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Henderson Speaks and It's Yesterday Once Again

April 26, 2014

A Heritage Days panel discussion
of the
Henderson Historical Society
featuring
Duane Laubach
John "Jack" Jeffrey
Colleen McGinty
and
Robert Groesbeck

introduced by
Fredric W. Watson

with afterword by
Louis F. LaPorta

filmed by
Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm
for
Henderson District Public Libraries

Fredric Watson: Before I introduce the panel, I want to thank some folks. I want to thank the Henderson Public Library for their generous support. They've—over the last three years, we've been able to use the Gibson Library, use Gibson equipment and their intellectual resources in the form of staff. So that's been really good for us. I want to thank the City of Henderson, who've been really good supporters of ours. I want to thank, especially thank Selma Bartlett and Brad Tope from Meadows Bank because they've helped us with this financially, just with donations that have made it possible for us to do these nice kinds of activities. Rick Stater, also from Tronox Corporation, has been especially generous with us. And, of course, I want to thank everybody who comes to our activities, and everybody who's joined the Henderson Historical Society. That support helps us immensely, gives us bragging rights in the community, so thank you very much, all of you. I also want to thank our partners from Nevada State College. Nevada State College has helped us greatly. We've had a couple panel discussions, and Pete La Chapelle from Nevada State College has been a stalwart of ours. Also Mark Hall-Patton from the Clark County Museum, he's our advisor and meets with us and he's kind of teaching us. You know, we're amateurs in the Historical Society, so we're just kind of feeling our way along, but it's really good to have somebody like Mark Hall-Patton. Cynthia Sanford is here from the Clark County Museum. We appreciate that kind of support. I was asked to remind you if you somehow or another got past the guards at the door that's taking down everybody's name, be sure and sign in before you leave. That's really important to us because it gives us a database of the names of all of the old families from Henderson and it gives us a sense of the interest on the part of new families that have moved here. And that's part of what we're trying to do. We're trying to reminisce with old-timers, but we're trying to teach new people in our neighborhood the history and the culture of our community. And that's just an important part of society.

I guess now I'll introduce our panel. And we want this to be really informal, so the panelists, maybe they'll talk twelve, fifteen minutes to kind of give you an impression of their experience in Henderson. And of course, we won't put the hook on them or anything, but it seemed it might be more comfortable for the speakers if they could talk a little bit, but then maybe open it up so that, well, our visitors could ask questions. So when we get to that point be sure to do that. But we have four people here who have just been great community members. Two have been elected officials and served their community greatly. That, of course, is Jack Jeffrey and Robert Groesbeck. I taught kids at Ferron Elementary School and I was just sure that that was Robert Groesbeck. I was hoping it was. This kid was really a good kid. [laughter] Robert Groesbeck, former mayor of Henderson; Jack Jeffrey, City Council and Nevada State Legislature; a representative from the education world, Colleen McGinty. Colleen McGinty was an office manager of several elementary schools and then went on to be a key secretary to one of the top administrators in the school district. I worked for the school district and I know who really ran the schools in Clark County, the school office managers. [laughter] Duane Laubach from the business community, Duane was in real estate industry. He is an old-timer here. He got here—he'd be the earliest—it might be a tie between Jack and Duane.

Jack Jeffrey: Yeah, but he's older than I am.

All: [laughter]

Fredric Watson: But they have great stories. You know, I have been dying to hear these two older gentlemen tell their memories of Henderson. So without further ado, I'm going to turn the program over to the panelists. Yep, this is fired up. And maybe we'll just start with one person and then we'll work our way down the table, okay?

[sounds of panelists adjusting microphone]

Duane Laubach: Can you hear me now?

Audience: Oh, yeah.

Jack Jeffrey: We signed a disclaimer up here just a few minutes ago, and it kind of put me on edge. They want to take our picture but it also puts us in a position where we can't tell a lie.

All: [laughter]

Duane Laubach: Anyway, my name is Duane Laubach and I'm a seventy-two year resident of this fine city, and before I start telling you a little bit about my remembrances and coming to Henderson, I'd like to lay out a little timeline for you.

Voice: Hold on, Duane, they've lost the power. [background conversation]

Duane Laubach: I'd like to lay a timeline for you. Before my family arrived here, I guess if any of you remember the history, there was a war starting in Europe, just at the beginning, 1939, where sooner or later there was a feeling that America would have to be coming into the position where they're going to probably be at war. At that time, there was something like, there was a feeling that they had to develop materials to fight this effort. And so, a lot of people don't realize this, but nine engineers and metallurgical people were called upon to go to England and learn the process of making magnesium. And amongst those nine engineers and professional people was a gentleman by the name of Fred Gibson, who was a metallurgical engineer. And for you that don't remember, his son, whom this library is named after, Senator James Gibson, and he's also the grandfather of a former mayor of Henderson, also named Jim Gibson. Those people went over to England and learned the process of how to work with magnesium. Of course, at that time, there was a lot of scare in the air because they went over by destroyer and they had to be concerned about the submarine warfare that the Germans had imposed. Anyway, they came back to this area and eventually the thought was to establish a magnesium plant. This was an ideal place for the magnesium plant. You had the resources that you needed, you had power from the dam, you had water from the lake, and you had the minerals. You had manganese ore and also you had calves. You would produce brucite, which was helping in the production of magnesium. And the by-products that magnesium was to come up with—that was going to be making incendiary bombs along with metal for fighter aircraft. Well, at this time, when the thought was that they're going to build this plant, this is

where the need was going to be established to have a work force. And this is where I come into the picture. My family were—we came from Oklahoma and we were survivors, so to speak, of the dust storms and the Great Depression. My father got the word that they were going to be hiring carpenters to come to the Henderson plant site here and help build the plant. Thus, we did. We got on Route 66. So many of you have come that way with your ancestors, for sure, where you could go Route 66, where you paid twelve cents for a gallon of gas, and fifty cents for a gallon of water. [laughter] We made it through Route 66. We got down to Palm Beach where my father received his designation to come up and work for the plant. Well, at that particular point, there was no lodging here in this community. There was nothing. Most of the people that were coming were—there was still work force that was left over from the building of the dam and a lot of people stayed and lived in Las Vegas at Pittman and Whitney, as we know it today. And that work force, they came from all over. They came from the Midwest, and as I say, they were summoned. Because of the Depression, people out of work, they had to get out here. And they found ways to get out. Anyway, when I first went to this area, when I first saw it, there were no schools established in Henderson at that time. And there was one school in Las Vegas which was the Fifth Street Grammar School, and my folks had taken me out of the fifth grade in Oklahoma and I had to finish my year. Well, we didn't want—I couldn't go to Fifth Street because it was over crowded, and so they sent me back to Oklahoma to finish my schoolwork. And I came out—when I came out, this was a bustling community. The good people stayed. I don't know if you can remember where I got—we called it Anderson Camp. Anderson's Camp was located over here where Hyundai Automobile Company is located and workers stayed there, they ate there, they lived in squat tents, and when I first came out, I remember seeing there was like twelve houses, outside houses were being built, and the city was being started. Well, at that point, there were no schools, no schools in Henderson at all. But when I came back from Oklahoma, I arrived and there was the creation of the first school we had here. A lot of people don't remember this, but the footprint where the City Hall is now located is where the first Basic High School was established as well as the grade school. It was like you had a row of school rooms which took care of the grammar school and a row over here that took care of the high school and a quadrangle in between. Well, the grade school had a principal by the name of Roy Petrie and Roy Petrie was a long time teacher, and what was interesting about Roy, when school was out at the end of the day, he would go to his—he had a little Model A truck, and he would get into that truck and he would go to various stops along the way, go to Pittman and Las Vegas—or not Las Vegas, but Whitney, and he would gather up scraps of vegetables, because he had a pig farm out in Green Valley. And we all thought that was quite humorous. Well, the principal of the high school was a gentleman by the name of Ben Church, and Ben was there quite some time, and of course, over all that was Lyle Burkholder who was Superintendent of our schools. You wouldn't believe this, but when we received our diploma, our eighth grade and high school diploma, on the back of the diploma, it had—it was our school district—it wasn't Clark County; it was Railroad Pass. That was our school district. And this day, that was, you know, just, we always seemed to fall back on that and kind of reminisce. But the workforce down at the dam, or at the plant, was one of—you know, my

father would come home and he'd say, "You know, I went down today," he said, "I'm an Okie," so they'd say, "Hey, Okie, go tell Arkie that Tex wants to see him over at the mill shop."

