

# **Henderson Libraries**

## **Henderson Oral History Project**

**Dianna Fyke**

## Dianna Fyke

**Interviewer:** OK, today is Monday, October 17, 2011. We're at the Paseo Verde Library branch of the Henderson District Public Libraries. My name is Wendy Walker. Our cameraman is Ed Feldman, and today we are interviewing Dianna Fyke for the Henderson Oral History Project. So first, thank you very much for participating in this project, and we're just going to start with a few basics. So can you tell me where and when you were born.

**Dianna:** I was born in July 1947 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. And shortly after that, I was just a few months old when I was taken back to Twin Falls, Idaho, where I grew up and was raised. It's a farm community on the Snake River.

**Interviewer:** And what did your family do there? What did your parents do?

**Dianna:** My father was a farmer at that time, and my mother, of course, in those days was a homebody, and I was the oldest – ended up being the oldest of 10 children before it was all over with. But, uh, we had a farm life, a dairy farm life where you had a lot of freedom to roam around. It was safe and pleasant to be at school.

**Interviewer:** And did you live there through high school?

**Dianna:** I lived there until I married in 1962. I married another farmer in the next town, young man, Ralph, and we started our families there. We had 2 children there. And I had this dream. I always wanted to, if we ever left that area, I always wanted to live near a large city, but I didn't want to live in a large city. I wanted to live in a small community and have the privileges of going to a large city.

**Interviewer:** So what brought you to Henderson?

**Dianna:** Well, my mother, after several years gotten married, and my stepfather was from Henderson. He actually worked at a construction company that made cement pipes, Hydro Conduit, down in the Pittman area. And so he married her and came here. And so in 1964 we came down for Mother's Day and visited her and then went home, and in the winter of '64 my husband found himself without work. And when you're in a farm community and you find yourself without work, you, there's not a lot of things you can do. So we went by way of Salt Lake and were there for a couple weeks, and he said, "Let's just go on down to Henderson and see what we can find." So we came down here where my mother was, and we actually, he got a job at the Flamingo Hotel years ago and started training as a pastry chef. And this became our home, the small city by a large city. At that time I was young and terrified of the big city, but I got my dream come true. And I also got out of the snow, so...

**Interviewer:** Into the heat.

**Dianna:** Into the heat. I love the heat.

**Interviewer:** So that was 1964?

**Dianna:** That was in the fall of 1964.

**Interviewer:** OK. And when you, how old were your children when you moved here?

**Dianna:** Our children at that time, one was 2, and one was just a few months old.

**Interviewer:** Oh my...

**Dianna:** So, and then we had our third child in '66, and she was born at St. Rose Hospital.

**Interviewer:** Oh, very nice. Nice. Just going back to your stepfather, just quickly, he was working for a company near, in Pittman? Do you remember the name of that company by chance?

**Dianna:** Yes, it was Hydro Conduit.

**Interviewer:** Hydro Conduit.

**Dianna:** They make big concrete cement pipes for construction.

**Interviewer:** OK, that's interesting. Um, where did you first live when you moved here? Did you live over on the older side of town, or did you live closer to Las Vegas?

**Dianna:** We lived down in what was then called the Pittman area, and they had some apartments down there on Jefferson Street. And – new apartments – and we lived in an apartment down there. My parents lived on Basic Road.

**Interviewer:** OK, ok, that's what I was wondering. So what were your first impressions of Henderson? What did you think when you got here?

**Dianna:** Um, well, I loved it. I loved the heat, and the sunshine. And it was not a large – it was only about 15,000 people here, so it was a small community, and it was very warm and friendly. And we went to St. Peter's Apostle's Church, and it was so friendly and warm that in a very short time you became involved, or I did, in several churches. I became a Sunday school teacher at Community Church, which was on Texas Street. It was a very busy area, and lot of people went to that church at that time. And then became involved because of my parents' connection, into the LDS Church, and I was working with my mother in that with different home calling and so forth. So I was very involved with community in the sense of children and women and our families.

**Interviewer:** It seems like, especially in those earlier years of Henderson the churches and the community organizations really played a large role in bringing the community together. It doesn't seem that people were looking for things...there were plenty of things to do.

**Dianna:** There was. It was – everyone knew everyone. Safeways was a store on Boulder Highway that everyone went to. You knew everyone that worked in there, and you just, you felt very comfortable and safe there.

**Interviewer:** So in addition to the various church activities, what else – and of course, raising your children – what else did you spend your time doing? What kinds of recreational activities did you pursue?

