

# **Henderson Libraries**

## **Southwest Oral History Association Mini Grant Project**

### **Norman Craft**

**Oral History of Norman Craft**

**A contributor to the Henderson Oral History Project**

**Southwest Oral History Association  
Mini-Grant  
for the  
Henderson Historical Society**

**conducted by  
Claytee White and Fredric Watson**

**January 20, 2015**

**Claytee White:** *This is Claytee. I'm with Rick and Anne Marie. Rick is from the Henderson Historical Society. Anne Marie is from Henderson Libraries and I'm from UNLV Oral History Research Center and we're with Norm Craft this morning. First question, Norm, could you spell your name for me.*

**Norman Craft:** C-R-A-F-T.

**Claytee White:** *Okay. And the first name, is it Norm or Norman?*

**Norman Craft:** Either way. (Chuckling)

**Claytee White:** *Okay, great. Norm, how are you today?*

**Norman Craft:** Fine.

**Claytee White:** *Great. I want you to start by just telling us about your early life before Las Vegas.*

**Norman Craft:** I was born in Phoenix, Arizona, 1936. My dad was...at that time he was working the Civilian Conservation Corp. He was a foreman there and born in Presbyterian Hospital, this American Hospital in Phoenix. My sister and I were the only two that were born in a hospital out of eight kids. The rest of them were born in tepees and mud huts and wherever my dad was. We moved around with him to Indian reservations, small towns next to Indian reservations, where his work was. And in 1944 we lived in Springer, New Mexico. And he had gone out on a Sunday morning to check a job site that was supposed to start Monday and Springer is northern New Mexico not far from the Colorado border. And there's a railroad crossing, Maxwell Crossing, that he was stopped at and the first train went by, except on Sundays there were two trains and the second train killed him instantly. That was the summer of '44. From there it was kind of a vagabond. Here my mom was kind of at loose ends, didn't know what to do. We went to Durango and stayed with a brother, her brother, Uncle Dick. She wasn't satisfied with that. She was afraid of the cold winter so we moved to Henderson to be with my older sister, Hedwin. Her husband was a roofer who worked on BMI Plant during its construction. They were one of the families that lived in Tent City down on Boulder Highway and behind what was then the Kit-Kat Club, which is now the, what I think, the Silver Dollar, down on Charleston and Eastern. And there was a Tent City back there and that's where they lived at the time. Then moved to Victory Village and that's where we lived when we first came to Henderson.

**Claytee White:** *Did you say Victory?*

**Norman Craft:** Victory Village. It was a concrete block residential area which would be now north of Henderson Boulder Highway on the side which had St. Peters. And a lot of airmen, plant workers, they were cement block built. They were two, three bedroom homes, kerosene

furnaces, electric stoves, probably totaled maybe 400 square feet. There were three and four apartments to a unit. And, uh...

**Claytee White:** *Can you...*

**Norman Craft:** Must have been a hundred of them because when I was a paper boy and when we lived, first time we moved there we lived on 98<sup>th</sup> Street so I know there was...when I was a paper boy we started way at the East end of that area. And then for some reason my mom decided to go to Albuquerque. We had no relatives there. We had friends but we had no relatives there. We lived, I think it was ??? was the street. And I think I went to third grade.

**Claytee White:** *Can you describe the tent cities that you just talked about?*

**Norman Craft:** You know, I really wasn't here at that time except what I read and what my sister told me. And they were a tent city. They were canvas tents down by the old bachelor quarters off Boulder Highway and Lake Mead, down the Pitman area, wherever they could, I guess, put up the tents. When we moved back to Albuquerque again, mom decided that Henderson was the place she wanted us to be. So in '45 we moved back to Henderson, lived at 95D, right behind St. Peters Church and I had the paper route in Victory Village, which was probably 110 units. Below where we lived was bachelor quarters. My mother was a maid there until she had a heart attack. And it was, it was a time in Henderson that everything was growing. You know, nobody had any money. If they did they never showed it. Those people, everybody I knew their parents were plant. Most of my paper route customers were, at most, enlisted people.

**Rick Watson:** *What newspaper did you deliver?*

**Norman Craft:** Three Street Journal was the only one in town. I had Victory Village. My brother had the northeast side of Henderson and it was, you know...the paper we would...we would get a paper and drop them off at the house and sometime...I never owned a bike so it was a lot of walking.

**Claytee White:** *How old were you?*

**Norman Craft:** We moved here back, I was nine when we moved back so it can't...ten, eleven years old.

**Claytee White:** *Were all eight children living with you?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, no. My family is...basically there's two different families. The...mom said you could always tell when Howard came home, my dad, because mom got pregnant. Because I think my first sister was born in 1950 and my youngest sister was born in 1940 and it seemed that there were, every four years. You know, there's four years between Juanita and I,

between Troy and I, between Johnny and Troy and there was six years between Troy, or Johnny and Howard, and then Juana and Delary and Edna and Louie. So there were eight of us, most of we were home at one time was four, Johnny, Troy, Juanita and myself.

**Rick Watson:** *You know, we were real interested in the old Carver Park.*

**Norman Craft:** You know...

**Rick Watson:** *Do you have any recollections?*

**Norman Craft:** No, I...Denny Sharon, a great friend of mine that I went to high school with and played ball with was a Carver Park resident. A lot of young marrieds when, when I came back from college were living in Victory Village. I noticed on the, when I read the Historical site last night, you know, I had never known that it was a segregated city. But from what the Historical Site said last night, that was what Carver Park was built for. An eight-year-old kid, I didn't know and could have cared less. You know, when I was in high school, I think my brother had one black family, the Williams family. And I'm not sure that the picture on the Historical Site is not the Williams family. If anybody's...is that, that the Williams family? Because the father looks a great deal like I remember Theodore, the oldest boy pretty much. And he was ahead of Troy at Basic. I never knew, you know, anything about segregation. Actually I didn't know about it until I went to Indiana, went to college. You know, it was never taught, never brought up. You know, we had black kids in school, we had two families. In my, in my ???, L. C. Bollen, who the metro command of the Boulder area over on the west side, is named after L. C., a good friend of mine, football player. He went to Community College and was supposed to go to USC and his family was sick and he had to come home and go to work and got in with Metro and he left. But, you know, then we had the Walker family. But it was, prejudice, we just didn't...we didn't think about it, we didn't talk about it. It just...we were kids. Who'd want to ??? We'd grow up and like I said, nobody had any money. If they did we didn't know about it. Getting back to the Village, we lived there until I think it was the Fall of 1950 that my mother had been on the list for the Townsite house for a long time. It was pretty much a government or plant owned, it was all the, all the Townsite homes. So you got on a list and when your name came up somebody moved out and...

**Rick Watson:** *Building Townsite homes different than Victory Village?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, heavens, they were penthouses. They were all, you know, 700 square feet. We had, you know, two bedrooms, bath, you know. I mean, electric heaters, no kerosene. You know, didn't have to go put your dime in the kerosene dispenser and carry it back to the house. In Victory Village, the kerosene dispensers would begin in the middle of the end of each unit and they were just big 50-gallon drums of kerosene that had a thing on it you had to put a dime in to get a gallon of kerosene. We'd put...had this glass jar and when you got that filled go in

and dumped it upside down in the heater that's how we drew heat. But, in Henderson, when we moved to the Townsite house, you know, like I say, it was all of 700 feet and we went through like touring through one of the homes out in Henderson that over in the Historical part. And sure, it was pretty close to what we had. But we were at 18 Ocean.

**Rick Watson:** *18 Ocean is where you lived?*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, and it was right...when we moved there, east of us nothing but desert. And we used to sit out on the lounge at night and hear the old miners' mules out there with bells on. And they disappeared during the day and, as kids, we used to go out and try and find them during the day.

**Rick Watson:** *You said miners' mules.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, there's miners in Henderson. You know all those hills backed up south and east of Henderson, had at, at some time albeit in the '20's and '30's had, they had miners up there looking for whatever. I had a good friend, Sheldon Langey, whose dad was an old miner. He was out all the time, you know. For many, many months so maybe twice during my childhood he was always out hunting for that pot of gold.

**Rick Watson:** *The prospectors and their...and the miners' mules would be the burros that...*

**Norman Craft:** Oh yeah, the burros that, that either the miner let loose or, you know, whatever it was that they were out there. You could hear those bells at night. You know, everything, and then they built a beast of Water Street up towards Boulder City, there where the Mormon Church is. That was built while we were at ????

**Rick Watson:** *You're just a short walk from the old Townsite school.*

**Norman Craft:** Well, oh, yeah. Well, when I was at school, even in Victory Village, I went to elementary school at the Townsite school. Carver Park had their own elementary school. Townsite or Victory Village kids went to Townsite school. So that was quite a walk each day.

**Rick Watson:** *Perchance did you use the old underpass under the old highway?*

**Norman Craft:** You know, many people don't remember that thing. But, no, I didn't. We lived, we lived what would be west. You know, that was close to Basic Road in that underpass. We, we used it as kids to scurry back and forth, if you were, you know, had friends up there and were going to Townsite, we would use it. Usually we crossed Boulder Highway right at St. Peters' Church which you had to look out for because that was a dangerous highway as it is now. You know, we crossed it.

