

This is Barbara Tabach and today is February 26th, 2015. I am in the Summerlin home of Henry Kronberg.

Henry, spell your last name for us.

K-R-O-N-B-E-R-G.

I want to thank you very much for agreeing to sit here and talk with me for this project.

It's quite an amazing story that you have. I've heard bits about it.

When you live long, you have plenty of stories to tell. The longer you live, the more stories you've got to tell.

That's good, huh?

That's good.

So start out for me with your childhood. I know you were born and raised in Poland. Talk about that, the prewar.

I was born originally Germany. When I was a baby, we moved to a Polish town that actually used to be right on the border between Germany and Poland. It was Katowice; that's in Silesia. You probably wouldn't know the town as much because the town doesn't have much historical things, but it's about forty miles away from Kraków. That's about it. And my childhood...my childhood was like a normal childhood. I went to school. My father was a watchmaker. My mother was a hat maker. Life was tough. They didn't have much money. I had a sister who was a year older than I. I had a normal family. I did start in Europe the education. I got my education in public school. But going to high school, you had to pay. The public school education was free and it was compulsory, but going to high school was just like going to college. So I never got more than the public education and I started working when I was fourteen years old.

What did you work at?

I worked in a material store. They were selling goods mostly for men's suits. Everything in Europe at my time, people didn't go to buy a suit. Mostly, mostly had it tailor made. So you had to buy the material. So that store is where I was working until the war.

It seems to be a common occupation when I do these histories that the grandfather or somebody—

Were the tailors.

—were tailors, yes.

A lot of tailors. My wife was a dressmaker and her father was a tailor. Well, she started actually, she got her education—not education, but I mean she grew up in a house where they were tailoring. So she became a dressmaker.

Yes, that really does set an occupation. So you didn't become a watchmaker like you father.

No, my father want me to become a watchmaker. But I didn't like it because my father used to sit many times. He had a little shop and during the day he attend to the customers and stuff, so he didn't have a chance to work on the watches. Many times he used to work until one o'clock in the morning and two o'clock at night where nobody disturbed him. That's how he was physician fixing the watches, during the time when nobody disturbed him. So I didn't like it. And besides that I had to...not make a living, but I had to get a job, and that's why I started working when I was fourteen years old.

Because you needed to contribute to the household income.

That's correct. That's correct.

So the conditions of the life at that era that would have been what year? Fourteen you

would have been...what year would that have been?

That was in '30s, early '30s. I would say 1934.

I've read your story. Did you ever write about your Holocaust experiences?

Yeah.

You have a book, too?

No, I never wrote a book. But I think you can Google me.

Well, I did.

You did? I have made a few speeches because I'm a Holocaust survivor.

And that story began for you when you were the age of nineteen?

Yes.

You've given your testimony. I know you've been interviewed about your Holocaust experiences, so that we have access to. What I'd like to do today is maybe if you can tell us a little bit about that and then the importance of sharing that story, how that became possible because I've got friends whose parents never told them that they were Holocaust survivors until they were adults.

When I came to the United States, I never want to tell. I mean people knew about it. I was not comfortable telling the stories. I was not comfortable. Even when my daughter was born and when she was old enough to ask me about it, I never wanted to talk about it because it was painful and used to bring a lot of memories, which I didn't want at all. But when "Schindler's List" came out, the movie "Schindler's List," I realized that somebody has to tell the stories. It was at that time when I opened up, actually, and I start sharing my experience.

So tell me about how that—"Schindler's List," for people who would be listening to this interview in the future...

I'll tell you. When the war broke out, we lived in a town, which was a border town between Germany and Poland. In school where I went we learned both languages, Polish and German. So I spoke fluently German. When the war broke out we knew that the town is going to be a hundred percent German town. And we, my father and I, went to Kraków that was about thirty, forty miles away, which was not too far. But we were told over that there was a bigger Jewish population there and we thought maybe we'd be a little safer than actually in our own town. So that's what I did.

