

Henderson Libraries

Southwest Oral History Association Mini Grant Project

Mary Monahan

George

**Oral History
Of
Mary Monahan George**

a contributor to the Henderson Oral History Project

**conducted by Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm, Fredric Watson, and
Mary's granddaughter, Iyanna George**

**Southwest Oral History Association Grant and the Henderson
Historical Society**

June 10, 2015

Henderson, Nevada

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Today is June 10, 2015. We're at the Paseo Verde Branch of Henderson District Public Libraries in Henderson, Nevada. My name is Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm and I'm with Rick Watson and his sister, Shelley Aguiar, of the Henderson Historical Society, interviewing Mary Monahan George, who is also from the Henderson Historical Society, as part of the Henderson Oral History Project at Henderson Libraries and part of the Southwest Oral History Association Grant that was won by the Henderson Historical Society this Spring. And we also are delighted to have Lyanna George, Mary's granddaughter, with us who's on a break from school. So welcome, Lyanna, and thank you so much for joining us, Mary.*

Mary Monahan George: Thank you.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Mary, could you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what your parents did for a living?*

Mary Monahan George: I was born in Henderson. My parents moved here in 1947 because my dad worked for the State and he was sent down here to work on the Charleston Underpass. He was an engineer. And there was no housing in Las Vegas so they moved to Victory Village area and we lived there...well, my brothers, I have two older brothers, and my parents and my brothers lived in Victory Village. And in 1949 when I was born my mother had gone to work part-time at St. Rose Hospital. And they had a house over on Nevada Way that the hospital owned and they let our family live there. We rented it from them. So when I was born we lived on Nevada Way which was just across the street from St. Rose Hospital.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That was a little bit better than Victory Village, right?*

Mary Monahan George: Oh, yeah. [Chuckling]

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *How was it different from Victory Village? Do you recall very much about Victory Village?*

Mary Monahan George: Oh, not much because I never lived there.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *You didn't actually live there.*

Mary Monahan George: I was born, but I had friends that had lived over there once I got into St. Peter's School and they were more like little kind of apartments basically, where as, you know, on Nevada Way it was a house and we had a yard and, you know, it was a lot nicer.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah, a lot more room.*

Mary Monahan George: It was like four or five complexes all hooked together in Victory Village.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What was Henderson like back in those days when you were growing up?*

Mary Monahan George: It was just really a little small town where, I feel like, we all knew each other and, you know, everybody... it was, it was nice. It was a nice little town where you could go outside and play with everybody. You weren't...you know, you didn't have to worry about each other. Everybody looked out for each other.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Were there lots of kids on your street?*

Mary Monahan George: There were a lot of kids...well, we ended up moving down to Church Street and there were a lot of kids on Church Street. There were a lot of kids on Nevada Way area too but I was pretty small then. But my, I know my brothers always had friends around. They were playing out in the alleys and that.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What schools did you attend?*

Mary Monahan George: I attended St. Peter's Catholic School. It was on Boulder Highway. And then I went to Basic High School.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Okay, so what was St. Peter's like?*

Mary Monahan George: St. Peter's was...it was a good school. I enjoyed it. I met a lot of friends there, well, like Watsons and, you know, we all...it was a family, it was a family and my family dog went to school. [Laughing]. He was always there with us.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Tell me about the dog a little bit.*

Mary Monahan George: Well, the dog was just, it was a Golden or Irish Setter and he came to school every day with my brothers and he was in every school picture and had his own set of class pictures. You know, it was just a, it was a, it was a good time and, you know, a good place to be.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What were the nuns like?*

Mary Monahan George: They were...nuns...they were, they were...[Chuckling]

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Were they tough?*

Mary Monahan George: They were tough. They...I would, I would never say they were mean, at least not to me. I never had a problem. But you respected them and you did what you were told. You didn't...you know, I can see the difference after working in the school district as I got older, the different amount of respect that we had as kids for teachers and nuns than to what kids nowadays have and the way it's done.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What, what do you think the reason is for that? What's the difference?*

Mary Monahan George: You know, I think a lot of it is just parents' attitude. You know. I know like when I was in school if we got in trouble in school we knew we were in trouble when we

got home too. Now I think a lot of it is that the child goes home and says something happened at school, the parent's on the phone to the school wondering why their child was treated this way or what they were going to do about it, and I think we've kind of changed the style of where the blame should be or how it should be handled.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Mmhmm, mmhmm. And I guess you couldn't get away with much in a town like Henderson.*

Mary Monahan George: Oh no. Not at all.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Did you ever get in trouble and your parents found out about it later?*

