

Henderson Libraries

Henderson Oral History Project

**James Edward
Smalley, Jr.**

Oral History of James Edward Smalley, Jr.

conducted by

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm

June 11, 2014

Interviewer: *Today is June 11th, 2014 and we're in the Paseo Verde Library in Henderson, Nevada. My name is Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm and I'm interviewing Ed Smalley as part of the Henderson Oral History Project of the Henderson Libraries. Thank you so much for joining me, Ed.*

Ed Smalley: My pleasure.

Interviewer: *Now, I understand you moved to Henderson shortly after you were born, but I'd like you to tell me a little about your family and what brought them to Henderson in the first place.*

Ed Smalley: Well, to be a little more complete, my Mom's from Caliente, and my grandfather—well, my great-grandfather actually came to Caliente. You know that's a family that came out of Texas and they bought a place in Caliente. Now, my grandfather was Sheriff of Lincoln County in the thirties and of course this is how he got to know a lot of people. Everybody knew my grandfather. And my mother went to college in Colorado after she graduated from high school in 1942. My Dad's from Peebles, Ohio, and he went in the Army in I think 1943. They wound up on a training mission in Denver and a guy in Dad's crew knew a girl in Mom's nursing class, and so they were going to hook Dad up with a date, and it was of this other lady who backed out at the last minute, so Mom went. And they were nineteen, I guess, and they saw each other and communicated. And when Dad came back from the war rather than go right home to Ohio he went out to Denver to see Mom. And of course he went back and they started exchanging letters. And this is in December of '45 when Dad got back and got out of the Army. And in this letter exchange, Mom told me later on that she said, "I'll marry you if we get married right now." And so that was okay, and so she was on the train, went to Peebles, Ohio, and Dad

picked her up, and on February 2nd, 1946 they got married in Peebles, Ohio. Well, Dad had a couple of jobs and my mom decided—and got Dad to go along to—maybe he should try to go get a college education, the GI bill was paying for it. So Dad went to Ohio State and he finished in two-and-a-half years. I think he went into college in June of '46 and graduated in December of '48. So about two-and-a-half years. And Mom of course went back towards the end there to do what she had left to graduate with her Nursing degree. And then she joined Dad in Columbus and Dad got a job teaching in Virginia, filling out the year, in January of '49. Well Dad applied to all the places in Ohio and all over the place and hadn't had a job, so Mom got a hold of her father, my grandfather, and so he spoke to somebody on the School Board in Las Vegas and so Dad had a job in Vegas at the Old Fifth Street School. I don't know if you're familiar with that.

Interviewer: *I've heard of it, yeah.*

Ed Smalley: Well, now it's the Performing Arts Center of the City of Las Vegas, or something. But Dad was on that—got on that staff there. And so in the summer of 1945, my mother and father—and my mother was pregnant with, guess who [laughter]—and they came across the country and they got an apartment in Las Vegas and I was born in November. And I think it was right around that time that Mom found a house to rent over behind what is now the Silver Saddle there in Las Vegas and she was living there for a while. And in March, she got the idea of coming out here because they were freeing up these houses here in Henderson. And so she got a house in Henderson. And so Dad commuted to work, but we were in that house in March of 1950. And of course that's the only house I ever remember.

Interviewer: *That's the house you ended up growing up in.*

Ed Smalley: And you have the pictures of.

Interviewer: *That's right, yeah.*

Ed Smalley: But it was an original two bedroom townsite. You know the townsites came in three basic designs. Now, I could be wrong, but in all the years I've seen those townsite houses, there was essentially—the two bedroom front entrance—which the house across the street that the Ortizes lived in—was a two bedroom front entrance, a two bedroom side entrance like we had, and then there was a three bedroom. I think there was a three bedroom side entrance and there might have been a three bedroom front entrance. I can't say for sure; it seems like there was. But anyway, we moved in there, and both my sisters were born there. But before my youngest sister was born, we remodeled the house, where we took the driveway, the carport, and turned it into a family room and dining room. And we put a fireplace in. And, of course, moved the entrance from that side by the carport to the front. And we had the only doorbell on our block, so that old trick of "run around knocking on the doors and running away," everybody did our house because we had the doorbell!

Interviewer: *That is so great! [laughter]*

Ed Smalley: But in 1959, after my youngest sister was born and grown up a little bit, we decided that we needed another bedroom on that house. And so we expanded and built a bedroom, a storage room and a bathroom, so now we had two bathrooms out on the back end of the house. And then in 1965, we put a basement in there.

Interviewer: *Wow!*

Ed Smalley: So there was several "retrofits" to the house, to use the current terminology. But since 1950 we lived in that house. And my parents moved out of it in March of 1989 and moved

to Mission Hills. And Mom moved to Sunrise Care Center which is back up that road a little ways. That was a couple years ago, and my sister sold the house for the estate, so that's where Mom currently is. I have a house down in Pittman, my sister has her house up there next door to where Mom's was.

Interviewer: *Boy! Pittman's grown a lot, too, since those days, right?*

Ed Smalley: It has.

Interviewer: *What was Pittman like when you were growing up?*

Ed Smalley: Well, I remember it being almost like a separate town because you drive from Henderson to Las Vegas and you leave Henderson right about as Water Street merges with Boulder Highway and Boulder Highway was always that four lane road as far back as I can remember. And you drive out of Henderson and you come into Pittman. And then you drive out of Pittman and there's an empty chunk of road and you come into Whitney. Then an empty chunk of road and then you come into Vegas around where the Showboat used to be. I'm not sure what's there now.

Interviewer: *It all runs together now!*

Ed Smalley: Well, there was an old—you know right there where Fremont and Charleston come together—yeah, well, and then coming just this side of Fremont/Charleston we had the Showboat. But I remember the Showboat being built. But there was a restaurant there called the Green Shack. I never got a chance to eat there but my Mom talked about when she graduated from high school, a couple of her cousins took her out to dinner, out at the Green Shack, and said it seemed like it was quite a little drive. And from the railroad station there on

Main Street, Fremont and Main, where the Union Plaza is now, I guess it might have been a bit of a drive.

Interviewer: *Did you get to come to Vegas a lot when you were a kid?*

Ed Smalley: Quite often.

Interviewer: *Where did you go? What kind of things did you do?*

Ed Smalley: Well, I had a great aunt and a cousin who had a—I'm going to use the word "ranch"—out there right off of Desert Lane. Are you familiar with that?

Interviewer: *Not really. No.*

Ed Smalley: Well you go out Charleston. And there was an old underpass that went under the railroad on Charleston, flood out anytime we had major rain. But anyway, you'd get over there and then—I guess MLK is there now—but it was between Shadow Lane and MLK, you'd turn right and then you'd go back there and he had his house. It wasn't much of a house. He had a trailer and he added onto the trailer. And it wasn't a huge trailer either; it was a small trailer. And then they built some buildings out there. It was only an acre I found out later on, but there was nothing else out there and so he'd let his cattle wander, he had chickens and the family would gather there. But, you know, the City kind of closed in. There's a big apartment building covering that now. But we'd go in there to Aunt Annie's all the time. And that's where I got to see a lot of Las Vegas, doing that. Plus there was—our doctors were at the old Las Vegas Hospital over on Eighth and Ogden. It's gone now; there's an apartment building there. I think it burned down in 1983, I could be wrong, but—

Interviewer: *So you didn't go to the doctors in Henderson growing up?*

Ed Smalley: No. Dr. Lund, he was in Las Vegas Hospital. I was born in the Las Vegas Hospital as were both of my sisters.

Interviewer: *Wow, how about that! Wow. She went a long way from Henderson to the hospital in Las Vegas, right?*

Ed Smalley: Well, there was some connections there. I couldn't tell you what the connections were, but she knew them, she had worked as a nurse out at what was then called Memorial Hospital, it's now University Medical Center out on Shadow Lane.

Interviewer: *So she knew people.*

Ed Smalley: I think that was the case.

Interviewer: *Yeah, that's interesting.*

Ed Smalley: But Dr. Sylvain delivered me at the Las Vegas Hospital, which would have been November of '49, so she'd only been out here just a few months.

Interviewer: *Right. That was at least before you all moved to Henderson. But do you have any memories of St. Rose at all? Did you ever go to St. Rose?*

Ed Smalley: Yes, I do. St. Rose was there. I mean we all knew about it, because it was, you know, you'd get out and wander through the neighborhood and St. Rose was not far away. If you know that old townsite area, it was only just a few blocks away. And the old townsite area has those alleys, too, which were really accessible.

Interviewer: *You could cut through them?*

Ed Smalley: Oh yeah, we cut through alleys and yards without fences and all that stuff. Yeah we wandered all over the old townsite section.

Interviewer: *Did you know any of the nuns at St. Rose or in the schools at all?*

Ed Smalley: No, I didn't, but several of my friends went to St. Peter's at one time or another and they would talk about some of the Sisters, although I don't think I can remember any of the names of the Sisters they talked about. But I do remember St. Peter's being an active and functioning school. And they went up through eighth grade and then some of them went into Gorman to go to high school. But a lot of them came to, originally, the Henderson Junior High School, which is down in the City Center. When the high school moved in '54, they established the Junior High, and that was there until the fall of '72 when they moved up and took over the old high school. And then it became, somewhere in there, it became Burkholder Middle School.

Interviewer: *Before we move on to the schools, and I definitely want to hear about your education growing up, but we were talking about St. Peter's. Can you tell me something about some of the other churches that were built in Henderson over the years? I know you have some stories about them, too.*

Ed Smalley: Well, I remember them building the chapel on Ocean Street, which was this big huge, fabulous building in the middle of these old townsite houses. Of course, you know, Track Two I think was established right about then. And that was, of course, right on the other side of Ocean—well on the south side of Ocean. But it was a really big building. It really stuck out. That old chapel is gone. And I remember it had that stake coming out of the building. Everybody said it looked like a “shot needle.” But the two churches I remember the best were the Community Church which is now located up on Horizon Ridge and, I want to say, Palo Verde or—only it's not called Palo Verde on that side. Greenway, I think is what it's called. But it's up there, has the big titanium cross. Well originally the Community Church was right there on Texas Street where Army runs into Texas Street, and then you've got—because Texas Street makes that big kind of

loop and then Wyoming Street comes off there, and I lived on Wyoming. And the church was right there. And they took an old three bedroom townsite house and—there on the corner of Wyoming and Texas—and made it into the Sunday school. And I remember going to the Sunday school. And I went through just a little bit in February when a guy who grew up here in Henderson, a guy by the name of Jim Campbell, he passed away. And, you know, he was just a couple years older than me. But he passed away and I went to the service up there. And it was his mother that sort of ran the Sunday school. So I remember Jim and Clay before I went to school even. And then we had the church and then they built this brick building behind it as an annex to the church and they called it Gilbert Hall. I never really knew who Gilbert was, but that's where we would go to Sunday school. It was kind of a public building, and we didn't have a lot of public buildings in Henderson at that time so it was a gathering place. And I went to church up there, my little sister and I. Well, Mom and Dad would go to church once in a while, but they'd let my little sister and I go to Sunday school. And we would walk up the street, because it was up at the end of the street, and go to Sunday school. And they'd have these activities for us. But I was very young. But some of the people I knew in that Sunday school were people I knew for the rest of my life! One of them, a guy named Stewart Barquist, his grandmother lived over on the corner of Texas and—well, Texas Street splits Atlantic and Pacific. I don't know if you're familiar with that. His grandmother lived right there and his mother took him over there a lot. So that's where I first knew Stewart. Before school even, before we even got in school. So that's how long I knew him. But the other church was over on the corner of Kansas and Atlantic. It was called the First Baptist Church and I remember building the original part of the Church, although there might have been some part of a Church there

before that. But I do remember, and I talked to—there's a guy named Bob Wiedman who lived over on Atlantic, a couple years older than me, and his sister's in the retired teachers group with me and she fills me in on him all the time. And then there was the Melton brothers, and I showed you that picture of Timmy there. Well, he has an older brother named Jim. And I've known them all my life. And Roger and Clayton Lindsey were the ones my age. After I went in the Navy I ran into their brother who was older still, although I couldn't tell you his first name right offhand. But the Lindsey brothers, Bob Wiedman, the Melton's, that was the group up around the corner. There were two groups of kids out of the neighborhood. They were the "up around the corner." "Down around the corner" was the Sullivan brothers, I don't know if you know them. They're "old Henderson." Their mother, Rae Sullivan, raised five boys and two girls being a checker for groceries, first at Prime Meats then at Food Land. Then I think she finished up her career over at one of the stores over across the highway.

