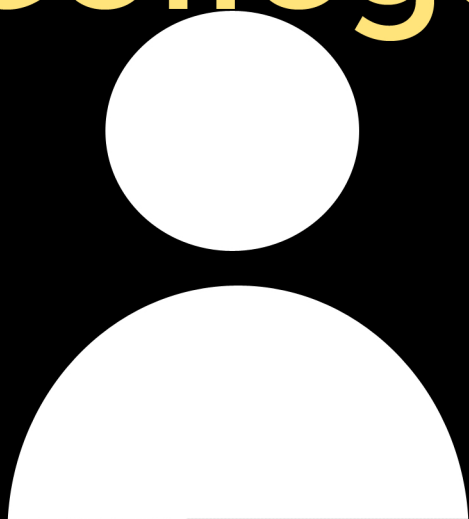


**Nevada State
College**



**Undergraduate Oral
History Project**

Oral History of Pastor Sam Roberson

An Interview

Conducted by

Gabrielle Yates & Cinnamin Stephens

May 05, 2014

Nevada State College Undergraduate Oral History Project

Produced by:

Nevada State College Undergraduate Oral History Project

Department of History, Nevada State College 89002

Directors: Peter La Chapelle, Ph.D. and Kate Hahn

Project Manager: Melissa S. Stoner

Project Assistants: Noelle Cruz and Laura Hutton

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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*.

Oral History of Pastor Sam Roberson

An Interview Conducted by Gabrielle Yates & Cinnamin Stephens on May 5, 2014

Biography

Pastor Sam Roberson is from Noxoli, Louisiana, and moved to Las Vegas after his high school graduation. He worked mostly in construction where he was able to meet and make professional connections with many people. He attended American Baptist Theological and received his certification for ministry.

Though he initially resisted his calling as a pastor, he continued to be involved with the Community Baptist Church. A pastor from the church began to include Roberson in his ministry program after noticing his talents; he would later replace the original pastor. Roberson has been an active member of the community for over 37 years. During those years, he built relationships with community leaders, taught many young pastors and ministers, and led his congregation to support and sponsor a residential complex for low-income senior citizens in Henderson. The Smith Williams Senior Apartment Complex is located where Carver Park was originally located.

Pastor Sam Roberson

Narrator: Pastor Sam Roberson

Interviewers: Gabrielle Yates and Cinnamin Stephens

Interview Date: May 5, 2014

Location: Henderson, Nevada

Gabrielle Yates: Today is May 5, 2014. My name is Gabrielle Yates and I'm sitting here interviewing Pastor Roberson, Sam Roberson of Community Baptist Church.

Pastor Sam: Here is a card if you need one.

Cinnamin Stephens: Thank you.

Gabrielle Yates: And the first question I'm going to ask about when did you first move to Henderson? Or when did you move to Las Vegas?

Pastor Sam: I came to Las Vegas in 1957 and I moved to Henderson in 1995 from North Las Vegas. [pause] But I lived in Las Vegas from '57 up to about '63. In '63 I moved to North Las Vegas and from North Las Vegas I moved to Henderson in 1995. I came to pastor Community Baptist Church in 1977 and---up until present time, which is 2014. So I been here thirty-seven years.

Gabrielle Yates: Do you have any children? Children?

Pastor Sam: Yep. I got six.

Gabrielle Yates: Six.

Pastor Sam: Yes; four boys and two girls.

Gabrielle Yates: What's their names?

Pastor Sam: Hmmmm, Vanessa, Antwan, Valerie, Derrick, Sam, Rodney.

Gabrielle Yates: And they all live here with you?

Pastor Sam: None live with me but all of them live here with the exception of two. Antwan lives in Seattle, Washington state and Sam Jr., lives in Lithonia, Georgia.

Gabrielle Yates: Okay. And you said you been here thirty-seven years, in the same position or did you work any place else?

Pastor Sam: Yes, I've done a little of everything. A little of hotel work, kitchen work, worked as a porter, as a matter of fact, I worked in, what's now called Green Valley before it was a Green Valley, they only had two houses out here. I worked on the golf course, Paradise Valley Country Club, I think it was called. I did labor work, construction. I worked as a cement mason in construction. I detailed cars and worked at the car wash. Worked at Mercury, done some of everything you could do legally. [laughter]

Gabrielle Yates: And you have been married for how long?

Pastor Sam: I think fifty-five years. I got married in 1959, same woman.

Gabrielle Yates: What's her name?

Pastor Sam: Earlene. That's her on this picture. Earlene, she was Earlene Jenson.

Gabrielle Yates: Was she from Vegas?

Pastor Sam: No, no, she is from Louisiana.

Gabrielle Yates: Louisiana.

Pastor Sam: Same little home town, little town called Newellton; N-e-w-e-l-l-t-o-n, Louisiana.

Gabrielle Yates: Someone told me that you used to have your own record store?

