

John Winlow

Interviewer: *Today is January 20, 2015. 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 John Winlow as part of the Henderson Oral History Project of the Henderson Libraries. Thank you so much for joining me, John.*

John Winlow: You're welcome. My pleasure.

Interviewer: *I'd like to start by asking about your childhood. Could you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised?*

John Winlow: Yeah, I was born here in Henderson and raised. I was born at the old St. Rose Hospital on Boulder Highway and Lake Mead. It was 1948, and I know Lou La Porta talks about his son being one of the first born at the hospital, and I had to be somewhere within the first hundred, if not the first twenty, because there couldn't have been that many of us in the town. But I was raised here. All my schooling up until 9th grade was in Henderson School District, and then in 9th grade I left and went to California for three years. And I was down there and then I came back and graduated from Basic High School.

Interviewer: *Okay. When and why did your family originally move to Henderson?*

John Winlow: That might be a dark secret. [laughter] It might be! Dad moved out first during the Second World War. He was quite a bit older than I was. He was fifty-six when I was born. But he moved out first, established some sort of a residency, and I'm not sure where, and then called for Mom and my sister to come out. And that would have to be in the mid-forties, 1940s. And they got stuck in Salt Lake City because of the war and rubber and gasoline and fuel and things like that. They were stuck up there for I don't know how long. It may have been like six months to a year until he could finally make arrangements for them to come down. They came down; they lived in Victory Village, right behind the Catholic Church, St. Peter's. And dad did maintenance work at the dam and did some maintenance work for the church. And then mom was the house cleaner for the church and then for Father—no, Monsignor Moran, Monsignor Moran. And so that's where that part came in. I say it's a little fuzzy because nobody has really talked about it. My sister and I don't talk about it. She's six years older than I am. We don't talk about how Mom and Dad ended up here with her.

Interviewer: *You said your mom was working for the church. Do you have some memories of St. Peter's?*

John Winlow: Oh, absolutely. One of my first memories was swallowing a quarter and being turned upside down until it came out. I was about three-and-a-half, four years old, and we were in the pew, and all of a sudden I went ugh, and Dad looked over, and he grabbed me and threw me upside down and just started pounding on my back, and out it came. But the more interesting, I think, other than that, is the—I did not go to St. Peter's School. My sister did. And Dad and the administration had a few words. Dad was not Catholic; Mom was. And he had a few words. And she was pulled out and went to the—I think it was Basic High School. No, it was—yeah, it had to be Basic High School. And her parochial education ceased at that point, Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 2

and mine did not begin. But it was Mom's insistence that I get my first holy communion and those kinds of things, confirmation. So I had to take catechism, every Wednesday or Thursday, whatever it was, during the school year. And that's how I was connected to the Church. I wasn't a member like some of our people. I was not a member of the school, did not attend school there. But the first time I was ever in catechism class, we were being taught by the nuns, and one of the sisters made a comment, was calling roll. That's what, she was calling roll. And there was a kid named John Wince—Wince family lived here for years and years—and John was ahead of me in the seating order. And so she would call out John Wince, and he would say, "Here, sister". And she was call out, "John Winslow, John Winslow, John Winlow," I'd say, "Here". Now this happened three times, about three weeks in a row. And when it came to the third time, I kept thinking, you know, I said, "This Winslow, does he ever come?" She said, "I don't know, I've never met the guy". Well, she was mispronouncing my last name, which wasn't uncommon, and I'd never heard it pronounced that way, so I didn't respond. But, yeah, and then on, did my confirmation there, at St. Pete's. You know, we attended, my learning, my driving experience began by driving Mom to Sunday mass at seven o'clock. We lived close to Boulder Highway, right on Boulder Highway and Major. And so I would drive out, and that's where I learned to drive, was to take her to mass on Sunday mornings at seven o'clock. Nobody was out on the road, and she would let me drive. So, it was—she got to go; I was encouraged to go.

Interviewer: *Did anything funny ever happen with the church? Do you have any stories associated with it?*

John Winlow: Oh, no, other than the one with the nuns and last name. No, no, not really.

Interviewer: *What about when you went to school at Basic?*

John Winlow: Well, I started out at, what, high school or Basic Elementary?

Interviewer: *Oh, let's start with Basic Elementary.*

John Winlow: Okay. Basic Elementary was opened up, probably in 1950s, the school year of 1953 or '54. They had just built what was called Track 2. Track 2 would be Ocean Street south and Boulder Highway up to the railroad tracks. Brand new Track, all new families, everything else. And that's where some of my oldest friends and I met, was kindergarten. And we were five years old, and there were two kindergarten classes, half day classes, so there was four total, I guess. And then we moved through Basic Elementary, which is now Gordon McCaw. I think that's what it's called now, Gordon McCaw. And it was a grind. We had a—Mr. Jeffs was our principal, and he didn't like noise in the cafeteria, so when we had lunch, you could hear a pin drop. And I'm a little sociable. But there was another person there, and his name was Les Charles, and I don't know if you know who Les Charles is. He's the co-creator of *Cheers*, okay. Les would bring dessert for lunch every day. And I brought potato chips every day. And so quite often we would trade off, because I didn't want the potato chips, and he didn't want the dessert. And his mother made a fabulous chocolate cake; it was fabulous. But that's where the Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 3

foundation for a lot of friendships developed to this—well now they're all dying off—not all dying off, but many of them are dying off. But it was an experience. And then they decided to move sixth grade from Basic Elementary to Henderson Townsite, where the junior high was. They had a section, so they

moved sixth grade down there. And that was a unique experience, because we weren't involved with the junior high students, but we were right there with them. We didn't interact with them, but, you know, if you went out of the room onto the playing fields or anything like that, they were there. I always thought that was a good move. You know, I didn't see anything wrong with it, and even today, now they have sixth, seventh, and eighth grade together. I don't—my wife is in teaching, she teaches at a middle school, and she said the older kids just stay away from the younger kids. The younger kids just stay away from the older kids; they just do it. They don't have anything in common. And I agree, we didn't. We didn't have anything in common, and so there were no problems, nothing. It was easy. And then from there it was to Henderson Junior High School. At that time, it was seventh, eighth, and ninth, and then I was kind of messing around with a rough crowd, and it was decided at Christmastime my freshman year that I was going to go away to school. And so off I went to California for two-and-a-half years. And went to a military school. And that was a real enlightenment. I had no idea what class we lived in, you know, stratus, economical. When I went to that school, I was roommates with millionaires. Good friends with actors' sons, Sir Cedric Hardwick, his son, Mike Hardwick, and I were pretty good friends. I actually went to their house in Beverly Hills one time for a weekend. But I didn't, you know, I still hadn't put it together that we were in a different stratosphere. Dad worked at the [Nevada] Test Site; he was an electrician. And these people, Mom would brief me, she'd say, "Now, they're going to ask you what your father does. You just say he works at the Test Site. If they say, 'What does he do?' you say, 'I don't know'." And that's how I answered it all the time. Well, then, water seeks its own level. Eventually, there were some other young men there with families who were doing whatever they could to keep the kid, the son, in school, like mine were. It was very expensive. And then my senior year I said I wanted to come home, and they said all right. So I came home and graduated from Basic High School in 1966.

Interviewer: *What was it like coming home after being in California all those years? Did you see all your old friends again?*

John Winlow: Oh, absolutely. No, we'd stayed in touch, because I would come home during the summer, and I'd come home during, like Christmas vacation, and we called it "Christmas vacation," Easter, any special holidays, three-day weekends, something like that, four-day weekends, whatever. Mom and Dad would fly me home, meet me at the airport, we'd go have dinner, and then it was out with my friends. So, yes, maintained, up in Track 2, maintained complete friendship with the whole group. And then, because in sixth grade, seventh grade, we merged with the Valley View School, Thomas Sewell, at the junior high. So now we had new friends that were in on some of our things. And it did. Friendships stayed throughout the whole thing, even through graduation. There was a picture at one time of the eleven of us that grew up together. There were a couple who came in at various times, like Phil Taylor. Phil Taylor's Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 4

dad ran BMI up at Glendale. And Phil and I are still very good friends. Larry Weider, whose dad was one of the foremen for Cal Pac, California Pacific. Larry was our best man at our wedding. Jim Campbell, who passed away last year, retired Metro officer. Like I said, there's pictures of a group of us. Dick Rounough, whose father just passed away. His parents were a lot younger than most of our other parents. And he lost his mom about six years ago, seven years ago, and lost his dad last year, or this past December. But, you know, for the most part, we come together maybe once every three months, four months. We don't hang out together like we did. But we're still in contact with each other, to a point where, hey so-and-so

passed away. You know, Jim Campbell, when he went in with his heart attack, his major attack. I called Larry and Phil immediately and said Jim's in the hospital, had a major heart attack, got to get up and check on him. And then it was evident that he wasn't going to make it, and Karen, Jim's wife, went through Jim's cousin—I'm blank on her name right now—I apologize—and asked if Larry and I would speak at a special gathering. Well, Jim was a retired police officer for Metro. Walked in, and there had to be two hundred people there. And I looked at the audience, and I still say this to this day, and even Larry, who spoke behind me, Bill Terry behind him, and then there was another gentleman who worked with Jim. They were partners. I got up, and I said, "All right, I got five hundred stories I want to tell." And everybody just looked at me. But 497 of them are rated R, and I can't do it in this audience. And so I said, "I'll tell you three stories" and proceeded to tell three stories. And then Larry got up, and he told three more stories, and they were different than my stories. So it—like I say, we still stay in contact with each other. We have a—somebody said we have a 50th reunion coming up next year. We didn't have a 40th. And that's the one I loved. Our 40th would have been in 2006. And without thinking, didn't even think what year it was or anything else, I called Larry, Jim, Phil, and said, "Why don't you guys come on over for a barbeque?" It was during the summer. I said, "I'll throw some steaks on the grill, and we'll just have a good old time." Well, as it turns out, it was like our 40th reunion. We told stories at the table that our wives had never heard before. Never heard. And then we had them in stitches for over two hours. And it wasn't just the wine. We had some great stories.

