

Henderson Libraries

Henderson Oral History Project

Shirley Phillips

Oral History of Shirley Phillips

conducted by

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Henderson District Public Libraries

and

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Henderson Historical Society

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Interviewer: *Today is March 21, 2014. We are at the Paseo Verde Branch of Henderson District Public Libraries in Henderson, NV. My name is Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm and I'm here with Rick Watson of the Henderson Historical Society, interviewing Shirley Phillips as part of the Henderson Oral History Project of Henderson Libraries. We are also pleased to have Shirley's daughter, Wendy Gillen, with us this morning. Thank you both so much for joining us.*

I'd like to start, Shirley, by asking about your childhood. Tell us a little bit about where you were born and raised and what your parents did for a living.

Shirley Phillips: I was born in Kadoka, South Dakota and I grew up on a 20,000 acre ranch and went to a country school by horseback, four miles to school and four miles home. When we went to high school, we moved a little travel trailer into town, which is thirty-five miles from the ranch, and we lived in that while we were going to school. There were, I suppose, fifty kids in the school, the whole school. So it was quite rural and it was on the Indian reservation.

Interviewer: *Oh!*

Shirley Phillips: So I'm part Indian. My mother was half. So that's where I grew up.

Interviewer: *What tribe?*

Shirley Phillips: The Oglala Sioux. Crazy Horse family. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Tell us a little bit about your family's background.*

Shirley Phillips: Well, my mother went to Indian School in Kansas, Haskell, Kansas, and my dad was a graduate of the Grand Island, Nebraska, Business School. So they had a good education,

and they wanted us to have a good education. And the ranch is still viable. They're still raising cattle, so it's profitable.

Wendy Gillen: It's still in your family.

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. It's still in the family. My nephews are on it.

Interviewer: *That's neat. What did you learn growing up on a ranch? What kind of things did you do?*

Shirley Phillips: [laughter] I learned I didn't like housework and I didn't like to cook. I'd rather be out there riding a horse. So I ended up with nine kids and cooking. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Wow! [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: It's been quite a life. And then I went to school in Chadron, Nebraska. That's where I met Joe, my husband. He was a returned veteran. We dated for a couple of years and then we got married. He graduated from college and got a job teaching and then we moved from Nebraska. We moved back to South Dakota. And he decided he didn't want to that anymore—he was a manager of the Employment Security Office in Hot Springs, South Dakota. And so he decided that he wanted to get back into teaching and we ended up in the Sandhills of Nebraska. He was teaching—I think it was third and fourth grade. Then he decided he didn't want to do that anymore. And we had three kids, at that time. He put in an application to, I think, the Rocky Mountain Teachers placement or something like that, where they'd place teachers, and that he got notification that could go either down to Arizona where that copper mine is or Henderson, Nevada. Well, we couldn't find Henderson, Nevada, on the map. It was

just, you know, okay, well, I think we better go with that, because I'd seen the Life Magazine with the deal about Las Vegas in there and it was quite tempting. So, he took—we took this job. And he came out here because Lorraine Taylor was having a baby and she was going to quit. Now, Don Taylor just died, just this last month.

Fredric Watson: *That was Don's wife?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. That was Don's Wife. So that's why we came out here, and I was pregnant at the time. We came in November and my baby was born in December.

Fredric Watson: *Oh, boy.*

Shirley Phillips: But it's been a good life. I love it here.

Fredric Watson: *What year?*

Shirley Phillips: It was in 1955 that we came here.

Interviewer: *And that was your first child?*

Shirley Phillips: No. That was my fourth child. We moved here with three. And my oldest daughter—I don't know if—Rick, I don't think you were going to Gorman when my oldest daughter was going there.

Fredric Watson: *I graduated in 1958.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, and she graduated in '63 from Gorman.

Fredric Watson: *So she would have been there when Toni was at Gorman.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, Toni, they used to ride to school together.

Fredric Watson: *And Jay Rodricks, and—*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. All of those kids. They'd always go into school together and your mother wouldn't let them go one day because it was foggy. And she said, "No. You can't go. You're going to have a wreck." So they had to wait until fog raised before they got in there.

Fredric Watson: *She worried. If she heard a siren somewhere, she assumed that we were out there and had been in a wreck.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, yes. I know the feeling

Interviewer: *Was that actually fog like water fog or was that chemical fog from the plants.*

Shirley Phillips: It was fog. It was regular fog. When that fog from the plant came, all the leaves on the trees would fall off.

Fredric Watson: *Chlorine gas.*

Interviewer: *Gosh, how scary.*

Wendy Gillen: But your laundry was real white.

All: [laughter]

Shirley Phillips: And when we moved here, Burkholder, Lyal Burkholder was the superintendent. We thought, "Oh gosh. Where are we going to live?" We were just, you know—he had a house rented for us. A furnished house. We ended up buying the house and living in it until what, thirty years ago.

Interviewer: *What part of town was that in?*

Shirley Phillips: It was an old townsite house on Nebraska Avenue. We moved from Nebraska to Nebraska Avenue. [laughter]

Interviewer: *How funny. [laughter] That's cool. What was the house like?*

Shirley Phillips: It was just a two bedroom house and we had three children and a baby on the way. And that house grew. It grew, and I don't know how many square feet it was in when we sold it, but we'd added two bedrooms, so it was a four bedroom house, it had a bathroom and a great big kitchen and a great big living room with a fireplace and a twenty by forty foot pool in the backyard. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Sounds nice.*

Shirley Phillips: And so it was. In fact, their friends thought it was Utopia or something because there was big trees and it was shaded and there was a trampoline there and a swimming pool, so it was a playground.

Fredric Watson: *Oh, having a swimming pool in those days, that was neat.*

Shirley Phillips: It was after the kids had gone, you know, the older ones, had left. And I think Jean was just in grade school—

Wendy Gillen: Well, it was my junior year in high school—

Shirley Phillips: —when we put the pool in.

Wendy Gillen: —when you put the pool in, because I know I—we threw some parties.

[laughter]

Shirley Phillips: It was a party house. It's sad to go by there now. I mean the trees are all dead. It's just pitiful.

Interviewer: *When you first moved into that neighborhood, who were your neighbors?*

Shirley Phillips: Marie Kelly, Marie and George Kelly lived on the right side of us. And on the left, eventually, it was a Blackburn. Then there was a Von Reese lived up north, next to them. And Jack Jeffrey lived down on the corner.

Fredric Watson: *See he's—Jack is going to be one of the speakers on the 26th, April 26th, when we're having our annual get-together at the library.*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, yeah.

Fredric Watson: *So it will be fun to hear from him.*

Interviewer: *Was it plant people that lived in the neighborhood? People who worked for the plants?*

Shirley Phillips: I think Blackburn worked at the plant.

Interviewer: *It was kind of a mixture, wasn't it?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah and Marie—George Kelly was a machine operator and he worked in on the strip when they were building all those new hotels. He'd work in there. But she worked at Van Valey's. So she was a clerk at Van Valey's.

Fredric Watson: *I'll be darned. We shopped there.*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, yeah.

Wendy Gillen: Well, across the alley was the Laubachs. He was an insurance agent.

Shirley Phillips: Oh yeah, Laubachs lived across the alley. I don't remember any of those people over there. Wilkins lived down on the other side of Nelsons, Ann and Jerry Nelson, Tab Nelson's parents lived down the street. It was quite a neighborhood.

