

Henderson Libraries

Henderson Oral History Project

MiNei Bingham

Oral History of MiNei Bingham

conducted by

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm

June 11, 2015

Interviewer: *Today is June 11, 2015. We're at the Paseo Verde branch of Henderson District Public Libraries in Henderson, Nevada. My name is Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm and I'm interviewing MiNei Bingham as part of the Henderson Oral History Project of Henderson Libraries. MiNei volunteers every week here at Paseo and she started working for the libraries a while ago, so she's a Henderson librarian. Thank you so much for joining me, MiNei.*

Title Card: MiNei's story begins in Panama

MiNei Bingham: I was born in Panama. My father was in the Navy when he met my Mom and they speak—she finished his time in the Navy. Well, he had married my mother between all the—and we lived in the Canal Zone which is—when the Canal was built in Panama there was an understanding when the President gave permission to have the French, who couldn't finish the Canal, gave it to the U.S. to finish and so that's the period where my Mom and Dad met each other. And I was born in Panama itself but I was educated in the schools that belonged to the American citizens, which was the Al—Balboa and Ancon were the two places that I went to school in Panama. And then after I came to the States when I was about twelve years old, and my parents unfortunately had gotten divorced. At that age, at the age of twelve I wanted to visit my Dad, so my Mom sent me to California where he lived. And then when I was fourteen years old I got homesick for my Mom and I asked my Mom to send for me. Little did I know that she had other ideas and she had—when I was sent home I thought I was going directly from California to my Mom in Panama. To my surprise I landed in Nicaragua. Mother had—my mother was a very, very intelligent woman. She was never educated because back in her days, unfortunately, they said women did not need to know—to go to school. And so my grandfather refused to let his—he had seven daughters and he refused—for my Mom was the oldest one. She went as—she only went to second grade. And there she learned how to write her name, though. And so she taught herself to read and write. Of course, I could tell by her letters that she had been self-educated because she didn't know to capitalize or periods or paragraphs. And because of that my Mom realized that it was important for her

children to learn. And she knew that if I left to California, came directly to Panama where I was no longer going to be allowed to go to the Canal Zone schools, which were the American schools that, you know, I was participating in prior to going to visit my Dad, and I only spoke...I understood Spanish fluently but I couldn't read it or write it...but, so Mom decided not to take...not to have me sent home directly to her. So she sent my brother who was married to a lady from Nicaragua and my oldest brother's name was Sonny and my sister-in-law's name was Gladys. Gladys was the opposite of me. She was born and raised in Nicaragua so she spoke very little English, if any, at that time. And I was purposely sent to her so that she would teach me Spanish because my Mom for some odd reason decided to, you know, that she was going to have, put me into a private school when I got home. But I didn't know any of this until after I left Nicaragua after, until I was age fifteen. When I arrived my Mom told me that she had put me in a private school and it was called the Pan American Institute. And I was very fortunate because it gave me the opportunity to learn to read, write and speak Spanish whereas when I first arrived I barely spoke and that was a very, very wonderful opportunity for me. It would be similar to me going to college because I, I was bilingual but, like I said, reading and writing was out of the question so my sister-in-law helped me with the Spanish. She spoke Nicaraguan which is entirely...every Mexican, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and all of the South American countries have a different dialect. The majority of it, of the language that's spoken throughout those countries speak just words, certain words are used that are not used in another country. And so that was a challenge to go to the Pan American Institute which I was a student and graduated from there from high school. And while my last year before I graduated, ten of us, about eight or ten of us girls got letters from the principal stating that we weren't going to graduate because none of us had done any extra-curricular activities. [Chuckling]

Interviewer: *What a thing!*

MiNei Bingham: And we didn't know there was even such an animal. We was like, "What is, what is extra-curricular activity? What is it that we didn't do?" [Chuckling]