**Voice:** *But did you know the point...*

**Rick Watson:** *What did you do for recreation when you weren't in school?*

**Norman Craft:** Got in trouble. (Chuckling) We did, you know, Henderson, Henderson has those big alleyways so we were never in the streets in Henderson. We were in the alleyways. You know, those things were 100 yards wide at some points and we would just rumble through them. We would do ornery things, you know. Now they would put kids in jail for but, but I remember one Halloween the old sheriff station was a building probably 20 by 20 right in the middle of the block where the Eldorado Club is now. And just west of that was Prime Meats Market. It's a little, little store, meat store right across from the post office. Well, the only way the police could get out, it was sheriff deputies at that time, was the alleyway between Prime Meats and our street. Well, we put a bunch of the old crates from the Prime Meats Market and blocked the alleyway and then threw a firecracker in the church office. They didn't appreciate...well, Henderson at that time, you know, what, 5,000 people. Maybe one deputy at night. You know. And we got to know them pretty well.

**Rick Watson:** *Was the...what got you, what got you interested in sports? I know a bit later on you had quite a sports career. What was the...*

**Norman Craft:** Uh, we liked playing baseball. From the time we ended in Victory Village baseball was the game that everybody knew. All the kids in Henderson played. Just a little bit ahead a little bit, that's why Las Vegas High School could never beat us in baseball. 'Cause we played from the time we could walk in Henderson. Now she gets upset but, you know, there's...but we did play good baseball. Other than that it was...uh, my brother played high school football, basketball, baseball. And he just told me, he said, you know, "Go out for football, get beat up out there, come home and I'll beat you up." We went through that little scenario quite a bit until I came home from college one time and he challenged me and that was that. That ceased. But, uh, I was six foot maybe, 130 pounds, 135 pounds, you know. Just got beat to death. (Chuckling) He was...it was just...

**Rick Watson:** *Pretty skinny for six foot.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh yeah, yeah. But that got me. Then Bob Taylor was, was the assistant football coach under ??? and he decided it was time that they had a shooting high or elementary basketball team. Well, they ever, they called for practice and everybody went out and I went home and delivered papers. And he called me the next day and wanted to know why I didn't show up. And I told him. Also told him that I didn't have, own a pair of tennis shoes. Well, the next day I had a pair of tennis shoes and he had talked to my mother and I, you know, people in Victory Village were gonna get their papers a little late. So he was the one that got me going and I had, you know, this is just here to show to...this is a picture of my eighth grade basketball team with Bob Taylor. And here's one of...no, this is, this is another one of that team. But it's, it's all, you know, here's guys, Rodney Blue, Denny Sharon, Van Horn, Gene

Menley, Gene Ingle who ended up going to Vegas High School and Kip McBeth, Doctor McBeth, Aaron North, Virgil Weiss, Dave Bardwell, Franklin Heath and myself and Bob Taylor. He did, Bob did a lot of things that you had never seen. But that's what got me started. And then it was...kept me out of trouble. But the thing that really kept me out of trouble was Victory Theater. I think it was August of 1951. My mother took me down to Sharon's Market which was a little place right next to the theater. They had a little meat market going there and wanted to buy mom a hamburger so I got mom a hamburger. With the receipt I entered the drawing at the Victory Theater that Saturday night. Well, that Saturday night my mom's name was drawn and we got a TV set, a little head hole about this big, had a greeny screen, you know. And, you know, she kept that, that was in her apartment when she passed in 197...gee, '77? She still had that. She used to put things on. It was still in her apartment. Well, when I went up to get it, get on the stage, Ben Michael, who was the manager of the Victory Theater, asked me if I wanted a job and I said, doing what? He said, "an usher". I said, certainly. You know. And so, from that August of my freshman year until I graduated I worked six nights a week at Victory Village. Except on Tuesday nights he gave Tuesday nights off. He gave me nights off when I had a ball game or was on the road. If I had a ball game at home Friday night I was okay if I had a ball game home. Saturday I had to work matinee and then, of course, Sunday you worked the matinee and the evening shows. And I did that for four years, played feet for us, I was never home. I would leave home at eight o'clock in the morning and get home at midnight and I had Tuesdays off. And then I wasn't home Tuesdays. I was usually trying to catch up socially because at that, at that schedule I never had, had time to socialize. Tuesday nights I usually ran to Vegas and especially my senior year. And dated my wife's best friend.

**Rick Watson:** *How'd you get to Vegas?*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, yeah. (Laughing)

**Rick Watson:** *How did you get to Vegas?*

**Norman Craft:** I had, I had a car. Onc, once we moved the high school from the old Townsite my junior year, the middle of my junior year, to work and play sports and get around I had the car, had to buy a car. So I bought...went to Cashman, bought a car from a salesman who later ended up being my brother-in-law, Morton Manning. Bought a 1947 Chevy and that was my transportation to and from school and those activities that I did participate in. Not many because I was always working.

**Rick Watson:** *Were you able to maintain the car yourself?*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, you know, those, those things just needed gas and oil and, and we made trips to Vegas. And if you were short of gas, there was a guy down in Whitney called Price Gas Station. And if you caught him while he was open, it was twenty-five cents a gallon. If you had



to knock on his door after the lights went out, it was fifty cents a gallon. If you had to get him out of bed, it was a little bit more. So we always made sure that we had gas to get to Vegas and back and not have to stop at his service station.

**Rick Watson:** *So Boulder Highway changed since those days.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, heavens. Yeah, almost don't recognize it now. I don't travel it. I can't remember the last time I traveled Boulder Highway to get to Henderson. It's usually 215. Why, I can't remember the last time I was on Boulder Highway. But I cross it. But I don't travel it.

**Rick Watson:** *Those speed limits on Boulder Highway the same? Or was there one?*

**Norman Craft:** As fast as 'till they caught ya! There wasn't like...the '47 wouldn't go that fast anyhow. It was, you know, it would get me to and there. But I didn't have to worry about speed limits. I had to worry about curfew. I got caught a couple of time by Las Vegas police Tuesday nights heading home too late.

**Rick Watson:** *Who were the Henderson police and what...?*

**Norman Craft:** They were the deputy sheriffs. They were part of Chuck Jones and Ralph Lamb's group. Muldoon, Coughtin. I got that name of Grant who I've seen that line numbered, knew where I was 24-7. Because he was...I turned around and he was there. He was the one that investigated the accident I was in driving at, at...I had borrowed my brother's car, thirteen years old, had a little accident at Boulder Highway and Glen Eden.

**Rick Watson:** *You were driving at thirteen?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yes.

**Rick Watson:** *Pretty good.*

**Norman Craft:** Wasn't supposed to but I was driv...

**Rick Watson:** *Everything's standard transmission.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yeah. Well, he had an old '41 Ford that had the, the, the gear shift on the, on the dash, you know. But, yeah, like I say, you get in trouble, you don't have things to do and you hang around, there's no television, no radio and you find things to do. Not all of them what your mother would like.

**Rick Watson:** *You once told me a good story about little league coached out in Henderson.*

**Norman Craft:** You know, there was, always seemed to be a parent around, somebody around to help us out. There was a, a sheriff's deputy by the name of Hugh Ryan. In Little League we di..., we didn't know what Little League was. We just know, we, we had a baseball field down in

the old Titanium Softball Field down by the plant there on Lake Mead and he'd go to work in the morning. He had bag of baseball equipment, an old Army bag. He had old catcher's gear, balls and bats, gloves, what he could round up. He'd draw a bunch of us down there. We'd spend the day down there in summer, play ball. On his way home he'd stop by and pick up the bag again and we'd, if we didn't enough for two teams we'd play workout. You know, all you need is two people to play baseball. But...

**Rick Watson:** *What kind of equipment, you know, there talking about Boulder Highway, the sports equipment has sure changed I think in...*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yeah. We always used the bats from the leagues and team that were broken. But we would take those little finishing nails and tape them up and then get the electrical tape and tape up that broken handle and we never knew they were broken. We just knew that we could swing 'em. And Bob Taylor was again one that got people interested in whatever he was, you know, until he got to be a principal himself. And then he helped a lot of kids in Henderson with golf. He was the Nevada Amateur Champion in the '40's, and early '50's. Lou LaPorta, who I found out last night after looking at the site is the CEO of the Historical Society. Now, Lou probably knows more about Henderson than anybody in Henderson. 'Cause he was also on the political end of it and, and that. But Lou was one of the toughest radio, American Legion team. And just people like Dottie McBeth who was responsible for the youth center up there at the end of was it Lead and Basic Road? Right there is why it's best along in that part of Henderson. Is that still a functioning facility?

**Rick Watson:** *I think we've added to it.*

**Norman Craft:** Added to it? But it's still there.

**Rick Watson:** *Bigger complex.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah. See, Dottie was, spearheaded that. Sophie Tucker. I don't, many people don't remember whether we've got a record of the Night of Stars in Henderson that Sophie Tucker came out and performed at the high school football field and the proceeds of that were for the Henderson Youth Center. And...

