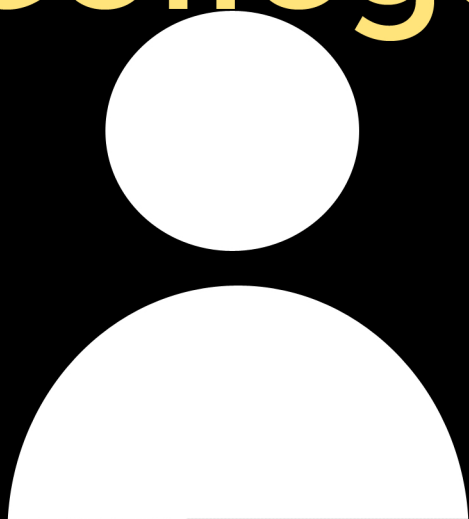


**Nevada State
College**



**Undergraduate Oral
History Project**

Leona Hinton

Oral History of Leona Hinton

An Interview

Conducted by

Karen Schank

February 10, 2011

Nevada State College Undergraduate Oral History Project

Produced by:

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Leona Hinton

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The transcript received minimal editing to preserve the conversational style and content of the narrator.

This interview is from the series *Bridging the Past: Henderson through Oral History*.

Leona Hinton

Oral History of Leona Hinton

An Interview Conducted by Karen Schank on February 10, 2011

Biography

Leona Cooper Hinton was born in Washington, Utah, on April 30, 1924. She married Max Hinton and moved to Henderson in 1945. During World War II, Hinton worked at the Army defense plant assembling bombs while her husband was sent away in the South Pacific.

After the war, Hinton, her husband, and their daughter continued living in Henderson, residing in Victory Village and donating their time to build the Latter Day Saint church in their community. She was a mother and a homemaker and her husband worked as the Captain of the fire department at the Basic Magnesium plant. Hinton enjoyed her life in Henderson, citing the city as a safe and quiet place to live.

¹Leona Hinton passed away on January 27, 2012, in Boulder City, Nevada.

¹ "Leona Hinton." Las Vegas Review-Journal Obituaries. Las Vegas Review-Journal, n.d. Web. 27 Mar. 2014

Leona Hinton

Narrator: Leona Hinton
Interviewer: Karen Schank
Interview Date: February 10, 2010
Location: Boulder City, NV

[Background Noise]

Karen Schank: It is February 10. I am here with Leona Hinton at Lakeview Terrace Senior Living Community. How are you today, Leona?

Leona Hinton: I am fine, thank you. How are you?

Karen Schank: Good. Would you spell your name for us?

Leona Hinton: L-E-O-N-A C-O-O-P-E-R H-I-N-T-O-N.

Karen Schank: Thank you, Leona Cooper Hinton. Where were you born, and the year?

Leona Hinton: I was born April 30, 1924 in Washington, Utah, Washington County Utah.

Karen Schank: Great. What do you remember growing up as a child there?

Leona Hinton: Climbing trees and riding horses. My daddy would put us on the horses and lead the horse along, so we would not fall off. I can remember one time we were going under a tree. I grabbed a branch and pulled myself off. As we got older, we played with dolls. We had a lot of fun with the pomegranate bushes. We made houses in the pomegranate bushes and played with our dolls, played house. Our mother would let us take some old sheets or whatever and we made houses around on the bushes. We played with our dolls. We even played as if one of us was a doctor and things like that.

We liked to go out to the corral where my dad had his cows, horses and other animals. We sat and watched the animals. One time they had a little newborn pony and one Sunday afternoon, everybody was busy in the house eating or something. I went out and got on that little newborn pony. It was not very old. It ran away with me. It ran out, clear down and threw me off down in front of my parents' door. That really hurt me, but I would not let them know how badly I was hurt. That is why I think my back still hurts to this day. That hurt me.

Karen Schank: Where did you go to school as a child?

Leona Hinton: I went to elementary in Washington, Utah and then to high school in Saint George, Utah.

Karen Schank: Did you have a favorite subject or favorite teacher?

Leona Hinton

Leona Hinton: Oh yes. Calista Wharton was my favorite teacher when I was in the first or second grade, and also Willard Nison. He was also a favorite teacher when I got up in the fourth or fifth grade. Ruth Windsor, she was a good teacher. I had her.

Karen Schank: What activities did you engage in as children at recess?