The plan that we actually had...we had some friends on the east part of Poland. When the war broke out, my sister and my mother—my sister was married at that time. We had some friend, which lived on the east part of Poland. So we felt that over there maybe the Germans wouldn't occupy and maybe we would be much safer up there on the east part of Poland. So my mother and my sister and her husband went there. The plan was my father and I were supposed to follow them. But our plan never materialize because the Germans took over and we couldn't travel by train and the situation deteriorated where we could never get where my mother and my sister were. We actually lost contact with them.

Wow.

So I knew through some information, I found out they rounded my sister and her husband. They managed to go on the Russian side. And I knew that my mother was left in that little town where she was. I found out later on that she didn't survive. I didn't know the circumstances what happened, but I knew that she didn't survive. And I didn't know nothing about my sister's fate with her husband. The war was over and still I didn't know what happened with her.

But my father and I stayed in Kraków. I don't want to go to details, but the Germans came into Kraków. They took over and they made us do all kinds of manual work and we had to

report all the Jews especially men from I think it was sixteen years old. Every day we had to report to like a labor department, which they were assigning us to all kinds of different jobs and mostly was manual jobs, cleaning the street. Wintertime, we had to shovel snow or clean the street because Poland was cold and the snow was always on the ground all winter long. So we would actually clean snow most of the wintertime.

Food was very scarce and many times we had to look for different jobs to do something. Mostly everything used to be on the black market. We used to have ration cards, but the ration cards were very small. It was a tough, tough life at that time.

The war started in 1939. In 1941, they moved us to ghetto in Kraków, ghetto. Conditions was very, very bad. But before they moved us to ghetto—and that's what I was telling you story about that we had to report every morning to working department, they call. Mostly the Germans came in the morning to that working department there and they needed, let's say, twenty people or fifteen people to unload carloads of coal or whatever they needed.

Mostly manual labor.

Manual labor. So they came in and said, “Look, I need twenty people.” That's where we were. We never got paid or we never got nothing. But many places where we used to work, they used to have kitchens, which they were feeding their people. I mean the department had kitchens or whatever it was. One day I was picked up by some Germans. I didn't know who they were, but later on I found out that there was a Gestapo headquarter. They picked us up because they were confiscating people's property and furniture, so they needed somebody to carry it. So they picked up fifteen guys on the truck and we went away. In this Gestapo headquarter, they had a kitchen there, which they were feeding their Gestapo. So because we were workers they gave us a bowl of soup. So we actually were looking for—we had to go to work anyplace. So we were

always trying to push ourselves. We found out, oh, this place has a kitchen, so we might get a meal. So I was fortunate to be picked by that place and we got a meal. The labor, whatever we had to do, it was hard labor, but at least we got something to eat. That's what we were looking for.

I was picked up by that Gestapo headquarters and we went following day because the same guy used to come in. So he picked me up again. We became actually like a regular group, which was going to that place, the Gestapo headquarters. At that Gestapo headquarters I met one fellow who used to live in my hometown and he worked at the headquarters as a house painter. He was their foreman. At that headquarters they had all kinds of people working at the headquarters—there were mechanics; there were carpenters; there were house painters—because it was a huge headquarters. There was hundreds and hundreds of officers over there. So they needed maintenance. So I started talking to that foreman and I told him, “Maybe you need a helper.” So he said, “I don't need a helper right now, but if I need a helper...” He asked me do I know how to paint. I said, “Sure.” I never had a paintbrush in my hand. So I told him, “Yeah, I know how to paint.” Sure enough, a week later he asked me; he managed to make me as a painter and I became a regular. Actually, I became fully employed.

As employed as you could be in that situation.

Yes, as an employee. The people who were permanently employed there, they were getting two meals a day and that was the main thing behind it.

Because that's your goal is to survive.

That's exactly the truth, to survive.

And your father, what was he doing?

He was working. At that time he was fixing watches and he worked. He was lucky that they

didn't take him to any different jobs and he was working as a watchmaker in a place. But life was tough. The reason why I'm telling you this story...because that Gestapo headquarters while I was working on, they were in charge, the people, Gestapo, they were in charge of ghetto and they were in charge of all the Jewish affairs. When they took us in the Kraków ghetto, the Gestapo, because we were permanent workers there—I forgot to mention that also at the headquarters there were shoemakers. They had a shop of shoemakers, tailors, carpenters and plumbers and painters. When they formed a ghetto in Kraków, they gave us a special...not compensation, but I mean they gave us a piece of paper that we are working for the Gestapo headquarters and no other German authorities should touch us. They gave us something like a permit that we should not be harassed by different German authority; that we were useful Jews. So they protected us to that degree because they needed us.