Mary Monahan George: Not really. I didn't...not that I can remember. I must have kept it pretty well hidden because I don't remember them ever finding out anything.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Mmhmm, mmhmm. Yeah. Well that's good. You were a good kid.*

Mary Monahan George: Yeah, pretty good. [Laughing] Had my moments.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What was Basic like?*

Mary Monahan George: Basic was a whole different world when I got there after being in St. Peter's. Just, I think it was just the way you had the...the respect we had at St. Peter's wasn't the way we had to treat the teachers and that. It wasn't the same once I got to Basic. But it was...I enjoyed Basic. I really did. It was a good school and like now half the teachers I had at Basic now have schools named after them here in Henderson.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah, you had some great teachers at Basic, especially at that time.*

Mary Monahan George: Oh, really good teachers.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Do you recall any of the teachers that were, like, your favorites? The classes that you enjoyed the most?*

Mary Monahan George: I really enjoyed Government which is, we had, I can't think of his name now, Paul Horne?

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Mmhmm.*

Mary Monahan George: And, and I had Eileen Ravlin, who, you know...in English we had John Beatty who now has a school named after him. And our principal was John Dooley and then we had Estes McDoniel, who both have school's named after them.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah. Yeah.*

Mary Monahan George: There were some really good teachers. And again, it was a small enough town then that the teachers knew your families. So, you know, you basically knew how to behave because everybody knew each other.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah, that's right. And the parents, did they take an active interest in school activities?*

Mary Monahan George: Yes, yes, they did.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What part did they play and the parents, how did they get involved?*

Mary Monahan George: Well, in high school, I mean they were at most of the sporting events and that and they, they kept in touch with the teachers and came to everything. St. Peter's, of course, parents were involved with the church itself and the Altar Society and taking care of everything. So they, they stayed real involved.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That's neat. What activities were you involved in in high school?*

Mary Monahan George: Myself?

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah.*

Mary Monahan George: I didn't do a whole lot of the outside activities. I was...I'm pushing her [points to Lyanna] now to do that because I missed out. But, I just...I mean I, you know, I belonged to different clubs like, you know, Spanish Club and things like that, but as for sports and that I didn't...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Did you learn to speak Spanish?*

Mary Monahan George: Very little. I should have...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Poquito, huh?*

Mary Monahan George: In fact, Marlin Walker was my Spanish teacher. But my grandmother is from Spain. In fact, both my grandmother and grandfather on my mother's side were from Spain and they spoke Spanish all the time. And I probably should have learned it a little bit better.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Did you understand them while you were growing up? Even if you couldn't speak it did you could understand it?*

Mary Monahan George: A little bit of it. Like, my grandmother, every time she would write she would write in Spanish because it was easier for her to write in Spanish than it was English. And I would read, I would always take it down to Mrs. Medina and have her translate it for me. [Chuckling]

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That's great. That's a great way to learn, too.*

Mary Monahan George: She'd translate all her letters for me.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Oh, that's very kind. That's neat. I like how in Henderson everybody's always looking out for each other and pitching in, lending a hand and taking care of each other, and taking care of the kids when they can. That sort of thing. Taking an interest in each other's wellbeing.*

Mary Monahan George: They did. It was, it was a good atmosphere and a good place, I think, for kids to be raised.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Sounds like it. Did you have any friends growing up that lived at Carver Park that were African American?*

Mary Monahan George: No, not that I...no, I did not.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *There may not have been very many.*

Mary Monahan George: I don't think there were.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Not while you were in school. Yeah.*

Mary Monahan George: I don't believe there were. But I know the African Americans that went to St. Peter's I believe most of them came from the Las Vegas area. I don't think...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *They came from, what, West Las Vegas to go to St. Peter's? That is remarkable. Well, it was a great church. A great priest.*

Mary Monahan George: Yes, it was a, you know...but I, I don't...I mean I know Rick and Shelley both lived in...well, you didn't [points at Shelley], did you, live in Carver Park but Rick lived in Carver Park for a while but I don't remember a lot of African Americans.

Fredric Watson: *Just a few families when we lived there and that was, of course, that was after the war. We didn't get there until 1946, but I can only remember just a few families that were living there. Who were, what was some of the, the black families, who' kids attended St. Peter's?*

Mary Monahan George: I'm trying, it started with a W.

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Winder.*

Mary Monahan George: Winder.

Michele Watson Aguiar: *The Winder family.*

Mary Monahan George: The Winder family, the one that I remember. Was it John Winder, I think he was quite an athlete.