All: [laughter]

Duane Laubach: That's kind of how they had relations, because they had—they were just a—really a good camaraderie. The housing, as I said, was Anderson Camp and next to it they had the Townsite houses for—there were one thousand of them that were built and they were completed and then, of course, all the people could move into those. Of course, later on, when War Assets [Administration] took over, they were sold. Anyway, questions often asked about shopping, well, shopping was very limited. People had to—some of them would take the bus to Las Vegas and shop. The bus would go back and forth between here and Las Vegas. It would be like ten cents a trip. They'd do their shopping and they'd come back. And then, later on, we had where the Eldorado Club now sits, the parking garage, there was—the first store that was erected was a store called Clark's Bargain. And that was right where the garage is set, situated, and then you had to trip on down and then you'd have a few other stores. There was Van Valey's—had a little shoe store, as well as—you could buy some furniture. And further on down was the management office that controlled the Townsite houses. But that was kind of what things you would—you know, took care of. Shopping was one of the experiences, because in those early days, you could—I first went to work for the Clark Market and I worked for thirty cents an hour and my paycheck at the end of the week was six dollars. But it had its perks. I could get all the strawberry jam I wanted. [laughter] I could also get all the Wrigley Spearmint gum I wanted. [laughter] And those were some of the good things that happened at that particular point in time. But housing was something else. Police, you know, where you get for law—Henderson in those early years, we had—there were two deputy sheriffs that were dispatched from Las Vegas, and these two deputies would patrol. Boulder Highway was notorious for—when the plants were having their shift work, three shifts, some of the men after a long day, they would go to—they had a place called The Jolly Joke Bar and another one across the street called The Pittman Club. Well, these fellows would sort of transgress between these two clubs depending on their need for drink. Well unfortunately, a lot of them got hit on the road, on Boulder Highway. It was just one direction, and anyway, that was probably one of the biggest activities that the deputy sheriffs had to take care of. They had radio, but for those that might be lounging around and not next to their radio, where the LDS Chapel House sits on Ocean and Water Street, there used to be a long building up there which housed the various shops for the building and working on the houses, the Townsite houses, you know, doing the electrical work, the painting and so forth. Well, to the end of one of this long building was a sixty foot pole. And at the top of that pole was the red light. And when they wanted to acquire these two deputies, if they were not close to their radios, that light would go on and off, on and off, on and off to summon these deputies and they had a long strip of ground that they had to take care of. Some of them, you know, there were times that they had to run down to Searchlight. Well, anyway, as things went on, they started getting more and more people on the force. But that was the—the accident thing that happened on Boulder Highway, that was

just unbelievable. It seemed like there was a person hit just about every, every week. The schools that we had, to sit—the school itself was built in 1942 and what was real interesting about the school—I remember this, too, as long as I can—in 1947 Henderson, we had the distinction of becoming the first, in 1947, the basketball championship of the State. We beat Ely something like 47 to 38 or something like that, and you could not believe the people that gathered by the old football stadium. And we watched cars go by, Mr. Burkholder driving a big, long Buick convertible, and it was really interesting to watch this man and the celebration that went on about the school. Churches? The first church that was built here was built in 1943. And my father had the distinction of working on that and he always tells the story—you know, before he died—that one of the experiences was—I don't know, I'm sure there are a lot of people that belong to St. Peter's—but he had the distinction, he and another man, to drive down to Kingman, Kingman, Arizona, and their job was to pick up Father Moran. He came over from Ireland and—

Jack Jeffrey: And they hauled him around ever since.

Duane Laubach: [laughter] Dad said, "When he got off that train," he said, "you'd never seen a more pitiful man in all his life." [laughter] He had traveled on the boat, and come over on the train, and had his dress on, and he still had scrambled eggs that rolled down the front of his dress, and dad always remarked—when my father passed away, Father Moran attended his service, and that really took me in. I appreciate that today. And after that, of course, the Community Church was completed and we started to look like a little community. I'm going to wind this down a little bit, but our entertainment was primarily, during the War, when they had the gymnasium at the old high school, Saturday night you could go to a movie. They'd have one of these old, real type movies, sitting in this gymnasium, no air-conditioning, and we'd sit and watch the movie and pay ten cents to see this movie to its entirety. In 1943, the end of 1943, a gentleman by the name of Earl Brothers, Boulder City, took it upon himself—he had no theater in Boulder City to take care of the workers, and he decided to put one up in Henderson. Well the first theater that we had called the Victory Theater is now the parking lot—where the footprint is—is the parking lot of the Emerald Isle. And those were some memorable days. Saturday night, they would have a drawing, a twenty-five dollar drawing for food, at the local grocery store and they'd always get the latest shows in for the full price of twenty-five cents. And a lot of my high school buddies were the first workers that went there. Anyway, in addition to that other entertainment we had where the Emerald Isle is now, you had—we had a bowling alley and we had a pool hall and a lot of kids, we took in to gaming on the bar, but that was the alley. Had a beer bottle. And another entertainment was McBeath's Drug Store. Yeah, we congregated there, and what a time. And I'd like to just kind of close it down from there. It's just a lot of remembrances. At my age, I forget a lot, but I still remember those early days. There was always something going on. There was a baseball game right here where this library is now, there used to be softball games. I mean they had big teams, and good teams that were coming from all over. The high school football team, we won every one of our games except two, and we only got beat by Las Vegas and Boulder City. Won everything else, Lincoln County,

we'd go down to Needles, Arizona; we'd go to Barstow, California; White, California. Had a good time. We'd win those games but, boy, Boulder City would take us in as well as Las Vegas. And that much is what I have to say. Seventy-two years here, a lot of remembrances that just—I really love this community and it's come a long way.

Audience: [applause]

Jack Jeffrey: Hello, I'm Jack Jeffrey, and like Duane, we came here in '42 also. My dad came in '41. When he came here, as Duane said, the old Anderson Camp was a tent city. They had a semi-permanent building, you know, with a cafeteria and a pool room and a bar, and that was about it. And my dad didn't have a tent. So he came up here from Pasadena—we were originally out of Iowa, and Iowa's a good place to be from when there's a depression on, a long way from. [laughter] But anyway, he came out and went to work at the plant, and there's kind of an interesting story that I don't know if Duane remembers—he probably does remember the couple. There was a couple that the woman ran the cafeteria, and I'm not sure what her husband did here—he had some kind of a job at the plant. But Mom and Pop Lester, remember them? Well, when my dad came here, he had like six dollars in his pocket, and he got on a bus in Pasadena and came up here. He said that bus was running both ways. They brought a bus full of people up, and then could run a busload of people back when they'd had enough. But they had a tough bunch of people there that put that plant together. There were like ten thousand employees in that plant during the construction days and no place to stay. My dad slept in his carl. He had an old Ford and he'd pull the pin out of the seat and lay down. Well, that's where he slept. And he told me that wasn't easy. Let me just say, my dad had a gift of gab. I won't, you know, go into that. But he told me he had two other guys sleeping with him by the time he finally got a house. And he said that he used to go downtown and buy a stack of Bingo tickets and he'd pull a chair up in the corner and lean it against the wall so he could sleep. It was really a great set up. But, anyway, when he came here, Mom Wilson bought him his first meal ticket and paid up his union dues so he could get a job down here, somebody she'd never seen before. And she did this several times, I don't have any idea how many, and my dad said that nobody'd ever stiff her. They wouldn't dare because there were too many people around that owed her favors. But anyway as far as recreation was concerned, I think Duane covered that pretty well. We had one ball field that actually had grass on it, the field area, it was called—it was BMI Field in those days and then it became Titanium Field. The other ball fields around town were vacant lots, we'd get together and rake all the rocks off so you could play baseball. Lots of tarantulas and scorpions out in the desert. We used to run out, run around out there. And for kids, it was basically the movie, the pool hall. Of course you had—to go to the pool hall, you had to have a note from your parents. I don't know who wrote mine.