**Rick Watson:** *Yeah, the old Henderson folks, they rounded up quite a few...*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yeah. I can remember Sophie Tucker. But I, I know there were several performers that night that I couldn't tell you who they were. But it was a good two-hour show. And I know, I think the band closed the theater down that night and everybody showed up at the football field which is now the Convention Center. The old Townsite High School and Elementary School probably got fixed somewhat but the high school had the front section of the building and the elementary school had the back section and then the sixth, seventh and

eighth grades were up on the hill. And then when they built Basic High School, which is now Burkholder, we moved out there, like I say, in the middle of my junior year. It was obvious when we returned to the traffic box down at the Townsite.

**Rick Watson:** *Tell the audience about the, about the old theater that you worked at.*

**Norman Craft:** Old Pimpy?

**Rick Watson:** *You know, Coughlin, he tossed the old movie, a bag of popcorn...*

**Norman Craft:** Well, I remember as a kid we could go to the movie and buy a bag of popcorn for a quarter and have a big bag. Now, what I...when I was working there, there was probably 35 cents, wasn't that much, you know. Of course, it was to some people. But people now, I run onto, I run onto a bunch of ladies, Boulder City, we went up there for breakfast one morning. And there was a bunch of Henderson ladies, Han's wife, Eddie Johnson's wife, Bodalette Martin, and a couple of others. And this one girl, she says, "I remember you. You used to throw me out of the theater." And I would run people, you know, they would see that and it was...they were afraid to sneak in, you know. And the greatest one of all was a kid by the name of Jimmy McCormick. And it was every night I think Jimmy, he would...I guess he decided that I'm going to test Norm and see if he can catch me. And I would let him in. I could see him come in. See he was perched down there at the exit Blue. And the old Chevy would sneak around. He would go in and open that door and then walk and open it. You could tell they were comin' in just by movin' the curtains because the air conditioning was...if that door would open that curtain would move. But the manager, Ben Mightaven, didn't like kids sitting there with feet up on their, the seat in front of them. Might have to, you know, get them with a flashlight. (Chuckling) Anyway, hit them harder than we did others. But that brought on several occasions where kids have said, "Yeah, you got me thrown out of the theater or you something concerned with the theater."

**Rick Watson:** *What memory in A. D. Orcher's to...what was your salary in those days?*

**Norman Craft:** You know, I really don't know. I can't remember. But I know my mother got twenty per cent of it. My mother, my mother got, with three kids at home she got \$100 a month. That was her income. So, if we went to work, you paid board and room. Paper route, I don't remember getting a dime from that. I mean that, that all went, went to keep the family clothed. My brother, same way. But if we worked, when my brother was at home and working the U.S. Line he paid for his room. When working at the theater for four years she got twenty per cent of what I made. But I bought my own clothes, paid my own insurance, ran my own car. I ate, very seldom ate at home. I ate breakfast at home but I was never home to eat any other meals except Tuesday night. So, I ate at that time didn't, wasn't a burden financially on her. Even...I stopped being a burden to my mother when I started working because I stayed out of

trouble. I remember one time I got in trouble. I was with some kids I wasn't supposed to be with. She said, "They're going to get you in trouble." Well, time got away from me one night and I was with these kids and we were in their back yard down on Nebraska. And it was after midnight. My brother, Troy, got off work and I wasn't home. So they went looking for me. So, the first way, she decided, you know, this way are the kids he's not supposed to be with. So, sure enough, they pulled up the driveway and my brother had this '41 Ford. And my mom's punishment was the razor strap, my dad's razor strap that she'd kept. And I've always said, you know, in today's world my mother would spend most of her life in jail beating kids, especially me. But I got in the back of this '41 Ford and my brother's driving. He's four years older. She's facing me, she's turned around in the, in the passenger seat, the front seat, trying to hit me with that razor strap, hitting the top of the, the top of the seat. She couldn't get a swing at me 'cause of that seat. Hitting at...she even hit the car. So when she got home she told me to go to the bathroom. Well, I knew what that meant. She comes in there and told me that, you know, she had warned me about being with the kids and started swinging that razor strap again. Well that was a big house to us. But that bathroom, you know, she was hitting the walls trying to hit me with that razor strap. Finally gave up. And after that my punishment was she wouldn't talk to me and I was grounded. You know, there was one period that, that I got into trouble that she didn't talk to me for six months. And that was worse than any razor strap. I mean we'd be sitting at the dinner table and she'd say, "Troy, tell Norman to do such and such." Or "Juanita, (my younger sister) tell Norman to do such and such". And this went on for three months, you know. That, that took care of the razor strap. I didn't mess around much after that anymore. Plus, that's about the time I started working and lucky I didn't have time to, to mess around and get in trouble.

**Rick Watson:** *May I interrupt you. Just a minute ago when you were getting ready to describe the gymnasium at the old Townsite school. And I think that's what started...*

**Norman Craft:** Well, when we, when Basic High School, what's Burkholder, which is now something else again, is that old Townsite gym, the rafters, you could not set at the top of the key and shoot at the basket without hitting the rafters. So you had to go to the side and shoot along the rafters if you had any yards at all on your ball. You could stand, I could stand and touch the center circle and the free throw circle at the same time. That's how small that gym was. And then when they built, my senior year they built the, the gym at Burkholder, or Basic out at what we used to call Road Lodge out by the railroad tracks. That was a regular size 94 foot of court, we got feet. And you were going to die after the ball got the extra room on that thing after that little, old, tiny gym down at Townsite.

**Rick Watson:** *Sprints were different on that floor.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yes. Seemed to be a lot longer. But, you know, going back to that last...I was very logical in that for my Sophomore year we had some coaches that knew what they were doing. Good coaches, worked with kids. Bob Lunt, John Carter, Baseball Coach; Bob Lunt, Basketball Coach, Charlie Resling, Football Coach and Don Smith, Track Coach. And they worked those final three years and Basic had more success in that place than they'd ever had except for the one year that Estestania had where Steve Basebo or Steve Escoll came, I think in '47. But we were very lucky with what we had town-wise in student numbers. I know my, my brother's graduating class was 37. Four years later my class was 210. My class went into Basic High School at 210. We just doubled the size of Basic High School with my class. And from there on it just grew and grew and grew.

**Rick Watson:** *Was it 1950 when you were a freshman in...?*

**Norman Craft:** I was in '51, '51. My brother graduated in '51 and I went in in '51. So it just doubled and from then it just grew and grew. The old Townsite school was, like I say, was groaning. Besides Wood Shop, all only became classrooms.

**Rick Watson:** *You played all three sports.*

**Norman Craft:** I played all three sports four years. I was the last four-year three sport letter.

**Rick Watson:** *Was that a challenge for you to work, to study and play sports?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, absolutely, yeah, study. My senior year they took me out of Mechanical Drawing, which was one of the classes I really enjoyed and give me a study hall because they knew I wasn't doing it after school. Because I was, after practice I went to work. After work, mainly I went home. I was up at 8 o'clock in the morning to go back to school and start the course all over again. So my study habits were not that great. I had the study hall. Sometimes it was a slow night at the theater. I'd go in the manager's office and do some studying or I'd grab a book whenever I could and sit down and do some reading.

**Rick Watson:** *When'd you first start hearing from, from colleges that were interested.*

**Norman Craft:** We had a coach by the name of Gus Braun in, in my Sophomore year, after Coach Estestania retired coaching, came and he was supposedly a USC graduate, played football at USC supposedly. We found out later that a lot of the things he said were questionable. But anyhow he, he had it all set to go to USC. You know, I look at it now and I never heard from anybody else. I never heard from Nevada, I never heard from BYU, I never heard from Utah. It was just, you know, I guess they just said he's going to USC. He's all tied up at USC and that's where he's going. Gus Braun left my senior year and we got a guy by the name of Chuck Bresen who had just graduated from Indiana University. He was a hard-nosed, knowledgeable football coach and we were very successful my senior year under his guidance

and we had the...we had gotten the playoffs and we had a week off before we went down to ????. We had to play Blythe in the playoff game. And he, we had a week off and he said, "I know you're going to USC, but just for the experience, if you want to, Gus said to go back to Indiana and visit the campus and see what's going on back there. Well, I had been to USC a couple of times and what I, I took a flight from O'Hare Airport to go to Indiana. It was Lake Central Airlines. I don't think we got over 3,000 feet because it seemed like every 15 minutes we were landing at another airport. It was a no-fun airline that just bunny-hopped from small city to small city. So I got a chance to see the Midwest. Being born and raised on the desert and you see that country, you know, from 3000 feet, you know, that's, that's quite a change. Wilmington is, and Bruel, Indiana, southern Indiana, and the drive down there, I just fell in love with it. I, you know, so I decided these were ??? or anybody. I said if they'll have me here this is where I want to go. And they wanted me so I got back home and called the USC coach. I waited until I was at the Rose Bowl Game because I'd been invited to the Rose Bowl Game by USC. USC played Ohio State in the Rose Bowl so I wanted to go see that so I didn't tell the USC coach 'til, 'til after the Rose Bowl game. Were they up 55 with Jay the first 55...I don't know if they...