**Dianna:** We did a lot of traveling. We had a very limited amount of money at that time, but we actually would figure out how much money, extra money we had and what a tank of gas or two tanks of

gas would, would take us, and so we would go in different directions on the weekend. We would pack up and go to Rainbow Canyon up north, or we would go out to Lake Mead or to Willow Beach or to Utah. Whichever direction your car would take you, we would take. And we had a station wagon, and so we would camp out and venture through and see the different areas. We liked the outdoors. We liked fishing and things like that, so there was a lot of opportunities here. You could go to Mount Charleston if you wanted to, which was just an hour drive from here, and you could camp there overnight and have a good time with your family and be back on Sunday and back to work on Monday.

**Interviewer:** Did it take a – I don't know what the roads were like at that time. I know there have been recent additions to freeways and things. Did it take longer to get even just to Las Vegas at that time? You had to take Boulder Highway? Is that correct?

**Dianna:** You had to take Boulder Highway, but it wasn't crowded like it is today, and it didn't have all the stop lights that it has today. So it was really a smooth commute. And it's kinda hard to imagine but, my husband worked at the Flamingo Hotel, and we had one car in those days, so if you wanted to take the kids to the doctors, which was on Lake Mead and there was a clinic there across from the hospital. And all your doctors needs were there – I don't care whether it was surgeon, pediatrics, whatever they were all there, but if you needed the car you had to take him to work. And he worked early in the morning in the dark, and you would have to go across Sunset, and there was nothing out there, nothing. It was like going in the desert for 13 miles over to the Strip. And so, you know the kids loved it because it was an up and down roller coaster ride, but there was no lights, there was no town at all as there is today. It was just black, empty land. And you drove out there, and drove him over, and then came back home and were glad you were back safe, but there wasn't what we have today in Green Valley and all of that area. It's kind of hard to imagine, but it was just a dark road that you went on, and it was just a two-way road, by the way. It wasn't 4 lanes or any of that.

**Interviewer:** Right, so Vegas and Henderson really were just separated by desert. It was just desert.

**Dianna:** Desert. And you could really distinguish at that time the distance between the Las Vegas County areas and Henderson because I think we were very...we didn't have the hundred and some square miles that we have today. You know, we were probably less than 40 square miles in Henderson, and so you actually could see the difference. At night you could go down Boulder Highway, and you would leave the lights and you would see the darkness until you got to Whitney where there'd be a few lights.

**Interviewer:** Right, right. That's, that's interesting. So at that time, given that Henderson was such a smaller town than it is now, were you able to do all of your shopping and all...were you able to get all of the services that you needed in Henderson or did you occasionally need to go to Las Vegas?

**Dianna:** You did the basic things in Henderson. The utilities were here in Henderson for you to pay – they aren't today – but you could actually, you went downtown and you paid the telephone bill and the gas bill and the power bill. They had offices right downtown, and you did that. You did your shopping. If you wanted to buy, there was Othena's dress shop, there was Vernay's, I think, dress shop, there was Perry's men's store. So most of the things for what your needs were at that time were right here. On occasions, you would go to Las Vegas, but that was thought to be like once a month or something like that, and you were going to go to a larger store there and ride on an escalator and get in an elevator and things like that. You didn't do that on a regular basis.

**Interviewer:** OK, so all of your basic needs were met here in Henderson, but if you needed something special you might go to Las Vegas for that something.

**Dianna:** Mm-hmm.

**Interviewer:** OK, that's great. When did you start working?

**Dianna:** I, actually, the first time I went to work was in 1966 and that was because on a Sunday I was complaining to my mother during dinner that we needed more money. And she said, "Well, why don't you get a job?" because I was volunteering in so many different things – church activities, community activities – that I was gone with my children from 8 in the morning until really late at night. So kind of as a whim the Boulevard Mall was just opening, and JC Penneys was one of the ground, center stores there in the center of the Boulevard Mall. And they were interviewing. And I went in there and I interviewed, and I got the job, to my surprise. And so I went to work for JC Penneys, and we actually opened the Boulevard Mall and the store down there back in the '60s. And then when she sparked that, and you get start doing things, you know, you get used to being out into the world and working, and then I decided when my children went to school and they were all three in school, I went back to the university at UNLV to get my education.