Audience: [laughter]

Jack Jeffrey: I don't know how many I wrote. But, anyway, it was the pool hall, the movie theater, and the kids—it was board games and street games. When my dad came here, he was like a lot of people were, well the men were, especially during the Depression. If you had a job,

he could do it. He might not have ever seen it before, but he could do it. And that's kind of how he came here. He was a truck driver in the Midwest and when he came here, he got a job operating a bulldozer clearing the ground for the plant. Then later on, as I got older—I was four years old, so Duane's got an advantage over me. He's a lot older than me than I thought.

Audience: [laughter]

Jack Jeffrey: He came here when he was in fifth grade; I came here when I was four years old. Anyway, in later years, I asked my dad how he had the nerve to tell somebody he was a heavy equipment operator. He said, "I didn't have a job to start with. What were they going to do, fire me?"

Audience: [laughter]

Jack Jeffrey: And that's—I've known a lot of people like that. I can remember, I used to go down with him quite a bit, we'd hunt and fish together, and if it was air conditioning he knew all about it. He knew about boilers; in fact, he took care of the boiler at the hospital for Father Moran. He had a good relationship with him. But the only thing that I ever knew that he served an apprenticeship at was as a cooper. And most people don't even know what a cooper is any more, but they were the people who made the wooden barrels. And my dad, when my dad was twelve years old, he went to work in a meat packing plant working as an apprentice under his step-father, learned how to be a cooper, and the first check he drew as a journeyman, they quit making wooden barrels and started making steel barrels.

Audience: [laughter]

Jack Jeffrey: So he's got the luck of the Jeffries. But, anyway, we've got long roots here but there's really no place I'd rather be. Duane covered all of the important historical facts so—oh, one thing I do want to mention—I think Kirby Trumbo's in the audience—and I remember Kirby's dad when he was a lineman for the telephone company. I think in those days, the telephone company was your dad and the telephone operator. And nobody had a telephone unless they were on 24-hour call for employment and my dad was one of those because by this time he had BS'd his way up into Superintendent of Maintenance for the chlorine plant and so he was on 24-hour call. Everybody else went out and stayed—on the telephone poles with a cast iron box that you'd open up, and there was a handset there. You'd pick up the handset and you'd get the operator and somehow she'd plug you into whomever you were going to talk to. Anyway, that's about all I have now. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to try to answer them.

Audience: [applause]

Colleen McGinty: Well, I'm Colleen McGinty and boy these guys are a lot older than me.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: We came here, my mom and my dad and my brother and I, in 1954. I was twelve years old and, of course, at that age and all through high school, I didn't know how, what a historical time we were living in then. It'd just been incorporated and became a town, you know, a city. No, we were just busy being kids at the time. My mom and dad, we came through the first time from Minnesota in about 1951 and it was so hot that my folks took us to a movie at the Huntridge just to kill the day so we could travel at night and I remember my brother and I saying, "Man, we don't ever want to live in a place like this!" So three years later, when my dad was offered a job in Vegas and we came, we came in August. That's a terrible shock to people and the first thing that Russell and I did—my folks rented a house on Federal Street, which by the way, my grandson just bought, and we walked downtown. Well, on the way back Russ said, "Well, we don't have to walk all the way up Water Street. Let's turn here on Basic and we'll take one of the side roads that goes up there," not realizing how this town was laid out. We almost never made it home. I thought we were just going to have to knock on a door and ask to be adopted—

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: —because I was dying of thirst, it was hot, but we settled in and as soon as I started school—I was in the eighth grade—I knew it then, and my friends have heard me say this, I knew immediately that this was like a magic place to be a teenager. You know, I came from big schools: St. Paul, Minnesota; Huntington Park, California. I came here, and the first year, I was a cheerleader. You know, got to do fun things, made friends that I still have to this day, some of them are here: Linda Foster, Lois Foster, Mary French-Vincent, a whole bunch of us. But the eighth grade was still down on Water Street and you could drive down—people could drive down the street and we could watch them through the window. That was the most exciting thing that went on during the day.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: The cheerleaders from the eighth grade sold pop for the dedication of the Youth Center. That was where I met my husband to be, Tom. Tom got here in an interesting way too. His mom and dad and all four boys, Hugh, Dave, Jack and Tommy, loaded into a car literally with their mattresses on top. They were from Oklahoma, and one of Tom's uncles had told them there was work here, so they just packed up and came. And their car made it to the corner of Boulder Highway and Lake Mead and it died. And it never ran again. His dad called it "Old Passion" because every time he touched her, she got hot.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: So eventually Tom's parents bought a house right there at that corner and his mom said I can sit on my front yard and look at where "Old Passion" died.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: And Tom would shoot arrows from his house into the hospital yard and then run over and gather them up and shoot them back over to his house. We had—you know, it was such an innocent time for us. We were free to wander the town, we walked everywhere, nobody lived more than a mile away from anybody else until the second year I was here and my parents decided they—we were never leaving Henderson. They loved it, I loved it, only Russell didn't love it, so they bought a house. But they bought a house on Elm Street, which at that time, the "tree streets" were like the other side of the moon. I laid on my bed and cried and cried and cried and my brother finally said, "You're making mom and dad feel really bad because they're finally—this is a dream for them to buy a house." "I know, but I'll never see my friends again." And he said, "Well, I'll be sixteen soon and I'll drive you anyplace that you want to go." And boy, did I hold that over his head for the longest time.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: Early morning Desertaire practice: "Russell, you said you'd drive me." Late practice for plays: "But Russell, you said you'd drive me." The minute he graduated from high school, he left town.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: And I think it was to avoid driving me everywhere I had to go. We went to the movies at the old Victory Theater twice a week because the movie changed on Wednesday and I think Sunday, so if we could round up, you know, fifty cents, we went to the movies. And as far as shopping, for the girls, we went to Richardson's, which I think they moved in from some Wild West town. It was wooden; it had a wooden sidewalk and cupboard. It was really old. I don't think it was built here. I think there were remains of some old gunslingers in there.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: And then we went to Desertwear and my mother would let me go up just before school started and lay away three outfits, and then she'd pay for them when she could. And the other one was Tallyho and, of course, Van Valey's Shoes, Perry's Men's Store for the boys. That was pretty much our shopping. If you needed furniture, that was Gunville's, and Merrell's TV and Phillips TV Repair, regulars at our house, Phillips were. When I started high school, by that time, of course, the new school had been built, and I just thought it was just the most heavenly place I'd ever been. I loved school, I loved the—I didn't love it at first. I take that back. I was kind of a snot for about two years there, but I wised up and got over that. And the reason I did get better—I think what happened was in the eighth grade, Hal Binion hit me. And I had never been hit by a teacher before. He gave me a knuckle sandwich on the top of my head. Now I don't know how many times he asked me to quit talking before he felt he had to hit me, but I quit talking then.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: But he was a wonderful man, and Mr. [Gordon] McCaw was our principal when I was in grade school, and he was a sweetie too. All of the cheerleaders ditched school one day, and we hid out at my house, because my parents worked, and in the afternoon when my brother got home from school, he came in and he said, "The truant officer is outside." We said, "Oh, yeah, right." Well we had a big event that night and we wanted to polish our toenails and fingernails and look nice. So Mary French-Vincent opened the door, saw it was Mr. Lambros, the truant officer, and slammed the door in his face.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: But we didn't get to go to our special event that night, and the next day we had to go see Mr. McCaw and got lectured. So for the rest of my eighth grade school year, if I saw Mr. McCaw coming, because I knew he was vision impaired, I would stand real close to a column so he couldn't see me.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: I never spoke to him again; I was scared. At the high school level, my freshman year, we started the Desertaires and so my class was the only four-year Desertaires there ever were, because it was, you know, ninth through twelfth. And after that, the girls couldn't try out until the end of the ninth grade. So we were the first Desertaires, and we had a contest to design our uniforms and, oh, I designed a darling uniform: corduroy, blue, white piping, and it won! And everybody looked great in it except me.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: I hated that uniform. But we had such a wonderful staff at Basic. They really took a personal interest in us. We didn't always like that, but they did. We had Mr. [John] Dooley, and he was passionate about his kids. We may have made fun of him a little bit at the time because he would work himself up into tears, but I realized later what it meant to him for us to be good and be successful and be decent citizens. He once slapped Tom and my hands because we were holding hands on campus. I didn't think that was so bad, but we couldn't hold hands on campus, and we also had Estes McDoniel, and he was not only a wonderful man but the source of a lot of entertainment, because he would chase kids down.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: And once, he chased Terry Weller all the way to the Youth Center from the high school before he finally caught him. But we had—Mike O'Callaghan was our Government teacher, went on to be, you know, the Governor; Joanne Genanovich Zorio, wonderful lady; Lucreda Del Monte Lopeman and Trudy Cunningham and Les Burgwart. I think we had an outstanding staff. Mr. O'Callaghan, even after Tom and I were married, and we had our first baby, he brought a present to the house for our baby. I thought that was pretty nice of a school teacher. The education that we got, I took a business course, so, of course, mostly I learned to type and take shorthand, and you know how often we use that now.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: But I spent a lot of hours learning that and I can still take and transcribe shorthand too. So can Marilyn. But Trudy Cunningham and Lucreda Lopeman, when we came out of school, I went directly to work as the secretary to the manager of the Bank of Nevada on the Strip. I was seventeen, totally overwhelmed, but my office skills were great. My maturity level was probably not there, but boy I could take that shorthand and type. So I felt like we got an education and business skills that some people had to go away to Henniker's Business College to get after they got out of school. Oh, speaking of those hot uniforms that I designed—