Pastor Sam: Yes, I did. I opened up a store in 1974, called the Religious Emporium and I closed it in 2008. I was located in the historical site of Moulin Rouge. There was going to rebuild it and asked everybody to move and of course they haven't rebuilt it yet. We still looking. So, like I said, I owned a record book store since 1977 to 2008. So we been closed since then.

Gabrielle Yates: Wow! I lived over there; I didn't know it was a store over there.

Pastor Sam: How long have you been over there?

Gabrielle Yates: I lived over there for about ten years.

Pastor Sam: Ohhhh, okay. We started out the store on D and Jackson, right there by Wesley's Barber Shop. Wesley been here a long time also, probably longer than I've been here, but I had my book store right by his barber shop, 1322 D Street. And Larry Music Store

was there also, of course Larry moved up on Owens and they call it Sight and Sound. When he was on D Street, it was Larry's Music Bar. And of course now, Larry passed away. He moved from Owens over onto Martin Luther King.

Gabrielle Yates: Yeah, okay. I know where that's at.

Pastor Sam: ...at the time. Yeah, I used to get my gospel music from him.

Cinnamin Stephens: What brought you to Las Vegas?

Pastor Sam: Well, my mom and dad was here and I wanted to get away from where I was. And I graduated high school in May of 1957 and caught the bus in July of 1957. [laughter] Took me three days to get here on bus, yeah, yeah, that's the reason, how come. Because I love it here. I love it here. I tell people I go many places and I said, "I like a place where I can see where I'm going if I get lost." Oh, I'm supposed be over---but in the other areas where there's wooded areas you can't see where you are. I don't like that. I like to be able to see where I am if I get lost. If I'm not where I need to be I can look and spot me a landmark and go there you know?

So I love it. I love it here. I like Henderson. To me, Henderson is much quieter than Las Vegas and the Strip, you know? It has its crime like anybody else have, but it's getting a little more congested as far as travel, but I like Henderson better than Las Vegas or North Las Vegas. I mean they were nice when I lived there, but now that I've been out here---I used to commute from North Las Vegas for about eighteen years pastoring here before I moved out here. And then I moved out here, and, but then I still go back to Las Vegas sometimes; once or twice a week or two or three times a week, going up there for different things and events so, something is always going on that I got to go there. Somebody said, "Well you should have stayed here." I said, "Well then I got to go to Henderson, you know." [laughter]

Cinnamin Stephens: Now what made you---how did you get involved in this church if you lived in Las Vegas?

Pastor Sam: There was a gentleman here, the organizer; his name was Reverend Parks, Sylvester Parks. And he asked me if I wanted to preach on the third Sunday of each month and I told him yes. Well, he stayed here about ten years and then he located to North Las Vegas. He lived up there so he organized a church there and I was still preaching here and they wanted me to stay on as pastor, so that's how it come to be.

So the church has only had two pastors: the organizer, Reverend Parks and myself. Reverend I.W. Wilson and Reverend Jesse Wesley, I think they were in the start up of Community Baptist Church in its beginning or its inception. There were many other pastors and preachers that came to Henderson to start churches that later on end up going back to Las Vegas or just stopped all together, you know, but he asked me about being out here. He stayed out here for about ten years and decided that he wanted to relocate.

So when I started here, we didn't have anything as far as, a building or land or anything. We had services over here, Wells Park now, but it was called the Women Club, Women, Pittman's Women Club, we had the church services in their building at the time and then we sought to get some land and we---I came in '77 and we started purchasing land in 1978 and we started this building in 1981. We moved in 1985, paying as we going along. Yep, so that's how it happened, you know?

Cinnamin Stephens: So you in---for this building, you've been the only pastor in this building?

Pastor Sam: In this building.

Cinnamin Stephens: It's been your baby from the beginning.

Pastor Sam: In this building. I said, "I don't know what yall going to do when I'm gone. But I'm quite sure y'all going to alright [laughter]." I said, "I'm not leaving; I'm going to live to be 100." They said, "Yeah, right. Who going to be pushing you around?" I said, "I may be pushing somebody." [laughter]

Gabrielle Yates: So do you have pastors underneath you?

Pastor Sam: I got other ministers, only one pastor. We got other ministers, we have Reverend Dr. William Brown, we have Reverend Richard Lewis Jr., we have Minister Mary Edwards, that was here when you came in, we have Minister Emma Love and she's a another I think that lived in Pittman---Carver Park back in the time and we have, who am I missing, I think that's about it. I think that's about it. I got Love, Richard, Brown, Mary, and myself. I think---I think I named all the ministers, you know, you can name them and forget one. You didn't name me, well....you know, we forgot you, that's all. But I think that's about five or six now. We had more, but

some of them relocated, moved away to some other place that kind of thing. But those are the ones that we have currently.

Gabrielle Yates: Did you go to college?

Pastor Sam: No, not really. I went to seminary, American Baptist Seminary, which is located in Nashville, Tennessee. I took an extension course here in Las Vegas. Yeah, they told me---I tell---I give them a joke. I said, "You know, I went to college once." [laughter] And I said, "I took my daughter, dropped her off [laughter]." Yes, she went to ASU in Phoenix, Vanessa did, yeah, yeah. But, no, I wanted to go, but just wasn't in the cards. Had a lot of training in other areas, but not as a full fledge college person.