Fredric Watson: *John and Marge.*

Michele Watson Aguiar: The Travis', Elaine Travis and her brother; Jackie Hamilton, Donald Marion. They all came from the West side and I think it was because there was only a few Catholic Schools in Las Vegas and they were full. The parents felt they'd get a better education at St. Pete's. I always assumed that they were Catholic but now that I look back I think it wasn't a religious thing as much as an educational thing. There was no freeway and they would drive all the way from the West side to get them there by 9 o'clock in the morning and then have to come back and pick them up at 3 o'clock.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *It was an enormous commute back then.*

Mary Monahan George: It was.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *How far do you think, how long a trip was that do you think, to go all that way to Las Vegas?*

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Don't you think 45 minutes...*

Mary Monahan George: Probably a good 45 minutes.

Michele Watson Aguiar: *At least, oh yeah. Because they had to go all the way through downtown and then up the, up the high...straight up the highway.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: How did they get there? Did they have their own transportation?

Michele Watson Aguiar: *The Winders owned, the Winders owned a couple of bars, I think, over on the West side.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: Okay, okay.

Michele Watson Aguiar: *And I'm not sure about the other families. They were...I think they were just really dedicated to the kids getting a good education.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: That's really great. The priest at that time was Father Moran, right?

Mary Monahan George: Yes.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What are some of your memories of him?*

Mary Monahan George: He was a character. [Chuckling] In fact he was one of the priests that married me when I got married.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *One?*

Mary Monahan George: Well, I had three. I wanted to make sure it was done right. [Laughter]

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *You had three? How did that work? Tell me about that.*

Mary Monahan George: Well, at the time, Father Cavillia was the priest at the parish but Father Smith and Monsignor Moran were both family friends and they were coming to the wedding so they all participated in it too, so all three of them were...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That's really wonderful.*

Mary Monahan George: It was...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *I didn't know that was allowed. If possible, it's cool.*

Mary Monahan George: I had all three of them up there. It was on St. Patrick's Day so, of course, Monsignor Moran and Father Smith had to do their little practical jokes on each other. They were both supposed to do readings and Father Smith took Father Moran's glasses or something so he couldn't read because he couldn't find his glasses. So it was, it was a fun wedding.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Sounds like it. That's great. What are some of your other memories about the Church growing up?*

Mary Monahan George: Well, belonged to the choir and we'd sing every Sunday at 10 o'clock Mass and all the holidays and, you know, it was...singing at an event. Henderson itself was just a really good community and the Church was part of it. You know, a lot of good memories of the people.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What about that grotto they used to have? That was really neat.*

Mary Monahan George: That was, that was beautiful. It was...they had...they always had the May crowning there. We would, you know...they crowned the statue of the Blessed Mother and a lot of activities were held out there.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *And I heard that I think Father Moran had a vineyard in the back of the grotto.*

Michele Watson Aguiar: *That was Father Cavillia who had the vineyard.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *And he made his own wine? Is that true?*

Mary Monahan George: Did he make his own wine?

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Yeah, just for...just for, you know, it wasn't used for Mass. It was just kind of a hobby. And it wasn't very good. [Laughing]*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Okay.*

Fredric Watson: *Father Cavillia was from the northern part of the state.*

Mary Monahan George: Father Cavillia.

Fredric Watson: *And his, his family, that was the family tradition to share and make wine. In a cooler climate you make a better grade of wine. Father Cavillia's wine was kinda harsh. Like Hellen stir, the wine in Hellen stir, made at the old ranch in Vegas. It's better than nothing, but just.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Now, Iyanna, you're...are...did you grow up in Henderson?*

Iyanna George: Yeah.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Okay, so you're going to Basic right now, right?*

Iyanna George: I'm going to Foothill.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Oh, Foothill, okay. So did you ever wonder what it was like, like what was the difference in high school between now and back in the old days?*

Iyanna George: Yes.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What kinds of questions do you have about that?*

Iyanna George: Just the teaching styles between because I know that when I talk to my family about my homework they're saying you could do it a completely different way. But I can't do it because I'll still do what they taught us so I just...it's mostly about the teaching and in the way the grades were and, yeah.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *I remember growing up when I tried to get my parents to help me with my homework they couldn't do it because I don't know if we had learned the new math or they had learned the new math, I don't know what it was, but the way they teach always changes. But, yeah, that is a big difference. And what about the high school sports? I mean football games were a huge town event. Are they still a big event at Foothill?*

Iyanna George: Well, they're a big event but I don't think you'd have like a lot of people go there. It's mostly just the people at our school and if they brought family with them then they'd go. But it's not as big as it was probably back then.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Of course, you wouldn't want the whole town of Henderson now to go to one football game. Back then I think it probably was the whole town.*