Interviewer: *[Chuckling] Yeah, right.*

MiNei Bingham: So our history teacher, she was a wonderful lady from Hawaii and she had married a Panamanian and her name was Mrs. Humphroy. And Mrs. Humphroy made us a deal. The eight girls had to promise to come after school, after classes, and she would stay for half an hour for us until we got the amount of credits that we needed for extra-curricular activity. So that was an interesting situation for all of us that fell in that category. But we graduated and on top of that her and another Hawaiian lady, made...her name was Mrs. Wileat...she took advantage of the young girls that danced in our hula class including me, and asked us if we would entertain the young men that were in the service to perform hula for them. And that was my first time that we had ever performed for a group of people. And, of course, most of the young men in the military were, you know, were not allowed to be friends with the dancers because we were all students and, in essence, minors, you know. So, anyway, after I, I met my husband, my first husband, in Panama, and I had...I was visiting my sister, my older sister, who was also married. She, at the time, was married to an American soldier. And when I met my first husband he was an MP and he looked like an Adonis.

Interviewer: *Yes, he did. I've seen the pictures.*

MiNei Bingham: He was very, very handsome and, you know, typical female, I guess, I, I just, you know, had to know him. I had to...I wanted to meet him and so my...I convinced my brother-in-law to introduce me to him.

Interviewer: *Uhhuh.*

MiNei Bingham: And later we got married and after we got married I came to Florida because that's where my husband's family was. And we had two boys in Florida. My oldest son, Jared, and my second oldest is Neil, and by that time my ex-husband decided he wasn't as in love with me as I was with him

and we decided to get divorced. Which was sad because he died very young. But he had, he had, he was ill, became ill I should say and when he passed away. And by, in between my marriages, I took advantage of my knowledge of hula and I started performing. First, my very first performance that I recall was with a lady who was teaching in Florida and she wanted me to dance for, with her group. So I did what they call club dates and we'd go to the hotels that were on Miami Beach and perform in the different hotels. My very first time I danced was at the Yankee Clipper Hotel, which was in Fort Lauderdale. And they liked my performance. I was kind of bold, I guess, when I was a young girl, because I found out who booked the groups that danced at the Yankee Clipper and the following day I called the person they told me that might be interested in hiring me to dance. And so he took my name and number and about two weeks later he called me and they needed a dancer because the one they had was not going to be dancing at the Yankee Clipper so that's where I started dancing. My career started there. And then in between dancing for the Yankee Clipper I would get what they call club dates, which is a one-time or one week performance and then they, you know, move you on. But then I finally got a job at the South Pacific Restaurant and in the nightclub and a restaurant and I worked there for at least five, yeah, approximately five years, because my boys...my oldest boy was around five years old when I quit. I quit dancing when I met Bob, my second husband. And I lived in, we lived in Florida for, oh, until 1979. And we moved because of a couple of tragedies that happened in our family. I had gotten run over...a car was crossing...I stood on the edge of the grass waiting for this car to pull up a hill and he pulls up on the hill and all of a sudden he realizes, "Oh, this isn't where I want to go". And instead of making a u-turn, he backs up and I had just, just about ready to step off the tar and going onto the grass, well, he hit me, hit me several times before...

Interviewer: *Oh, my gosh.*

MiNei Bingham: ...a man who was across the street yelling at him and saying for him to look in back of his car.

Interviewer: *Oh, no.*

MiNei Bingham: And finally he put his brakes on and I had broken my tail bone and what he cost...well, it took me almost two years to heal because it just...you're sitting on it all the time and it's just very painful. But after that my second oldest boy was taking the younger children, Danielle and Robby, my, they were my children with Bob, he was picking them up from school and in doing that, it was raining, and they, he, the car went sliding. He panicked, got out of control, I guess, and he was sliding down the grass, a grassy area, and he managed to get the car stopped but it had flipped over.

Interviewer: *Oh, no.*

MiNei Bingham: And it didn't hit a cement embankment because it wasn't meant to be. And the one thing that astounded me when I found out was here's my son who's maybe fifteen at the time, maybe sixteen, I don't recall the exact age. They, the police department that came to the scene, never offered them a ride home. We, from where they had the accident to where you'd get home was almost a mile and they had to walk. Fortunately, nothing had happened to them. You know, the Lord must have been watching over them.