Leona Hinton: We played kickball and threw the ball. We batted the ball. When it was really bad weather, we used to have snow there. They do not anymore. When it was snowy white, our mother would fix us a lunch and we would eat around the big old potbelly stove in the school. We had to stay in. I can remember my parents had eight children. They were having a real hard time. I can remember one year our shoes had holes in the bottoms and we needed new shoes, but they could not afford them. We put layers of pasteboard, cut it and put it in the bottom of our shoes so we could walk to school and not get our feet wet. We did have galoshes. That is what they called them, after a while, but then we did not, as the years went on, we did not have a lot of snow.

Karen Schank: Did they have a prayer at school to start the day?

Leona Hinton: I think so. Yes, I believe we did. We always did the Pledge of Allegiance.

Karen Schank: Who led the prayer?

Leona Hinton: The teacher.

Karen Schank: Okay. How did you meet your husband?

Leona Hinton: I met him at a dance. I had gone to a dance.

Karen Schank: Is this in Saint George?

Leona Hinton: No, it was in Kanarrville, Utah, next to Cedar City, on the side of Cedar City. He asked me for a dance. I danced with him. It was an open air dance. They had an open air dance over there.

Karen Schank: What is that?

Leona Hinton: In the summer.

Karen Schank: You danced outside?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm. They had a nice floor and it was open air. That is how we started. After that, he asked me for a date. He worked for Bradshaw Chevrolet Company in Cedar City. They would let him take one of their cars. That was really nice. He would come and get me, and we would go to the dance and have fun, then go home.

Karen Schank: Wow. When were you married?

Leona Hinton

Leona Hinton: I was married in Las Vegas, Nevada December 7, 1941. After that he was called into the service and served overseas for 37 months, in World War II.

Karen Schank: Was he in the Army?

Leona Hinton: He was in the Army. We had come from Utah here to work. He found a job. That was in January 1946. By July he had a call to serve in the service, in the Army. That is when they pulled the names out of the jar or something.

Karen Schank: Tell me about that. I did not know that.

Leona Hinton: Yes.

Karen Schank: They pulled names out of a jar, the service men did-- the military did?

Leona Hinton: Yes. His name was pulled and I will never forget when we got the card. We had rented a tiny trailer house and lived in that.

Karen Schank: This is in Las Vegas?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm. He got this call in July. I will never forget it. He had two months to get ready too. We had to get ready and move back to Utah. I stayed with my mother. I was pregnant. I had a daughter while he was gone. We have the one daughter. That is all I had was the one. I do not have any boys. We moved back and I stayed with my mother and dad part-time, and his mother. His father had passed away. I stayed with my mother and father for a couple of weeks, and then I would go stay with his mother. I did not want any feelings, you know?

She was born and his mother worked with a doctor. She was a practical nurse. She and this doctor delivered babies in Hurricane, Utah and La Verkin, Utah. That is where my husband was from. My daughter was born in her home in La Verkin, Utah.

Karen Schank: Wow. I will bet that was hard, to have a child without your husband.

Leona Hinton: Yes. We could not do anything about it. That was all I had, the one. I never did get anymore.

Karen Schank: Let's see. He returned from the Army?

Leona Hinton: After 37 months he came home.

Karen Schank: Was the war over at that time?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton

Leona Hinton: He had lost so much weight because he was in the South Pacific. He got his jungle training in Hawaii and then he went clear down through the different countries, fighting the Japanese.

Karen Schank: Was that in the Philippines?

Leona Hinton: Yes, he ended up in the Philippines.

Karen Schank: Marshall Islands?

Leona Hinton: Nearly all of those places. They were going to invade Japan in two weeks. He said he knew. He had written me a letter and I knew it was a farewell letter. His company was scheduled to be one of the first to go into Japan. The war ended and they did not have to go in. It was just two weeks before the war ended. He thought he was not going to come home on that account.

Karen Schank: Wow. Was that when they dropped the bombs?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: That saved him.

Leona Hinton: Yes.

Karen Schank: Okay. He came home?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: Where did you go then?

Leona Hinton: I met him in Salt Lake City. He came into –

Karen Schank: Did he fly in?

Leona Hinton: No, I think they came by boat or ship. He flew into Washington, the state of Washington. Then they flew him down to Salt Lake and I met him there. He was just nothing. He was just a skeleton. He had been through so much. We stayed there a couple of days, and then came home. We came down. He had not seen the little girl, my daughter. We came home and got there. [00:14:00] I think Thanksgiving that year was the 27th. We got in there about midnight or 12:00. We got off the bus. I will never forget my mother bringing my little girl down for him to see. She just turned away from him. She did not know him.