Interviewer: *I bet. Can you tell any stories here?*

John Winlow: As we go along. You know, if they pop in, and I know how to sanitize them, yes, I will. [laughter]

Interviewer: [laughter] *Okay, we'll see what happens.*

John Winlow: You know, I've got to be careful. I don't want to name names, so there's a couple—you know, I was thinking, there's one funny story that I have to tell, but I have to change names. And as we get along, I'll tell that story.

Interviewer: *Okay. Do you remember some of your neighbors when you were growing up in Henderson?*

John Winlow: Oh, absolutely. We lived on the corner of Burton and Major. And across on Major on the corner house—we were on a corner and across the street was a family named Schreck, Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 5

okay, and they had two children, had a daughter who was quite a bit older than I was, probably close to my sister's age or even older. And then they had a boy who was—I was trying to figure this out today. Frank was probably about five years, four years older than I was. And if you look up Frank Schreck right now, you'll find out that he's one of the top gaming and hotel attorneys in the United States.

Interviewer: *I know I've seen his name.*

John Winlow: Well, he grew up across the street from me; I grew up across the street from him. Next to them was the Rheame family, and that was Joe and Fran, and they had Trudy and Mary Jo. And Mary Jo passed away in 1971. I'd just gotten back from Vietnam, and they told me that she was pretty sick. She had some sort of a blood disease or something, and it just, wasn't anything they could do. And the next

thing I know, Joe came over and said she passed away, and I want you to be a pallbearer. I said, will do. Then there was a family, the third house was, well, the first family moved out. We didn't know them too well. But one of our math teachers moved in. And that was Mrs. Anderson, Jackie Anderson. And everybody loved her—she was a terrific—she would have study halls at her house at least once a week, and I swear sometimes, because she taught different subjects of math, probably three times a week. And they were like hour to two hour long study halls, and she would have punch and cookies and things like that. And you'd go in and she would help you with anything on your homework or whatever it was. It was fabulous. And there would could be as many as ten, fifteen students in there. And up from there, there was a good Catholic family. And if you know what that means, they had lots of children. And even though the Pope yesterday said, "You don't need to multiply like rabbits." Across the street on Burton was the Chase family. And then next to them was the Conger family. And the Conger family, Bill Conger, was my age. And we started out in elementary school together. We started out in kindergarten. And one day, walking to class, we got there too early. And the principal, Mr. Jeffs, made a comment to our teacher and said—no, we were in first grade—said, "I don't want those two people, those two guys here early. I don't want it to happen." And so we got talked to by the teacher, and then they called our parents, and our parents said all right, don't get there early. We don't know why we were early. So the next day, we start walking. And we walked, and we picked up rocks, and we threw rocks, and next thing I know, up comes a car, and it's my dad. And he said, "What are you two doing?" I said, "We're walking to school." He said, "School started forty-five minutes ago," said, "They've been trying to find you guys." Oh, so, we had to learn time management, that was the first time that he and I learned time management. Bill's family moved to Vegas. His dad worked for Metro, and Bill ends up retiring from—actually he was the number two or number three guy under Young. He's now the Chief of Police in Boulder City. Bill and I, he leaves about his freshman year—yeah, it had to be his freshman year—and I leave to go to California. We run into each other my senior year, we play Basic High, or Vegas High School in basketball, and he was at the game and came up after the game. And then, in Vietnam in 1970, he was with 101st, and I was with the 5th Infantry Division, and he was flying Cobras, and I was flying Hueys and jet rangers. He—all of a sudden, I walk into the officers' club on the air base—which is right next to our hutches—I walk Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 6

in and there he is, and I said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I just came over; I just got in the country." He said, "They moved us all up here because there's a typhoon coming through down south." And I said, "Ah, okay." So we got a chance to talk. And then during Operation Lam Son 719, which—you can look it up—was the largest helicopter battle in Vietnam. And it was the invasion of Laos. And one day, a long story short, I was riding front seat in the Cobra with a friend, Russ Webble. And Russ, we can just come out of contact, we'd been in contact with the enemy for a couple of hours, and now we had to refuel and rearm. And we pull into the POL, petroleum place, to gas up. And you keep the engine running, the blades running. And so Russ says, "You don't know how to fly this thing real well, so I will sit here, you go gas us up." So I climb out, and I'm out there, and I have the nozzle in, you know, gas us up, and you have to stand on your tiptoes to look, watch the level, because there's no real indicator. So I'm watching, I'm watching, and all of a sudden another helicopter comes in next to us, and it's bouncing me all around. I said, that's got to be something big, and I turned it off, I turned around to look. And it's Bill Conger sitting in the front seat, and he's writing his name backwards, C-O-N-G-E-R. And I said, "I got it, I got it!" And then we didn't see each other again for probably for another thirty years. Then we both

joined up with the local Vietnam helicopter pilots association. And now we haven't, since he has taken the job in Boulder City, we haven't seen each other in three years, four years. But that was the neighborhood. I mean, there were, let's see who else was up in that neighborhood? Most of our players on our baseball team came out of there. All the football, a lot of the football players came out of there. A lot of the track too. I'm trying to think. Oh, as I go along, I'll think of some other people that came out of there. It was a real interesting—I, you know, people talk about moving in—for instance, we'd moved into our neighborhood, our kids were six and eight. Yeah, six and eight. And there were no kids in the neighborhood. When we moved into that neighborhood at Track 2, there were kids everywhere. They were just everywhere. Junior high students, there were high school students, elementary students. In 1956, I would have been seven or eight years old, Basic High School won state championship in basketball. Well, a lot of the players lived around me. So to give you an idea of the age group when they first moved in—

Interviewer: *The people coming to Henderson in the '50s must have been young families, because—*

John Winlow: For the most part, they were.

Interviewer: *—they were just starting out maybe at the plants or in something.*

John Winlow: Yeah, I was trying to figure that out also. I've been thinking about that the last couple of days, looking at this, where did they come from? Obviously, from out of town. I don't think many moved down from the north; they could have. But it seems to me I remember people moving from the east coast, moving from Washington, Oregon, the Midwest. Jim Campbell's family came from Joplin, Missouri, the one that got hit with the tornado four years ago. Yeah, his family is from Joplin. Larry Weider's family came in from Needles, California. Where they were from prior to that, I'm not sure. Dick Rounau's family came in from Wisconsin, Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 7

I want to say. So, yeah, they came from just about everywhere. It was interesting. Not sure where the Schrecks came from, or the Rheames. Rheames—I do know that Fran, I think, grew up in Henderson. I'm not positive on that. Because we did have her, I think it was her brother, was an Ostrander, Chuckie Ostrander, and he lived not too far from us when we lived on Silver Street. But yeah, they were from all over.

Interviewer: *I feel like in the '50s when you were going to high school, probably a lot of African Americans had actually moved out of Henderson after the war years. But did you have friends who were African-American?*

John Winlow: Acquaintances. But, you know, I don't want to say it was segregated, but it really was. You had Carver Park and Victory Village. But you also had Pittman. And Pittman had a few African-American families. Carver Park probably had the majority of them, but it wasn't like ninety percent of Carver Park was African-American, it was probably thirty-five percent, forty percent. The other Rheame family, we had Joe and Fran across the street from me, and then you had, oh, what was their name, what was his name? Anyhow, he owned a meat market, a grocery store, right in the center of Carver Park. Royal, his first name was Royal, and Joe's brother. And he actually sponsored, I want to say in 1966, Industrial Days, you'd have to go back and look this up. There was an African-American young lady, and I can't remember her name, but he sponsored her for the beauty contest. And everybody just kind of looked at

each other, and nobody thought, you know, I'm sure there were some negative thoughts, but nobody said anything. Wasn't that big a deal. Playing sports, until I was a senior, there weren't that many that played sports. Charley James was a freshman or a sophomore, I think, when I was a senior. And I liked playing ball against him or with him, because he was pretty talented, and I enjoyed that. But on our team, '66 graduates, there were no African Americans. On the football team, I don't know if there was any, I don't think there were. Baseball, there may have been. Baseball, seems to me there was a kid named Sonny, not Hopkins; it was one of the ones that we grew up with, but I can't remember his name. But I seem to think he was—he played varsity baseball when we were a senior and he was a sophomore or a junior. But we didn't have that many African Americans. Everybody talks about segregation and everything else. We didn't have them. Now, you just made a comment, did they move back or out of Henderson after the war. Did we have that many during that time period? I don't know.