Interviewer: *That's lucky.*

MiNei Bingham: And then the last incident that happened that made a decision to move out of Florida, we lost a son. And it was, Anthony was his name, and he was Bob's child with his first wife but he was like my boy too. And I loved him deeply. And after that incident I told Bob, I said as soon as school lets out, which it was like another month or two, I said, we're out of here. I said I want to pack and went...where I wanted to go at first, when I first...had never gone, we had never come to Las Vegas. We had gone to visit my Dad in California. We were on the highway and I saw Las Vegas and I saw the casino and I told Bob, let's stop in Las Vegas. We've never been there. He said, "No, I don't want to stop in Las Vegas." So we went straight to St. George. Well, when we decided to move from Florida, we went, came back to St. George because I told Bob, I said, I've never seen such lovely, young people. The

girls are just, just so wholesome looking and, you know, and I said I'd like to come and live here 'cause it, it's, it has like valleys and mountains around it and lots of green and it's a beautiful place to live. Well, for, when, when we decided to leave Florida and came towards Utah, we stopped in St. George and Bob got a job with the owner of a motorcycle shop there because he, he too had owned a motorcycle business, Bob did. And, anyway, for some reason he...the guy that gave him the job for the motorcycle shop asked him to move to Vayo and Caliente and we didn't know where Vayo or Caliente was. But, so we took a weekend trip, you know, to check it out. And he went back and told, said we can't do Vayo and Caliente. It's too far apart and we'll either do Vayo or Caliente but I can't...you know, we can't take care of both...he had two small markets and he wanted us to operate them. So we ended up in Caliente for about a year and then after the end of the year we went to Alamo, Nevada. Have you ever been to Alamo?

Interviewer: *No, I haven't.*

MiNei Bingham: A very quaint, nice quiet place. They, the only reason I wanted...I didn't really want to leave. I was very happy there because I felt like my children were safe after the other incidents that had occurred. And that's why we chose to stay in Alamo. We, we were there for approximately five years and then Bob decided he wanted to come to Las Vegas after all. And he did and he found a place for us to live in Henderson. And that was the first time, when we first came here we lived on Ocean and it's the main road that Basic...

Interviewer: *Basic, uhuh.*

MiNei Bingham: ...Basic and Ocean, until we found some land that was vacant and they were selling the pieces of land, pretty inexpensive at the time, and that's how we ended up in Henderson. And...

Interviewer: *And that was the mid-80's, right? 1985 or something like that?*

MiNei Bingham: Well, the house that we, we had, ended up with...we were build, having to build it because there were no homes off of Race Track. It was just desert and there wasn't not any home built

up there. And the five acres, it had one teeny house but that had Frenchman and was French and his wife and one daughter, a little girl lived in it. Then when we bought whatever the acreage was, we had built our own place and lived in it until about, about four or five years now, maybe. I'm beginning to lose time. [Chuckling] Not when we actually moved from there but in the...in between all of this, once we got here to Henderson, Bob became a, an insurance agent for Farmers and I became his office manager and I was...my kids were old enough to, you know, go back and forth to school on their own because they were, by then they were high school age. And then, als...after he became a Farmers agent we opened up...what else did we do? I'm trying to think in...it's been so much that I forgot. But, anyhow, I only danced here when, for the church, for the...when they have, like, fairs and things to get, make money. I danced for four years in a row for, for those carnivals I guess they call them. 'Cause they had all kinds of things for the children to do and I got, I offered to dance and, of course, I, you know, the church appreciates the fact that I perform for them. And in the meantime, I think, I, Bob and I got out of the insurance business because we'd been doing it for almost ten years. Ten years is, you know, a long time.

Interviewer: *It is.*

MiNei Bingham: And when he decided to get out of the insurance business I was...I started working at the library. And then I worked for the library short of ten years by seven days and that, that's something I need to find out. How I can put in those seven days to make, complete...

