

# **Henderson Libraries**

## **Henderson Oral History Project**

**Sandra Sager**

**Oral History of Sandra Sager**

**conducted by**

**Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm**

**and filmed by**

**Edward Feldman**

**August 29, 2013**

**Interviewer:** *Today is August 29th, 2013. We're at the Paseo Verde Branch of the Henderson District Public Libraries in Henderson, Nevada. My name is Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm and our cameraman is Ed Feldman. Today we are interviewing Sandra Sager as part of the Henderson Oral History Project of the Henderson Libraries. Thank you so much for joining us, Sandra.*

**Sandra Sager:** Thank you for inviting me.

**Interviewer:** *I'd like to start by asking about your childhood. Could you please tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what your parents did for a living?*

**Sandra Sager:** I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1940. And at that time I believe Dad was a bartender and once Mother had me, she maintained being a housewife. And we moved from there—let's see, in 1941, Daddy got a better job on the Panama Canal and then he and my stepsister from his first marriage and my mom rode a—went on a merchant ship in the summer of, summer or fall of '41 down to Panama to join Daddy once he got situated there. So we lived down there until 1943. My sister that was three years younger than me was born there. And we came back in October, I believe it was because the government, for security reasons during the war, sent all people home from Panama, sent them back to the States.

**Interviewer:** *Did you learn any Spanish while you were there?*

**Sandra Sager:** No, no, I have not much recollection only being three years old when we left there. The only thing I remember is one night Mom and Dad putting something under the table legs so bugs couldn't climb up, ants couldn't climb up the table, et cetera—some containers of water or something—and I'm standing there at the doorway to the kitchen looking and something comes up and touches my toe and I remember screaming, "Oh, no! A bug bit me!" It didn't, it just [laughter]—that's my only remembrance from there. But Daddy—Panama is

tropical and wherever Daddy worked on the Canal he rode the bus and then he had to walk through a forest area or something [unclear]. And then we had jars, like big canning jars, of different critters that were embalmed in alcohol or something like that we brought back and all us kids and Mom and Dad's grandkids always took these to school for "show and tell." Because grasshoppers are like that big, you know, big as a cigar, huge! And beetles of all different colors and description. In one story, Daddy found a big spider that had just fell out of a tree or something and died, or whatever, but it was as big as a dinner plate with all its legs out.

**Interviewer:** *My goodness!*

**Sandra Sager:** So he came home and attached it to a board and put it up on the wall, and the next morning most of the spider was gone. Critters of some kind had come and eaten it all away. [laughter] So, it was interesting.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, how funny.*

**Sandra Sager:** I wished I'd have been older remembering riding through the Panama Canal on the boat, you know, and all that kind of stuff. And our trip back, I don't know how much of this you want me to tell, our trip back was on a Pan American airplane and there was apparently some kind of summer storm in October, maybe a hurricane going through; it was a pretty severe thunder storm. All of a sudden, the plane is being landed in a jungle, an emergency landing! I don't know why. In the stories that Mother and Dad told, it was an Army base in—eked out in the middle of the jungle somewhere, and the vehicles that the Army had, trucks and jeeps and stuff, were lined up so that—it was at night—so the pilot could see the runway to land. And once we got on the ground, there was not much information given to the passengers. And the doors with the slide that you slide down were opened up, and the men and women

down, and my sister was just three months, three or four months old, so someone at the bottom told my Mom to, "Just drop her down, I'll catch her," which they did!

**Interviewer:** *Oh, my goodness!*

**Sandra Sager:** And then once we got our feet on the ground, the men were sent one way and the women and children were sent another. Mother didn't know whether we'd been kidnapped by the enemy or something. You know, who knows? Because they were sent away from Panama because of the War and our involvement in it, et cetera.

**Interviewer:** *But you got back okay.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. Then finally the next morning, they put families back together and fed us breakfast and then I guess somehow put us on another plane. I've never learned what happened to that other plane; if it was just a storm or if they had engine trouble, you know, to land like that was serious, something serious going on. I wish I was better on the computer. It's one reason I bought a computer ten years ago so I could research all this, but I only play solitaire on it! [laughter] I'm just not up to this modern world! And then Mom and Dad, we landed in Brownsville, Texas, once we left that jungle area, wherever it was, and he went—we went to stay with one of his nephews in Long Beach, California. And then even though he has three children, he was drafted, and he was already in his mid-thirties by then.

**Interviewer:** *Wow.*

**Sandra Sager:** So, my husband, in talking with my Dad when we were dating and stuff, believes that he probably volunteered.

**Interviewer:** *That could be true.*

**Sandra Sager:** Because he lied about his age when he was seventeen and joined the Army and spent two years in it. And Dad was that kind of person. If there was work to be done by soldiers, he wanted to be there even though he wasn't a fulltime military person. But he served his time twice, and then he was sent to—over to Germany and Poland, Czechoslovakia, actually, and fighting. And so after he was drafted and went to Texas for basic training and stuff, then my mother and—I think by that time our stepsister had run away—I'm not sure—Mother and my baby sister and I went up to stay with one of her sisters in Oregon. And they ran a camp for—when you cut down the forest, logging camp. [laughter] I wanted to say “tree huggers”! I knew that wasn't right! [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *That was the opposite! Right? [laughter]*

**Sandra Sager:** For a logging camp. So it was interesting. I do remember things there. There was a great big pavilion type thing, the cookhouse, where the men ate that straddled over a stream, so that's where the water went from cooking and cleaning the dishes and everything. And some logger gave me a little red, white and blue patriotic whistle that you blow through and I dropped that down the hole of one of the knotholes in the floor one day and it—phffff—went down that stream! And you know, being a four year old at that time I was upset about it. Somebody went and found it for me.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, how about that!*

**Sandra Sager:** I can remember that much, you know. I can remember having the hives there. And then Mother finally got lonesome for her mom and dad, and so we got on a train and went back to Detroit Lakes and she rented—rented or bought a house on a hill on Elizabeth Street.

And the house was built backwards. The backdoor faced the street and the front door and the nice porch faced the alley down behind us.

**Interviewer:** *Isn't that funny!*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. Just the independent—and it was a wonderful old home, probably built in the early 1900s or something, so big rooms, big bay windows where I could sit and read my library book or whatever, and that big screened-in porch with lilac bushes out front.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, it just sounds lovely.*

**Sandra Sager:** And it was fun living there and then when Daddy got out of the service, then he needed something to do, and I guess he saw a need to—for people to have their—Detroit Lakes, there's four lakes around that little—if you count the three thousand people or something—in the state of ten thousand lakes. So he decided covering boat seats would be a good thing. So he went and got some material and a sewing machine and then—no, he didn't even need a sewing machine, he just needed good scissors and tacks and a hammer for that, and started that. That began his upholstery shop. And I don't know how long it was, let's see—it was probably in '45 then when we moved from that house to the apartment that was above the building that he rented for his upholstery shop.

**Interviewer:** *And then your mother also worked in the upholstery shop?*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, so then she started sewing for Daddy when we lived upstairs, and we had a housekeeper that came and kept care of the house and watched us girls, because two of us still were there, and then my baby sister was born. Well, that's right, she was still born when we lived on Elizabeth Street, so it was in '46, because she was born in June of '46.