Audience member: They were great!

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: Well, we had to wear them the first year in Helldorado. I swear it was 210 degrees out, and in Industrial Days, another scorcher. The next year we had little, skimpy little light weight uniforms made because it was awful. Cowboy hats, boots and corduroy uniforms, what was I thinking!

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: But we had such fun. We used to be able to have bonfires at the Ben Church Memorial Field before Homecoming, huge bonfires. And then we'd all get in our cars and snake around through town. We did the same thing for Sadie Hawkins Day. They dismissed us from school in the morning, and we all chased boys around town, and then we all went to the lake and went swimming. They, of course, had to stop that when finally a girl was riding on the hood of a car; the car stopped and she didn't and skinned her face really bad, so she kind of ruined it for us.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: After I got out of high school, I married Tom McGinty and stayed home and raised children, and when my daughter was seventeen, we decided we'd build a house, which we did up on Long Acres, and I thought, if we're going to build a house and furnish it and keep the kids in shoes, I'm going to have to go back to work. So I did. I went to work at Basic as the Attendant Secretary in the Dean's office with two of my children still in school. Oh, they loved that.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: I knew where all of the parties were being held and who was doing what to whom and who was in love. They did not like me working there. But after three years there, I applied and was hired as the Office Manager at Chester Sewell Elementary School. Now, the secretary before me had been there since the school opened, and I knew how long she'd been there when she retired and I opened a cabinet next to my desk and there was a packet of really nice paper and if you wanted any more of it you had to call a Dudley number. It was the old Las

Vegas prefix, Dudley 48061, and Henderson was Frontier something or other. But I said, oh, this paper is old, so we ran it through a copier and it just came out crispy and brown.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: So that kind of takes us up. They had asked me to talk a little bit about the changes in the school district that I saw. I worked for the school district for twenty-three years, three years at Basic, nine years at Chester Sewell, two years with the area superintendent and then I went to John Dooley and worked nine years there. I think one of the biggest changes was that we were there through the computer era. They sent us in for computer lessons before we had computers so, you know, that information does not stick with me. I didn't have anything to go back to work to practice on. But finally they bought each school "a computer" and we had to put it on an AV cart and roll it back and forth between my clerk, that's Linda Summerton Sloan, and me. I would type something, then she'd need it, and we'd roll it over to her. It was a few years before we each got our own computer. And Linda got dragged kicking and screaming into the computer age, and once she did, she's just a whiz. She was so good at that. One year at C. T. Sewell, we had 800 students and Linda and I in the office. I set up—we put our heads down in June, or, you know, July, when we came back to work, and I didn't pick my head up again till the following June. It was just a horrendous year with two women and 800 kids. And we didn't have fulltime clerks. The secretaries—and later we were—they started calling us office managers—but we worked eleven months, eight hours a day. You got your clerk, and Marilyn will attest to this, Marilyn Allen, you got your clerk depending on your enrollment. So if you only had 400 kids, you only got a clerk for four hours a day. But there was still just as much…you still had to do all the same reports, so that was one of my big battles in the school district, was I fought for eight-hour clerks. And we got them. They finally—the district saw that we just couldn't make it with our clerks working four hours a day. So what happened with the clerks was they were volunteering four hours a day too, and that wasn't fair. And then the last big fight we had, we fought for health aides in every school. All the time I worked at C. T. Sewell and the first, oh, probably seven years at John Dooley, we didn't have anybody to take care of our sick kids. That was us. It was just the two women in the office trying to get your reports done and deadlines to meet and then some child comes in sick or injured and you had to stop and, you know, of course, attend to that child. And when I first started we had like maybe five or six children that took Ritalin. And by the time I retired and we did finally have a health aide, I think we had twenty-eight children coming in for their Ritalin at noon. So I don't know what's happened in there, but the kids got wilder and wilder and wilder.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: So they started medicating them, medicating them, medicating them. But it was a wonderful career for me. As I have said, we were very over-worked at the elementary level. We were over-worked but we were never bored. Those kids were the funniest things. I think the funniest one was a little boy who came to the office one day and said, "Miss Colleen," and his voice was very muffled, so I looked over and he had dumped his books out of his book

bag and was wearing his book bag on his head. He said "Could I use the phone?" And I said "Well, what's the matter?" He said "Well, I've got a bad haircut and I want to go home." I said, "Well, Hon, you don't get to go home because you don't like your haircut." And he, oh, he was hysterical. I said, "Well, let me see." Oh, no, he wasn't going to even let me see this hairdo. So I called his mom and she said, "No, make him stay. He told me he wanted that bowl cut," when the boys were just, you know—

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: It was awful. So I couldn't talk him into class. The principal finally, Stu Reid, finally came and sat with him and convinced him that he could go to class. And he told him, he said, "But the kids will laugh at me." And I said, "Yes, some of them will," I said, "But some of them will laugh at you no matter what kind of hairdo you showed up with." So that was just one of the things that happened daily that kept school so much fun. But I do have to tell you in closing that Linda and I, you know, both knew Mr. Dooley pretty well. She worked in the office when she was in high school. She was my clerk for seventeen years. Our children dated each other. I mean, you know, it's Henderson. But every once in a while, I would turn to Linda and say, "Wow, Mr. Dooley would just shit if knew who was running this school."