**Interviewer:** Oh, fantastic. And so what did you...did you get a...you got a degree in something?

**Dianna:** I got a degree in business and education. I went originally to get a degree in education because I was always going to be a teacher. And in my family my grandmother was a teacher and history of teaching was in our family, so that's what I was going to do. But in the late '60s and the '70s, there was a – can you believe – an abundance of teachers that were coming out of school. And so I had a great counselor at UNLV, Dr. Goodwin, and he suggested that I should change my major to business and minor in education. He assured me I'd always be able to teach, which I always have been able to do. That's never been a problem, but he said then that would open the door for me to be in the business world. And in being with the business world I'd probably make a whole lot more money. And he was definitely right about that. So I actually went to UNLV and took management classes where I was the only woman in class, and it was full of a lot of athletic young men that were in the school at that time, and it was a good thing I was married because I didn't have to compete for boyfriends or anything like that. But it was a world that you learned to kind to gain a respect by your peers for what you were capable of doing. And at that time it had been, business was kind of a man's world, and so it was an adventure to be able to go through that and to get a degree in business. And Dr. Goodwin was right. It did open up a field for me. And I worked for First National Bank for 2 years and then went to work with my career. I actually started with Centel, which was a telephone company and had a 31-year career with that company. And in my career I was able to teach. I was able to lead, to manage, and to be a project manager. I brought services, digital services to this Valley that no one else had in the United States like caller ID and all of the different things that we work with today and was privileged to work with the wireless phone industry. We brought that, the big brick phone, in the '70s to this Valley. The uniqueness of this Valley from a communication aspect is that all our switches are digital. They were all computer switches. Where the rest of the world, where the communication had been there longer, they were analog, and they were mechanical. So it was more difficult to bring new services to those areas because they are run on computers, where we had this entire large area from Laughlin through up to Mount Charleston covered with digital switches. So we were able to bring in new products from Canada and try with different research what the customers here would like to have. And people in Nevada are risk-takers.

They want the latest and the newest, and they're willing to try that. And so, I had a great career doing a lot of good things and traveling all over the United States.

**Interviewer:** Wow, that is really, really wonderful. So you worked for Centel for, did you say 31 years?

**Dianna:** Over 31 years.

**Interviewer:** My goodness. And then after that, is that when you transitioned to the Chamber of Commerce or did you take a break?

**Dianna:** I did. I took a break for about a year. I had, was the third woman at the Henderson Chamber of Commerce ever elected as President of the Chamber of Commerce. If you look through the history, the 60 plus years of the Chamber of Commerce, there have only been 3 women ever, that got, were elected to be the President. And I had the privilege of being elected 2 years in a row to be that and to lead the business world here in our community. So from the early, or late '80s on, I was very involved in the business part of our community here in Henderson. And, so close to my heart are 2 things: the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce. I have watched and helped and advised to watch this community grow into keeping the culture of the small home town but to a metropolitan area that it is today.

**Interviewer:** Has that been difficult?

**Dianna:** No, no. I think the people that came to Henderson all had the same mindset. I remember talking to some people that had – came from California, and they bought a home over in Summerlin. And they were there about 2 years, and they didn't like it. So they sold it and moved over to Anthem area, and they were explaining to me that why they made that decision was that Summerlin was a different type of people. It was more of a class system, caste system that the mid-West and the East kinda have. Henderson has the Western culture. It has a community home town. We work very hard with each other – the City, the Chamber, the businesses – to keep that friendly, home, warm feeling. And people that live here understand that, whether they ever put it into words, I'm not sure. But you know our motto for the City of Henderson is "a place to call home". That's not by accident. It's a vision that the forefathers had for Henderson. They wanted a quality place to live for families. It was not based around gaming or construction or large companies. It was built around a culture of quality, family, home town living. And we've maintained that today to 270,000 people, and we're still lucky enough to have those roots there that people recognize when they come to live here.

**Interviewer:** OK, just going back a little bit, the 2 years that you were elected President, do you, which years were those?

**Dianna:** I think it was like '96, '97 – somewhere in that area – or '97, '98.

**Interviewer:** OK, and then after that, is that when you became the Director of Government Affairs, or did you transition...?

**Dianna:** I became the Director of Government Affairs two years ago, so that would have been in '99 [2009].

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Dianna:** A little while, a year after I retired. I was volunteering for the Chamber during legislature, and I was also volunteering at the school. So when you retire you just don't quit. You still do things. You just don't get paid for it, but you still do things. And their government liaison individual retired, and someone turned and said, "Dianna, we need you. Could you do this?" And I saw the possibilities of what our Chamber could do in the state and what we could affect in the state if we aligned ourselves. And so that's what I've been busy doing the last two years is helping Henderson: some of the regulations and things that we need for businesses and for our city, getting those implemented and working on those.

**Interviewer:** OK, let me take a larger step back because I don't know very much about the Henderson Chamber of Commerce, so, and the various roles within the Chamber of Commerce, and obviously you do. So can you tell me a little bit more about the overall goal of the Henderson Chamber of Commerce, their general role, and then specifically, your role as President and how it differs from your current role as the Director of Government Affairs? And does that make, does that make sense?