Interviewer: *That's pretty good!*

Ed Smalley: But anyway, right there was the Baptist Church and I remember while it was being built there were some people that my mother knew that lived in that house next door to where that church is. And I was over there and I'd heard them. They were crawling through this little crawl space and they wanted to show me, so I crawled into the crawl space. We got in there and we came up on what was the altar of the—you know they had this main building and then some little classroom type buildings—later on, my friend, Dave Wheat, he and I went to church there a few times. I mean that was just out the back door and I could be there in five minutes. He and I went to church there for a few years. We tried to be good church going people. And there were some kids from the town that were in that congregation, too. Now later on they

built a big chapel, because it was kind of an 'L' shape before and they built this chapel in the middle there, nice chapel, and I went to some kind of a function there ten years ago or so. Ten years goes [snaps] by like "that," when you think about it. But they had sidewalk over there and we'd skate on the sidewalk. That was one of the things we used to do.

Interviewer: *There weren't too many sidewalks.*

Ed Smalley: No, the sidewalks didn't really come about until the '60s so that's when they had the municipal sidewalk project going on. And when I was in 8th grade the skateboard thing started to become a fad. Now we wouldn't buy these skateboards like they have now. I bought a pair of skates for 15 cents at some garage sale somewhere only we didn't have garages in town, it was just—

Interviewer: *A carport sale! [laughter]*

Ed Smalley: Well, I can't say exactly where I bought it, but I remember getting them for fifteen cents. And my friend Dave, he lived down on Arizona Way. And I went down there, and he got us a two by four and cut it in half, and we each nailed a skate on the ends of the two by four and we had our skateboards. And for about a month that was the big fad. But there was a couple of really good sidewalks in town. You start up there on Basic Road—and at the time there was the City Hall there, which was much smaller than the—you know the Jail is there now. And you would take the skateboard and roll all the way down to Atlantic. And that was a good piece of sidewalk there. Then on Atlantic, you could go down there to where Army Street cuts in in front of what we used to call Polar Queen, which is Portillos to you now. And then across that where the Ford Insurance Company used to be on Army Street, you could ride that sidewalk all the way down to where Pacific came in. It was at Pacific. Pacific and Water was that

nice long stretch of sidewalk that would take you all the way down to Victory Road. But that— on the corner there was the Henderson Library, which was an old three bedroom townsite house converted into a library and over the years it got converted more and more. And it was in the '70s where they took out the tennis courts of the old—the tennis and basketball courts out of the old junior high school—junior high school/elementary school, whatever. And put the Gibson Library in there on the corner of Basic Road and Water Street. And that's where it was until it moved down to its present location and that was in just recent years, after 2000. So those are—I don't know, you got me on the sidewalks!

Interviewer: *[laughter]* Tell me some more about your education. What was it like? What were the schools like?

Ed Smalley: Well, my dad was a teacher, and he came out in Henderson I think in '53. It could have been the Fall of '54, but it might even have been as early as '53 because he'd been at Old 5th Street School and then he'd got on in North Las Vegas then he got on out here at the— either it was just before the high school left and went to the new building. Now, it's my understanding that the new building, and I remember it opening—which was the building I went to—which is where Burkholder is now on Van Wagonen before there was a Van Wagonen Street! *[laughter]* It was way out in the desert. But it was my understanding that in the Fall of '53 they went back to school at the old Basic High School which is in the middle of, which is in the City Center. All the schools in town were there except for that school in Carver Park. And I told you about that on the phone, where my understanding was that during the War that's where the African American children who lived in Carver Park went to school, as far as I know. But then you know in '54 we had Brown and that changed, changed the whole dynamics of it.

But I don't ever remember that school in Carver Park opening, but I talked to Duke today and he remembered going to that school in first grade.

Interviewer: *I think Rick Watson went to that school.*

Ed Smalley: He might have. But it was there for a while although I don't remember it. And anyway, I remember my Dad would come home for lunch because it was such a close trip. You know, he walked to and from school almost the entirety of his whole teaching career there in Henderson. But he came home for lunch one time and after—he'd go back to school after lunch and I'd get put down for the nap. Well I wasn't always ready to go to sleep at that time, and I remember I snuck out one time. And I was going to go see where Dad went, and so I went up to the school. And you know we had the hill, the old football field was on the hill, classrooms were on the hill, and then you'd go down the hill for more of the buildings. I had no idea where Dad was, but I thought if I went there I could find him. And I walked up the hill and there was kids everywhere! And I was confused and scared and I remember this girl coming up and saying, "Are you lost, little boy?" [laughter] "I wanna find my dad!" And I did get out the name of who my dad was, and next thing I know, one of the teachers kind of took charge of me and not long after that here came my mother, and she was steaming! [laughter] I remember it scared me so much to be in that big, huge crowd of people! And I was really intimidated. But the first day of school, I went to kindergarten at Townsite. The teacher's name was Mrs. Elsinore. And I remember Dad walking me, taking me to school—we walked to school—and going in there. And of course the kids in the neighborhood went to school, they were in that kindergarten class with me. And then, of course, I went to Townsite from kindergarten through third grade. Now, I think it was when I was in second grade, they built this big concrete stairwell going up from

below the hill above the hill. And then—well maybe it was the next year—I know it was in third grade when they decided what they were going to do was they were going to build the new gymnasium on the campus. They built a gymnasium, locker rooms, the arts and crafts room, the band room, the home ec rooms, some restrooms. I mean, it added to school quite a bit. But I remember them building it because the old, the old gym was an old “cracker box,” and you’d sit up there in the balcony at the one end and it was really small! And that’s where the high school played and the locker room was up the hill in this little building there. And I can remember when they were giving us shots when I was in kindergarten and parading us through that! And I always thought of that as the “shot building.”

Interviewer: *Oh, how awful! [laughter] What kind of shots did you get back then? Do you remember?*

Ed Smalley: Well, I just got my smallpox vaccination, but I remember a couple of kids getting the boosters. And how they were crying with the needles stuck in them. And that scared the crap out of me because I didn’t want to get stuck with the needle! But my Mom, being a nurse, as she was, we had all our shots all the time. And so, but I remember that.

Interviewer: *So your Mom kept working as a nurse all those years.*

Ed Smalley: No, she never—she quit working, I guess—I vaguely remember her working, but I think after my—you see I’m the oldest, but I have two sisters I refer to. One is the older and one is the younger. But when my older sister was born, not long after that she was a stay-at-home Mom until my youngest sister started going to school. Then she went back to work and she worked at Rose de Lima.

Interviewer: *Okay, I wondered about that, if she might have done that.*

Ed Smalley: She worked there for a year or so, then she got on as a school nurse in the School District. And she was a school nurse for well into the '80s.

Interviewer: *Yeah, that's neat. So you went all the way through school in Henderson.*

Ed Smalley: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: *And graduated from Basic High School. And what were some of the activities that you were involved in growing up in the schools? Were you in some clubs? Or did you do like Boy Scouts? What kinds of things did you do?*

Ed Smalley: Well we had a couple of—I was in Cub Scouts in a couple of different groups. I was in third grade I believe it was when I got into Cub Scouts with—Mrs. Bigelow was her name. No relation to the Edith Bigelow and Eddie Bigelow who stayed here in town. I think they were from—they lived on Arkansas Street, but it seems like they said they were from Arkansas, now I might be confusing Arkansas Street—but I remember we had the Cub Scout troop there and her son Buster was in it. But also Jerry and Herman Hagen. That's where I first got to know them! And they're still around! As a matter of fact Herman was a teacher in Clark County School District for—I think he went in the Army and he did a career in the Army and when he got out of the Army he was a teacher for a while. I'd see him and talk to him once in a while and I'd exchange emails when we were in the District together. And Jerry, I don't know where he is, but he'd been around. Then there was a guy named Pat Clancy who went all the way through school with me but then sometime in high school he wasn't there anymore. Those were some of the—I don't know, the kid named Pete Cummings. He was in Henderson for a while and then he vanished. You know that's one thing about this town: "they were here and then they were gone!" And I don't know what happened to them.

Interviewer: *Well some people came back, but obviously not everybody, I guess.*

Ed Smalley: Oh yeah. There was those who came back many a time.

Interviewer: *And I think it's interesting how you've been able to keep up with some people in town. Why don't you tell us a little bit about your friend, Mark Ortiz.*

Ed Smalley: Well, Mark moved in when I was four and he was four, too. And it was right across the street. Now, it was 1954 when it happened, because his Dad built this little archway over what was going to be the sidewalk from the entrance to the yard to the front door, and he had this little slab there and he wrote the date in there: 1954. So we keep referring to that as—because they had to have been there in 1954, because I remember him building it. And Mark was a year ahead of me in school, and I told this story at his funeral a couple of weeks ago about he'd get to go to elementary school and I didn't, because I was—waited for another year so I could go to school. But I'd get up from my nap about the time he'd come home from kindergarten. And I'd go out in the street and wait for him and we'd go doing what kids do, wandering around all over town. There were a couple of wooden apartments, apartment buildings there. The road—there's a big lot between Texas and Wyoming. There were two sets of apartments and a big vacant lot. Someone told me—I couldn't cite it where—but that they were even planning a third apartment building in there, but when the War ended they just never got to it. Nowadays there are three senior citizen apartment buildings in those spots. We used to play in that vacant lot. We'd go play baseball, and it'd be like 110 in the afternoon, we'd go out and start playing. And the old thing was you'd get up to bat, and you're the first one up to bat and then when they'd get you out, you'd quit so you didn't have to go out in the heat anymore! [laughter] So that was part of the legacy of going out there to play. “Oh, no! We're

not going to play! We're not going to let you bat first because you'll quit once you get your ups done!"

Interviewer: *[laughter]* So I guess you guys were used to the heat.

Ed Smalley: I guess a lot more than I seem to be today.