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: Anyway, I've retired, I get to travel a lot, but I'm never leaving. Three of my children live here. I want to be near them and all my grandkids and I love Henderson. It was a wonderful place to grow up. Thank you.

Audience: [applause]

Robert Groesbeck: Good evening. My name is Bob Groesbeck. I'm a relative newcomer to the community in light of what we've just heard here. I want to thank Rick, I want to thank the Historical Society, for having me, inviting me to come over and talk with you. It's interesting that—I belong to an organization called Canada Nevada Business Council, and in that capacity I've had an opportunity to speak with groups throughout Canada and the State of Nevada and I'm often accused of grandstanding on behalf of Henderson. And I always do that. It's just—that's my focus, it's my focal point and it's where I come from, and it's a great story. This is an amazing community and to hear the stories we've heard tonight, you know, where we started as a community and where we are today, it's a story that needs to be told and I'm just honored to have the opportunity to sit here and listen. But I don't feel worthy. I am not—I'm grappling with this term, pioneer, particularly after hearing this. I talked with my older daughter today in college and I shared with her that I was coming over tonight, and she listened to me and said, "Hey, Dad, it's all okay because you're old."

Audience: [laughter]

Robert Groesbeck: "And, I mean, you know, you're perfect." And here I sit. But again, it's an honor. I think I can put it in perspective maybe in just a few paragraphs. You know when I grew

up here, and again, I'm a newcomer by this panel's standards. My family came here I think in 1966, so we were a big city then by I think, what, about 15,000 maybe, Duane? And, you know, we came out of Utah, and similar to Colleen's story, I have vivid memories of pulling in here with—you know, we didn't have much money and we had a truck full of furniture and that was about it. And my dad worked for the Bureau of Reclamation and it was hot. It was unbearably hot, and we pulled in here in June and I truly thought, you know—I didn't know what hell was—I was a kid—but if I can describe it, that's how it felt, and it was amazing. I had never been—I'd never experienced a swamp cooler. And I didn't realize that after about 90 degrees, the swamp cooler was just blowing air. And it was a difficult adjustment for me that first summer. But I fell in love with the town and I fell in love with the community and I've been here ever since. My daughters were born here. And getting back to my point on the city, about how we've evolved, when I was a kid—and some of you, I'm sure, had the same experiences—wherever I'd go out of town to play baseball or football, we were constantly referred to as Hooterville. And it was always meant in a very derogatory sense. And it bothered me; it pissed me off, for lack of a better term. And it really got under my skin and for many years I dealt with that and I was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to run for office and win and I was at a school board meeting, actually a business meeting over at the airport, and this would have been about 1995. I'd been in office for a couple of years and I think all of you probably remember the bitter fights we were having with the Clark County School District to get resources to Henderson. We were the fastest growing city in the country for the four years I was in office and for many years after that. And a group of us got together and decided we just weren't going to take it anymore. We wanted a fair share, we wanted a fair shake, and we wanted those resources. So I'm sitting at a meeting, a very hotly contested meeting—it was absolutely out of control—and what it really came down to was Henderson vs Summerlin, or so everybody thought. And the chairman wisely called a break, because it really was—it was a difficult meeting and I, you know, I make no apologies for it. I was in the trenches and I was fighting for our community and that was my job. So we take a break, and I'm in the back getting a soda or water, talking, and a lady just beelines up to me, and she was furious. And she says to me, "You know, you've got a lot of nerve, young man. You are just—you know, you've got a lot of nerve. You should be just ashamed of yourself. But, you know, I'm not surprised because that's how you people from Snooterville act."

Audience: [laughter]

Robert Groesbeck: And I thought—I thought for a minute, you know, I know that wasn't meant as a compliment but I think that was the greatest compliment I've ever received in my life, because I spent 25 years, 30 years of my life, being called from Hooterville, and all of a sudden I'm elevated to Snooterville. I thought that was a wonderful treat and it's something that I've kept with me forever and always will. And I think it's a testament to where we've come as a community and I look to people like Duane and Jack who helped me when I was in office. Duane spent a lot of time with me mentoring me with the Chamber and a lot of visionaries. And you know we've become really a story, a national story on what a community can do when everybody pulls together. And one thing I think a lot of folks here maybe recall but don't have

vivid memories of like I do, when I was first elected, there was a huge movement in the Green Valley area to pull away from the city. And I lived—bear in mind, I've lived in this city for forty-six years now, with the exception of college and spent a little time in Washington, D.C., and I'm a Henderson boy through and through. And you know, I know what those factories did for this community. I know what they did for jobs; they put me through school and I've always been grateful for that opportunity. But when I was campaigning, there were a group—I lived in Green Valley at the time, so everybody assumed that because I lived in that part of town that I was going to get on the band wagon and I made it pretty clear early on that no way in hell that was going to happen, if I was ever elected mayor. And there was a dramatic push to fight, to pull away and when—it was so bad when I was first elected, we created what was called the "One City Committee" and we didn't really expect anything to come out of it other than to get business leaders from both sides of the community together to talk. And you remember in those days there was a lot of desert between the two areas of town. Really there was nothing out on Lake Mead and I think the fact that the city's grown together now, it is one city geographically, and folks realize that we could do a lot more as one community as opposed to two, I think, again, is a testament to the leadership and the vision of the folks that were here in the city. We've got a lot to be proud of. Now I talk to folks all the time that tell me, particularly the old-timers, that, you know, hey Bob, I'm not sure it was all good. You know, we've got—we're a big city now. We've got one of the largest freeway interchanges in the state here. We've got traffic stops every fifty feet. We've got high-rise casinos. And you know, it's hard for me to argue that point because I've got mixed feelings. I remember old Henderson. I remember those days and I cherish those. I've loved this community; I still love it. But on the other hand, I also remember, and as Colleen mentioned, when we were kids, we had very—or as residents, we had very limited opportunities here. You know, I remember Pop getting in the car, you know, the Chevy, our entire family lugging, you know, down to Sahara to go to Walmart. That was a big day for us, boy, you know, I mean, jeez, driving into Vegas. And you remember there was a lot of distance between Henderson and Vegas and so I—on one hand, I have fond memories of where we were, but I'm very proud of where we are and I'm excited about where the community is going to go. I think we've got some great leaders here in the community that are going to take the city to the next level and do things responsibly. But I want to talk a little bit about some stories about growing up. I literally started right across the street in the triangle. I lived on Mallory. And I shared with you my first summer, but shortly after that we moved to Pittman and I spent a number of years in Pittman. And again, as I said, we didn't have much by way of resources but I didn't know any better and I didn't care. I knew every square inch of Pittman Wash. I could tell you, I was the master of the Wash and there was a group of guys, some of them are still good friends of mine, we were the Pittman Pirates. And I'm telling you—but that's when we had real swamps down there, by the way, and we moved—my dad came home one day and said, "We're moving up to Hillcrest," by what is now Burkholder Junior High, in the Hillcrest area. And Colleen was sharing with you she cried when she moved; I threw a tantrum probably for about two or three hours. I couldn't stop crying because I couldn't envision leaving Pittman. That was the greatest place in the world for me and when I look back

