

# **Henderson Libraries**

## **Henderson Oral History Project**

**Dorothy Coroneos**

**Oral History of Dorothy Coroneos**

**conducted by**

**Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm**

**June 20, 2014**

**Interviewer:** *Today is June 20, 2014. We're at the Paseo Verde Branch of Henderson District Public Libraries in Henderson, Nevada. My name is Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm, and I'm interviewing Dorothy Coroneos as part of the Henderson Oral History Project of the Henderson Libraries. Thanks for joining me, Dorothy.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Thank you for having me.

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

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I was born in Las Vegas, New Mexico, and we lived on a farm outside of town where my grandfather had his home. Thank goodness for my grandfather. My father went away when I was very young to find work, and so my mother and I stayed behind, and my other two siblings, and she helped clean houses up and down our street. We lived off of 8<sup>th</sup> Street extension, and she helped at these beautiful homes to help supply the family with money for us to live by while my father was gone. He was in construction and took my older brother with him. And so we stayed in the family home, and we depended on my grandfather a lot, so it was a nice childhood. It was—because it was a farm we had plenty to eat, and we—I loved it. I was very young, I had just started first grade, and shortly after that my father sent for us, and we moved to Tooele, Utah, which was—actually it was Desert Chemical, a government camp. My father went to work for the government and we—he brought the family with him. We, my mother and my siblings, worked in the Army cafeteria, and I, of course, went to a government school, which was grades 1 through 12, and I loved hanging out with the older kids. So most of my schooling was, my grammar school was in Desert Chemical, a town right outside of Tooele, Utah. And that was a very happy life. We had good food, we had good schools, and we had

Catholic services that came in once a week. My whole family was Catholic, so that was very important to us.

**Interviewer:** *That's neat. Now this was during the '40s?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *And then how did you end up coming to Henderson?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** My father would get transferred to different places, and he heard about a big project that was going on at the test site in Mercury, Nevada. And so he signed himself and my brother up and came out here. He lived in barracks, because it was 45 miles out of Las Vegas, and of course he couldn't send for us just then. But soon after that, Victory Village opened up in Henderson, and he was able to secure one of the units for us, and he sent for us. So then we were all together again.

**Interviewer:** *That's neat. What was Henderson like when you first came here?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** It was homey; it was small. My life was between St. Peter's Church and Victory Village, which was right behind the church and the school. It was, we felt, different because we didn't have fencing all around us like we did at the government camp in Utah. And so we felt free as a breeze and the kids just loved it. Our place was small, and we were very confined to being right close to neighbors. But at least it was clean and new and nice. And of course my mother immediately registered me into everything that St. Peter's had to offer. St. Peter's was young then. Father Moran had just come to run the school and the church, and so he was a big, big focal part in our life. We had him come to dinner, to just have home-cooked meals for him. He loved it. And our life was church and school, and my father continued to work in Mercury and only came home on weekends.

**Interviewer:** *This is—what year was this, about?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** This was in the late '40s.

**Interviewer:** *And so what were some of your neighbors like?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** They were great. Susie, Susie Medina, who became a Henderson schoolteacher, she and Gilbert lived next door to us. And we had a lady, the McGregors, her husband worked for the plant. Most of the neighbors were employed by one or the other of the plants. That was our life. With the exception of my father who traveled back and forth.

**Interviewer:** *So there weren't a whole lot of people who commuted to Mercury from Henderson?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No, no, there was a lot of people that just took part in the working plants that we had going, and the city, as small as it was, was our home town. It was wonderful.

**Interviewer:** *Did you know what your father was doing over at Mercury?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** They were helping build government barracks for the soldiers.

**Interviewer:** *So he didn't have a secret job that you couldn't talk about.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No, it wasn't secret. He could come and tell us. They were building cafeterias and barracks. I visited that area later on in my life, and all of it is gone. But that's what my father did.

**Interviewer:** *Did he have to be away from home for weeks at a time to work there?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** It was difficult for him and my brother to come every night because it was such long shifts that they just stayed in the barracks until the weekend.

**Interviewer:** *How did your family feel about that?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, we missed them, and my mother felt like she was in charge again, you know, which she always had been all my growing up days. But we always saw them on the weekends and sometimes they even had Mondays off, so they would spend three days, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday with us.

**Interviewer:** *What kinds of things would you do together as a family when they came home?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Church, grocery shopping, trips to Las Vegas, trips to Boulder City for the doctors' appointments. That kind of thing.

**Interviewer:** *Because they had the hospital in Boulder City, right?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** They had the hospital in Boulder City and I think St. Rose was just getting started.