**Interviewer:** *How did they ever decide to come to Henderson?*

**Sandra Sager:** Oh that's interesting, too. The winter of 1952-'53, it was fifty below for about three days there and Mother had had asthma all her life and that cold was too much for her. She told Daddy she wasn't spending another winter there. So in August of '53 they headed out to San Diego to get settled, and then by that time our step—my stepsister was married and had two children of her own, the youngest being born just a couple weeks before Mom and Dad left. So we stayed there on the lake with her until they got to San Diego, which never happened. They came over the hill looking into the valley, late, early one morning while it was still dark and saw all the lights of Vegas. In 1953, it was still the "Jewel of the Desert" but not big like it is now, and they stopped at—it was the Blue Onion Drive—or not Blue Onion. Right where Denny's is across from the Stratosphere—it was called the Round Up. They stopped there for breakfast and coffee and were talking finances and they noticed there was a waitress sign, "Need a Waitress," in the window of the door when they went into that restaurant and they said they really needed some more money. What would they find in San Diego where they've never been? Of course they'd never been to Las Vegas either, but Mother said, "Well, they're looking for a waitress and I certainly know how to do that!" So she asked. And Daddy, when they were driving to go to this restaurant, coming down Main Street, saw an upholstery shop that was looking for an upholsterer and he said, "Well just down the street a ways, they need an upholsterer." So within a couple of days they both had jobs.

**Interviewer:** *Wow. That worked out perfectly.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah! So then there was discussion by mail and stuff of how to get us three younger girls out here to Nevada, on a bus or on a train or whatever, and my stepsister's husband was out of work at the time so they decided to pack their belongings and us three girls



and our clothes, whatever they could fit in this 1938 Ford, and then their daughter and their new baby that slept in an apple box in the back seat in front of me, and drove us out here. And in the meantime Mom and Dad had rented a house in Henderson up on Federal Street, one of the Freedom Homes. So we were the first people to live in that.

**Interviewer:** *The first family to live in the—in the Victory Village?*

**Sandra Sager:** The stucco homes, I think they're called Freedom Homes.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, the Freedom Homes. Okay. Wow, how about that.*

**Sandra Sager:** They met the owner of that in their work, at the restaurant or something like that, said they were looking for a place to rent. He had these houses that he bought, brand new, didn't even have covering on the floor. It was still the cement floor.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, wow. So did people move into that neighborhood quickly or did it take some time?*

**Sandra Sager:** I think so. There were—we weren't the first family but we were the first people to live in that particular home. I think it was 667 Federal Street. But I'm thirteen at the time, and right away I get babysitting for the family next, on the left hand side of us, which, who happened to be the Kinsley's, Ron and Mickey Kinsley. And Mickey Kinsley many years later worked for Henderson City Hall. And on the other side was a family with the last name of Stout. And their girl was my sister's age, Mary, and between—was three years younger, the one that was born in Panama, and come to find out later on, when I'm an adult, one of her brothers, Phil Stout, was a politician in Henderson. And I think he was on the Nevada State Legislature or whatever, and different things. So you know, interesting acquaintances that aren't well known

people at the time that you meet them, but turned out, as life goes on, the different paths that everybody takes.

**Interviewer:** *Right.*

**Sandra Sager:** And so we lived there until Mom and Dad bought their first house that they'd ever owned, on the VA bill, and they bought that in North Las Vegas because they both worked in town, they figured it was closer to their jobs than Henderson was.

**Interviewer:** *What year was that?*

**Sandra Sager:** That was in 1955. Maybe it was '54.

**Interviewer:** *But sometime in the mid-fifties.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, mid-fifties. And then I was—I went to—let's see, I was in the eighth grade when I came out here. So I started the ninth grade at Basic High School. One of my classmates that I remember was Landra Gould, who was Harry Reid's wife, Landra.

**Interviewer:** *How about that!*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah! I mean, all of these things that cross back and forth, you know. Until a person's in their 70s and 80s or life's ended, you don't know the whole story, the history and the connections with people. But Mom and Dad bought their first house in December. Christmas vacation of '54 is when we moved to North Las Vegas and I became a freshman at Rancho High School, which—they were still building their campus. So Rancho High School met, the freshman class—that was the only class that they had—met at the Fifth Street Grammar School, which now is some kind of Court building or something. It's across from that Federal Court that's been built on Las Vegas Boulevard. We had the red tile roofs and red brick and all that kind of stuff. I forget just what it's used for, but the building is still there. But it was called

the Fifth Street Grammar School, and I guess it had quit being a grammar school, but now it housed Rancho High School's first class. So I was part of the first four year graduating class of Rancho High School. There were two other graduating classes ahead of me because they brought kids from other areas once they got Rancho itself built.

**Interviewer:** *So you had about a year in Henderson, living in Henderson, before you moved to North Las Vegas.*

**Sandra Sager:** A year and three months or so.

**Interviewer:** *What were your impressions of Henderson versus North Las Vegas? What were some of the differences?*

**Sandra Sager:** North Las Vegas had nothing. Henderson was a nice—and I didn't know until many years later in reading something that we came just a few months after Henderson became incorporated. But it was a nice small community. Living up on Federal Street, we could still walk downtown to shop and everything and they had every kind of shopping you'd want, you know: furniture store, clothing store, men's clothing, women's clothing, shoe store, appliance store, the medical facilities on Lake Mead Drive, the Clinic and the Hospital, churches. And the grocery store we shopped at mostly was—oh, I don't remember. The area where the El Dorado Parking Garage is, was a little bit of a hill off the street, and there was a row of commercial buildings there. Van Valey's had a shoe store there until he moved over onto Water Street and Perry's men's store, men's shop was there. So men's clothing.

**Interviewer:** *So you really didn't have to go anywhere else to shop!*

**Sandra Sager:** No. Rexall Drug was part of what now is the Emerald Isle Casino and that's where you could catch the bus if you wanted to go into Las Vegas.

**Interviewer:** *Did you ever do that? Did you ever travel to Las Vegas?*

**Sandra Sager:** Us girls, yeah, especially during the summer.

**Interviewer:** *What did you do?*

**Sandra Sager:** We would just walk down there and catch the bus and then go in and cruise Fremont Street and my biggest, funnest thing to do was stop at Woolworth's Dime Store where they had the nuts, and I mean, when they turned around, and buy myself a quarters worth of cashew nuts. [laughter] And there was a Penney's there on 6<sup>th</sup> and Fremont, and across the street, Sears built a building. And there was two movie theaters on Fremont Street, and when you got down like to 3<sup>rd</sup> or what, there was still—I think at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Fremont, there was still a house on Fremont the first year that we lived here, and then it was eventually torn down for more commercial business. But then there was two houses down on 3<sup>rd</sup> to the left, to the south of Fremont, that were—one of those, the Beckley House, I believe, was our museum out here in Henderson, our county museum. So we've seen a lot of changes in the Valley over the years, you know. The Strip was hardly anything and they built, well they built the Sahara Hotel, I guess, in the early to mid-fifties, because when my husband and I started dating, we went there a lot and had their buffet dinner. And Rancho High School was unique; we lived about a mile, a mile and a half away. We lived up on Oakwood Street in a new development there. And then a plumbing contractor that was one of our neighbors, Mr. Ireland, lived across the street from us on Oakwood and he did the plumbing work for some red brick homes that were down in Pittman, we learned.

