

Henderson Libraries

Henderson Oral History Project

Juana Blackburn

Oral History of Juana Blackburn

conducted by

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm

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Interviewer: *Today is August 19, 2014. We're at the Paseo Verde Branch of the Henderson District Public Libraries in Henderson, Nevada. My name is Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm and I'm interviewing Juana Blackburn as part of the Henderson Oral History Project of the Henderson Libraries. Thank you so much for joining me, Juana.*

Juana Blackburn: Thank you for asking.

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

Juana Blackburn: I was born in Cedar City, Utah and I lived in a little community south of there called Kanarrville and my father was a rancher and a farmer. Had a lot of fields and thousands of acres of mountain property. We lived in a beautiful big brick home and I was, we had a large family and it was a good life. And it was something that we thought that's the way it was always going to be and, and things changed. And, but, I was born in 1936 and we lived there until I was six years old and then we moved. And this part of this country is the rest of my life and the rest of the story.

Interviewer: *Why did your family decide to move to Henderson?*

Juana Blackburn: We, pre, a pre-move was that we first resided in a community closer to Lake Mead called Manganese Ore and we lived there for approximately a year and it was to be able to...for my Father was a very profitable rancher if, when the Depression hit. The banks went closed, he owned all these properties but there needed to be money for taxes so that, that's why the family essentially moved here, was to provide money to be able to keep the property.

And so we first lived in Manganese Ore and commuted from there to Henderson on a bus to school and then we moved here to Henderson in 1944.

Interviewer: *How long did you have to travel to go to school in Henderson from Manganese Ore?*

Juana Blackburn: For about a year.

Interviewer: *But I mean how, how far was the distance?*

Juana Blackburn: Well, it seemed like a long time but it was, I guess...Manganese Ore is probably, I guess, five miles from here, six miles.

Interviewer: *Oh, okay. So not too far but far enough...*

Juana Blackburn: It's in the location, 'cause it's in the location of where the Three Kids Mine, ah, Lake Las Vegas is now, where that's where Lake Las Vegas is.

Interviewer: *Okay, umhmm.*

Juana Blackburn: We explored the mountains there when we were children.

Interviewer: *So what were your home and neighborhood like when you first came to Henderson, what did Henderson look like?*

Juana Blackburn: A lot of flat roofed homes. There was, there was black-topped streets by the time we got over here and the homes were, everybody's home looked the same. You just had to remember...we had kind of an incline at our house to get into our driveway so as a child we remembered, okay, we've got a slope so that's our house because as you went walking you, the

homes all looked alike and, but it was...all I can remember is good memories of the childhood, in my childhood years of moving here and being here.

Interviewer: *What kind of things did you do as a child in Henderson? Where did you go to play and that sort of thing?*

Juana Blackburn: Well, I remember exploring the hills around Henderson, going up Black Mountain. We'd start out in the morning with a bottle, a Kerr bottle of water and with a little satchel around it and we'd just head out. And we'd explore the caves. We would, we would find our own fun; we would play childhood games. When summertime came we spent a lot of time going to the lake. And also we knew what a water hose was for and that was to cool down. [Chuckling]

Interviewer: *[Chuckling] That's great. Well, you know, you mentioned the caves. That's interesting. Were these old mines?*

Juana Blackburn: Yes, and some of them were closed, some of them had big rocks on them. But, you know, as kids if there was a great rock on something that's what the boys would try to do [chuckling]. They would try to see what was going on behind there but I think some of them had been explored and also I'm, I'm sure that at some times might have been other people had been in, maybe at the inside of. I don't know for sure but, but we, we would climb the hills and we just...it was, it was, it was an adventure and we would all...we would see our friends up there because many did the very same thing.

Interviewer: *That's neat. Well, was it dangerous though in the desert?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, we would look for lizards. Never, remember coming across a snake but I do remember falling down and landing on a, on a cactus. [Chuckling] I left, that left on me an impression but, uh, no...I, my day, my era, later on there was an incident on Black Mountain and for...a Jones boy, rock came down as they were climbing and he was killed and so they put a halt to no more mountain climbing after that so, but...

Interviewer: *What year was that?*

Juana Blackburn: Pardon?

Interviewer: *What year was that?*

Juana Blackburn: That would have been in the '50's.

Interviewer: *Oh, okay, so not too long after. That's interesting. So how did they keep the kids off the mountain?*

Juana Blackburn: Well, they just, they just...you know, I think we, we heeded what were, we were told. We were, it was quite a shock to the community.

Interviewer: *I bet.*

Juana Blackburn: We were quite close-knitted and there wasn't that many in our schools and we knew all of, everybody. And to know that somebody was, there was an incident that occurred that somebody was killed while they were hiking, the word went out and, and I, I think there just became a halt to it. And I don't think any question was asked. I know when my children came along it wasn't even a discussion of them doing that.

Interviewer: *Uhhuh. Yeah, and times have changed in Henderson. It's still a very close knit community but do you think it's more dangerous in Henderson now than when you were growing up.*

Juana Blackburn: We didn't, we didn't have drugs. Maybe parents would, maybe drag their kids to church but we didn't have drugs as per se. We, we were, we were united. We were, we'd maybe see what we thought was a little gang fight and, but it would be a little gang fight and it would get over real quick.

Interviewer: *Were the gangs associated with the schools, was it like a school fight or...*

Juana Blackburn: No, just a bully. A bully gang fight. But today...we used to leave our doors unlocked. We felt, we felt comfortable about where we went. We could walk the streets at night. Interestingly enough many of the homes didn't have telephones. Our home always had a telephone but many of the homes didn't. So, let's say, halfway up the block there would be a telephone pole and on that would be a telephone. So if somebody was to have an emergency they could go place a call at that telephone pole on that telephone pole. And, of course, it wasn't long distance. It would be if you needed to have the fire or the, you know, emergency type call more or less. But...

Interviewer: *Did you ever do that and if you did how did that work?*

Juana Blackburn: I was with a group of young people one time and we saw somebody getting bullied on the other side of the street so one of the young men runs over and calls in the police and it stopped immediately and that was the end of it. And, but, uh, but that gave us a sense of security. Today I noticed, I got thinking back and the era of time that I noticed the difference.

My family bought, or when we came to Henderson, we resided at 267 Atlantic Street and then after I was married, we purchased the home from my mother and we owned the home until recently and then we deeded it to our son so it is, the home is still in our family.

Interviewer: *That's neat.*

Juana Blackburn: And, but we chose to want to move elsewhere when many of the homes, many of the apartments started coming up in the neighborhood and we, we would have, different things would occur. Things would be stolen out of our vehicles or else, or else our home had been burglarized several times so we noticed a difference when...in the fifties, the late sixties especially, or no, excuse me, in the late sixties we noticed a difference.

Interviewer: *Yeah, I know the apartments were being built in the sixties and then they were contributing to a crime problem at that time.*

Juana Blackburn: Yes, never saw anything up until that time and I think it was the different people that came in must not have had the work ethics and the value system as those early people that came there and worked and established what we knew as Henderson, the strong characters, the characteristic of strong value people that were actually pioneers of Henderson.

Interviewer: *The people that came when you came in '43 came mostly to work at BMI.*

Juana Blackburn: Yes.

Interviewer: *And so they all came here for a very serious reason. I think a lot of them came here because they wanted to support the war effort. Was that the case with your family or...*

Juana Blackburn: Well, there was a need that I also, you also felt like you were supporting the war effort. I had a brother that was in the military and I had a brother-in-law that was on the, on the battle, battlefield line so, yes, we felt like we were contributing to that. I re, I recall that when, at one time, I, I could hear a lot of honking, a lot of noise, a lot of commotion in the streets and I wondered what was going on and as I went out they said, well, the war is over, the war is over. And I can just remember the, the, you know, everybody was so excited to know that was, that was going to...I mean there was going to be, our loved ones, our family members would be coming home. There would no longer be the war effort going on, lives lost. And, but, as a child I do recall what, that, yes, I think that everybody that did come to work, most of them were women and older people that couldn't be in the military.

Interviewer: *Right.*

Juana Blackburn: So I think in that, in that regard, yes.