Interviewer: *What was it like to live in Henderson when you first moved here? How did it compare to where you had come from?*

Shirley Phillips: Where we came from was so small that this was just kind of overwhelming, but it was—you know, I could call the grocery store and they'd deliver groceries. We had a milkman. They'd come and deliver milk and there was even a bread truck. They'd come and deliver bread. I mean, I thought I was in heaven.

Interviewer: *Those are nice services.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, because the school that Joe was teaching at before we came here was—I think was about twenty miles from the nearest town that had any big grocery stores. There was little post office grocery stores there, but to buy supplies, you had to go thirty miles either direction to get to a store.

Interviewer: *Did you buy most of your things in Henderson or did you go to Las Vegas to buy things from time to time?*

Shirley Phillips: Clothing and stuff like that, to get to a cheaper price, to go into Penney's. It was right there on Fremont Street. We'd go in there once a year to get groceries. And then the kids

had to have uniforms for St. Peter's School and those you had to go into town to get. Yeah, it was—that was the big trip. [laughter]

Wendy Gillen: Going into town was a big event. And we didn't do it all the time. We stayed in Henderson.

Interviewer: *How did you fit everybody into the car to get—or did you take the bus?*

Shirley Phillips: We had a station wagon.

Wendy Gillen: And there were no seatbelt laws. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Right, I remember that, yeah.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, I think of that now and I think, my gosh it's a wonder we didn't kill some kids. Because they wouldn't sit still, I mean—

Interviewer: *Somehow people survived.*

Fredric Watson: *Shelley—when we were driving on Atlantic, Shelley opened the back door and fell out of the car. It was those suicide doors where the back doors opened this way and the wind, of course, just yanked her out to the side of the road. But there were no sidewalks in Henderson.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. There weren't any sidewalks when we moved here.

Fredric Watson: *So she got skinned up good, but she didn't hit any curbs or anything. [laughter]*

Interviewer: *That's amazing.*

Shirley Phillips: There weren't any curbs. It was just a blacktop. And then where our house was, Kansas went straight and Nebraska curved. We were right on that curve, so we had a pie-shaped lot. It was huge. It went clear way back. That's why we could get all that stuff in there, the pool and everything else.

Fredric Watson: *Yeah, that was a blessing, wasn't it? And having an alley was—I always thought that was a neat feature. The developers, after that, they didn't make that mistake again. [laughter]*

Interviewer: *No room for alleys anymore. How did the weather affect you in Henderson?*

Shirley Phillips: When we first got here—well, we left Nebraska, it was thirty below zero. It was freezing. The roads were icy all the way through Salt Lake and down until we got nearly to Cedar City. When we got to Cedar City everything turned green. I mean, it was summertime to us. And we got to Henderson, and everybody was bundled up, and we thought, “What in the world's going on? It's summer.” [laughter] Because it was so warm. And it took us a while to get used to it, but you know, we had overshoes and everything else that just rotted because we never wore them again after we got here. And I'm glad we're here now because of the weather back east.

Interviewer: *Yeah. This has been a bad year. Did you have any friends in the African American community in Henderson? Did you know anybody in Carver Park?*

Shirley Phillips: No. I don't believe I did because, as I said, I was a stay-at-home mom. I didn't get out that much. I know one of the cheerleaders, when my daughter was a freshman in high

school, was an African American, but they didn't even think anything about it. I mean, she was one of the girls. There was no prejudice there at all.

Interviewer: *There may not have been too many people left in Carver Park by the late '50s or early '60s.*

Fredric Watson: *Yeah, I'm sure of that.*

Wendy Gillen: Carver Park, when I was in school, there were a few kids who would go to St. Peter's from Carver Park, but they weren't all black. I mean there were white kids down there too.

Interviewer: *Right. Rick lived in Carver Park, yeah.*

Wendy Gillen: I didn't realize until recently that it was supposedly an African American community. I didn't realize that was the segregation.

Shirley Phillips: It was built as that, wasn't it?

Interviewer: *It was, yeah, it was designed for them and then they didn't really want to live there because everything was happening on the Westside [of Las Vegas], so they would actually commute out to the plants rather than live in Henderson. But there were still like—*

Fredric Watson: *There were a few black families that lived in Carver Park when we were there.*

Interviewer: *There were still a few up to the '60s, I think.*

Shirley Phillips: Well, a lot of people lived there in Victory Village.

Fredric Watson: *Pat Clayton worked for me when I was the principal at Wasden Elementary School. She's from a black family and I think she lived in the same apartment that we did. You know, we moved—*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, really?

Fredric Watson: *When I got to telling her about it, she said, "I think we lived there too." This was at—you know, we had moved to—got a townsite house up on Tungsten in 1949 and she said she lived there in about the late '50s maybe, late '50s and early '60s. What a coincidence.*

Shirley Phillips: [laughter] That's amazing!

Fredric Watson: *Yeah. I still can remember the Willowby family. That was a black family that lived in Carver Park, and they were neighbors of ours, lived across the street. But I don't remember a great many other families.*

Shirley Phillips: I never knew any. You know, I was busy. [laughter]

Interviewer: [laughter] *You had a lot on your plate. But Shirley, even though you were taking care of your family, you must have participated in the church activities, and what kinds of things—*

Shirley Phillips: Oh yeah. I was on the church council and I was also a member of the Altar Society.

Interviewer: *Tell us about the Altar Society.*

Shirley Phillips: Well, our job was to clean the church and whatever the priest needed done, why, he'd call on us to do.

Interviewer: *And this was all women?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. The women of the church. Rick's mom was a member of it.

Interviewer: *And the men must have had another group, then.*

Shirley Phillips: I don't know what they did. [laughter]

Wendy Gillen: Knights of Columbus.

Shirley Phillips: The Knights of Columbus.

Interviewer: *Oh, is that it?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. Yeah, that's when they were really active. In fact, when we moved here, the first people that ever came to see us, was Bernie Cantwell, Bob Allan, and Bob Olson to get Joe to join the Knights of Columbus. Well, he was already a member. He'd been a member for years.

Fredric Watson: *Oh, really? Back in Nebraska?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. So, he was active in the Knights of Columbus.

Interviewer: *That's neat. What are your memories of Father Moran?*

Shirley Phillips: He was quite the character. I didn't know him that well, but he would throw some pretty fancy dances down there in the hall. [laughter] I'm surprised that building didn't fall down because when Father Caviglia came and decided that it needed to be demolished, he said just one touch of the Caterpillar, the demolisher, he said the thing just kind of fell in on itself. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Oh, man.*

Fredric Watson: *Remember there were wild cats, feral cats that lived under the old hall? They used to send us kids down there to try to chase them off, and we'd crawl under the building, and all that stuff.*

Shirley Phillips: That was dangerous.

Fredric Watson: *Oh, I know it. [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: [laughter] And then we were talking about the grotto that was down there, and I just felt so bad when they tore that down, but she said that the big kids at St. Peter's would threaten the little kids with—

Wendy Gillen: They said it was haunted, that we couldn't go back there. And it was scary. I mean, you know, it was dark.

Fredric Watson: *Do you remember when Caesar Caviglia had his—he had a vineyard back in behind the grotto?*

Shirley Phillips: He had quite a vineyard in there. And we made—stomped grapes and made wine twice down there. He raised enough grapes that we had quite a good quantity, not very good, but it was, there was a lot there. [laughter]

Fredric Watson: *It's too hot around here. The grapes are good to eat, but they—*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. But, we stomped the grapes. I mean, we'd—you know, we had a regular party down there.