Interviewer: *Right. I think that they thought that they would need Carver Park as housing, but then they ended up living on the West Side of Las Vegas, anyway, because that's where their community was growing.*

John Winlow: Yeah, it wasn't a big deal. The biggest deal made in the household was—my dad, they came out of Pittsburgh, my family. And Dad had a name for everybody. Every race had a name. And it was sometimes so much so that after my wife and I were married in 1973, she would look at me as we were driving back to the house or something, she'd say, "What's a Hunky?" I said, "It's a Hungarian. You didn't know that?" She said, "I've never heard these words." "Oh, okay." But Dad—Mom referred to the garbage men as Negroes, I think is the term Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 8

she used. And Dad would always just call them colored people, which was probably very common. And then all of a sudden one day, and I think it was my wife looked at him and said, "What color are they?" And I don't know if he ever caught on or not. You know, he had, and what he did was not mean, not mean-spirited, that's just the way he grew up.

Interviewer: *He didn't think anything about it probably.*

John Winlow: No, no. He called Catholics 'Micks'. My mom was a Catholic. You know what a 'Mick' is?

Interviewer: *An Irishman?*

John Winlow: Yep.

Interviewer: *Yeah, because back in Pittsburgh, that's the Catholic community.*

John Winlow: My mom's parents—and I never met Dad's parents. I never met my grandparents on that side. Grandfather was killed in a train accident—he was a railroad man—killed in a train accident when dad was about ten or eleven years old, and dad had to, along with his four brothers, had to quit school immediately and get to work and take care of Mom. I have pictures of them, but I never met them. On the other side, Mom's family, they came from western Romania, and their name was Nussbaum. And everybody says, "Oh, they're Jewish." I said, "No, it's spelled with two s's; they were German." And granddad and grandma came over, and they both migrated almost at the same time, different boats and everything else, to—and she was from western Romania also. And her family was Catholic, and Lott was her name. But they met in Ambridge, at a social club. And that's where they got married and had nine

kids, and so I have thirty-three cousins, most of which I've never met. But if anybody comes through with the name Nussbaum, and there's two s's in it, I know they're probably related. But the—it wasn't, you know, getting back to the racial, I think there was probably more tension between the Hispanics—called today—we called them Mexicans—Hispanics and the Caucasian kids growing up, than there was anything else.

Interviewer: *Oh, really?*

John Winlow: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: *And everybody was coming here for the plants, or were there other reasons that people settled in Henderson?*

John Winlow: Well, I know that when I was—oh, well, it had to be other things, too, because the [Nevada] Test Site had to be taking off in about 1960. So, let's see, that would have put me at twelve.

Interviewer: *I'm surprised so many people lived in Henderson that worked for the Test Site, because it's quite a drive, and you'd think they would have rather lived in Las Vegas and cut their commute by about—* Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 9

John Winlow: Yeah, I'm wondering if the housing wasn't cheaper.

Interviewer: *Maybe so, yeah.*

John Winlow: If they came from small communities. And at that time, you know, I can remember the sign on Boulder Highway, population 18,000. And I remember that from the time I was twelve or thirteen. So prior to that, it was probably even 10,000 or less. But I'm probably thinking that they were getting those townsite houses pretty dirt cheap. They didn't mind the drive. Dad made the drive for years. He would go up on Sunday night and come home Friday night. And they had special allowances for things like that, and he had a whole group, there was four of them. And he supplied the car, and they supplied the gas. So, it worked out for him. But, to him it wasn't an issue. He'd drive into Vegas. When they finally opened up the highway, for a long time it was a two-lane highway. They called the widow maker because so many men driving up and down, back and forth, and they'd stop at the NCO Club and grab a few and get a little crazy on the road. But it had to be more than the plants. The plants, I don't know if they were—they were winding down, they had to be winding down, because the war was over. But there was still an awful lot of people who worked there. Dad worked there for a while, before he went to work as an electrician. Even after he became an electrician, he ended going back there with the company for a while. So I don't know, that's a good question. I can't think of anything else. There was no other major industry. You had the government, you had gaming, culinary, and then you had your service industry.

Interviewer: *The gaming industry might have been part of it, too.*

John Winlow: Could have been. Could have been. Once things started breaking out there. I know that dad did an awful lot of work out there on the Strip at the Tropicana and the Stardust because of the electrical contractors who were called in to do their work, their job. So he never was without a job for years. When he went to work at the Test Site, every two years, the contract would come up. And so

mom always had money put away to make all the payments for the house, payments for the car, whatever, insurance payments, whatever. But the bad one, I think, was in '66, and they were out for four months. And that was a back-breaker. The union, the night before the election, I think that was the election where Paul Laxalt was elected governor, the union got together and said, all right, let's go for the contract, and they went for the contract, and that was it. But I know Paul and gone in and talked to the union members, which is an unheard of thing. You have a Republican, and you have the union. So I don't know what was said. Dad was there, and he would never tell me what was said.

Interviewer: *Did he keep it a secret or did he just not tell you, just not bother to tell you?*

John Winlow: No, it's a combination of both probably. It's like the family issue, doesn't get brought up, and it's not going to get discussed. And I'm not bringing it up.

Interviewer: *Better not to. Do you have some memories about visiting the Strip when you were younger, in the 50s and 60s?* Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 10

John Winlow: Yeah, well, it, not memories, because it was only on occasion. Seemed to me one of the hotels, and I can't remember which one it was, would always have the Easter egg hunt for the kids. And that was a big deal, to go out on the Strip. But just to go out for the Easter egg hunt. Nothing else was—I don't think we were aware, I wasn't aware, at least growing up, until probably fourteen or fifteen, of the entertainment and what was happening out there. You know, ten, eleven, and twelve, you know, it wasn't a big deal. And by then I was out of the Easter egg hunt.

Interviewer: *When you came back for your senior year, did you go with your friends to the Strip and go to the—there was a good hamburger joint, I heard.*

John Winlow: No. Oh, yeah, that was the one on, The Corral, on Charleston and Las Vegas Boulevard. Yeah, it was a pretty good one. But when I came back, I'm trying to think, did we go out there and mess, we didn't mess around too much out on the Strip. I know that when I came back from, I think it was basic training or something. I was drafted in '68, and I came back, maybe it was after advanced infantry training and on my way to—that's what it was. It was—I was on my way to flight school. So that had to be January of 19—or December of 1968. I know that three or four of us went out on the Strip, and I got to watch Frank Sinatra play baccarat. Now, it only lasted about five minutes at the most, and he dropped \$40,000. And that was at Caesar's Palace, and he had just had some trouble with one of the other hotels, and I don't remember what it was, on credit. And, they'd say, no, not tonight, you won't get any more tonight. And I thought that was so funny. But, I was never—our family and most of the people that I know, were never—it was never a big deal to go out on the Strip. I know that when Christy and I were married, and Larry and—Larry was our best man, and his wife, Madeline, at the time, said on our first anniversary, they said, "Hey, we're going to get you into Danny Thomas' show." And I said, "Really?" And they said, "Yeah, dinner show." So we dressed up, went out there, and to this day, I say there's only two comedians I could just listen to forever, actually three, but two main ones: Robin Williams, just because he goes off the wall, the way he did; but the other is Danny Thomas, because he was a story teller. He wasn't like a comedian, comedian. He didn't throw one-liners out. He told one story about his family, and it kept you in stitches the entire time. He talked about uncle Anton, and he would get into, you know, pulling his shirt out in the front and dropping it, and he has a suit on, dropping his shirt off

the front, and then dropping his pants a little bit and moving his tie over. And he would start acting like Uncle Anton. And he was in character, and you go, unbelievable, I cannot believe he's doing this. And it was so funny. But those were, you know, occasionally we'd do a show, but not too often. Even to this day, we've seen *Phantom of the Opera*, but it was so loud I couldn't enjoy it. It was way too loud. Great show, great costumes, great show.