**Dianna:** Really the role of any Chamber is a group of businesses, usually small businesses, but not necessarily, are the most of our businesses in the Chamber of Commerce here in Henderson is about 98% less than 5 employees. So we have big businesses. I don't mean that St. Rose and the M Resort and some of those, but, NV Energy and Southwestern Gas Company. But the majority of the membership is small people, small businesses that make up probably over 80% of the GNP for the United States. Our country is built on small businesses. And so the purpose is, is to be a voice for those small businesses. You know, one small business with a couple of employees, one, they don't have time to get out and network and be a voice. They can't afford the administration, like directors of government affairs or lobbyists and things like that. But if you pool that network together, and that's what a Chamber does, is pools a network of businesses together to help business in that community, either politically or marketing-wise or networking-wise. Because the best people to do business with is your friends. And so by pulling that group together and sharing the cost of marketing, sharing the cost of lobbying for government regulations and things, that's what a Chamber is and what makes it work, is basically for small businesses. And then the larger businesses are involved because they have a moral responsibility to the community. If they're like the telephone company or the power company, they're servicing all those people. So they want businesses to thrive, and survive, and do well because when they do well, then their customer, which that base is, does well.

**Interviewer:** And so what were your primary responsibilities as President? And what are your primary responsibilities as the Director of Government Affairs?

**Dianna:** As President the primary responsibility was to represent that group of people, and we chaired a board of directors that helped make regulations and helped with events and things that made this community more active and generated tourists to come here, generated other parties to bring monies to spend here in the community.

**Interviewer:** OK, and so your current, what are your current responsibilities?

**Dianna:** As Government Affairs Director, my responsibilities are several. We have a state and local issues committee that watches after basically the regulations or things like a fire permit or a permit that's being imposed upon the businesses or thinking about being imposed. We would watch those

different things going on that would involve the business and alert business owners about that, get their feelings, and then represent them. Right now, we're economy-wise, really stretched for small businesses. We're losing a lot of small businesses in the United States as well as in this community. And a lot of that is just financial stress and lack of revenues and high costs. So we work to keep those costs down for them and then at the same time help to generate revenues. That can also then had to be expanded. We made a couple of trips to Washington, D.C. and met with legislators there and found that that was a one-week kind of shot thing. And it was good, you put a lot of work into it, but you came back and you kind of forgot the federal issues that are going on. We have a lot of issues like water distribution and BLM land and other regulations that are going on now. And so we actually then started a federal issues committee. So we have two. We have one that focuses on state and local issues, and one that focuses on the federal issues. Then every other year, we have a legislature that is developed here or activated here in Nevada, and that's a 120 days of our representatives – 11 of them are elected here in Henderson – go up there to represent Henderson in the state. And a lot of bills are put before them. So our legislative committee, which makes up about 35 chairs and co-chairs, meets with our 11 representatives every Wednesday morning at 7:00 for one hour. And what we do is, we have looked at every bill. This last session there were over 125 bills. We look at every one of those bills, and they are separated into committees. And those committee members, volunteers, review those in the aspect of how will this bill impact our small businesses here in Henderson? So if it's a positive impact, we support it. If it's a negative one, we identify why it would be a negative to our small businesses, and we present that to our legislators every Wednesday morning. And then we actually support the follow-up with letters to the different committee chairs in the legislature in Carson City and voicing that the Henderson Chamber, composed of a thousand business members, support or oppose these bills, and this is why. So that goes on during the legislature while the state and the federal committees go on all the time. And then we have an IMPAC committee that's under the government division, and that's an advocacy group. That's a group that actually interviews all the candidates that are going to represent Henderson, and we actually endorse different ones and help them financially with their campaigning. So that IMPAC group works to be the voice or the message-carriers for those other committees that I talked about earlier. And then our fifth committee under the government division is the Nevada Chambers Round Table. And there's 28 chambers and 7 associations that come together on a conference call every month to discuss what's going on with their chamber in their area of Nevada. Like last month, Jennifer Sprout from Elko, Nevada, brought our first bright light of sunshine in months. Because gold and silver right now is so high that the Elko area has a lot of mines – Newmont, Belmont. They have so many jobs that are open up there that they're having trouble finding people to fill those jobs. \$68,000 average annual income for a miner in the industry, and they, with that, so now you have a big demand for jobs, which we love to hear here in Nevada, right?

**Interviewer:** Absolutely.

**Dianna:** So, along with that though, Elko is a small community. They don't have enough housing. We told them we'd send them some from Clark County. Their shortage is housing. That's their problem, is housing. Our problem here in the South right now is too many empty houses and foreclosures and short-sells. So we share those views and we share what's going on with each other. We share information with the different communities because not all of them can afford government directors or lobbyists. So we work to help them and help them stay in business and make their community worthwhile.