**Interviewer:** *It was new, though.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** St. Rose de Lima.

**Interviewer:** *Okay, so—but for a while you had to go to Boulder if you wanted medical attention.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, Dr. French was my mother's doctor, and so she just loved him, so she went to him. We kids went to Dr. Coogan here in town. He took care of our ear infections and sore throats and that kind of thing. But she trusted Dr. French, so she took the trip to Boulder when she had to.

**Interviewer:** *What kinds of things did you get to see when you went to Las Vegas back then?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** We mostly went to the movies downtown, and of course we saw the clothing stores and things like that that we didn't have in Henderson. My mother, who was a penny pincher, did not let us look too much, but we still looked in the windows. There was a

store called Ronzoni's that was right down on Fremont Street, and our eyes would get bigger than snails when we would look through the window and say, oh my gosh, we want that, we want this. But it was a treat, it was a treat. We'd always get ice cream. We rode the bus.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, I was going to ask, did you drive your own car ever, did you have to ride the bus?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No, we rode the bus. So we made a day of it.

**Interviewer:** *Although your father must have had a pretty good gas ration card to commute to Mercury.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** When he was home, he would take us. So it was, you know, it was a luxury to have him home.

**Interviewer:** *Did you get to take some family outings around to, like, Lake Mead, and some of the other places?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes, we did that a lot, especially in the summer, because it was so hot in our unit. And my mother's sister-in-law was the only one that had a car. All of the men took the cars to go to work, so we would get in her old Chevy, and she'd take us to Lake Mead, and we'd go swimming for the day and take our picnic lunch. And the children would entertain the adults and we'd sing and swim and have a great day.

**Interviewer:** *It does sound great. When you were kids, did you get to play around in the desert at all?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** A little bit, chasing the dogs mostly. We always had a dog.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah. I heard that you had some dogs that ran over to Whitney Mesa.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** That happened to me after I was married, a married lady. That's further on in the story.

**Interviewer:** *That's a later story. Well, we'll get back to the Whitney Mesa dogs. Okay. Well, that's neat. So do you remember what the schools were like in Henderson when you first came?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** They were very good. They—comparing them to the government camp that I had been going, where, you know, not a whole lot of attention was on each classroom, here we had a classroom for every grade, and so it was good. I think that once you got into junior high, they doubled up, but for grammar school, it was pretty much full rooms for each grade.

**Interviewer:** *And did you, do you remember, did you have any friends in the African-American community, friends that lived in Carver Park?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes, I did. I played with lots of little girls that went to my school. And their mothers would cook and have me over for lunch with them, or I would have them over to my house. They liked coming to Victory Village, because we had a park, and so we could run around the park and things like that, which was not far from our unit. Carver Park didn't have that yet. So, there was Hispanics, there was, there was blacks, there were whites. I mixed with all of them.

**Interviewer:** *How many African-Americans do you think were there in Carver Park at that time?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Quite a few, and most all the units were filled with African-Americans.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, okay. I ask that question because I know that later on, most of them decided they would rather live in West Las Vegas, because that's where the greater community was. And so a lot of them moved out of Carver Park. Then I know by the time Rick Watson came to town [1946], his family moved into Carver Park, because they couldn't fill it.*



**Dorothy Coroneos:** I think that's true. I think that they did move out, and I lost track of my little friends. But it was a wonderful time, and they were good people.

**Interviewer:** *I guess that's how people feel about, especially at that time, people coming from all over the United States to start this temporary town in the middle of the desert, they sort of all banded together in a spirit of community. Did you feel like that when you came here?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *That there was a special spirit of community?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** And as a matter of fact, my auntie took a couple of those girls swimming with us to the lake. Their parents had to be convinced that we would be all right, and that we would be watched by adults. But we were close and we had lots of fun.

**Interviewer:** *I had read that they had a swimming program at Lake Mead. Did you participate in that at all?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No, I didn't.

**Interviewer:** *Okay. Now, I understand that you went to elementary school, and I think you said junior high in Henderson?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes, and I started my first year of high school in Henderson, and my grandfather was quite ill in New Mexico, and my aunt, who lived with him, couldn't handle him on her own, so my mother took me, and we traveled to New Mexico to take care of him. So I went to high school there in Las Vegas and graduated from school there before I came back to Henderson.

**Interviewer:** *What brought you back to Henderson?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, my father was still here, and my older brother. My older sister had married in Utah and had moved to Victory Village as well. And so, by the time I came back after high school, my father had bought a home on Arkansas Street, one of the Townsite homes, and so we didn't have to go back to Victory Village, and I was hired at Bank of Nevada by Selma Bartlett. So I immediately went to work for her right after high school.