Interviewer: *I know.*

MiNei Bingham: ...the ten years because unfortunately Social Security goes exactly to that, if it's not an exactly ten years, they take advantage of you. And so, but I currently have two households. I don't say have. I lived part time with my daughter that lives, she lives right on Las Vegas, the line that slices Las Vegas and Henderson.

Interviewer: *Right, yeah.*

MiNei Bingham: And she had twins and that's the main reason I'm staying with her to help her with the twins because she works part time. Her husband works and she tried a nanny and the girls were getting to the age that they would cry when she's gone. Now they don't.

Interviewer: *Now they're used to you.*

MiNei Bingham: Because they know Nita. That's their name for me, is Nita, which is a short version of Ajuanita.

Interviewer: *Yeah, that's right. Yeah, uhuh.*

MiNei Bingham: Which means grandmother in Spanish. And, uh, and Bob and I, I go visit him on the weekends and holidays but he likes where he's at. He's, you know, he's sort of out in the country and quiet at night and he's content there. And I'm okay when I go to...I, I'm not really a big city person anyway, even though...I know what I almost forgot to tell you.

Interviewer: *What?*

MiNei Bingham: My, my big, one of the many places I danced was at the grand opening of Disneyworld.

Interviewer: *Yes! Tell me about that.*

MiNei Bingham: We got an invitation to do the first script performance at the grand opening for Disneyworld. And we didn't know when we accepted it, when I say we, my girlfriend of, that danced with me. Her name was Mapouana. And Mapouana and I went to Disneyworld and we were the opening review for Bob Hope.

Interviewer: *Oh, wow.*

MiNei Bingham: And we didn't know we were going to be the opening review for Bob Hope or we would have made us nervous. But he was such a wonderful gentleman. And, you know, uh, he was very down to earth. I didn't, you know, when you see movie stars and people you assume that, you know, because they're, they're being mauled most of the time, you know, by the people who want to touch them and try and...that they're kind of standoffish. But he wasn't. He was just the nicest guy and when

he, when he, it was his turn he made some lovely comments about, you know, how what beautiful dancers, blah, blah, blah, and how much he appreciated our performance and that. I got, I did the typical [chuckling] "Can I have your signature?" And all I had was a brown paper bag.

Interviewer: *[Chuckling] That's great.*

MiNei Bingham: He signed it. He signed that brown paper bag for me.

Interviewer: *That's really great.*

MiNei Bingham: And then I, while we were there, I also got a signature from another movie star that I was in love with at...I...I don't know why I was. Anyway, but the name will come to me.

Interviewer: *Right. And you got to meet Robert Goulet also. Tell me about that.*

MiNei Bingham: Well, I met Robert Goulet when I was working at the South Pacific Restaurant and he must have seen me perform because he spoke to my boss and asked my boss that if it would be okay that could he invite me to see his performance. And now my boss told me about it and asked me would I like to, you know, go see him perform. And I said yes! I, I said I listened to him sing every night when I had to go to work and every night after work. It was the only thing, music that I would listen to was Robert Goulet's singing 'cause I...I was in love with his voice. And, anyway, after my boss told me that he wanted me to go see his performance he had the driver come with the limo to pick me up and drive me over to where he was performing which was at the, oh, I think it's called Caesar's Palace, but I'm not positive. It's one of the big hotels on Miami Beach. Anyway, I went and saw him and he sang, beautiful voice, was on stage, and I, I, when he was finished, because I stayed until he was finished with his concert, and then I was invited to go to a party he was having. And his aunt was there also, for the party. I didn't know it was like a family affair. I thought it was going to be more people just wanting to come in. But it wasn't. All the people that were there were invited there and I was one of them. And again, I asked him for his signature and I got his signature and a big hug and a kiss. [Chuckling] And he

was a very, very nice gentleman. I have, and that's where I was very proud that he asked me to come and see him perform.

Interviewer: *Yeah, that's a big deal.*

MiNei Bingham: Yeah, I, I was in love with him but, oh, like you fall in love with old movie stars if they're handsome and he is, he was, and had such a beautiful voice. And, and then the next day he also invited then the girl who danced with me who was from Tahiti.