Mary Monahan George: Oh, I think it was. I think they all showed up for it.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That was a big deal. It was a big source of entertainment. Yeah. Even if we lost. Well, okay, so Mary, after high school what did you do?*

Mary Monahan George: Well, I went to work right out of high school for my brother who was a dentist in Las Vegas and I worked for him for a few years and then I took some classes at UNLV and I ended up getting a job with the State of Nevada and went to work for the Department of Transportation. So I kind of dropped out of school which I kick myself for now but I worked for

them and then I got married and stayed home for a while raising the boys. And then I went back towards the part-time school district office manager and until I retired.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *How many years did you work for the school district?*

Mary Monahan George: Twenty-five.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Wow. That's a great career. I bet you miss the school and the kids but...*

Mary Monahan George: Yes [Laughing] I, I do miss the people, the...I don't know if I miss working actually for the school district any more but I do miss the people that I worked with. I keep in touch with them all this time.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Oh, that's neat.*

Mary Monahan George: You know, friends and get-togethers.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *And that's an interesting thing about Henderson, too, I think, is how people that grew up together in Henderson keep in touch with each other even though they've all moved to different places but yet they come back for all their reunions and it's a big deal and they keep in touch by phone and by letter and whatever so...yeah.*

Mary Monahan George: Yeah, we do, we have stayed close with everybody. In fact, I still keep in touch with a girl I went to kindergarten with. We're still, you know, contact...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That's amazing.*

Mary Monahan George: ...each other and talk to each other all the time.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *I don't even know how I would find the people I went to kindergarten with, you know? I just think that's amazing. Were you involved in any organizations while you were working in Henderson, like special organizations?*

Mary Monahan George: Not really. I basically worked and then went home because I had kids at home, you know. Stayed occupied...they played sports in high school so we'd, you know, run home and either go take them to practice or go to their game or something so I didn't really have a whole lot of time to myself to do much.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Umhmm, yeah, you had two jobs really.*

Mary Monahan George: You bet.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah, sure. What was it like in Henderson, and maybe you didn't have time, but to go shopping in the '50's and '60's and...*

Mary Monahan George: Well, I really...I think if there was a school dance or something that we were doing we would drive into Vegas. We had a few shops here in Henderson but there...you

know. I think we had the Van Daley Shoe Store and there was one dress shop, I think, and a furniture store and things like that but we would usually drive into Vegas. And I, I remember shopping on Fremont Street. There was quite a few stores along Fremont Street at the time.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Umhmm. There was a Penney's there and...*

Mary Monahan George: Might have been Penney's.

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Could be Sears...*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Were there some good restaurants in Henderson back in those days?*

Mary Monahan George: We had a few good ones, Swanky Club and there was a Dante's...was that the one that was there on Lake Mead and they were very good. Those were the two best ones I think I remember.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *And I heard the politicians would meet at Dante's for lunch and talk shop.*

Mary Monahan George: [Laughing] Yeah, they were good.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah, and the Swanky Club was one of the first buffets. I mean buffet is so ubiquitous and...*

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Smorgasbord, yeah.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What's the difference between a good buffet and a smorgasbord?*

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Well, I remember the sign saying: "Swanky Smorgasbord".*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *They almost pioneered the concept. I mean now everybody wants to come to Vegas just for the buffet and really it was Swanky Club that introduced that. They tried to shut Swanky Club down, didn't they?*

Mary Monahan George: I don't know. I didn't know that.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *I...there's a story in there.*

Mary Monahan George: They tried to shut it down?

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah, because they were too successful and the other, the other, some other businesses were like, "Oh, I don't know if this is safe, what you're doing is safe, this smorgasbord thing. I don't know if it's safe food handling."*

Mary Monahan George: That's right. It might not be healthy.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *So growing up in Henderson you think was pretty safe in the old days? Parents didn't worry about their kids too much?*

Mary Monahan George: I don't think we worried at all about it.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *You'd go out in the desert and play with your friends all the time?*

Mary Monahan George: We'd go out in the desert and of course a lot of it was desert, so I don't ever remember being worried about safety or anything like that. We always felt secure and taken care of.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Did you ever have adventures in the desert?*

Mary Monahan George: Well, most of it was just out there playing. I don't remember anything too adventurous that we really did.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *You never saw a rattlesnake or anything?*

Mary Monahan George: No, I never saw a rattlesnake. We'd catch lizards and things like that but I never did see any snakes.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Some people used to go down to the dump and look for things that people had thrown away. Did you ever go down there with your friends and...*

Mary Monahan George: No, we never did that.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *It's probably for the best.*

Mary Monahan George: We left that for the boys.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *So, so there was a difference between the things the boys were doing and the things that girls were doing then?*

Mary Monahan George: I think they were probably a little more adventurous than, you know...we kinda stayed closer to home and, you know, played in the same area where they would wander around a little bit more I think and explore.