Gabrielle Yates: But you push others to go to [inaudible] like you went too.

Pastor Sam: I try to encourage them to go on and further their education. We had some that matriculated from us. One girl named Tiffany, she relocated to Atlanta. I think she's a doctor now. She went overseas and got her training, Tiffany Woods at the time. She's in Atlanta, Georgia as a full fledge doctor.

We have some others that are here are in school. Some want to be veterinarians. I try to encourage them to go, you know, even though I did not listen to my advisors and those that told me to go didn't go and they said, "You're going to need it." Well, at that time I couldn't see where I needed; later on I did.

So I try to encourage those others to go. I tell them put something in your head instead of on your head. You know, it's important, you can always make it if you have education, you know? You can always wash dishes with an education, but you can't teach school if you don't have one, yeah.

Gabrielle Yates: Or opportunities.

Pastor Sam: Yeah, yeah. You can make it. I tell my young people now and I use the word hustling. I said hustling is not going to be as good for you as it was for me because we're living in a different society now and they want you to have the paper. I went and took my, one of my grandboys--- I just picked him up from Dixie University; it was Dixie College up in St. George. And I heard one of the teachers---professors there, he said, "A degree is important, we don't care what kind, just as long as you got a degree." And I thought that was very interesting. Get yourself a degree. I don't care if it's in picking up chips as long as they get a degree for it.

Gabrielle Yates: Basket weaving. [laughter]

Pastor Sam: If they give out a degree, get you one, you know because somebody ---like my other grandson that graduated from UNR in Computer Science, Trevail. He has a degree in Computer Science, but now he's serving as a substitute teacher. I said, "You have to go to school for that?" He said, "No, I didn't have to go to school, I already got the degree." All they want to know is if you got a degree. I said that's---that's important. That's important, you know. I was always good in school, I just didn't---in my hometown everybody was going to be a teacher. I didn't want to teach. I said "Guess what I'm doing now?" [laughter]

Gabrielle Yates: Teaching.

Pastor Sam: I'm doing what I didn't want to do and biblical teaching, you know, that kind of thing. I was trying to encourage some of the other young people to go ahead on and further their education and not waste their time, you know? Once it's wasted, you can't get it back.

Gabrielle Yates: Can't get it back.

Pastor Sam: Time is one thing you can't get back. Once it gone, it's gone. And like I said, they may not give you a job in your field, but you know you always got the paper and that paper is important. You know, I don't care where you go, you can ---wherever you go, if you got the paper, you might have to take another test to get in where you going, but it's always worth it to have that paper.

It's kind of like your driver's license, you can drive in any state as long as you got your license, you know? If you don't have a license, they'll pick you up and give you a ticket. But if you got the license, you get stopped, let me see your driver's license, got your license, okay.

You know, I was going through Alabama from Birmingham going back to Atlanta, Georgia, driving real fast. I set my speedometer on 85 and I was going. Highway Patrolman came up the other side, facing me and went up and turned around. I knew he had got me. And he said that, "You know you going 85?" I said, "Nah, I didn't know I was going 85." He said, "You were. Where you going in such a hurry?" I said, "I'm going to Atlanta." Wrote me a ticket, it took me three years to get that off my driver's record.

But it's off now, you know, but as I was saying if you got your degree, if you got your paper, doors will open, opportunities will come where they won't come if you don't have that paper. It's a struggle. It's a sacrifice, but once you make it, it's worth it. It's worth it, yeah. Yeah, I tell the young preachers, you said that God has called you to preach. Well, go to school. They don't teach you how to preach, it's just kind of help you to rightly divide the word. Go to school, get an education and get the paper because somebody is going to be looking for somebody with the papers. Whereas you might be a great speaker, a great orator, but you don't have the paper and we looking for somebody that has the paper that matriculated that shows that they're going someplace so---. I applaud both of you young ladies, you get the paper. It's important.

Cinnamin Stephens: Now, did your kids go to school here in Las Vegas?

Pastor Sam: Yes. They was born and raised here. Went to [pause] grade school, high school and then my daughter, Valerie, graduated from UNLV. Sam Jr., graduated from Morris Brown, those the only two that graduated from college you might say. The others got good jobs and good opportunities, but they all graduated from high school, but not necessarily from a college. But they're doing good.

Cinnamin Stephens: Now did you see a lot in this community, a lot of change?

Pastor Sam: Yeah, this community is---that we're sitting in used to be what they call Pittman, Nevada---Pittman and I forgot what year it was incorporated into the Henderson area, but it's all Henderson now. But right here, I think up to Sunset, I think it went from---I'm not sure about the boundary, but I know right in here where we are, it used to be called Pittman. For years they kept the Pittman Post Office right up the street here. But I think they closed it up and now it's all Henderson.