Interviewer: *Oh, uhuh.*

MiNei Bingham: And her name was Liva and he sent for her to come too, you know, watch him perform also.

Interviewer: *Tell me a little bit about the hula names because everybody here at the library knows you as MiNei but that's not your given name. So tell me about those hula names.*

MiNei Bingham: Well, the, MiNei, the reason I had to...I couldn't use my, my legal name because it's not Hawaiian sounding at all.

Interviewer: *Right. Your, your legal name is Shirley Ann. [Chuckling]*

MiNei Bingham: Yes. And most people, you know, when I see a man, I talk about being, you know, having danced Hula and, and I have family in Hawaii. My Father was born on, in Maui and LaHaina. And so of all my family I became the first hula dancer. Then my baby sister learned from me and she started dancing but she doesn't...I don't think she liked dancing as a professional as much as I did. And MiNei, which was my third hula name, because the first lady that was Hawaiian, she gave me a name that translated to "Kiss Me Quick". And I...

Interviewer: *[Chuckling] Was that your teacher, your teacher gave you that name?*

MiNei Bingham: Well, I, something, it said something like "Wiki Wiki" and I, I...she would call me that all the time. But then when I started dancing at the, at the Yankee Clipper Hotel in the group that I was with there, I met a Hawaiian lady who is a descendant of the Pol...Hawaiian royalty and her name was

Ikilani. Iki meaning high like king, queen, and lani meaning her descent. And Ikilani was, had the most beautiful Hawaiian voice I had ever heard and our group was made up of a gentleman who played the guitar who was American but he, they knew all the Polynesian band, you know, music. Plus, she was a wonderful teacher 'cause if she wanted us to perform, we had to stay after our show was over and rehearse any new routines or anything we wanted to do. Anyway, I danced with two girls. One of them was named MaiLi. MaiLi was, she was a Houli who, her husband had brought her from the Bronx. And I don't know where she learned to dance hula but she was beautiful and she was a good dancer. And Niva was a very good Tahitian dancer and I had to teach myself Tahitian because they had very few Tahitian people dancing. And in Florida the group that danced, the owner of the Mai Tai Restaurant brought them from Tahiti. And I had never seen Tahitian dancing before but I watched carefully to learn because they would not teach us. Because they were brought here to the States without having to have a lot of, you know, rigmarole or whatever it is that they came here, have to do to come in the States if you're not born and raised here.

Interviewer: *Right. They had a unique talent that you couldn't be provided by people in the United States so they didn't want to share that talent and not be able to come over here and work.*

MiNei Bingham: Exactly it. They, they were afraid to share the talent so they wouldn't, they wouldn't teach any Hawaiian dance to a Tahitian. But I used to stand in front of my dishes in the kitchen and I would wash dishes and do what they call an Umi to learn to, you know, be able to the dan...the actual motions. And as I would, got where I was comfortable with doing the Umi standing up and then I learned to do it faster, faster, faster so that's how I learned it. That's how I taught myself. And apparently it was getting noted because people applauded. They didn't know apples or mangoes. [Chuckling] And I did a lot of club dates like I said before at the, at the big hotels and the Polynesian shows that they would have down, down, all the way down to Miami Beach. I have to admit, aside from being a Mom, dancing had been the, the most rewarding thing I can think of, especially doing hula. I

hadn't...I was a dancer from the time I was this high because I can remember that when there was a children's party and they'd have music, I would be dancing and everybody's making a circle, clapping for me so that I could keep dancing. And I was only, I had to have been only three or four years old at the most. And I'm enjoying watching my grandbabies do it too. They're, they're not quite four. They're going to be four August 11th. But they watch every kind of dance there is and I, I'm teaching them hula. And Gracie's more inclined to dance than Giana but Giana likes to sing. And she, then she wiggles her, wiggles her little bum. But they're...they're not, they're natural. They want, they want to dance. They love it. And I love, you know teaching them when they have the patience with their grandmother.