**Interviewer:** *Wow. That's a great start for your career.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** It was real interesting, because I had, she made me learn everything. I started as a file clerk, I went to teller, then I went to vault teller, and then I went to loans, and I was working in the loan department when I left. But during that time, she introduced me to the nuns at St. Rose de Lima, and I became very close to them and ended up serving on the Board for the hospital. And I also served on the Library Board on Water Street. Lydia Malcolm. I served on that due to Selma's pushing and saying you have to join all these organizations. She also helped me buy my first car. And my little old Chevy had just given up, so I had to walk to work every day, and she—it wasn't far. Arkansas Street was not far from the bank. But she insisted that I have a new car, and so we went to Boulder City, and she helped me buy my new car.

**Interviewer:** *What kind of car did you get?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I got a Falcon, think it was '61 or '60.

**Interviewer:** *What was that like?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** It was small, it was a small car. But compared to what I had been driving, it was luxurious.

**Interviewer:** *That's really neat that she took you there to help you buy a car.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *Did she negotiate for you?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Oh, definitely. She walked in telling the guy, you better tighten up your shoe strings, because this girl's not paying a lot of money for this car.

**Interviewer:** *She's so smart.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Very smart lady. My mentor.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, I can tell. I can tell. What are some things that you remember about working at the bank? Did you have some stories?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I have some very pleasant stories. The girls that had graduated from Basic that I got reacquainted with, quite a few of them were working there. The Killebrough girl was one, and the Maestes girl was another. And we immediately made friends again and had social functions afterwards, went to each other's homes. And so Henderson by then had grown, and there was places to go. We went to the dances at the Administrative Hall at Victory Village. We went to every Friday night dance and met a lot of friends there that I had known from before. And the families, the family names were all there, you know, so it was just great. The Settelines, so many of the friends that I see now, even, unfortunately, at funerals, are from families that I've known from way back then.

**Interviewer:** *Who are some of the other families in town?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** The Killebroughs. They owned a laundromat in town at Victory Village. And so those families were close to me. And the owners of the Swanky Club, the Mallorys. Their kids were close to me. So it was great. I never even thought back about ever leaving Henderson. It was my town.

**Interviewer:** *How did you meet your husband?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** He was a customer of the bank. And Selma Bartlett had checked out his account, and said, you've got to meet this guy. [laughter]

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

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Oh, yeah.

**Interviewer:** *She was taking care of you.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** She was taking care of me to the end. So that's how we met. I was a little fearful, because he was so much older than me, and he was an eligible bachelor. So we started dating, and he proposed, and we got married in the early '60s. We didn't get married in Henderson, because Alex had so many friends that made fun of him after being a bachelor for so many years, that we went to Caliente, Nevada, to get married.

**Interviewer:** *That's interesting.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** And we married at a little Catholic church there.

**Interviewer:** *What had brought him to Henderson?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** His family was here from the '40s. They moved from Phoenix, Arizona, here.

**Interviewer:** *What business were they involved in?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Pop Coroneos owned a hotel where the Skyline is now. He owned a hotel and restaurant. He had Greek food, and he and the boys, Alex and George, had started a plumbing business, and they owned a building on Boulder Highway as well where they had their business. And they were probably the only plumbing shop in town. They were very successful when they first started. Then they got tired of it and decided to cash in, but it was very, very fruitful.

**Interviewer:** *I wonder if there were a lot of plumbing problems, you know, back then?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I think there was, especially with the Townsite homes.

**Interviewer:** *What do you think the problems derived from?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** They weren't so much, you know, the homes weren't that old, but they weren't so much problems with the plumbing that existed. It's that people came in and added additions and did home connections that they didn't know very much about, and that's where we came in. Or that's where the Coroneos boys came in, with their plumbing.

**Interviewer:** *That's interesting. Do it yourself home improvement, and people didn't need permits back then.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** And, you know, they bought homes that were two bedrooms, and they wanted to add another bath and another, enlarge the kitchen and that kind of thing.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah. Those homes have an interesting history. What was the difference—I just wanted to ask you really quick—between—when you moved into a Townsite home, what was the difference between that home and the Victory Village Apartments? What were the improvements over Victory Village?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, for one, I had my own room. My brother was still living at home, and so I had my own room. We had a three bedroom house, and even though I've seen the home, the Townsite home at the museum, and it looks so small, but to me, it was a giant, to me it was a castle, because after living in Victory Village in those tight quarters.

**Interviewer:** *How much square feet do you think were in the Victory Village?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** It was 1000 square feet, no, 1200 square feet for the three bedroom.

**Interviewer:** *But it was a three bed, the three bedroom was?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** 1200 square feet, for Townsite.

**Interviewer:** *That was the Townsite house. What about the Victory Village?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Oh, Victory Village, it had to be 700 square feet.