Fredric Watson: *Did you go down to Lake Mead to swim?*

Mary Monahan George: We would go down to Lake Mead to swim.

Fredric Watson: *Your Mom and Dad take you down there?*

Mary Monahan George: Yes. We would go down there and swim and then my uncle who lived here also had a plane and we would usually on Saturdays or Sundays he'd always take us for a plane ride and we would spend the day doing that.

Fredric Watson: *Who was that?*

Mary Monahan George: Pardon me?

Fredric Watson: *What family was that that...*

Mary Monahan George: Oh, it was Pete Mendev.

Fredric Watson: *Oh, Pete Mendev. Sure. What you did...where'd he have the plane?*

Mary Monahan George: I'm trying where he parked it. We had just talked about it a couple of weeks ago when I was up in Reno. He didn't...I always thought he parked it up in Boulder City but Darryl said, "No, he parked it...". I want to say he said he parked it down behind like the Swanky Club or somewhere down there. He just parked it and then would take off through the desert area there.

Fredric Watson: *Pepco Road would have been a big...*

Mary Monahan George: That might have been it...

Fredric Watson: *A big dirt road.*

Mary Monahan George: Because it was down that way.

Fredric Watson: *That's interesting.*

Mary Monahan George: But in my mind I always thought we went to Boulder City but maybe we went in the other direction. It sounds like this might be a question...

Michele Watson Aguiar: *You weren't afraid to go up in a little plane?*

Mary Monahan George: No, not then. I probably wouldn't do it now. Back then I thought it was fun. [Laughing]

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Well, see, that's an adventure. What other places did you visit? Did you go to Boulder City at all? Did you go around? Did you go to Valley of Fire? Like, what kind of things did you do besides...*

Mary Monahan George: We would, we would go to, well, like Lake Mead and then we would take trips to Ely or, you know, places like, we'd go to the Lehman Caves. Valley of Fire we went to a few times. But most of the time I think because of the ages of my brothers and I were, like by the time I was a little bit older I remembered things, they were all playing sports or the weekend was doing something with them. And then when they, when Darryl went into college we'd always drive up to Utah for his games on the weekends. And so the little things around here we didn't do a whole lot. Most of the summers we would go up to northern Nevada because that's where most of the family lived.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That's nice that you could get away from the heat that way too.*

Mary Monahan George: Right, it helped. And so, you know, but, Red Rock once in a while and like I said, we would go to the Lake and, you know, fly with my uncle on the weekends. Things

like that. But that was mainly what we did on weekends and like in the summer we'd go up north.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That's nice. What about...how did you get health care when...in the fifties and sixties?*

Mary Monahan George: St. Rose and most of the doctors at the time from what I recall, they would come to the house if you needed them. They would come to your house and see what was wrong and we lived on a street where we had two doctors. So they would just, neighbors right there, so it was pretty easy.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *How convenient.*

Fredric Watson: *Who were those doctors?*

Mary Monahan George: Doctor Kugman and Doctor Phillips.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *How about that.*

Fredric Watson: *Mrs. Phillips is still alive.*

Mary Monahan George: Yes.

Fredric Watson: *She's somebody that we, we should interview. I think she's been in the...*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *I think we've interviewed her now.*

Mary Monahan George: I think Del might have interviewed her. In fact I'm going to lunch with her tomorrow so I can ask her if she's...

Fredric Watson: *Yeah, that would be...see if she's up for it.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Well, um, what memorable events can you recall that happened in Henderson over the years?*

Mary Monahan George: Over the years? Probably the biggest was Pepcon which was, you know, that was exciting.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Where were you when that happened?*

Mary Monahan George: I was working at Gordon-McCaw when that happened. It was, it was...I thought actually at the time I could see the smoke and I thought that maybe Burkholder was on fire.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Oh, gosh.*

Mary Monahan George: And so I was calling from the office and about that time the front window of the office blew in and...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Did you get hurt?*

Mary Monahan George: I didn't but a lady that was standing right next to me, the glass cut her Achilles tendon in her foot.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Ooooooh.*

Mary Monahan George: And our librarian tried to get her to the hospital though St. Rose was so busy they ended up driving to Boulder City to take her to the hospital there. And by the time we got home, my house, of course, the front door was off and the dogs and cat were gone and the windows were gone.

Iyanna George: What was Pepcon?

Mary Monahan George: It was a plant. That blew up.