Interviewer: *Yeah, there's a lot of entertainment here. You can see practically anything you want.*

John Winlow: Anything you want. A lot of people don't realize that there are ticket booths out there, that if you go out the day of, you can get discounted tickets to get into the shows, too. Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 11

Interviewer: *Especially for locals probably. So tell me a little bit about your career. You graduated from high school, you were drafted into the military, you flew helicopters. How did you decide to, how'd you get to fly helicopters?*

John Winlow: Well. Finished up basic training and they put me right into infantry training. All right, the three hundred guys in infantry training, all but about fifteen of us went to Vietnam immediately after graduation. So we graduate somewhere around—we're going to graduate somewhere around in October, yeah, first of November. And they had already—a major had already come through basic training and asked if anybody was interested in flying. And I said yes and never got a response to it. So he came through again in infantry training and said, "Anybody interested in flying?" And there were five or six of us who raised our hands, and he looked at the cadre, the drill sergeants and the captain, and he said, "I want their names, and I want to meet with them tomorrow." And so they made the arrangements, we went in and they talked to us, and out of the six of us, we took the aptitude test, and three of us did real well on it. The other three didn't do very well, and then he said, "Okay, you three, you're going to start taking the physicals and things like that." Took all the physicals. One of the things that they found out about me was that I had the eyesight—I was 20 years old, 20 years old, had the eyesight of a 38 year old man. My eye reflexes, they put a little thing and they, you know, waiting for your eyes to cross. Well, he actually coached me, "Make them cross!" And when they did he said, "Yeah, you got it, you got it!" He said, "You're only going to fly ten years with the Army," he said, "but I'm not going to kick you out or fail you from flight school." And he was a flight surgeon, he was a major, and so he okayed me. I received orders and I had to report January 2, 1969, and begin flight school. And everybody asks, well, what did you know about a helicopter? And I said, nothing. I knew nothing about a helicopter, but in the aptitude test, you had fixed wing and rotary wing. I scored higher in the rotary wing than I did in the fixed wing. Well, what did you know about airplanes? Well, I knew a little bit about airplanes, not much. So we start flight school, and the first day they have us out on this big tarmac in a formation. And they have what's called tack officers now, and they are warrant officers that have, for the most part, been to Vietnam and back, and now they're going to train you, get you through flight school. And they're like drill sergeants, and they're mean and they're nasty. And they came out, and they started screaming and yelling, and they said something [like], "We have 235 people, and we don't have enough uniforms and flight gear for 235. We need five people to quit right now. So this is day one, this is less than an hour into the formation, and five people step out and leave, go home. The next day, we are in line to get our flight gear, and they're yelling and screaming at us and just like basic training all over again. And they said, we don't have enough flight helmets, we need to have ten guys quit. If we

don't have ten guys quit, we're going to run you until ten of you do quit. Just like that, ten guys step out of line, and said, that's it, I'm done, I don't like this. And so they leave. So we begin the process, and the process—the first four weeks, it's learning textbook things, becoming an officer, that kind of stuff. From that point on, it became aviation, and we started flying, and you had to solo within sixteen hours. And if you didn't solo in sixteen hours, you were done. And I was at fourteen-and-a-half and hadn't Henderson
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soloed. And it was a Friday. No, I was at thirteen, and I hadn't soloed yet, and it was a Friday, and they put me with a new instructor. His name was King, Mr. King. Mr. King was large. He was an American Indian, and he stood probably 6'3", 6'4", and weighed probably 225-240, I'm guessing. He was a big man. He's in the left seat of the helicopter, I'm in the right seat of the helicopter, and he said, all right, let's go out and try all your maneuvers. So we go out, we do all the maneuvers, come back, we land. And you always have this foot propped up on the doorway, these were bubble type helicopters, not the Bell 47-G, the [unclear: collinoids] 23. He has his foot propped up, and he said, well, I'm going to fail you. Now that put me at fourteen-and-a-half; that means I have an hour-and-a-half of flight time, and I'm out, I'm washed out. This is on Friday. He said, I want you to go home, I want you to study, I want you to think, I want you to concentrate. He said, I don't want you doing anything else, just do that. So I went home. So Monday morning, we went out, and he gave me an A check ride, the top check ride, and the next day, he soloed me. And I soloed right at 16 hours, and that was it. And then it was all the way through flight school until September 29, 1969, when I graduated. Figuring that the war was going to be over any day, they asked if I wanted to stay stateside, and I said, "Okay, I'll go stateside." And they said, "All right, we're going to send you back to Ft. Bragg." And I said, "Whoa, all right, let's go back to Ft. Bragg. Where is it?" And they said, "It's in North Carolina." "Okay," I said, "No chance of going to Ft. Ord, California, or Ft. Irwin, California, where I can go home on the weekend?" They said, "No." So they sent me back there, and it was kind of a blessing in disguise. The unit that they put me in had a lot of returning Vietnam helicopter pilots. And so there were several of us that were showing up with this unit, and the major who was in command of it, he said, you guys are going to do all the flying. Those guys are going to work with you. And that's the way it worked. I ended up flying, they got me transitioned into the OH-6, which everybody said, you know, that's a scout aircraft. I said, "I know, but they said I had to do it." But they transitioned me into the OH-6, and then I had—a lot of these pilots, very experienced pilots, they would take me out and show me all kinds of tricks, what the helicopter can do and what it can't do. The helicopter can fly backwards if it wants to, if you want it to. Those kinds of things. So, when I first report there in October, you have files that have to be turned in. You have your personnel file, your aviation flight file, your medical file, and your personnel file. All right, so I turn everything in, except nobody wants my personnel file. They tell me to go to Brigade, I go to Brigade, Brigade says we don't want it, take it to Division, I go to Division, Division says I don't want it, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, and finally I said, I'm just going to take it home. So I take it home, and I literally put it underneath my bed in my apartment. Well, now I've had two different roommates, guys coming and going, guys that I'd gone through flight school with, and they're getting orders to go to Vietnam. This is in February, and I'm not getting any orders, nothing's coming up. And so one day, I thought, you know, I'm going to call the Department of the Army and find out if I can, they're getting schools, they're getting like Chinook schools, they're getting OH-58 instructor pilot schools, you know, I mean these are good schools. Nice things to have in your record. So I thought, well, I'm going to call up and see if I can get

Chinook school. So I call up, and they say, "Where in the world are you?" I said, "What do you mean, where am I? Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. I've been here since Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow
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October." They said, "Are you getting paid?" I said, "I am." They said, "Are your medical records up to date?" I said, "They are." "Flight records up to date?" I said, "They are." "Where's your personnel records?" I said, "Under my bed." They said, "Grab those and get them over to division immediately. You're on your way to Vietnam, and you're going to have to be off post in about seven days." So I was dating a lady at the time and broke the news to her, and she said, well, her cousin's husband was a bird colonel and good friends with Hank Emerson, who was a general, and so they called Department of the Army and said, "All right, can we get him into a Chinook school? They said, "No, he's supposed to be in Vietnam in February!" Ooh, not good. So, I get over to Division, and I walk in, and there's a specialist, Spec. 4. And they said, "Oh, *the* Mr. Winlow." That's what—the warrant officer was called "Mr." in the Army, or in the military. And I said, I am Mr. Winlow; I don't know if I'm *the* Mr. Winlow. And so he's being kind of a smart aleck about the whole thing. So he goes over to the major, and he said, "Mr. Winlow's here." So the major comes up, and he said, "Where have you had these records?" I said, "Under my bed, in my apartment." He said, "That's what I've heard." He said, "Why didn't you bring them to us?" I said, "I did." And he said, "What happened?" I said, "Your specialist right there told me I couldn't drop them off here, that I had to take them to Brigade. I went back to Brigade, Brigade said no, I came back to the specialist, and he said, 'You have to take them back to brigade.'" I said, "He told me twice!" Well, they had a heated argument right there, and they said, "Get his records up to date!" So I had to sit down for about two hours while they updated my personnel records. So I came home and shipped off to Vietnam and got there in—May 27, 1970. And had flown over with a guy that we were in flight school together. His name was Don Putnam. And Don kept saying, "Where are you going, where do you think you're going, where are you going?" I said, "Well, because I have that OH-6 Cayuse on my records," I said, "I'm pretty sure I'm going to a cav unit." In cav units, the low bird would go look for the bad guys and wait till you take fire, and then call in the cobras and take care of the bad guys. Hopefully, you didn't get shot down. So he started laughing at me, and he said, "Don't you wish you had something else, like Chinook school?" I said, "Of course." So, we finally get our orders—we're there two days, and we finally get our orders. I go over and check, and they're sending me to a place called Quán Tre. And I said, "Where's Quán Tre?" And I'm looking all over, looking at the southern part of South Vietnam, looking all over. Where's Quán Tre? And I said—some guy walks up to me, and he said, "There it is." I went, "That's up by the DMZ!" He said, "Uh, yeah." I went, "Ooh." So I went back, and Don is sitting on the bunk, and he said, "Where are you going?" And I said, "Well, where I'm going, I can probably shower with the NVA." And he said, "Where are you going?" I said, "A place called Quán Tre." And he said, "Oh, I gotta go see where I'm going." So he goes over—Quán Tre is 13 miles south of the DMZ. He goes over, and he comes back—now, he was pale to begin with, he's a red head, he's pale, you know, white skin. He walks in, and he was so ghostly white, it was unbelievable. And I said, "Where are you going?" And he said, "Six miles north of you." He said, "I'm going to Đông Hải." He started laughing, and I said, "Really?" So as it turned out, we both ended up going up north. His unit ended up going south. He went—they moved him south after about two months or three months. But I got to hang around up in what they called northern I Corps. Vietnam was divided Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow
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into five Corps, and northern I Corps was Quán Tre and north. And everything was fine. I was the last one to carry on the family name. And so at the time, Nixon was in office, and Mom was a very good Republican and Dad, and they wrote the President, and the President, one of his advisors, somebody they'd sent down the chain, said, "We can have him out of there twenty-four hours." So I get a letter, and this is like, let's see, I get there May, I'd just transitioned into the jet ranger, they got me into another helicopter. And so I have all these qualifications going down, and I'm thinking, you know what, there's nothing going on. The war's over basically. And they said, we can have you out of there in twenty-four hours, in the letter. And I wrote back and I said, "You know what, I'm building time, I'm building 110 hours average a month. You need over 1,000 hours to get a job when you get back to the States, and I'll be fine." On January 28th, 1971, the South Vietnamese military invades Laos, and the home base is Khe Sanh, where the Marines had been in '68, and that's where our base was. Well, it got nasty. It got real nasty. We lost—we had eight aircraft; we lost all but one. So we had a turnover. And—no, we lost all eight aircraft, we lost eight aircraft, but we—there was one aircraft we did not lose, but we lost my aircraft and then the replacement aircraft for that aircraft. But we lost a couple of pilots and lost a door gunner—or a crew chief, and all of a sudden, I thought, you know, I'm not having—this isn't fun. This is getting nasty. And then one day, we were out flying, and came in, and I had to pick some people up off of a mountain and go out and pick up some other people off of a mountain and then go drop all of those people off at—it's kind of a halfway point between Quán Tre and Khe Sanh. I drop them off, I take on a full load of fuel, and then they call up and say, hey, we've got six more that have to go back out to that hilltop. So I load up with six, now I got a full load of fuel and everything, and when we had gone in to pick up the original six, my Peter pilot, the co-pilot—we always called them Peter pilot—Peter pilot was flying, and he had gone in downwind, which is a no-no, but we made it, and so I thought, all right, I'm flying it going back out. We're only ten, fifteen minutes away. So I thought, you know, I'd—over the intercom I said, "You went in downwind, so I'm just going to go in the other way." And he said, "Yeah, makes sense to me." Well, in about a little more than five hundred feet, the aircraft lost power, and we started to spin, and we're dropping, and I looked over at our vertical speed indicator, tells you up or down, and we are descending at over 3,500 feet per minute. We're dropping like a rock. The rotor, low warning RPM came on, so that's buzzing in my ears. I look at the engine RPM: we're supposed to be at 6,200; we were down to 5,400. So I had an armful of rock with ten people, including myself. And everybody said, the next part of this, everybody said, "How in the world did you come up with that idea?" And what I did is, it didn't matter how fast we were going to drop, I wanted to see where we were going to hit. So I cut power, bottomed the collective. Now the rate of descent really increased, because now we're like a missile coming out of the sky. But I could see where we were going to hit, and we were starting to gain a little bit of rotor RPM. Now, all of this happened within probably two seconds to three seconds, maybe more, maybe four, but not much more than that. So we're falling backwards, we come around, we hit on the pad instead of straight, we hit ninety degrees to the right. And we bounce, and we start to roll over. Now, the pad was probably a little bit wider than this room but not as long. So that gives you an idea. And on three sides, it's down into the river, and Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 15