**Interviewer:** *Good grief. [laughter] Yeah, you were packed in there like sardines. All right, so you came back to Henderson, and you worked at the bank, and you met your husband, married your husband, and you were involved—and Selma had encouraged you to join some organizations. After you got married, what organizations were you in?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, after I got married, I immediately knew that Pittman needed things for the children, and so we had a library where the Boy's Club is now. And we had, the ladies of the community and I had joined a Pittman woman's club, which had been existing from older members that were already retired. And we had parties for the children, we had Halloween parties, Christmas parties, we brought Santa Claus, we gave them gifts and clothing. And we had birthday parties for them. In the summertime, it was interesting because they ran wild, and we wanted to keep them safe. So, even though we didn't have a pool at that time for them, we did take them into Henderson so they could go swimming. And it was a real good organization and lots, lots of help from the ladies. There was Mary Roberts, who is deceased now, but she helped tremendously. She was a good mother. We had Artie Cannon, we had Mrs. Foster. She had children that she raised down at Pittman. And so we worked with the kids and helped the community in any way that we could. We also brought books in so they, so we converted it into a library, so that they could have things to read and a place to study. And that was one of my first missions after I married. I didn't have children, so it was important to me that I stayed close to them.

**Interviewer:** *Did you work after you got married?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I worked in my husband's office. By that time, he had quit the roofing business that had opened up—the plumbing business—that had opened up a roofing company. And his partner was Elliot, so they called it Elliot Roofing. And it is situated on Elliot Street, and it has—I am in that office right now with my Coroneos Property Management. But I worked as their secretary for many years and helped type the contracts, and they went out and examined the roofs. By that time the Townsite homes were ready for roofs. They are flat roofs, and the sun beat down on them, and so when it rained we had lots of business.

**Interviewer:** *I'm sure. I don't know, even if you are in a place where it never rains except once or twice, a flat roof is still not a good idea, right? [laughter]*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No. The Elliots were all roofers, and Alex was the brain. He was the estimator. So, it was funny, because we made fun of him: he was scared to get up on a ladder, but yet he estimated all the jobs. It was very successful, and we sold to a company from Denver, Colorado, that had kids that were starting to have teenage problems, and they wanted to get them out working. Well, they only lasted two years in this heat, since they were from cold country, and they came here with their children to work roofing. So we didn't actually sell the land; we just sold the business. So, I ended up getting the land back in our hands, and we embellished on making offices and renting different spots, which still exist.

**Interviewer:** *And that's the business you run today.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes, under Coroneos Property Management.

**Interviewer:** *Sounds like a great business.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** It is. It's lots of fun.

**Interviewer:** *And you were telling me earlier that you had also had a very interesting role in selling jerky.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes. This was prior to my going to work at the roofing company. My father-in-law needed a secretary, and he had taken the old Coroneos plumbing shop and was making jerky for dogs. So we would get a, he would ship this jerky all over, and we'd get these letters from these ladies and phone calls saying, ship me twelve cases, my dog loves your jerky. And so I was his secretary, and I had to take care of his office business, and he was booming. He just loved it. He bought horse meat and then he sliced it and prepared it in the back room. It didn't smell very good, but he loved doing it, and by that time he was in his 80s.

**Interviewer:** *That must have been a tremendous amount of work for him!*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** It was, it was, but he just kept going, he was just, he was one of these active old-timers. And I know the Henderson Police Department loved him. They had to stop him on the highway all the time and tell him to get out of the car, because he couldn't drive anymore.

**Interviewer:** *Oh.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** *They kept their eye on him.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yeah, they'd call me to come pick him up, and he finally got it through his head that he wasn't going to drive. And then I was his driver.

**Interviewer:** *You were the chauffeur. [laughter] Oh, goodness. So you've seen Henderson change over the years in a lot of ways. What are some of the most significant ways between—and Pittman too, I mean.*



**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, I've seen a lot of growth. When Green Valley came along, it kind of tore into our little old Water Street, old home town. But I think a lot of us oldies still rely on the fact that we like old Henderson. Green Valley is wonderful. We have a lot of nice shops and restaurants. We've got several brand new hospitals, and all that has helped. And I love it, but my heart is still in the smaller, compact Henderson that I was used to as a child.

**Interviewer:** *You knew everybody.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** You knew everybody, you knew all your neighbors.

[break in recording]

**Interviewer:** *What do you remember about some of the politics in Henderson over the years?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, I really didn't get too involved in politics when I was working at the bank. But after I married Alex, he had a lot of politicians come over for dinner, and we had developers. Harry Polk is an old name that was an interesting developer. Lou La Porta was a real good friend of Alex's, and they masterminded a big project to pave the streets in Pittman. Between Lou being on as a Commissioner and Alex pushing him, we raised the money to pave the streets, and that was a big undertaking for all of us. And it was very, very good for the citizens down there.