**Rick Watson:** *I wonder if that was the Rose Bowl that Weisner played in.*

**Norman Craft:** No, he was Wisconsin. He played in '61.

**Rick Watson:** *All right.*

**Norman Craft:** Tom played in that '61 Rose Bowl that Wisconsin quarterback went wild. He won the game in the last seconds, I think. Yeah, Tom. I never got to play against Tom.

**Rick Watson:** *So what were, what were the scholarship arrangements to go to a Big Ten school?*

**Norman Craft:** Well, I can always...my favorite sport was baseball. I thought all my talent was in baseball and I went to Indiana and I also had Steve with probation that if I made certain progress in football that I could play, I could just swing practice and go play baseball. Well, Indiana's deal was if you made the travelling team, you could play baseball in the spring and miss spring practice. You'd have to do your sophomore year. So I made the travelling team, second ballgame was the year I started. So I've got, you know, I'll be able to miss Spring ball, play baseball, you know. It didn't quite work out that way. I broke my leg against Michigan, didn't play in the Purdue game. We lost the Purdue game. The coach gets fired. Get a new coach. Nothing turned right again, a mean handshake. So the new coach says...there was two of us, Kit Weisner and Bumpy Lawrence, a big tackle, same deal...said, "I've talked to Ernie Andress, the baseball coach and you can have the baseball scholarship or the football scholarship but you, you know, the deal's off that supposedly you had those permits." Well,

the baseball scholarship was probably books and maybe a little stipend. My football scholarship was board, room, books, tuition, fees, \$15 a month laundry. That's all the NCAA allowed. So that, that was my football scholarship. So there was no way I could do the baseball thing. Just tuition with my, my family's economic situation. So I stuck with football and didn't play baseball. Came home and played baseball every summer here in the old Henderson Industrial League and that type of thing. Then ended up playing the Frio Cashman Cowboys. James Cashman was a great baseball player. And I came back and Gary Romero, who was...man taught class at Basic High School, came knocking on the door and he was a good baseball player. Told me that they were going to get up a baseball team in Las Vegas and they were going to call it The Cashman Cowboys and James Cashman was going to put up all the money for uniforms and we would play at the Cashman Field. So I played for them in the summer for three years until I returned to Indiana to get my Bachelor's Degree.

**Rick Watson:** *I remember the Cowboys but who...were there any other Henderson kids that played for them?*

**Norman Craft:** I don't think so but prior to all through before that happened my colleagues here, we played with the Henderson Merchants. Dan Taylor had a team out there, we played. Las Vegas must have had three or four baseball teams so we played every weekend.

**Rick Watson:** *But Dan Taylor was in the insurance business as I recall.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, yeah. And another adult that helped a lot of Henderson kids. One of the greatest is Michael Callahan. You know, Mike was a great boxer and he's the one who got the Henderson kids, although the weak ones say you couldn't...(chuckling) He took them off the street by, by boxing and keeping them busy.

**Rick Watson:** *What you guys, where'd they practice boxing?*

**Norman Craft:** You know, somewhere they had a place, might've been the old gym.

**Rick Watson:** *Uhuh. No.*

**Norman Craft:** But, but I was gone during, when Mike was at Basic High School. He came in I think the year after I left. But...

**Rick Watson:** *How about another Anderson? I have a recollection that they, that they had a ring, got ruled and Ed Peister and they somehow they worked, rigged up a ring in the old pool hall, the old bowling alley.*

**Norman Craft:** That could have been because that was a, a gathering place in Henderson. That was another place that I wasn't supposed to be, was the pool hall. But it was right next to the bowling alley and I used to set pins at the bowling alley. So it wasn't much of a stretch for me

to go from...if, if I didn't, if the, if they didn't have the alley that I was working to sneak over and watch them play pool. I never played much pool but I enjoyed watching good pool players. And, and, right, we had a kid, and it was Henderson he was called Cue Ball, cue balling. Where it took his parents all his life, I understand he's still out there. But he was just a year or two older than I was and he could stand up to the adults in the pool hall. He was good. That's where he got his name, Cue Ball.

**Rick Watson:** *Something in pool, huh?*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah. He could, he could shoot a good, good stick. But, they did ten cents a line for bowling and it kept us busy on a Friday or Saturday night. And again that's just money in the pocket. Go home and give Mom her share. (Chuckling) Ten, fifteen, twenty cents.

**Rick Watson:** *You mentioned getting your leg broken in football. You know, injuries, head injuries especially, are kept down. Were injuries, concussions and things like that as prevalent in those days?*

**Norman Craft:** They were prevalent but nobody ever said anything about it. I had two, two games that I, I don't remember the second half, both my sophomore year, Notre Dame game and the Ohio State game. I got hit after catching the fast Notre Dame game. I seen what happened on film but I don't recall and after that I don't remember being back on the field again. Twice, but I don't remember that either and I know after the Notre Dame game that Charlie Rasnick had left Basic and, and gone to coach with an old teammate of his in southern ????. And he was at the Notre Dame game. I didn't recognize him. He said I just talked like I had a mouthful of marbles.

**Rick Watson:** *God, you saw...*

**Norman Craft:** Same thing happened at Ohio State. Those are the only two times I remember being hit hard enough to have a big concussion. The broken leg happened at Michigan late November. Before Thanksgiving. That was our eighth ball game. And just caught a pass down field. It bounced around between a couple of guys and I heard it crack on a winter day in Michigan. You know that nice, crisp fall day. I heard it crack. When the trainer came out and asked what was wrong one of guys that tackled me, a big end, all-American end from Michigan by the name of Ron Kramer, said, "He broke his leg." Well, it wasn't sticking out anyway and it was still straight but it had already started to turn black and blue so they took me to the hospital, the University of Michigan hospital, and x-rayed it and no breaking. And I told our team doctor, I says, I heard it. I know it broke. He said, "Norm, there's no ??? break." So I go back and its Sunday night I'm in hospital and the doc comes again. He says, "I'm going to x-ray that leg again." So he puts me on a, on the table and he pulled my, my foot and turned it a little bit and I about died. And they found the break. It was spiral fractured my tibia that just ran



about that far up the bone. And he said when he turned my foot, he said it just opened the break. But the, hey, I go to practice on crutches on Monday and it's Thanksgiving week. We're the only people on the campus and I'm sitting next to my roommate, John Rasnick, Charlie's brother, and he's getting dressed. I'm sitting there in my civvies and my position coach comes up and he says, "Why aren't you dressing?" I said because of my leg. He says, "Coach wants you dressed." So we, I get dressed; I go to the trainer; I put a tennis shoe on my left foot and my football shoe on my right foot and I tell my trainer, you know, I broke my leg. If you don't believe it call the doctor. Spike Dixon was the old trainer who was a team trainer. He wasn't a, he wasn't a player trainer. He was a, a coach's trainer. He says, "Coach wants you on the field." So the coach tells me, "You're going to play this week." And so I practice all week. Can't push off on ball, can't run. We're on the Boron train to Purdue. We left the West Lafayette. We couldn't bring it there. And my roommate and I are sitting having breakfast and he comes sits down and he says, "Norm", he says, "if you were a senior", he said, "you'd play today." And I just thank heavens that I wasn't a senior. Because not only was my leg still troubling me, but at game time it was 27 degrees. At that time, it was minus-seven. That's up in West Lafayette. And that was in the ????. I sat in the press box and spotted for a sportscaster out of Fort Wayne. And I was cold up there and I just couldn't believe that, you know, that wasn't played back down there. But those were times when, when you had to be unconscious and laying down for you to play, you know. I remember Mike Freebolt, you know, getting shots. He had a bone spur in his thigh that kept rupturing his muscle. Well, they couldn't do anything during pre-season so pre-game they'd go and shoot him and...

**Rick Watson:** *No chain work.*

**Norman Craft:** No chain. And after the season he had the operation and had the spur removed. But during the season you couldn't take that time off. No, you...the rules are so much different now. Not only scholarship rules, but playing rules. You played both ways. You didn't have offensive and defensive. You played both ways. The Big Ten rule was if you started a quarter you could go out and come back in the same quarter but if you substituted in the quarter and you came out you couldn't go back in. So once you were on the field you were pretty much on the field. I remember my sophomore year playing two sixty minute games, no relief, no substitutions. Nebraska, early season in early September, and it had to be 100 degrees in Lincoln that day, played a sixty-minute ball game. And the one in Columbus I played a sixty-minute ball game. Just...

**Rick Watson:** *It would be exhausting.*

**Norman Craft:** That's terrible. You know, you look, you look now at things and...

**Rick Watson:** *Did that influence how you felt about sports at, when you started teaching?*

**Norman Craft:** Well, yeah, there were certain things that, that, that we didn't do that, 1) you never gave water during practice, during the football practice. When I went to Rancho in 1960 Charlie Rasnick was the head coach and we talked a lot about the training in that we consulted positions and water, brace and salt. And it used to be we'd give salt tablets. Well, that salt didn't make, do any good until 18-24 hours down the road. If you wanted some immediate hydration, you'd put salt in the water. Well, we found that the first time we did that, a lot of kids just drank and drank and drank and drank and made practice there but would get sick. Well, they only did that once. They knew that if they drank too much of that salted water that they were going to get sick. So we did a lot of things although we did some drills that now would not go, would be frowned on, upon. And just naming the drills, Blood Alley, Killer Row. You know, you can't...I thought as administrator that litigation of sports injuries, you know, those types of things really count when, you know, you called a drill, a kid gets injured, and you call it Killer Row. That sways a lot of people on what, what these kids do, the drill was.