**Interviewer:** *It's a small world.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yes, it's a very small world once you get settled in doing your little shell where you live, and then you run across all these connections that makes it—makes you connected to the rest of it, even though you're in a small little nucleus family and the community and everything stretches out there.

**Interviewer:** *Did your parents stay in North Las Vegas or did they eventually move back to Henderson?*

**Sandra Sager:** They stayed. Once all us girls had moved away from home and everything, they stayed. And then in 1976 when our youngest son was born, they bought a home on Oregon Way. They wanted to get out of North Las Vegas. By that time they were both retired and so they bought that home and moved out to Henderson. And then by that time, I think age was catching up with my father and he developed senility, was what they said, but I think it was Alzheimer's before that word had been invented. And he passed away in 1979. And that was the same year that we had cut down the big tree in the front of our yard of our current property and built the office supply store and the print shop over there. They moved there—my husband and I—well, let's see, speaking of my husband I've got to date him first! [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *[laughter] Yeah, tell us that story.*

**Sandra Sager:** A girl that I went to Rancho High School with was born July 1—July 3, 1940, in England, and her parents came over here. He was in communication; he worked for—I think then it was called Centel Phone Company. Henderson had its own phone company, but Las Vegas had a separate one, and her father worked in that company in the office. But we went to Rancho together and she dated my husband's younger brother, who was two years younger, and decided we should, maybe she should line up his brother with her best friend and arranged

a blind date. And I asked my mom permission, et cetera, my mom and dad. When they came to pick me up, they all came in. We met this man and his brother and my girlfriend and went on a date together and then the next day, Sunday, we went with another couple, so there were six of us in the car, to the Lake, and drove up the mountain, and at that time they had some kind of desert races just behind Ben Stepman Hyundai there, and we went to that that day and spent the whole day together and the Blue Onion was at the end of Fremont Street. Where Fremont and Charleston come together was a drive-in plus a walk-in restaurant that we—many of our dates ended up at the Blue Onion buying cokes and hamburgers or whatever.

**Interviewer:** *That's neat.*

**Sandra Sager:** But we dated. He was the first guy I ever dated and we dated for a little over three years and got married in 1960, January 1. [laughter] So then he had a—he and his brother had already bought a home on Zirconium Street, one of the Freedom Homes too, off of Victory Road and so they lived there until, let's see, 1967. I really don't know why we sold that house. Maybe to get out from a house payment or something. So we bought a townsite [home], which happens, we realize now, it happens to be the Galbraith Office. We bought it from the Galbraith Corporation. And the Galbraith Corporation is who accepted the rental payments and then the house payments of all the townsite homes. That's why it has a full concrete driveway in the front. And we bought that and we moved away from that and—but got rid of our house payments after being married for seven years. How cool is that?

**Interviewer:** *Yeah. Not bad.*

**Sandra Sager:** And then we were expecting our second child, and so we either needed to add onto that and we'd—my husband had added on a washroom and a print shop, and we opened

up our print shop under a zone variance. And then when we were expecting our second child, we either needed to add on some more or get a different place. And I had noticed the For Sale sign where we're currently at, 62 East Basic, [unclear] Realty, and Jim Jensen was a salesman for them, took us to that house. It had belonged to a chiropractor, and they had just moved out one morning after breakfast, because the milk carton and the orange juice bottle were on the table and you could tell that eggs had been served that morning. You could see a residue of the eggs on the plates. I don't know how long it had been vacant, but it was being ready to be condemned by the City because kids were starting to set fires to it. Vagrants were starting to take over.

**Interviewer:** *Oh my goodness. So they just abandoned their house?*

**Sandra Sager:** Apparently.

**Interviewer:** *Did a lot of people do that or was that an unusual case?*

**Sandra Sager:** I—you know, I really don't know. It seems like a lot of people abandon their homes now, too. To get out under them, you know. Maybe it's something people have always done but it wasn't so knowledgeable except for the neighbors or something, I don't know. He went to Phoenix and ten years later we learned, back in the '80s or something, some member of his family came to look up their old homestead and stuff and asked my husband to look and see how it was still—and whatever, you know. And of course we'd added on, by that time, had added on the front yard and added on the two story addition on the side.

**Interviewer:** *So it was really different.*

**Sandra Sager:** So it was different. But it was still on their corner, you know. And they shared stories. But their father, I remember reading about it in the paper, their father had been killed by one of his stepsons down there in Phoenix.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, my goodness!*

**Sandra Sager:** I can't recall their name, right now. Best I don't say it anyway! [laughter] But it's just, you know, life goes on. And then my husband established his print shop there after we moved in and was a part-time printer, because he was a printer for the Boy Scouts of America. And some of our—[unclear] husband Troy, who passed away a couple years ago, was the manager of the print shop there where my husband worked and stayed there and then he got a job with the—well that wasn't Boy Scouts, that was the bank. That was the Bank of Nevada. Yeah, get my stories turned around here. And then he went from there to the Boy Scouts of America and printed for them until they laid him off and then by that time he printed up a bunch of flyers, and my mother-in-law and I took them around to all the businesses and offices in Henderson, and the schools and everything. And the business took off and we were self-employed! That was in '73. Probably about '75 by then.

**Interviewer:** *And you ran that business until?*

**Sandra Sager:** Helped my husband, did the typing on paper masters and stuff for him and did the bookkeeping and all that. And took care of our three sons until somebody came and tried to rent us property up on, developing Boulder Highway and Major, into a big shopping center. And they said it would be the perfect place for a print shop. And I said, "Well, I don't think so because you don't go into a print shop because you see it and want to go in there and see what they're about. You go to a print shop because you need somebody to print something for you.



So I don't think that would be viable." And his wife had opened up selling pens and paper along with everything, but office supply store. And that's what gave me the idea. Four years later, we had an office supply store in our front yard. Still self-employed, still living at home, but ran a business, too. And our younger kids were in school at that time. We had ten years between our first and second child. Two years between the second and third. And then it was ten years before that shopping center opened up and put a Safeway store in there. No, not Safeway—Albertson's was in there first and different businesses. So [laughter]—and once I had grandkids I decided to close up my store, like I was telling you earlier, the industry of computers and everything sort of killed independent mom-and-pop office supply stores, and there was three of us in the Villa and we all retired that year: 2003. And then the print shop got less and less business through that and so my son was time to retire anyway even though he was already on Social Security, so he closed that one too. Now we just live there as our home.

**Interviewer:** *Even though you don't have the business, did any of your children continue as printers?*

**Sandra Sager:** No. Monty tried to get them interested in that, and they were just bored by it.

**Interviewer:** *They wanted to do other things.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. Our oldest became a magician through interest in it when he was in school and a magician came and put on a performance at Gordon McCaw Elementary and he was about ten at the time. So he got interested in that. He came home from that presentation that they'd had that day and took all my aluminum foil and rolled it up into tight little wads and then connected them together in rings and tried to implement what that gentleman did with linking rings.