I understand. So most of these people were young men like yourself, I assume.

It was mostly young men. Some were shoemakers. They had families. So they were looking for a little protection that nobody else should grab us because many times when you walked down the street and they needed some people to do some work, they used to grab you and put you on the truck and make you do some manual labor, which they needed, and many times a lot of those people never came back. So we had like a little protection because we were useful for them.

So you must have kept your papers in a very special place.

That's correct. That's correct. The reason why I'm saying that...because those people who I worked for, I got to know on a daily basis because I used to go to paint the offices or their apartments. So I got to know those people personally. After the war was over, I caught one of those Gestapo, a man who was in charge of Jewish affairs. He was a mean, mean guy. He used to walk many times to the ghetto and then when he met some healthy Jewish young man, he shot

him on the spot. And before he shot him he says, “Hey, you look too healthy. Maybe someday you might be a menace to us.” And he shot them. And he shot two of my friends that I used to go to school with. And the same guy, I met him after the war in Hamburg and I had him registered. They sent him back to Poland because he was damaging Poland and they hanged him. His name was Vaughn Maloochkey. They hanged him.

I'm not telling you the whole stories of the problems we had in ghetto, but I have to tell you how actually...after they liquidated the ghetto—in 1943, they liquidated the ghetto. When they liquidated the ghetto, the people who work on the Gestapo headquarters, we used to walk every morning. We used to walk from the ghetto to the headquarters. That was like a half-an-hour walk. One day they told us to assemble. They assembled us after the day's work and they told us that we're not going to go back to the ghetto. And my father was in the ghetto and other people had some families. They didn't tell us the reason. But what was the reason why they didn't let us go back to the ghetto? Because they liquidated the ghetto. The liquidation was that they killed everybody in the hospitals. They killed everybody in the orphanages; babies they killed. It was a slaughter. And some young people who were able to work, they took them to a concentration camp. So because we were working on the Gestapo at the headquarters, they kept us. So instead of sending us back to our homes, they put us in a prison. They housed us in a prison and we stay in the prison and they kept us in the prison. Every morning from the prison we went to work and at night we went back to prison. That was for almost two years we were in prison.

When I found out that they were liquidating the ghetto, I went to one of my Gestapo, a guy who I paint his apartment and he was high in the rank. I went to him and I begged him. I told him that my father is a watchmaker and why don't he bring him, save his life, and at the

headquarters they could use a watchmaker there. So I persuade him to bring my father to the prison, actually, to keep him alive. He dispatched a special...a runner and they found my father. And they brought him back to the prison.

Amazing. Oh, my goodness, how you must have felt about that.

And I was so happy that I saved my father's life. I was the only one from the group. There was about seventy, eighty people in that prison. And I saved my father's life. But unfortunately, my father caught typhoid fever. And two days later after they found out that he had typhoid fever, they told me that they're going to take him to the hospital. Instead of the hospital, they took him to a camp and they executed him. They killed him. I found that out later on. He never came back.

Oh, you were so close. How heartbreaking. I can't imagine. So then from the prison...?

In the prison, we were two years there. The prison, which we are in, right across from the prison used to be a monastery. They took over the monastery and they remodeled it to a prison, that monastery; they put bars on the windows. So what happened...they gave us a whole floor because we were about sixty, seventy people of all kinds of professions. So they gave us that floor in that monastery. So we were able to move on that floor from one room to another. So we were prisoners, but we were prisoners on one floor. We had little better conditions than actually the prisoners in prison. There was women, also. There was maybe about twenty women because the women were cleaning. They were in maintenance in headquarters. That's where they were washing the windows; they were washing the floors, all the corridors or whatever. They used those twenty women to keep maintenance at the headquarters. So there were twenty women and there was maybe another fifty or sixty men doing all different professions.