Interviewer: *Did you do a lot of swimming as a youngster?*

Ed Smalley: Yes. As a matter of fact, I was going to go into that. You know, we talked about the red brick buildings on the phone the other day? The pool, the Henderson City Pool, was one. And I was thinking when I came in here, the Henderson City Pool and the Multi-Generational Center, which at the time would have been the Youth Center. Nice twenty-first century name for it now! But they built the Youth Center and the pool right around the same year and it seems like it was just after I got into kindergarten or they opened it just right around there sometime. But they had the pool and of course the recreation center. It was indoors. They had part of it partitioned off where they had pool tables and ping pong tables. And then they had this kind of a gymnasium. It wasn't very big, but they had a stage up on the end. And we used to play with a plastic ball and bat, play indoor baseball. It was a lot cooler indoors. But over on the pool, you'd go up there on a weekday in the summer and everybody in town my age, was in there. And we'd be in there—and I don't know, it seemed like a lot of people then, I don't know if I was to see the numbers today—but that was the thing! Going swimming every day. Go up and swim and then come home, or we'd go play in the Youth Center. So I took swimming lessons there at the City Pool and I remember struggling through swimming lessons for the whole time I was there. I learned how to swim because when you go in the Navy—

Interviewer: *You have to swim! [laughter]*

Ed Smalley: Well, there's the pool and the route that you have to go! If you can't swim it, then you get pulled out of your section and then they teach you to swim before they'll let you finish boot camp. Well, I swam the course with ease! So I guess I swam well enough to be in the Navy. I mean, I can swim adequately.

Interviewer: *Did you ever go to Lake Mead to swim?*

Ed Smalley: Yeah. There was—trips out to the Lake were a constant thing. Now, Vegas Wash was a lot bigger and more full than it is today and that was kind of the—I mean, Boulder Beach was down a little ways and a lot of people went there, but Vegas Wash kind of became the place where we went. And we would drive out Lake Mead and then of course you come up over the hill and then you'd start to see the Lake and of course with my little sisters, we'd always start the "I see the Lake!" [laughter] But there was a magnesium plant out there. And it was functioning for a while because I remember it putting out that smoke, and then we had a spring where we had flowers everywhere, and I remember the smoke was so bad it turned the flowers brown.

Interviewer: *Wow, it burned the flowers!*

Ed Smalley: It didn't burn them so much as just dumped soot on them, probably, more than anything else.

Interviewer: *Oh, okay.*

Ed Smalley: But I remember we'd go out to the Lake all the time and, you know, sit in the shallow water. There was a picture my Mom had of me when she got some color pictures, film for the camera, and I had this old bathing suit and there was a picture of me in that bathing suit in the Lake. Going out to the Lake and going swimming was a standard thing in the summer.

And when I got older, we went out to the Lake but we didn't swim, we just drove our cars by and, you know, "hung out" there.

Interviewer: *When you were a little kid to you get to play in the desert at all? Go exploring?*

Ed Smalley: All the time! Yeah. That's all there was. There were places out there: there was a family that grew up up the street from me. A guy named Ron English, he had three brothers and a sister. And they lived up the alley. They lived on Atlantic, we lived on Wyoming, and the alley ran in between. And they were always going out, and of course, go down the alley and cross over, there's Boulder Highway and then there's Victory Village, but even in between Boulder Highway you could find chunks of desert that would have lizards and snakes and stuff like that. But they always had lizards and snakes up there at the house. And of course, like I say, I've known Ron all my life. I've don't ever remember not knowing him! He was born in March of 1950 which was the same month that we moved to Henderson, so I don't ever remember not knowing him. And we're still in touch. I haven't gotten ahold of him lately.

Interviewer: *That's really neat that everyone keeps in touch here. It's a special community.*

Ed Smalley: Well, like I told you on the phone, you know, there's only one generation. Our parents were from someplace else and by the time we had children, the town had so fundamentally changed it wasn't like that town that we grew up in.

Interviewer: *So you graduated from Basic in what year?*

Ed Smalley: '68.

Interviewer: *'68 and then you went into the Navy.*

Ed Smalley: And then when I got out of the Navy—well I didn't go right into the Navy. I was in the Navy Reserves. And I'd been going to the meetings my senior year of high school. And then I

went to boot camp in the summer of '68. And I came home and I got a job working for the County Road Department. And in the fall, my mother insisted that I go to college and because I wasn't going to go to active duty till—eventually wound up being March, but at the time I was thinking February, and so she said, "Go to college." Well, I went to college and I had one term, and like every other dumb eighteen year old freshman, you just kind of lose your focus, but then I decided, "But maybe I do want to stay in college." And no, they were going to send us back. And of course I joined the Navy Reserve outfit in Salem, Oregon at the time, and so I had to transfer back to Vegas. And they told me—well, it turned out they were setting people back, you know, what they called the PADD date, Pending Active Duty Date. And they were setting them back for people. And I said, "Well if you set me back to April, I can go to another term in college." "No, you're going! You're going right now!" So anyway, I came back home and I went out to the Navy Reserve outfit out there and the personnel man—and this is a momentous life decision that happened [snaps] just like that, the personnel man, he says, "Well do you want to go to college?" And I said, "You can do that?" "Yeah! They're setting them back all the time! We can just set you back. Set you back until the end of the semester." And I says, "Nah, it's too late because winter term already started up there." He says, "Well, they're just starting now, out here." I thought for a minute, "Yeah I can probably enroll in what had become UNLV by then." And I was thinking about it—I said, "No. Take me in. Take me in as soon as you possibly can." So it was set for March and I went in March 4th of 1969. And they sent me aboard the USS Hancock later that month and I served there until—I left the ship in December of 1970. Now, I was going to go to school at the University of Nevada. Me and my buddy Dave—Dave Wheat I told you about—we were going to go to the University of Nevada. Well, as time had worn by, I didn't get

the enthusiasm from him to go and I had to make a decision. They would give you—I was due out March 3rd, 1971. Now, I was thinking of starting school at the University of Nevada which would have been about February 1st, but then I thought if I went back to Western Oregon, I could get out in December because they start at the beginning of January. And I get the school cut on top of it, and I did it, and so they let me out in December. And so then I came home. And I went, “Well, maybe I don’t want to go back to school,” and Mom says, “If you’re going back to school, that’s okay but if you’re not going back to school you’re going to have to find a place of your own!” “What? You mean I can’t just hang out like I did when I was in high school?” So I went back to college. Momentous. That was what shaped my life in the form that it is. As a matter of fact I just got back from San Diego going to ballgames with a friend of mine I’d met that year in college. I showed up as a twenty one year old freshman in the dorm. That was quite a deal. I made some friends that year that I’m still good friends with.

Interviewer: *Yeah, it’s interesting how sometimes people make the best college friends in their first year.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah.

Interviewer: *What were you studying?*

Ed Smalley: Well, I was taking English courses and History courses. And I started to really enjoy it. And I’d always liked History although being an adolescent, you don’t like school, even though what they’re talking about you might be interested in. But English I was terrible at, and so I started taking English classes because I knew I was going to have to pass. And I took more and more of them and eventually when I graduated I had a double major in English and Social Studies.

Interviewer: *How about that!*

Ed Smalley: I've taught English over the years, too, when I've taught. But mostly Social Studies. That's my real strength.

Interviewer: *So where have you taught?*

Ed Smalley: Well, when I graduated from college in 1975, I wasn't sure I really wanted to be a teacher. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I got a degree and found out: I don't know, what are you going to do? It took me a long time between—well, you know, I graduated in June, and I didn't get a job until August. And that was working in the cannery and of course, in Salem, if you need a job, that's what you do during the canning season. Well I got on in August and then I wound up getting married in September and then I got hired by the State. So I worked for the State for two years and I really didn't like that job, and so I decided I was going back to college and get my—just a few classes I needed to become a teacher. So I did that in '77 and '78, and I had my student teaching in '79 and I got my license and I substituted through the end the school year of '79. And I was interviewing for all these jobs and I understood the frustration my Dad had a generation earlier and I thought, "Well, what I'm going to do is when school starts, I'll just substitute. Substituting all over the place." I mean, there's jobs available. And then in August of '79, I had worked with a lady in the placement office, her name was Betty White. She passed away a couple of years ago, but I was always talking to her, "What do I need to do for my placement folder and everything," and she gave my placement folders—they said they needed somebody to teach English and Social Studies. And so she said, "Well, here: Ed Smalley. Take him." So I went down there and interviewed. There were about four of us, I guess, that interviewed. I was the only one there that day. And I got the job! And so I worked there from

the Fall of '79 through the Fall of 1990! And both of my boys were born then, and my wife ran off with somebody else and things just started to turn sour. And Laughlin opened up in '91! So I took the job at Laughlin. And came back down here. I was three years down in Laughlin then I— Mom decided she needed me up here to help with Dad because Dad had Parkinson's and he was really needing more and more care. So I came up here. I got a job at [Ed] Von Tobel [Middle School] and when that principal got the principal job at Rancho, he took me with him and I stayed there fifteen years! And I just retired in 2011.

Interviewer: *That's great. So what are you doing nowadays?*

Ed Smalley: Well, being retired, I want to run around and do everything I want to do! So I'm going to ballgames and such. And that guy I met, I told you about, in San Diego? Well, he and I got connected last fall. I picked him up in Pittsburg in September. And we saw baseball games to the end of the regular season and then we saw the Red Sox playing in the pennant race. We saw college football games every Saturday of that trip and a pro football game every Sunday of that trip! And then something I'd always wanted to do: after he left and I was driving back, I stopped in St. Louis and I saw the Cardinals and the Pirates play the last game of that series in the playoffs. And a guy I was in the Navy with lives in Joplin, and I stopped and visited with him. Then out of Joplin I went down to Texas because I'd always wanted to see the Texas Oklahoma game, because they played in the Cotton Bowl and it's on the Texas State Fair Grounds at the time of the Texas State Fair. Now that is a "blow out!" I think if I'd have been in my thirties I could have really had a good time! But I had to get up so early to go to the game. Great game. Hotter than heck. Not that I really had a rooting interest in either team, but it was really hot

and it was a great game. And then I went to the fair, because your ticket to the game gets you into the fair.

Interviewer: *That's great!*

Ed Smalley: And I went into the fair and there was all kinds of stuff going on. And they're talking about how that night, it was a Saturday night, they were going to have the bands out there and it was going to be a real "blow out" but I was so burned out from pushing myself so hard that I went back to my motel room and then the next day I went out to Arlington because the Cowboys and the Redskins were playing. They were playing on Sunday night, that night, and so I got myself a ticket for that game! And went to that and worked my way home. That's the kind of stuff I like to do now that I'm retired. A couple of years ago I went to Ohio because I'd always wanted to see a regular season football game in Columbus with Ohio State. And I went when they played Purdue. The game went to overtime; it was an absolute classic ball game!

Interviewer: *Sounds great.*

Ed Smalley: And then—but I've started substituting more and more. I wanted to substitute but I wasn't really making a hard push of an effort. But, you know, they kept sending these emails saying, "We want retired teachers to apply as substitutes." So I went through the paperwork and I got on as a substitute and I substituted once my first year out, just at the very end. And, you know, I'd call the secretary there at Rancho, because I still know a lot of people there, and they'd get me in there at Rancho and I subbed a little bit and then—it was this year—well, the school year that just ended—and I started going and substituting more and more. And I kind of thought, "This is really neat: you show up, in, out, done!" And then you're someplace else! And all the years I worked at Rancho, there's those Rancho people all over the District I'm running

into. And I've gone down to Laughlin and substituted a couple of times. So that's kind of been fun to go back to the buildings. And you go in there and you remember how much time you spent in there and all the things you've done, and now you're here for a day and gone! And then buildings I never even knew existed I've gone to! I got a call—I went out to [James] Bilbray Elementary. That is way out towards Indian Springs. Although I've been out to Indian Springs as a substitute, too. There's a guy out there who was on the staff with me at Rancho. But I went up there and I did elementary PE. And they called me the other day and wanted me to come back. But the service for Mark was that day and I couldn't.