Interviewer: *Did the women in your family work at the plant as well?*

Juana Blackburn: My mother had a college degree so she didn't as per se work in, in the production at the plant. She worked clerical office work and she worked for many years with Galbraith Company who managed the homes in Henderson. She first worked in Manganese Ore in the, in the operations, the office over there and then she worked at Jones Chemicals after the war and worked down there and retired from there. But my, my siblings were all either in the military or up, up in Utah plumbing, different things, so I had, I had, I had a brother-in-law that was down here working. I had an uncle that was down here working. Our home, I don't know how we handled it but we, when there was work to be done, different ones

would come down and stay with us and work at the plants so at times I had, there was cousins and uncles also working down at the plant during the war.

Interviewer: *Sounds like a lot of your family lived in Henderson.*

Juana Blackburn: Well, they were all right within our home. [Laughing]

Interviewer: *[Chuckling] Yeah, okay. And how big was your home?*

Juana Blackburn: We had a three-bedroom home and...

Interviewer: *How did everybody fit?*

Juana Blackburn: I don't know but I'd awake...one time I remember waking up in the bathtub, asleep in the bathtub, and I thought, boy, we must have had a lot of company last night [chuckling]. But I, I got in the habit, if I got moved to my bed I'd walk in my sleep and that was one of those experiences. But we slept on the floor and whatever beds there were the adults took the beds and I'm...I was looking at an old picture and there's a, an old cot like outside that over hanged the house and knew one from the kitchen area and when we were married there was an odd bed out there so we just...

Interviewer: *Made do.*

Juana Blackburn: Yeah, we just did for wherever we had, had space whether it was inside or outside.

Interviewer: *How many people were in your house at that time altogether do you think?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, well there was us, there was us four children at home and my grandma and grandfather and my mother and father and my two uncles and two cousins that I can remember. And then family would come down to visit them and their families would come down to visit them. [Laughing]

Interviewer: *Must have been an exciting time. [Chuckling]*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, it was fun. Us kids would all be outside playing, having a good time. We didn't hang out in the house, yeah.

Interviewer: *That sounds neat. And so your father, he was a security...he worked in security at...*

Juana Blackburn: A fireman.

Interviewer: *He was a fireman at BMI.*

Juana Blackburn: Yes, yes, uhhuh.

Interviewer: *Thinking about that, what are your memories of that?*

Juana Blackburn: Well, very little. My father passed away in 1946 so he...I was, I was just...in fact I just turned ten years old the day before he passed away and so I don't have a lot of recollection of it other than I'm sure that's possibly one of the reasons why we were privileged to have a telephone in our home so that he would be accessible if there was a need for, if there was a fire. Because, and that was before, I'm sure before they had an established fire department or it was...they...you know, in Henderson. So, but it was, it was, it was time where

everybody worked and as kids we just, we just, we did our part, stayed out of their way as much as we could. [Chuckling]

Interviewer: *Good kids. What was it like to make a phone call back then?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, it was fun [chuckling]. We, even though there was only a few phones in town, it was...they were party lines and you would either have two short rings or a long ring and if you picked it up and somebody was on it then you might pick it up two more times so you might happen to listen in on something and it meant, think, oh well, I've got to hang this up. Or else somebody, you knew somebody was listening in and you were making a phone call so...[chuckling]...but oftentimes news traveled really fast.

Interviewer: *I bet. [Chuckling]*

Juana Blackburn: Okay, so...

Interviewer: *Yeah, I bet the operator knew everything that was going on in town.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, yes, it was interesting. We had a party line the first time our house got burglarized and, and we picked up the phone and as we called the police and the next thing I know the neighbor was running over telling my other neighbor about it so, yeah, it did, it did help alert the other neighbors also.

Interviewer: *How, how did you possibly get burglarized? When was your home ever empty?*

Juana Blackburn: Well this was when, this was later on.

Interviewer: *This was later, okay.*

Juana Blackburn: Yeah, this was not...in the early days nobody would want to come in our house. [Laughing] Not in the early days, no, they wouldn't, they wouldn't. But, but there wasn't only just our family in our home. Let me just share with you, my mother played the piano and as you walked in our living room there was an upright piano and it also was a player piano. So any kid in the, in the town came and wanted to play our, our player piano where you pump and the keys would play by themselves. And so, if, if anybody needed accompaniment for anything, my mother played for them so we also had the likes of, of Claude Poet, Poem, who had a beautiful baritone voice; Maureen Sullivan who had the contral...contralto voice; our work choir would practice there; anybody that had to sing would come to our home and practice because there wasn't any place else that they could. And if many people had pianos and anybody knew how to play, they didn't let it be known because we had a lot of people in our home other than just us. So it was, it was a full, a full home, full house and a lot going on all the time.

Interviewer: *It must have been wonderful to have all that music in the house.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, it was. I used to sit on our piano bench and listening to them sing I had such a desire that I learned to sing alto at an early age because listening to Maureen Sullivan, she had such a beautiful voice, and it just, it enriched and filled my life throughout my entire youth and adulthood and I've been able to share my voice throughout my life also with trios and choirs and, and because of the early day experiences.

Interviewer: *That's wonderful. Did your mom provide accompaniment at church too?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, yes. She provided for church, for the youth group, for the children's group, for the...if we, if we had, if we had anything, if we had anything for the community she

provided for the community. Yes, yes, she decided at the time she passed away that she had played for fifty-some odd years and played not only just for, for church meetings but for other events and she was an excellent accompanist and she knew how to follow you. You didn't follow her, she followed you, so...

Interviewer: *I'm sure she was wonderful and I'm curious if you remember, did...were there productions like plays. Can you use plays as part of or that you were part of?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, my gosh, were there ever, were there ever. Absolutely.

Interviewer: *Tell me about some of those.*

Juana Blackburn: Well, in the, in our church we were kind of the social calendar for the community. We sing like if we, we would have gold ring ball dances and I would leave a note say in a publication back in '43 it was announced in one of the Henderson publications, an announcement of one of our dances being held down at the Carver Park Center. And it also said down at the bottom, "And ladies, formal dress". So it was opened to the public so we would always have a band and it would usually be Nelson Bland's band from Boulder City and we, we had...the townspeople would come out if we had a dance, if we had a play, if we had a, a, an opera. If we had a road show, if we had any kind of production everybody would come and participate because there wasn't much of anything else going on here. And so it was, we were kind of the mega social park and if we had what we called a social dinner for everybody to get together, everybody would come and join us. And so it was a community opportunity to get together.

Interviewer: *And I think this is one of the foundations of Henderson is the community involvement and especially as organized by the churches in Henderson.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, yes, we didn't, we didn't know different denominations as per se. We were all together. I worked out, was involved later on as an adult with Father Gabalia in the, in the... Jane Fye Gibson, different ones in political advance, in Boy Scouts of America activities and many different aspects. We all worked together in...I was never involved personally in, in the Industrial Days but I, I also, I was...later on I went to...after I graduated from high school I went to cosmetology school so I got to do the hairdos for all the queens of the...so...

Interviewer: *That's great.*

Juana Blackburn: And then they'd go outside and the wind would blow and their hair would go everywhere. But thank goodness we had hair spray, we could do our best. But those were, those were days that you just...it didn't, it didn't matter. You didn't, our classmates, we were friends with everybody. But there wasn't so to speak...oh, you didn't get in one...you didn't have just one or two friends. You, you, you associated with everybody.