**Interviewer:** *How fun!*

**Sandra Sager:** And it wasn't long before my husband decided maybe they'd go visit a magic shop and get him some things. So he—when they had industrial days, they used to have a talent contest with that, and so he was in the talent contest many times as a performer in magic.

**Interviewer:** *Does he still work as a magician?*

**Sandra Sager:** He does. He's unemployed right now but he did for quite a few years. He worked in retail at Kmart when Kmart built across the highway from us after he got out of school, and then went to Arizona, lived with some relatives there and did different things. But magic was always a sideline. Came back here and worked for Houdini's Magic Shops some different years. Even managed one of their shops up in San Francisco for about a year and a half. And then our two youngest ones—I don't know what Don did when he first got out of school. They both became interested, the middle one, Don, was interested in firefighting or anything to do with water from when he was first born, because when I'd take him for a walk in the stroller, he was out there hugging the fire hydrants. [laughter] And talking to them in jibberish, you know, babies will.

**Interviewer:** *How funny!*

**Sandra Sager:** So there was always some kind of connection he had there.

**Interviewer:** *They are baby sized, I mean. They look like they could be your friend. [laughter]*

**Sandra Sager:** Right. But he just—you know. The other two never did that, but he did. And we had one on our corner. So if I'd take him for a walk, boy he'd stop and jibber jabber and hug it,

touch it, look all over, and always loved to play with the garden hose or in a bucket of water or in the bath tub. You couldn't get him out!

**Interviewer:** *So he became a fireman?*

**Sandra Sager:** He became a fireman. He's a fireman with North Las Vegas. Tried to get on the Henderson Department a couple times but they're just a tough nut to crack, so he's with—he was a full-fledged fireman up at Mt. Charleston first and then transferred down to North Las Vegas after about four years.

**Interviewer:** *We did an interview last year with Frank Belger, and he was saying in his interview that it was difficult to get onto the Department because vacancies didn't come up very often.*

**Sandra Sager:** Right, right. Yeah, the first time that my son applied they had four openings or something like that and there was 1,400 people that applied!

**Interviewer:** *Wow!*

**Sandra Sager:** At the Convention Center the people were out around the building twice, waiting.

**Interviewer:** *So you would think it's like a really tough profession and, but it seems like it's really a privilege to be a part of that profession.*

**Sandra Sager:** It is. And I think all firemen are probably—and policemen are the same way—they want to do service for their community and—whether it's firefighting—and I've never seen a fire truck go by that you know, whizz, on its way to a fire, that the guys aren't all excited as heck. You know?

**Interviewer:** *That's what they live for.*

**Sandra Sager:** It's one of the things that they do, that adrenaline rush and everything is what they go for, you know. And our youngest son was a wild land firefighter, through the BLM in Las Vegas, and then he wound up going up two years to Alaska and being with the Midnight Sun Hot Shot crew up there.

**Interviewer:** *I bet you're proud of them.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. But a mother watches the news all the time when they have wildfires somewhere and you love to see, especially if it's in—in Alaska when he was up there, where their all wearing the same kind of uniform and helmets, and they always have a beard on because they don't have time to shave while they're out fighting fires. You can't tell one from another, but.

**Interviewer:** *Do you worry about them?*

**Sandra Sager:** I did. That was years ago. It's been ten, twelve years since Dan quit being a firefighter and he helps build gas stations now. I really miss him. He just got married last—a year ago last July. And he has this—all three boys live in Henderson.

**Interviewer:** *That's amazing. And that seems to be generally the case.*

**Sandra Sager:** And that's one of the draws of our community. People tend to stay here. I know there's, there's tons of people I know that their kids grew up here but live elsewhere. But it's just a—there's something about the family connection and the comfort level or something, especially in this older part of Henderson that has always stayed even though we have—since I came here and it was a population of about five thousand and now it's what—263,000 or something like that. We were the fifth largest state when I moved here and now we're the second. I mean city in the state, you know.

**Interviewer:** *What's your impression of the way that Henderson has grown?*

**Sandra Sager:** I think it grew too much and has different areas that are in competition with each other as far as everything goes. But the character of Henderson has managed to stay and downtown Henderson, the old part, has suffered because of development and different ideas and wanting to make it bigger and better instead of making it better and more comfortable. Trying to change it too much I think. Keeping the old character would have been much better than putting trees down the middle of the street. I was on the Chamber Board at the time. It was hard trying to convince some of these 'do gooders,' or developers and whatever to not be so pushy on what they wanted to do.

**Interviewer:** *I'd love to hear more about your experiences on the Chamber.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, it was interesting. I was asked one time by Gary Johnson who was a director of the Chamber of Commerce if I would take an appointment to serve somebody that was elected and then couldn't finish out their—and I forget the particulars of that—so I went ahead and signed up, and that person happened to hold the office of Treasurer and so then that made me Treasurer and they swore me in all that good stuff, and all I did was the official signing of checks. I didn't keep the books for the Chamber anyway. Then I had my own business to run, you know. Kids to see off to school every day, et cetera. But I stayed on the Chamber Board for—maybe until I retired or something. I don't remember how long it was. And it was interesting, being on the Board and getting information about new interests that were coming to Henderson. And then being in business, coming in contact with different businesses that started up like the GTE Sylvania that built a building, Good Humor Ice Cream, Levi Strauss. You know we were all in on the floor, the development of these various businesses that came to

Henderson and some are still here and some are gone. And there's just—to see the town grow and then to see Green Valley develop—it's just—it's a learning experience how a town changes and grows or doesn't.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, Henderson is really an unusual case because they had all that extra land and they could expand so quickly.*

**Sandra Sager:** Right. The government let loose of a lot of land to develop different areas and because Henderson had its history of the plants and everything I think a lot of people got the importance of making it a bigger and better community. And I think some of that is why it was changed from Industrial Days to Heritage Days, because they didn't want it to be just an industrial community. I know there's work a foot, people, and I have a lot of friends my age and younger that want it to go back to Industrial Days, you know, whatever it is.

**Interviewer:** *I've heard that, yeah.*

**Sandra Sager:** But I can see the Chamber's and the City fathers' idea, and the developers, especially from the Green Valley area, they're going to make it less of an industrial town and more tourism and commercial and all that kind of stuff, you know.

**Interviewer:** *Do you feel that Henderson still has that industrial identity even though some of the plants have gone?*

**Sandra Sager:** Yes, right. And I think it's important to always keep that no matter what happens to the plant property, if eventually all of them are gone. PEPCON was a huge disaster that woke up an awful lot of newcomers to Henderson that didn't know that there was any such thing that could happen in that plant area.

**Interviewer:** *What do you think were the repercussions of the PEPCON explosion?*

**Sandra Sager:** It brought the community closer together and it divided it the same time.

**Interviewer:** *How did it divide it?*

**Sandra Sager:** Well, I think the people that lived in Green Valley just thought, “Well, that’s just a bedroom community now.” And it’s changed this area, the townsite area, a lot. The homes and stuff, a lot of them were rentals, then first time homebuyers, or whatever, you know. A lot of them need to be fixed up. The City has, with the property—not property. What is that group called? It’s two-and-a-half people that take care of Henderson—and having cars on blocks in your yard, and letting the weeds grow and all that.