**Interviewer:** *So that was mid-60s.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yeah. Mid-60s.

**Interviewer:** *That's really great. When did Pittman and Henderson start to grow together?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, you know, they don't even call it Pittman anymore. We—with Boulder Highway growing like it has, areas like where we had Country Cousins, a grocery store, now is a Hampton Inn. And all up and down, especially the upper part of Boulder Highway where all

those new businesses are, it just melted in together, and there's still a lot of new things going on, on Boulder Highway, and it's a real plus to us. We've got the new waterpark going off on Galleria Drive, and we've got several new buildings, old offices that have opened along that area. So I think that the growth, the potential is there, and the growth is there. We just need to continue what we're doing and being, bringing businesses that are going to be fruitful to all of us. It's amazing how many offices and new buildings are down off of Sunset and even Elliott Road has some very, very good businesses.

**Interviewer:** *That's great. So what about the plants? It started with BMI and some of the mining operations.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** The plants were very, very good for us. The people that they hired that are—some of those people are still there. My nephew was there thirty-four years. He started right out of high school. So the plants are a big plus to our city and I can't say enough about how happy I am that they're there, and that we still have them.

**Interviewer:** *Along those lines, what do you remember about some of the old celebrations in town, like the Industrial Days festival?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Industrial Days was a big part of my life, my family life. In 1973, my niece was Miss Industrial Days, Debbie Falvey, and we set up the big flatbed truck and decorated it, and our theme was Wizard of Oz. And her little sister and her nephew were on the float. It was a beautiful thing that we were awarded Miss Industrial Days for that year. But we participated every year in Industrial Days; it was very important. It still is important to me.

**Interviewer:** *And the businesses in town probably had floats.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** All of the businesses had floats. Gunville's Appliance had a float. We had a shoe place that had a float. Kiddie Corner was a baby store. They all had floats, and I know they still participate. Well, Kiddie Corner and Gunville's isn't there anymore, but I know that so many of the merchants still participate. And that makes me very happy.

**Interviewer:** *Did you get to be in the parade when you were a kid?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No. I didn't. I just walked alongside when my friends were in it.

**Interviewer:** *What kinds of activities did they have during Industrial Days besides the parade?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** We had a carnival, a big one, right about where the Gibson Library is. That was a big area for a carnival, and big excitement for the kids. We also had vendors with food, which they still have now. So that part hasn't changed about Henderson.

**Interviewer:** *Where do they have the carnival now?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** You know, I didn't see where they had the carnival this year, but I know it was there.

**Interviewer:** *They had to find a new venue after the Gibson Library got built.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Probably, yeah. We've got all those new stores now.

**Interviewer:** *Well, there's a lot of—it looks to me like, looking at a map of Henderson now, there are some open spaces, and some of them are probably not the greatest place to put tents up because they might have been used by the plants in the past. I know there's been some remediation in some areas, but some of the big open areas are some of the old neighborhoods, like Victory Village and Carver Park, where you can still see the foundations. I think it's interesting that they tore down the houses, but they left the foundations.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes, yes, they're still there.

**Interviewer:** *But Henderson keeps growing and trying to use those old sites, I think, but they haven't completely erased them.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** They were so close to St. Peter's Church that, you know, it was a plus for us, because we could just walk over to the Church and the functions. Our roofing company roofed that administrative building that's next to the Church. Of course, you know, at that time, Father Moran was always looking for freebies.

**Interviewer:** *He was good at getting them, too.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** And he knew who to go to.

**Interviewer:** *[laughter] He was very persuasive.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** And then Father Caviglia came in, and he was just as Father Moran. They were both very good priests.

**Interviewer:** *Do you remember some stories of the Church?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, I was Father Moran's secretary.

**Interviewer:** *Oh.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I helped him with the bulletin, and of course there were no computers. We did everything on the Selectric typewriter. And he would tell me what he wanted in the bulletin, and I'd put it in there. That's just how he was. And then when Caviglia came in, Father Caviglia came in, he got more sophisticated and got all the new equipment. And so there wasn't as much for me to do as there was with Moran.

**Interviewer:** *But you knew everything that was going on if you were writing the bulletins.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Oh, yes, I knew what was going on in the Church.

**Interviewer:** *What do you remember about the grotto?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** The grotto was very special, because we had people from all over come and take pictures there. And, believe me, those priests knew when the crowd was out there, because they were proud of it too, very proud of it.

**Interviewer:** *I know it was a focal point for the community.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes. And we had a lot of tourists come there.