Interviewer: *Umhmm, umhmm, that's neat. Tell me a little bit about beginnings of the LDS Church in Henderson.*

Juana Blackburn: Well, it started with a lady by the name of Locreo Perkins wanting to have religious training for the women, religious society, and also something for the children. So she sought out to see what they could do to get something organ...organized, and at that time our stake center was in Moapa Valley. And she was informed that there had to be a survey taken. So she came down, she was contacted by the State Relief Society president from Moapa Valley

indicating that she'd need to do this and if they could find enough members in Henderson. So this dear lady, with a baby in a carriage, she pushed this baby and covered 300 homes and came up with 40 families that indicated desire to have religious training for their children and their family. And that was, that was the August of 1942 and in September of 1942 as the school was just opening, they had indicated that, that they were going to let social groups attend there to have their services and later was written up and submitted and this dear lady, along with Christian leaders, this dear lady's name, Loreo Perkins, was on that and that was the beginning. The branch was organized and first branch was organized in 1942 and October was the month that they started. The Basic High School, it wasn't high school, it was called Basic Township School, down in the high school area, the far last room was where we first held our meetings. It was, we were few in number but great in spirit and it took...it was, it was, that was in '42 and three and a half years later they had enough to organize a board. And I could go on from there but that was, they had two branch presidents and prior to that time, President Cameron and also President Welch and then Bishop Edwin Pittman was, was called as, as the first bishop to Henderson. And in 1944, '45, at, no, '45, and he became ill, had a heart attack, and so then Edwin Bunker was the next bishop and he served there for six years.

Interviewer: *Did he live near Henderson?*

Juana Blackburn: Yeah, everybody lived in Henderson.

Interviewer: *Okay.*

Juana Blackburn: Everybody...

Interviewer: *There wasn't a travelling bishop.*

Juana Blackburn: No, everybody lived in Henderson. And then it just grew from there. It seemed like after the war as different ones moved out, different ones moved in. We, we never thought...I don't recall, it seemed like there was always those that didn't work at the plant or came here for plant work, established their own businesses or went out in different areas, they're just strong, strong people that...I know Pratt Prince worked initially down at the plant but was a barber so they opened up a barber shop and just on from there. Many people...that was in the beginnings of establishing our, our community but our church just continued to grow and in 19.., let's see, 1950, let's see 1954, then and that's when we divided and had two wards. And Barney Cannon was called as the bishop of another ward, of the second ward, and then in 19', 1955, then Marlin Walker was called as the bishop of...to release, as Bishop Bunker was released and moved out of the area. And that dear Bishop Walker served almost nine years and he contributed so much. He was the bishop as the chapel was completed on Ocean Street, which is now called the Water Street Chapel, the new chapel. But as, as the, as the township, as the war effort completed, they felt there was a need to establish churches. But with the LDS Church they, they owned, from Salt Lake they said we own our property and we own our chapel so they wouldn't accept a gift. So it was hard procuring the land and when they did procure the land it was out, they were able to get the parcel in 1952 and the chapel was completed in 1956 and dedicated. So we spent thirteen years in, in the Basic Townsite Township, then Basic High School, School, holding our, our, our meetings. And it, we have, I have such wonderful experience of going there but, oh, you don't think that was a glorious day to know that we had our own chapel and to have our own activities. But we, they, we had such, they, we were so

fortunate to be able to...I guess we must have been good tenants because we were able to hold any of our events that we needed to at the school so...

Interviewer: In the gym?

Juana Blackburn: In the gym and the classrooms for our different activities. But we held plays, we held, we even held dinners, we held...I remember reading about in the history that we also on the, we call it Pioneer Day on the 24th of July, it was so hot so the parade was down in the corridors of the, of the school. [Laughing]

Interviewer: *That was smart. [Chuckling]*

Juana Blackburn: It was too hot to go down the street so, but they allowed us to pretty well have, have the free use of the school so thank, thankful to Robert Caulder was the Superintendent of Schools at that time and I remember that he worked well with, with anything that was needed and certainly appreciate those early educated, those leaders that...if there was any problems we were never aware of them.

Interviewer: *Umhmm, umhmm, well, that's neat. You, you mentioned Pioneer Day parades. What did you, how did you participate in those?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, we would have like, we'd dress up like pioneers and then we would have like our, we, we just celebrated at, you know, the event by either at the end of it, either telling a story or else in some ways we would, we would have scones or some fry bread or something, honey, something that would be something like the pioneers would eat, for them to have at the

conclusion. But just to kind of let them know about the heritage of, of, from when the Mormon saints came to Utah and that has been, always been a special time, Pioneer Day.

Interviewer: *Umhmm. Did you make your own costumes for it?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh yes. We made all our clothes. I even made all my kids' clothes [chuckling]. That was what we did back in those days.

Interviewer: *Did you have a sewing machine?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, yes, and I have a sewing machine today.

Interviewer: *You're still doing it, huh?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh well, I should do it more but...it's nice to have some of these other stores now to buy from.

Interviewer: *Do you do any quilting?*

Juana Blackburn: I have quilted for years and it was, it was, thank goodness it was, it was...my mother quilted, my grandparent, my grandmother quilted. My daughter quilted. As I made quilts for my, my sons when they were ready to get married I made my sons sit down and learn how to quilt so they could appreciate the, the work that went into a quilt.

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

Juana Blackburn: Every time I gave a quilt to somebody I would invite them to come and sit down and quilt so that they would realize the hard work that went into a quilt so they would appreciate it better and care for it. And so, yes, my...they all are quilts that adorn many homes,

many beautiful quilts. And it is a, it is a, a dying art. Many people now have quilt machines. I think that's wonderful, that's very...

Interviewer: *The fancy, expensive ones too.*

Juana Blackburn: [Chuckling] Yeah. Yes.

Interviewer: *But you do it by hand with a regular sewing machine?*

Juana Blackburn: No, I do it by hand on the, with frames.

Interviewer: *With frames, wow.*

Juana Blackburn: Yes, yes, quilting frames. Yes.

Interviewer: *Huh, how about that. So, you enjoyed going to school. Most of your life was spent in the school because you had all your church activities there too for a while.*

Juana Blackburn: I like that, going to school five days a week was...no wonder we had our, our meet show was there one night a week so one night a week would be there for that activity and then on Sunday you would leave for Sunday School and sat in on many services so half the day on Sunday you'd [chuckling] you'd be by to the school house again. So but on Sunday we just figured it was church so we didn't think of it as school.

Interviewer: *Yeah. Well, that's interesting. Okay. How, how did you like school growing up in Henderson?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, it was fantastic. You know, it doesn't get any better than to think that you start school, I started here in the second grade, and graduate from high school with many

of the same students. We were like bonded friends that we hung around together but we knew each other and I knew that if I had ever get in any trouble the tough guys, the guys that wore their, the seniors that wore their pants down a little lower and looked tough would be right there for me. [Chuckling] They were my good friends, good buddies. We had some neat young, neat guys and some special gals that I was able to go to school with, establish some friendships, that are forever friends and forever loving sister friends now. It was...we had fantastic teachers, we had tough teachers, best teachers were the toughest teachers because they wouldn't put up with any tom-foolery and you knew it. And the one, one experience I will share with you in high school, a senior in high school, we had our toughies in our class that were trying to...in our, in our, oh, oh, let's see, it was the current events class, was giving our teacher a hard time and she wasn't as well prepared as she should have been to answer their questions and so they were kinda...so she went up and quit. [Chuckling] Oh, but did we ever come up with a teacher. We got Mr. John Dewey, the principal of the high school for our teacher for the rest of the year. Did we ever have a marvelous experience! Oh, we learned so much. He had us compare the morning Sun and the Review Journal every single day and we would come to school and we had discussions like, I think we...I think that whole class learned more that year because he was...he made...he pulled out of us what we worked, we wouldn't have got out any other way. But we had the likes of, of, of Mr. Dewey, Miss McDoniel, John Batey...oh, my golly, he was a marvelous English teacher. We were just fortunate to have some of the greatest teachers and many of them, my children had and went through high school with or elementary school with. Some of the same librarians, Ruth Ball, she was here for years and years. Marion Burkholder, she brought music to our school starting in elementary school. Ooh,

the cantatas and the programs that she would plan on, we would, we would have costumes for them; we would try out for them. I never got a main part because I was always too tall.

[Laughing] I was, I was, I was, I was one of the largest ones in my class so I, I had a good voice, but I never got a main part. But my brother did. My brother was star so, anyway but...she would go room to room and, but you didn't put up with any goof-off around her. I'll tell you that for sure. But you learned music and you learned an appreciation to music. My children had her also at Gordon McCaw Elementary School so you...there's...we've been blessed. We've been fortunate to have people that, that have been in the school system, educators. Marlin Walker came, was teaching while I was in high school. I was smart enough not to take his class because I knew it would be too hard. [Chuckling] I took, I took, I was more into secretarial in education rather than I was into language and his was, his was language. He taught Spanish and Latin and that but just incredible teachers that...my children took, took from him. I could go on and on about the education system and the educators that we have been so fortunate.