on it, I think all of two paved streets, and we had no parks; we had nothing back then. But it was wonderful because we had the swamps. And we also had all the colorful ponds. Remember all those? Well, I mean, I've learned a lot now that I'm older and I used to—in fact, I have vivid memories of this. The guys, we'd all rope together a bunch of twigs and boards and go out there and, you know, we'd—you know, the pirates, of course. And we never could understand why the rope would all rot away and why the nails would rust out immediately. We had no clue, we just thought it was cool and the ponds were pretty. And I just have great memories of that. I don't want to think about the chemical side of it necessarily, but great friends and many of my friends back then are still my friends today. And I loved every minute of it and I—also then, I said, when we moved up to Hillcrest, I was right down the street from the high school which was then Basic High and I don't know, many of you have been here from some time, you remember Basic High had the all-state backfield, Lefty Haunch, Greg Yancy, and Mike Jeff, and I used to—the greatest job in my day was to go to practice. I was a water boy and got to hang around with those guys, and carry their helmets back to the locker room. I just thought, you know, life couldn't be better than that, and it was so exciting to walk right up the street and watch the football games and then when I—I was a water boy for the baseball team for a period of time, and I used to take all the cracked bats. And back then we used wood bats, you know, and I would go home and glue those and try to—and they never worked, of course, but I got to see the big boys play, so I got to take the bats. And just wonderful times, wonderful memories and something that I think most of us have and we should be very proud of that. I'll spend just a couple of minutes on the city. As I said before, it was an interesting time to serve in public office. I was very fortunate to have won. I ran against three people that were really icons in this community, and when I saw who announced to run, I really didn't think I had a shot. I thought this should be fun, I'll give it a shot and we'll see where it goes, and I was fortunate enough to have won. But had a great Council, had a great staff, and it's a great memory for me. You know, I've been out now seventeen years, but sometimes it feels like yesterday. And again, I drive around the community every day and I just look at the neat things that are here, you know, in this part of town, and I live on this part of town. You know, I moved back here because I love it. I wanted a little distance; I wanted a little less density and unfortunately things are starting to move again, so I'm going to be right in the middle of the city before you know it. But with that, again, I'm honored to have the opportunity to address you and to be part of this distinguished panel, and I too would be happy to address any questions you may have. Thank you.

Audience: [applause]

Fredric Watson: Great stories, thank you all very much. We have another wireless mike that we'll pass around the audience now and if anybody has a good question they'd like to ask our great panelists, feel free to do that.

Audience member: Dr. French is touted as being our first mayor, correct? What was the—Bill Byrne, he was something official. He was before Dr. French, wasn't he?

All: [general disagreement]

Jack Jeffrey: And Bill Byrne had also been in the legislature. In fact, my memory might not serve so well, but at the same time Bill Byrne was in the Assembly, he decided he could run for mayor too. And there was a lawsuit over that. Remember that, Duane? And to make a long story short, he couldn't run. But he and his wife had a little store. It was across the street from the theater, Julie Byrne, and that's where we took the notes from our parents to buy cigarettes.

Audience: [laughter]

Jack Jeffrey: And believe it or not, in those days, that was legal. In fact, I was surprised, I was in the legislature and it would have been, oh, probably in the '90s sometime, that we finally repealed the provision that allowed stores to sell cigarettes with a note from home. I didn't write any of those rules. I had some of them.

Audience: [laughter]

Duane Laubach: I'd like to make a quick comment. I failed to touch on—many of you probably remember a senator that we had here. I look at Lou, and he sort of brought it to mind: Senator Pat McCarran, who was a very, very prominent Senator, probably the equal to Harry Reid, if you want to put it. But through his efforts a lot of the current hospitals and some of the other facilities in this community were—at his efforts, we brought those things to Henderson. One thing I failed to touch on was an ethical thing that went on through his early years. We had something like—Lou, maybe you can dovetail on this—we had a Dr. Starzinski, a Dr. Compton, and a Dr. Hemmingway, and our dentist was a Dr. Nelson. And their offices were located in St. Rose, the old part of St. Rose. And those doctors, all you had to do if you got sick at night or your children got sick, all you had to do was call one up and they would make house calls, and they would come to your house. And I remember quite a few times that when I had my problems, they came to our house. And anyway, those are—we ought to remember Pat McCarran really did a lot for this community. Politics in those early years was really rampant. I mean you had people like Carville, you had people like Bucker, and it'd just continue on, and they were always—you had the Democrats fighting the Republicans, the Republicans—well, it's the same today, and that's what went on. I remember one time I was hired to—by a gentleman here—to put campaign posters for E. P. Carville, and my friend and I were hired and we were picked up one morning early about sunrise and we started catching every telephone pole, tacking up E. P. Carville campaign signs, then we'd go from—we went from here and on to Boulder City. We traversed down into Searchlight, and from Searchlight we went over to Pittman and we'd come back and we put in a whole day. And I will never forget the man that we were working for, he handed each of us fifty cents to spend it at our discretion, and I don't know, Lou—

Jack Jeffrey: He must have been a Republican.

Audience: [laughter]

Duane Laubach: I don't even remember what Carville was. Was he a Democrat or a Republican?

Audience member: Who are you talking about?

Duane Laubach: E. P. Carville and I—earlier when I—Jack alluded to Hersh Trumbo. The first telephone that we had when my wife and I came back to Henderson from college, we had a four-party line.

Jack Jeffrey: Remarkable.

Audience: [laughter]

Duane Laubach: [laughter] Yeah. And of course, we had some good neighbors, and every time we tried to pick up that phone to ring out, well, the neighbors were on it, of course. But I was used to that, you know, being raised on a farm in Oklahoma. But it was really something, because it wasn't too much longer that they started to expand the telephone company and we all got telephones. But the medical thing and school system, these are memories that we'll never forget.

Audience: [applause]

Colleen McGinty: I just wanted to add one thing about the medical end of this. Father Moran before he became a monsignor, he bought St. Rose—he bought the hospital that the government owned for a dollar and started St. Rose De Lima and brought in the Dominican Nuns, which I think—that's a great story. I'd also like to add one other thing, just going back to how hot it was when we were teenagers because I can't let that go.

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: We were—of course, wore our huge skirts, many crinolines, poodle skirts, and I made a skirt in Home Ec that was six yards of cotton gathered up. My mother said I looked like a bell tied in the middle. But we—Tom and I went on a double date, well, a triple date once, so there were four of us in the back seat, and the girl, the other girl—now here we both are with these huge skirts mushed into the back of a sweaty old car, the sun beating down, and she had gotten the bright idea, she had read this somewhere, that you could starch your crinolines, your slips, with sugar. Well, that would probably be just fine if you were just standing there, but as we were sitting there and we both starting perspiring, the two girls crammed in the middle, by the time we got out of that car, I was sticky sugar—

Audience: [laughter]

Colleen McGinty: —on the outside of my skirt, on my legs. She was just a sugar mess. Anyway, that's something our kids will never experience. First of all, they don't dress like that anymore, and secondly, they have a/c and everything, so they don't know what it was like to live like that. Thank you.

Audience: [applause]

Jack Jeffrey: One thing I'd like to mention that had skipped my mind, you know, we talked about Father Peter Moran and he was the first priest we had here. My dad was a convert. I don't know what religion he belonged to before he got married, but when he got married he converted to Catholic. He didn't go to church a lot, but Father Moran knew where he lived.