Interviewer: *That's what I wondered if they called you just for Social Studies or if you also did other teaching.*

Ed Smalley: Well, one of the things I found out is [that] to substitute PE, you have to have a CPR card. And it's every two years.

Interviewer: *I would have thought they would require a CPR card for all the teachers generally, though. Maybe they don't.*

Ed Smalley: Well, they don't. But if you're going to coach or if you're going to do PE, they expect you to have a CPR card. Well, I talked to a lot of the teachers, I said, "Well, PE's a good substitute job and there's a lot of PE jobs available." "Oh, I don't know if I could afford \$30 for a CPR card." Well, I went to CPR class—the guy who gave me the class when I took a coaching job just before I retired—well I dug him up again and I went to his class: thirty bucks. Best thirty bucks I ever spent! If I can get a return on an investment like I did that 30 bucks, I'd put all my money in it!

Interviewer: *Yeah, there's some good courses out there. That's great! I wanted to make sure that we touched on some of the things that you wanted to talk about—Henderson—you know we discussed Carver Park a little bit. I think you had said maybe you had one or two African American friends growing up in school. Could you comment a little bit on race relations in Henderson?*

Ed Smalley: Well, I don't know if you'd say "friends" because I didn't really hang around with them, but I knew them and I got along with them pretty well. One of them was a guy named Charlie James. He's probably the most gifted athlete that came through Basic during the time I was there. He was a great basketball player but, you know, I don't think there was a future for him in basketball although he was good for high school. But as a football player he was incredible. And he came and played—he came out for football my junior year, his sophomore year. And then his junior year and my senior year we were on Varsity together. He was great.

Interviewer: *What positions did you play?*

Ed Smalley: Well I played tight end my senior year, and he was the other wide receiver. And then we—there was another guy by the name of Charlie Wesson. I'd been playing football with him ever since we played with the City League in the 8th grade. He was on one team or another. But his sister was in my class. Although I didn't really communicate much with her during high school, I know at some of the reunions I've visited with her a little bit. There was a guy in my math class named Percy Marshall and I'd tell him jokes all period. He'd laugh at my jokes, which encouraged me, I guess. And we had a guy named Willie Sledge who played baseball. He was a good baseball player. I guess he got eventually in the Phillies organization. I don't know what happened after that.

Interviewer: *Well, so there were quite a few kids.*

Ed Smalley: There was a custodian came I think it was my junior or senior year. His name was Tom Parker. Now he was great. He was fun to be around. He'd like to tell jokes and laugh at our jokes and all that stuff. And when I got out of high school, I went and had a drink with him a couple times. And, I don't know, I guess he passed away like so many have, you know. But those are the African Americans I remember growing up with. There were a couple others there whose names I can't think of right off the hand but it was the Hispanic kids I grew up with...like Mark right across the street from me! Ever since we were four years old, we knew each other.

Interviewer: *So they didn't live in a separate neighborhood, they lived intermixed with everybody else.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah! And we all knew them. The guy that lived next door to me was "Little Joe," they called him. And anybody that grew up in Henderson during that period knows who Little Joe was. He lived with his grandmother and grandfather. Jecka was the grandfather and Aurora was the grandmother. And we always called him Joe "Jarmillo." Well, as I got older and learned more about the pronunciation [I realized] we were pronouncing his name wrong all his life! It was Jarmillo. And I never called him that in all the years I knew him! And I went to his funeral—he died when he was fifty—and I remember going to his funeral and I was talking to some of the people and said, "I pronounced his name wrong all my life!" But yeah, I went a lot of places. When we were little, you know, me and Little Joe and Mark—and there was one of the Crespin brothers, Pete. He was always involved in this. Then there were two guys who lived across the street from me: Tom and Dave Drake. They lived kind of on the other side. They were—their stepfather was from Lincoln County and he knew my grandfather, and they were involved in

the activities of us. And a guy that lived in the Crespin house before the Crespins did was a guy named Eddie Aleris and his brother Leo, a half-brother, Leo Montoya, lived there. Dickie's still around. As a matter of fact I saw his sister, Mary Jane, at that funeral the other day. But they lived there and I got to know Eddie pretty well. I mean, he was kind of, you know, one of the bigger kids that I kind of thought was really, really neat. And so I knew a lot of the guys. They'd come up from Victory Village and hang out and I knew them. And, you know, like I was able to identify them in that picture of the Red Sox there. It was an experience growing up. And I went to school with them and it didn't really dawn on us that there was a cultural difference there. "Wait a minute you're not supposed to hang around with them." That didn't even come about until junior high or high school that there was a cultural difference.

Interviewer: *Well, they were all from New Mexico, right?*

Ed Smalley: Yes. And you notice I'm not using the word Mexican. Because "Mexican" doesn't apply. They were all from Las Vegas, New Mexico. And they came here in the '50s like I was telling you earlier about after the War. When I talked to Duke today, Duke said that it was kind of a depressed area and the farming and the ranching, they needed to—it wasn't going to support the population that was there. And all of them that I knew of came from Las Vegas, New Mexico, that whole area there. And so I guess they're a big extended family to some extent. Now there was a guy who went to school here in town, his name was Lanny Littlefield. He was about four years older than me. And I guess he married a Lucero. Now as years came by, Lanny Littlefield was teaching at Rancho the year I came to Rancho. Then he moved on to some other place. But later on his son Scott taught at Rancho and I coached and taught with Scott for two or three years. Now Scott would tell me a lot of the stories, too, about a lot of the

people that I knew. So Scott's a descendant, really, because he's related to the Luceros and the Vacas. I didn't know how they were related; I could probably tell you more about it now than I could then. But, you know, I grew up with them all. And there's an elementary school down the street from where I live, and I went down there to substitute and the head custodian there's a guy named Paul Montoya who was in my class and I grew up with him. Now Paul Montoya's father was Mark Ortiz's mother's brother. And I didn't know that until later.

Interviewer: *But it's hard to keep track of, isn't it? [laughter]*

Ed Smalley: Well, you know it's hard to keep track of who I'm related to in my own family! You know, try to trace other people's families. Although, as it was, I got to know a lot of the families, a lot of people in the families and who they were related to and such. And you know it wasn't just the people from Las Vegas, New Mexico, that came out here. A guy that became my best friend all through school, a guy named Dave Wheat, his family came—I think Dave was in second grade when they came here. They came from Montana to get a job and they were here for a long time. I still see Dave every now and then. Now Dave's brother Mike who grew up here and went to Basic—see, and I keep throwing this little commercial in about how Nevada sometimes doesn't value education like other states do and what is the price we pay—well, Mike Wheat, he could have been here, but he went to college in Montana! Well he graduated from Montana State, went to the University of Montana Law School and now he's a Justice on the Montana Supreme Court! In Montana, not down here! And he grew up here!

Interviewer: *Wow.*

Ed Smalley: Now Dave, Dave went to school at Montana State and he'd come home and he'd work at the pool as a lifeguard during the summer. Well, there was a girl working at the pool

that was a friend of my sisters. Her name was Pandora Schmidt. And he and her were working together and they got hooked up and they got married. She was going to Idaho State and Dave went to Idaho State there in Pocatello. And of course they both got married and graduated. I go by and see them all the time. And well, Pandora, she was a dental hygienist in Idaho, could have been here. Dave, he wound up being a school principal in the Marsh Valley School District just south of Pocatello for thirty some years or so. And they're always trying to get him back to do this project or do that project since he's been retired. But see, there was another left we could have had back here.

Interviewer: *Henderson's seemed to have produced a phenomenal amount of really successful, capable graduates that haven't all stayed here, but the schools were really good. You can tell.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah. I don't think my K through 12 education would take a back seat to anyplace else. And I've taught in schools where we've—

Interviewer: *Yeah I wondered about that, like how did, because of your teaching career and teaching in different places, how did Henderson's schools when you were growing up stack up to the places where you taught? It was a different era.*

Ed Smalley: Well, I would say that, well you know, Oregon puts more emphasis into education than we do. Although you get the same gripes about not wanting to pay for it and everything. But they had that local funding until they passed that proposition to limit property tax and then had to go to state funding. And of course you know how that goes, "We don't want to pay our property tax for schools!" You quit paying property tax for schools and throw the funding on the State. The State doesn't want to pay for it either. We don't want to pay extra money in the State. So it caused a fundamental change and took away the local control that was there when I

was there. And there's something to be said for local control. I mean nowadays they'll run around trying to say, "Common core! Everybody in the nation has to learn everything at the same time on the same date." Well, you want to know something? That is not realistic! Well that sounds fine but we've got to live in the real world. And one of my strengths, probably the biggest strength I had as a teacher, was I could take these low end kids who were slow, haven't had a lot of success by secondary, you know, you kind of have identified who doesn't have a lot of success. And I could bring these kids along. And then, of course, they go, "Oh. You do good with low end kids!" Cram my class with forty-five of them, well, gee, no wonder I'm not so effective.

Interviewer: *That's too many.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah. You cannot be effective in a class that big.

Interviewer: *No. Because already you're supposed to sort of keep control over the kids, but when you have that many I don't think there's a way to do that efficiently and effectively.*

Ed Smalley: Well, it limits what you can do. Like doing my writing classes. When I taught these kids to write. You know, you give me fifteen, twenty kids, we can write and I can read their writing and I can go through. Because when you teach writing, there's a lot of individual work you do. You know, you work with somebody and you look at it and you discuss their writing with them. But you cram forty-five kids there, you try reading forty-five essays, five classes long, you know, you don't have time! And you don't have time to give them the critical feedback they need. And it just doesn't work. And then you get these people who want to throw this term around, "Well, if you can teach it doesn't matter the situation." Oh boy! Now, what do they know about it? I would say this: that's true, if you can teach, you are going to be effective in a

situation, but you can erode the teacher's effectiveness to a certain point to where, I don't care, even the best teacher in the world isn't going to reach them.

Interviewer: *Do you think overall that teaching has improved or is it not as good as it was in the '50s?*

Ed Smalley: Well, I think the skill of the individual teacher has improved. It has to have! Because you don't have some of the fallback that they did in my age. I can remember getting paddled by teachers. You know, I remember getting told to shut up five, six, seven times and finally grabbed by the hair and slammed against the wall and said, "Are you going to shut up?" Well I finally heard, you know? Well today, that's undoable. Not that I'm saying that that's what we should do! Because in my whole thirty-one year career I never did that. I had to deal with getting their attention and working with them. And I think over the course of my career I was fairly successful with that, until, you know, I get bombarded with forty-five kids. And then, of course, I don't care how good you are, you can't keep forty-five attention spans in one direction. You get a bunch of motivated adults into a classroom, you're not going to get forty-five attention spans in the same direction.