Yeah, but I was telling the mayor, Mayor Gibson, I was talking to him I wanted to relocate the church to another area but I didn't want to be in Green Valley. I wanted to be on this side of Green Valley. And found a piece of land on Lake Mead, right there [inaudible 0:21:24] Warm Springs through to Lake Mead and there was a piece of property over there in this corner and there was one on this corner that I was interested in and he said, "Well I don't know about those two pieces." But the city of Henderson owns this other park and that was Carver Park and it was just sitting there in vacant. They have some of the old slab still there. I wanted to relocate the church there and they had 13.5 acres. I

wanted it all, the whole 13.5 but financially we couldn't get it. So, in that we got 8.145 acres and we took three acres and put up a Senior Housing Complex, called Smith Williams, right up here on Lake Mead.

Cinnamin Stephens: Is that off of, like, over behind, like Wal-Mart?

Pastor Sam: No, no, no, no, no. It's, I guess north or east or whatever it is of Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart sits up on the corner of Boulder and we down on your way to Lake Las Vegas, to your left.

Cinnamin Stephens: Okay.

Pastor Sam: But going there, you'll see some old concrete pads still out there, all that was Carver Park. And over there where the Elks Club is, that was part of Carver Park. So we built eighty units there for senior housing, one and two bedrooms. And we been open know since now, ohhhhh, 2011, yeah and it's full, with a waiting list.

Cinnamin Stephens: That's great! Do remember much about Carver Park? Do you ever associate with it or?

Pastor Sam: When Reverend Parks was pastoring he had church in the administration building. And we used to sing, I had a little singing quartet group. And we go singing, help to raise some money trying to build and that kind--- but I didn't live in the---frequent the area too much until such time as I go and worship with him or fellowship with Reverend Parks and then, of course, he left out the Pittman---not Pittman, but left out of the Carver Administration Building and they gave him an apartment.

I think Apartment C, I forgot what street it was on and every time it rained, you know, they had to sweep the water so they can have church and eventually they tore all that down. And then the church moved over to the Catholic Church, right there on Boulder, I forget the name of it now. And we had a room there in the Catholic Church and from there he moved down here to the Pittman Women Club Building. And then after that, he left and we built this building right here, yeah, so that's kind of the history of that.

But I didn't---I didn't live in Carver Park or visit too much, you know, in Carver Park, we do have one other member that I think lived in Carver Park, that's a member here, her name is Rachel Bowman, that lived in Carver Park during that time. But Carver Park was one of those areas where everybody lived; black, white,

Hispanic, everybody. Of course it was a segregated area during that time. Black folks here, white folks over here.

Cinnamin Stephens: Oh ok. Inside - - within the park?

Pastor Sam: Within the whole complex.

Cinnamin Stephens: It was segregated?

Pastor Sam: Right, right.

Cinnamin Stephens: Okay.

Pastor Sam: Right, right. Because that was during that particular time, you know. It wasn't until about 1960 that Las Vegas and all the other areas become integrated, you know, so for the time before that everybody lived in there. Most of the blacks lived on the Westside. About 1960 when integration came in and open housing came in and everybody kind of---kind of scattered so---that goes the saying, you can throw a rock on the house now and ain't no telling who would run out, you know, that kind of thing.

But like I said, I didn't live in there but just from what people told me. Diane was one of those because she lived in Carver Park. It was nice, she said, you know everybody do what they do, you know, you gotta have a place to live and Carver Park at that time was just about it, for living, I think.

Gabrielle Yates: [inaudible]

Pastor Sam: Yeah, for probably back in the fifties and up, you know, because Henderson a lot of them lived here in Henderson while they were building the dam, you know, they lived ---you'll see a lot of the old part of Henderson all from Boulder Highway, those little houses up in there was used during the time of building Boulder Dam and then we had the magnesium plant and it served for building bombs and whatnot for World War II that's still sitting there.

You know, eventually they're going to move them I'm quite sure. But it's still sitting there and they were building bomb---never been inside just---from what I heard about it, you know. Henderson years ago used to be known as Stinksville, you know, the sewage and whatnot was coming in coming from the plant and whatever but those days are gone now. Those days are gone. Henderson at one time was known as the fastest growing city in America, just a few years ago.

I think North Las Vegas is now the fastest growing city. I'm not so sure how fast, but back during that era you had about three or four thousand people coming per month to Henderson, you know in Green Valley. And when I left North Las Vegas, they say, "Oh you moving to Green Valley," I said, "I'm moving to Henderson." Because if you call the police, it's Henderson police, Green Valley is just a place in Henderson, it aint, you know, but you know, it's kind like upper crust you might say [laughter].

Cinnamin Stephens: Now, since you're able to distinguished between Green Valley and Henderson and you know you make that distinction and I was around, that was ---it was a battle where Green Valley wanted its own....?

Pastor Sam: Yeah.

Cinnamin Stephens: ...so what do you remember about that?