So on that floor there were shops. They created shops. They created shops for

shoemakers. There was a shoemaker shop and was also a tailor shop, which they stayed there all the time. I was a painter and I was a painter at the headquarters. So every morning the carpenters, the plumbers and auto mechanics were going every single morning from that prison to the headquarters and they perform all the work.

So what were you painting, rooms or the exterior?

I was painting, yeah, exterior. Many times I was cold. When they were interrogating some prisoners, they used to beat the heck out of them and they bloodied this part on their wall. I used to come in, scrape the wall and repaint the walls.

So that's how you kept busy painting, by repainting the same...

Yeah, I was painting the—yeah. But mostly we were painting—because that headquarters was huge. It was a whole square block. It was a lot of rooms. Also, at headquarters people used to live there.

Like the dormitory, barracks.

Not dormitory. I mean...what do you call it?

Barracks?

Not barracks, no. It was a building. Buildings, yeah. So there were residences. People lived there. The offices of all the people, they lived there. One section was designated for offices and the other section was residential. So somebody moved in and some moved out and new people moved in. So we had to repaint the apartment because the apartment was dirty or filthy or something. So we had to clean it up. So that's what we were doing.

To make a long story short, the Russians were coming closer. The war for the Germans turned a different way and the Russians were coming from one side and their allies were coming from the other side. So when the Russians were coming closer to Kraków, they liquidated our

prison and they sent us to concentration camp. And night before the Russians walked into Kraków, they sent us to concentration camp. Instead of letting us go...they did not. So that's how they reward us for all that work, what we were doing all those couple of years or three years, whatever I work for them. They didn't release us. They sent us to concentration camp. They send me to concentration camp in January in 1945. The war was over in April, but in those three months I was in three different concentration camps, three different ones. More people passed away—I mean died, not passed away, they died from hunger and terrible condition in camp than actually two years before. Some camps like Auschwitz; that was a camp which they were killing people; that was a killing camp. But some of those camps were working camps. So they send me to a camp, which normally had a capacity of three thousand people. We were there over forty thousand people. There was no food, no shelter, and people were dying like flies.

What was the name of this camp?

It was Rosen; that was in Silesia, Gross-Rosen. That means great roses. That's actually the name of it, great roses. I was lucky because I was young and I survived. They sent me from that camp to a different camp three weeks later. They put us on train cars, open, coal cars, didn't have no cover, and they load us maybe almost hundred people to a car. We were maybe two or three thousand people; I don't know how many thousand people were on that transport. On the car where I was on, we were from Sunday morning to next Monday, seven days without food and water. And that was end of January, freezing cold, snowing, raining, no cover. By the time we came to the end of our destination, there was three-quarter of bodies and only a few people left alive. Most of the older people, they die from the...Then we came—bodies—now, other train was mostly bodies. But I survived.

How did you survive?

I don't know. Because I was maybe young at that time.

The right age.

Anybody who was older, thirty, forty or fifty, they never survived, never survived. I was lucky and survived. If somebody would tell me before that I'd be able to survive for almost seven days, eight days without food or without water...We opened up our mouths when the snow was falling; that's how we got the moisture in our mouths. That was the story.

Later on they sent me to a camp. They called it Dora. That was deep in the mountains, similar to Mount Charleston, very similar to Mount Charleston. There was a tunnel and they were publicating (sic) V-2 rockets. I don't know if you've heard about that.

I've read about that, yeah.

You read about it, the history? That they were sending those rockets from Germany to London. Those rockets, they could not control. They were just shooting up indiscriminately. They didn't know where they were going to fall. But they knew that they were going so many miles in certain direction. That was the beginning of our rockets. So that was the camp where they were manufacturing the rockets; that's where I was in the camp.

On April eleventh, they load us—send me to another camp, a smaller camp when I was working on—I have to get some water. They sent me to a different camp, a smaller camp, and I was working on an assembly line of airplane parts. I was working over there for another few weeks.