Karen Schank: No.

Leona Hinton: They became really close and still are. Not still, he is gone; he has been gone eight years.

Leona Hinton

Karen Schank: Okay. Where did he find employment after he got home?

Leona Hinton: He had a hard time. There just was not any employment. There was nothing in Utah. He and I, our daughter, his sister and her husband came down here looking for work. We came to Las Vegas. We were just ready to go back home because they could not find anything. They had some openings out at the dam, Boulder Dam, building the spillways. They got a job using a jackhammer to dig out those spillways. That is what they did. It was really hard on them. He was so thin and weak from the war. They finally found a job there, doing that, using the jackhammers on the spillways.

Karen Schank: What was his workweek like at the dam?

Leona Hinton: He worked -- It seemed like he worked almost every day but Sunday. They had to drive out there. We lived in Victory Village. They had built them temporary homes for war, during the war. We lived in 112-B Victory Village. We lived, the five us, together until they got a job. Then my sister-in-law and her husband got another apartment. They were able to get another one. They did not have any money. We did not either. We had to do what we had to do. That is what we did. We just got an apartment together at Victory Village and stayed together for just a short time.

Karen Schank: Can you describe Victory Village to me, the apartments there?

Leona Hinton: They were just row after row. I think there was one more below ours. There must have been one. Ours was 112. I think there was one on the other side. They started up high. If you ever go to Sonic or one of them, you can still see cement, some slabs still there. They were row after row of temporary apartments for the people who worked down in the plant, down at BMI. We were able to get one, but they did not want us to stay because they did not work at the plant. They kept trying to get a job at the plant and he finally got one at the fire department. We were able to stay in the apartment. My sister-in-law and her husband moved in another, the same kind, but in another location.

Karen Schank: Okay. It was a two-story.

Leona Hinton: No, just one.

Karen Schank: One-story?

Leona Hinton: Yes.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton: Just a row of apartments. We had to use kerosene for fuel. They had barrels. I do not know how much they held. You had to use kerosene to put in your stove. All of the cooking stoves were kerosene. We had to go down and drain

Leona Hinton

the kerosene that we needed and fill the container. That is what we used. It was a wonder we did not have fires, everybody. I do not remember anybody having any bad ones. Of course, they told us how to use it. That is what we used for fuel. That is what we used for the stoves. They were all kerosene. We had small coolers on the house.

Karen Schank: How did those work?

Leona Hinton: They were pretty good when it was cloudy. If it was good weather, they worked okay. I cannot remember. We must have had a kerosene – There must have been a kerosene stove in there for heat too, for winter. We were not there in the winter. We were there in January.

Karen Schank: Did they have a place in the stove that you put the kerosene into?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: Was it like a pot?

Leona Hinton: Like a little pot that you poured it into. It was a good-sized stove, probably a little bit bigger than that.

[Cross Talking]

Karen Schank: All right. Can you describe the individual apartments, how they were situated inside?

Leona Hinton: As you went in, the floor was all brown linoleum. It showed every footprint that you walked in, over the floor. I just kept myself, all the time, with a dust mop dusting it. I was so fussy about the floor. It was the same clear through. As you went in, there was no furniture. We got a two-bedroom finally, my husband and I. We had one room for our daughter. We had her bed, the baby bed, from the time. We put that in one room and we took the bed that was in that room and rolled up the mattress and we tied it with string and put a blanket over it. We made a couch out in the living room, to sit on. It looked pretty good and it was quite comfortable to sit on.

[Laughter]

Karen Schank: That is great. Did it have a living room and two bedrooms?

Leona Hinton: Yes, it had a living room and then a kitchen. It was just infested with roaches. We all complained and complained. They would spray and spray. I guess they sprayed in one apartment and they would run to the other. I will never forget getting up one morning and going to make my husband's lunch. He wanted peanut butter and jelly. I went to open them. We had to buy little bottles of jelly then. I opened that jelly to put it over the peanut butter and there was a roach in it, one of those little brown ones. That made me sick. I never opened anything else. The lids at that time did not screw on. You just

Leona Hinton

put it on and pushed it down. You had to use a bottle opener, usually, to get the lid off. One had gotten in there. Did I ever throw that out.

[Laughter]

Karen Schank: Okay. Did it have a back door and a front door to the apartment?

Leona Hinton: No, it just had a front door.