**Interviewer:** *That's neat. So I was surprised that they didn't keep it, or rebuild it somehow, because it was such a draw.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I don't know if they needed that spot for something else.

**Interviewer:** *I think that's what it was.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I'm sure that's what it is.

**Interviewer:** *Was Henderson—when you were younger, was living in Henderson dangerous in any way?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No, absolutely not. We never locked our doors. We never locked our doors. We'd actually let the neighbors know that we were leaving, and that there was something in the oven if they wanted to come and get it.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, my gosh. [laughter]*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** *And so parents didn't really worry about where their kids were going or what they were doing?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No. We didn't have any fear of anybody jumping us in the streets or anything like that. Everybody knew everyone, and God help us if it was a new kid, because he

had to earn our trust. But, no, we enjoyed the new families moving in, and it wasn't long before we all made friends.

**Interviewer:** *Probably the only real danger in Henderson back then was Boulder Highway, trying to cross it.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *How fast do you think cars went?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Trying to cross from St. Peter's over to St. Rose de Lima—that was pretty dangerous.

**Interviewer:** *I bet people were trying to get to Las Vegas, right? Coming from Boulder City.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes. And they'd have to go all the way Boulder Highway, of course. It wasn't like turning on and getting on an expressway. They'd go all the way Boulder Highway past Whitney, what was called Whitney at that time, east Las Vegas. And straight on to Fremont Street.

**Interviewer:** *Whitney, it reminds me that we need to get back to your dog story.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Oh, okay.

**Interviewer:** *So tell me about the dogs.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, when we had the roofing company, my husband took the dogs, two dogs, they were pointer dogs to work in the morning, and then I brought them home at night. So we let them out when the weather—whether the weather was nice or not, these two dogs were hunters. So we let them out to roam around, and they'd roam all the way up the hill to where Vo Tech is now. Of course, we didn't have a Galleria, and so they would tramp all through that area and chase lizards and whatever. And then they'd come sloshing down back to

my office at night, exhausted. Sometimes I had to wait to close the office, because they weren't home. And sometimes I went home and came back to find them, and they'd both be sitting in front of my office waiting for me.

**Interviewer:** *Crazy dogs. [laughter]*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yeah, crazy dogs and loved to hunt.

**Interviewer:** *I guess there must have been water out there for them somewhere, right?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, I always left water, if I went home and they weren't there, I'd leave water for them.

**Interviewer:** *But I mean out in the desert, maybe they had a water source.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** There must have been. There must have been some ponds or something out there.

**Interviewer:** *Did anybody ever see your dogs out there?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Oh, I would call everyone I would think of when they didn't come home. And they'd say, no, we haven't seen them today. They were here yesterday. It was something else. And then to take them home, you couldn't have a new car, because they scratched all your seats.

**Interviewer:** *Yeah, I bet they were pretty energetic.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Oh, they were, they were, but by the time we got home at night, they were ready to go to sleep.

**Interviewer:** *They sound like neat dogs. What do you recall about some of the memorable events that happened in the community or the area? What are some of the things that you witnessed or some of the memorable things that happened?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, are you talking about like birthdays and celebrations of that kind?

**Interviewer:** *Well, it could be like surprising things that happened in the community. Some people talk about PEPCON, you know.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes, PEPCON was really very heartbreaking when we had the explosion. I have a triplex apartment building on Merlayne, which is across from the Edna Hinman School, and all the windows were caved in, and the door was caved in. So we had to immediately board up everything for, you know, to keep vandalism [from occurring]. By that time, there had been—there was vandalism in the area, not a whole lot, but still. So we had damage there. Thank goodness for insurance. So we were paid well. But a lot of people suffered a lot more than what I did. And that was—that building especially, and the Edna Hinman School was hit hard.

**Interviewer:** *It was a long recovery time. I've been told that—you know, and part of it was that you couldn't get supplies. It was one thing to get the money from the insurance company, but you couldn't necessarily to make the repairs, because there was such a great demand.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, we were in that business, so our roof was not a problem, because we had plenty of roofing. And my husband knew the ins and outs of who to contact for glass, you know, for glass repairs and that kind of thing, and they always put us in first. So we didn't have that problem so much as other people did. And we didn't want to worry about the insurance getting their check to us. We went ahead and did it. It was just, we had to keep the tenants happy, and it was very sad for the community. I know other people suffered more than we did.

**Interviewer:** *You know, another memorable thing that some people talk about too is when Kennedy came to Las Vegas to speak in the early 60s, in '63. Did you get to see him?*



**Dorothy Coroneos:** When who came to town?

**Interviewer:** *Kennedy, John F. Kennedy.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No, I did not get to see him. That was an experience, but I didn't get to see him.