Interviewer: *Yeah, that's true. That's true.*

Ed Smalley: But I had some really good teachers. And one of the ones I want to cite and make sure everybody remembers him is John Coe. I had him in 6th grade. And he really moved me along. And took me from being not very—not headed in the right direction to headed in the right direction. And you know, he was a tough guy! I can remember even then having him grab me by the shirt, pull me down into his face and telling me to shut up! I can remember him slapping me around, stuffing me up against the wall, and slapping me around! I've told people

about that and they go, "Well didn't you tell your parents?" "No! I didn't tell my parents!" Because my parents would have kicked my butt, too! One thing I found out: telling my parents was telling on me! They didn't want to hear about it! My Dad told me this. He told me, if he told me once, he told me a thousand times, he says, "You've got no argument. They're trying to teach school! And if they're getting after you it's because you're keeping them from teaching school! I don't want to hear this 'pickin' on you crap!" Mom would always say, "Well, once you start getting yourself a reputation, you're the one they're going to come to!" And, you know, it worked pretty well. But when it was all said and done, he really straightened me out. I mean, you hear I'm not putting him down. I'm saying he was a great teacher. And he was! And he really straightened me out!

Interviewer: *How do you spell his last name, Coe?*

Ed Smalley: Coe. John Coe.

Interviewer: *That's neat. So you were out of Henderson for about over a decade, two decades.*

Ed Smalley: If you count the three years in Laughlin, which is hard to do, it would be twenty-five years. But the three years in Laughlin kind of still keeps me here. But I never lost contact with the town; I was always here.

Interviewer: *You were visiting a lot.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah. I'd come home and one of the first places I'd go is across the street and hang out with Mark for a little bit. Because they were still there until well into the '80s.

Interviewer: *You were visiting, so the changes that you saw, you saw it change gradually over time, but how do you think that Henderson has changed the most over time, since when you were growing up there?*

Ed Smalley: Population! It's a big city! It's not the small town. And I've lived in small towns. You know, Lebanon, Oregon's a small town and kind of reminded me of Henderson in the day, except that, that was multi-generational. And Henderson's not that way anymore. Henderson's a huge city! We've got how many high schools here? It's not like Basic High School. You know, everybody in town was going to go to Basic High School. That's the way it was. And it's not that way anymore. And of course places that were desert are now chunks of the City! This was desert, now it's a chunk of the City! I could never even have got to this part of the desert back in those days! And now it's part of the City! So that's what I've seen is just this tremendous proliferation of growth.

Interviewer: *What do you think about Henderson in terms of—now, Henderson has been cited as being one of the safest cities of its size. But how do you think safety has changed in Henderson since the '50s? I mean, probably when you were a kid you weren't scared. Your parents just let you go run around and do whatever. I've heard that neighbors took care of each other's kids, they made sure they got home okay. I heard a story about the police officer flagging down a motorist to give a kid a lift. That would never happen in today's world!*

Ed Smalley: Yeah. It was certainly a different town in those days. And, you know, you'd go out and do something stupid and the next thing you know, you'd come home, your Mom's already heard about it because somebody knew me and knew Mom and told Mom! And so that part of the community has changed, definitely. But one thing I notice about Henderson, as you look around we've got parks all over the place, and recreation, too. Down in Laughlin you don't see that. What is there for the kids to do? Well, if they live in the right apartment building, there's pools and stuff like that, but here, you know, there's parks, there's pools, there's rec centers

and diversions for kids to do. And of course there's sports programs and things like that. There's always something going on! That's one thing that goes on in high school too is all the extracurricular activities, middle school, too. And then elementary, I'm finding out, they have their diversion activities, too. So it's a—I think that's one of the real strengths of the town. Although, I'm sure Las Vegas has it, too. And it depends on—well, see, that's another thing, what part of Las Vegas are we talking about, you know, as far as—because, you know, it's like any big city. What part of town are you in? And that's going to affect how the town's look at. And there's good parts of town and there's parts of town that aren't so good. Now I don't know if I could say that about Henderson. Now the part of town I live in currently, there's a question about how good a neighborhood it is. It's fine with me. There's a park not far away and a pool and a library.

Interviewer: *There's plenty of people that I know that feel very comfortable living in Henderson, and I think it's a wonderful community to live in.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah and, you know, I think that's great, too, because that really—you know if you can give kids diversions and things like that, you'd be a lot better. You see kids hanging out and walking the streets and stuff like that; that's going to happen.

Interviewer: *Well this is kind of funny, because in the Henderson Coordinating Council minutes from the early '50s, there was the 'teenage problem.' And they were really worried about getting some activities for those teens! That's why they had all dances.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah. I remember those dances at the Youth Center. And I went to those from when I was in eighth grade all the way up to—even after I graduated from high school, when I came back a couple times, I went to the dances up there.

Interviewer: *Did they teach you actual dances or did you just dance?*

Ed Smalley: No, it just—just a band would play. You'd pay a dollar and you'd get in and dance and visit. It was just a good diversion cause where else would you be that night? I remember a couple times when there weren't dances. What we did was wander around town and get in trouble!

Interviewer: *Do you have any funny stories about that, that you want to tell? [laughter]*

Ed Smalley: You know we're putting stuff on the record here.

Interviewer: *I know, I know. Well, you don't have to if you don't want to.*

Ed Smalley: Well, like all kids, I did some really stupid things, you know. And I'm not really proud of it, but I've learned as time's gone by, you know, how to act more grown up. And the 'me' that left in '68 and the 'me' that returned in '91 is quite a transition. And the 'me' that has developed since '91, that's quite a transition, too. You know, you just need that adult perspective. And then of course my parents were 'on me' a lot. Now, we'd make family trips together. We'd go to Caliente to where my grandparents lived and I kind of got a good feel for—well I've still got a good feel for Caliente. I go up there all the time and I see people I know. And I'm talking with them all the time. I'm related to about half the town but—half the county, I guess, which isn't a lot of people. But we'd go up there a lot, as a family, and then we made some trips to Ohio when I was a kid, to my Dad's hometown: Peebles, Ohio. And although I still go there all the time, I just don't have the connection anymore. And my grandparents are gone and my cousin and my aunt moved to Florida, so it's really hard to reconnect there. But those trips to Ohio, you know, took us across the country as a family and took us places that a lot of other kids didn't get to go. And then one of the more fateful things that happened was in 1965.

You know after the summer of '64, my mom, she had my uncle living at the house on and off. My uncle was nine years older than me, so he was closer to my age than her age. Anyway, my dad and my uncle were hanging out and Mom said, "We're not going to spend another summer like that!" And so she got Dad—the National Defense Education Act came out after Sputnik, and so they were giving grants to teachers to go to school to get better educated so they could help us catch up with the Russians, I guess. And so Dad applied for a NDEA Grant and got it and it took him to Oregon College of Education in Monmouth, Oregon. I was fifteen, summer of '65. Just finished my freshman year. "I don't want to go up there! I want to stay in town and hang out with my friends!" Mom says, "No. That isn't going to happen. You're going with us!" Oh, thank God she made me do that because that would have been a disaster if I'd have stayed here. But we went up there and I just hung out and was a real 'stick in the mud' for three or four weeks. Then I started meeting some of the local people, and then I got pretty hooked up there and then I didn't want to come back! And so we went back up there while Dad finished his education increments in the summer of '66. And so there was my connection. Although I didn't intend to go to college there, that's where I wound up going back to college. And that's how my life got up there.

Interviewer: *Yeah. It affected a lot.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah, you know these little decisions that happen all of a sudden affect your life and subsequent events after that.

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

Ed Smalley: Probably watching it develop and the people, the people I grew up with, that I'm still in contact with. I see them all the time. And I drive through the old part of town all the

time, remembering the families that lived here or there and such. And still connected with the people from the time. And it's quite a deal. Like Ron, I still see Ron quite a bit. I haven't seen him much lately. He's still working and I'm retired, so we just haven't connected. We go to football games together and sometimes we have gatherings. Dan Higley, I see him periodically. I don't ever remember not knowing him, either. And, well, Dave Wheat, I always make sure to get by his house up there in Oregon—or Idaho, excuse me. And, well, Duke Sanchez lives in Oregon. And so we've been getting connected lately. Stew, Stew came up and lived in Oregon for a while. Now he's back and I go places with him every once in a while.

[break in recording]

Ed Smalley: Going back to what I like about this town, you know, it's part of me and I'm part of it! The town was only eight years—eight years prior to when I came here, the town was nothing but desert! And since that time I've been inextricably tied to it. It's part of me and I'm part of it. And so people ask me where else would I live—well, I don't know! I've been to places. I've been to towns all over the world. Some I've had more connection with than others. But, you know, I'm here! And it's such a part of me. I wanted to go into this thing that I've referred to as the 'red brick era'?

Interviewer: *Yeah, I want to hear more about that.*

Ed Smalley: Okay, now you remember we were talking about the housing developments that were coming along in the early '50s: Track 1, which nobody knows about; Track 2, which most people who were here for any length of time know about. But the Henderson section, now, they were starting to develop things for the town because the only real auditorium we had was the old gymnasium at what was then the high school. So they started adding structures. And

the Youth Center that I alluded to earlier and the pool, they're built out of this red brick. And the high school, when they opened that in '54, was built out of the red brick. And so those red brick buildings defined that generation. Because everybody that was in town in those years spent time in the youth center, which I guess the proper term now would be 'multigenerational center,' [laughter] the pool, and of course the high school. And that high school gymnasium would hold a lot of functions! You know, we talked about the Christmas program that would be held there. Fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, the upper elementary grades, would put on a Christmas program at the high school. And I was there for all three of those grades. And of course, the basketball games, that was where you'd go, to the high school. Everybody in town was at the football games and the basketball games because I'd see the people I knew up there. Now my Dad would get me into the games since he was a teacher there and he knew the teachers at the gate doing tickets, and they'd let him in and let me in. And so I'd bring my friend Mark with me, Mark Ortiz. And so he got into the games with me, too. And so we'd get to see games all the time. And it was such a part of Henderson! And the movie theater. I don't know if you've heard of that.

Interviewer: *Yeah, Victory Theatre.*

Ed Smalley: Well, that was originally what it was called. And then it closed. And then it reopened as the Henderson Theater.

Interviewer: *Oh, okay.*

Ed Smalley: And, you know it had a hard time making a go of it. Early in the town, the Victory Theater, you know, they still had the 'V' on it even when they called it the Henderson Theater. But every Saturday for the matinee, every kid in town was there. And me and Mark would go to

the store—or go to the show—we'd have maybe 35 cents each. So we'd stop at the Polar Queen, which I said now is 'Portillo's II,' or whatever. I remember that being built as the Arctic Circle. I remember it being built! Which was really—you know, I thought that was really 'cool' having a place I could go to buy a nickel coke. But we'd go over to the Polar Queen and we'd buy a dime coke which was maybe twelve ounces or so, and then we'd go over to the drugstore that was over on the corner of—I believe that's Army and Market Street. And they had that lunch counter there at the drugstore. And we'd go sit at the lunch counter and right next to it was the comic book stand. We'd grab the comic books out of the comic book stand and drink our cokes and read the comic books until it was time to go to the show and then we'd go out the back door and go to the show!