Pastor Sam: I don't remember the battle of the struggle, but I know they didn't win. [laughter] It's still Henderson. It's still Henderson. It's kind of like, Summerlin is Las Vegas, you know, I live in Summerlin, you live in Las Vegas. Henderson, I mean, Las Vegas---Summerlin just a locale in ----and it's nice out there, I'm not putting it down, but they just don't have their own township. Somebody told me it cost a lot of money to get that and be incorporated and become your own city. It may happen, but it ain't happening right now. So we still have Green Valley, we got the Anthems, we got Lake Las Vegas, even though it's Las Vegas, but it's in Henderson.

Henderson has---I been told have more land space then Las Vegas, you know? Now, Las Vegas goes to a certain point and then the rest of that is county, you know, like the Strip, the Strip is county. It's not Las Vegas, but we think it is. So I've been told that Henderson has more acreage, more land space than Las Vegas. Now Lake Las Vegas is nice, very expensive homes and that kind of thing, but it's still Henderson. Where the M is on St. Rose, it's Henderson, you know? St. Rose Dominican on Eastern, that's Henderson, you know, Henderson is pretty good size when you start looking at it---driving around it and that kind of thing. You go down Water Street it's kind of like the historical part of Henderson because that was it. That was a town or whatever the case maybe.

Like I said, I moved out here and start building this building in 1978 and I go down to city hall and my paperwork and got along

with everybody. Everybody was so---so nice. They lost my plans [laughter] and six sets of plans, here yall lost [inaudible] all of them [slap noise]! Well, at that particular time now where city hall and all that stuff it was a lot of trailers and they hadn't built city hall and all that stuff at that particular time, you know, that came along later. And I forget the name of the gentleman that worked down there. Because they had the master and they said, "Well, we still need some more plans." I said, "No, I'm not leaving these plans. If you lost six, you won't lose these." He said, "Well, I'll stay here with you and we'll make another set." I said, "Okay, make another set, but I'm not leaving." And they made another six sets for them or whatever. I still got the master set you know, but I've been able to get along with everybody.

And then after when after I moved out here in '95 then I got on the Henderson Police Department as a Chaplain. I still serve, me and about ---I think it's about eight of us now, but five of us serve for a long time going out on jobs, death calls and sometimes you go down to the jail and talk to the inmates and all that. Larry Burns, Chief Burns wanted to put together a Chaplainship Program and he orchestrated that before he retired. So [inaudible] pretty much going on every since---just trying to be a part of where you live and that kind of thing.

I was telling my grandson, bringing him home from Dixie College, I said, "You know, a name is rather to be chosen than all the riches." Gotta have good name. If your name is good, it opens doors for you. You might not have a dime, you might not need one, but if your name is good, if your reputation is good, then people will help you, if you got a good reputation. And that works.

[crosstalk inaudible]

Cinnamin Stephens: I'm sorry.

Pastor Sam: Go ahead.

Cinnamin Stephens: I was saying, did you notice, did they changing the name [inaudible] substation right here? The Henderson Substation.

Pastor Sam: Not really and I guess I don't---I live on John Henry, which is kind of on the edge, you might say of Green Valley, right off of Stephanie. And when I come over to here it's more or less at the church. Well, the police riding in and out of here all the time so I see very little crime and whatnot even though when they opened it up, I went over to---for the ground breaking as a chaplain and I

Pastor Sam Roberson

went back when they built the building to have prayer and that kind of thing.

The came over here and did a good job on building up Wells Park, you know, it used to be a little dingy park there. But they came in and they expanded on the park and made it so much nicer. My only regret is they didn't make the building large enough. I was hoping that when they were building it, then I said, "But y'all didn't ask me." [laughter] But they come in and made the parks so much, so much nicer.

Now as you see driving through there putting down sidewalk and getting ready for street lights, you know, I tell them sometime when I'm talking to the mayor, our area is the lighted area, you know, they kind of doing something about it now, putting some street lights in and that kind of stuff. Like I said, earlier it was called Pittman. And know they spending some dollars down here and that kind of thing.

I find it to be a nice neighborhood to be in, you know, I guess you got crime everywhere but its---to me it's a safe area to be in. We're here at the church just about every day except Saturday. And we give away food on Tuesday and we have people from wherever to come in that need food. Sometime we feed, excuse me, from eighty to one hundred fifty a week, giving away food and that kind of thing, but we have not had any trouble or [inaudible] from anybody. Sometimes they park in our parking lot and they say, "They parking on our parking lot," I say, "Ahhhh, you gotta be careful now, you don't want to mess around and alienate nobody because if they parking on it that mean they got an eye on the building." We had to look at it a different way. They don't have an eye to break in it, but if they see anything happening they can be able to tell somebody, you know, that kind of thing. So you don't want to---

Gabrielle Yates: We want to come and fellowship with you, Pastor Roberson.

Pastor Sam: I need you to come and fellowship with me, Sunday.

Gabrielle Yates: I don't think--- I go to Nehemiah with Pastor West. [laughter]

Pastor Sam: Okay, I tell you what, we have---

Gabrielle Yates: Remember you came to the---[crosstalk inaudible].