**Interviewer:** *Homeowners Associations?*

**Sandra Sager:** Something like that. Even though the townsite has never been—

**Interviewer:** *Or zoning?*

**Sandra Sager:** Zoning—but they want the community to—you know, your front yard should look presentable. It shouldn’t be overgrown with weeds and it shouldn’t be overdone with trash. And dead bicycles laying there and all that kind of stuff. You know, people should take pride in their homes, whether they own it or they rent it. I know myself when I went back to Pennsylvania and visited back in the mid-nineties that even in the poorer looking neighborhoods, their lawns and their outside of their home was so kept up. You didn’t see trash anywhere. You didn’t see people throw trash out of the car window as they’re driving by. People took care of their properties no matter what scale the neighborhood was, you know. And there’s—in Utah, you kind of see that, too. People take care of their property.

**Interviewer:** *So you’re saying there’s a small committee of people that are trying to encourage people to do that?*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, I think it goes along with the—boy, the words aren't coming out today—transient nature of the Valley, Southern Nevada. A lot of people come and go. Tourism is heavy and people don't always stay.

**Interviewer:** *And it's always been like that, right?*

**Sandra Sager:** Right. It's always been that way. But they don't take any pride. If you're not going to be for long, you don't take any pride in it, I mean. When I went—the first time I went to a movie here was where I noticed there was popcorn bags on the floor. We didn't have that in Minnesota. If you bought popcorn, you didn't buy a soda but you bought a dime's worth of popcorn and you carried your bag out and put it in the receptacle when you left, you know, and I don't know if it's different cultures of people and how they train their children to do or what it is. Well, and moving here at thirteen, at the time I wasn't in connection with how you raised your families.

**Interviewer:** *When you first moved here, did you feel like Henderson was dangerous in anyway?*

**Sandra Sager:** No.

**Interviewer:** *There was no danger from the transient nature of the area.*

**Sandra Sager:** No, I don't think so. We didn't seem to see homeless people on the street or anything like that. We weren't accosted in a parking lot, too, by people wanting a dime or a dollar.

**Interviewer:** *They didn't have animal control problems back then?*

**Sandra Sager:** I don't think so. The city being new, maybe they didn't even have Animal Control at that time. [laughter]



**Interviewer:** *I ask because in the Henderson Coordinating Council minutes from the '40s and early '50s they were concerned about animal control in terms of roaming packs of dogs. There were a lot of stray dogs.*

**Sandra Sager:** Oh, I didn't notice that when I lived for that—little over a year—and then once my husband and I moved to Atlantic Street in '67, there were at night, there was a pack of wild dogs that would run up and down the alleys and you could hear them tip over the garbage. You could hear them scabble around.

**Interviewer:** *So they still had that in the late '60s.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, and then all of a sudden, by the time we moved up onto Basic Road in '76, I think by the early '80s they had a handle on that and a lot of people were being more responsible pet owners, because all of a sudden you didn't notice any stray dogs out. People fenced their yards and I think, I think people just became more responsible.

**Interviewer:** *So what about now? Is Henderson, the original townsite of Henderson, is that—is it dangerous to live in Henderson in any way? Or do you think it's kind of safer than other places?*

**Sandra Sager:** I think when I was a teenager and we lived up on Federal Street, I don't remember us leaving our door locked during the day. Mom and Dad were at work and us girls were at school. I don't remember having a house key, but that might be something you just don't pay attention to. But now, since we moved onto Basic Road and even when we lived on Atlantic, yes we keep the doors locked. We keep our doors locked even when we're inside the house. The front door especially, because there's all the bus traffic now that comes right by our house and lots of people get on and off the buses with backpacks, just curious about it. And

we've had police, we've had drug dealings; you could tell what was going on in houses up and down our neighborhood.

**Interviewer:** *And yet Henderson is one of the safest cities for its size.*

**Sandra Sager:** I heard that reported on television a couple weeks ago, and they also accused us of being the most boring.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, no! [laughter]*

**Sandra Sager:** The announcer didn't, but he said that the end of the report said they were also the most—one of the most boring cities that they'd interviewed, or something.

**Interviewer:** *I don't know about that.*

**Sandra Sager:** No, I don't think so.

**Interviewer:** *In fact my grandmother [Ruth D. Cordes Hamilton] was talking to me the other day, and she remembers visiting Henderson just to go to the casino years ago.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. A lot of people would come up here from Kingman or whatever, yeah.

**Interviewer:** *So it must have been the El Dorado.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yes. Before it was the El Dorado, before the—who owns it? The family—Sam's Town. Boyds.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, Sam Boyd, yeah.*

**Sandra Sager:** Before the Boyds bought the El Dorado, it was called The Wheel.

**Interviewer:** *Right.*

**Sandra Sager:** And my husband and I used to—and his brother—used to go there a lot and eat breakfast or lunch, whatever. One of their school friends, a female, was a waitress there and fairly new this one time and she, so glad to see them, she said "Oh good." She said, "If I get

your order mixed up," she says, "You won't get mad at me." [laughter] So you know, you just run into people all the time. And then, you know, we saw the Convention Center being built. I know a lot of people thought, "Well why is that? We're not a big town." But there were so many conventions coming to the Valley that were small enough that Vegas didn't have places for them and so Henderson built its Convention Center, and has used it a lot. The Nevada Quilt Show was shown there every year: Desert Quilters. And downtown Henderson, you know, I said I used to shop at a—when we lived out here—at a grocery store that was independently owned and it's like once more people have got cars and stuff then the bigger malls and stuff build in Las Vegas. The Galleria Mall was—I mean, the Boulevard Mall was the first mall that I remember, indoor mall facility. And so people started traveling to that as long as they had transportation.

**Interviewer:** *And I think Las Vegas built their Convention Center in the early '60s. Right?*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. We went to their Grand Opening which was dedicated to something to do with flying airplanes and stuff. What was that called? The World Congress of Flight? Something like that?

**Interviewer:** *Wow, neat. Did you happen to get to see Kennedy when he spoke at the Convention Center?*

**Sandra Sager:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *You were there? Wow.*

**Sandra Sager:** My husband and I went to that and we took our one nephew out of school for the day and took him to that, too. We thought that would be an important step in his life. The nephew that was born just before we came out here.

**Interviewer:** *That must have been amazing.*

**Sandra Sager:** It was amazing. We were appalled by the number of people that would get up in the middle of Kennedy's speech and everything and go to take a break.

**Interviewer:** *The speech wasn't that long. It was like twenty minutes at most.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, I don't recall but it seemed very strange for them to show that disrespect to the leader of our country. Whether you were uncomfortable with him being the President or not. There is a certain amount of respect that should be shown.

**Interviewer:** *Do you think they were doing it out of respect or they just didn't have the proper—*

**Sandra Sager:** No, I think they were just—because of the tourist atmosphere and, you know, you'd get up in the middle of a movie and go buy a coke or go use the facilities or something. People were just inconsiderate. In the '60s and the '70s, you know, mannerisms and stuff were—and tradition was being dispelled with and a lot of courtesies were cast aside. People became more independent and people became more independent of—instead of doing what Mom and Dad said, "I'll do what I want." [unclear] [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *What did you think of Kennedy's focus on the environment—as his speech was about using natural resources?*

**Sandra Sager:** Well see I was young enough, I don't remember that. I just remember feeling very honored to be there. That was—what year was that when he came?