Interviewer: *That's great.*

Ed Smalley: [laughter] And we'd watch the show. Then of course, they'd run it again, of course after we'd already seen it, and we're going to watch it again. We didn't want to go home! So we were wandering around the movie theater. [laughter] And I can remember my dad, that was a big thing for him on a night to go up and see the picture. And you know in those days, not only in Henderson but in all of America, it was kind of a standard thing where you had six showings on six nights a week then a matinee on Saturday. And so it changed the show on Thursday/Friday/Saturday, or Friday/Saturday/Sunday, depending on how you ran it, then you had the Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday thing. Of course, when the show opened again as the Henderson Theater in the—I can't remember exactly when that happened—they just had the weekends. From the Saturday afternoon matinee, when you got old enough you could go to the Friday night show. And there again, every kid in town was at the Friday night show. And it was a

big deal! And I'll see a movie on TV every now and then that I'll remember seeing there. But, back to my dad, you know, it was a relatively easy walk up to the theater, and when I was real little, Dad would go to the theater and take me with him. And we'd get up there and we'd go to watch the movie. And I remember watching a movie many times and then I'd wake up next day in bed because I'd fall asleep in the movie and Dad would have to pack me home! So that was quite a deal. [laughter] But I remember being a kid in that movie theater many, many times. Many an afternoon and many an evening in that theater.

Interviewer: *I bet it was great fun.*

Ed Smalley: It was. It's a different experience than today. Now I was in Morrow Bay, California five years ago or so, and we went to the movie, it was that *Benjamin Button* thing, and it was just the same thing! It was the night showing, one theater, the crowd was there and it was just like an old time town! You don't have that. It's not the multi-cinedome type of thing that they have today. Which is how they really make their money.

Interviewer: *Yes, I guess they have to do that these days.*

Ed Smalley: But I remember the movie theater was the hub of town. And in Caliente they had a movie theater and it was the same kind of thing. But in Caliente they didn't get television until probably 1960! And I can remember my grandfather lived down the canyon. At night, you know, he had this big pipe that he had up there and put a top on. That was his radio antenna and he'd pick up radio stations and they'd listen to radio. And of course the house didn't have electricity, so you had these big batteries that he'd run the radio off of. And I remember listening to Arthur Godfrey, listening to Edward R. Morrow and "One Man's Family." There was a soap opera on radio called that. I was really little, but I remember us listening to that.

Interviewer: *It's amazing that you remember that well.*

Ed Smalley: It was quite a deal. They never got electricity down to that house until '65 or '66. So they had the kerosene lanterns, and they never did get the plumbing in! I took a shower there. The only time I ever took a shower in that house was when I stayed in that house to go to Granddad's funeral. But I remember him building a septic tank and running the grade out there to the septic tank and making the septic tank out of railroad ties. That canyon has a lot of railroad tie architecture. [laughter]

Interviewer: *Interesting!*

Ed Smalley: Not so much now as back in the old days, they sure did. But I remember when we got our first TV. It was after we'd remodeled the house! Because I remember a family called the Spendloves came in and lived next door. That's where Little Joe came to after they left. And they had a television. So I'd go over and watch their television. I watched Rin Tin Tin. Howdy Doody was one I used to watch. And then when the Ortiz's moved in, they had a television! And I'd go over and watch their television, watching Superman, and all that stuff! But Howdy Doody, that was my favorite! Howdy Doody and Pinky Lee! And we got our television, and I was in kindergarten when we got that television. I remember I'd go to the morning kindergarten and I'd hustle back, slide through the boards in the fence, and we had that board fence till the day they sold the house, and I'd get in and I'd watch Pinky Lee and Howdy Doody. So Howdy Doody was taking the summer off. And they never came back on the air. I was so disappointed! You know, I'd like to see some of the re[runs]—I know it'd be corny now with [laughter]—at the age I'm at but I guess in the '70s, Buffalo Bob Smith would make appearances and a lot of people in my age group would go out and watch it.

Interviewer: *Did you ever get to see anybody famous who came to Henderson? Because I know they had some people come for various benefits over the years and I wonder if you got to meet anybody.*

Ed Smalley: Well. I remember Jayne Mansfield. You know, all my friends were Catholics and there was a picnic they had, and Jayne Mansfield came out for the picnic. And I got her autograph!

Interviewer: *Oh, wow, that's special.*

Ed Smalley: Of course everybody was mobbing all over her. She was—that's one I remember. Well, Grant Sawyer who became the Governor of Nevada, I remember one morning my mom went to school with a guy up in Lincoln County by the name of Ralph Denton. He was an attorney, lived in Boulder City—his son was running for judge. But Ralph was really politically active. And my parents were politically active. Well, I remember one morning, I remember Ralph Denton out there. But here's these two guys out there smoking cigarettes and talking with my parents and everything. And the guy that Ralph was introducing them to was Grant Sawyer, who was running for governor. So I knew Grant Sawyer! And my parents would give a coffee for him because they had pretty big living room after they remodeled, and they'd bring people all over the place, and he'd sit in there and he'd talk to them and tell them the issues. I had no idea what the issues were but you know I supported him. I passed out handbills and stuff like that. Oh, it was—you know me talking about the triangle where the Water Street comes down and obliquely intersects Boulder Highway? Well they had those streets there that were the triangle which was part of that Track 1 development. And they had that Dodge dealership, originally Dick Stewart Dodge. Well, they were having some kind of benefit there,

and I met this man—they had his picture up there—his name was Alan Bible, who was elected Senator of Nevada!

Interviewer: *Yeah, how about that!*

Ed Smalley: Yeah. And it didn't seem like it was that big of deal at the time, but it was!

Interviewer: *Yeah. We have some pictures of Bible with Kennedy when Kennedy came to visit.*

Ed Smalley: I remember that, when Kennedy came in 1963. He was going to be here—he was coming out in the spring of '63. I was in seventh grade. Maybe it was the fall of '62—I can't remember. But I remember he was going to come out and he had to cancel the trip out here because of a cold. Well come to find out it wasn't because of a cold, it was the Cuban Missile Crisis flared up right about then and he had to be back in Washington to deal with it! So he dealt with the Cuban Missile Crisis and so he came out in the—it was in August of '63.

Interviewer: *So he was supposed to come out to visit Henderson.*

Ed Smalley: Not Henderson, but he was at the Convention Center in Vegas.

Interviewer: *Yeah, he was at the Convention Center, right.*

Ed Smalley: And so we went there and saw Kennedy.

Interviewer: *Oh! So you got to see him! That's great! Wow.*

Ed Smalley: Yes, I did. And when he was coming out, you know he was in that big Lincoln, you know that was convertible and he was sitting there, and I took my little sister and I put her on my shoulders so she could see him drive away. I didn't get to see him drive away. And then he was killed just a couple months later! But then the next year, the Beatles came to the [Las Vegas] Convention Center and put on two shows! And me and my friend Dave, we were going to get tickets, and they were selling tickets at the youth center. And they were, oh God, I think

this one was three bucks or something like that to get a ticket, and Dave didn't have the three bucks, but I went and bought it thinking Dave was going to get the three bucks. Well, how were we going to get there? Well, Mom said she'd drive us there, drop us off, and then she'd go visit Aunt Annie. Well I had my ticket and I was going! Well there were two shows, I had one to the second show. Mark and his family, they had them to the first show. And Mark went out to the first show then they came back and we were talking about it, I remember, and then I went to the second show. And I sat in that section. Of course I went by myself, but there was all these Henderson people I knew that were there because they were selling the tickets in Henderson and they bought the same section that I did. [laughter] But I got to see the Beatles. It was about a year after I saw Kennedy there.

Interviewer: *Boy, when they were really starting out, it was really the British Invasion! That was the first part of their career.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah, but if you look at that concert, now that I remember it, I'll never forget it, they brought out Bill Black's Combo; I'd never heard of them—one of the warmup bands—well they were a big band in the early '50s, and they played. And then they brought out a group called the Exciters who had a big hit in the '60s: 'Tell Him That You're Never Going to Leave Him'. They performed. Jackie Deshannon came out and performed and she had a pretty big name at the time, too. And then the Righteous Brothers came out and played! And of course, you know, I remember their song was 'Little Latin Lupe Lu' was the one that I knew about. And then they did 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling', but that was before it got—it hit the charts just right after that. But you know, you look at that lineup, and they were warming the Beatles up! That in itself would be a concert!

Interviewer: *It's amazing! All those people? Wow!*

Ed Smalley: It was quite a concert. I'll never forget that as long as I live.

Interviewer: *Fantastic!*

Ed Smalley: But getting to see the Beatles, you know, at the time, no big deal! I mean they're here in town; I'm going to get to see them. But I didn't realize what a historic event that was!

Interviewer: *They didn't go to every town.*

Ed Smalley: And you talk to people and not many people that I know ever saw the Beatles! So that was quite a deal. You know, in this little community. Of course, Las Vegas has a big name which draws people to it, but Henderson, we were—you know, people say, "Well isn't Henderson a suburb of Vegas?" Which kind of—I guess I shouldn't really get too upset about it, but I always correct them and say, "No, it's not a suburb of Vegas. We have our own industry. We're a more diversified economy here that Vegas is." And then we have the plants, and I mean, look what they've done: they brought Levi Strauss here. Ocean Spray Cranberry Juice is here. Nothing in the process! They've got to ship everything in and bottle it here. So that must have been a real coup for the Chamber of Commerce here!

Interviewer: *That was a really neat plant, too. Did you ever get to visit it, the cranberry plant?*

Ed Smalley: Oh, yeah! Yeah that was something else!

Interviewer: *Yeah that was a good tour. I hear they don't give tours anymore, but that was a good tour.*

Ed Smalley: Well it's been a few years since I got out there, but it was fun. But that's the kind of—and the Auto Mall! You know, Henderson has pulled some real good—

Interviewer: *Yeah, that Auto Mall is huge.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah! Well I remember when they brought State Stove here. And how many people work there! You know most of the people I know had jobs there at one time or another.

Interviewer: *So, like you say, there's a lot of diverse opportunities in Henderson. It's not all about gambling.*

Ed Smalley: Well Vegas, they want to stay the tourist economy and not diversify. We have! And that's why we're a big city. I mean they're a big city, too, but—and there's gambling here now—back in the old days, there wasn't that much gambling. I can remember the El Dorado; it was originally—out on the Strip they had a club called 'The Royal Nevada' and it was owned by Sam Boyd. Or he was one of the owners. When that broke up, he had some of the money and I think he's the guy who put the Stardust—the Stardust was on that spot. But he built a club there on the corner of Army and Market Street and called it The Royal. And it was there for a while. And then there was a club built on the corner of Army and Water. No, Atomic and Water, I'm sorry. That was Atomic Street. Atomic and Market and Atomic and Water. Okay? And so they called that The Wheel. And I remember they used to fill up these balloons with helium and tie them onto the slot machines. And after the Friday night show, we'd go in there and we'd grab balloons off the slot machines and go out with them. And of course the big thing you'd do with your helium balloons is cut them open and [inhales] [laughter] the big coup that we'd pull!

Interviewer: *Yeah, good times. [laughter]*

Ed Smalley: Yeah, we were kids. And well, you know, we used to walk out in the desert and take a can of pork and beans and some potatoes and build a fire out there amongst maybe some chaparral bush shading or something out there. It was a big huge empty desert out there!

Interviewer: *Did you ever see any rattlesnakes?*

Ed Smalley: Not here, I saw them up in Caliente but never here.