**Interviewer:** Wow. That's really wonderful. I had no idea. You sound like a very, very busy person.



**Dianna:** A little bit.

**Interviewer:** So this is all volunteer? Is that correct?

**Dianna:** All 100% volunteers. We have 8 staff members at the Chamber that are paid, but I have over 200 people that I work with, and that's all volunteers. That's all based on...it's a little different from the business world where I directed hundreds of people and call centers throughout the Western states, but the difference is they were all paid a salary, and on the Chamber side you have to work with volunteers. And so they have to be dedicated and incented in a different way than dollars.

**Interviewer:** That is, that's really amazing. What a wonderful resource for the businesses. I just, I had no idea that you were able to do so much for them. Um, so just the timeline again, because I think I missed something. So you started working for the Chamber in what year?

**Dianna:** In '99?

**Interviewer:** In '99? OK, and you were elected President...?

**Dianna:** In the '80...? What was it? Tell you the truth, I don't know. '97, '98, somewhere in there?

**Interviewer:** '97. OK. Somewhere in that area.

**Dianna:** Maybe, I may have totally blown when I did it.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Dianna:** Things move too fast in my world.

**Interviewer:** And then between the time that you were President and Director of Government Affairs, what were you doing then? Because you were...

**Dianna:** I worked with Centel.

**Interviewer:** OK, oh.

**Dianna:** The reason I got involved with the Chamber in the very beginning was because of my position with the telephone company, which is now CenturyLink. Through my career it changed names something like 5 or 6 times.

**Interviewer:** OK. So those were co-current activities. You were working for Centel...

**Dianna:** When I was President. President of the Chamber, or Chairman, as it's called today, is all volunteer.

**Interviewer:** Right, OK. But you were doing both at the same time.

**Dianna:** Of course.

**Interviewer:** When did you retire from Centel?

**Dianna:** I retired from, which was then CenturyLink...

**Interviewer:** CenturyLink.

**Dianna:** ...in, let's see, 1999.

**Interviewer:** OK, I see.

**Dianna:** '98, '99.

**Interviewer:** Right, my goodness. What do you think...obviously, the current financial situation is difficult for everybody, but over the years, as you've lived and worked in Henderson, what do you think are some, have been, some of the biggest challenges for small business in Henderson?

**Dianna:** Uh, probably, sales is a big thing. And part of that's been caused by the growth of our community. Our forefathers set down a plan within the Henderson community to build ten, what we call town centers, so that within a town center you would have all the facilities that you needed within a 5-mile area to go to – cleaners, grocery stores, you know, shopping. All your needs could be met, entertainment, within that area. Because we've grown so rapidly – we won't probably now for a while – but we have grown over the years, you know, pretty rapidly, people moved, businesses moved to where the new population was. And so, in doing that – and this is typical of any town – businesses want to be where the new homes are, where the new people are moving in. And that left areas that we call redevelopment within Henderson kind of blighted. Because when you have a shopping center, and you have an Albertsons that is the reason why everyone comes there all of the time, you build these little cleaners and shoe repairs and things around that. If that store, that main business moves out of that area because it wants to go over here where there's new growth, then that starts a lack of reason for people to shop in that center. And so what the City has done to offset that is to develop redevelopment areas within our older areas of town and worked to bring business and incentivize businesses to those areas and get those things growing. That has probably been the hardest thing to crack and resolve in our City as I sit and look back and say, how do we keep those shopping areas and those business areas vital and growing in Henderson?

**Interviewer:** It seems like that's been a real challenge, particularly over near Water Street. I mean, that's where the town started. But I've, just looking at the materials that we have related to Henderson's history, it looks like over the years there've been more than a few attempts to revitalize the Water Street area and that that has been a real challenge. There's been a sort of a start in that direction and then it doesn't quite succeed in the way that people hoped that it would. So it seems like that has been a real challenge over there, especially in that sort of older side of town. And Green Valley's the new, relatively speaking, the newer area...