Pastor Sam: Yep. We have ---we have---we have, Sherry, I think that's her name, Sherry. She is going to be one of our speakers in June. [inaudible] I'm going to be gone, I'll be in Dallas, Texas, you know, Sherry that does Channel 8 News?

Gabrielle Yates: I don't really watch the news.

Pastor Sam: Well, anyway, she is going to be one of our speakers. She goes to Nehemiah also. Yeah, and Reverend Rankin will be preaching here, June 29. Kelsey will be teaching here---not the 29th, Rankin will be preaching on the 9th of June. Pastor Kelsey will be teaching on the 8th of June. So we got a close relationship. So if he happened to look up and miss you and tell you, "I'm going up to Community Baptist," he say, "Go ahead." You have to be careful where we go visit. Can't just go everywhere, you know?

But we be glad to have you, you know, then you could meet Rachel. Rachel, as I said, probably one of the older members that we have that lived in Carver. There's another lady we have that don't comes as much now because of illness and her name is Mary Albert. She lived to raise her children in Carver Park. Like I say, she's not in the best of health, but they're probably two of the older ones that are now living. There's another gentleman name Alexander Love, he don't come much now because he's been sick for the last few years. His wife is one of the ministers of our church.

Cinnamin Stephens: Pamela.

Pastor Sam: Pamela, yeah. They lived in Carver Park back in the day. That might be---have a little more to offer than what I've given, you know, I just give an overall view and that kind of stuff. I work construction work through here back in the day, putting in water lines and sewer lines and Boulder City, we piped that whole city, back in the day water lines and all that kind of stuff; hard construction. Can't go to school like you going, but I went to school of hard knocks [laughter].

Cinnamin Stephens: Can I ask you a question about, you mentioned Moulin Rouge and ---did you visit---did you go there, you know?

Pastor Sam: When it was open?

Cinnamin Stephens: When it was open, yeah.

Pastor Sam: No, my uncle, Eugene Roberson, had moved out here from Louisiana and he helped build it.

Cinnamin Stephens: Oh okay.

Pastor Sam: It wasn't open that long because of segregation. Part of the history is that the entertainers from the Strip would come over there and congregate and---the powers that be, they didn't want to mix and mingling. And so eventually, closed down, it ---it was short lived. The Moulin Rouge, Carver House, the Carver House used to be located there on the corner of Jackson and D. Very nice upscale hotel. But then, again, it closed down as well, so---we haven't had anything over there now for a long time.

Carver House was ---it was state of the art man, you know, it was--
-it was nice. It was nice. I sat with the Jackson Avenue Merchant Association trying to get that area revitalize and it just didn't happened. We served with Mayor [inaudible], Bob Bailey and several of us had the Jackson Avenue Merchant Association trying to get that together. Bob is not doing good now. He's in poor health.

But the Westside of Las Vegas when I came here it was---it was popping like the Strip. I mean, because of segregation. That was the only place you could go basically, so ---. It was open 24/7, you know, they had the Louisiana Club and Town Tavern, several clubs that were opened at that time. Everybody was---they had their business, you know? And then after integration came in, everybody kind of scattered. So it left it kind of blighted, you know, we were the Jackson Avenue Merchant Association was trying to get it back up to par, which unfortunately it didn't happen you know, and like they say, talk is cheap, take money to buy land.

Gabrielle Yates: Would you say it almost because of that they're trying to build up around it and not really be bothered with it so much?

Pastor Sam: Well, if you know Las Vegas, they build around you and try to come in, but they only going to come in so far. So rather than building around us and coming in, they went to Summerlin and they got ---well naturally so, you can't buy two-three hundred acres out there and just build anything whereas in the Westside it's sort of like a confine area, you got your little lot, I got my little lot, I got my little house, somebody else got their little house and rather than coming in uprooting everybody, they just went on over there to the mountains, just bought two-three-four-five hundred acres and just built another whole area, you know?

That area may in time do something, but then again, it may not. They got just the other side of that area, other side of Bonanza and they built another shopping area, but on this side, the north side of Bonanza they didn't do anything. So between, well you might say between Rancho and Main Street and from Bonanza, you might say up to Cheyenne and very little had been done. Built a few warehouses and then North Las Vegas came off of 215 and built a new community called Aliante. Everybody moved out where they could buy them, you know, four, five hundred thousand acres and they could develop it into whatever kind of community that you go in. Now since we have open housing, you can live anywhere if you can pay the rent, if you got a job, you know? But at that particular time everybody was kind of confined in that area, black, white, Hispanics as well, right there on Westside.

Cinnamin Stephens: So the Hispanic lived in the Westside as well?

Pastor Sam: Correct. Maybe it may not been as many but they was in there.

Cinnamin Stephens: Were they segregated as well? Like they couldn't live with---or was it their choice to be---did they feel more comfortable or was it just---?