Audience: [laughter]

Jack Jeffrey: And he never bothered him too much about going to church, but my dad, he'd change the boiler at the hospital. When Anderson Camp was gone, the two buildings I was telling you about that were the permanent buildings, my dad—and I think I was about eleven years old then—and two or three other adults and half a dozen kids tore those building down. And we tore them down we thought for lumber for the school, so we tore the buildings down, pulled all the nails, stacked the lumber, and Father Moran wanted my dad to deliver that lumber to Phoenix. And he talked about [unclear] but it wasn't for him. [laughter] But he did, he took it down, but what the deal was though, he traded the lumber between those buildings for cinder block, because Father Moran wanted a more permanent school than they could build out of that lumber. And he was a real wheeler-dealer and a real character, but contributed a lot to the community that really nobody knows about. And another one that contributed a lot to the community that nobody heard much about is Hershel Trumbull. When he took over the telephone company—he told me the story one time—he bought the telephone franchise. As I said, he was a lineman and he was a working stiff just like all the rest of the people here in Henderson. And he had a good friend, I think it was Bill Erga; there were two brothers that were in the electrical business in Las Vegas, Bill and Vince Erga. Anyway, I think it was Bill Erga who put up the fifty thousand, but the deal was he'd put up the fifty thousand. Hersh had to pay the twenty-five thousand back and he had to run the telephone company. And he had probably the most progressive telephone company at that time or any time since. He was the first to go and get rid of the four party line, and the first for direct dialing, first to put all his wire underground, and he told me he did all that because he was trying to get a rate increase. And he said no matter how much he put back into the company—and his guys would go to all these conferences, he'd send them all first class and he was spending a lot of money, but he could never spend enough to get a rate increase. So he finally sold out to Centel. But Hersh and I got be fairly good friends and he supported me when I ran, well, each time I ran, and he was really my dad's age, but we became very close. In fact, the property we live on now, I bought from Hersh, but he was the first to develop the property up above the golf course. He built the first place there and he built the place across the street from him, like thirty-five years later. Henderson has been full of opportunity and a great place to be. I've thought several times over the years about leaving Henderson but there's never been a place that I wanted to go. Our schools were always good; we never had half-day sessions for the kids. The town was small enough that everybody knew what everybody was doing, and that's not all bad. I'd go home

and tell my son something I'd found out that he'd done in school and he never could figure out who the snitches were.

Audience: [laughter]

Jack Jeffrey: He stayed pretty much on the straight and narrow. I got a report from several people.

Audience member: I only have one thing to say. I moved here in 1953, and I moved to Pittman. And the only thing we had to do in Pittman was play in that water you were talking about and I knew it was pretty bad when the scorpions wouldn't get in the water.

Audience: [laughter]

Audience member: So I gave up that water pool.

Audience member: I want to say that I came to this country only nine years ago and my husband was born here in Henderson and I am very glad to be here. For me [this] is a history lesson, a history class that I appreciate a lot because like some famous historian said, "We know where we are going to when we know where we are coming from." And I am a teacher and I am here. I enjoy [being] here. I love the history because the origins of the cities and the region, of the different locations, made the basis of what we are right now. I would like that many kids of this city, of the schools, they could be here and listen [to] this, what you say, because unfortunately sometimes the time change in general, the progress, has made the things better, going better. But sometimes the kids, they don't know, of course, because they were not of that time. And the situation changes in time; they need to know this. And Henderson grew up, and new neighborhoods with luxury houses are coming out. And sometime I am going, walking by old Henderson downtown and my husband will always say to me, you know, because here was the first school and here was the first store, and I always say do look at the Henderson, but old downtown Henderson, [unclear], I say, I don't understand. But now, you are giving dignity to this city and you are making all of the things that whatever we have and the luxury house and the luxury new neighborhood of Henderson now, they are because you were the [unclear], you came to [the] city, you never give up, even though Henderson was nothing at those early times. But you, even, I know most of you are still living in the same houses, are still living in the same neighborhoods and I admire you because this city was—Henderson as it is right now because you, the founders, create the basis. And even though Henderson has a beautiful area, I don't know why I love [to] walk by the old downtown homes. I don't know why, because for me, always I say, it is like doormat, you know, city, where you can interact with people, you can walk and there's this feel of those old towns where we grew up. And I like the old downtown of Henderson because it has that spirit of the old times, and you, with this activity, you are giving dignity and you are making the memories of—to get alive, and I think could be good that the students of our schools, that they could listen to this kind of story, because they would love this city the same way. Henderson is what it is now because you love this city from the beginnings. The kids would love more and understand what this city is if they could listen to these stories.

Fredric Watson: Very well said.

Audience: [applause]

Fredric Watson: Could you tell us your name?

Audience member: Yes. My name is Olga.

Fredric Watson: Again?

Audience member: Olga.

Fredric Watson: Olga, what's your last name?

Olga: It's Jeffrey.

Fredric Watson: Very good. That was well said. Would you repeat the line the historian said.

Olga: One famous historian said that, "We know where we are going to only when we know where we are coming from."

Fredric Watson: Very good.

Olga: And we have to remember that we come from humble people from humble towns, from people that work hard and made this city with their hands and their intelligent and their love.

Fredric Watson: Thank you very much.

All: [expressions of surprise as the lights in the library automatically turn off]

Fredric Watson: Do we have any other questions?

All: [continued expressions of surprise and laughter]

Fredric Watson: You know the librarians didn't do that on purpose.

Male Voice: They were building the Hoover Dam, you know where it was?

Fredric Watson: Could you tell us your name to start with?

Male Voice: My name is John.

Fredric Watson: John, what's your last name?

John: My name is John Brusquez. I'm retired military.

Fredric Watson: Thank you.

John: And I've lived here in Henderson for quite a while, and I was wondering when they had the Tent City and how far it extended, if you know, if you remember. And also, I heard rumors that the industrial plant was making tanks and trucks for the military during World War II. Do you remember that?

Fredric Watson: We can pinpoint where the Tent City was.

2nd Male Voice: My name is Harry Topfer, at TIMET from ’63 to ’06. And I’ve often wondered about whatever happened to Dr. Compton. Last time I heard, he was with his family and they were going to go around the world.

Female Voice: I wish somebody had seen [unclear].

Fredric Watson: Now, the Tent City was roughly in the corner where Lake Mead and Boulder Highway intersect. It would be the Northwest corner.

Jack Jeffrey: Yeah, where Water Street comes into Boulder Highway, where the Hyundai dealership is, on that side of the highway, that’s where Henderson ended. It was just a short walk from where the Tent City and the cafeteria and so on were, on the plant side. The guys were just right there where they could go to work. Some of them came in from Vegas, but most everybody tried to find a place to sleep out here.

Peter La Chappelle: Okay, I have a question. Does anyone here know where the magnesium was sent? Actually developed the bombs during World War II? Something I’m trying to kind of figure out. Was it Southern California?

Jack Jeffrey: The magnesium bombs?

Peter La Chappelle: Yeah.

John: My understanding was they were German. And the Germans were causing so much damage in England that—now this may or may not be true, so take it for what it’s worth, but the story that I heard was that the English actually stole the process from Germany and brought their people together that they were probably going to England to make copies. Britain had the technology, but they didn’t have the resources, and they were too close to the battle lines and there was a lot of reasons they came to Henderson. One, it was almost impossible to bomb; they had a long way to go. They had the water and power from Boulder Dam and the lake, and lots of vacant property where nobody could get hurt, you know, if something had happened down there. But to get back to your original question, my understanding is that actually the Germans developed the incendiary powder. And that’s what magnesium was primarily made for.

Peter La Chappelle: Well, I guess my question was more than where the technology came from. Where did the magnesium actually go to be built into bombs?

John: It came from two different sites. One was Gabbs up south of Reno out of Hawthorne and the other was right down here.

Peter La Chappelle: Okay, but you’re telling me where the ore came from. Where did the magnesium get shipped to so they could actually make bombs?

John: I don't know.

Peter La Chappelle: Did anyone know? I'm sure…

Duane Laubach: It's my understanding that a lot of it was sent to Southern California. When my family came out to this area, my dad was dispatched to a place called—just down from Long Beach. And I'll never forget Long Beach, where he was getting his designation to come up this way, that whole area—we pulled into a registration place where dad was supposed to sign up for work here and all you could see was just nothing but camouflage all over the whole area. And it was a P-38 factory and they were making P-38 airplanes and then not too far from there, they had the Long Beach piers. And a lot of this was set down into this area that was based here, this is my understanding.

Jack Jeffrey: That would make sense.

Duane Laubach: Yeah.

Lou LaPorta: I think we've had a wonderful evening this evening.