Karen Schank: Just a front door? Okay. It had a restroom in it, in each of the apartments?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: Okay. Was there a housing shortage during this time?

Leona Hinton: Yes, there was. That is when the government built those. There were lots of them. They built some down in –

Karen Schank: Victory Village?

Leona Hinton: We lived in Victory Village. They built some over in Carver Park for the coloreds. Of course, they probably would not like to hear that now. They built them to separate them from the people that lived in Victory Village. There were some of the people. All of the apartments got full in Victory Village, so they had to put some of the people over in Carver Park. It was mainly colored people. They even opened -- The Reams out of Salt Lake City, they came in and opened a little grocery store down in there.

Karen Schank: In Carver Park?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm. It was in Carver Park. When we wanted to buy groceries, we had to go over to Carver Park to get them. They built an Albertsons. We would have to walk up there and it was quite a walk from where our apartment was. Those people that came in and built that store had it really stocked good. They had very good meat. They were out of Salt Lake City. Their last name was Reams. That is what they called the store, Reams' Grocery Store.

Karen Schank: Carver Park, you mentioned there was integration in Carver Park.

Leona Hinton: Not too many, but they ended up putting some of the people over there because they needed the room. There was room there for some. I do not know if any of my friends had to go over there. I do know of people who had to go in there.

Karen Schank: How did it work?

Leona Hinton: I do not know. I guess it was okay. I never remember them having any problems.

Leona Hinton

Karen Schank: Okay. Tell me about living during World War II. Do you remember rationing or supply shortages?

Leona Hinton: Oh yes, we had a ration book. In fact, I still have mine in my cedar chest in Utah. I got by really good because my daughter was a baby. I could get a ration book for her also. I need to bring that down or have it brought down so you can get a picture of it.

Karen Schank: I would love that.

Leona Hinton: I do not know how I would get it. I will mention it to somebody who might be going up.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton: But anyway, there were stamps for sugar and stamps for gas. There were stamps for shoes. I believe there were stamps for tires. You could trade them. Say you needed extra sugar. I could let you have a sugar coupon and you could give me one to get shoes or something. You could trade them. I never had any shortage with them because I had my daughter's. I did not run out of anything. I know a lot of them did that had more children, where they had to have more shoes.

Karen Schank: Who issued these rationing books?

Leona Hinton: The government.

Karen Schank: How did you apply to get the rationing books?

Leona Hinton: I think we had to fill out a little paper and send it in. They would send them right back to you.

Karen Schank: Through the mail?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: Okay. Did you know of any supply drives or war driven collections for the war effort?

Leona Hinton: Oh yes, but not really too – I was always fixing a box to send to my husband. He said that at Christmas time and Thanksgiving, they would give them a donut and a cigarette. He did not smoke. That is what they gave them, and a cup of coffee. They did not have anything really fancy.

Karen Schank: Did you collect tinfoil or rubber, anything like that, for the war effort?

Leona Hinton: I do not remember. I know they did, but I do not think we did in those little towns.

Leona Hinton

Karen Schank: Okay. Did Victory Village have a bomb shelter?

Leona Hinton: No, they did not. They had one in the plant, the BMI plant. No one knew about it. My husband was working. He got on the fire department after he came. It was a humongous bomb shelter. When they took the things out of there, we have barrels about that big, empty barrels, that they had stuff stored in. We threw it out. They also had a bigger barrel that had all kinds of soap, sugar and Kotex for women, everything you would need, in those barrels in case they bombed it. They were afraid they were going to bomb this plant down here.

Karen Schank: Wow.

Leona Hinton: They had all those. He brought one home, my husband did, when they finally got rid of them after he came back from the war and worked down at the plant. He had to go through the plant and examine everything. They gave him one of the barrels. I think the barrel is still down there in our basement now, with stuff probably thrown out of it.

Karen Schank: Wow.

Leona Hinton: They had everything that you needed, dish soap and hand soap.
Karen Schank: That is wonderful. Did you use blackout curtains? Was there security for civilians, to practice during that time?

Leona Hinton: They did down here, I think. Up there in Utah, they never –

Karen Schank: They never did?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: They did here in Henderson?

Leona Hinton: I am pretty sure they did here in this area, because of this plant that they built to make titanium and things for the Army and Navy. In fact, I came down and worked three months in the plant.

Karen Schank: Did you? What did you do?