on one side, it's straight up into the hilltop. We hit, we start to roll off into the river, and my Peter pilot and I both grabbed the cycling, pulled it over, we got it leveled off, we hit again, and that time when we

hit, I slammed the collective down. The skids went out but we were on terra firma. And, you know, I did a check, I said, "Everybody all right?" Well, the six grunts in back thought that was a normal landing. And they take off and they go off to their pub. And I said, "Where are they going?" He said, "Well, they think you're done." And I said, "Well, we are done; the helicopter's done. I can't fly it!" And so they said—so I called operations, and I said, I got some bad news. And they said, is everybody all right? And I said, yeah, everybody's all right. And they said, what happened? So I explained it to them. And they said, all right. So they came out and picked me up, because I was one of the most experienced pilots, and they didn't want to risk losing me on the hilltop. And then they picked up the aircraft and got it out, and they got the crew out, and got the aircraft out of there and took it down to what's called Red Beach, which is in Đà Nẵng, and they had to sling it, sling load down to get rid of it. We get the newer aircraft back. I didn't even get a chance to fly it. Two days later, they take a hit, and the crew chief, who was the crew chief with me, was killed. And it was just going from bad to worse. So, at that point, along in there, I looked at Russ Whipple, who flew with the scout unit, he was the Cobra pilot I flew with, and I said, "I'm done." And he said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "I'm not going to make it a career." And he said, "Oh, you're crazy." He said, "I've flown with you and you're a good pilot." And I said, "No, I'm done." And so I decided that was it. And I said, if I never touch the controls of an aircraft or a helicopter or airplane, it will be too soon. But I did. [laughter] Twenty-seven-and-a-half years later, I get a chance to fly Terrible Herbst's helicopter, and the head pilot there asked if I wanted to go with him. He had to take it down to Jean. I said, "Yeah, I'll go." And I don't know why I said I'd go. I get in the aircraft, and all of a sudden, I don't want to do it. And he said, "Get over it." And I said, "All right." And then I flew with him one other time, and then I said, "You know what, I think I want to get my private pilot's license and fly airplanes." I still loved flying, but I didn't want anybody with me, in case anything happened, because I know how close I was to killing ten of us, and I don't ever want that to happen again. So I went out and got my license. And Christi's dad was still alive, and he was a pilot also. And he said, you ever going to take her up? And I said, yeah, if she wants to go up, I'll take her up. So she said, yeah. Took her up, and I probably made the best landing I've ever made in my life in an airplane, and she didn't even know we were on the ground. And that was it. I said, "You know what, I just, I don't want to do it anymore." So I hung it up. So from there, I had to figure out what to do in life. I came back from Vietnam, went to work at the Spring Mountain Youth Camp. Before getting drafted, I had a year and a half over at Flagstaff as a psychology major. Went out there, and I liked it for a while, then all of a sudden we started getting some hardcore kids, and I mean, real hardcore, and I, you know what, I don't like this. By then, Christi and I had just gotten married, and she said, "What's the matter?" and I said, "I want to go back and get my degree." And she said, "Do it." And I said, "Okay." So I went back and got my degree at UNLV in business. All along the way, she said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I don't know, but I think I want to go into real estate." And so, I did, and didn't really like it. I liked real estate, I didn't like the sales end of it. And I was watching the appraisers Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 16

do their work, and I said, you know what? That's a lot more detailed than selling. He said, "Yeah, and they also get paid." And so I said, that's it, I'm going to become an appraiser. So I became—I went to work for the Department of Transportation for five and a half years, probably the freeway system that you ride on from downtown out to here, I probably appraised half of that. The other half I probably purchased from the owners. And then in 1983, I said—by then I was on the HUD panel, still working at the State and had a couple other banks that I was working for. And I told my wife, I said, I think I want to

go out on my own. And she said, do it. She's always been encouraging. I mean, seriously. So for twenty-seven years, I ran my own appraisal office, and then in 2010, there was too much interference coming in from government and everything else, and I said, "That's it. I'm done." I decided to go back into real estate and sell, and I just, nah, I don't like this. And my wife said, "What are you going to do?" And I said, "I want to become a tour director." And she said, "What's that?" And I said, "Well, do you remember when we went to Ireland and then to Italy?" And she said, "Yeah." I said, "The lady who sat up in the front of the bus, gave all the talks, and took care of everybody?" And she said, "Yeah?" And I said, "That's me." So last year I went to Colorado, took the class and came back, and went to San Diego and took another class, a certified interpretive guide class and came back, and was putting out resumes and the fifth resume that went out, I got a call from Jean Nowlin with Globus, one of the oldest and the largest companies in the world. And she said, "I don't have a tour director job open, but I do have a lead representative in Las Vegas." And I said, "What's that mean?" She said, "You're going to coordinate all the arrivals and take-offs of our buses and tours." "Oh, sounds interesting, let's talk." So I don't know what it's like to be out on the road, but I watch these guys come back after two weeks, and I said, "You know what, I'm too old to do that stuff." So I just meet them, you know, get them their keys for their rooms and talk to them and help the people out, whatever they need. And I did have five people working for me, and I'm down to two of them, and we're not sure how much work they're going to get. They've cut back drastically. But it's fun, I enjoy it, and I get all kinds of discounts for travel. That's where I am in my career. So I'm semi-retired.

Interviewer: *What do you think of the prospects for tours in Henderson in the future?*

John Winlow: I think they're good. That's one of the reasons that when I saw all the committee openings come out, I told Lou, I said, "I'm interested in getting involved with the tour company."

Interviewer: *I think it would be great if we had a tour of the plants, if we could get that going.*

John Winlow: The plants, well, the museum. You know, but there's several different types of tours that need to be addressed, and I did this at a meeting. I don't know if you were at the meeting or not. There are people who are going to come here to invest. Corporations. They want to know where their people are going to live. Where are they going to shop, where are they going to entertain, where are their children going to be entertained? So you have that aspect, social aspect of a tour, which can be done in less than half a day. But you have, somehow we don't have tours from Las Vegas coming to the plants. And I think that's the one Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 17

that I really want to see if we can find a market for. Right now, the tours are saying, oh, no, we have to go past Henderson to the Dam. Past Henderson and to the Lake.

Interviewer: *Back in the '90s they had a great little tour of Ocean Spray.*

John Winlow: They did?