Iyanna George: Oh, okay.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Pacific Engineering. And what they did was they made a part of the rocket fuel for the space program for NASA and when the Challenger blew up in '86 NASA put a hold on the space program for a while and, but they didn't cancel their orders with Pepcon and Pepcon was faced with stockpiling this material and then I guess one day they were working on something with a blowtorch. I don't know what they were doing and they caught something on fire and between the rocket fuel component and the gas line under the plant the whole thing just went up like a nuclear bomb. We should YouTube it.*

Fredric Watson: *This illustrates what we're talking about here in your history and government classes. Sometime when you have to make a report because you helped us today we will help you with your report. We can find pictures and all that kind of stuff.*

Iyanna George: Thank you.

Mary Monahan George: Yeah, that was, that was an exciting day.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That happened in '88 in May.*

Michele Watson Aguiar: *So it blew, it blew your door off, your front door?*

Mary Monahan George: Uhhuh, the front door.

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Because that's interesting the way your house is lo...was situated just around the corner from my Mom and Dad's and so the door would've been on the north side and my folks' north windows and south windows were shattered but not the east and west. Well, the way it hit, the way it must have hit the back...The side it hurt, the back of my folks' house.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah, it went out in waves and the waves affected people's houses differently the way they hit.*

Fredric Watson: *What street did you live on?*

Mary Monahan George: We lived on Atlantic.

Fredric Watson: *You see, we're right behind.*

Mary Monahan George: In fact the...at school, when it went off, the principal was walking through the door and it hit and I mean it blew her like across the room and she just fell face first down on the floor.

Fredric Watson: *Who was that?*

Mary Monahan George: That was Carol Blount.

Fredric Watson: *Oh, yeah, sure.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Were all the tiles on the roof damaged?*

Mary Monahan George: No, and it was...it...I don't remember a whole lot of damage at the school itself, you know, except, I don't remember, the windows broke, a few windows broke. But there weren't that many windows in the schools at the time, and we didn't know if we should put the kids inside or if we should bring them outside because we didn't know what was in the air. You know, if they should, you know, be standing in case there was something floating in the air that they shouldn't be breathing. But we didn't know if we should put them inside in case the structure was damaged and something was going to collapse. And then they finally had a school bus that came and picked up kids that we couldn't get ahold of parents to come and get and took them to Boulder City to be picked up there. That was a day I don't know if we'd ever forget. That was pretty...

Fredric Watson: *That nervousness at the Henderson schools was the same in the Vegas schools where a lot of people had moved who worked in town but lived in Henderson and vice-versa and were really worried about people they knew out here and worried about the kids.*

Mary Monahan George: And they really wouldn't let too many people come in to Henderson at the time. They were trying stopping traffic until they could I guess really figure out themselves what was going on.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: And they had the National Guard right? For like a curfew or something?

Mary Monahan George: I believe so.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: A couple of nights but nothing happened I heard.

Mary Monahan George: No. It was Henderson. [Laughing]

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Good Place. Yeah. But, it...every...it was tragic. A couple of men were killed, heroic men who stayed to get everybody out of the plant. They were killed by the blast but a lot of people at the marshmallow plant next door were severely burned from the,*

from the blast. But remarkably there were only those two deaths and there had been a school as I understand that, a school tour for the marshmallow factory that day that had been cancelled.

Mary Monahan George: Oh, that was lucky.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That was lucky, yeah, so...*

Fredric Watson: *Can you think of any, any school routine or new purchases that happened because of Pepcon? Like in your...that would have impacted you as office manager?*

Mary Monahan George: I don't, I don't remember anything really.

Fredric Watson: *You know, the...what struck me was it seemed like right after that we started having all these, what do you call it?*

Mary Monahan George: Shelter in place?

Fredric Watson: *Something like that.*

Mary Monahan George: Those, yeah, they did, they started all that.

Fredric Watson: *They were worrying about chemical spills and things like that. So we used to, we would have to tape the windows to...do you remember that?*

Mary Monahan George: Tape the doors.

Fredric Watson: *Tape the doors, everybody had to stay in their room.*

Mary Monahan George: Shut off the air conditioning and all the vents.

Fredric Watson: *Another thing that, that seemed right away we'd get...we...the principals all got, and the office managers all got walkie-talkies.*

Mary Monahan George: Right, to keep in touch.

Fredric Watson: *Because that had been a problem for us. We were having a hard time communicating, all the staff. And the schools in those days didn't have, I bet McCaw didn't have an intercom, did it? Do you recall?*

Mary Monahan George: They did have an intercom. It, we did have that but you'd have to ring into each classroom and it was...but we did have an intercom and we...and that was...I said everybody outside. Okay, everybody back inside. Trying to figure out just what we should do with the children because we didn't know. We didn't know what was the safest place to be.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *You had to figure all that out.*

Fredric Watson: *Just think of the changes in the school office from the day you started working in the school 'til the day you realized and you retired. I'm thinking about all the equipment. We*

were looking at some old Board minutes out at the Head Center the other day and they'd inserted different places "ditto" and erase all really nicely typed minutes that written down there would be a dittoed page, that old blue...It just seemed like overnight that all changed somewhere in the 1990's maybe.