Interviewer: *It sounds great and I'm wondering how they managed to get all those great teachers to come to Henderson.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, they wanted it. You know, I think, I felt like that many...I, I think that the school district...it was...they could make more here than they could in Utah and they had tried to lure the teachers from Utah.

Interviewer: *That's interesting.*

Juana Blackburn: But, of course, many of them weren't. The Burkholders came from back East. I, I think we're so fortunate to have got the ones that we did get from other areas but if they

were really good then Las Vegas would take them and put them in one of their schools in Las Vegas. And they...I mean, they excelled in some of our, our high school music choirs and groups and that. Like, they would, they would take them and put them in one of the high schools in Las Vegas. We went and sat more than once. But I think it was interesting, we owned a sporting goods store for a while and everyone's comment, "Well, I can tell you're from southern Utah. You've got that southern Utah drawl." And I thought, well, that's interesting. I've never been to school there a day in my life. But I was taught by teachers that came down here from southern Utah and, of course, lived in a home with parents that were from southern Utah.

Interviewer: *Right.*

Juana Blackburn: So we were expos...I was exposed to at school, church and in my home. So, so be it. So if they'll say what part of the south are you from, I'm going to say southern Utah. But really right here in Henderson.

Interviewer: *Yep, yep. Well, that's interesting. So when you were in high school, did you ever go to Vegas with your friends?*

Juana Blackburn: Well...

Interviewer: *Or travel to other places around the area or did you stay in Henderson?*

Juana Blackburn: Our transportation was limited. We, if we went to Vegas it was, it was because there was a need. And if we were at school, it was like, I was, I was involved in, in a choir. And if we were going there to compe...and I also was involved with different choral

groups in there. I would go in there at that time with friends. If, if we was going into...oh, if there was a dance anywhere in...yes, absolutely, it was usually with friends. I had a brother that was just twenty-one months older than I was and he was, he was a neat brother 'til I...as an older brother in high school, I was the sister that he was going to watch out for. [Chuckling] So I was privileged to have my brother take me a lot of places.

Interviewer: *Oh, okay.*

Juana Blackburn: And, but if I wanted to walk the streets at night, then he'd pick me up and put me in his car and say, no way. But, if we went to Boulder City it was usually, there was a reason. Either go over there for sports and if we went, most generally it was, it was...none, none of our friends drove so it was, you know, a family member would have to be driving the car.

Interviewer: *You mentioned that when you met your husband he had a car and so was that, that was a pretty rare think in Henderson for people to have a car.*

Juana Blackburn: Well, my husband was four years older than I. [Laughing] So, yes, yes, he, he did have a car so...

Interviewer: *How did you meet?*

Juana Blackburn: Well, interesting enough, he, he came to church one day and he worked, he worked down at Time Ed and he came down in 1953 for what he called a boiler's work and he kept saying it was a long winter. And he came to church and in 1954, took him a long time to get to church finally. Church laws. But I, and he hit up with my brother. And so my brother

said well, come on up and so anyway. So evidently he had seen me before church, out down at the Pike Out. And so he had taken a second look at me down at the Pie...or first look at me down at the Pike Out and the second look at me at church so...

Interviewer: *What was the, the Pack Out you said?*

Juana Blackburn: Pike Out was on Water Street right across from the Eldorado or right or, or...anyway...

Interviewer: *What was that?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, that was the hang-out.

Interviewer: *Yeah? I guess hamburger joint?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, more or less root beer, cokes. I guess it was...I don't think we was rich enough to get hamburgers. Probably had hamburgers but if we...it was, it was where, it was the only place in town that, that you could just really drive up to and that's where, that's where all the teenagers would...if you wanted to meet anybody you pulled up there and ran and got a drink or an ice cream.

Interviewer: *Umhmm, umhmm. That sounds neat. The congregating place.*

Juana Blackburn: Yeah, the congregating place.

Interviewer: *That's great. And then, so your husband was in, in the military at some point.*

Juana Blackburn: Yes. Uhuh.

Interviewer: *Tell me, tell me about that, like how, you know...you, he, you said when he came back, the first time you got engaged and the second time you got married. Is that how that worked? Tell me about that.*

Juana Blackburn: Well, our, our love affair, so to speak, was on, in letters, so to speak. We started dating in the fall and then he was drafted and, in November, and then he came back in February and it kind of went on from there. And then proposed to me and he was, looked like he was gonna get shipped overseas, and to Germany. And it was, I was, I graduated from high school in 1955 in May, and it was not my mother's plan for me to get married. I was to go to Salt Lake to, to school. But he won me over. He, we got married and in July and had a beautiful wedding. I went back to Oklahoma. We were there for six months and then he was shipped out to Germany on the first helicopter group that went across the, company that, that, corps that went across the continental United Sta...or to Europe and served there. And, for, and then I met him in New York in December of the next year and that was we pulled over...he bought a Volkswagen Bug while he was in the Service for his folks. So we drove out from New York up here and as we came up over the ridge at Railroad Pass he looked down and he said, oh, that's the most beaut, Henderson is the most beautiful sight. He said, I never want to live...I never want to leave here the rest of my life. He said, I'll be so glad to be dry and warm again. Where he was at it was wet and cold all the time. And so that was in 1956 and this is now 2014. So, yes, we have remained here.

Interviewer: *Umhmm. That's neat. When, after you were married did you work?*

Juana Blackburn: Yes, I did. I went to...while he was in Germany I utilized my income as, as a, as a married military spouse and went to cosmetology school in Salt Lake City. And then I came down here and I worked at Savoy Salon on Water Street and that's just...it was located...nothing is where it used to be. But it was located just down a little bit from where the first public library was. And I worked there until I started having my family and I was privileged after that to work part time for a while. But then I was privileged to be a, a professional homemaker and I was a...as I reared my family I had three children. As I reared my family I was very active in PTA and so I...in fact I was in, while I was PTA president, I initiated the first bicycle rodeo for the schools with the assistance and support of Basic...or for the...the police department. And the police department and the public works and it was a very successful program. Many schools bussed in to also participate in that program and it occurred for many years after that and I was so grateful for that, that, the success of that program.

Interviewer: *About what year was that?*

Juana Blackburn: That would have been in about 19, um, let's see, 1971 I think.

Interviewer: *Okay.*

Juana Blackburn: '71 or '72. And then after that I, I worked for a short...a stint with Snap Tool in the auto parts as a dispatcher and a, as a book keeper and then I went to work as our daughter was just getting ready to graduate from high school and just getting ready to go on a career to...with her aspirations to go into medical school and go into the University of Utah, decided that I needed to come up with a ways and means to help with her desire to go to medical school, so I then went to work for Desert Research Institute of the State of Nevada.

Interviewer: *Huh.*

Juana Blackburn: And I started out as administrative one and as I retired I had a professional status and was assistant manager of a major department of energy program and so I..

Interviewer: *Wow. That's quite a career.*

Juana Blackburn: I, I was very fortunate to have very wonderful experience and many opportunities. Our, our daughter's aspirations of going to medical school didn't occur. She passed away in 1984 at the age of 23 but, but I...this community so, as we've, as I've lived here and raised our family here, she's buried here. And now this year my dear husband passed away and he's buried here so as we started the new beginnings, as we started, first moved here at the base of this little tiny hill, this little community, now the mountains look even so much bigger than when I climbed them as a child. But it's...the community is so vast, it's just grown so much. There's so many wonderful people that have made Henderson be what it is. Lou LaPorta, I can't go on without mentioning Lou LaPorta. He knocked at our door one day and said, "I'm looking for a secretary" and hired my sister.