**Interviewer:** '63.

**Sandra Sager:** '63.

**Interviewer:** *In fact it was a month and a half before his assassination.*

**Sandra Sager:** Was it really!

**Interviewer:** *It was, yeah.*

**Sandra Sager:** I'll be darned.

**Interviewer:** *His 50th anniversary of his visit is coming up.*

**Sandra Sager:** Well see, I was already a new mother in '63.

**Interviewer:** *You had other things to think about! [laughter]*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. So we must have left Randy with a sitter and then Monty and I took my nephew. I remember him speaking on television before he came out here, I guess. I think it was that we were going to be, have the first man on the moon, in space, the space flight and stuff. And I'm thinking to myself, "Yeah, right!"

**Interviewer:** *[laughter]*

**Sandra Sager:** You know, that's the superman comic books and stuff coming through that you read too much as a child [laughter], and he was the first person that I got old enough to elect. Had to be twenty-one.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, how about that.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, that must have been in '62 then.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, '62 I guess.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. Wouldn't have been '60 because I wouldn't have been twenty-one yet so had to have been '62; it's always an even year. Every four years we elected a president.

**Interviewer:** *Do you remember much about the plants in Henderson, like BMI?*

**Sandra Sager:** No, other than they were there and my husband worked for Titanium when we met.

**Interviewer:** *Okay.*

**Sandra Sager:** And then by the time he had proposed to me, he had switched jobs and he worked for—what was the other plants that were there?

**Interviewer:** *He didn't work for the marshmallow plant did he? [laughter]*

**Sandra Sager:** No, no, that was—I remember when it was built, too. The Chamber got to go on a tour through there. Which eventually became PEPCON, but I forget what it was called when we were married. It wasn't—

**Interviewer:** *Oh, it was the plant that became PEPCON.*

**Sandra Sager:** I think so. I think PEPCON: Pacific Engineering and Petroleum Company of Nevada was PEPCON. I think they bought—oh, it's around here.

**Interviewer:** *What did your husband do? What was he doing?*

**Sandra Sager:** He worked in a lab or something there that checked the stuff that they were making, whatever it was. And he worked shift work. So he'd work a week of days and then a week of swing, the graveyard.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, that must be difficult.*

**Sandra Sager:** So when we were first married, we'd go a whole week sometimes without seeing each other when he'd work swing shift, because he'd go to work at 2:00; I worked at North Las Vegas City Hall and wouldn't get off till 5:00 so if I woke up when he came home and got in bed, I'd—you know, we could say hello to each other and then I'd get up in the morning and he's still sleeping.

**Interviewer:** *What were you doing at the City Hall in North Las Vegas?*

**Sandra Sager:** I went to work at North Las Vegas City Hall after my one year of college, which was at UNLV, but it was called Las Vegas University or something like that. Yeah, they're one

building out there on Maryland Parkway in the desert and I went there because I thought I should go to college and I did get a bit of a—when some organization gives you money to go to college.

**Interviewer:** *A scholarship?*

**Sandra Sager:** Scholarship. [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *It's not always a scholarship though. Sometimes it's a grant.*

**Sandra Sager:** And words usually spill out of my mouth. Today they're not there.

**Interviewer:** *It's okay.*

**Sandra Sager:** So I went there for a year, but I wanted to be a secretary or something like that. I wanted to be a teacher when I was like a sophomore in high school. And then I went to—once I learned to drive a car and had my license—because I was a junior then—went to pick up my niece and nephew from school—saw how ill-behaved they were. Especially Junior High.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, you decided—*

**Sandra Sager:** And I decided that wasn't for me. And I thought I wanted to be a nurse. First I wanted to be a nurse, but then taking care of those kids and stuff, and taking care of a split lip or something like that, almost passed out. No, I wasn't going to be a nurse either. So I decided a secretary would do it. So then my senior year of high school, I took shorthand, and then junior year I took typing, and typing in the senior year. So I went to UNLV, and because I was going to be a fulltime student, I couldn't take anymore shorthand or typing or whatever but took a class in Speech and all that kind of stuff.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, yeah, useful.*

**Sandra Sager:** History, English, P.E., even though they didn't have any facilities there. Part of our P.E. was dancing and they took us by car or bus or something down to an empty house on 8<sup>th</sup> Street that was probably built in the '30s and they had a big enough living room or dining room combination there and that's where we took this six weeks of dancing in P.E. in college.

**Interviewer:** *That's neat.*

**Sandra Sager:** And we also did Archery out in the back of the University.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, how fun.*

**Sandra Sager:** They set up big targets out in the back there and we did archery.

**Interviewer:** *Were you good at it? That's tough, archery.*

**Sandra Sager:** I don't know. It was sure hard to—[demonstrates pulling the bow]

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, it's hard to pull the bow.*

**Sandra Sager:** Now I don't think I could do that: pull an arrow or do anything like that. There's a lot of strength in that piece of string. [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *It is. That's hard. I always thought it was hard.*

**Sandra Sager:** But it was interesting, you know.

**Interviewer:** *How did you feel about moving, since you had lived in North Las Vegas for so long and you were pretty independent because you were working for the City Hall. And how did you feel about moving to Henderson?*

**Sandra Sager:** It seemed all right. My work cronies there in North Las Vegas City Hall said, "Oh, where are you gonna live?" And I said, "Well, my husband to be has a house in Henderson." "Oh, No! You're going to move to 'Hooterville!'"

**Interviewer:** *Oh, that's terrible!*



**Sandra Sager:** Yes, that's what they called it back then. And then that's when my mother-in-law, after we were married, she said, "Well, Las Vegas considers Henderson as a—just a bedroom community." That everybody that lives there works in Las Vegas. Then they just go home to Henderson, see? But she says, "If everybody in Henderson would not shop in Las Vegas for a day," she said, "they would find out what we're all about."

**Interviewer:** *So by that time a lot of people from Henderson were shopping in Las Vegas.*

**Sandra Sager:** I think so.

**Interviewer:** *For the necessities.*

**Sandra Sager:** Well, I would say because of the advent of everybody owning a car and then, you know, when we moved here it was—the first car that I remember my mom and dad ever having in Detroit Lakes, if we went somewhere we went on a bus, if we went on a trip somewhere.

**Interviewer:** *Then because the War had limited tires and gasoline and all, rations.*

**Sandra Sager:** Right. Second World War development happened and gasoline rations quit and everything, and then the Vietnam War came.

**Interviewer:** *Do you have any memories of what it was like to live during World War II?*

**Sandra Sager:** No. I think anything that I could tell would just be from my parents stories when families would gather and stuff, you know. And then my Dad always liked, he and my boyfriend, my husband, who became my husband, after a date would come home and then if Dad was still up—my husband is a history buff, too—well they'd go start talking over a beer or coffee or something, you know. I might have to just fall asleep on the couch at 2:00 a.m. or something.

**Interviewer:** *[laughter]*

**Sandra Sager:** My boyfriend and my dad were having a good time! *[laughter]*

**Interviewer:** *That's really good. [laughter] That's good that they got along.*

**Sandra Sager:** And they got acquainted, you know. By the time I was proposed to, Daddy didn't have any qualms about it at all; neither did my mom.