Interviewer: *But they don't do it anymore.*

John Winlow: They do have the tour at Ethel M's. That's still there. They had a tour at the Kidd Marshmallow Factory also. Track 2, where we grew up—and I described it earlier—there were pockets in Track 2 of kids, families that had four, five, or six kids. And where they came from, where the families

came from, I was thinking about this, and I don't know if some of these families came out of Utah. You know, the LDS families that moved down here for job opportunities. I don't know. I never thought; I just now thought about it. But there was about, oh, eight or ten kids that ranged in age from seven to probably twelve, and thirteen maybe. And they always had something going on in the street. And they would play what they called cork ball. And they would take a cork out of a thermos and they would take tape and wrap it lengthwise and then crosswise. And they'd play it with a sawed-off broomstick. So somebody would go home, borrow mom's broomstick, and all of a sudden it would become a bat. And the game was played out in back. If you hit the ball, you had to run out to first base and you had to run back to home. It was hilarious watching it, because people don't realize what you can do with that cork, with it wrapped like that. You can make that thing do all kinds of—it's like, this is the beginning of whiffle ball. You know, all of the gyrations you can do with a whiffle ball, you can that with this cork. But they always had things like that going on out there, and you go out there, and it was entertaining just to sit on the sideline and watch, watch guys strike out, and they'd miss it by two feet, three feet, or whatever. But one day, the whole group is out in the desert, doing what kids do in the desert. They'd chase lizards, they'd look for snakes and hope they don't find them. But they were out there, and there were a little Rob and a big Rob, we'll say. And there was a big Dave. And big Dave said to little Rob, "Take off running." And he said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, I'm going to shoot this bow and arrow up in the air. And so you want to make sure you're as far away as you can [be] from it." And he said, "I don't want you shooting that thing at me." And he said, "Take off running." Little Rob says, "Uh oh, I better get going." So he takes off running. And big Dave takes that bow and arrow out, pulls it back and launches it. Now there's like eight of them out there, and they're all, they're looking at this thing and going, run, run, keep running. [laughter] And they could tell by the trajectory that it was going to come very close to little Rob. So they're yelling and screaming at him, and even big Dave is worried now, oh my goodness, what have I done here, oh, I could really hurt this kid if not kill him. And they watch the arrow go down, they watch little Rob take a nose dive, and he thinks, oh, my god, he hit him, and a couple of the other kids out there, saying, "You have killed him! You have killed him!" So they all went running out there, you know, like fifty yards or more, seventy-five yards. And they get out there, and little Rob is crying. And they said, "You all right? You all right?" And he said, "Yeah, I'm all right." He had worn roughouts that day. Do you Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 18

know what roughouts are? Okay, they are a rough leather boot, but the boot doesn't fit snug around your leg. It's about that wide, okay. And he was a little guy, so I'm sure he inherited the boots from his brother. So he didn't quite fit in them. And what had happened, is that arrow had gone down behind and between the heel and his boot and lodged. And that's what tripped him up, as he brought that leg down, it tripped him up, and that's when he took the nose dive. He said, "You're killing me! You're killing me!" He said, "We're not killing you. You fell down." He said, "What do you mean, I fell down? You shot me." Nah, we didn't shoot you quite yet. And then he said, "What are you talking about?" So they take his boot off, and they held the boot up, and here's the arrow sticking out of the boot. So, see, it was things like that, you never knew what was going to happen, never knew. You know, in the group, we had a kid that was a pyro. He wouldn't burn a building down, he wouldn't burn a car down, but he would make a Molotov cocktail and throw it out in the desert, just because he wanted to see what it looked like. You know, it was about the time when there was some of the World War II movies were out, and they were showing people throwing Molotov cocktails, and they were going boom. They don't go boom.

They just break and fire goes everywhere. We had one that was, let's see, we had a pyro, we had one that liked to mess around with demolition-type stuff, firecrackers, heavy-duty firecrackers, avalanche bombs, that kind of stuff. So it wasn't unusual to be standing there and all of sudden, you hear, "Run!" And you take off running and then, BOOM. But this whole neighborhood was really interesting. I remember Jim Campbell. He was, I think, the first one to get a motorized vehicle. We all had paper routes, not all, there were three or four of us that had paper routes. And he was the first one to get a motorized vehicle, and he's like thirteen years old, twelve or thirteen years old. And he gets the moped, and one day we're walking home from school—everybody walked to and from school, from junior high, elementary, because we all lived up in Track 2, it was just, you'd walk. We're walking home and he said, "Let's get the moped and take it out." I said, "You can't take it out. You're not supposed to take that out." He said, "No, let's take it out." I said, "No, we're not taking that out." And he said, "Don't worry about it; nobody will know anything." So we get there and it's on the back porch. It's locked up. He unlocks it, we put our books in the house. And at thirteen I was the same height I am now. He gets on the front, gets it fired up, and gets it running, and I climb on the back. Well, there's no place for me to put legs; it's not built for two. We come out of where he lives and we turn right, and we go up into this rocky area and sure enough, he dumps it. And I'm thinking, what in the world, what are you doing, why didn't you hit the boulder, why didn't you drive over here on the road? So we get into it, we have a few arguments about that, and I get up and I look down, and my sock is bloody. And I had loafers, and I pull the loafers off, and I pull the sock down, and I have a gash that's about one and a quarter inches long, and it's wide open, at the widest spot at about probably a half an inch. Stitches. And I'm going, "No, no!" He said, "Whatever you do, you don't tell anybody." And I said, "Jim, I'm bleeding!" And he said, "You don't tell anybody." "Okay, I won't." So I sneak home, sneak in the house, and my sock is ripped, there's blood all over it. And I thought, I gotta do something. I have to figure this out. And so, I don't know, mom went to the store or something, and I got out—or I washed the sock first, just to get the blood out of it. And then I got out needles and thread, and I'm telling this Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 19

story at Jim's wake, or whatever you want to call it. And this young lady looks over at me, and she goes [gasps in horror] and I said, "No, I'm not going to stitch myself! I'm going to stitch the sock!" And she went [sigh of relief] and she's like fourteen or fifteen years old. And so I stitched it back and put it in the laundry, and mom never noticed it. That's how good a job I did. But now I have a problem. I've got a hole in my foot. So about three or four days later, it's not healing. The bleeding has subsided; it hasn't scabbed over. I have a slice in my foot. So I'm in PE, and that's when—we were in 7th grade, that's when the 7th graders and the 9th graders were in PE together. And there was a 9th grader in there, and I looked at him and I thought—he looked at me and he said, "How'd you get that cut?" "It's a long story." And he said, "You need to have that looked at." He said, "How long have you had it? And I said, "Oh, about a week, ten days." And he said, "It's not healing?" I said, "No." He said, "You know what? I've had Health [class]. You might have cancer!" And so now I'm, I can't talk about the sock to my mom, I can't talk about my foot. Now I'm thinking that, you know, I've got cancer. So, somehow or some way, it healed itself. It took a while, long time for it to heal. But even to this day, when I take a shower, I can look at my left ankle, and there it is, the scar. But it was things like that that happened. You never, you never knew. We weren't trying to be mischievous, we weren't trying to hurt either one of us, it just—we were doing something stupid and it happened. That's the way that usually works out.

Interviewer: *Rick Watson likes to ask people about the hermit. Did you ever meet the hermit?*

John Winlow: The one up at Railroad Pass or the one out at Lake Las Vegas?

Interviewer: *There were two?*

John Winlow: Yeah.

Interviewer: *Oh, wow. Well, tell me about both of them.*

John Winlow: I didn't meet either one. I just know that there's a story that, where Lake Las Vegas is built right now, as you're driving in.

Interviewer: *I think that's Rick Watson's hermit.*

John Winlow: Okay, on the right hand side, there was supposed to be some caves down there, and we used to go down there shooting. There was Larry, and Dick, and Jim and myself, and maybe one of the Hildebrands, Russ Hildebrand. But we all had 22s, and our parents would not allow us to take those guns out of the house until we took an NRA class. Well, at the farthest end of Victory Village, toward Lake Mead, was some sort of an office, and they had an NRA class going, National Rifle Association. And so, all of our parents said, you get signed up for it, and then we'll talk about whether you can take those out. And we were probably twelve years old at the time. So we went down, and we took the class, and here was five of us walking down the road, with the apartments on each side of the main road, and we're all, all of our guns are in a case. But we're carrying gun cases, and not one person, no policeman, no one ever came by and said, "What are you guys doing?" But we would walk down every Saturday morning for, it Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 20

was like six weeks, eight weeks, and we took the class. Well, the instructor, he liked to go down to that area and set up targets and shoot and things like that. But I've heard all this, I've heard stories, not all the stories, probably, but I've heard stories of people going down there and seeing him, and then all of a sudden he's not there, and you go, "What?" And I said, "No!" But there was supposed to be another one that lived up at Railroad Pass. And as you're going up, off of the freeway onto Boulder Highway, and you're climbing the pass, you cross over the railroad tracks, and on the right hand side, there's a mountain there. I think they're doing some excavation now, they're doing some sort of work up there. But up in that area was a lot of junk, stuff, barrels and cars, and people talk about a hermit that lived up there also.