**Dianna:** It was. It's not any longer.

**Interviewer:** True. Relatively...

**Dianna:** It's now another blighted area.

**Interviewer:** Right. So where is the town growing now then? What is the...

**Dianna:** Where was it growing?

**Interviewer:** Where is it growing now? Green Valley was the new area 20 years ago. What, where are we pushing now?

**Dianna:** Now it's going out St. Rose Parkway, out past Siena Hospital. You have the, past Anthem, Seven Hills. It's going more toward I-15 and that area because that's where the land growth is.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Dianna:** One of the problems that we have here in Henderson or in lots of areas in Nevada is that we're surrounded by government land, and so our boundaries are restricted from these government-owned lands. And so you have to go to the federal government, you have to get bills and amendments passed to allow us to have certain lands so that we can expand. For example, Nevada State College has a tremendous amount of land that we were able to get for them outside here going South, but the problem is now we have to get the finances to put those multi-million dollar buildings up there on that college area. So land will restrict that, some of that, growth processes. I've sat on the redevelopment commission for several years, and Henderson downtown is a really important area that we keep. And we've thought, just as you described, several different things. I think we've got the right thing as far as a theme. It's a walking area community. We have a lot of civic buildings. The City has invested a lot of civic buildings down there. A lot of people have old town houses down in that area, and they don't want to leave those homes. You know, they've been there for 50 years, and so you have to kinda work those, that theme in with the community. But I think we've invested cultural things, activities for the families, and we've put it in different spots throughout the community to keep people coming into different areas. One of the problems with the downtown Water Street that you mentioned is we had facilities that were designed in the '50s for that area, both telephone, power, gas. When we started to redevelop that area and had people investing in that we soon found out that we didn't have the capacity for power and for water and for that to meet the needs of larger, multi-story buildings down in that area.

**Interviewer:** Oh, OK.

**Dianna:** So when you go over to like the Water District in the area of Green Valley, ok that's brand new. And so the facilities that you need at that time are able to be put in, but so that the new digital, the new capacities for telephone and water and that, you can actually put those from the ground. It's a lot easier. You come back to the Water Street area, it's not so easy to do that because for instance, just a simple thing like power has to have a substation that has the capacity to bring that much power in there to the Water Street area. And you might not have the line capacity to carry that. So there's a lot of structural, infrastructural stuff that has to be done, and that's not easily done as we may know because you have to tear up the street to be able to start putting those facilities in. And when you start doing the underground work you impact these small businesses, like bakeries and dress shops and that, on the same street. And so then they lose revenue and the next thing you know, you lose some of these businesses because they don't have the capital in large enough stores, savings to hold on until you get this finished. So that's caused some of our problems in that area of redevelopment, it's, that we're gonna work on. Boulder Highway is another one as far as some of the areas there. But if you go back through history, and you watch, they usually recycle and get it done and catch up. And so what we're seeing with our Water Street area is a lot of development. You've got economic periods, downturns,

that then businesses say well, I wanted to invest in here, but right now is not a good time because I've lost business somewhere else. And so I can't take that capital that I was gonna invest here and put out right now. I'll be back in 5 years or something, so it's a slower process of growing.

**Interviewer:** Right, right. That's interesting. The infrastructure down on Water Street, I mean, that really does date back to the beginnings of the town.

**Dianna:** It sure does.

**Interviewer:** So, but I have listened to others describe other examples of where they've taken land that was previously industrial or where there were some real problems with the ground – where the Fiesta Casino is, for example – and they've been able to implement technological solutions and environmental solutions to re-purpose the area so that they can actually, sort of catch up and put something in that's modern and different.

**Dianna:** It is. You know, and back, when you were back during the War, this was never supposed to be a town.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Dianna:** And so those plants dumped waste and things that wasn't safe for residents at that time. Not doing it deliberately, it was just desert. It was just something you didn't have to worry about. And the big concern at that time was making products for the War and winning the War. So now the War ends and they think, well, this will just go away. Everybody will pick up their little houses and move away, and that didn't happen because our forefathers said no. In the '50s, they went, we like it here. We wanna live here just as Boulder City did with the building of Hoover Dam. They said, no, no, we wanna live here, so then they petitioned to the government and they get the land and they charter and they start their towns. Well now you have these ponds that were there where chemicals were dropped and so then you have remediation that has to go on in those areas to clean it up because people wanna live here.

**Interviewer:** Right, right. All of those temporary, quote, unquote, homes that are still standing and still occupied and things like that down in the old townsite area. Yeah, people really did want to stay. It could have become a ghost town pretty easily after the plant shut down when the War ended, but there were enough people here that liked it enough, and they really came together as a small community at that point, it seems, to, to make a go of Henderson. They did, I think, a pretty amazing job.

**Dianna:** It is. When you look at the history of Nevada and you go to some of these mining towns it's really interesting to see pictures and you'll see where 30,000 people lived here, and you're standing there looking around at desert, and you're going, how? Where? And when you walk around you'll see some of the framework or the structures in the desert that is still there because it doesn't deteriorate as quickly in our dry desert, and you'll go, oh my gosh, there was a town. And people, the mining would, you know, the mine would fall out, and so then people would move to the next discovery of whatever mineral that they were after. And they actually picked up their houses and moved. So we have a tradition of that happening in Nevada but some of these communities, like Henderson, said, no, we like it. We want to stay here, and they built this large community, second largest city in Nevada now because of people that wanted to stay here and loved the area and have built a home here.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it seems the community spirit here has always been very strong, very strong. So thinking back to community-related kinds of events, were there a lot of community, I know there was Industrial Days which later became Heritage Days. Did you and your family attend those sorts of events?