Pastor Sam: Well, I think they felt kind of comfortable, but those who lived in the area, you take where KCP is now and you might have heard that already from somebody else; it was called the Westside School. Everybody went to that school; black, white, everybody. Everybody went to that school and then as they built those schools then it became vacant and KCP moved in and they remodeled and you know, and did whatever. Now KCP occupies the whole building but when we first went to that building we had the little room like so, you know and then it expanded.

Gabrielle Yates: Wasn't EOB was one of those that was closing?

Pastor Sam: EOB, yeah, they were in there. Well, KCP is still owned by EOB, but EOB was also a part of that whole structure at the time before they kind of lost a lot of their properties and that kind of thing, but yeah that was the Westside School there.

Cinnamin Stephens: Now with you're saying now segregation, you're segregated to the Westside and they did the sixth grade centers in like the seventies?

Pastor Sam: Somewhere along in there, what I'm thinking. And they did the sixth grade center because whites did not want to come to the Westside, you know, and they figured they come over here that

one year, sixth grade, and they bussed them over or whatever the case maybe and everybody else was just confined to here, and a few blacks who had moved into those areas got bussed over there as well, but most of that was for the white population for the most part, sixth grade centers. And they had them all on the Westside, so they bussed some---they bussed some over. I don't know if that's still active now because they built some more schools like Charles West School and a few others.

Gabrielle Yates: What they do down for the high school students, [inaudible] they bus them to Canyon Springs they don't let them go to West Center, Rancho or A-Tech or Vo-Tech so they by-pass all of them?

Pastor Sam: Mmmm hmmm.

Gabrielle Yates: Where they could go to them, they don't allow them to go there.

Pastor Sam: Mmm hmmm. They still have them there and they're trying to, I think I'm great; I'm going to do some other things with them. School district owns the property and that kind of thing, but as Las Vegas has grown so much and everybody kind of move in different areas or whatever more schools and so therefore is not confined to that area like it was. In the past, they had the Westside schools, they had Madison, Matt Kelley, you know, those kinds of schools, but during the days that even before integration set in you had some mixing and mingling of black and whites that was going to those schools at the time. Got along fine. Seemed like to me they did. Anyway, I didn't go to school out here at all. I went to school in Louisiana.

Cinnamin Stephens: Do you know Judge---he was a judge, Jerry Davis?

Pastor Sam: Yes.

Cinnamin Stephens: He went to school and he was the---in his first or second---grade class, he was the only black child in his class.

Pastor Sam: Yeah, yeah. He was judge in North Las Vegas. Yeah, I sold him, I sold him a robe from my store. He wanted to have him a nice colorful robe and with all these African colors to it. And he was [inaudible] he ran into some bad problems and the end of his career, so to speak. But he was quite a guy. He was quite a guy. Yeah, he was one of those who grew up, grew up over there and that kind of thing. I remember the days when Senator Reid, when he was hanging out at the Town Tavern with some of the guys, you know?

You know, when he was a young lawyer and that kind of thing and as he matriculated up the ladder---of course you know, he hadn't had a chance to come worship with us in several years now. Whenever I meet him, I say, you got to come back and worship. When he came to worship, he stayed till the end, you know and he came one Sunday and I said, I don't know if he was senator or what he was at that particular time but I said, "I want you to speak to our young people and tell them how it was with you and how you---how you grew up, you haven't always been where you are now."

And I want the young people---he said, "Oh, I'd be glad to." And that's when he told us about how he lived in Searchlight and he would walk to Basic to get an education, you know, of course you ain't got to walk now, you got a car or a bicycle or moped or something [laughter]. But I did know it was refreshing to hear it from him being that he's white, Caucasian and how he had to go through that kind of situation to get where he is now.

And it was a labor of work, you know, they kind of put him down now because of this, that and the other and they got to have something to shoot at, you know. He didn't just---he wasn't born with no silver spoon in his mouth, in my opinion, you know? We talk, we wasn't no bosom buddies but we knew each other. I think I got him on my phone here, we took a picture together, probably one---maybe not the last time but the---a few times that we were together. I don't know if he's in this set of pictures or not, but he's quite a guy.

And then he been working in with the President, sort of hand in hand. He brought him here when he was a senator. Harry Reid brought Obama here when he was a senator, had something over at [pause] I think it was Nevada Partners, I'm not sure where it was but they were good together. [inaudible] I thought I had it on my phone. I guess I don't have it and I was looking for it too, looking too fast, whatever the case maybe, that kind of thing. I used to go down and have my [inaudible] souvenir book, ahhh, I'll take a page out.

Gabrielle Yates: Oh, talk about souvenirs books, here is a classic that you would really appreciate.

Pastor Sam: Oh yeah!

Gabrielle Yates: Here you go.

Pastor Sam Roberson

Pastor Sam: [laughter] okay, okay, yeah, yeah. You know that lady that put that together was sitting here...

Gabrielle Yates: Kelly.

Pastor Sam: Yeah, yeah.