[Chuckling]

Interviewer: *Well that's neat that you have that time.*

MiNei Bingham: Well, I, I've been very blessed and I feel like for what I have I can't ask for more, you know.

Interviewer: *Because you've had a good life.*

MiNei Bingham: And I, I like my work that I did with the library. It was very, very...I like people to begin with. [Chuckling]

Interviewer: *Well, you did the Homebound Program. Tell me about the Homebound Program.*

MiNei Bingham: Yes. Well, the Homebound Program was something I had never heard of until I came to the Henderson Libraries. And I think it's the most wonderful thing that anybody could do for elderly people. Basically, we would have a group of people that apparently no longer could come to the library due to illness, due to age, but they wanted to read. So I believe, but I might be wrong, that Vicki, who was my boss in the Henderson Library, supervisor, she was my supervisor there, she was very hand...was the one who, I think, got that Homebound deliveries created. I don't know if it was her idea or what...I like to think it was because she was the one who did it. When she was getting ready to retire, she asked me if I would like learn how to process...because I was doing deliveries so I got to know the people that

she was delivering to. And she asked me would I like to, you know, learn how to process the books and things or what it is I had to do for the homebound. And it involves, number one, knowing what kind of books these...Mary likes to read or John likes to read...and selecting the books and then checking them out to Mary or John. And then pack...putting them in a bag, delivering it to them, picking up the books they already have, bring 'em back to the library, checking them back in and making sure that nothing is missing. And some of the people, they were so grateful of having that service that I never, I don't think there was a day anybody complained about it. Because they knew that if...how else are they going to get books. And some of them, like my, my case, are hard of hearing, they, just being able to read and large print and then... it's, it's very interesting about that because you don't realize how much you're learning about the person who's asking for books, you know. That's how you get to know them better. There, there was a gentleman that, he's, who hardly spoke to you at all. But when we'd come up and bring him his book he was...already had his books that he had already read ready to go, you know. And we delivered to Mrs. Furman, who is the, the wa...she's the mother. I don't know if she's still alive. But she was the mother of that Furman from California who was a detective. And she was equally a very, very nice lady, you know. She wasn't unkind in any way that I could think of. And it was a lot of work involved in it and, like I said, I don't...Vicki had already started doing it before she taught me. And she was doing all of it. She was doing, picking the books, checking them out, bagging them, delivering them, and, and then, finally I guess she got permission to use me to help her with the deliveries. And then later when she was getting ready to retire she asked me if I would like to learn how to do it. And then, and I was very, very appreciative that she would even consider me. I had no idea she was going to ask me. But it, I can see where having that service would be wonderful in all libraries. I don't, I have never heard of it or seen it happen anywhere except in this library.

Interviewer: *Yep. Well, I know other libraries have these programs but it, it's neat that you got to work in that, on that...*

MiNei Bingham: Say that again.

Interviewer: *It's, it's great that you got a chance to work on that sort of library service. It really is important to the community.*

MiNei Bingham: Oh, yes, yes. Well I don't, I never, never heard of that kind of service ever in any library. I, to me the fact that somebody would even come up with this idea and make it happen is a blessing.

Interviewer: *Yes, it is.*

MiNei Bingham: I, I can tell you I don't know...I, I try to keep active and I don't know if I just, I just don't want to get to the point where, you know, oh, I can't do it because...I'm tired. I can't do this...

Interviewer: *Well, why did you decide to volunteer after you retired?*

MiNei Bingham: I, I would, I was thinking about doing that because like in Golden Valley they have a library but because it's small it's only open one day a week and, and I was...I haven't approached anybody over there.