Interviewer: *Well, we'll have to find out some more about that one, too. That's interesting.*

John Winlow: Yeah, I don't know any—I just know that people talked about those things. But I never saw any.

Interviewer: *Did you ever see a rattlesnake in the desert?*

John Winlow: Not around Henderson. Out at Lake Mead I did. There are a lot of them out around Lake Mead. But around Henderson, no, never did, never heard one. And our playground was Center Street, Boulder Highway, looking toward Basic High School. There was nothing out there, all the way to the mountains, all the way to the Railroad Pass, there was nothing in that area whatsoever. That was our

playground. And you, you know, different parts of town would go out there and build forts. You know, you can't build a fort in our playground. Never wanted to get caught tearing somebody's fort down. But no, I don't recall ever seeing any snakes. And everybody probably thinks that's strange, but I don't recall ever seeing a snake. Tarantulas everywhere. You know, and they're harmless, they won't, everybody thinks, oh they're terrible. No, they won't bother you. Lizards everywhere, horny toads everywhere. But I don't recall seeing rattlesnakes or sidewinders, either one.

Interviewer: *How about that. You know, Henderson's probably changed a lot over the years, since you were a kid. What are some of the biggest changes you've noticed?*

John Winlow: Well, aside from the population explosion and the residential, the freeway system that went through. You know, I can remember coming off of, you have to keep in mind that Lake Mead and where that transitions into the 215, that was all Lake Mead, all the way to I15. That was all Lake Mead. Off of that, you had a right hand turn that was Gibson, and Gibson would take you to the plant. But out there, on that roadway, somebody, and I don't know who, and I really don't, had marked off a quarter mile. So, at the earliest time I could remember, people were drag racing out there. And I, it would get pretty serious. I would go out there later on in life when I had a car, and I would drag race out there. But there was one story that I heard, and everybody confirmed it. Bunch of the older guys went out there. I was probably 16, 17. Bunch of the older guys had snuck out of town, and they all had cars that they raced. They'd go up to St. George and race, Cedar City and race, anywhere they could go to race. And they went out there, and they started lining cars up and pretty soon people driving in from California
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started pulling over, just to watch the race. And I said, well, aren't you worried about the Highway Patrol, and aren't you worried, you know, about the Metro? They were out, the police department? They said, no. I said, why? They said, because we have a police officer that sits up on the hill and monitors the radios. And if he hears anything, then he flashes his lights and turns on the bubbles, and we all scatter. And I said, oh, OK. One day they were out there, and do you know what a rail is? OK, dragster. OK, they had this, it wasn't a big dragster, anyhow, they had it out there, it's a single-seater and wire wheels up front, and an engine and just big wheel tires in the back. So he's out there and he's saying, I'm not going to fire it up unless somebody comes by and somebody wants to race that has something decent. Well, in from California comes these two guys, and they have this Ford Thunderbolt, probably a '65, '64 Thunderbolt. Big 427. And they see all the crowd, and they see all the hot cars out there, and so they start to prove something, too, and they finally get to the starting line, and they said, what's going on? They said, aw, we're just doing some grudge racing. And they said, really, what do you have out here? And they said, all kinds of stuff, why, are you interested? And they said, well, I don't see anything that I can't beat. And they said, what about the dragster? Oh, yeah, let's do it. So they turn the car around, they fire the dragster up, they bring in, somebody starts them, the Thunderbolt goes down the quarter mile and blows the engine. Everybody scatters, everybody just leaves, because you're not going to be out there and call, you can't call. You know, somebody said, you know, I'll go back to Henderson and call, we didn't have cell phones then. And so they had to go back to Henderson and call for a tow truck for this poor kid coming in from California, with this nice, new big Ford Thunderbolt, and he blows the engine on it racing a dragster. So, you know, it was things like that, that made it fun

growing up in small town USA. I mean, it was small town. We, it was fun, it was fun. There were times, you know, that it wasn't fun, but for the most part, it was fun.

Interviewer: *Did you win some of the races?*

John Winlow: I did. By then, when I was racing, I had a '67 Camaro. And I wish I had the car today. It was a hot little car, and I wanted to make it hotter, and that's when I got drafted, and told mom and dad, go ahead and trade it in on your car, whatever you want to do. You know, and I came back from Vietnam and driving down Boulder Highway one day, and I saw it on a car lot. And I don't know why I didn't even think to go over and say, how much? Didn't do it. Let it sit there. Today it would be worth a small fortune.

Interviewer: *Probably, yeah. How about that?*

John Winlow: Shoulda, woulda coulda.

Interviewer: *Yeah, yeah. What do you enjoy most about having lived in Henderson?*

John Winlow: Oh, the camaraderie. The knowing people. I have friends, both male, female, that we talk to often. You know, enough to stay in touch. A couple, we text a lot. When Jim Campbell was alive, we texted or emailed each other five or six times a week, and he was living Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 22

then up in Earthside (?). And it, but I have an old girlfriend that I still text. Christie knows, my wife. But we're just friends, but we grew up together.

Interviewer: *A lot of people stayed here.*

John Winlow: They did.

Interviewer: *Which is amazing.*

John Winlow: They did. A lot didn't. There's a lot that.

Interviewer: *Or maybe it's not amazing. I mean, I come from a place where a lot of people moved away, and so we're kind of scattered, my generation is kind of scattered across the United States.*

John Winlow: Was it a big town or a small town?

Interviewer: *It was bigger, it was bigger.*

John Winlow: I, when I was drafted, I spent time up in northern California, Fort Ord. Then I went down to Texas. And then from Texas to Alabama, Alabama to North Carolina. And before I went over to Vietnam. And in each one of those moves, I'd loved it, I loved the place, but I said I'd never want to live there. OK, the south, everything rolls up at 8:00, it's done. Entertainment, when I was stationed at Fort Rucker, Jimmy Day, who's a good friend of mine and lives in Hawaii, we just saw him last month, he and his wife. He and I would go over to another classmate's house, we were invited over every weekend, we went over often, but not every weekend. And his brother would come over, lived someplace else, I don't even know where he lived. But it was in Fairhope, Alabama, and it was right on Mobile Bay. He came

over one night, and he said, what are you doing? And I said, I don't know, not doing anything. He said, let's go down to the pier. I said, all right, let's go, thinking, big party down at the pier. Get down to the pier, and there's just like 10-15 people, and they're just standing there looking at the water. And I said, this is it? And he said, yeah. And that, it took me awhile to understand that that is their way of life, and they don't care. They like it, they love it. One of the things that I had to learn their terminology. For instance, that night, we're at the pier, and at that time, I smoked. And we're at the pier, and John's brother looks at me and said, can I have one of your ready-rolls? Well, I had no idea what he was talking about. I said, what's a ready-roll? What, are you stupid? He said, one of your cigarettes, it's already rolled.

Interviewer: *Right, yeah.*

John Winlow: I'd never heard that term before. I said, oh, sure. But it was things like that. So, but I didn't like the fact that everything closed down. You know, if you wanted to grab a pack of cigarettes, a six pack of beer, or whatever, loaf of bread, you had to do it before 9:00 at night. Nothing was open, in any place in the south that I can remember. I didn't like that. I had a hard time with that. Then I, you know, I still had a lot of friends living here when I came back from Vietnam. And they had made their home here, they were doing well. And I, you know what, I'm Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 23

just going to stick around. I had opportunities. While in Vietnam, I was approached to go to Israel and work for the company. I'd give up nothing in the Army, but I would go over there and become kind of an instructor in aviation tactics. I told the major, I said, I want just a couple of days to think about it, I said, you know, that's a big move. And he said, fine. Couple of days later, I ran into him, and he came up, he was with the 101st Airborne, he came up to Quantree (?) and came into the club. He said, what did you decide? I said, let's do it, let's go. And he said, OK, I'll get in touch with the people, let you know. The next day he went out, was shot down, they brought his body back about three years ago, four years ago. So I did have opportunities to do other thing. Petroleum helicopters wanted me to come down to the Gulf and fly out onto the oil rigs. And I just, at that point, I was done flying, it was over. But the work in Israel, I think, would have been very interesting. You know, it was great pay, for the time, for 1971, it was fantastic pay. But I, you know, I still had mom and dad here, and I just, you know, they were older, like I said, dad was 56 when I was born. So when I got back from Vietnam, he was 79. And I, you know what, just wait it out, see what happens. Christie and I got married in 1973, and I knew when we got married, we weren't going anywhere because of her parents, my parents, our families. And we were starting to bring kids along now, grandkids. But I've always enjoyed living in southern Nevada, I've always enjoyed it.

Interviewer: *It's a great place to live.*

John Winlow: I think it is. Henderson, we are in the process of taking care of the work around our house, and then we're going to sell and move back to Henderson. It has a great reputation, the growth on it was handled properly, the infrastructure is unbelievable. If you go, like you go into Anthem and places like that, it's beautiful. You almost lose track of the fact that you're in the desert. I'm pretty impressed. We were going to move to, whatever it is, the old Green Valley area. And it just didn't work out, so we

didn't move. Our family, our daughter and son and their families live here now in Henderson. So it's easier for us to be with the grandkids, let's take a look at it.