Gabrielle Yates: Got you a Community Baptist Church Honors Pastor Sam Roberson 25 Silver Anniversary.

Pastor Sam: Yeah, that's nice, that's nice. I thought I had one on here with Harry Reid and I---but I guess I don't---I don't see it no more. Maybe I don't have it any longer. But---thank you.

Gabrielle Yates: You're not keeping it; you're just going to look at it.

Pastor Sam: [laughter] Okay, yeah, yeah.

Cinnamin Stephens: Now were you close with Senator Gibson---senator---Mayor Gibson you know---?

Pastor Sam: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We still are. We still are. We worked together. In fact when he got ready to run for the governor he called me and said, "Sam, I'm going to run for the governor and I want you to be there when I make my announcement."

And so I was. I think I still have it. I went forward and [pause] I don't see it now, I know where it is. I had a picture that I'm saving---I don't see it. I don't see it anywhere. I'm looking over it maybe.....that he and I made, we were just standing there talking and somebody took a picture and they blew it up and it went all over the state. They say, "Well, can we use this?" I said, "Sure." These are my two grandsons.

Gabrielle Yates: Okay.

Pastor Sam: Those are Valerie's two boys. This one here---those---when he was in college at Silver City, New Mexico and [pause] [inaudible] oh, that's Sister Ragsdale, she left here and she moved to go back to Fresno. Knew this guy here that on the boardwalk, Bob [inaudible] I think he passed away, Bob did. [inaudible] on Sunset and he moved to Pahrump. I don't know if his wife still living or not. And that's Henderson Police, they put it in my---this was 25, what year was that? 2002, okay. 2002, yeah, we haven't done a

Pastor Sam Roberson

book lately, bout time to do---bout time to do another one. How you come by it?

Gabrielle Yates: Sam. Sam Smith.

Pastor Sam: Oh yeah. Okay, I know Sam.

Gabrielle Yates: He owns a bookstore, it's off of J and Owens.

Pastor Sam: Oh yeah, I thought he had closed up because he---I was on D and Jackson he was on D and Monroe.

Gabrielle Yates: Right and then he moved to [inaudible] and then he moved right next to the welfare office, that's where he is at now.

Pastor Sam: Oh okay, because I know he retired from the fire department.

Gabrielle Yates: Right.

Pastor Sam: And sometime he would send down and see if I had a book or sometime I'll send folks up there to see if he had a book and---I dealt in religious books and he just dealt in black culture more or less. Sometime he'll have another kind of book there, but---yeah, I know Sam. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, I hope you got enough.

Cinnamin Stephens: Very Interesting, very interesting.

Pastor Sam: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I tell people, you know, I came here when I was nineteen and I don't think it's any other part of the country that I would like to live in, really.

Cinnamin Stephens: Have you traveled a lot though?

Pastor Sam: Traveled a lot. Matter fact, I'm leaving in a week or two, going to Tucson, got to teach class down in Tucson, Arizona. But I'm with the National Baptist Convention USA Incorporated, so I get a chance to travel a lot. In June we'll be in Dallas for a week, going to class up there and then in September, the National Baptist Convention will be in New Orleans. And we travel there and we get a chance to go around and we have other classes and that kind of thing and I'm often in Nashville because we owned the American Baptist College there in Nashville since 1924 the Baptist Convention own that school.

That's the one that I graduated from in American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee. Yeah, but it's been interesting, I love it

you know, folks say, "You talk a lot." I say, "You can only talk if you got something to say, you know, and you don't have to say the same thing." You don't have to make it up either, you know, you just flow. I've seen a lot since I've been here. I've seen some changes when I first came here in '57, I went down to the Mint Hotel down there on Fremont Street; you can't drive through now. And I was looking for a job and of course I went through the front and they sent me through the back. I mean, that's the way it was in the fifties, you know, I don't know if I got a job there or not, but I worked a lot of hotel work, you know, and that kind of thing, but I love it.

Cinnamin Stephens: Did you find it hard to find a job because of ---?

Pastor Sam: No.

Gabrielle Yates: No.

Pastor Sam: No, in those days you could quit over there and go to work over here. You didn't have to go online. [laughter] You just showed up--- a lot of time if you showed up at the change of shift, I've worked every shift--- you work 11 to 7, 2 to 10, 7 to 3, but if you showed up, say, 10, 10:30 at night and the next shift start at 11 o'clock, somebody didn't show up, that was a chance that you can go to work. You know, either in the dish room or whatever the case may be.

Mostly the kitchen part of the hotel would have that 11-7 because at that time they had shows and shows then had dinners, they don't have dinners anymore. They may serve you some drinks, but back in the day they served dinners and you can tell the breaking up the show, the show was getting ready to break and then dishes would be coming out of your ears. And they had the dish washer, you got to scrape all the food out and put it in the dishwasher, dishwasher washed them and the plates were scalding hot and you had to have gloves on to take them out of there, you know, but hey, like I said, I've done a little bit of everything. I got married early and had to do something to take care of the family. So you do what you do.

[End of Audio]