Audience: [applause]

Lou LaPorta: I want to thank the panel for a really great evening, putting on such an interesting story. They're baby boomers and precisely that's what we have on the Henderson Historical Society. We've got the baby boomers. There's only eleven of us on the board, but I would say that out of the eleven, perhaps maybe seven or eight of them are the products of what you've just heard. And I want to compliment all of you. There's one thing about living in a community where you grew up, went to school, and you knew our neighborhood. And to have your comments tonight just drives it all home.

Audience: [applause] I'm not going to keep you here all night because the lights might go off anytime [laughter] but I will tell you one thing. The Henderson Historical Society was only a dream that came true as the result of the Henderson Chamber of Commerce and I will only tell you briefly, they asked me to write a memoir. And I said I won't. There's so many people in Henderson that can do the very same thing. Why would I want to just do that and I mentioned to them I will join you in a historical society that should be told. And that's what happened. And I thank every one of you. Before I say anything further, how many of you are living presently in the Town Site? I know where, I know where the former mayor went. He went to Pittman. Am I right? Let me tell you, if it wasn't for Kent we wouldn't be here tonight. Why? Because Henderson only had presidents in the days that we had the BMI plant. And it took the BMI people and the Henderson Chamber, the Las Vegas Chamber, to talk to the people in Pittman. The people in Pittman were also in politics. They had a town board. You try to take some authority away from people when they're, when they're already with a town board, it's tough. So the Swanky Club was there and I think many of you remember the Swanky Club. We ate so much chicken that I don't know how in the world we'd be able—how we would ever get home. But it's a story that should be told. The BMI Plant—well you've heard about Senator Pat

McCarran. Senator Pat McCarran played an awful lot of situations here in Clark County. But getting back to the City of Henderson, the plant site here was the result of Pat McCarran actually telling President Roosevelt at the time that the ingredients are out here in the West where you'll not find them anywhere else in the U.S. for magnesium. Magnesium was a very, very, very—it was a product that had to be built. Well you heard that it came from a German plant. Yes, Fred Gibson, Sr. is also a star in this whole thing. England had the plans from the Germans. The Germans were already in production, and actually magnesium was very important to the aircraft industry. And when you have Manganese Ore, which is the Three Kids Mine, that was an alloy that was put into magnesium for aircraft parts. The aluminum was strengthened; all of the individual parts of the planes came from magnesium. So as a result of that, this town was a battle born city in the events of our nation. There are ten metal buildings here at the plant site. Every one of those plants produced fifteen thousand tons a day of magnesium. That's a lot of tonnage. So what you are really hearing about, the history, is a history of a town that produced something. We didn't just take it out of the ground; we produced something. And if you move it—fast forward, right now, you have plants here in the City of Henderson that are not only on the U.S. Stock Exchange. They are producing—not magnesium anymore—titanium, caustic—all in this—putting out a lot of chlorine. It's an industrial area. We know it. The town's not going to die. I think if you want to compare the Las Vegas area to this area, they're two different areas, totally two different. Las Vegas depends, and they're—I have no problem with them—Las Vegas depends on conventions, tourism. Guess what else: McCarran, McCarran Air Base. That's what you hear about all day long. But out here in Henderson there's a lot of products that are being built. All over the world, these people are selling all over the world. But I won't go any further today except that I'm saying that the Henderson Historical Society is something that needed to be done, needed to tell a story. And I've got a feeling that we are going further than what you have this evening. For many of you, I just hope that you enjoyed us. It's not going to take an awful lot of money to join us. Twenty-five dollars and you get two tapes. Can I interest you in that? And the two tapes didn't come from the Historical Society. It was the City of Henderson when they celebrated their fiftieth year. They are available to you if you'd like. Those tapes are forty-five minutes each. Now, again, the Historical Society also has a Web site and it's easy to get on. You can see so much more on that Web site: hendersonhistoricalsociety.org. You can't miss it. And its, it'll be actually one that we are very proud to put it out there for all of us. The Historical Society is not for me, it's not for only eleven members; it's for you. And I thank you for all coming out here tonight. Yes?

Male Voice: What can you tell us about the transition from the wartime town to peacetime town that started to grow?

Lou LaPorta: Well, let me tell you briefly. The area actually had about 3,500 people after the war. They were about 15,000 in population. The downsize got down to about 3,500. That 3,500 was a melting pot, of ideas, of culture. There were thirteen states represented in this area, mostly from the Western portion of the U.S. We did have some from Louisiana. And that

actually produced not only the interest, because we had something else to attend to, and that is War Assets Administration. War Assets Administration was a federal project. The plant site and the townsite was up for grabs. Why couldn't they sell it? Well, when you have ten very large plants and the only product you had was magnesium, it was very difficult for the Federal Government to try to find somebody that would be able to take over the whole thing. The townsite and the plant site were one. You could see it today. It's a historical situation that we have right now at the townsite. We're desperately trying to keep that thing together as a historical area. There isn't any—you can't possibly change what has been made as a single plant during the war. So now getting back to your comments. The State of Nevada saved us. Nevada came in at a critical time in '47 and actually paid twenty-four million dollars our plant was costing the federal government at the time, because they built it [for] a hundred and fifty-three million. But what else did we have that made it very attractive? We had power from Boulder Dam, which was an ingredient that you needed. We put that—I didn't do it; the State of Nevada didn't do it. The federal government put the last generator in Boulder Dam. You see the high tension lines right now. If you go out towards Lake Mead you'd see it go under Boulder. What else did we have? We had a forty inch waterline, the first straw, you might say, into Lake Mead. Magnesium needed a lot of water, a lot of power, and the ingredients that we had in Gabbs, etc. That's what really happened. So for two years the State of Nevada tried desperately to hang on and get these plants permanent. Stauffer Chemical was one of the early ones. Titanium came in the '50s, and it finally grew. Olin took over with the situation of Stauffer Chemical. We had WECCO here, we had Kerr-McGee here, and those are the ones that really, really satisfied putting this whole plan together. So along with the opportunity that I had to explain this, that's where it is. These plants right now are very concerned about the community. I know it because I'm a member of what they call HICAP. HICAP is a plant area that's trying desperately to talk about risk management and loss control. A lot of talk about [unclear due to loud background noise]. Henderson has not only been blessed to be here when World War II ended, it also now is—listen, we had PEPCON. PEPCON is a major player. Unfortunately, the accident happened, and we know it. But they were the largest producers for what we have now in the space age. If it wasn't for them, we'd have never been up to land on the moon and whatever else. We could do it. And so this area is very important, extremely important. And all we're trying to do in the Henderson Historical Society is tell the people just like these panel members have told you how interesting it was to be here in Henderson and how much they love it. We all love it. So I'll just tell you one thing. I didn't come here by choice. I was in the Air Force and I was stationed towards the end of the War, because the Japanese War was still going on, and I was at the Las Vegas Air Force Base and I was only out there three to four months until the War ended. And where can I possibly live? My wife and I came down to Henderson. And about seven or eight of us came out to Henderson and we loved it. Just like all of these members here just mentioned to you over here. So I think I've talked enough about it, but I just want to tell you I'm pleased to have you here. This has been a very successful lecture on the basis of—the basic thing that really occurred that you have students here that understand. Basic High was the only high school here for years. Green Valley came on board in 1990, so that's a big gap. Now they

mentioned about Mike O'Callaghan, our Governor. Mike offered, so many times, to go up to talk to the Civics class, and I finally told Mike, I says, "Mike, you're not teaching in Civics. This is a college course of 101". And they did and I think we had more people serving from Basic high over the years and that shows you just how wonderful this area has been. Now certainly we have Green Valley. Green Valley is starving to know what Henderson is all about. I talked to the Rotary Club up there not long ago. And they want us back. They have no idea what is going on. The only time they know is when the trains stop at a critical point and they have to wait ten or fifteen minutes for the train to go. And they say, "Where are these trains going? Where's the freight going?" So there is an appetite to know more about our area. But that's about it. I talk too much.

All: [laughter and applause]