Interviewer: *Isn't that interesting! I mean you know they've got to be out there, but even in El Paso growing up, and we played in the desert all the time, we never saw rattlesnakes.*

Ed Smalley: Well, you know down in that canyon I ran into rattlesnakes quite a bit. I can remember my first rattlesnake was up there—you know, the ranch that my granddad had is down in Rainbow Canyon. You ever been up to Caliente? Right. Up in Caliente there's a canyon that goes down, they call it Rainbow Canyon, and the ranch is there. Now that Narcanon thing that they have up there—there was a big scandal that they were taking people to Narcanon and teaching them Scientology or something like that—but that's the ranch, that's what used to be my granddad's ranch. My uncle's widow sold that ranch I think in '94 but my great granddad took that up in 1915! So they had it close to eighty years. It's for sale again and several of my cousins said, "See what they want for it." And I haven't done it yet, but I think I will. I don't know—I don't know if I'd invest in it. I don't know how you're going to make money on it. But for an investment that size, you'd better make money on it. But I remember we went in—I was maybe four years old—and we went into the—had this old shed made out of railroad ties and a tin roof, and that's where the chicken feed was kept. And Grampa goes in there and he, you know, he was going to get a bucket and go out and feed the chickens and he steps right over this rattlesnake. And of course I saw it right there! And I don't know about Grampa but I still remember that thing looking at me! It was rattling and I'd see its tongue coming out! And I'd go, "Grampa! A rattlesnake!" He turns round and goes, "Oh, that is a rattlesnake! Don't come in here!" He didn't have to tell me that. I wasn't going in. So he took the hoe, bam! Because you know, it was a threat at that point!

Interviewer: *You know we've talked a little bit about people feeling safe letting their kids play around in Henderson in the '50s, but did you ever worry about stray dogs back then?*

Ed Smalley: Well there were always stray dogs out there and I remember getting chased by stray dogs periodically. But, you know, but as far as being a big issue that you'd hear about, we didn't. Now we got a dog when I was—I guess it was somewhere between kindergarten and first grade. My grandfather, you know, in that—he lived in the old Aetna Schoolhouse that he'd built into his own house and he took it up, and he had dogs around all the time! And this one dog had puppies—you know many times they had puppies—and we brought one of the puppies home. And of course it ran out in the street and got killed. And so we got another dog, Inky, who was our dog for a lot of years. But you know the dogs get out all the time, and we had a license for it, for every dog I had. But you never really thought about it. The Ortizes had a dog, and Tom and Dave had dogs, and so dogs were around all the time. And I don't remember the stray dogs being an issue.

Interviewer: *Well I ask because in the Coordinating Council minutes from the late '40s and the early '50s they do talk about there being a stray dog problem and, "What are we going to do about this?" "Well, we need to license people or will that even solve the problem? Maybe if the dog catcher ever came, but he never comes!" And there was all that kind of talk going on. So I know there was probably a problem back then but I'm just wondering.*

Ed Smalley: Well I do remember the dog pound. Now, it's on what is now Van Wagenen. I think the American Legion Club's there where it used to be. We used to have City Hall up there on that old dirt road. Because you go up Ocean Street and you go west of Water and keep going and it made a little turn and went right to the City Hall and the dog pound was there, which was

nothing more than a bunch of cages and some metal siding. You know, the old corrugated metal pieces that they did. And there was the dog catcher; he'd go up and down the street. We were always talking about 'that mean dog catcher taking everybody's dogs.' And talking about going up there and taking the lock off the dog pound and letting all the dogs out. [laughter] Not that we ever did that, but, you know, it was conversation. But I do remember the dog pound being there. And I guess maybe they did take care of some of these stray dogs. And I can remember one time coming home from—went up to visit a friend of mine. You know go home from school with one of your friends and then walk home from there. And I remember getting chased by some dogs and I thought they were going to maul me. And over the years not just here but when I lived in Oregon, too, I like to go out for walks. That's my best exercise. And I went out for a walk and I'd have dogs attack me, so I carry this baseball bat with me, a small baseball bat. But I've had to use it a couple of times. But, you know, I am aware of that. Most of the dogs are behind the fences. And they can bark at me and do anything they want as long as they are behind the fence.

Interviewer: *As long as they don't jump over the fence! [laughter]*

Ed Smalley: Well, if they come over the fence, now we've got another issue! I know my wife had her two dogs and we got that back yard dog safe. They'd go out the pet door and run around the backyard and everything, but that's it! They can't get out in the street. And we keep them there and our neighbor's do the same thing. They keep their dogs bottled up. But I don't remember it being so tight and restrictive back in the—back in the old days.

Interviewer: *Yeah, I'm sure it was a little more relaxed back then.*

Ed Smalley: Yeah. But I don't remember not having a dog pound and I don't ever remember not having a dog catcher. But another thing that used to happen in this city, and it's kind of an amusing story, anybody that grew up around that time, after Christmas when people would throw their Christmas trees away, we'd have these Christmas tree forts. [laughter] My mom used to just hate it when I'd do that. Cause we'd get our Christmas—Hey! A Christmas tree fort! It wasn't even a fort; it was just a pile of Christmas trees you'd play on. And they'd go around and steal each other's Christmas trees. The big kids would come take them from the little kids! And that stuff went on from the latter part of the Christmas vacation; when school started, that's where it all ended, all the Christmas tree fort stuff.

Interviewer: *I never heard of that before. That's interesting.*

Ed Smalley: Well I'd never heard of it anyplace other than here, but I remember growing up with the Christmas tree fort issue. You know, maybe about a week a year, but that's when it went on.

Interviewer: *Did you go Trick-or-Treating at Halloween?*

Ed Smalley: Yes I did!

Interviewer: *What was that like?*

Ed Smalley: Well, I remember my Dad taking me my first year, and we took one of those old paper grocery sacks and Mom cut out a little mask for me and we found a hat and I went out with a bag and Dad took me out Trick-or-Treating to some of the neighborhood houses. And then I started doing it more and more and then I'd go with my friends. But this came up at that service for Mark Ortiz the other day—about—and it was the last year I went Trick-or-Treating—we walked into the apartments here—usually you'd go to the apartments and they've got

candy to give you and stuff like that. Went in there and the big kids came out and sprang on us and tried to take our candy! Well they grabbed the candy of a couple of them but they grabbed my sack and I wasn't going to let go! So we pulled and ripped it and all the candy went flying and they took off and of course I took my hat off and put all the candy in my hat. So I didn't get it as bad. But Mark was talking to his little sister who, quite a bit younger than everybody, and this was when he was on his deathbed in the hospital saying he wished he'd have done more to help me out in that. But, you know, there was Little Joe, Eddie Valdez, me, Mark and Pete Crespin. The five of us had just sort of fallen in together that night. And we Trick-or-Treated all over the place and we got jumped that night. But I can remember getting a Halloween costume, going out Trick-or-Treating, and seventh grade was the last year, and I didn't do it anymore after that.

Interviewer: *Did you used to go to the Coke Company?*

Ed Smalley: Actually that had been done before I started. But I remember the story. You'd go Trick-or-Treating at the Coca Cola Bottling Company and they'd give you a bottle of Coke. Or it seemed like it might have been Pepsi. I can't remember. Seemed like it was the Pepsi Bottling Company, but that thing was shuttered up for decades. It was up there by where the Ocean Street Chapel is, and I can remember it being there. Now it's gone with the new Ocean Street Chapel complex up there and everything. But, yeah I remember it. But I don't remember it ever really functioning, although I think it might have been at one time during my lifetime, actually functioning. I remember it was an old brick building. There weren't a lot of brick buildings around here in those days. No brick buildings. No two story buildings. I mean everything was

just one level. Nobody had chimneys; we all had coolers on our roofs, but nobody had chimneys. You know, it was quite an experience. You know, things have changed over the years.

Interviewer: *Did you ever participate in the Industrial Days parades?*

Ed Smalley: Well I know I participated twice. Now, originally there was—this lady came from England in the early '50s. Her name was Doris Reed. You ever heard of Doris Reed Elementary?

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

Ed Smalley: Doris Reed. Well before she could get her green card and become a teacher, she had a nursery school. And all the kids in town were in that nursery school. And I, you know, I allude to—have you ever heard of Les Charles, Glenn and Les Charles? He was the writer of *Cheers*? He was in that nursery school.

Interviewer: *Oh, how about that!*

Ed Smalley: And—among a lot of others. I've just dropped my famous names, of course.

Interviewer: *Are you friends with him?*

Ed Smalley: I wouldn't say friends—acquaintances at best. I haven't seen him in a million years. Although we had some of the same friends. I can't say we've ever really communicated, although I did know him. His brother was older and there was a friend of mine who, Class of '63, I think, was friends of his. And also Stephanie Wurzer, you ever heard of her? Stephanie Street?

Interviewer: *Oh, Stephanie Street. Yeah, sure! Yeah!*

Ed Smalley: She was in his class although I never knew her. You know, I knew *of* these people. I remember the big kids I knew, I didn't know them all. But there was a group there that kind of, oh, between the graduating classes of between '72 and, oh, '60-'61. That was the group I knew.

Some of those kids were older. Of course Dad knew them from having them in school. And that's kind of where I had my knowledge of these people. Then when I started going to the ballgames, you know some of these guys became heroes of my hero worship, because they were great athletes at the high school. But then after that, you know, I can't think of many of them that went on to do anything. But like I said, the football games and the basketball games were community events.

Interviewer: *Did the sports teams have entries in the Industrial Days parades?*

Ed Smalley: I don't remember, but going back to that because I've kind of gotten far afield—but the nursery school. We had an entry in the parade. Now a lot of people don't remember, but the Industrial Days Parade originally went down Market Street between Atlantic and Pacific. You can't go from Atlantic and Pacific on it now because the El Dorado bought it all out and made the parking garage and closed down that section of Market Street. Now in between on Market Street on the other side—that Boyd eventually took over all the buildings there—there were some old stores and buildings over on that side and Woodruffs Photo was one of them at the time. And then on the other side was Food Land. That was our grocery store. Then, of course, there were other buildings there. Then they had this hill that went down and around the corner, and we had Bill Byrne's Market. Of course, across the street was the Rexall Drug Store and the movie theater was down there on the corner. And some of those old buildings are still there, you know, from once you get past the El Dorado parking garage there's some buildings still there from the day when there were several businesses there. There's this place called Tasty Tavern. Now I vaguely, vaguely remember that, but that was the burger joint in town. And when Basic High School was in where the City Center is now, it was a lot more

vibrant because the whole town economic and social center was right there. But as the town grew—you know, and then the center started to get away. And of course the fire and police station and the jail were all in that one building up there. Right at the edge where— [demonstrating] that's Army Street and that's Panama Street. And I think it still is a fire station. But I remember it was all there at one time. But you know, as the city grew it outgrew that. But anyway, I remember that Industrial Days Parade going down Market Street and somebody had a pickup and some of us from the nursery school were in that pickup and my picture got taken of being in that parade.

Interviewer: *Oh, how about that!*

Ed Smalley: Then when I was in fifth grade, there was a sixth grade teacher at McCaw Elementary—of course, at the time it was called Basic Elementary—she had her League of Nations things where she'd have a bunch of students who would dress up like people from a certain nation and carry that nation's flag and they would march through the parade. By this time, it was going down Water Street from way up by Ocean where we'd pick up Water Street, walk the length of Water Street down to where it crosses Lake Mead, then the carnival was over where Titanium Field was—right now the Gibson Library and all that—that's where the carnival would be. And we'd, you know, we'd walk down and go to the carnival. But I remember I was in that parade in fifth grade. And my country to represent was Nigeria. I'd never even heard of it! And my Mom and everybody showing me pictures of people in Nigerian costumes. And as far as I know, I'm the only caucasian I'd ever seen in Nigerian [laughter]—

Interviewer: *You dressed up in the Nigerian dress? Wow! How about that!*

Ed Smalley: Carried the flag! I know about it now, and that was one of the ways I learned about it.