Interviewer: *How about that.*

Juana Blackburn: She gave up her education. She was up at BYU and she gave up her education to come down, come down and help mother out as, to help take care of us little kiddies, after my father passed away in 1946. And he, he was looking for an all-girl Friday, somebody to work in his new insurance office on Water Street. And his office was built onto their home initially and he...in fact then I became one of their babysitters and fell in love with their little daughter, Valerie, and that's who I named my daughter after, her daughter Valerie.

Interviewer: *Oh, that's great.*

Juana Blackburn: But, enduring relations with the LaPortas, but we've...there's, there's been wonderful political people in this community that helped establish what we have today, made the foundation.

Interviewer: *You've been involved in politics in Henderson a little bit.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, yes. My mother...I remember as a child going with my mother, my mother, I even, I decided I, I needed to, I first put my daughter's history together, her turn on earth, some years ago because I wanted her nieces and nephews to know who she was, her incredible life. She was an artist; she was, she excelled in sports; she was a very intelligent person; she had, she was a very outstanding young, young person. At her, at her, in her time, in her peaks and her valleys she still, she still made everybody think that they were the most special people in her life and that was, that was a rare quality that she possessed. But then I now have done, am working on my mother's history and right now I have four volumes on my table. I'm just getting ready to submit it to...so it can be sent to Vienna Book Form and because my mother never even threw away a piece of paper. I even have her, her slips that she got from her, her table slips so I knew that when she worked at the plant for forty hours a week her paycheck was \$40 and this was a woman that had a college degree so, of course, that era she worked with men that maybe didn't have a college degree but that was, that was what a woman made back in that era of time. But we were blessed that she did have a, she was able to provide for us. We never had any what I call free lunches. We provided for ourselves, each one of us, each one of my siblings and myself have all established good work ethics. I can share

with you, downtown Henderson we had a bulletin board down close to where McBeth's Drug Store was, was, became, was just a drugstore. And on it people would hang, if they had, needed a babysitter, if they had something to sell or whatever. And so I would go down there and my mother would put up that I could babysit or if somebody...but most people that had telephones, so they would either...then you'd go back there and somebody'd put a note underneath where you put that you'd babysit so you would have to contact their house.

Interviewer: *You'd have to go to their house and ask them.*

Juana Blackburn: And they'd tell you what they wanted you to babysit. [Chuckling] So it wasn't always in our neighborhood. And often times they would pick me up at my house but then my mother would have to walk over to their house to get me to walk me home at night. And my mother didn't even own a car until after I got married. So it was, it was times that we...but we didn't know we, we still got everywhere. Somebody either, somebody either picked us up or, or when my sister came back from college and got a job with Lou LaPorta, oh, it was wonderful to have another paycheck in the house but, um...

Interviewer: *And I bet he paid better than the plants.*

Juana Blackburn: I don't know if my sister was very quiet about it but she was very, very frugal. I tell you I'm sure she had her first quarter. But I can share with you that, that we all worked. My brother assisted, we had milk deliveries to the door. My brother was about thirteen, fourteen years old but he would go out. I guess he would be what you call ADHD, I mean he was hyper, hyper anyway. He could get up early, he'd go out and deliver, do the route for the delivery man for the milk delivery. He'd get out and go deliver milk in the mornings before

school to earn money and then have paper routes after, after school, mow lawns, you name it. I babysat; I cleaned house; we did, we did whatever, whatever we could to earn money to provide for ourselves. But when we had stores come into town like Desert Wear and Van Daley's Shoe Store, Prime Meats and different places like this that had dry goods you could go get things on layaway. And so I could make a quarter an hour babysitting and when I got the LaPorta's long enough I made fifty cents an hour, wow, I thought that was marvelous. That was, that was really uptown. [Chuckling]

Interviewer: *[Chuckling] That was a lot.*

Juana Blackburn: But, um, it was, and it was the same with everybody else. So I...my household was a little different because I didn't have a father. I had a mother but we, we always had food on the table and we always had music in our home.

Interviewer: *Yeah, that's wonderful.*

Juana Blackburn: And we always knew we were loved. In fact, we got kissed so much when my husband and different ones would come into family and they said they never came into such kissin' family in their whole lives. We got kissed when we went to school, we got kissed when we got back, we got kissed when we ever...anyway. It was a loving family and, guess what, it still is. It is still, it has still carried on. But some of the, the timers, the old timers that, I now say ole, O L E, [chuckling] timers, that were, that were here in the early days are dear hearts. And they instilled a, a genuine nurturing community and what we have now is a pride of the early days. They wouldn't have what they've got today if it wasn't, wouldn't have been for those, those strong early leaders.

Interviewer: *That's right. There wouldn't even be a town because it was a temporary town. It was a war town and they didn't intend for it to be permanent. And they worked hard to save their town.*

Juana Blackburn: No. No. Lorna Kesterson, our woman mayor, incredible woman and fortunate or unfortunate as it was, I was in the doctor's office sitting having a last conversation with her before she had her major heart attack. And then it was at the time of elections going on and my comment to her is, "Are you glad you're not running [chuckling] for mayor now." And she said, "Oh, my golly, yes. I'm glad that era is in the past." But she set what she, in place what she did so that we can benefit in our posterity to benefit. Right now I'm...our ninth great-grandchild will be here in about four weeks and so...and they all live here so...

Interviewer: *Oh, congratulations. Oh, that's amazing that your whole family is here. Wow.*

Juana Blackburn: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: *You know, you said some things about Lorna Kesterson and she was our only woman mayor.*

Juana Blackburn: And she was councilman for two terms I believe, two or three terms.

Interviewer: *That's right. What was it like to have her as mayor? What did that mean to Henderson, to have her as the mayor?*

Juana Blackburn: She was a woman of stature. I think, I think it puts...I don't think it made a difference whether she was a woman or a man but she just was a woman. And she was...I knew her when she first moved here. She moved, grew up in Boulder City but I knew her when she

first moved here because she was on the city ball team with my sister. My sister was ten years older than I was so I remember going down and watching them play ball. That was, that was the big thing. You know, the women's baseball team and the men's baseball team. So you'd meet down at what was called the Titanium Field and, and that was, that was our entertainment going down there and see if the, somebody was going to holler at the ref, the official for calling the wrong, wrong play. But anyway I met her back in that era. And also she went to, went to college with my sister up in Utah, up in Dix College. But it was, I never thought it as her being a woman mayor. I just thought of her being Lorna Kesterson.

Interviewer: *Okay, yeah.*

Juana Blackburn: And, but I think it, I think it says a lot. It says a lot when you think of the history of, of what the woman movement has made. But I, I don't think there's...I don't know. I, I know my husband was...gave me credit for so many things. It wasn't, it wasn't he was above me and I was above him. It was that we were together. And so I think that was the same with Lorna's family. Her husband was right there and I do recall at one time somebody offended her, one of the other councilmen offended her when she was a councilman, and her husband was right there at that next meeting. [Chuckling] He was, he just let him know right up front you don't say anything about Lorna. And so I do recall that, I do recall that. So it was, and she had a wonderful family, great family, all boys.

Interviewer: *Oh, how about that.*

Juana Blackburn: [Laughing] All boys, yeah, so...

Interviewer: *She was trying for a girl but...[chuckling]*

Juana Blackburn: No, all were boys.

Interviewer: *That's interesting, yeah. That's neat to hear about. And your husband was friends with Harry Reid from...*

Juana Blackburn: We...of course, I knew Harry in high school and he was younger than I was. And then when we went to Cedar to college Harry was also going to Cedar. It was S, uh, S U, SSU, uh, S U of, anyway...

Interviewer: *I know; I always get confused by the acronyms.*

Juana Blackburn: [Chuckling] But he, he spent mostly Sundays at our place having Sunday, Sunday meals. In fact, I will tell a story on him. When he and Landra eloped, they stopped at our place. We had a baby and he'd, he'd come by and he'd join us for a Sunday meal and play with our baby, Junior, and he said, "Well, guess what, I eloped." And I'm the longest stat I've probably gotten placed on. [Laughing] But then our, then our paths kind of changed. He went to Logan to school and then after graduation I had serious health problems so my husband didn't pursue his, his schooling and he came down here and worked. But he, he got his degree when our baby son graduated from high school in 1976, my husband got his degree. So he continued his education and then ended up with a professional engineers' degree.