Interviewer: *But you, but you volunteer here for us. Why do you volunteer?*

MiNei Bingham: Oh, for...well, because I wanted to learn something where I didn't have to use the phone and didn't have to talk to people because...not that I don't like to talk [chuckling]...because of my hearing loss. Unfortunately, I still can hear out of my left ear. My right ear is 75% gone. I have a hearing aid which I'm trying to replace and, because it's old. And, and I like working around the library. The people that I, the majority of the people that I have met in the library, the one in old Henderson and this library here, I get along with. I try to learn something new and different, you know. Being, you have to have a hearing to deal with the public face to face. So my choice of learning what I'm learning now, I don't have to deal with the public. And I can, and I am able, capable of doing a lot of things that they show me, especially Jo. She's so patient, you know, and she's a very good instructor. Then I have my moments where I'm like what was I supposed to do next. But, no, I, I like being around the library. It

gives me an opportunity to do, you know, find...but every week when I come I see a book, oh, I'd...I think I'd like to read this one or listen to it. And if I, I hope I don't ever lose my sight because I was, I'd have to wear glasses not to read, but distance. But now, now I was noticing that the teeny-weeny reading letters, I was squinting trying to hold it farther away so I could see it. But, but the large print books...I didn't even know they had large print books until I started working for the library. I thought every book was in the same print and that...that's a wonderful thing to do for people.

Interviewer: *It is. It's easy to read. I like it too. [Chuckling] It's good for your eyes.*

MiNei Bingham: Yeah. Do you, do you, your glasses are for reading or are they for distance?

Interviewer: *No, they're for distance but now as I get older I'm having trouble reading so, and, you know, it's, it's just easier on your eyes if you have large print I've found in general.*

MiNei Bingham: Oh, yeah. Large print is, is a blessing. I never even knew there was such a thing until I started working for the library.

Interviewer: *Umhmm. Now, you, you didn't come to Henderson in the old days but you've lived here a long time. What were some of the memorable events in Henderson?*

MiNei Bingham: What kind of what...?

Interviewer: *What kind of events happened?*

MiNei Bingham: Well events, the mos...the things that I particularly enjoy is when they have those big get-togethers on Water Street because, especially now that they have had...they said there has been an influx in the Las Vegas area, which includes, they include Henderson, I guess, of, of Hawaiian or Polynesian people, a lot of them have come from the Philippines through Hawaii and...but there's something like 23,000 of the, of them who have moved into the area.

Interviewer: *Wow.*

MiNei Bingham: So, one of the things that I notice that, that the City of Henderson when they have those festivities that they normally have and they have their car shows, now they have a Polynesian

revue, people dancing. Oh, it's wonderful. The last one I got to see which has been a few years, a couple of years back or more, were the male dancers. Wow! I had seen male dancers before but these boys that the, the teacher they have, the Hal au that they go to, I don't know who's teaching them because the gentleman that has the Hal au, he's probably, he looks to me like he's in his late 60's, early 70's. But he's not, he doesn't look old at all. But these boys have the most wonderful routine I have ever seen and I've seen a lot of hula, you know, in different places. And when I go to Hawaii because I have a sister who lives on Kauai and I have another family member that lives on Honolulu in the...and I have another girlfriend that lives, well, lived in Maui. But the...if you've never been to one of those festivities that they have you'll have to go see it. Especially if they're going to have the Polynesian Revue.

Interviewer: *I'll keep an eye out for that. Yeah. Did you...you were here in '88 when Pepcon exploded.*

Do you remember...where were you when Pepcon...

MiNei Bingham: Yes. In our office in the building that we...Bob had bought the building. We had not, just bought it and put in all new glass doors.

Interviewer: *Oh, gosh. How awful.*

MiNei Bingham: And fortunately he was out inspecting property that, you know, when people want to have their house insured he has to go and inspect the property, make sure it's in good health before we insure it. Well, the first boom was loud and it shook the building and both the girls, the two ladies that were working for us, and myself, because I guess Bob was out doing inspecting, we walked up to the glass door and we're looking and we're looking and all of a sudden we see smoke rising. That's all I, we could see was the smoke rising from below. And then I thought to myself, you know what, this might, it might happen again. And boom. And I said to the girls, you know, let's get away from the glass door. Not even ten seconds that we got started going towards the back of the room, that boom was even quite...it was just the final explosion. It blew out that door towards us. And if we had been standing

where we had stood we would have been hit with glass. Bob's office had a huge piece of glass. That whole glass shattered and was all over his desk and one piece of glass was buried in the, buried on the wall where he would have been sitting.