**Rick Watson:** *What year did you start, start teaching down at Rancho?*

**Norman Craft:** I started at Rancho 1960.

**Rick Watson:** *That was right after you graduated.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, right after I graduated, yeah. I, I, I actually...I spent a year, I spent a semester, I needed a semester to finish my degree. So I was in the freshman coach at IU. In that January after I graduated in '60 I went in the Service for six months. Then came out into Rancho.

**Rick Watson:** *Started with...*

**Norman Craft:** John, John Tartan was also there from Basic.

**Rick Watson:** *So he let you go...*

**Norman Craft:** He was the baseball coach.

**Rick Watson:** *To your old coaches...*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, to my old coaches. And Bob Lunt was in the Administrative Office. He was Pat Discant's assistant. And then in 1967 I left coaching and went to work for Bob Lunt in the Athletic Office and that's where I spent my last 27 years in Clark County School District.

**Rick Watson:** *One time I talked to you about your work with Bob Lunt and, you know, the school district's application of the Title Nine Ruling. I think that's a good story for you to tell.*

**Norman Craft:** Title Nine was a federal program that started I think in '72. It passed in '72 enforced in '74 maybe. Anyhow those were somewhat the timelines. Bob Lunt had gone to a

conference in Washington D.C. and pretty much knew what was coming down the pike in girls athletics, that they had to be equal with the men's programs. So he came back from the conference and said, "You know, this is going to happen down the road in a year or two and we better jump on it and jump on it now." So he went to the school board and with a proposal, girl's athletics and this was in the Spring of '71, I think. And all of a sudden he wanted his voters to enlarge the program immediately. Well, in the Spring the only thing going was GAA Softball. And that was pretty much girls that led such a time. So we got some girls together and, and Linda Close from Valley, I don't remember; Judy Cameron from Basic, Sheila something from Rancho. And then Rancho had a basketball coach that had been a, travelled with the, the...I forget...the red-headed basketball...it was Charlie Wynn's basketball team. Well, Sheila loved softball so, so Lunt said let's get her to run this, this softball tournament. We're going to have it at four and it was so fast we, we just said we'll take the boys baseball rules and apply them to girls softball, which was probably the biggest mistake we ever made. We got these girls together and they came down to a pitching room. Well, the boys' pitching rule was you could only pitch, what I think, seven innings in three days. Well, in softball you can pitch and pitch and pitch. So when it came to the tournament, they said, you know, you can only have seven days and this and that. And Linda Close just exploded. And she exploded on me and I said, you know, you all agreed that you were gonna follow the boys' rules, you know, and that's the boys rules. So right now that's the rules. And I mean I had these women all over me. So I went to Pat Lunt at the embassy. Get me out of this thing, I said. I can't handle these women. I said, (chuckling) it's probably the most hideous experience I've ever had. And I mean sailor talk, bestiality, you know, when they were after you they just didn't let up. So he hired Judy Cameron. Judy Cameron came into the office and started our, our Title Nine Program. And, and then started, started developing the athletic programs for girls. Did a great job and, you know, it, it's all on Judy Cameron that the girls today have the foundation that they have in girls athletics. She was the, she was the one that really got it going. And, I mean, there was a lot of road blocks in girls athletics. We had a board member, she said, you know, "The jerseys have to have sleeves and collars." And Bob Lunt said, you know, "Why do you want sleeves...?" She said, "I don't want to see any dirty bra straps." That reminds me of a college story but I won't tell it. It, it, you know, things like that that pregnant girls can't play, married girls can't play, you know. All this stuff and finally broke regulations that Bob said, "No, we've got to get rid of this stuff if we're going to have a successful program." So we contacted physicians and said what about pregnant girls playing basketball? Certainly, why not until a certain time. So we developed protocol for if these girls were pregnant during season, how long they can play. And we had to have written permission from their doctor. So we got that done. We got, you know, if you're not going to let married students participate in activities in the school you're not going to keep them in school. They're going to drop out. And so we got it on that we could, married students could participate in athletics. As long as they were, you know, attending school like

everybody else we could. Being married didn't make any difference. So there were a lot of changes we had to make in, in, in the District. Budget-wise, you know, and it's still not equal. I know since I left, oh heavens, it's been 23 years and they've added some programs. Now they've got girls' live football which I understand is very successful. But again, they can't round out the numbers that the boys have. You, football just dominates the program number-wise. The girls can't match, you know...the high school football program probably has a hundred kids. There's no girls' program that you can come up with that can come up to the number. But the federal law says that they have to be equal in number but it's never, never come to that. But, you see, colleges that are doing...they have more sports in girls than they do in boys. They have, I don't know, lacrosse, field hockey. Indiana has a lacrosse and field hockey team, rowing teams that boys just to try to equal out those numbers try the mind. It was a great, great thing for the district for the girls who...I'd tell you one young gal by the name of Renee Brown, a white gal from Henderson who when I first met her was about that big around and a great athlete. And if it hadn't been for girls athletics she would have not gone to Stanford. She had not become a coach; she would have not played at the level she played at; she wouldn't hold the job she's now holding, which the last time I heard was an assistant to the NBA Commissioner for the WNBA.

**Rick Watson:** *I'd forgotten. That's right. I'd forgotten about her.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, She's, you know, and without girls athletics she'd have probably gotten married at 16 or 17 and had a bunch of kids just like all the kids that, you know, didn't have anything to look forward to.

**Rick Watson:** *I'd forgotten she was from Henderson.*

**Norman Craft:** She was a, she was a big...she was, she was one of the girls in that, that saw first start softball tournament that we ever had that, that I told Judy Cameron, who was the coach. I said, Judy, you better do something with that young lady. You know, we, if we're going to develop an athletic program for girls, you know, you'd better do something with her. And they did. Boom. She just lost them.

**Rick Watson:** *Eventually you were in charge of Clark County's Sports Program.*

**Norman Craft:** Yes, I was, 198si...in 1989, August of '89 I took complete control of the athletic program. And, uh, you know it was very difficult. I had just come off...it was the year I had my heart attack and my heart surgery. We were building schools, high schools left and right. We were opening athletic programs in those schools and it really became a task to keep up with things. And it was basically myself and my secretary and that was the athletic department for the Clark County School District. At that time, I think we had 16 high schools in the city. Now they have 35. So in the 23 years since I've been gone it's just exploded again.

**Rick Watson:** *Think of, think how things have changed since you were here.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh heavens, you know...

**Rick Watson:** *How many high schools were there in the valley.*

**Norman Craft:** Well, just, you know, things change. And I was look...there was a picture I was looking for last night that, that I wanted to show as what we did, what we played with, what our equipment was, you know, to what these kids have now. You know, it's...Paseo Verde Little League team is, you know, batting helmets and new gloves and, you know, this and that; these beautiful grass fields to play on, outfield fences that have yellow on the top of them so that you can tell a home run; they got foul full lines down each, each boundary; they got stands; they get, you know...I remember one time my senior year, we went...Henderson had a baseball field which was at the corner of Lake Mead and Boulder Highway where the Albertsons store is now. It's about a hundred yards eased into that, that ????. And it was dirt, just...there was no sagebrush or bushes on it, it was just dirt. That's where we played weegie ball. Then they moved up to the corner of which is now Van Wagenen and it might be Water Street...no, Water Street goes south. It might be Ocean that goes up where Ocean and Water Street cross goes up that way. The only problem with that facility was about like this and playing baseball on a slanted grade is not, you know...but that was, so my senior year we had just got back from state basketball tournament and I get a call from the baseball coach telling me to report at 7:00 at the high school. I said what for and he said, "Just be here. Don't ask questions. Just be here." I said, coach, I gotta be to work at 1:00. He said, "Okay, 1:00 you can go to work." So we go down there and here are tractors and graders and lumber and chicken wire and pipes. We're going to build a baseball field. So we build a baseball field. They grade off that section which is west of the football field, the old football hill at Burkholder and graded that, put a field in there. It was all rock and we, we raked that field pickin' through rocks for a year. But that was our baseball field.

**Rick Watson:** *And the team did it.*

**Norman Craft:** And we did it. We won, we were very successful that year. We won the first State of Nevada Baseball Championship for our schools. We got in the playoffs, the CIS small school playoffs. We went to Palo Verde, or what is that town on the coast? You know what, northern California, and won the State, won the CIS Championship.

**Rick Watson:** *Who were some of your teammates?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, I'll tell you this. The catcher was Bobby Peck. And I'll tell you a story about Bobby after I finish this. Bobby Peck was the, the catcher. Don Blockerage was third base, Donny Wilson was second base, shortstop was David Drofwalther, based Ledy Johnson, right field was Rodney Blue, I was in center field, and Kim Harris was in left field. Ray Martinez was

our pitcher, the only pitcher we had. We had Charlie Snyder who was kind of loaned to us from Boulder City.