Interviewer: *It's, it's really great that you're, both of your fam...sides of your family are, are so interested in education, the importance of education.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh yes. Well, my, my mother-in-law was also a school teacher and it, it...you know you just...and our, our sons have excelled in education and our second son, who

didn't...he thought he could work at the plant and he did. He was working at Con Met. I had, we had him enrolled at community college. And he felt like, oh no, I, I don't need to go to school. I can, I can make good money down here at Con Met. And then he had a back injury and then he decided that education was important and about four years ago he got his master's degree. And it's certainly benefited. He is, he has had very many opportunities in...first in the City of Henderson and now he's currently in the City of North Las Vegas and very grateful for what his education's been able to provide him.

Interviewer: *That's great. One thing that I haven't asked you about is some of the other neighborhoods in Henderson. When you were growing up did you have friends from Carver Park?*

Juana Blackburn: Well, in high school transportation for...well, if you, if you saw them at the movie theater but you didn't...I mean, you didn't know who they were. But my grandfather was the custodian at the Carver Park School so I just know there was a Carver Park School. But, and, but it wasn't until high school that we became acquainted with them. They were never in any of our, of course, any of our schools because they had their own school. And, but they were, they were accepted as, as...in sports...I mean there was never a, a...it was just like all of a sudden a new person because you had never been acquainted with them before and then when high school came then, then you went to school with them for four years. And, um...

Interviewer: *Just to give people a little background about what we're talking about, Carver Park was a neighborhood that was constructed during World War II for African Americans to live while they worked at the plants and after a while it became integrated so that...because*

they couldn't fill all the homes. Some of the African American families were moving to West Las Vegas to be with the greater African American community there and so they couldn't fill all the homes and some Caucasian families started moving in. And Rick Watson is one of those. I don't know if you know Rick. He was a principal in some of the Las Vegas schools and grew up in Henderson. But his family moved to Carver Park when they first moved here.

Juana Blackburn: Yes, many families did.

Interviewer: *Yeah, so...yeah, when did...well, what, what did you all...you all didn't have much, you didn't have a lot of contact with people from Carver Park or the other neighborhoods...did you sort of stick with your own neighborhood? There was like Victory Village.*

Juana Blackburn: Well, well we, we had an underpass that we could walk over to Victory Village. It was, it was...we'd go over to Victory Village if we had...because our...they would...you know, we would have classmates that lived there. But we'd go over there and play with some of our friends. We had a lot of our church activities over there in the, in the Center. The, I, they had over...it was...I don't, I don't know for sure what the terminology was for the Center. But anyway, it was, it was a large area that we would go over and either there or the Carver Park Center and we had dances.

Interviewer: *Yeah, I remember you said you had dances at the Carver Park Center.*

Juana Blackburn: Yeah, yeah, and so we held, we held dances at both places and I can, I recall, now in high school we held dances at the, at the Victory Village Center all the time. And we also did our church dances there. And it was, you know, it was, it was not quite as big as the, as the...well, when I...they didn't get the new high school until I was a, a junior, the end of my

junior year. And, but the high...after we'd get through with the game then the dances would go, we'd go over to the Victory Village Center for the dances. That was the hangout. And the Bop and these different kind of dances, you know, were the big thing. And we'd, we'd hear, we just, we just got out and danced. We didn't care who was out there with us, you know. And the African American, I was coming...we all danced together.

Interviewer: *Oh, they purchased tickets too.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, yeah. Yeah, they were out there. They're our friends.

Interviewer: *That's great.*

Juana Blackburn: They were our friends. And I had a, I had a, I had a rude awakening when I got married and moved to Lawton, Oklahoma. I went to work at a Kres, Kresge's store down the street from where we lived and I go home and I told my husband, honey, there's two water fountains. One says, "Colored", and one says, "White". And the water's the same from both of them. And he says, "Dear, only the colored people can drink out of the colored one". And I went to get on a bus there and I was sitting in the front and this elderly woman got on and had her arms full of groceries. I got up to give her my seat and she said, "Oh, no, no, no, no". And so, I mean, it was a total, a total shock to me. I had no idea. I had never been exposed. I mean, totally, not ever exposed to anything like that here.

Interviewer: *So there was no segregation in Henderson.*

Juana Blackburn: No, no, absolutely not. They...I...they were our friends! Our classmates and our friends. But it was, so I, so, yeah, I found out colored water didn't come out of a...[laughing].

Interviewer: *You expected it to be a color?*

Juana Blackburn: Well, it said colored. I expected see colored water for the first couple...

Interviewer: *That's, that's great [chuckling]. Well, we wish it had been that way.*

Juana Blackburn: Yeah, yeah. Maybe lemonade or something come out.

Interviewer: *Yeah, lemonade, right? Yeah. Oh well. Oh, gosh. Do you remember some of the...were there any exciting events that ever happened in Henderson over the years that you've lived here?*

Juana Blackburn: Well, I can remember waking up early in the mornings to go out and sit outside to watch when they'd do the ground, above ground testing. And then going to school at eight, and, of course, we always wore skirts, dresses. You know, I mean girls, no way did you wear pants to school. And we'd say, well, we'd be holding our, our skirts out, well, you can tell it's going to be a windy day today because they just let off another test, above ground testing. And remember seeing that, witnessing that.

Interviewer: *Was it windy because of the test?*

Juana Blackburn: Well, because they made sure that the wind so it would blow it out.

Interviewer: *They waited for a windy day.*

Juana Blackburn: Yes, yes, the weather had to be such that they could...

Interviewer: *How interesting.*

Juana Blackburn: So that was, that was a, that was a planned thing. It, it, it had to be an interesting Nazi program that I, the O8 Program that I worked on was to do with the community of British and Monitoring Programs in communities throughout Nevada and Utah and into California. And those were monitoring stations to monitor any, any, anything even on the below ground testing but did take place as I worked it as a researching student. And even with the Chernobyl incident, we did get some readings on our monitoring stations. And they're still in place, still actually engaged but, of course, we don't do the testing anymore but it's for, more for transportation, you know, for, for broader than what these are, whatever uses are. I haven't been involved in the program, of course. Its...I retired in '96 but, but what's interesting how delicate the machines and equipment were. But that was, that was, that was an interesting era. And I remember, my husband tells me about going up 91 and then taking and having checkpoint stations and checking and checking his tires as he drove from Henderson to Southern Utah and to see if there was anything on his tires and his car. But, oh, later on the Pepcon blast. I think that was in '88 and that was devastating, emotional and devastating. My two grandchildren and my granddau...and my daughter-in-law were the last ones to get marshmallows at the marshmallow factory right next door and as they were coming out that she saw the fire and she thought she needed to go back in and tell them there's a fire next door at the plant and she had the kids buckled in. And she thought, well, if I don't see a fire truck come, I will call as soon as I get down. And for whatever reason she had the windows rolled down about an inch or two and just as she got right to the driveway entrance, or the entrance

there it...the first explosion went off. And so it was, it was a frightful time. Friends had gone with her and had gone the other way and, and had seen the explosion but never saw them coming out and so we get on, on the answer machine that is screaming message, "Where are you, are you okay?" But she was able to get into her folks' place but you couldn't, you immediately could not have phone contact with anybody because all of the phone lines, they, everybody tried to make contact and everything locked up. You couldn't make a call anywhere.

Interviewer: *Wow.*

Juana Blackburn: Everything went busy. And, and somebody passed her on the way and she just, you know, emotionally screaming and everything else but then our, our nephew saw the fire and he had a Volkswagen and he pulls off the side of the road coming from class to see what it, what it was and his Volkswagen is the one they show in all the pictures that just hit it, his car. But thank goodness he, he wasn't, he wasn't hurt but...