Fredric Watson: *All right. I wish we had pictures of that.*

Wendy Gillen: I think you do have pictures.

All: [laughter]

Interviewer: *Somebody has pictures, I'm sure. What other social groups were you involved with?*

Shirley Phillips: I was president of the Republican Women of Henderson for two terms. I think four years.

Interviewer: *What kinds of things did you do?*

Shirley Phillips: We put on the Lincoln Day Dinner. We conducted campaigns. I was co-chairman of Paul Laxalt's campaign when he ran for Senate.

Interviewer: *Wow.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, and Letty Ness was the other chairman for Henderson.

Interviewer: *Did that take a lot of your time?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. But the kids were all gone then, so it wasn't that much, because it was fun. It was something to do.

Interviewer: *Did you have parties? What did you do? Did you invite people to come to parties?*

Shirley Phillips: No. We had a monthly meeting and then we'd decide now what do we have to do now. And we'd get political signs and we'd go out and get people to put them in their yards. It was a regular campaign. I enjoyed that. I did that for several years. And after that, I had a

friend who was working with the ballet. She was volunteering in there and she got interested in the politics. And I said, "Well"—she says, "Why don't you come with me and go see if you'd be interested in helping at the ballet. "All right. I'll go." Well, it was right up my alley. I loved to sew. And I ended up at the ballet and she took over my spot with the Republicans. [laughter] And I stayed with the ballet for ten years. And then everybody quit when the silly sewage quit. The whole crew that was working in the costume shop quit. So I took it for a little bit. And then I didn't have anything else to do, so I was walking by David's Bridal one day and thought, "I wonder if they have alterators." I went in there and they wanted me to work the next day. [laughter]

Fredric Watson: *Really. Where was that?*

Shirley Phillips: Over there on Marks.

Fredric Watson: *Okay, yeah.*

Shirley Phillips: So I was with them a couple years. Then I decided, "Aw, that's enough of that."

Fredric Watson: *Is that Marks down by, off of Stephanie? In that region?*

Shirley Phillips: Yep.

Wendy Gillen: Down at the Galleria.

Interviewer: *I bet that was a full-time job, working for David's Bridal, good grief.*

Shirley Phillips: It was. It was, and it was fun, but I don't think I want to see another bead [laughter]. To do it, we had to take all the beads off and put them back on the same way were.

Interviewer: *Gosh. Did you do anything else in your spare time? What kinds of school activities did you get involved with? You must have been involved in some of the school things.*

Shirley Phillips: Well, when the kids were in—down at St. Peter's, I think my son Joe was in the upper grades—the big kids. And he came home one day and he said, "Mom, we're not going to get any PE because there's no one that can teach it. Will you come down and help me, help us? Would you come down and teach it?" So I did that for one school year. I went down there and I—Jean, my youngest, was about two and she'd come along and sit there and watch. I made those kids play games. I never did have them, you know, in organized baseball or anything like that. It was just running and things like that. They thought it was great.

Fredric Watson: *Was that at St. Peter's?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. That was before it closed.

Interviewer: *Why did St. Peter's close?*

Shirley Phillips: Well, I think it was because of the cost. They were having to hire teachers instead of the nuns, and it was getting—you know, it was going to be too expensive. There weren't that many people that were sending their kids to school there anymore.

Interviewer: *Why did they decide to have teachers instead of the nuns?*

Shirley Phillips: Because there weren't enough nuns to teach. There weren't enough nuns that were taking up teaching. So it was—hire teachers, and that gets expensive.

Interviewer: *Did you ever do anything with St. Rose?*

Shirley Phillips: No, except I had babies there. [laughter] Six of them.

Fredric Watson: *Enough to keep them in the black.*

Shirley Phillips: They knew me in the emergency room, too.

Wendy Gillen: Well, she had all of us—six of us had to have our tonsils out, so she had it scheduled that we were all going to get our tonsils out at the same time. So they put us all in the hospital, and then the littlest one, my sister Jean, she had tonsillitis at the time, so she didn't get to go. So there were five of us and they scheduled surgeries, and we were all in the hospital, in the same room, to get our tonsils out.

Shirley Phillips: And the doctor told me, "Now don't go down there, because if you go down there, they'll want you to take care of those kids, so you just stay home with your baby." So I did. It was hard, but I did it.

Fredric Watson: *That's a good story. Was Sister Marie Daniels still there?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Wendy Gillen: I believe so, yes.

Fredric Watson: *She was a fixture at the hospital.*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, she was, yeah.

Fredric Watson: *Took care of Shelley when she broke her leg. Now, see, I had my tonsils out down there right after I graduated from high school, so it would have been about June of '58.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Fredric Watson: *But, I mean, how many days were the kids in the hospital?*

Shirley Phillips: They kept them several days. The doctor said, “No. no. You’ve got to keep them; because there’s so many of them, she can’t take care of them at home.” So they kept them for, oh—

Wendy Gillen: It was about four days.

Shirley Phillips: Four or five days, they kept them in there.

Fredric Watson: *Can you imagine the cost today?*

Shirley Phillips: It would be outrageous.

Interviewer: *Who was the doctor who performed the tonsillectomy?*

Shirley Phillips: Dr. Potter, wasn’t it?

Wendy Gillen: I don’t know. I was just a kid.

Shirley Phillips: I think it was Dr. Potter. Yeah, because Jean was a baby and he delivered her.

Yeah it was Dr. Potter.

Interviewer: *Do you remember some of the other nuns that worked at St. Rose?*

Shirley Phillips: I’m so bad at names. I remember seeing him—I know there was Sr. Frazier, was it? I’m not sure.

Interviewer: *I think Sr. Madonna was there, maybe?*

Shirley Phillips: I wouldn’t venture to even name any of them because I don’t remember names that well. I’ll remember it, you know, middle of the night, I’ll come up with the name. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Did you support any other institutions in Henderson besides the church and school?*

Shirley Phillips: No, I was on the beautification group with Marge Ivory for a while.

Interviewer: *What did they do?*

Shirley Phillips: Not much. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Was it to landscape the city?*

Shirley Phillips: It was—oh, she wanted to put hanging plants down Water Street and, you know, things like that, that absolutely were—it was pretty, but how are you going to keep those plants alive?

Interviewer: *Yeah. The shopkeepers would have to water them.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. Things like that that she thought would be nice. Of course, she had a greenhouse. She ran that nursery out there by the water plant.

Fredric Watson: *They lived up there.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. They lived there too.

Fredric Watson: *I thought that I remembered that she was a gardener. But they had a nursery?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Wendy Gillen: It was a great place.

Fredric Watson: *Did you get to go over there and play?*

Wendy Gillen: Oh yeah. It was fun to go in there. It was like a jungle.

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, well, my husband took the kids up there when—I don't know who was all with him, but somehow they knocked over a squirrel and broke the tail off, so I had a squirrel in my yard with a broken tail. [laughter]

Interviewer: *[laughter] You break it, you bought it.*

Shirley Phillips: You break it, you buy it.

Fredric Watson: *Did you say her name was Marge Ivory?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Interviewer: *Shirley, what are some of your memories of your husband's work with the school?*

Shirley Phillips: When he came here, he was to take Lorraine Taylor's place. Well, she wasn't ready to quit, so they had him working with the sound equipment and stuff at the junior high for two or three months before she quit. And then he taught third grade up at—it was Basic Elementary, but now it's McCaw. But he was there for several years and then he went into the special ed program. And he had a little cottage right there on the corner of Basic and that street that goes up by the school. It's the little corner there, and that was where he taught special ed.