Leona Hinton: I worked on the Army side. My sister worked on the Navy side. I put the notches in the big shells that were about that big around and that long. I ran a notching machine. I had the big stacks of them. I had to lay it up here by hand and then run this machine, putting a notch in each side of that. It would notch both sides.

Karen Schank: Of the bomb?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm. My sister worked over on the Navy side, that lived here. She made torpedo shells. That is what her job was. They made the torpedoes. I do

Leona Hinton

not think many people know that they made those shells there. I worked there, so I know they did.

Karen Schank: Wow. How many would you make a day?

Leona Hinton: I do not know. We would be so greasy. There were great big pyramid piles of them. Then you would notch them and put them in another pile. They would haul them away and they just kept that piled up. I would not know, because it would only take two or three minutes to notch it and get it laid back down. Then you get another one. You had to do that all day long.

Karen Schank: Wow.

Leona Hinton: They were oily, the shells were. Your clothes were just saturated in oil by the time you lifted them up and put them on that machine. Right at the end, they got an automatic machine that did them. It was too late then. I did not get to use it very long.

Karen Schank: You did that for three months?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: Was that a paid job?

Leona Hinton: Yes.

Karen Schank: How much did you make?

Leona Hinton: Golly, I cannot remember. It was sure good money. I cannot remember. It seems to me like it was – I think we were paid every week and it was maybe \$60.00. It was a lot of money for then.

Karen Schank: What did you do with your daughter while you were working?

Leona Hinton: My sister that lived here, her husband was missing – He had a bad ear. He could not go in the service. She asked me to come down and stay with them. They would tend my daughter while she and I worked. I came down from Utah and stayed with them.

Karen Schank: This was while he was in the Army, overseas?

Leona Hinton: Yes.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton: I stayed with them. She and I worked at the defense plant. It was Rheems that we worked for. I still have my badge up there too, R-H-E-E-M-S I think.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton

Leona Hinton: We worked a swing shift. We would go in the afternoon and get off in the evening. Her husband, my sister's husband, was working at the plant. He took the pictures and fingerprints of people that went to work down there. They had five daughters. Some of them were old enough to tend the little kids while we were working.

Karen Schank: Wow. Great. You said there was an Army side and a Navy side. That was at BMI.

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton: Part of the plant was for Navy and part of it was for Army.

Karen Schank: How was it divided?

Leona Hinton: It was just like we were on this side and they were just over on the other side.

Karen Schank: You could see them?

Leona Hinton: No, I could not see them.

Karen Schank: There was a wall?

Leona Hinton: Yes.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton: It was in the same building, but it was divided.

Karen Schank: Did they actually put the bombs together there at the site, or just build the cases?

Leona Hinton: They did not, the ones I made. I do not think they did my sister's side either, the torpedo shells.

Karen Schank: They just built the shells?

Leona Hinton: Yes, we just built the shells.

Karen Schank: Okay. That is interesting. How did your husband find employment at BMI?

Leona Hinton: He just kept trying and putting applications in. They finally hired him. I think Ethel's husband, he came down later. He came in here later and did an interview. He was one of the first firemen, my husband was, that was hired down there.

Leona Hinton

Karen Schank: Wow.

Leona Hinton: They had nine firemen on each shift.

Karen Schank: How many shifts were there?

Leona Hinton: At the plant?

Karen Schank: Did they have two shifts?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton: They worked 24 on and 24 off. That is what they worked.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton: They had nine firemen on each shift, and one captain. He was the captain.

Karen Schank: Wow. What was a workweek like for your husband?

Leona Hinton: It was not bad. If he went in at 7:00, he got off at 7:00 the next morning. That was usually the shift he worked.

Karen Schank: Okay. What kind of responsibilities did he have in his job?

Leona Hinton: Him?

Karen Schank: Mm-hmm.

Leona Hinton: When they went out on fires, he was the one that told the firemen what to do, you know, how much hose to pull off. He had to be responsible for keeping the fire truck, everything that went on the fire truck, up. He had the men that worked there do it too. He had to be responsible that the fire truck was up to par. They had to wash them. I do not know if they washed them more than once a day or what, but I know they had to be really up to par all the time.

Karen Schank: Was there ever a fire at the plant?

Leona Hinton: Yes. There were fires, but I do not think there were any really bad fires.

Karen Schank: Okay. The BMI fire department, did it also take care of the community fires?

Leona Hinton: Yes, they did. Then they divided after the war. They divided and they could choose whether they wanted to go for the city or stay there. He chose to stay there. He was sorry afterward because they did not have any benefits at the BMI fire department. They did at the city. He was always sorry that he did not go that way.