Interviewer: *Well, that's amazing. That is so lucky.*

Juana Blackburn: ...it's, it was, it was devastating. There was so many incidents of our, our home was...it kinda did a ripple thing so one home would be affected and the next home wouldn't as much. One home would have windows all broken out and the next home wouldn't. But cracked our swimming pool up in our area where we lived. Anyway, it was, it was, it was a...for the whole community, the whole valley, it was, it was a shock. And for people that maybe didn't know about Henderson, the next, next day we, my husband had a business trip and we flew back East and on the headlines back there it was, "Henderson Experiences Explosion at Plant". People said, "Henderson, where's Henderson". And we said it's our home

town! That's where we're from, yes. And so, but I think everybody, Henderson got on the map and big time. We weren't just a suburb of Las Vegas after that. We were truly Henderson. But, you know, I think the progress of the city, the growth of the city, I mentioned the growth of the, just everything, is kind of monumental in things that have, that have occurred here in Henderson. But that's, that's some of the memories that are most devastating ones.

Interviewer: *Yeah, well, that...you know, and I think when people think about that explosion they think, they think about the, you know, the event and not so much about the lives that were affected. They, they, you know, it's lucky that only two people were killed but, but so many people were injured and, and traumatized by what happened, especially at the marshmallow plant.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh yeah, yeah, when they...yeah, that, devastated it and, you know, it, it's part of history. Now it, I know it affected the Gibson family emotionally. They could, a lot was said in the press that shouldn't have been said personally against the Gibson family and I know it was, it was, it was difficult, very difficult for James I. Gibson at the time because he was struggling with cancer. And it, it was, it was devastating to witness because you knew the people that worked there, you knew the people that, that were the CEO's of the company and you knew the character and the caliber of the people they were. And, but we learn through things. As my husband was a safety engineer, he was involved in many, many committees that he was on the State Legislature for years and different things I feel that we've got a safer community. Our plants, of course, that plant relocated. It's out of Cedar City now, and other areas because we've got a little smarter. In the early years Henderson was kind of, had a stigma of being the industrial community and with the industrial community came...we were a

little, "Oh, you're from Henderson". And we had a man, Steadman I believe was his name, at Steadman Dodge, and he coined the expres, expression, "Henderson, of course". And many kind of coined that after him. And, but it wasn't until OSHA came in and there was different regulations, stipulations put on the, the BMI complex and the other plants here that made controls of, that we had better quality of emissions that went out of the plants.

Interviewer: *I heard you had had some chlorine releases in the early days where the leaves would fall off the trees.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, my golly, I, I said I was texting my niece last night and told what my day was going to be like and she said, "Oh", she said, "In the olden days I just loved when I came into town and I could smell Henderson and I knew I would soon be getting to grandma's house. I loved that smell because I knew I'd soon be getting to grandma's house." Well, we got referred to as "oh, you're from, you're from Hooterville, from stinky town" and as you shopped you knew who worked at what plant because you could smell it and at school we knew whose kids worked or whose parents worked at what plants because the kids would have some different odors on them.

Interviewer: *Well, that's interesting, yeah.*

Juana Blackburn: Yeah, yeah, it was. It, it, they had, they had their wives. There were certain homes you'd walk into and you knew that they, that they worked in certain plants. What, what chemicals would be there because it would be on their coveralls, their work shoes, you know. And even if they kicked them off as they came in the door or what have you that...but, and then we had the swamps where we don't have swamps anymore and, and...

Interviewer: *The ponds you mean so that chemical evaporation pools were...*

Juana Blackburn: Yeah, the ponds and that's, that's where they, that's where they, they kinda dumped to. So, I mean...

Interviewer: *I heard a couple of weeks ago what was in there.*

Juana Blackburn: Well, did, does it smell like burnt rubber tonight or is it sauerkraut or what is it. You know, we'd kinda, to us we'd...

Interviewer: *It was just kind of normal, right?*

Juana Blackburn: It was, this was home. This was where we had a living provided for us, a home, a loving community, a school, education. We love it, home, and peace and plenty all around, you know. I will tell you there was...I do recall a child being, in the real early times, being scared when we had the actual air, air raid, kind of events where they would have us turn off all our lights and, and I remember thinking, "oh, Nellis Air Force is so close, I hope it doesn't get bombed". And as a child, you know, those fears, because I knew the war was going on, you know. I had pictures of my brother, and, and he'd write, "I don't know if I'm going to be sent, I might be sent out to...he was at, in Alaska at the time, but they might be going over to Russia and thank goodness for the plant. So all of that came to end. So the magnesium and the manganese that, all that they were able to do to provide for the bombs and eventually the nuclear bomb that brought the war to an end so that we could have peace. And that...

Interviewer: *Yeah, Henderson contributed a tremendous amount to winning the European front.*

Juana Blackburn: Absolutely. You know, we are pioneers in a sense that this, this ar, this area was a barren desert and it was bleak looking. It was, there was nothing pretty about it. We, we knew that when these homes were established they were established temporarily. And the flat roofs, the home, we were told on the onset, and the way the street was designed, that if there was a, planes overhead, it wouldn't look like a community. And that's why everything is kind of, you know, well somebody just got a little something and just twizzled something here. I'll make a way here and I'll make this little street here but it, there was quite a bit of insight put into the design of this community. No, but think, but all of those thousand homes, and Victory Village and Carver Park, were built in a year.

Interviewer: *That's amazing.*

Juana Blackburn: And also the hospital was constructed in a year, and the pipe line to go from the dam, from...I mean, you think of the infrastructure, the electrical, all of this, that...and the railroad had, there had to be more tracks put in. You know, everything that was done, all the thousands of employees that had to be housed one way or another. I remember that there was Indians in Manganese Ore that were camped out down below the town. And down, now the homes in Manganese Ore were actually built on blocks, cement blocks, so they knew on the onset that was going to be very short, you know, that operation would be very short-lived. But I do have a picture and I will send it of...of employees that my mother had in 1943 of the Manganese Ore employees and amazing how nicely dressed they were. And that was, that was the caliber of people that came there to that community, made that commun...or Manganese Ore community, worked at that plant and produced what needed to be produced for the war

efforts. And so I feel like that we certainly contributed so much to ending the war and, and that, I feel like that we need to take a lot of pride and have a lot of pride.

Interviewer: *Yes, yes, and the world needs to know about Henderson's contribution.*

Juana Blackburn: Absolutely, absolutely, and I appreciate what is being done through your efforts in capturing the history. I feel that if you snooze, you lose. You either lose your, the people that have the histories of the past or have the recollection of what transpired. There's, there's, my mother had keenness of mind until her last breath but not too many are that fortunate and that blessed to have that ability, abilities, but with her collection I have been fortunate to come across so many things that are so, so mem..., so memorable. And I hate to say this, many I have already tossed. What did I do this for? After four big books put together, I thought I don't think I can collect, I need to keep everything. But I, I have, I have gone through and I have scanned many of them.

Interviewer: *That's great.*

Juana Blackburn: And, but that's...but I, I want my, my posterity and I want the posterity of, of the George Berry Waites family to, to know of what the community we left to come down here for what was to be a little short stay. With my father's passing, my mother was able to provide us a good living and a good life because she did acquire work here. And so we've had, and we thanked her every day that she didn't move back to Little Kannaraville. That we had what we had accessible here for us.

Interviewer: *There's always been a lot of opportunity here.*

Juana Blackburn: There has been. Later on, when I went, when we went, we had to go away for medical, we had to go away for school, because there was no...there was no University of Reno when I graduated. There was nothing here. My husband decided when our first child was born, "I need an education". This plant isn't always...titanium, who knows, there, you know, they're going to have strikes, they're going to have this, that and the other thing else. It's going to go up and down. So that's when we had a three month old baby, we left, sold our house, moved to Utah and started in school. It's, it's, we were fortunate that little bit by little bit, community college started and then you know the end, look at our campuses now. And then we have state college and so many other trade schools and opportunities for our, our families to receive the education, they can here locally. On the onset we didn't have even any profess...or doctors that were professionalized in different types of medicine. We had our general practitioners, we were fortunate to have Dr. Phillips who was a surgeon, and also pediatric surgeon. But other than that, even at St. Rose, even the valley, you either had to go to California or, or to go to Salt Lake if you needed...

Interviewer: *Do you have any memories of the nuns that were at St. Rose.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, do I ever.