Wendy Gillen: How did he get involved with special ed?

Shirley Phillips: Oh, he just loved to work with kids and those kids just adored him. He was just, you know, their hero.

Interviewer: *That's really great.*

Shirley Phillips: But he worked with them for, oh, three or four years, and then he decided he'd get his masters and become a principal. He was at several different schools. He was at all of them to begin with and the person that encouraged him to do that was Neil Twitchell. He's another one you should interview.

Fredric Watson: *Yes, yeah, we haven't done that. He would be a good one. And he was the principal at all of them.*

Shirley Phillips: He was principal at all of them, and my husband was assistant principal because they had dual schedules. They had two different sets of students because it was so crowded. So one would start early in the morning, and the other would start at noon.

Interviewer: *How many students did they have?*

Shirley Phillips: I have no idea.

Interviewer: *But probably by today's standards, it was nothing. [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: I don't know. I really don't know. Then from there, he went over to that school there on St. Louis.

Wendy Gillen: John F. Miller.

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, John F. Miller. He was there for—they could only stay in a school so many years and then they had to move. That was their program then. Then he got moved over to C.P. Squires over in North Las Vegas, and he was there for his allotted years and then they moved him down to John S. Park, and he was there until he retired.

Interviewer: *That's a lot of commuting.*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, yeah.

Fredric Watson: *On Boulder Highway, a lot of it.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, and it was just the one road to go in there.

Fredric Watson: *Some of the Henderson kids, they're older people now, but they posted a picture of the Boulder Highway before it was paved. It would have been back in about the 1930s. So I'll have to make you a copy of that too.*

Shirley Phillips: When the dam was being built.

Fredric Watson: *Yeah. That's a good picture.*

Shirley Phillips: But you know, it's strange—we were talking about it just the other night—the kids had to walk to school down to St. Peter's from home and they had to cross that road, and they had the seventh and eighth grade boys out there as crossing guards.

Wendy Gillen: On an interstate highway. It would not happen nowadays.

Interviewer: *No, that's nuts.*

Fredric Watson: *I was a crossing guard when I was at St. Peter's. And it was scary, and it was like seventy, eighty mile an hour traffic.*

Wendy Gillen: Right, yeah, because there were no speed limits.

Shirley Phillips: There were no speed limits, and those kids had to cross those road.

Fredric Watson: *Had they crossed the underpass?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. They closed that.

Fredric Watson: *We have a good picture of that too.*

Shirley Phillips: Have you?

Fredric Watson: *I'd almost forgotten that there even was one, but Toni was remembering that to me.*

Wendy Gillen: Yeah, it was scary down there.

Fredric Watson: *Graffiti and—*

Wendy Gillen: Oh, homeless people and—[laughter]

Interviewer: *What kinds of shops do you remember from the '50s and '60s in Henderson?*

Shirley Phillips: Well, like we were talking, there were two grocery stores—Prime Meats and Food Land. And then a meat market up on the other side of Food Land. Then there was a hardware store in there that had toys. I remember that because my son decided he wanted to see the toys and he took off one day and I didn't know where he was. I looked, I looked, I looked, and that's when the Royal Club was across the street. They had him up in the cashier's cage. He'd wandered in there and they just put him up there and called the police and said, "We've got a kid here that's lost."

Fredric Watson: *I'll be darned.*

Wendy Gillen: How old was he?

Shirley Phillips: Oh, he was about four. He just wandered off. After that, I put a harness on him and hooked him to the clothesline. [laughter] And then there was—next to that, there was a—

Van Valey's was in there. And then there was a women's clothing store in there too. Style Show or Style Shop, I don't know what the name of it was. And a drugstore.

Wendy Gillen: Rexall Drugstore, with the soda fountain.

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. Your grandpa used to take you guys down there. And then, who was it, had the shop right in back of the drugstore? A lawyer. Dot—

Fredric Watson: *Oh, Doc Gould. Was that Doc Gould? Who was the chiropractor?*

Shirley Phillips: No. Dottie, Dottie, Dottie, somebody. See, my names are just blank. And there was the old theater—movie theater. It was just a Quonset hut that they put in as a movie theater.

Interviewer: *Did you go to the theater a lot?*

Shirley Phillips: The kids, they'd let the kids go on Saturdays. That was our vacation. [laughter] Send the kids to the movies!

Fredric Watson: *Do you ever remember a word that you could hear on the Saturday matinees? You could see the movie, or at least what my experience was when I was little, but it was so noisy, you could almost never hear the—kids would raise Cain.*

Shirley Phillips: And then there was a barbershop down there, between—on the other side of the drugstore. And Gunville's Department Store? Furniture Store. Gunville's Furniture Store. There was even a dime store down there on the other side, on Pacific. And a hardware store.

Interviewer: *Did you have some restaurants that were good?*

Shirley Phillips: What was the name of that one down in Pittman?

Wendy Gillen: Swanky's.

Shirley Phillips: The Swanky Club.

Wendy Gillen: Smorgasbord.

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, that was good. There were people all around the country that would go to that restaurant because it was really good. But there wasn't any, really, restaurants in town. The El Cortez—or the Eldorado finally built up, and then they had a restaurant. Do you remember any? I don't remember any at all. I remember when they built the A&W next to the church down there.

Interviewer: *When was that?*

Shirley Phillips: Well, it was when—

Interviewer: *In the '60s?*

Shirley Phillips: I don't remember when it was.

Wendy Gillen: I was still going to school. I was probably in fourth or fifth grade. So that was late '60s.

Shirley Phillips: Then they built a McDonald's down there too.

Interviewer: *Did you ever go to the casinos?*

Shirley Phillips: No. You know, that just—I loved to play the slot machines, but I never did, and she was a dealer at the Golden Nugget. One time we went in there and waited on her for a

while, and I decided I'd play the slot machines and I hit a royal flush. I don't think I've ever played them since. [laughter]

Interviewer: *How about that!*

Shirley Phillips: It just didn't, you know—not addicted. [laughter].

Interviewer: *[addressing Wendy Gillen] You know, it's interesting that you became a—well, how did you become a dealer?*

Wendy Gillen: My older brother, Frank, was down here from UNR—Reno—with his friends, and they decided that I should come back up there with them. So they kidnapped me and I went back up there and I found a job in a casino. Well, actually, I started at a bank, and then my brother and I were sharing an apartment, and then he came and told me he was moving in with his girlfriend, so I needed to do something. So I went down to the casino and I applied at Harrah's casino and before too long, I was a dealer. Then I stayed up there for ten years and I came back down here when the Mirage was opening and just started dealing down here.

Interviewer: *Did they teach you how to do that?*

Wendy Gillen: Harrah's did, up in Reno. They had their own dealer's school. You went on your own time and they taught you to deal. And then if you passed an audition, they would let you be a dealer. So it was good career.

Shirley Phillips: She's still at it.

Interviewer: *Oh yeah?*

Shirley Phillips: Well, she's not dealing anymore, but she's still at it.

Wendy Gillen: I'm in management now.

Fredric Watson: *What hotel are you at then?*

Wendy Gillen: I'm actually on an Indian Casino in California outside of Sacramento—Cache Creek Casino Resort. So it's a different atmosphere. [laughing]

Shirley Phillips: It's amazing. You'd think you were in one hotel down here. I mean, it's fabulous. You think of an Indian Casino, and well, I grew up on a reservation, so I think of these shacks. It's elaborate.