**Interviewer:** *That's great.*

**Sandra Sager:** But I went to work at North Las Vegas City Hall. You asked me how I got that job. After I finished that one year of college, I knew I didn't want to go back and I only had that scholarship for that one year and I knew I wasn't going to ask Mom and Dad for money, et cetera. And there was an ad in the paper in North Las Vegas that was looking for a Temporary Clerk Typist. And I thought, "Well, I can do that! I know how to type. And it's temporary but maybe it will give me a start." So I went there and applied. That was like in June, July, something like that. And the Personnel Director said, "Well, we were really looking for someone with more work experience, that's worked in an office. This will be your first job." And I don't remember saying, you know, I was amazed at myself saying this because I was just a shy wallflower back then. I said, "Well, if somebody doesn't hire me that first time, how am I going to get that first job?" And he said, "You have a point, young lady!" And he says, "I'll be back in a minute." He went to talk to somebody and came back and says, "Here's some paperwork, fill it in, and see us tomorrow morning at eight o'clock!" [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *You had gumption!*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. And you know it was like I turned around to see who said that! I didn't believe I was bold enough to say such a thing.

**Interviewer:** *[laughter]*

**Sandra Sager:** Applying for a job at City Hall. So by October of that year, my boss, who was the City Clerk's secretary, and the temporary job was retyping all the ordinances on ditto masters and running them off to put in the files and then some other forms, employment forms and stuff like that that they used throughout the City, because the ordinances had changes that had been made and stuff so they had to be retyped on these masters. And it was before correction typewriters, so I did have an electric wall typewriter, a little typewriter desk in the corner of this little front office that was all that they had. So she liked my work after two, three weeks there and she says, "We've got to work on creating a position because," she said, "I have appreciated your work here when I have you type up letters that I don't have time for." Because being the Financial Director's secretary and then it also blossomed over into where she would start taking minutes at the City Council meetings. So she had them to do. And she was one busy person! And so she worked getting me hired on as a permanent position and I still stayed next to her. But I had plenty of work to fill out the day and then they got me to fill out, type up the purchases orders for the Water and Sewer Department because they were filling them out by hand and they figured typewritten ones would be much better. And so I did that as a sideline. I just did odd jobs for different parts of the City.

**Interviewer:** *And you were there how long?*

**Sandra Sager:** I was there from, let's see, that summer of '58 or '59, I mean, until 1963 when our first son was born. And she wouldn't let me just resign. She made me take a maternity leave and even called me and she said, "I know you'll want to come back because you enjoy this job and we certainly need you here."

**Interviewer:** *They really valued you.*

**Sandra Sager:** By that time she was the Personnel Director and when I left, I was the Assistant Personnel Director. So we had stayed together, you know.

**Interviewer:** *She was sorry to lose you.*

**Sandra Sager:** And I said, “No, I’ve taken out a new job, now: I’m a mom!” And when I was proposed to—or when she was trying to make me a permanent employee and then the Financial Director there, the Auditor or whatever he was called, told her, he said, “No, it’s not a good idea. She’s young, just out of school.” He said, “First thing that’s going to happen to her, she’s going to get proposed to, and she’ll get married and have kids and she’ll leave. We’ll just get her trained and she’ll be on her way.” And so I think I stayed there longer than he anticipated but he was not happy to hear by October I’d been engaged! [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *He was a little bit right! [laughter] Yeah, that’s funny.*

**Sandra Sager:** So then my husband becoming self-employed there in ’74, he had bought a printing press. Well, we’d set up our temporary print shop on Atlantic Street in the early ’70s, so he became an independent, self-employed, and business took off.

**Interviewer:** *That’s great.*

**Sandra Sager:** We survived! All three kids graduated from Basic High School, same as us. The Henderson Community Church, which is now the rebuilt Henderson Community Center or Senior Center that’s just off of Water Street—that has apartments up above—that property was the Community Church. His parents were married by the minister of the Community Church before that Church was actually built and they were married in one of the two houses that are still left on Water Street, or there’s one left there that’s next to Lotus, the Chinese Restaurant, Lotus there. I think that house that’s left there is where they would hold

Community Church services, and they were married in that house under the Community Church. And then all four of their children were married there in that Community Church when it was built. All four of us. Monty had two brothers and a sister. So we were all married there. So then our picture in that history went down to the little corner wedding chapel in the corner that's down on Basic and Texas.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, okay.*

**Sandra Sager:** That was built and owned by the Bensons. And they put a notice in the paper about their startup and everything, and anybody that had family history connection, marriages in Henderson and all that kind of stuff. Who better to tell that us! [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *Right! What other groups, associations, were you involved in in Henderson through the years. We talked about the Chamber.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah. I was on the Chamber of Commerce board when I was self-employed.

**Interviewer:** *Were you in some other groups?*

**Sandra Sager:** No, I joined—was given an invitation to join Beta Sigma Phi in 1969. I received an invitation, so I went to their rush party and I thought I had pulled the wool over somebody's eyes. I thought it was a college—you had to be a graduate of college to be in a sorority. I didn't know it was just a women's organization that was also called a sorority. And so I joined them then in 1969, and I'm still a member. And it was, at that time, they had just two chapters, and we were up to six chapters several years ago. Now we're down to four. At one time we had ninety-some women in Henderson that were members of Henderson Beta Sigma Phi. And it's a women's organization that was started in 1932 in Kansas City, Missouri.

**Interviewer:** *I think my mom was a member in El Paso. I think we even had a Legacy Ceremony at one point.*

**Sandra Sager:** Oh, yes.

**Interviewer:** *I have some pictures of that.*

**Sandra Sager:** So you're a legacy of Beta Sigma Phi? And did you ever join it?

**Interviewer:** *I guess I'm a legacy. I don't think my mother is still in it but I, I never joined.*

**Sandra Sager:** If you were a legacy you could—you already have one foot in the door. You just have to take advanced training and you would become a member.

**Interviewer:** *How about that. Well, I know that you all have a pretty strong base here in Henderson.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *Because practically everybody I've met is a member of Beta Sigma Phi.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yes, yes. Beta Sigma Phi to my knowledge, now I might be wrong, I would like to talk to some people that have lived here longer than I have, lived here from the forties on. I think it was the first woman's organization, social organization that came together in Henderson and Phi Chapter received its charter January 16, 1948. So when we were in the last Heritage Days Parade in the—that was part of our spiel that we had the people that read about each entry in the Parade. The first time we heard that, the woman who was saying that, she says, "Oh, that can't be right. We're celebrating Henderson's 60<sup>th</sup> year of being since they're a corporation, that's 1953 to 2013." She says, "They couldn't be a member since 1948." Well, you had people living here, like I told Andy Hafen, Mayor Hafen when I saw him that night. I said you've got to correct these people. Yes, we are older than the city.