**Interviewer:** *I bet that was a pretty big deal for St. Peter's too, that he was coming.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** St. Peter's prepared for it, yes. Their Catholic boy.

**Interviewer:** *Yes.*

[break in recording]

**Interviewer:** *What about the Swanky Club? Do you have some stories about the Swanky Club?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes. The Mallorys were real good friends of ours, and we went up to Panguitch Lake, Utah, with them a lot on our vacations. It was a wonderful place for a smorgasbord. I think they invented it. And the whole family worked there. My husband was extremely close to their family, and he would slip away and go have his drinks with his buddies at the Swanky Club, because they wanted to give them the business. Not that they needed it. That place was always packed. It was actually the only restaurant on that highway, so, I mean, how could it not help but do good? And so that was Alex's little drinking pool. He loved it, and he loved the Mallorys very much.

**Interviewer:** *I heard that they shipped in steaks and food on a regular basis, like had it flown in.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Oh, yeah, and by the time they closed at night, they had run out of everything. So you better be early if you're going to go have dinner, because their menu became depleted very fast.

**Interviewer:** *What was it like? Was it like a sort of, you know, salad bar type idea, where you go up and you pick from whatever's on the bar?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes. The smorgasbord was to go in and select your own salads, and then of course order your steaks and whatever. They had steaks and chops and chicken. They were, they had great, great chefs, and the whole family worked there. The girls were the waitresses. They knew how to run a business.

**Interviewer:** *And they catered, too, didn't they?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I don't know too much about the catering, but I do know that when we had political parties at our house, that they would bring food in for us.

**Interviewer:** *I was wondering about that. When you had political guests at your house, did you do the cooking or did you have it catered or have somebody help you?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I did a lot of it, but I did have a lot that I catered. My sisters all fixed Mexican food, the authentic, and so we had a lot of that, and it was a great, great party to have. Lou La Porta came in, because we supported him fully when he was running. And then even Alex ran for Councilman. He didn't win, but he ran for Councilman, and we had a party for him. So there was a lot of family gatherings in our home.

**Interviewer:** *That's neat. You had a big home, I guess.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Very big. The house is still there. I had sold it to his brother, so his brother has got children living there now. But the house still exists.

**Interviewer:** *And it stayed somewhat in the family, that's neat. Rick had said that Pittman had had some water issues in the old days. What was that about?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** There were a lot of septic tanks installed, and we didn't belong to the Henderson City water at that time, so we had to build wells to get our water. And so many of the older homes such as Alex's house, because it belonged to his mom and dad, had that. They had wells and they had septic tanks. And sometimes they were not very effective. The house, as the house has got older, there were a lot of plumbing problems. Now we've got the City in there, and so we have City water.

**Interviewer:** *When about did that come in?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I think that started in the late '60s or early '70s, when all of them—when we started connecting to the water systems.

**Interviewer:** *That seems so late, considering.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, a lot of people kept the septic tanks.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, they didn't—they just were used to it.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** And then when the City offered to tie in the lines, they finally decided to do it because of the problems.

**Interviewer:** *Well, I guess that you could have saved some money, except for the repairs or, you know, the cleanings that you had to do because of the septic tanks.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *If you get City water it costs more, probably, or City sewage.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, the City water was a blessing to a lot of people.

[door opens and closes]

**Interviewer:** *We're popular. [laughter]*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I guess so.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, and also, a lot of the people in Pittman were homesteaders, right?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes, a lot of people, as they were growing, as the mother and father were getting older, they wanted to make sure that their house was protected. Some of them have built their own homes. It wasn't like they had loans and that kind of thing. And so they homesteaded their homes, so that if anything happened to them, the children would get them.

**Interviewer:** *How did they do that? How do you homestead a home?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** It's an easy process. You can do it through the assessor's office. You can do it through your lawyer. Your lawyer can take care of it. But there were so many people that wanted to protect their homes.

**Interviewer:** *What were they afraid of happening if they didn't homestead?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, some of them were afraid that if they had a loan for something else, that they'd come after the house. And so they wanted to prevent that. And it was just a cautionary thing. You know. A lot of those younger folks live in those houses now.

**Interviewer:** *Did people in Henderson also do some homesteading?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Oh, I'm sure, I'm sure.