Interviewer: *They're nice. Yeah. What did your other children do for a living?*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, gosh. Let's see, my oldest daughter was a teacher down in California. She's now retired and lives in Idaho. My oldest son was a fireman here in town until he decided he needed to go—move—he married a girl from South Dakota and she couldn't stand it here, so they moved back to South Dakota and he started his own construction company, building custom homes. And he passed away up there in '99. He was forty-nine years old. Then the next son is an engineer and he works in Kentucky, for the state, doing projects like building bike trails and things like that for the State of Kentucky.

Fredric Watson: *That would be fun.*

Shirley Phillips: And then, my next son, Joe, is an engineer and he works contract work for the Navy up in Bremerton, Washington. And then there's her.

Interviewer: *It's interesting how everybody goes away from Henderson rather than staying.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. I have two sons that live here. The next son, he works for the school district and the youngest son is a dean for the school district.

Interviewer: *Well, that's pretty good.*

Shirley Phillips: Then the two daughters, the younger two girls that I thought would be good friends, never liked—don't put them in the same room. One is in Sandpoint, Idaho, and she works for the Alliance Corporation up there. And then my youngest daughter is in Beulah, Wyoming, population 33. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Wow.*

Shirley Phillips: Her husband is a patrolman up there, highway patrol.

Interviewer: *They don't dare move away or else. [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: [laughter] But they've got a beautiful home that he's built and it's just gorgeous. I said I—he's trying to get a better job so he can retire sooner, but if they do, they'll have to leave that home. I don't know if they'll ever do it or not, but it's an investment, they say. So then I've got eighteen grandchildren. In fact, one of my grandsons will be here this next month. He's in the Navy. He's on the Ronald Reagan. My oldest granddaughter is married to a captain of the Alabama submarine. So the Navy must run in our family. Joe was in the Navy.

Fredric Watson: *Oh. Joe was in the Navy?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Fredric Watson: *See, I didn't remember that.*

Shirley Phillips: But that's my family.

Interviewer: *Do you remember anything about Joe's military experience?*

Shirley Phillips: I didn't know him at that time. I know he was an aviation electrician. He worked on planes. In fact, Wendy and I and he went down to go through the [USS] Midway [Museum] down in San Diego and all those planes were on there that he had worked on. Oh, he was just—it was just amazing to watch him. He'd just look at them, and I'm so glad he got to see them again.

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

Fredric Watson: *I've never gone onboard there, but I've walked past the—looks like really neat exhibits.*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, you've got to go see it. Now, my grandson, Randy, is on the Ronald Reagan and it's down there. And he said, "Now, grandma if you come down, I'll get you on a tour of the Ronald Reagan." And I said, "Oh gosh." [laughter]

Fredric Watson: *Yeah, that'd be fun.*

Shirley Phillips: But it's going to be leaving here in a little while.

Interviewer: *Well, you better go down and do the tour! [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: I know, and he's coming up here next month, and then he said they'll be going to Hawaii and then after that, they'll be going to Japan. And I have one grandson in Aberdeen, Scotland. He's an engineer and he's working for Schlumberger Drilling and I went over there in August and got to see him. I was on a tour and I got to see him.

Fredric Watson: *Well that was neat to—*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Interviewer: *That's beautiful.*

Fredric Watson: *To have your grandchildren all over the world. That's really a good reason to travel.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, but I'm getting kind of old to travel anymore. [laughter]

Fredric Watson: *Oh, never too old for that. Where were you when PEPCON happened? Do you remember?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. I do. My daughter, Jean, and her husband were looking at a house over on Calico, and Joe and I decided, "Well, let's go over there and look at and see just what they're getting into." So we were over there, and we were driving up Lake Mead—you know, the highway over there—and I looked back and I saw this great big—it looked like a gas truck or something had blown up, is what I thought it was, and we didn't think anything about it, and then when we turned around to get back, we couldn't get home because all the roads were closed and it was just—it was amazing, what that blast did. It didn't hurt our place any. It kind of pushed the garage door in, past the stoppers. But that was about what it did. But then, the mountain's between us and PEPCON—Black Mountain—because we were on the other side of that mountain.

Interviewer: *Oh, okay, that's interesting.*

Shirley Phillips: So it didn't do us much damage.

Wendy Gillen: I think there's a lot of hidden damage that you don't know—you know, the cracks and the—

Shirley Phillips: There could be, yeah.

Interviewer: *Could be, yeah. But I also heard that those houses were built so much more soundly than the new houses that were built in Green Valley, that the ones in Green Valley really sustained a lot of damage.*

Wendy Gillen: There wasn't a mountain in between them and the [laughter]—

Interviewer: *That's true.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, but it was horrible. And then most of the people that went to the hospital over here—Dr. Kilpatrick was the doctor at the hospital—he said most of them were burns from the marshmallow factory that got—blew up. He said that that gel would just stick to their skin.

Interviewer: *That's awful.*

Shirley Phillips: It was burns from the marshmallows. It smelled like the biggest marshmallow roast you ever saw.

Fredric Watson: *Really? I'll be darned.*

Interviewer: *Yeah, a lot of people were injured. They like to say that only two people died, but a lot of people were injured.*

Shirley Phillips: And a lot of them, he said, it was burns from the marshmallows.

Fredric Watson: *There was a man that worked for California Pacific. That was the gas company in Henderson in those days. And he sent an email to us saying that he was out in the street in front of the place, talking to somebody when the first explosion went off and it knocked him down. He said then he went in back in the building, and when the second explosion went off, it knocked him over the conference table, which I thought was a—that was an interesting story.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, well, when my friend, Connie Trujillo, was working for Lou LaPorta in his office down there on Water Street, and the door wasn't locked, so it was a free-swinging door, but she said when that when off it just blew that door in. It didn't blow it off the hinges, but it just blew it in. So they didn't lose any windows, but she said she could hear the windows breaking all the way up the street from that.

Fredric Watson: *See, Lou under—was the underwriter for a lot of that.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, he was. Remember that flood that we had that time and it went right through his house? He didn't have any flood insurance! [laughter]

Interviewer: *Oh, no! Of all the people, right?*

Shirley Phillips: He's a good friend.

Fredric Watson: *Yeah. Lou's got a lot of good stories.*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, yeah.

Fredric Watson: *In Henderson.*

Interviewer: *What are some of your other memories of events that happened in Henderson besides the flood and the PEPCON?*

Shirley Phillips: Well, like I was saying earlier, whenever that chlorine gas came out, all of the leaves on the trees would fall off. We never thought anything about it. It was just one of the things that happened.

Interviewer: *It didn't bother your lungs or anything?*

Shirley Phillips: No.

Interviewer: *That's amazing.*

Fredric Watson: *You can tell; you could smell it.*

Shirley Phillips: You could smell it.

Fredric Watson: *But I don't remember getting sick from it or anything. We just went out—interesting to look at it.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Wendy Gillen: What you don't know doesn't hurt you.

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

All: [laughter]

Fredric Watson: *I mean that was chlorine gases.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. It was chlorine gas.

Fredric Watson: *They used that in the First World War. That was a weapon.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Interviewer: *Defoliate. [laughter] Gosh. Besides the chlorine gas, was living in Henderson dangerous in any way? [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: No. I thought it was quite nice. I never had any fears about living in Henderson. In fact I'd rather live here than in Vegas.