Mary Monahan George: Yeah, could have been...I remember fighting for a fax machine. They didn't think we needed a fax machine. Yes, we need a fax machine. I had to kind of fight for that one to get that in the school.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What year was that?*

Mary Monahan George: Oh gosh...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Was that in the '70's or...*

Mary Monahan George: It was probably the '80's or early '90's and they, they just didn't think we needed a fax machine. It was amazing that once we got it how often it was used. They said, "We have the telephone. Why do we need a fax machine?" I finally convinced them to get a fax machine and we did get it.

Fredric Watson: *The school office managers here did have a huge array of tasks they had to do the general public probably just weren't even aware of. Counting popsicle money.*

Mary Monahan George: [Laughing] We kind of did it all, the attendance and the...

Fredric Watson: *You were school nurse and...*

Mary Monahan George: Yeah, I was a school nurse. They only had the school nurse once a week if we were lucky.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Oh, my gosh.*

Mary Monahan George: That was one other thing we fought for, was to get the health aides where we'd have somebody in the health office all the time. Had to get that to go through.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *You had to have CPR training?*

Mary Monahan George: Training, yeah, we had to be CPR trained. It was...I...you never got bored, that was for sure. Yeah, it was an interesting job.

Fredric Watson: *Sure had to be prepared to, to treat diabetic children or somebody had peanut allergy you had to be able to do the Epipen.*

Mary Monahan George: You had to do the Epipen and yeah, it was...we had quite a few diabetics. I was surprised how many diabetics there were.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *In the '90's?*

Mary Monahan George: Uhhuh. They would have to come in and test their blood sugar all the time.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Oh, gosh.*

Fredric Watson: *I know that diabetes has been since the dawn of time I'm sure. I don't remember all the time I was at St. Peters or Gorman I remember one kid that I knew that had diabetes.*

Mary Monahan George: Yeah.

Fredric Watson: *Or a peanut allergy.*

Mary Monahan George: Allergy, yeah, but you wonder how it all came about, why it's so noticeable now.

Michele Watson Aguiar: *In 1960, that one summer, three of our friends, though, discovered they had diabetes, Kathy Cronis.*

Mary Monahan George: Kathy Cronis.

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Becky Sanchez and Suzanne Struthers all...and I remember worrying that maybe it was catching, that I was gonna get it. And so that was 1960 and they didn't do very well. Suzanne is still alive but both Kathy and Becky have died of diabetes.*

Mary Monahan George: Kathy and Becky have died. It's awful.

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Young, they were about, both of them were about 35.*

Fredric Watson: *[unintelligible] was, was born with polio.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Did that affect your life growing up. I mean, when you're not allowed to go to swimming pools or take part in activities some years because there was a polio scare.*

Mary Monahan George: Well, we had a pool in our back yard so I never really went to the public school or public pool that often. I did...

Michele Watson Aguiar: *I remember mother and daddy being a little bit worried about it but, um, maybe when I was real little, because I spent a lot of time at the pool.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *But...nobody told me anything about, you know, relating to that about Henderson, so I figured it wasn't the problem here.*

Michele Watson Aguiar: *I don't know that there was a scare in the area. I just remember in general my mom was concerned about it but we went ahead and did what we, you know, what any kid would do during the summer.*

Mary Monahan George: I don't know if we ever had anybody in Henderson that had polio.

Fredric Watson: *I can't remember but, I know that it was in the newspaper that, you know, the big cities that...*

Mary Monahan George: Media.

Fredric Watson: *And we'd thought about, you know, should we go to the movies, the Victory Theater, you know, a bunch of little kids on Saturday, locked up at Saturday matinee theater.*

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Breathing on each other.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *So you toss a chicken pox party, right? (Laughing)*

Mary Monahan George: And that was with the chicken pox. I can remember neighbors had chicken pox. My mom sent all of us over there to get it so we would get it over with. Just go get it and then we'll have it finished. So that's a completely different life style then.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *What changes have you observed in Henderson over the years? And obviously there was...It's gotten bigger.*

Mary Monahan George: The growth is definitely a big change and I don't...I think in our area of Henderson we're still basically the small-town kind of atmosphere but I think as it's grown outside that area it, a lot of that has changed. I don't know if we still have quite that, you know, feel where everybody's still connected. But I do think in the old part of Henderson we still have that.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Umhmm. That's great.*

Mary Monahan George: You still go to the store and you run into people you know and...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *And it seems like there's some effort to re-energize the downtown area so...*

Mary Monahan George: That would be nice. I'd love to see that happen.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Umhmm. Yeah. There supposed to be some good shops down there and a nice art...*

Mary Monahan George: Art gallery. Yeah. A couple, couple nice art galleries.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *It's almost an art district now.*

Mary Monahan George: Right. If you know...we just need to be able to draw the people down there.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Yeah.*

Mary Monahan George: That's what we have to figure out how we can do it. Just get them to come.