**Interviewer:** *Right, right.*

**Sandra Sager:** You know, officially. [laughter] But the early years of Beta Sigma Phi here in Phi Chapter, they were called upon by the city fathers a lot to help out at dedication ceremonies and different things. When some dignitary came to town and refreshments were available or something, the women contributed, probably along with some City Hall employees and stuff. But I don't think City Hall employees was that many back in the fifties. And when they were getting ready to incorporate and become a city and all that kind of stuff, so Phi Chapter was called on a lot for different things like that. So there's a history there, you know. With the sorority and the city and all the important people.

**Interviewer:** *And I think it's great that all the groups participate in the Heritage Days. Can you tell me more about things you've done with Industrial Days?*

**Sandra Sager:** Yes, we did years ago, we did years ago when we used to, when Ben Stepman was still alive, he always drove a convertible for us and we'd gather up a member in each chapter to be in the convertible, and he would support the parade.

**Interviewer:** *That's neat.*

**Sandra Sager:** And then we stopped doing it for a long time. You know, I thought it was important, especially the last couple of years in the history of Henderson to get back into it and membership and all social organizations had fallen down because of the change of the times.

**Interviewer:** *People's lives are more hectic sometimes.*

**Sandra Sager:** Different family structures and all that, more hectic or taken over by the Internet and all that good stuff, you know.

**Interviewer:** *[laughter] It's just too much fun.*

**Sandra Sager:** When I joined, there was, it's a worldwide organization; there was a quarter of a million women belonged to Beta Sigma Phi. Now it's less than half of that worldwide. So we're trying to build up membership in our chapters. So I said, "Well what better way than to go to the parade and advertise?" So last year we passed out little treats, wrapped candies with Beta Sigma Phi on it and the Web site to contact.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, that's great.*

**Sandra Sager:** And so we're going to try to have an entry in the Christmas parade, the Winterfest Parade, and in the Heritage Days Parade this year. We're already talking about it. We've got one woman that signed up to be in charge of it.

**Interviewer:** *Great.*

**Sandra Sager:** Give us some different ideas.

**Interviewer:** *What's your favorite part of living in Henderson? What do you like best about Henderson?*

**Sandra Sager:** I think the community spirit that it has and, you know, it's just living here so long you can't go shopping anywhere without seeing familiar faces and ask about their children, grandchildren, whatever. But there's a lot of people that are gone, that have moved away or passed on. But there's still a lot of that basic connection that was here when I came here in '53, some of the same people or family names.

**Interviewer:** *So it seems like a great community to live in and raise children.*

**Sandra Sager:** And the fact that we have a nephew that was my husband's younger brother, when he married, they bought a home in Las Vegas and they raised four kids there. But the youngest son lives out here in Henderson. He got married and moved back to Henderson.



**Interviewer:** *That's great.*

**Sandra Sager:** He lives up off Horizon, he's in the new homes up there, and so there's something about this connection that brings people back. In the years of business, we met many new people that came, settled, opened up a business or established a family, would come in and buy pens and paper and whatever, get wedding announcements printed up, whatever, it was, announcements. And then you'd see them three or four years later: they miss home. They're moving back. They move away and we talk to all of them, we said, "Have heart, you'll probably be back here." And it was amazing, the number of people that did come back here. There's something here that draws them. Even though they came from Illinois or Indiana, Nebraska.

**Interviewer:** *Well, it's surely the sense of community.*

**Sandra Sager:** I think so. I think anybody that lived in—maybe—and born and raised in Minnesota, if you lived where there's snow eight months out of the year, that impedes you walking to school and everything—this is nice. Get snow once in a while, just long enough to get out there and enjoy it.

**Interviewer:** *As long as you're okay with the heat, right?*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, and the heat you adapt to.

**Interviewer:** *It's easier to adapt to than snow.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yes, it is. You learn to, if you have to be outside doing yard work or hanging clothes on the line or something, you do it early in the morning and they'll dry quick. You get all your laundry done in two hours' time. Folded, dried, washed, and put away.

**Interviewer:** *It is nice.*

**Sandra Sager:** It didn't take this expense of a dryer. I still hang most of my clothes on a clothesline. And there's a—you know, you just learn to adapt. And if it gets too hot, there's malls to go to and there's big hotels to go to, there's museums to go to.

**Interviewer:** *And lots of air conditioning.*

**Sandra Sager:** Libraries to go to, and you can see the people you know because they're doing the same thing.

**Interviewer:** *Right. Everybody's doing the same activities. Yeah. Is there anything else that you'd like to add that we haven't talked about?*

**Sandra Sager:** I don't know. Let's see. Well, no.

**Interviewer:** *I don't know that we got to talk much about your quilting.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, I started that—each one of my boys, when they came out of the crib, then I decided they needed a special blanket to go in that bed because they didn't have the protection of the crib on the—because our oldest was—missed that crib, so we left it up, but we put it beside his little twin bed so he could open his eyes and see those bars in front of him, see.

[laughter] So then I guess that's what gave me the idea that they need some kind of security, so when each one was ready to come out of the crib, I made him a blanket. It was usually out of their left over pajamas and fabrics and whatever, you know. And I just cut up squares of fabric and sewed them together and put batting in there and the backing on and give it them as a blanket. And they'd use them up and that's good. And then in the early '90s, I wanted to—every year I wanted to have a Christmas quilt and I—you know, you think of it, Thanksgiving Day, well, that's too late to get started, so I think it was in '90, right after Christmas, Joann, et

cetera, or some fabric store had a sale on Christmas fabric so I went and bought a bunch of Christmas fabric and made a Christmas quilt. Used Christmas cookie cutters as outlines.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, that's neat.*

**Sandra Sager:** Embroidered on them and everything like that. And we still have that. We get it out every Christmas. But that was the beginning. And then I just started making, started making quilts from magazines. Subscribed to a couple of quilting magazines and we happened to—we used to have a little quilt shop down on Water Street called Boll Weevils, and I went to a couple of her classes. And then it's just, you know, they took sewing out of—home economics out of school, so girls weren't learning to sew anymore. So girls weren't learning to sew clothes, and it got to be where it was more expensive to sew your own clothes than to buy ready-made. Now people should buy ready-made that's made in this country. Otherwise sew it yourself.

[laughter] But it wound up, everyone needs their craft of some kind whether it's knitting, sewing, painting, gardening, reading, writing stories, whatever, so quilting's been my passion.

**Interviewer:** *And you've taken over the old print shop with your quilting.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yes, yeah, my office supply store is now my hobby room. My husband teases me, he says, "You've got the biggest hobby room in the county." I said, "Probably do." [laughter] He looks in there and he says, "Well, I didn't know you were going to fill it up."

**Interviewer:** *Oh, it's probably a quilter's dream. [laughter]*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, it's about as long as this building, a little wider.

**Interviewer:** *Wow, wow. That's a nice space.*

**Sandra Sager:** Yeah, you know when we took care of the grandkids that we—once I quit that store, then they could sleep in a little daybed up there and be out of the way from the rest of the house noise and the dogs and everything. It's fun.

**Interviewer:** *Well, I've enjoyed talking with you today, Sandra. Thanks for coming.*

**Sandra Sager:** I've enjoyed it. You bet. Hopefully this is useful.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, you've told us so many great stories. I know people are going to enjoy listening to it.*

**Sandra Sager:** And if questions come up just come—call us up, because my husband has a lot of history and remembrance of Henderson.

**Interviewer:** *Great. Thank you.*