Interviewer: *And you've stayed here, so there must be a reason that you've stayed. Why have you stayed in Henderson all these years?*

Shirley Phillips: It's home. It's been home for, what, since 1955. And I don't know what's going to happen to me later, but I'm still here. [laughter]

Fredric Watson: *Yeah. It's nice to be in a place where you know a lot of people.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. And, you know, it's the church and all. It's home.

Fredric Watson: *Did your kids ever talk to you about the hermit? There was an old prospector that lived down on the wash—the kids called it the swamp. Did you ever hike down to the swamp, Wendy, or the water that runs out of Vegas?*

Shirley Phillips: I think my boys did. I don't know whether you ever did.

Wendy Gillen: No, I didn't go over there.

Shirley Phillips: I think the boys used to go down there.

Fredric Watson: *Joe Hill said that he'd been down to visit him a couple of times. I ask everybody that I run into if they have any stories about the hermit because we're trying to track down who he was and whatever became of him.*

Shirley Phillips: I'll ask my boys.

Fredric Watson: *Yeah, do that because he's like a folk legend from those days.*

Shirley Phillips: I'll ask my boys because it would probably either be Frank or Joe. Joe and Marshall and those guys, they were all over everywhere.

Fredric Watson: *Yeah. That was a big source of entertainment for Henderson kids, was to get out and explore the desert.*

Shirley Phillips: Do you remember spring break, always on spring break, the swamp caught on fire.

Wendy Gillen: I wonder why.

All: [laughter]

Shirley Phillips: The smoke was just horrible, but the kids would go down there on spring break and, I don't know, they'd set that thing on fire.

Interviewer: *I can't imagine. [laughter] Now, were they setting just the brush on fire or did the water actually burn because there was chemicals in the water? [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: Well, I don't know.

Wendy Gillen: That's a good question. I can remember, as a little kid, the sandstorms that would come through. You could see them coming across the valley and it was kind of frightening because the wind would just howl and there would be sand everywhere.

Interviewer: *And I heard you didn't want to wear a dress to school because the sand would hit your legs.*

Wendy Gillen: Well, we wore uniforms, so we always had skirts on, but I mean, it was just—you'd see that storm coming, you'd head inside.

Shirley Phillips: It kind of reminded me of the '30s out there on the prairie. It was the dustbowl and those storms would come in—it would just be black. You'd think it was midnight because the dust was so thick. And when it would go on through, there'd be dust an inch thick on the windowsills and stuff.

Interviewer: *That's really scary.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. It was amazing. That was growing up out there in the prairie.

Interviewer: *Does Henderson still get dust storms that are as bad as back then?*

Shirley Phillips: Not now because it's built up so much. There's not all that open—there wasn't anything between Henderson and Las Vegas, except for—

Wendy Gillen: Burning desert.

Fredric Watson: *A little bit in Pittman and a little bit in Whitney.*

Shirley Phillips: Pittman and then in Whitney. There was nothing in between.

Fredric Watson: *When developers bladed off all of the ground in the Green Valley and that area, anytime there's a big building project, that just exposed a big part of the desert to blow.*

Shirley Phillips: You know, that one there, what is it, the first one they built over there—I know the Dalitas moved into it.

Fredric Watson: *Oh yeah, down by Sewell, where Sewell School is?*

Shirley Phillips: No. In between—

Fredric Watson: *Magnesium Park.*

Shirley Phillips: No. Out along Boulder Highway going toward Vegas. They would have dust storms in there.

Fredric Watson: *Where all the sand dunes from Paradise Valley were, okay. Yeah, do you remember the sand dunes? We used to sometimes, instead of going to Boulder Highway, sometimes drives those dirt roads through Paradise Valley to get to town, and there would be just sand dunes everywhere. That's where, when they put in our yard on Victory Road, they hauled in dump truck loads of blow sand.*

Shirley Phillips: Did they get any scorpions in them?

Fredric Watson: *Yeah. We had everything. Spiders.*

Shirley Phillips: Because we would get that from the kids' sand pile. We had a big sand pile, and we told them, "Now watch out," because there's probably scorpions in there to begin with.

[laughter]

Interviewer: *Oh, gosh.*

Wendy Gillen: We were abused. [laughter]

All: [laughter]

Shirley Phillips: Poor babies.

Fredric Watson: *Local scorpions weren't deadly, they would just hurt you. I remember going up to boy scouts, on a big Boy Scout activity up in Red Rock Canyon, and the scout master, a man named, Cornelius Cornell, his kids went to St. Peter's and he sat on a scorpion. It was his truck, an old green Studebaker, and we drove all the way up there, and when he got out of the truck, there was a scorpion just flat as a pancake, where he'd been sitting.*

Interviewer: *He didn't even notice. [laughter]*

Fredric Watson: *Poor scorpion didn't get a chance to get his apparatus pointed in the right direction. [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: Speaking of Boy Scouts, one time one of our boys was going to go down to Christmas Tree Pass to camp and they needed transportation, so Joe decided, well, he'd furnished some of them, so he and my dad took a load down and my dad said, "I've never seen such a rugged, unforgiving, mean country in my life." He was out there in Nebraska and South Dakota where it's grass, not rock.

Fredric Watson: *Oh, my goodness, rough country.*

Shirley Phillips: "I don't know what those kids are going to do down there camping. It's awful."

Fredric Watson: *We loved the desert though. We just got used to it.*

Shirley Phillips: They'd go out and hunt for rabbits, and they had a 22 and they'd go out hunting. I mean, I never worried about them. I guess I should have. In fact, they tell stories of

what they used to do and I say, "It's a good thing I didn't know what you were doing or you wouldn't be alive today" because they did some things that were pretty darn dangerous.

Interviewer: *What did they do?*

Shirley Phillips: Well, they were talking about some tunnel, a water tunnel that goes—
[addressing Rick Watson] you knew about it!

Fredric Watson: *No, go ahead and tell the story because we're looking for that one.*

Shirley Phillips: I don't know the whole story, but they had to crawl through that thing, and then come out and lay down father down the hill and I thought, "Oh, my gosh."

Fredric Watson: *Get your boys to tell you about that in detail, because that's another, like the hermit story, that's a good one. Henderson didn't, maybe by that time, we had a swimming pool, but there just wasn't a lot of water kinds of things to do. You could go down to the lake and jump off the cliffs, but that water tunnel, I've heard stories about that. I saw it. I hiked up there one time. It's just right off the Boulder Highway.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. That's what they were saying.

Fredric Watson: *I never had nerve enough to climb up there, but these kids would go up—what it was was for runoff from the water reservoir, and for a period of time when they must have been doing some work there, and to flush the reservoir, they would pump a lot of water down this thing, and it came at the same time every day. And these kids would climb there and then wait. Then the water would shoot them out of the tunnel. [laughter] That's scary to think about, isn't it?*

Wendy Gillen: I was an angel. [laughter]

Shirley Phillips: [laughter] Oh, dear. Well, it's been an interesting life.

Interviewer: *Did your family participate in Industrial Days parades? What kinds of things?*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, yes. The kids were all on the swim team—the Silver State Swimmers, was it?

Wendy Gillen: Silver State Swim Club.

Shirley Phillips: Silver State Swim Club, and there were the Tabars, the Cowens, the Redfords, the Bowers, and the Phillipses—that was swim team. And they built a big swim—or a float in our backyard. And, oh, it was something else. Didn't we get first prize or something? We had a diving block, whatever you call it.

Wendy Gillen: It was like a pool on the back of a truck. It looked like a pool with a diving board. Then we were all on the back of it.