**Dianna:** Absolutely. Yeah, there was a big, what I called a Quonset hut to start with over on Boulder Highway, St. Peter's had the...and if you've got pictures of it...it was a big theater building is what it was. And it had a stage in it and wood floors in there. There were actually basketball games that were played in there. There was movies and theaters, plays and things that happened there, the Knights of Columbus down underneath. When I got to go through that building it was amazing to me years ago. They had a bar there and the men went and gathered and had drinks there and had meetings there. It was a social hall for meals and fundraisers and things like that before we got others going on. The Industrial Days – it was, when we wanted to change that to Heritage Days because of kind of the image that the plants had given Henderson as Hooterville, and the chlorine smoke and things, then you wanted to move to a heritage. It was our heritage that we were preserving. The people were in uproar. They bought t-shirts, they, they... It was a regular campaign against us changing to Heritage Days from Industrial Days because the roots and the pride of these people were so strong. You know, they had beauty pageants. I've got granddaughters that were in the beauty pageants. I know women my age that when they were in high school were in the beauty pageants of Henderson. And so, you know, Henderson has always been that community gathering, party, watching plays, and we've kept that, going to musicals and things, to the theater right here in Henderson. And we have survived that. That's what we are – a home town. And that's what makes us the home town. And our City Cultural and Arts Tourism Division actually helps to work to keep that going. The Pavilion next door to your library, you know...

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Dianna:** It just, it goes on and on, and it will continue because it's so embedded in Henderson, that gathering, that celebrating, the partying, you know, whatever you call it, but it's a gathering, a celebration for whether it's Heritage Days, Industrial Days, food courts, you know, it's there. I was just...we are the only area, Henderson anymore, that has really a parade route in the whole Valley here, in this large Valley. And a couple months ago we had the India parade from all the Indian people – not Western culture India, but India, and then last weekend we had the Spanish Latin parade. And so it's a great means, our Water Street, a parading, and people of the same cultures gathering together to celebrate on the Plaza, taste each other's food, dance, see the costumes, and it's a gathering area that we do very well here in Henderson.

**Interviewer:** Has that been one of your favorite things about living in Henderson, that sort of coming together of the community in all these different ways?

**Dianna:** Yes, yes. I have 12 grandchildren that all live here in Henderson area. They went through the same schools. There's like 4 or 5 generations now here in Henderson of families, and it's so neat to meet the sons that are now grown and have their sons or daughters that are doing business in this community. And so, that's where I came from. That was the small home town in Idaho type that I came from, and that's what we've built here in Henderson.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything about Henderson that you would like to...that you, if you could change it, you would? Is there anything that you think is less than optimal in Henderson?

**Dianna:** Hmm, less than optimal. I think our redevelopment areas, if I could change anything, I would be able to speed up the redevelopment areas. I think we do a reasonably good thing of develop, redevelopment in our area, but it's for me slow because I can see the vision. Lake Adair, which is now Lake Las Vegas, I, when I came here, my early...

[recording interrupted]

**Dianna:** ...to keep on top of it. And they were going 7 days a week, 24 hours a day to build that. And people said, oh, that's a folly, that's never gonna happen. And the neat thing about Henderson is once they catch on to a vision or a dream, they get it done. There is nothing that I've seen in Henderson that when it's a good idea, a good sound idea, that it doesn't get done. It may not get done in the original time frame because of external forces and we may have to extend it 20 years or something, but it gets accomplished. And Lake Las Vegas is a visual of that. Anthem, Green Valley, I mean you go, Nevada State College, it's a composition of dreams that the community people have that they gather together and work together hand in hand to get it accomplished.

**Interviewer:** I've heard, I've heard a lot of people talk about those, in fact, those specific projects in just that way with the City Council members and like Father Caviglia, for example, so more church involvement, but people really just working at such a local level and then being represented at state and federal levels when necessary, but really working hard at this local community level to get those kinds of projects accomplished. And it's really, and it's taken, sometimes it's taken a lot longer than they hoped that it would, but they persevere. I think one of the things I've been impressed by is the perseverance of the people who are working at those levels really trying to get those things done, and they just keep plugging away. And it's really sort of remarkable because I've lived other places where that doesn't happen. So that's really something. Um, sort of switching gears here, I was thinking you mentioned 1988, and I was thinking of PEPCON.