Interviewer: *Oh, how awful.*

MiNei Bingham: Which probably would have severed his neck.

Interviewer: *Yeah. Yeah. My goodness.*

MiNei Bingham: And then, of course, all the phones are ringing because the house, here's a brand new house that's, that the whole thing was on the ground. Some of them, you know, just the roof fell off. And others, the garage doors and the house doors and the windows but the ones that suffered the most damage were the brand new homes. Because I guess that maybe nothing was solid yet. And a big, the good thing about the whole thing, there was only one person who died in the...

Interviewer: *A couple of people, there were two.*

MiNei Bingham: Two was it? At the time they said it was only one. But he was in a wheel chair, was it?

Interviewer: *There was one man who, I think, had trouble walking and the other man was also a manager and they were trying to get people out of the plant and they stayed behind a little bit too long and they...*

MiNei Bingham: That was a, that was a scary, scary thing.

Interviewer: *Yeah, because you didn't know what was going on.*

MiNei Bingham: Oh, no.

Interviewer: *I mean...*

MiNei Bingham: We could, we could...when the boom hit, and it was loud 'cause our office was right on Water Street and the corner of Basic, or Basic and Water. And it's not really on the corner but it was like one building down.

Interviewer: *Close to town, yeah.*

MiNei Bingham: And then you could see that black smoke just rising to the sky. And I'm glad that I said something to the two girls that worked with me...two girls, ladies...that worked with me to get away, let's get away from the door.

Interviewer: *Yeah, that was smart.*

MiNei Bingham: Because we definitely, all of us, would have been cut because the door was thick. It was that real thick glass door. And you could actually, when the second time it happened, you could actually see the door like balloon out and then shatter.

Interviewer: *Wow. Wow.*

MiNei Bingham: I had never seen something like that door and I hope I never do again. Yeah. It was scary.

Interviewer: *Yeah. That was amazing.*

MiNei Bingham: It co..., it cost the insurance companies, I'm sure, millions of dollars probably to re...

Interviewer: *Hundreds, wouldn't you say hundreds of millions? I don't know because the whole, everybody's house had to be repaired and...*

MiNei Bingham: Well, I'm sure, you know, all the people, the majority of the homes that got damaged the worst and right away I don't know were the ones in Green Valley, the new...

Interviewer: *The new building, the new...*

MiNei Bingham: Yeah, that new...and we had, we had just moved into our office on Water Street. Had an office in Henderson and Sunset and we were renting an office. Well, Bob decided he didn't want to rent anymore. He wanted to have his own office. So we had just bought the office building. We, we had less than, not even a year, when that happened. We had a, a shed outdoors, in the back door, and it was like on the floor, on the ground. I mean there, there was no fire, nothing like that.

Interviewer: *Is there anything more that you would like to talk about?*

MiNei Bingham: Oh I was just, I was just gonna bring up the fact that the, that the...because I, I thought I wanted...I knew I wanted to bring up my children in a loving household. And I wanted them to...because was raised, my aunts worse. My Mom was the oldest of the seven daughters my grandfather had. Can you imagine, my grandfather was a full...he was part British Chinese and his father was the Secretary to the Ambassador, the British Ambassador that was sent to Jamaica. So my grandfather was born in Jamaica but he went to Panama to get his degree, to get a degree to become a dentist. And then after he got his degree he traveled all the Caribbean and then went down to Mexico. He, that's where he met my grandmother. She was living in a part of Mexico that's not even part of Mexico now. It's part of Guatemala. And she was from Escuintla in the, Estado Escuintla en Ciudad da Tapachula, Estado meaning the state of Escuintla and Tapachula was the, the city they lived in. And she had one son with her former husband whom I'm assuming died and left her with a son. And she had the seven daughters with my grandfather.