**Rick Watson:** *He was quarterback too, wasn't he in...?*

**Norman Craft:** He, he was a quarterback, halfback in football. So that, that was our starters. We had, Harry Reid was a backup catcher on that, on that team. We had a kid by the name of John Wayneky was on that. Don Diamassey was on that team. There was, like I say, Henderson kids knew how to play baseball. I don't care if it was on grass field or lot field or in a baseball or a basketball court, we knew how to play baseball. When that field was built, when they got through with, from the right field line to the left field line it was a drop off. And center field was about 12 feet from the level of the playing field to the bottom...

**Rick Watson:** *Make it hard on outfielders.*

**Norman Craft:** Well, makes it very hard on me. I was at practice one day and, and the wind was blowing as it does off Black Mountain and it was cold windy day and John Harden had a friend of his hitting us fly balls who played semi-pro ball with John. And hitting fly balls and I remember going out there one-night walking blues; we always walked for him because of the fence, no fence. So I was running after one and I kept hearing Rodney say, "Okay, okay, okay, Nooorrrmmm". I went off the edge. He hit a fly ball like this. I get it like this on the ground and went tumbling like this big around. And I remember Rodney Blue coming up to me and opening my eyes, looking at my eyelids and he said he didn't see anything but white. And, and I was the only one that I know of that went off that. But it was years before they ever put a fence up out there. But you'd go out there now and that's a, that's a great facility because it's all grass, fenced, got bleachers in it and that, that's really a nice facility. But, you know, another story with that...Bobby Peck was at Boulder City. I played against him twelve months in a year. Well, one day he's standing or sitting on the fender of his car watching us practice so I call Harden over and I said, hey coach, I said, I think that's Bobby Peck over there. What's he doing here, he's Boulder City catcher. So Harden goes up and talks to him and Bobby leaves. Harden doesn't say anything and I don't ask him anything and next day at practice Bobby Peck's back up there. But now he's got a catcher's glove catching his catches. He's transferred to Basic High School. And basically Bobby Peck was such a great catcher that was the foundation of the success of that team. He could handle Ray Martinez as a pitcher. And he was just a sparkplug and...

**Rick Watson:** *He was a pretty good football player too.*

**Norman Craft:** Yes, he was for...

**Rick Watson:** *High school league.*

**Norman Craft:** I've always said that if Bobby Peck had been my size with the talent he had he'd have been an All-American in three sports. He was a great athlete, football, basketball and baseball. And I coached with him at Rancho. We had the three coaches and we won one state baseball championship at Rancho together. And in '65, '66.

**Rick Watson:** *It's interesting how over the course of a career or lifetime, you know, you work with people who are your teachers, your coaches and was it...I was talking to Mario Lonico and he said that John Dooley had been his coach back in my time.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, well, you see, John came to Basic...Ben Church had been the Superintendent or been the Principal of Basic High School. In the summer of '51 or '52, his family was on a trip and he got killed in a car accident and John Dooley came down from Montana to be our, our Principal of Basic High School. And he, he always wore that...he had a Mon...high school Montana jersey that he always wore to our football games. Yeah, yellow or something that's...but know there were, you know, some kids that, that, in Henderson, that I don't know whether the Historical Society or anybody realizes that they are Henderson kids. Of course, Harry Reid, everybody knows that although he claims Searchlight as home, he's been, you know, his high school years were at Basic. Donny Wilson, who was, worked in Harry's office for many years, was the second baseman on our team. His chief of staff, Ray Martinez, was our pitcher. You know, two kids that I didn't know but my mother had conversations with their mother in the alley because they lived right behind us, was the Charles brothers. Now if you don't remember the Charles brothers, you're shaking your head, they wrote and are still writing at TV but ones that became of notice was "Cheers". They wrote, both of them, wrote "Cheers". And the bartender, I can't remember his name, the bartender here. You're smiling so you remember.

**Rick Watson:** *Yeah. There was...they named their characters after people they went to school with.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *Like Mantuso.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *The bartender, they gave him that name.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, and you know, a teammate of mine, a kid by the name of Don Deidamess who never left college. Now, you say, he studied. Are you kidding? He never left college. He goes to Utah. He gets his Bachelors. Decides he wants to get his Masters before he leaves college. Gets his Masters. Gets a teaching fellowship at Utah. Decides he would get his Doctorate. Gets his Doctorate; then he gets a job the next year at the University of Calgary. He

retired from the University of Calgary after 35 years. He's still up there. But he never left college. He's a perpetual college kid. And Doug Lockridge, who was a, a teammate of ours. He was a...which really surprised me...Doug was a brilliant kid but he ended up as a warden of the Univ...er, the Alaskan Prison.

**Rick Watson:** *Is that right?*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *He was a great high school basketball player too.*

**Norman Craft:** Yes, he was. Good baseball player.

**Rick Watson:** *Oh, really.*

**Norman Craft:** Good baseball player. There's a one...he was in my brother's class...and I don't know whether the Society has anything on this guy. But his name was George Rusty. George lived down by the, the, I forget the street, by the Community Church which is now the Senior Center, or was the...a couple of years ago the Senior Center just off Water Street. He's the first one I know of from Henderson that went to the U.S. Military Academy. His father was, worked at the plant. I saw George maybe ten years ago at a reunion. He retired as a general. And he was living there in Virginia not far from Washington D.C. You know, a lot of, a lot of kids from Henderson were...you know, for a small school, industrial town, you know, you'd think going to school, doing what they did would...me, going to college? I'd never, never even thought about it until the end of my junior year. It was one of those goals you didn't think about. There were kids that you knew in your class that were going to go to college. Don Deidamess, you knew he was going to a college. Lockridge, you knew he was going to go to a college. The rest of us, we'd all end up working down at the plant. You know, some of them did. Some guys that got out of there, went to college. Donny Wilson, you know. He went to Arizona State. Played baseball down there. A lot of kids had a lot of success coming out of that small school in the education system. Henderson at that time was...you know, when they consolidated and made it a city it was not a very rich city, you know. We had...the school budget was, I don't know what it was. Until my senior year we didn't have a full set of uniforms that matched.

**Rick Watson:** *During baseball?*

**Norman Craft:** No, football, during football. Yeah, some guys had stripes up here, other guys had stripes here. But, you know...like me.

**Rick Watson:** *Yeah, big change.*

**Norman Craft:** We travelled the school buses, Boulder City and Las Vegas High School travelled in LTR's, you know. But, you know, I wouldn't have given it up. I had great experiences growing



up in Henderson. From running the alleys of Henderson to, to playing ball and meeting all the people that...really the adults that really cared for kids, you know. Didn't have to. They didn't have kids. I don't think Lou LaPorta, children I don't remember. But he was always involved in kids' activities. And Dotty McBeth, oh, she had three of her own. I, I remember speaking at her memorial service that, that she only had three children but she about 300 kids that everybody, every kid in Henderson knew where Dotty lived and if they needed anything they could stop by. A lot of us did just to chat with Dotty. She always had cookies or coffee or, you know. I know when Nancy and I first started dating, the one person I told her you have to meet is Dotty McBeth. We went out and met Dotty.

**Rick Watson:** *I think both of the McBeths or the senior McBeths have passed on.*

**Norman Craft:** Yes, both of them.

**Rick Watson:** *I think all of their kids are sti...I think Campton and his sister are still around.*

**Norman Craft:** Well, I had coffee with Campton late Tuesday morning. John is in California. I'll just...Sherry is in Washington or the city of Washington. Yeah, they're all, they're still around.

**Rick Watson:** *See, they're folks that we should interview.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, Camp, uh, John, I'll tell you, I don't know who you've interviewed. Virgil, you know, if...

**Rick Watson:** *Virgil Weeks for sure. We haven't interviewed him yet.*

**Norman Craft:** But, yeah...

**Rick Watson:** *But we've got a lot of, you've shared a lot of his things with us.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, he would have a lot. His, his dad is an electrician. I don't know whether his dad and his mother are here in town but yeah. Donny Wilson is still around. Maggie Shenlein. Maggie Snyder is still around. Her mother was a waitress at the El Dorado Club for years and years. You know, I grew up and brothers, we all, you know, there's still a lot of those people still around that had great stories that, that should be told. That, you know, that context that what happened, what was happening in Henderson at that time. I remember going to, during the war when the first trip I made to the Henderson Theater in my uncle's car and they had the top of the lights blackened out. And I couldn't understand that, you know.

**Rick Watson:** *Air raid...*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, and I was also in Albuquerque when they exploded the first, um, um, at White Sands. So, you know, understand, understand that. But, you know, that there. Van Waggon and Hugh, he was, he was my savior, you know. But he also got his dollars' worth out

of me because he was on the City Council and on City Council nights he said, "Norm," he said, "I want you to close up". Well, closing up meant, you know, good midnight.

**Rick Watson:** *How old would you have been?*

**Norman Craft:** Well, I was, you know, at that time I would have been a junior, senior in high school but I started at the theater when I was about fourteen. And, you know, it was good.