Interviewer: *That's neat that they did that. That's great.*

Ed Smalley: It was! It kind of won some awards and everything. But I knew if you went in that parade, they'd give you a ticket for free French fries at the Polar Queen.

Interviewer: *Totally worth it! [laughter]*

Ed Smalley: In those days it seemed like it was! [laughter]

Interviewer: *Well those are some neat stories. It's been great talking with you, Ed.*

Ed Smalley: Well I could go on, I know this is getting long.

Interviewer: *You seem to have all the stories!*

Ed Smalley: Now I'm sure the people that see this will relate to a lot of those things.

Interviewer: *I think they will. I think they'll enjoy it.*

Ed Smalley: The Christmas tree forts, the pool, everybody being at the pool. Oh, I want to—one more thing on that youth center—and I think this guy needs mentioned. His name was Charles Swift. He seemed like an old man then in the '50s and '60s. We call him Pappy, Pappy Swift. And he sort of—there was a guy named Dalby Shirley that ran the youth center, but Pappy, he took care of—he was the one that was always there. Dalby was in the office; Pappy was everywhere, and he ran the place. And everybody in town knew Pappy Swift. And I saw him—it was in the '80s, last time I saw him. Of course, he'd long since retired, and I saw him in the store. He was really in good health. He was well into his nineties then, and we chit chatted a little bit. But he passed away—I'll bet he was close to a hundred when he passed away. You know, we need to always remember Pappy Swift. Everybody in town from that era remembers Pappy Swift. You

know he was a great guy! He'd yell me and a lot of other kids because, you know, you have responsibilities there, and we're dumb little turds running around getting into things. [laughter] But if you were tall as a cue, he'd let you play pool, and of course I'd get there and play pool. I had to be one of the crappiest pool players I've ever seen play. [laughter] But that's where I first learned to play pool. But, you know, I hung out in that youth center many, many hours. And of course the dances later on. But had to get that shout out for Pappy. Now, his son and grandson lived next door to me for a lot of years. A guy named Chuck, well they're both Chuck. But the Chuck closer to my age, he got in a motorcycle accident when he was in ninth grade or something like that. He really got busted up. And so he was always kind of limping. But he and his friends had put together hotrods, take pieces of old cars and make these great hotrods. And he used to have the dragstrip down—Henderson-Hyundai now, I think it is, out there on the highway? Right next to that, between that and Pittman Wash—

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

Ed Smalley: There was a dragstrip there. Now, I never saw one single dragger on that dragstrip, but I knew of it. And a lot of people would go there and do the drags, drag racing, and that was a big deal. And Chuck would always have something in the drag race. And everybody in town was always talking about Chuck Swift's new car, or new concoction of a car. I remember—and you know, they were next door to me. So he and his friends were putting those things together, and I got to see them first hand! And I remember he had this old '32 Chevy. And they put a modern V8 engine in it and of course Chuck had to have automatic transmission, because, you know, he couldn't really work the clutch with his busted up legs. At least that's what he told me. And I remember him having that and painting it competition yellow. Of course, Little Joe

was always telling me the whole story of Chuck's automobiles and everything. But they moved away—I think it was after I left town. And they moved—I don't know where they moved to. But I see him, and he married a girl that grew up on my street. Her name was Andrea Brush and she had four brothers. And I knew the Brushes pretty well. But he married Andrea and I see them around town every now and then and I stop and chitchat with them for a few minutes. But I guess Chuck's Dad is still around, still doing okay last I heard. So I guess those Swift genes are pretty good if they're living as long as they did. But that was—I remember those days. Yeah, digging a lot of memories up. [laughter] The pool—everybody in town was in the pool. You'd go there.

Interviewer: *I'm sure that was the best place to be!*

Ed Smalley: Well it was! I mean that was the big thing: "We're gonna go swimming today." You go up there and everybody else in town was there. Everybody had the brownest tans because you'd go swimming—it wasn't a heated pool—and then after you'd swim a little bit, you'd go out and you lay down in the sun. And of course, obviously you're going to tan! I mean ever since, I don't know, I think I first started in there, I remember, I was six. And I could go up and play in the pool, wade in the shallow end. Went from three feet up to ten feet. They had the high dive and the low dive. And yeah, that was quite an experience. I can remember one time they would—they had this—they tried to, with the youth center, in that building they had, they had kind of a place for a concession stand. And they had it opened a couple different years where they would sell concessions to the people who were swimming. If you were swimming, you had to go over there and you had to—whatever you bought, you had to eat and consume—eat and drink over there before you could come back into the pool. So I remember—and then

they'd run the radio speaker there, running the radio stations and I know it was 1959 because I remember the songs that—there was one, really obscure, and I heard it a while back and, you know, it's kind of—it was by Carl Dobkins, Jr. It was called "Don't Believe All Those Lies." I remember that would play over and over again. And the Fleetwoods doing "Come Softly to Me." And those are just two I can think of. But you know, it was going all day. And you'd hear these songs over and over again. Yeah.

Interviewer: *Lots of good memories from Henderson, it sounds like. Just good times.*

Ed Smalley: And I was talking to Duke today; we were talking about Little League. Now I say, "I played Little League." I want to be totally clear about that: I was on a Little League team, I would stand in the outfield and throw balls back once in a while. I'd get to bat at batting practice once in a while. And I'd sit in the dugout and watch the games. I never really *played!* [laughter] I think I could have been a much better athlete but I was—I wasn't as mature as I needed to be, I guess. And of course, you don't realize how immature you were until after you're no longer—you know, till after you grow up.

Interviewer: *Right, and you did play football later, so you matured a little bit to play football.*

Ed Smalley: Yes I did, but I could have done better there had I matured more. But, you know, you're kids! And I know when I coached, I tried to impress on these kids, "Hey, it's now! It's happening now!" You know, you've got to play. And I could kind of get some of those kids to believe in themselves. And that's what it is: believing in yourself. And I guess I had a lot of self-doubt, and so therefore I wasn't the athlete I'd always wished I could have been. And I remember the Major Leagues. The Dodgers came out in '58; of course, so did the Giants. Everybody in town was a Dodger fan. Well, I decided I'd be a Giants fan. Although you didn't get

to see the baseball very often. And I never got to see a game in—well the first game I saw on the West Coast was in '67 and that was in Anaheim after the Angels game. I did kind of bond with the Angels for a while. I remember we'd go into—when the game was on, you'd go into the house and be able to watch TV, watch the game on TV. And the All Star Game, that was a big event in the summer. And sometimes at night somebody'd have a transistor radio and have the Dodger game on. We'd sit out on the curb at night and listen to the Dodger game. We'd be talking all the time, but then you'd hear the crowd get excited and you'd turn the radio up and listen! [laughter] And baseball cards: I've still got some of them. Me and Mark used to collect baseball cards. And I remember his sisters, he talked them—because Mark had six sisters—and he talked them into buying the baseball cards for the gum. They didn't want the baseball cards; they just wanted the gum, so they gave the baseball cards to us.

Interviewer: *That's clever!*

Ed Smalley: I don't know what happened to all my baseball cards but I've still got some of them left. But I'll go through and I'll remember cards that he gave me, or cards that we had together, and stuff like that. But it was just that brief period, I think '59, '60, '61, where I collected those things. That was—but I remember I did see a baseball game. It was in the—I think it was in the spring of '61, the old Cashman Field. Not the one that's there now. It used to be up, you know, you go out to Cashman Field ever?

Interviewer: *Yeah, I have been there, yeah.*

Ed Smalley: All right, now, you know that parking lot up the hill and you come down the hill and they've got the park. Well back in the old days, the stadium was on the hill. You parked up

above. The press box was up there and you'd come down and the stands were up against the side of the stadium.

Interviewer: *Oh, that's pretty cool!*

Ed Smalley: And so we would watch the ballgames. And I remember the Dodgers and the Indians, Cleveland Indians, came up from Arizona to play a spring training game there. And I went over there with a guy named Gary Wilson, another Henderson guy I'd known all my life, and we watched that game. And of course, one thing I remember is how it would be good to watch the game for a while, but when I was that age my attention span would divert. I can remember they used to take us by bus to the Shrine Circus there at Cashman Field. It was towards the end of the summer. And we'd go watch the Shrine Circus at Cashman Field. The rodeos—when I was real little I remember Mom and Dad taking me to the rodeos. And my cousin was a barrel racer. As a matter of fact, she got put into the Rodeo Hall of Fame! She's a—well, into her seventies now.

[break in recording]

Ed Smalley: Christmas, at the Post Office. Now you know where the Wells Fargo Bank is, right across the street from the Rainbow Club on Army Street. That's where the old post office used to be, an old brick post office building that was there for a long time. I think they tore it down in '67 or something like that and moved across the street, and then of course eventually over to where Victory Village used to be. And they would put a Christmas tree in, get this big Christmas tree and put it in the ground, and Santa Claus would be there at Christmas. And of course they'd bring him down and he'd sit in his little chair with his—every kid in town was lined up

there to see Santa Claus! You'd go tell him what you'd want for Christmas and he'd give you a candy cane. Sponsored by the city. I think it was sponsored by the city.

Interviewer: *Yeah, I remember that was also in the Henderson Coordinating Council minutes, was their annual Christmas Party and how hard it was to get a tree and keep a tree without it being demolished by the kids! [laughter]*

Ed Smalley: Well, you know they took care of the kids. When I think about it now, it looked like there was always an attempt to make sure there was something for the kids. And they did that pretty well.

Interviewer: *I think that's what makes Henderson such a special and close community. It's like a big family, right?*

Ed Smalley: Yeah, especially from that era. The park, Morrell Park, you're familiar with that? I remember building it. They called it "The New Park." Well, where was "The Old Park"? Right now, it's the oldest existing park in town. But at Victory Village there was a park. And I know—oh, I must have been four, and they had these underpasses under Boulder Highway, you see, so the people in Victory Village could walk uptown underneath those underpasses because that's where all the business were, uptown. There wasn't anything hardly at all on that side of the highway. And so, anyway, me and one of the kids in the neighborhood, we ran away down underneath the underpasses and we're playing in the park over there, having a good time, and here came Mom! [laughter] It was a—I'd run off and get myself in trouble a lot.

Interviewer: *It sounds like it. It sounds like you had some adventures!*

Ed Smalley: Yeah, well you know, that's where I grew up. And then I start rambling on and they keep popping out of my memory here. Well anytime you're ready to—

Interviewer: *Well, you've told us so much I think everybody's really going to enjoy this interview. And thank you for joining me today. It's been fun, Ed.*

Ed Smalley: It's been my pleasure. Like I say, I want this recorded for posterity because we're not going to be around forever and these things are going to be lost. Anybody who keeps these things and keeps them going is helping preserve the heritage of this town.

Interviewer: *Well, we're all working together to do it. The Historical Society and the colleges and everybody is working together to make this happen.*

Ed Smalley: Well anybody else who wants to talk to me, I'll be more than happy to make the time for them so I can give them my ramblings! [laughter]

Interviewer: *Well, thank you so much.*