Fredric Watson: *The farmer's markets, I think the farmer's market gets pretty good*

Mary Monahan George: Pretty good business?

Fredric Watson: *Pretty good play there. Don't you wish they'd had farmer's market when we were kids?*

Mary Monahan George: Yes. That would have been fun.

Fredric Watson: *Did you ever, did you ever recall going to the Ivory Nursery?*

Mary Monahan George: Yes.

Fredric Watson: *I read in the Henderson Home News some articles about Ivory's Nursery but I couldn't remember, I didn't remember it from my childhood. I knew that there was a lot of the Ivory kids who was my age I went to school with.*

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Wasn't it just north of the reservoir...*

Mary Monahan George: Of the what?

Michele Watson Aguiar: *of the reservoir. It was just north of or just south of, of... Isabel Road.*

Mary Monahan George: Up around Major

Michele Watson Aguiar: *I think around Minor, Minor and Water.*

Mary Monahan George: Was Minor and Water?

Michele Watson Aguiar: *Minor and Water.*

Fredric Watson: *Up around where the [unintelligible] live. Up around there.*

Mary Monahan George: And that was another thing. No matter where you lived we'd all walk to each other's houses. But now you don't find kids walking anywhere.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *It's probably for the best. [Laughing]*

Fredric Watson: *From Church Street all the way up to the reservoir, it's probably only a fifteen, twenty minute walk.*

Mary Monahan George: Yeah, and we never thought anything of it.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Did you go under Boulder Highway using that tunnel?*

Mary Monahan George: I never did do that. I was too big a coward.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *That's a long tunnel if it went all the way under Boulder Highway.*

Mary Monahan George: I, I never did go in there. I...

Fredric Watson: *The underpass? Have you seen that picture that we posted on Facebook?*

Mary Monahan George: No, no, I didn't.

Fredric Watson: *Yeah, I'll send you the link, e-mail you link. It made, you know, let's see, Shelley, do you remember the...*

Michele Watson Aguiar: *I don't remember it. I didn't know about it until you started mentioning it the last few months.*

Fredric Watson: *You know, you know in the 50's, the early 50's, a flood filled it with sand and I think the city, and this had happened on several occasions, and I think the city just got tired of digging it out. So they just buried it permanently. Yeah, there was an underpass under Boulder Highway so the kids who lived in Victory Village, and adults too, passed Boulder Highway without having to cross it because it was real fast traffic. We didn't have freeways in those days and the people on Boulder Highway drive sixty miles an hour, which in our day was high speed, dangerous.*

Mary Monahan George: And I just, just figured coming from school and crossing Boulder Highway I never...I took my chances with the cars, I guess. I'd rather do that than run into a snake or something.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Well, yeah, or something else, who knows what. Mary, what else would you like to share about your experience in Henderson that we haven't talked about?*

Mary Monahan George: Well, I, I just have loved my time here. I know that growing up it was...nobody wanted to live in Henderson. It was...you know, people in Vegas and that thought that we were just kind of on the outskirts and nobody wanted to be here but I don't think that knew what they were missing and it was a wonderful place and I've just always been happy here and kinda glad my granddaughter's getting a chance to live here and see it and...

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *It seems like a great place to grow up.*

Mary Monahan George: It is. It's a good town.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *I know when I visited in '97 I took a bus tour to the dam and we passed by Henderson. I looked at Henderson and I thought this would be a great place to live. It just looked like a really nice community. And that was before they built Green Valley. That was before they had the 215 so, you know, they were still building the 215 at that time so that wasn't part of the picture. I was just looking at old Henderson and thinking what a great place.*

Mary Monahan George: It is. It's a good place to be.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Well, we've enjoyed having you here.*

Mary Monahan George: Well, thank you.

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *And I don't know if anybody else has any other questions they want to ask you but, you know.*

Fredric Watson: *That was good. Yeah, that covered the topic really well.*

Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm: *Well, thanks for joining us.*

Mary Monahan George: Thank you.