**Rick Watson:** *Bette, we interviewed Bette Jo Peisker.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yes.

**Rick Watson:** *Who was really involved, she said, in girls that fight at Basic High School.*

**Norman Craft:** Yes, she was the leader of what was then the GA. Yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *But she said that her dad would have her close up the pool hall.*

**Norman Craft:** Pool hall!

**Rick Watson:** *Or, or, or run it. He'd just leave about four in the afternoon. That's what it was.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *She said that he, that she was just a twelve, thirteen old kid. She would be in charge until he came back from dinner.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, yeah, and that pool hall was a going thing. Mr. Heister, he ran a tight ship. Yeah, but you know...

**Rick Watson:** *A different era.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh yeah, you know, it's...the girls, I remember Basic had a, or Henderson had a very good adult women's softball team in the '40's and 50's. And I remember watching Betty play and there two sisters, the Gangred sisters that lived on Basic Road apart from the Blues that were excellent softball players. And we used to go down there as a kid and watch them play softball. The old Titanium Field down there on Boulder, or on Lake Mead. You know, but...those things don't happen anymore. Everything has to be so organized. You know, it's come to the point where now, you know, a guy like me, I can't coach Little League because I don't have a son or grandson playing.

**Rick Watson:** *Is that a rule?*

**Norman Craft:** That's what I understand. You have to have a relative playing. Now I coached Little League up until my grandsons quit playing. But now I, you know, I can't...with all the knowledge I have and my life coaching, you know, I can't go out and help kids play baseball.

**Rick Watson:** *That's too bad.*

**Norman Craft:** Well, that's, you know, that's what's happened to our society that, that, you know, they...I don't care if they run a background check on me but that's what happened. You don't know who's coach...they want to know who's coaching the kids and if you have a blood relative coaching they feel they're, they're pretty safe.

**Rick Watson:** *Lets see, I'm about out of questions.*

**Claytee White:** Where did Bobby Orr transfer from?

**Norman Craft:** Who?

**Claytee White:** *The person who transferred to Basic to play ball?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, Bobby Peck.

**Claytee White:** *Bobby Peck.*

**Norman Craft:** Boulder City.

**Claytee White:** *Boulder City. Okay.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, because I played against Bobby my senior year in football. He was their quarterback. And played against him in basketball. And now all of a sudden he shows up.

**Claytee White:** *Wasn't there a rivalry between Basic and Las Vegas High School?*

**Norman Craft:** Kind of. I'd say the only thing that we could beat Las Vegas High School in was baseball. Football we came close my senior year. They beat us 24-13. Basketball they always beat us by 15-20 points. They had a school of 2,000 against a school of 400-450. But baseball was the one equalizer in Basic High School.

**Claytee White:** *Tell me a little about race relations at Rancho High School.*

**Norman Craft:** You know, like I said, I didn't really consider race relations until I went to Indiana.

**Claytee White:** *So you weren't there during the...*

**Norman Craft:** No, you know, like I said, Basic High School we had two black families. The Walkers and the Molins. It was...we never even talked about it. We didn't think about it. It wasn't a discussion. But when I came back from Indiana, now Indiana's the northern-most, how did they put it, the northern-most school to the Mason-Dixon Line, so we had a lot of, a lot of blacks at IU. And that's where it first came to me that they talked about it. They talked about it in the locker room. Now I remember last discussing about where they came from.

They said, "Naw, your folks adopted this item or this item. No, we came..." you know. The fact that ...Rancho was a different thing. That's where I, it really hit me that there was a problem. I, you know, I'd never been faced with...even in IU I was never faced with that, that type of thing, although I'm sure it was there. It was in teammates even, you know. Rancho was a different thing. And I don't know what started...I know what, what people said it started. We had a kid by the name of Richard Green who was a baseba..., or football player that was dating a white cheerleader. And, but that to me was an internal thing. That was a, you know...but it did. It got the school going. It got, you know, things going and that just led to other. Then other things kept, kept involving. I remember going to class that...on a Thursday, we played the fire staff in a football game and Friday morning we wake up with a, get the Review Journal. And here's a picture of Rancho's gym with most of our biggest police sitting in the corners with rifles looking down upon the campus. You know, as far as black leaders, we had all the black leaders with us. I don't know what was going...never did find out what we, was going on there. But those were tumultuous times and things just, you know.

**Rick Watson:** *Was that the '60's?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *Of course that was in the Civil Rights Movement.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *The Civil Rights Act was passed. Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy were killed during those four or five years. There was a...that probably stirred up a lot of upheaval.*

**Norman Craft:** Well, and, you know, even as a kid it never dawned on me that black entertainers weren't staying on the Strip. Nup, never dawned on me. They had to go to the West side for, for hotel rooms. And like I say, I, I can't say just all my ignorance it didn't, didn't dawn on me. And I knew kids from Vegas. I knew Ulton, Ulton Curtis, a great, great athlete, you know. But never dreamed that...

**Claytee White:** *So there was a curfew in Las Vegas that you talked about when you were a young man going back and forth. How, how did that play out? I mean, why was there a curfew?*

**Norman Craft:** I guess in most towns at that time, juveniles had curfews.

**Rick Watson:** *That's right.*

**Norman Craft:** You know, during the school year, you know, there's no need for, no need for you to be on the street at ten o'clock at night.

**Claytee White:** *In Henderson?*

**Norman Craft:** Henderson, Las Vegas. You know both cities...

**Claytee White:** *So Henderson had one as well.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, Henderson had one as well. And I, that's why I used that alley so much going home from the theater because the police didn't check the alleys. They checked the streets.

**Rick Watson:** *I got a big tangle one time for being out after curfew.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *My dad had to go up to the police station to get me. Boy, was he mad.*

**Norman Craft:** Well, they took me home and explained me to my mother and I was trying to explain why I was out and she made sure that I understood that she would take care of me when the policemen left. No, my mother was one of, of discipline. I had talked to my older brothers about it and wondered why I got the brunt of it. Which I thought I got the brunt of. And they disagreed with me. That it had started with them except they didn't take it. They left. They were, you know...she used to tell the story, she'd take them to school, the little old schoolhouse, wherever they were at, and go in the front door. While she was explaining to the principal, my two older brothers and a couple of Indian kids would run down to the river. Out the back door and off they were gone. But at her services when I had all the, all her stuff together and I turned to my oldest brother and I said you're the oldest. You know, you need to take charge of this and see that mom's requests are... "Oh no you don't. You take care of it." I said, no, she said. Then they all said, "You were her favorite." I said, favorite? I said I used to catch more from her. And they said, "No, you caught it because you were the one that she wanted to let get away like the rest of us did." I could say Troy and I were the only ones out of eight kids that graduated from high school.

**Rick Watson:** *Were your brothers as big as you?*

**Norman Craft:** Yes. Troy was. Well, Larry was, Larry was probably 6'3; Power was maybe 6'3; but I had two sisters that were 6 foot.

**Rick Watson:** *Really?*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *Good size kids.*

**Norman Craft:** And my older sister I don't know because she died in 1927. You know, nine years before I was born. She was thirteen years old when she died.

**Rick Watson:** *That must have been a challenge for your mom to take after you big boys with a razor strap.*

**Norman Craft:** [Chuckling] I don't know how many got the strap but I know that if it hadn't been for that '41 Ford and that small bathroom that I might have gotten some more. But she was the greatest but she's...you know, I've said she got a hundred dollars a month from...you know, it wasn't...I never did understand. It wasn't Social Security. It was from working, it was a government job when he was a kid so it was a government...some kind of pension. But I know when, when she died she was only getting \$113 a month. So over, you know, forty years it didn't appreciate a whole lot. But she lived on that plus what everything else we scrounged up. But for Christmas she borrowed a hundred dollars every year from Household Finance. You remember Household? It was down across from Ben Beatty's Shoe Store. It was a little building.

**Rick Watson:** *I can still see those little magnets and sometimes snowmen.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, she borrowed a hundred dollars a year for Christmas every year and paid off by the time the next Christmas rolled around she'd borrow another. But, but like you say, everybody in Henderson is from spaghetti. We all worked at the plant or, or...

**Rick Watson:** *Hitchhiked a lot. My dad used to hitchhike. He'd work the...*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *...work the graveyard shift at Boyds and he would walk down to the corner in Boulder Highway and Lake Mead and hitchhike to Vegas in the middle of the night. He had to work...*

**Norman Craft:** I never, you know, like I say, be like keep thinking of people who were so influential that some of hard work was, you know... I think of Becky in Las Vegas when we're thinking about it. She would loan anybody who wanted to do anything in Henderson, that helped Henderson grow, she would make sure they had the money to do it. And she would make sure that they got a loan to build whatever they wanted to build; a business, housing, whatever it was. Just make Henderson grow.

**Rick Watson:** *Big difference between that philosophy in the '50's and, oh, the philosophy today.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh yeah. Yeah, it's...well, you know, just look at the changes, not only in the finances, but social changes that happened in that 55, 60 years. I keep thinking it's that long since I've been in high school. It's (chuckling), it's been that long. Well, I hope I've given...I've given you something that you don't have. There are, you know, I don't know whether you need pictures. I would like to give that...if I ever find it again, a picture of that junior league team of 1950 sitting in the dugout. You talk about a bunch of rag-tag kids and...