**Dianna:** Mm-hmm.

**Interviewer:** So you were here when the PEPCON...

**Dianna:** No, I wasn't.

**Interviewer:** Oh, you weren't? OK.

**Dianna:** My company had sent me, which was Centel at the time, to Chicago to work on a project that was gonna be 2 years. It was a billing project for the United States, and it turned into a 5-year project, but we had leased our home, and we were there. And again the commitment of our community, my sister-in-law worked for the telephone company, and when that happened, she knew that we would be concerned in Chicago when this hit the news. And she had the power to go out on the telephone ahead of the lines that soon got bogged down and she called me and told us immediately before it even hit the news what had happened. And she had already called all the members in the Valley here, family-wise, and they were all fine. And so for us just to watch the news but to know that we were all fine. And so, it impacted us but it didn't impact us with the day of event. We had leased our home here and so our home had damage to it. I think there probably wasn't a home that didn't have damage to it. Unfortunately, you know, the people, the plant were, a couple of them were killed, but you know, we were taken care of. And it was a massive problem for the community. It really was. It told us again to take a look at those plants that actually built this community, to take a look at them and say, we've now

surrounded it with residential homes. What can we do to protect our residents and still at the same time work together with the industrial plants and keep them going, too? And I think it took a couple of years to get that all figured out, but very little people realized until then, I think, the importance of those plants. Up until then they were just an eyesore, and they, no one thought of the thousands of men and women that worked at those plants, that that provided incomes for them and for our country. You know, the titanium that was made here, some of that was on our shuttles, that's on the tiles of our shuttles that went to outer space. People just kind of, you know, didn't recognize that those things were going on...the rocket fuel that was being made, and so it changed a little bit of a focus for Henderson, some positive and some negative. It really, out of the negative came the awareness of the positive things, too.

**Interviewer:** Right, yeah, that's very interesting. I mean, it's been a source of a number of jobs, they've been a source of a number of jobs over the years for locals. And, of course, when BMI started, people came from all over the country to get jobs here during the War, so, yeah, that's interesting. And where was your home located at that time? Were you still in Pittman?

**Dianna:** We were, we bought our home, no, from – Pittman was more like an apartment.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Dianna:** We built, bought our first home over in what was called Valley View. In fact, at the time we bought it it was a new subdivision off of Lake Mead, east of Boulder Highway, over by what's now Basic High School. So our home there, the sliding doors had to be replaced, and windows got cracked, and doors were ajar because like anything that has the ground level that that blast caused there was a lot of like an earthquake-type of thing. So we had to actually spend money to get that fixed and that, but our family was safe. You know, any time you have something like that the first thing that you all think about is, is our family all right? And because we were in Chicago, it could have been a nightmare for us, and my sister-in-law took the initiative to know that our family needed to be...you know, first found out that they were all fine here and then notify us in Chicago because we were the only ones that were on the other side of the world at the time, so it was important to us to know everything was safe here and that we had a home to come home to when I finished my project.

**Interviewer:** Right. That's interesting. You mentioned Basic High School. Did your children attend Basic High School?

**Dianna:** My children, in fact, I have sisters and brothers that graduated from Basic High School, and we have a heritage of all my grandchildren, my children, went through Robert Taylor Elementary, and all my grandchildren have went through Robert Taylor. We have tiles over there with the names and the year that they were at that school. And they have all, the ones that have graduated, have graduated from Basic High School. So there's a tradition there for our family, and Basic High School is a big treasure to us.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, first high school in Henderson, and a long history here. Let's see. I think that's about all I have. Is there anything else you'd like to say about your life here in Henderson? Any special memories?

**Dianna:** You know, when I started out here years ago...(chuckle) in fact, we will celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary next year, my husband and I.

**Interviewer:** Oh, congratulations.

**Dianna:** And when I grew up I would have assumed that I was gonna be in Twin Falls in the farming community. And when we came here in 1964, you know, I never saw such beautiful sunrises and sunsets in a community that has been so...we have been so blessed by. And we've been blessed because of the community of people. You know, you can build castles anywhere, but you can't always select the people that have come here from all different parts of the world to live in Henderson. And they call the Chamber all the time telling me that they're moving to Henderson, and my favorite question: Why are you moving here? And it's: to get away from the snow, I heard it's a great community, it sounds like just what I want to live in. And they move here and they join that kind of commitment that we have. And I made the best decision of my life and my husband's life when we decided to stay here.

**Interviewer:** OK. Well, thank you very much. Ed, did you have anything you wanted to ask?

**Ed:** (Coughs and shakes head "no".)

**Interviewer:** No? OK. Alright, well thank you so much. We really appreciate this.

**Dianna:** You're welcome.