**Interviewer:** *It was kind of a general practice. We were talking before the interview about this place called the Shady Rest. What do you remember about the Shady Rest?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** The Shady Rest, I got familiar with that business through my friend Artie Cannon. She belonged to the Pittman Woman's Club and helped us with everything. She was a real, real worker. And she owned the Shady Rest, she and her husband. They did a wonderful business, worked themselves to death. They both died very young. But they kept the cabins clean and up to date and rented. Many times I went to her home to either pick up a check for

something or deliver something from the Club. And she was always working on something, either the books or cleaning up a cabin. So they were good, good people that settled there. I know that later on, she was working at a job off of Fremont Street, part time, because she said that the Shady Rest wasn't doing that well, and so she needed the extra money. And that might have been towards the end before they sold. But I understand from Rick that it's a relative that has it.

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

**Dorothy Coroneos:** So I don't know if they left it to one of their children or what.

**Interviewer:** *I'm curious about it, because it has—it's called the Shady Rest. It has all those trees around it. I wonder if the people that built those cabins, if they put the trees in there themselves, or if the trees were there before.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** That I can't answer, because they were always there when I went there.

**Interviewer:** *So they were already by the time Artie owned it.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** They were there. And it was so apropos for it to be called the Shady Rest.

**Interviewer:** *And you said her husband liked to golf.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** He was a golfer. She was the worker, and he was the golfer.

**Interviewer:** *I bet everybody was really excited when they put the golf course in, in Henderson. What was that like?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** The Black Mountain [Country Club], yes. We all ran up and joined.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, yeah? Did you golf?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I didn't golf, but I joined.

**Interviewer:** *Did they have other activities, or was it just golf?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, we had a lot of gabbing activities. And most of my friends golfed, so I went up with them.

**Interviewer:** *Well, that sounds like fun. What do you enjoy most about having lived in Henderson?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I enjoy the people that are still here, the friends that I've made. And I enjoy the fact that we're still a hometown, especially in the lower part of Henderson, Water Street, that kind of thing. I also enjoy the fact that we're growing. I love Green Valley, and I love the idea of the businesses we have. I'd like to see more movement on Boulder Highway, lower Boulder Highway towards Sunset, because that's really the entrance to Las Vegas. I mean, you catch the expressway, and you're there. So I'd like to see more of that happen. But I've enjoyed this City, I've enjoyed the people, and I still have a lot of my mom and dad's friends here. So.

**Interviewer:** *That's something that I think is interesting about Henderson is that although some people move away, there's a remarkable number of people who have stayed.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** *And the infrastructure is here to make that happen, to enable that to happen.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** There's a lot of history here for these folks.

**Interviewer:** *What else would you like to share about your experience in Henderson? Did we miss some stories, do you want to tell some more stories?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Well, I think we've covered a lot, and I especially want everyone to know how much I love Henderson. I want it to prosper and keep prospering. The businesses on Water Street need something, and I think we're working towards that. So I'd like to see that happen. And of course, like I mentioned, Boulder Highway, that's my love.

**Interviewer:** *There's a lot of really good qualities in Henderson. It's a good place to live, and people enjoy living here. It's a family-oriented community.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Yes, yes, we've got good schools, we've got good banks. We're growing, just like all cities, but I think we're growing with people that love each other. When you go to a big metropolitan city, it isn't that way. I've traveled with my business, and I've found out there's no place like home.

**Interviewer:** *Where have you traveled?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I was in the convention business, and I worked for GS Exposition Services. I was a saleslady on the road and went to many cities. I even went overseas. One of my accounts is the Las Vegas Convention Visitor's Bureau. So I've traveled with them and had set-ups for the conventions and had them ready for when they walked in and sold Las Vegas. I even took care of some of the showgirls. When we went overseas to Egypt, we had a place that wasn't too good to set up. The floors were dirt. So I had to put carpet on top of dirt and get the showgirls' room ready for them, where they could put their costumes on, and that kind of thing. Sometimes when I didn't have a chance to even get a hotel room, I had to share a room with them. That was a story in itself.

**Interviewer:** *[laughter] I bet they were interesting.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Very. [laughter]

**Interviewer:** *Oh, did anything crazy happen over there?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** It was a great career, it really was. But no, we were safe in Egypt, and I went to Germany.

**Interviewer:** *Was it just you with them?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Pardon me?

**Interviewer:** *It was only you taking care of them?*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** No, no. The Convention Bureau people went.

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

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I was just there to take care of the booth for them and electrical and whatever they needed.

**Interviewer:** *Oh, what an interesting job. And you went to Germany, you said.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** I went to quite a few countries, but mostly United States. Chicago, New York, Atlanta.

**Interviewer:** *And those are big cities.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** San Francisco.

**Interviewer:** *Don't have the small town feel.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** And I always came home to Henderson.

**Interviewer:** *Well, Dorothy, I've enjoyed talking with you today.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Same here.

**Interviewer:** *You've had an incredible career.*

**Dorothy Coroneos:** Thank you so much for having me.

**Interviewer:** *Thanks for coming.*