Interviewer: *Sounds cute.*

Fredric Watson: *Do you think you have any pictures of that? That float? That would be a nice thing to—*

Shirley Phillips: If we do, I don't know. I never took any pictures of it.

Fredric Watson: *And maybe some of the others, Joel Bower, he's still in Henderson.*

Shirley Phillips: I don't know whether he was—Tabars were the ones that—and Cowens.

Fredric Watson: *Tabar and Cowens? Was that Ben Cowens? His wife's still alive, I think.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. She's married to—she's remarried, but they still live in the same place.

Wendy Gillen: Industrial Days Parade was always—it wasn't the parade so much as the carnival that was always set up. That was always the big thing, the carnival, because, you know, we didn't get to go to Disneyland or anything like that, so anytime that carnival would come through, it was a big deal. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Did they have rides?*

Wendy Gillen: Oh yeah—the Ferris wheel—all of the carnival rides.

Shirley Phillips: Oh yeah, the Ferris wheel—it was a regular carnival, you know, that they'd put down there on—well, where the library is now, down in that field.

Fredric Watson: *At Gibson Library.*

Shirley Phillips: That's where the carnival was set up.

Interviewer: *Where Gibson is.*

Fredric Watson: *And they used to do it, before that, right about where the El Dorado Club is, there was a big—there was a big—you know, if this property shrank as development came in, but it would have been right across the street from the Townsite School.*

Shirley Phillips: In there where the City Hall is—or, no, the Justice Center—corner of Basic and Water. They had an in-ground trampoline thing there at one time, on that corner.

Fredric Watson: *The City of Henderson has a big archive of photos and a lot of people are newcomers here, and they have the pictures, but they don't know the story behind them. So that would be interesting to look for that. I'm sure some were in there. So around Water and Basic.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. It was in-ground trampolines.

Interviewer: *I've not heard that before.*

Shirley Phillips: And then the tennis courts were on the other side of the street.

Interviewer: *Did you play tennis?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Interviewer: *Were you ever in a tournament?*

Shirley Phillips: Not here. We were in Nebraska. I was in a tournament there.

Interviewer: *How about that. How'd you do?*

Shirley Phillips: I won. [laughter] She's the tennis player! [referring to Wendy Gillen]

Interviewer: *Do you have a little trophy or something?*

Shirley Phillips: No. It was City Recreation, and I won. I was—I thought I was pretty smart.

[laughter] We used to play here. My husband and I and Dick Van Camp would play and we'd get one of my kids to go. And Andy was playing with us. My son, Andy. He hit the ball and hit Dick Van Camp right on the back of the head. Just wacked, just as hard, oh it was awful. [laughter]

Interviewer: *How has Henderson changed over the years do you think?*

Shirley Phillips: Oh, it's gotten too big. I worry about the water. They keep building these houses and building houses. Where is the water going to come from? And then this new freeway they are talking about putting in, that's scary. You've seen that, haven't you?

Fredric Watson: *I haven't.*

Shirley Phillips: It starts over on the other side of Nellis and goes clear down to the lake and then comes back and comes right up here next to the River Mountains. And those people over there in those rural estates—I don't know what they call them, but they're the horse estates. They're fighting it. I went to a meeting about three or four weeks ago about it, and that room was packed. There are people that are just furious about it.

Interviewer: *Is it that they're trying to make a truck bypass to get around?*

Shirley Phillips: They're trying to make a freeway bypass, so there will be a freeway from Vegas to Phoenix. It was in the paper. I've got a copy of it at home.

Wendy Gillen: There's already a highway. I don't understand why they were trying to by-pass all the businesses.

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. That's what everybody is saying, "What's wrong with the 515?"

Interviewer: *I looked at what that road would encompass, and I just imagined in the future, what are they envisioning of a megalopolis that the Las Vegas Valley will become? Oh, my gosh. It's going to be bigger than the Atlanta Metropolitan Area.*

Wendy Gillen: There's no water to support it.

Interviewer: *No. Lake Mead is already drying up.*

Wendy Gillen: Yeah. I understand populations grow, but there has to be a limit. Your resources have to match what you allow to grow or you're going to be in trouble.

Shirley Phillips: But even up there on Horizon Ridge where we used to go and look at the lights, you can't do that anymore. There's too many houses up there. They've built it up so you can't even pull off the road. And it's getting that way all over.

Interviewer: *Do you think that the population growth is just too much in the expanded area of Henderson or do you think that the older area of Henderson is also getting bigger?*

Shirley Phillips: Well, I think the older area is sort of deteriorating. They're doing more for the outland—the newer areas and they're ignoring the old townsite.

Fredric Watson: *The old townsite houses, they weren't planned.*

Shirley Phillips: No. They were supposed to be torn down after the plant closed. In fact, the house that we were in, her husband was one of the managers down at the plant and he died. And so she was in that house and she moved to those Henderson apartments where that new senior living is now. We rented that house for \$99 a month.

Fredric Watson: *That was your first house on Nebraska?*

Wendy Gillen: That's the house we all grew up in. In fact, when they went to renovate the house, they planned on taking the one wall and just expanding it out. They poured concrete and then they were going to take the existing wall and move it out and then build walls to it. In the corners, it wasn't all nailed together. There were bolts. It was temporary housing. They

intended to come back in, undo the bolts, let the walls fall, and the houses wouldn't be there anymore. So it was all temporary housing.

Fredric Watson: *In all their documents they refer to them as demountable. And it was redwood.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. Clear redwood. I mean it was, even the beams underneath, were clear wood. There was not a flaw in any of them. You can't get that now.

Interviewer: *They didn't know what they had back then. [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: No, they didn't. But we did—they just kind of walked that wall out and fastened it with beams and built in, and we had two dorms. The girls' dorm and the boys' dorm.

Fredric Watson: *What was your address on Nebraska?*

Shirley Phillips: 375.

Fredric Watson: *We interviewed Bette Jo Peisker. Her dad, during the war days, ran the pool hall and bowling alley and later they had a boxing ring in there too for Harry Reid and—*

Shirley Phillips: Where was that?

Fredric Watson: *You know, here's the Victory Theatre and the Drug Store, and then you would have taken a left turn down toward Pacific. You know where Kreskies and everything was? Well, it would be in that block. The drugstore, and then it was right down here at the end. But yeah, Bette Jo had some good stories to tell. Her dad let her run the pool hall from about 4:00 or 8:00 or maybe 5:00 to 7:00 when he went home to eat dinner. She was only ten years old. This is a good story.*

Shirley Phillips: [laughter] But I never worried about the kids going anywhere. I mean, I didn't have to take them anywhere. If they wanted to go someplace, they walked.

Wendy Gillen: Or rode our bicycles.

Shirley Phillips: Or you rode your—until you broke your arm.

Wendy Gillen: One time. [laughter]

Interviewer: *How'd you break your arm?*

Wendy Gillen: I was on my way across town to see a girlfriend and I was riding along and the handlebar came off—the handle grip. You know, the plastic part came off and I lost control and I fell and my arm hit the curb.

Shirley Phillips: It's like she had two elbows.

Wendy Gillen: So it was like the curb. And I wasn't that far from the house. I was only down on Basic, so it wasn't like I was that far from the house, but I didn't know what to do. This nice guy stopped, took me to the gas station, and called her.

Shirley Phillips: Took you to the hospital.

Wendy Gillen: Well, he took me to the hospital and then they called her, but he was the Texaco man. He worked at the gas station down across the highway.