Leona Hinton

Karen Schank: What were some of the benefits that the city had?

Leona Hinton: It would be retirement and medical.

Karen Schank: Okay. Tell me about the town security during the war. How was it laid out?

Leona Hinton: We had one theater downtown, a big theater. We would go down to every change of movie. My husband and I, that was the only entertainment. We did not have a car at that time. We could walk down and each one of us would hold onto the little girl's hand and walk down to the movie. That was about all they had.

Karen Schank: What were some of the movies you saw there?

Leona Hinton: Golly, I do not remember.

Karen Schank: How much was it?

Leona Hinton: Probably 50 cents or .25. It was not very much.

Karen Schank: Okay. Was there an alarm that sounded daily in Henderson?

Leona Hinton: Yes, there was one at noon. I think it still goes off down at the plant.

Karen Schank: What was it called?

Leona Hinton: I think it was just a –

Karen Schank: Okay. Let's see. Was there a tunnel under Boulder Highway?

Leona Hinton: A what? A tunnel?

Karen Schank: Was there a tunnel under Boulder Highway?

Leona Hinton: No.

Karen Schank: Okay. Tell me about being a mother and homemaker during the early part of Henderson.

Leona Hinton: It was not bad. We lived in – It was a happy time with husbands home from the service. We had to walk uptown to get groceries. We did not have a car, so we would walk up, my sister-in-law and I, and my little daughter. There was a shortage of bread, sugar, mayonnaise and salad dressing. That is why we would go. If we could get it, we would. People would just crowd up to that front door and go as early as they could so they could get in there. I will never forget one morning. They trampled my sister-in-law down, just pushing to get in there. She said, "I will never go back again." But she did. They trampled her down on the floor.

Leona Hinton

The first thing we grabbed would be a loaf of bread, and then [00:45:00] we would look for it. We knew where everything was, salad dressing and sugar. Sugar was really a shortage. Sometimes you could get sugar and sometimes you could not. It was the same way with the dressings.

Karen Schank: This was after the war?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: About what year?

Leona Hinton: It would probably be in 1947.

Karen Schank: Okay. Were you here when they first built BMI? Were you in this area?

Leona Hinton: I was in Utah, but I was back and forth down here with my sister. My brother – People came from all over to work. They had to have so much help that people came from all over to work down there, to build that big plant. It was not hard to get a job and they paid good wages. I know my brother worked down here. He drove back and forth from Utah. There were quite a few of them. Sometimes they had to carpool. They would drive down and stay a week, and then go back on the weekend or whatever they had off.

Karen Schank: What did BMI do to help build the town here? Did they build the schools?

Leona Hinton: I do not think so.

Karen Schank: Okay. Are you familiar with the community church or the first Catholic church that was here?

Leona Hinton: No. I am LDS. They only had a few people that were. Of course, I am sure it was the same way with all the churches. Our neighbors went to the community church. I think they moved to Idaho after the war. I think that they went. They still belong to the community church.

Karen Schank: How did they fund that church? Do you remember?

Leona Hinton: It was right down – It is where the old– They have a senior place down there. Now they have built one out further on Racetrack Road. It was built for that, for the community church. I do not know whether they built it or BMI helped them. I know they did not with the LDS church, because my family would go and donate time for that, for all of those.

Karen Schank: To build it?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm.

Karen Schank: Okay. Where did you go to church before they built yours?

Leona Hinton

Leona Hinton: We went to the schoolhouse.

Karen Schank: Where was that at?

Leona Hinton: It was up where Garden McCullough is right now. We sat on benches like this. There were very few chairs. We had to go and sit on the table or whatever. That is where I think most of the churches started out, in the schoolhouse. I do not know about the Catholics. They are over on the other side of the highway. I do not think they had anything then. I do not know where they met.

Karen Schank: Okay. Was the schoolhouse used for any other social events?

Leona Hinton: Oh yes, they used it for nearly everything, if they had dinners or things like that, they were always held there at the schoolhouse gymnasium.

Karen Schank: Okay. When did the fire department close at BMI?

Leona Hinton: My husband got hurt in 1980, not on the fire department. He had to quit. He worked there 33 years. It stayed open for just a few years after that, and then it closed. I am not sure. Ethel should have had that on there.

Karen Schank: She said about 1982.

Leona Hinton: About 1982?