**Rick Watson:** *That would be wonderful to have. You know, any pictures that you, you'd let us copy, we'll take good care of the...*

**Norman Craft:** Well, I can, I can copy 'em. Any pictures I have, I can copy them.

**Claytee White:** *So, so, so you could scan them?*

**Norman Craft:** Pardon?

**Claytee White:** *Could you scan them?*

**Norman Craft:** I could scan them.

**Claytee White:** *And could you make two copies?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, certainly.

**Claytee White:** *Wonderful.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah. I guarantee we have at least of all, 50.

**Rick Watson:** *I'd be happy to get...*

**Norman Craft:** I can get up in the morning and get to the retired administrator's meeting once a month. I have, I have pictures that, you know. Didn't own a camera so all the pictures I have either came from Woodruff Studios, who was the photographer in Henderson.

**Rick Watson:** *Jerry Ludwig maybe too.*

**Norman Craft:** Jerry Ludwig.

**Rick Watson:** *'Cause Ludwig maybe is the obvious photographer.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah. And people giving me things that I was in. Boy, out there you've got a closetful of pictures out there. Friends pictures.

**Claytee White:** *A lot of history. Thank you so much.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, you're welcome. Any other questions? I don't, you know.

**Rick Watson:** *But sure a sense to get home and get your home's work. These are great.*

**Norman Craft:** But I appreciate the opportunity. The reason I had talked about this from time to time and, of course, retired and stayed with this, you know. There's a lot of talk and no action.

**Rick Watson:** *But we've, you know, Ann Marie talked about having a panel discussion with four or five folks who played ball out at Henderson. And people...*

**Norman Craft:** Well, there's still some out there, you know.

**Rick Watson:** *It'd be great to get them.*

**Norman Craft:** I know a lot of them still just kids that I went to high school with. You know, I don't know whether Dwayne Wallback is still alive or not.

**Rick Watson:** *He is. He's one of the panel discussions we had.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, Dwayne was, you know, he's another old Henderson...he just lived up the street from me on Ocean. Guys like him keep going. I know he lost a wife here a couple of years ago but I think he's still...

**Rick Watson:** *Yeah. I think we've gotten a good interview.*

**Norman Craft:** Have you? Well, good.

**Rick Watson:** *Do you remember the Elks Club that was down by Carver Park?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yeah, Don Beeman and his father was very involved in the Elks Club.

**Rick Watson:** *That's a name we need to remember because we're trying to remember when that was built. Was it there...I mean, I know it was there before Carver Park was torn down but...*

**Norman Craft:** Not...it might have been closed. Yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *Do you think the Beeman family would know?*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Don, Don, he's still up in Cocheran Canyon just outside of...oh, my memory, whoa, boy, whoa, boy.

**Claytee White:** *Thank you so much.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, you're welcome. You know, if I can, you know, if you ever run out anything, I've got things that I should have been in years ago but I haven't. I must have got out...I did have my family out here.

**Claytee White:** *Tell me about that.*

**Norman Craft:** That is a picture of my father taking oil well rigging pipe up to northern New Mexico or southern Colorado and a place called Green, Colorado. I tried to find where Green is and, you know, it's not on the map just like Churrios, New Mexico isn't on the map and that was one of the places, a stopover for travel. It's up there by Espinol, New Mexico, it's northern New Mexico. But Espinol is still there but Churrios isn't. So, so, you know, it's things like that, that now...



**Rick Watson:** *It's a great old photo.*

**Norman Craft:** My mother and father on their honeymoon took campers to Gallup, New Mexico, built the bridge up by Farmington from Churrios, New Mexico to Colorado, which is at the bridge right outside of Farmington. My dad hauled the first timbers up there to build that bridge on their honeymoon. And, and in a horse-drawn carriage, horse-drawn wagon. And she said they would sleep underneath the wagon at night. If you've ever been up...if you've ever gone to Gallup, to Farmington, if you've ever been...that's the most desolate. You'd think you were on the moon. There's nothing there. (Chuckling)

**Rick Watson:** *I went to school for a year in Santa Fe, New Mexico.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh.

**Rick Watson:** *That's beautiful country.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, it's beautiful country.

**Claytee White:** *I that was a...that's a...*

**Norman Craft:** But you, you get, you know...Gallup, to that part of New Mexico. That's desolate country. I took my mother up once to visit her brother in 1961 and we would see some sheep. I said, who's tending those sheep? She said, "You wait a minute, you just keep your eyes open." Pretty soon here sitting by some bushes, an Indian sitting there watching his sheep. He might, they might have been scattered over five miles but he knew where they were.

**Rick Watson:** *Nomad, Navaho and Hopis and every one, they were big in the sheep industry and a lot of, a lot of coal interests.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah, yeah.

**Rick Watson:** *That's, that's a prize possession.*

**Norman Craft:** I've got some of the pictures, the old family pictures, that, that...

**Rick Watson:** *The burros' coming down close to the old part of Henderson.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh yeah, they were...you know, we could hear...we could never find them though, Rick. But we could hear them at night. We could hear the neck bells ringing and, uh...

**Rick Watson:** *Umhmm. I see old pictures of the railway station in Vegas taken around 1910 and there's always a prospector with a burro lugging a load on its back.*

**Norman Craft:** See, we used to take...I had an old army canteen I got somewhere filled with water and all the other kids had something because we'd just go. And we'd...everything east of

Henderson up where, I guess, Hollywood's now, we, we were at the foot of that mountain and we always wanted to go and saddle back. And there's a mountain east of Henderson and we would get up there a couple of miles and we could see it and it looked like a saddle, we named it saddle back, I don't know what the name of it is. But we could never get to it 'cause, you know, it was more than we wanted to trek through. We knew how long it would take us to get back home and we had to be home by sundown.

**Rick Watson:** *I can remember going with the Boy Scouts, they had a big Boy Scout Jamboree, where they gathered in a vacant lot, it would have been right near Prime Beach, up the El Dorado quite...*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, that's good.

**Rick Watson:** *We gathered there and then we hiked from that spot all the way up into a canyon in the River Mountains, you know where that River Mountain trail is. It'd be on the, it'd be on the northeast side of the Boulder Highway. And we slept there that night and burros came down and were sniffing our faces and licking us.*

**Norman Craft:** We had the Boy Scout troop I was in, march, we just walked the highway, the Lake Mead Highway out to the lake and camped out there. Had a cougar, this cougar was spotted that night. We only spent one night out there. And we, you know, do stupid things like try and ride your bike out to the lake in the middle of the summer. Geez.

**Rick Watson:** *We had a friend, Cushes, that this kid had a DSA motorcycle. He'd be a sophomore. And we got...Win Shiller and I got on my brother's bicycle and he pushed us with his motorcycle all the way down to the lake and out through Boulder City and back down to Henderson.*

**Norman Craft:** Is that right.

**Rick Watson:** *And he'd, he would put his foot on this, you know, on the nut on the back axle. That was crazy, stupid.*

**Norman Craft:** Oh, we did some stupid dumb things. You know, now kids would end up in jail. If it hadn't been for adults and some of the police officers. Hugh Moran, you know, the guy who dropped off all the baseball stuff and guys like him and Mr. Hickman, Sammy Insted, he was a police officer. You know, they'd have had half of Henderson in jail, half the boys in jail. There was just those stupid...you remember one Halloween we had a big thing at the theater and, of course, just before midnight, all, we let all the kids out and there was a big...Deser's Drugstore was a gathering place.

**Rick Watson:** *Had a soda fountain, had a soda fountain in Deser's.*

**Norman Craft:** A soda fountain, that was the gathering place in Henderson. Well the cops were out in this intersection trying to direct traffic and some kids up on McBeth's started throwing water balloons at him. Well, you know, do that today and the police would have you in jail and up to Elko before you could say boo.

**Rick Watson:** *That's the nice thing about, about a small town where everybody knows everybody. I mean they discipline you but at the same time they knew, they knew how far to discipline you.*

**Norman Craft:** But, uh, it was, it was a great time to grow up. Anna and I say now, I would hate to raise a kid now. I, you know. It would just scare me to death.

**Rick Watson:** *Too big, too dangerous.*

**Norman Craft:** Yeah. My oldest are 56, Norm's the youngest one so he's what, 47? Yeah, and they had a tough time in the '60's. You know, '70's, Valley High School. That was a raucous place and you had...we had to have big basketball games, nobody in the gym.

**Rick Watson:** *Mhmm. Yeah.*

**Norman Craft:** You know, we used to catch hell for that. Well, can't you let the parents in. No, the parents the biggest problems. (Chuckling)

**Rick Watson:** *They can...*

**Norman Craft:** You say, but if we could get the parents and keep them away from the kids while they were playing ball, were involved in it, we'd have had a lot more successful kids and more fun. Parents were the biggest bad distraction to kids in athletics.

**Rick Watson:** *Screaming at each other, and at the kids.*

**Norman Craft:** Let them know that of course you do what they want and let them go. Can't do it. It's not in the DNA. Well, thank you.

**Rick Watson:** *Thank you.*

**Claytee White:** *Thank you so much.*