Interviewer: *Tell me about some of them.*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, our first baby had...oh, Sister, let's see, Mary Magdalene, Mary Margaret? Our first child had, had made his...was, was born with what was called a complete mal-rotation of the intestines and had had major surgery at ten days old and was hospitalized

for two months. And that dear, those dear, sweet nuns...I had to be quarantined in a, in a separate room because he got staph infection...

Interviewer: *Oh, wow.*

Juana Blackburn: ...and, and so they, they, the dear care that they extended. We had to stay with him twenty-four hours a day, of course. And the care that they extended to him...they were loving. She, she was tough. She wouldn't put up with any tomfoolery. My two nieces came down to help, help out with the night shift and my one niece was the oldest and her sister was three years younger. And they wouldn't let my older niece hold her because she thought she looked younger and she took the baby away. [Chuckling] My, my niece was, was a year younger than I was. She was probably twenty-two, twenty-three years old at the time, she gave away. But she was, they were caring, loving, caring; they were compassionate; they were...they knew you, they called you by name. And you felt, you felt that you were, that you were a, a...you weren't just a person in there. That you were somebody that, that they, they personally cared for. And so, when my, my...I had a sister that passed away...she was just fourteen years old. That was before the, the Catholic sisters took over the hospital. That was in '44. And when she was brought to the hospital, they just said, "You'll need to take her elsewhere". So she, we could...mother took her to Salt Lake City and she passed away there. But, but the...they were so caring and I feel like that they saved my son's life on, on two, on two major occasions...at birth and then he, then he had an incident occur, that surgery just eight years ago and felt like they were there for him. And so, but they, they've been there for us when we've had a need and on the onset we knew that we were in tender care when we came here.

Interviewer: *Yeah, I...it's just such a wonderful community to be a part of, isn't it?*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, absolutely.

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

Juana Blackburn: The people, the people, the times, the memories. You know, I, I was...I can...I have good memories. I have sad memories, too. My father passed away when I was just so young. But the, my mother made our home such a loving home that we never felt that...I mean, we never felt anything but fulfillment. We, we...I felt like that we had support from community people, like I said, our educators. Opportunities, there were opportunities at any different levels. In high school I loved music. I, I had health problems so I wasn't involved in sports so I learned to play the Hawaiian electric guitar. So I played for many school assemblies, either solo or with two other ladies, two other class...two other people. They were older than I were so as they graduated I ended up playing solos. But I played that on many events, many places, many times involving choir; many opportunities seeing either trios or duets; had opportunities to, with, with playing my...with my guitar. I also taught lessons and even worked in, in Mr. Crosby's music center. And the business people, Gonvilles that had a furniture store, you knew everybody. The further I went I in there, I even cleaned their home, Gonvilles home. So if they had had a dinner party and they, they would invite other civic people over, so I would be there maybe helping out for events like that so I was acquainted and did...as a teenager had experiences like that. I always felt that no matter what setting I was in I felt comfortable. I, whether I was with older people or with younger people, I loved babies, I loved children, I loved my...even with my family. But I, I acquired kind of a setting I was in.

Interviewer: *People really took care of each other in Henderson, I think, and looked out for each other.*

Juana Blackburn: They did and we...you know, if you, if you, if somebody had a car when they turned sixteen and could drive, guess what, it was full. I remember one time we, we would starch our, our petticoats and remember getting out of this one, the seat of this one car this one time, and I laughed. The back seat was full of sugar because we'd found out if we starched them with sugar they, they would stick out a little further. [Chuckling] But you know what, those are fun memories of...that we just all laughed about it and we'd just, we'd just go pick up people and, you know, just go do things. And if somebody moved in, you know, it was, it was, we'd...we welcomed them and we got new friends. And, and, but no matter where they came from or where they came from, it didn't...we didn't know about brand names of stuff. We all were kind of in the same money bracket as far as income. We all kind of wore the same kind of clothes. Like I say I usually made all my clothes. Back in those days it was poodle skirts and made enough money to, babysitting, to buy sweaters or, or have you...but it was...I know Van Daly's Shoe Store, the, the proprietors of the stores were just like...they made us feel like that, that they were so happy to see us whenever we got there. I'm having problems with my feet now and somebody said the other day, "It's too bad that Mr. Van Daly isn't here. He would take care of you." [Laughing]

Interviewer: *Yeah, yeah, I bet he would.*

Juana Blackburn: And I'm sure he would, I'm sure he would. But that was the type of people that, that we were, that we were fortunate to have. And the McBeth's, we had people that

contributed that were, like the McBeth's had the drug store, but Mrs. McBeth was in the school system a lot helping out, helping out. There's, even the most popular kids still were our friends. Even though you were, you were down here, they were still your friends. And they was nobody that ever thought they were...at our alumni reunions it's exciting to get together because the most...macho Norman Kraft, the best basketball player ever, and different things. I mean we're all just friends. Ironic enough, I never dated a classmate, never dated anybody that, that I went to school with but we were all good friends and hung out. They, a lot of them dated my best girlfriend and so I would go right along with them.

Interviewer: *So you knew a lot of people. And I think it's interesting that people have stayed friends over time in Henderson.*

Juana Blackburn: Absolutely.

Interviewer: *That's great. It's a great place. Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experience in Henderson? We covered a lot of ground but...*

Juana Blackburn: Oh, thank you for, thank you for allowing me to go down memory lane. I think with our Industrial Days, it...they were in the beginning and even later on, like, like a county fair. They would lead in with, with talent shows and talent contests and they would bring whatever entertainers they had from Las Vegas to do the judging so that was exciting to know that there would be a, a, some movie star up here helping judge. And we would have, then they would have their art shows. They'd have their, they'd have different things that, that, that people would submit that, whatever quilts or, or what, crafts, brought tables, pop tent, brought tables of different things. Whatever goods that people would do, they would display

them. My children got involved with, through the, through the Civic Center, the first one that they had on Basic Road, art classes. Genevieve Smith started art classes. Different ones contributed whatever abilities they had for free and my mother started, when she, when my mother retired she said, "I always wanted to learn how to, how to paint". So she started taking art. Then she took my children. And then my children expanded on their art. Our daughter did the most with her art. In fact, the wolf that was on the outside of the gymnasium wall at Basic High School up until just the last four years, I think, was drawn and designed by our daughter. And that was, she did that in, she graduated in 1979 and it was there until about four years ago. And then she also did a nursery design down to the Sewell Elementary School. Or, no, the Bob Taylor Elementary School. And, and then, so I think that was, those people that offered certain things that their gifts and talents provided opportunities for others to expand on their gifts and talents. And I, I witnessed that in other people that formed this community. It, it...my grandson graduated from Basic High School and he was quite pleased to know that he could stand, you know, right there with the, the wolf that his, that his aunt had done many years below, before and she did other things throughout the school that with...I feel like that what has been provided in, on all the aspects, but I think that our educators, our early educators, helped mold what we've got today and what we've got in the professional people that have chosen to be here and remain here. And I think that's, that's...and, and our strong religious convictions that many of our church leaders have had and still have. And, incidentally, I recently went to a rosary for Peter LaPorta, who I babysat as a child, and Mr. Lou LaPorta, who is now 90 years old, looks like he's 60.

Interviewer: *Hard to believe.*

Juana Blackburn: And I look and I think, oh, what an amazing man, what an amazing life, and what a contribution he has made to this community.

Interviewer: *He sure has.*

Juana Blackburn: And I feel like that the early pioneer people were cautious in making sure we were, we, as we were getting our beginnings, that we were sure that we didn't just jump. That we were secure. And made sure that we had things in place and I think that's, that's, that's the greatest things that we've been able to benefit by. Provided a good income, a wonderful livelihood and I feel, I feel safe and secure in my home because I have good neighbors. And I feel like that many people, I hope, feel the very same way. And so if the, I think that we're with political people that we have here locally that we need to be actively involved. I went with my mother. I'm still actively involved with...and my grandkids today are actively involved in, in supporting any candidates that we feel that will represent us the most and give the best for us.

Interviewer: *Well, that's great. Well, Juana, it's been so great talking with you today and thank you for coming.*

Juana: Thank you.