Karen Schank: Okay. Did they ever have chemical release problems into the community from BMI?

Leona Hinton: Oh yes. You could smell it, Stauffer's especially. You could smell it.

Karen Schank: What is Stauffers?

Leona Hinton: There was Stauffer Chemical down there.

Karen Schank: Okay.

Leona Hinton: Every once in a while they would let that old orange colored gas out. You could smell it everywhere. People would say Stauffer's has let more gas out today. I do not know whether they would get overflowed and have to or whatever, whether they did it on purpose or accidental, but they did.

Karen Schank: Did they ever move people out of the area?

Leona Hinton: A time or two we had to. I remember having to go to Boulder City when they let some of it off. We drove out there and stayed on the lawn or sat on the lawn, at their park. Every once in a while, but it was usually Stauffer Chemical Company that it would come from.

Leona Hinton

Karen Schank: How long would you have to stay in Boulder City?

Leona Hinton: Sometimes two or three hours, maybe three or four.

Karen Schank: Okay. The PEPCON explosion in the 1980s, do you remember that? Where were you when that happened?

Leona Hinton: I had been cleaning all morning, cleaning the house. My husband was working. It was noon, around noon. I thought I was going to lie down on the couch for a few minutes. Our daughter was married by then. I laid down on the couch and that boom went off. Then another one did and glass – I had a big picture window right over the couch. It broke that glass and it went clear across the room. There was a piece poking at my head. The couch was covered with it. There was a pointed piece like that, a great big long piece, pointing right at my head. It did not hit me. It is just a miracle it did not.

Karen Schank: Wow.

Leona Hinton: I jumped up off the couch and went out and stand on the front step, on the sidewalk. Then there was one more that went off. It was a really scary time. We had to board up the window until we could have one put in.

Karen Schank: Where were you living at this time?

Leona Hinton: On Basic Road, 234 West Basic Road. I still own that home.

Karen Schank: Do you?

Leona Hinton: Mm-hmm. My grandson is living in it.

Karen Schank: Is that part of –

Leona Hinton: The old town site.

Karen Schank: The old town site? Okay.

Leona Hinton: Yes.

Karen Schank: Was that build after Victory Village or before?

Leona Hinton: After.

Karen Schank: Okay. That was built by the government also?

Leona Hinton: Yes.

Karen Schank: Okay, great.

Leona Hinton

Leona Hinton: I remember when, it was only like, if you worked at the plant, it was only \$31.00 a month. If you did not, I do not know what it was. They gave the men that worked at the plant and the fire department first choice on those homes. We took one. There was a fellow that had been there. He had really left a mess. We were so tickled to get it, but we had to clean his mess up. He was a picture taker and finisher. He had blue all over the walls and the floor. I scrubbed for days and weeks, trying to get that off, never thinking about getting a gallon of paint and painting it.

[Laughter]

Karen Schank: When did you move in there, about what year?

Leona Hinton: 1947.

Karen Schank: Okay. Do you know the year they were built?

Leona Hinton: They would have been built – The war was 1941, wasn't it, and 1940? They started to build them right away. I would say they started to build them in 1941.

Karen Schank: Okay. What was your husband doing during the PEPCON blast?

Leona Hinton: He was working at the fire department. I do not know what he was doing. He was down there.

Karen Schank: Did they have any problems?

Leona Hinton: I do not know whether they went, whether they called them out or not. The fire department he worked for was for the plant. It was not for the city. They ended up working for the city too.

Karen Schank: Was it for the PEPCON plant?

Leona Hinton: It was all of them, PEPCON, Stauffer and TiMet. There were several of them in there.

Karen Schank: Wow. He was right at the heart of the explosion. Wow. Did he feel the blast?

Leona Hinton: Oh yes, and boy you could at the house too. It was just like an earthquake, I guess. The ground moved. We could see where it had moved the roof of the house a little bit. It was a scary thing.

Karen Schank: Compared with the past, how has Henderson changed today? Are there things that are the same and things that are different?

Leona Hinton: They have changed. I do not know whether it is for the good or the bad.

[Laughter]

Leona Hinton

Leona Hinton: We have a mayor and we have a city councilman. We have all those things now. Of course, in the old days when we first came here, everything was safer. They have a good police department now. [inaudible], I cannot think of his name. He was the constable or something. I think they had – I do not remember if they had any police. I do remember my little daughter, when my sister and I were working, she wandered away. It was getting to dusk. She wandered away up the alley. The police brought her home. She wandered up there and they had one bar.