Interviewer: *See, that is the kind of thing that would happen in Henderson because everybody was so family-oriented.*

Wendy Gillen: Yeah. They weren't so worried about, "Oh, I'm going to get accused of doing something."

Interviewer: *What do you enjoy most about living in Henderson?*

Shirley Phillips: Oh. I don't know. Raising my family here and being able to not worry about where they were going and the freedom. Yet, you're close enough to—if you wanted to go have a good time, there's places you can go. It's a good place.

Wendy Gillen: We were out on the lake all summer.

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. We'd go to the lake a lot.

Wendy Gillen: And then we'd go up to Mount Charleston. I mean it was just, you know, you didn't have to go very far to have a totally different atmosphere.

Shirley Phillips: We'd take them camping up at Mount Charleston, boating out on the lake.

Wendy Gillen: Valley of Fire. I mean there's just so many places to go around here, that, you know, people—"What's to do in Vegas besides gamble?" It's like, "Oh, there's so much to do."

Interviewer: *Yeah, Valley of Fire is my favorite.*

Wendy Gillen: Not in the summer.

Interviewer: *I'll go in the summer. Well— [laughter] not when it's really warm.*

Wendy Gillen: But in the winter, it was the perfect place to go because it was still warm.

Shirley Phillips: Yeah, we went up there one time and came around this corner and here was this beautiful Spanish village. It was a movie prop for that movie that they built up there. What was it? There goes the name again.

Fredric Watson: *What year was this, would you say?*

Shirley Phillips: Let's see. Joe was about six, so it would have been '61, '62.

Fredric Watson: *So that was up by the Valley of Fire, did you say?*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. It was a prop. It was there and it was just real, I mean.

Interviewer: *That's neat.*

Fredric Watson: *Do you remember any of the movie stars.*

Shirley Phillips: No.

Fredric Watson: *I'll have to look. There's a website called Internet Movie Database. I'll scan the sixties and see.*

Shirley Phillips: I think Lee Marvin, but I don't think he was in it.

Fredric Watson: *There was a movie called The Professional that was filmed out that way, I think.*

Shirley Phillips: That's it.

Fredric Watson: *Burt Lancaster.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. That was it.

Fredric Watson: *Yeah because that is scenic country, just beautiful backdrops.*

Interviewer: *Did you get to see any celebrities that came to town like Frank Sinatra and Betty Grable? Chuck Norris? [laughter]*

Shirley Phillips: No. I don't remember.

Wendy Gillen: They really didn't go out much.

Shirley Phillips: We didn't go out much.

Wendy Gillen: I mean my whole childhood, I can remember having a babysitter twice. And those two times were Knights of Columbus things that they went to. They didn't go out that much.

Shirley Phillips: We have some friends, the Cantwells. I don't know if you remember them or not.

Fredric Watson: *Oh yeah. Sure.*

Shirley Phillips: But they were good friends. They had eleven kids and we had the nine. And we'd have Thanksgiving at each other's house—rotate, you know. One year it was the white people's turn and the next year it was the Indians' turn to have Thanksgiving. [laughter] Twenty kids and four grownups.

Fredric Watson: *Man, that must have been a shindig.*

Wendy Gillen: It was so much fun.

Fredric Watson: *Let's see, Margaret Cantwell's son would be a good person to interview. Bernie could bring the beer too.*

Shirley Phillips: Oh gosh. He could bring all kinds of stuff. He worked for Nevada Beverage. We enjoyed him. He was glider pilot during World War II. And he was a prisoner-of-war for I don't know how many years.

Fredric Watson: *Yeah, they have some good stories. That's something, flying down.*

Shirley Phillips: Charlotte is still alive.

Fredric Watson: *Charlotte. I said Margaret, but it's Charlotte.*

Shirley Phillips: Charlotte, their mom. She's pretty sharp too, [would] probably remember names better than I do.

Fredric Watson: *Their youngest daughter went to Gorman at the same time that my oldest daughter was there.*

Wendy Gillen: Monica?

Fredric Watson: *Monica. Yeah. She lives in California, I think, now.*

Shirley Phillips: She's up in Reno. She's a physical therapist. She's got her own clinic.

Fredric Watson: *All right. See—and I didn't—I saw her at my mom's funeral and, of course, I couldn't remember. You know how you do, you pretend like you—oh, yeah—but then I was having to ask Jennifer, "Now, who's that?" "Oh. Don't you remember Monica?" Evidently, we took her with us on a trip to see Notre Dame and USC play in Southern California.*

Shirley Phillips: Another person that was there was Dennis Ortwine.

Fredric Watson: *Yeah. Dennis was there. I saw Dennis.*

Shirley Phillips: I went and talked to him, and he [said], “You know, I’m eighty year’s old, and I don’t remember your name.” [laughter]

Fredric Watson: *See, Dennis is from Montana. So he’s not far from where you were raised.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. I’ve got relatives up there that were close to where he was. A lot of my relatives are still up there. They’re Flathead Indians.

Fredric Watson: *We should have a separate interview on your recollections of your Indian days.*

Shirley Phillips: You know, I grew up on the reservation. I’m part Indian, but we had Indian friends and Dad would always hire the Indians when there was haying to do, and he never paid them until the job was done because if you paid them, they’d disappear. They’d not come back. They had some money, they were gone. So, he’d get them groceries. They’d pitch their teepees out across the road and they’d stay there until the job was done and then he’d pay them and they’d go on.

Fredric Watson: *Did they actually use the old style tent?*

Shirley Phillips: Did they actually what?

Fredric Watson: *Did they actually use the old style teepee tent when they were—*

Shirley Phillips: No. They were tents. They’d pitch them out on the other side of the road and camp there while they were working.

Fredric Watson: *See, your grandparents, was it—which side of the family was the—*

Shirley Phillips: My mother's.

Fredric Watson: *Your mother's side?*

Shirley Phillips: My mother's side. Her mother was one of three children that was born to this George Rooks and an Indian named, Tingliska. Tingliska was related to Crazy Horse. And then their mother died and this George Rooks married another Indian and they had fourteen more children. So, I'm related to nearly everyone up there on that reservation because they all married and stayed there.

Fredric Watson: *That's neat.*

Shirley Phillips: And they're having a reunion this next summer.

Fredric Watson: *I've read all kinds of books about the conflicts between the Sioux and the Cavalry. That's just interesting history.*

Shirley Phillips: My son gave me a book for Christmas. It was about Red Cloud. So I've read it, and there's referrals to our relatives in there.

Fredric Watson: *Red Cloud had face-to-face meetings with presidents before the Civil War and after.*

Shirley Phillips: Well, my grandfather, you know, he went with the Buffalo Bill's, Red Cloud did. Well, my grandfather rode with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. He was in that show. They went to Europe. They went all over.

Fredric Watson: *What an adventure that must have been.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. That's why, it was my grandfather.

Fredric Watson: *See that, that was good history.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. It's amazing when you start looking back and find some of those things that they did. And where my husband passed away was just a little ways from where my mother's grandmother died. It was in Colorado and they said that she drowned. I don't know. I've been to the place where they said she drowned, but I don't know if that's where it was or not. It gets quite entangled. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Family legends.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah.

Interviewer: *Shirley, is there anything else that you'd like to share about your life or your experience in Henderson?*

Shirley Phillips: No. I think we've pretty well covered it. I love it here. I wouldn't live anywhere else.

Interviewer: *Well, I'm glad to hear it. It certainly is a special community.*

Shirley Phillips: Yeah. It is. It really is.