Interviewer: *It's such a convenient place to live. You talk about the infrastructure. You can be anywhere inside of ten minutes. Pretty much. Ten or fifteen minutes.*

John Winlow: You can. And it's almost like you're going to a different place. You know, you go from Heritage complex off of Boulder Highway, what is it, I'm trying to think of the cross street there. But then you look at the Jen, Jenette (?). They're almost two different complexes if you look at them, but they serve the same needs. They do everything the same. You know, it's, the Henderson City Council, I think, handled the BLM property real well. I think they did a very good job, I think they kept it close, they didn't get caught up in, I think Lou made a comment about it the other day that the City of Las Vegas also has the County of Clark. You have two entities there. Even though they're called Las Vegas. But you have two political entities that are always vying for the money or the OK to do something, whereas City of Henderson, they just put it together and say OK, yes or no? If it's no, it's no, if it's yes, let's move.
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Interviewer: *What do you think about the future of Henderson, how do you see it growing in the future?*

John Winlow: I don't know how much more it can grow, physically.

Interviewer: *Or develop?*

John Winlow: Well, it's, there's a lot, there's not a whole lot of land unless you start climbing up that mountain ridge, that one developer did. Went up the mountain and put in the terraced lots. And if you ever have a chance to go up there, do it, take a tour of that. And if we should be doing tours, that would be a tour. It is fabulous, how they did it. I was lucky enough to go up there with, do you know who Bob Campbell is? OK. Bob Campbell, I think he was the city manager way back in the 70s.

Interviewer: *Oh, OK.*

John Winlow: But he is more like a consultant, or was like a consultant, and he worked with the group that put that in. And he and Hal were very good friends. So he asked one day if I would like to go up there and take a tour, and I went up there, and oh, my goodness. And he explained how they did everything. Nothing, no dirt was brought in, nothing. They just moved that mountain into the position, the shape they wanted. It's amazing. It's amazing story. But, aside from that, I don't know where they're going to get land. They can go up the mountain, they can go a little bit on the back side of the mountain. Mission Hills.

Interviewer: *Seems like there's some opportunities for development right in Henderson central.*

John Winlow: Well, you're talking about downtown Henderson, the old downtown?

Interviewer: *Yeah, there seem to be a lot of places to develop.*

John Winlow: Well, what's holding that up, that's been that way for years. I did some appraisal work in there. It wasn't for the City of Henderson, I don't think, think it was for, private entities. And there's something that is blocking the way for development. We just had, I say we, the City of Henderson just

had the one bar and grill that was on the corner of maybe, not Pacific, maybe Basic and Water Street, just fold.

Interviewer: *Not enough traffic.*

John Winlow: So something has to be brought in.

Interviewer: *An anchor.*

John Winlow: Or anchors. And I'm not sure exactly what it is. I love it when they do the old cars downtown. I have so much fun, I go out there, and I, you know. I'm a food wag and junkie, you know, hot dogs, whatever, you know, let me have it. But let me get a look at those cars. I know they have shows over at City Hall in the little amphitheater. But I, you know, that isn't my expertise, and I don't know. But they have to do something, they're going to have to do it in Henderson Oral History Project:
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order to allow that to grow, grow out and redevelop and come in with new buildings and new ideas. I had thought at one time in my days of real estate, that the corner of Water Street and Lake Mead, the only vacant corner now, would have been a great a great office and restaurant complex. Offices down below and restaurants on the second and third level. Because if you go stand there, it's across from St. Rose and diagonally from the library, the other library. If you stand there and you look out, you're looking at the Valley. And I think a restaurant up on top of that would be just fantastic. Something happened, people started it, they tore down some buildings, and then that was it. So I don't know what happened, I don't know if they're not getting the money, the improvement money to do those things. Of course, that was a bad time in real estate, too.

Interviewer: *That happened during the downturn.*

John Winlow: So, I don't know if, eventually I think the old Townsite complexes, the houses, are going to have to go to the wayside. They have to. They were built to get through the War, and that was it. They've been there since 1944, some of them, 1940 on some of them. With no renovations. You can drive up and down some of those streets and you can say, that house has not been touched.

Interviewer: *I thought most of them had been renovated maybe.*

John Winlow: I don't think so.

Interviewer: *Wow.*

John Winlow: I don't think so.

Interviewer: *But they were built really well to still be standing at this point, or do you think.*

John Winlow: Well, they actually were not built on foundations. People don't realize that. In order to get an FHA loan, you have to go in and put a perimeter foundation on that thing. That was one of our jobs as HUD appraisers, we had to go in and ask them to pull stuff away, so we could check and see if they had a foundation under there. If they didn't have it, then, in order for you to get the loan, you have to put it in. And there were companies at that time that were doing it. But I, you know, they're not well insulated, most of them don't have drywall in them. They have like a paper board.

Interviewer: *What are the walls made out of? Because it was meant to be temporary housing, or are they semesto (?), are they like the semesto houses that some of them were built in World War II?*

John Winlow: I don't think so. The outsides are shiplap (?) wood. The insides are, I don't even know how to describe. It's more like a very thin sheet of, not even particle board, not even wall board, but it's a very thin sheet. You could almost go up and press on them. Yeah, they're not. Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 26

But my point is, if you're going to redevelop downtown, you're going to have to start doing that. You're going to have to get an investor to come in and put in some decent housing, you know. Not senior citizen housing, and I don't mean that that's not decent. But I mean, people, if you go to the Galleria. They have town houses to the north side of that. And if you go to, what's the other one? Green Valley Ranch. There's town houses built in, incorporated in with the District.

Interviewer: *A lot, and more coming.*

John Winlow: Yeah. You know, there are people now who want to live that lifestyle. You know, they're not, they're like semi-retired. You know, and there's enough people around there, they don't have to worry about their house getting broken into. That kind of thing. I think somebody will come along and create the idea, somebody will do it. It's just a matter of time.

Interviewer: *And the market's improving, so.*

John Winlow: Not according to the latest statistics I got. Someday I'll shoot that over to you.

Interviewer: *All right, yeah, I'd like to see that.*

John Winlow: I still get, people that I worked with when I was selling real estate, I still get, from title companies, their data. And so I just kind of follow that.

Interviewer: *Well, is there anything else you'd like to share about Henderson that we haven't talked about yet?*

John Winlow: Well, I think the only thing I would like to say is there have been some tremendous leaders in this community. I talked about Hal, and I talked about Jim's father. Jim himself, Father Seam (?). A lot of people don't know that much about Father Seam and what he contributed to this community. But there are other people that, you know, like I said, the Council and Andy right now, Andy Hafen, Mayor Hafen. Sure, you hear some negative stuff going on, but that's politics, you always do. And don't get me wrong, I'm not a Democrat, so to be saying anything good about Andy and the group. But I think the leadership going back to probably even Mayor Bill Byrne (?), when he and his wife Julie had the little candy store downtown. I mean, it's always been interesting. Lorna Kesterson (?), it's always been an interesting group of people. Lulu (?) Porter, there's another great example of a leader in this community.

Interviewer: *They all had a personal investment in the community.*

John Winlow: Always, always, always. You know, Christie's dad, Hal, he had the Henderson lumber yard down on Boulder Highway that's now the pool place, where they have the fiberglass pools. They were all

vested, they were all vested, it was interesting. Um, Worser (?), Henderson Oral History Project: John Winlow Page 27

Al Worser, Al and Jean, Al was a plant manager, down at one of the plants at BMI. He was hilarious. He was one of the funniest guys to be around, 6', I don't know, 6'6", had this huge deep voice. But he was invested. Phil Taylor's parents, dad ran BMI. He was invested. They were good people; they were strong leaders and as long as we have that in Henderson, here we go, saying "we" again. As long as Henderson has that, I don't think they'll be any problems.

Interviewer: *Well, we are Henderson.*

John Winlow: Well, I was born and raised here. I don't really call Henderson my home right now. That's going to change in the next year or so, but I never thought it would ever happen. And I've looked back over the years, and I said, "Somebody knows what they're doing". Hank Greenspun, "wheeler-dealer", but he got that land in Green Valley and got it going.

Interviewer: *It's just amazing. I mean, I think it's unprecedented anywhere.*

John Winlow: He was a "wheeler-dealer".

Interviewer: *Yeah. It's just an explosion. The town just exploded into that.*

John Winlow: Well, I think it helps that we're fairly close to California, so that the retirees; that was probably the biggest market between 03 and 08, those people. And, of course they got hit the hardest. A lot of those were cash buyers, that came in and bought cash. They're not going anywhere, they're gonna wait and see if the market ever recovers, which it will. It will recover

Interviewer: *It'll be a little slow though.*

John Winlow: It'll be cautious, but it'll happen. You know, I didn't think we'd ever recover with our house, and we've recovered.

Interviewer: *That's good*

John Winlow: Anyhow...

Interviewer: *Well, John thanks for talking with me today.*

John Winlow: I think I've just ran out of voice.

Interviewer: *[laughter] That's all right. Thanks a lot.*