That building is still there. It was the Henderson Drug Store and there was a bar and a barbershop right below it. She wandered in that bar. They sat her up on a barstool, a little 37-month-old girl. They sat her up on a barstool and I do not know how they found out, whether she told them where she lived, because they brought her home. It scared us to death. They had me, my sister and all the kids going up and down the alleys, hunting for her. Here she was, up there in the bar.

[Laughter]

Leona Hinton: They thought it was quite cute. They probably thought I was a neglectful mother.

Karen Schank: Okay. Is there anything else you would like to add to the memories of Henderson?

Leona Hinton: I think it is a nice place to live. There are a lot of nice people, and a lot of nice churches. I just enjoyed it. I had a garden. I planted a garden in my backyard. My husband did help. It is just a good place to live and I feel safe there. On Basic Road, I have always felt more safe living there than some of the other places in town.

Karen Schank: What kinds of things did you grow in your garden?

Leona Hinton: My mother grew Kentucky blue string beans. I always wanted to grow them down here. My husband built up the ground. He tilled the leaves that came off the trees. We always had trees there in the yard. He would till them in the ground. He had it really rich and nice. One year I decided to plant some string beans. I planted those string beans, two rows of them, just down by the wall. He had to build a big brick wall around our home and the back. I planted and he went down to the swamp and got willows cause they are pole beans. We really had many beans, green beans, off those vines.

I planted them nearly every year for a few years. We planted butternut squash one year. They just really produced. We had big bags of butternut squash I give away all the time. We cooked them. We loved them. We had onions. We would get onions from my mother and brother. We always raised onions to make the big onions. We called them onion sets, or they called them. We would bring onions down from her place and plant them. We would pull

Leona Hinton

them up when we wanted an onion, after they grew. They did really well. We planted some watermelon, but they did not do very good. We did cantaloupe, but they did not do very good either. They probably would have done, but I had fruit trees in the backyard also, apricot, peach and plum. We also had nectarines. They produced many fruit. It was so good. He built the ground up and had it really rich. Eventually those old cicadas ate them up and they died. My grandson said that he has planted some more trees back there this year.

Karen Schank: You said your husband was injured and had to quit the force. What happened?

Leona Hinton: Yes. He was in Las Vegas one night after work. He stopped at a gas station, way out toward the LA Highway. A man came up and asked him if he would take him home. He lived out to [inaudible] or somewhere in there. He said yes. He got him in the truck and took him home. On the way back, his pickup hit a chuckhole, one of the tires, and it was not traveled much, the road. He hit and it flipped his truck over. He laid there for eight hours with the battery acid. He was under the steering wheel. He was pinned in.

He laid there for eight hours with battery acid dripping all over him. His head was clear down to the scalp. They just said it was a miracle that it did not go on through. Finally a man that lived out in that area got off shift and was on his way home. He found him. He called the ambulance. They took him into Sunrise. He was there for three days and they said they had to airlift him to San Francisco where teams of doctors could work on him. They thought all of his skin was burned. He was black from here on up, just like a colored person. The acid made it. He had holes in his clothes that had gone through and made holes in his legs, just little ones. On his hands, he had one hand that was really – He must have tried to cover his face with one of his hands. It was really bad.

We were airlifted up to San Francisco. He had to have – We were there 37 days. He had to have plastic surgery and then they finally let him come home. That was October 30, 1980. We came home. They let us come home for Thanksgiving if someone would drive a motorhome up there and put him to bed. My daughter and her husband borrowed a motorhome and came up to bring him home. Then we had to go right back after Thanksgiving. He had to have new eyelids built. It burned his eyes. He had to have eyelids made. They took the skin off his legs here.

Karen Schank: Behind the knee?

Leona Hinton: The knee. They ran it through a meshing machine to put on his head for plastic surgery. He was really fortunate that he lived through it.

Karen Schank: Wow.

Leona Hinton: Then it was back and forth to San Francisco for about five years, getting more work done on him. At that time, I would not drive up there. We had to

Leona Hinton

have somebody. We flew for a while, back and forth. Then we could not afford it anymore because he was laid off at the plant. Some of the family or friends would drive us up. That was a terrible accident that he was in. He was just doing a good deed.

[Laughter]

Karen Schank: Okay. Thank you for your time.

Leona Hinton: You are welcome.

Karen Schank: We really appreciate it.

Leona Hinton: I hope –

[End of audio]