On April eleventh, 1945, they assembled us and put us on the truck with a guard. We didn't know where we were going again and we asked the guard, “Where are we going?” They said, “I don't know.” The guards didn't know where they're taking us. Maybe two hours on our trip, all of a sudden, the truck stopped and the guards disappeared. What happened...the

American troops were coming and I seen American jeeps and American soldiers and I realize that the war is getting over for me. The guards disappeared and we jumped off the trucks. We were in this little village. I said to a friend of mine, I said, "I think we're free people." We jumped off the trucks. The first thing what we were looking for...to get something to eat because we were starving, all the time starving. We went to a German farmhouse and we walked in. And I spoke German, so naturally I told them, I said, "We want some food." So he didn't know. We were afraid of him and he was more afraid of us because he didn't know who we were. I show you the way...I have a picture of me two weeks later after liberation. I have a picture of me.

Oh, really?

Yeah, somebody took a picture of me. We walked in and I asked him for food. He gave us some food. Who was it? The American troops were Patton troops, tanks and jeeps. They were in a bottle or whatever it was. I didn't hear much shooting, but they were advancing. And we stayed at that farmer's house for two days. He gave us some food and we tried to recuperate a little bit.

How many of you were there?

Me and a friend of mine, two of us.

So just the two of you.

The others, I don't know where they went.

They all scattered?

They scattered. But because I spoke German, I took advantage of my thing and I went to get some food. The other guys ran away. I don't know where they were running. We were there for two days. In the morning my friend says, "Let's go outside and see what's going on in the village." We walked out from the house going to the main street there. All of a sudden, I see

two German tanks coming back. What happened...Patton troops usually never cleared the area; they were just going ahead. So two German tanks hid in the woods and when the main force were ahead, they came out.

Oh, wow.

And all of a sudden I see on the main—at the main street there was a little like a court and I see on one side two German tanks; on the other side about a hundred feet away I see American soldiers on the trucks jumping out of the trucks and running away.

Oh, no.

Well, sure. There was only a few soldiers. They didn't want to stay there and fight the two tanks. When I saw that I said, "Nope, I'm going to run towards the side where the Americans are running." So I was running after the truck, thinking maybe they would take me on the truck, but they didn't. They just went away. And I felt if the Germans would shoot me, they shoot me, but I'm not going back to the camps. But they did not try after that. They were busy with themselves over there. We walked maybe a mile and we came across a lot of American troops. There was trucks and tanks and everything. And they asked me if I saw a German tank. So I told them they were there. So I don't know. I didn't stay to find out what happened. I kept on running away. We came to a little, small town and we stay in that town. The town was already liberated by American troops. That's where we stay in that little town for a while.

So how do you get from just suddenly being free and with Americans, how do you transition?

Well, it was a big, big experience. We were happy that I seen American troops and I felt that we are free people; we are not prisoners no more. It's hard to express, the feeling. We stay there a few days in that town. The Germans tried to pacify us, actually. They tried to do something for

us because they knew what happened. So they tried to make up.

So these are the people who just lived there and they're not part of the military.

Right. So they knew if they're going to be maybe nice to us...they would help us a little bit to cover their problems—not problems. We had the problems. To cover up the guilt. That's what it was, to cover the guilt. We were there for a while. After we were there for a couple of weeks, I got sick. I went to the hospital.

While we were there we found out that in the vicinity there was another camp, which was also liberated, a big camp. And I think when they were trucking us from the small camp, I think they were taking us to that big camp because each huge camp had like a—not a hub, but...I forgot what they call it, whatever it was. A larger camp was bigger assembled and it was their...what do they call it? Not the headquarters.

Like a base camp?

The base camp. That was the base camp, right.

And then the others were like satellite that fed into this bigger one.

Correct. So I was in the satellite camp and they were probably trucking us to the base camp, and that base camp was Bergen-Belsen. You heard about Bergen-Belsen.

I definitely have heard about that, yeah.

So the reason we went there...so maybe we're going to find somebody we know, always looking for something. Sure enough, I met some woman who used to be in the same prison that I was and a few women were from the same town. So we got acquainted. One woman was in prison with me. I wasn't friendly with her, but I knew that she was in the same prison. They sent her out before me. They sent her out two months, three months before. They liquidated the prison in January '45; they sent her in October to Auschwitz. The reason why...they were minimizing

the population of the prison. They tried to—

Reduce the number of people.

—reduce the people there. So they didn't let the people go; they send them to concentration camps. And they sent her to concentration camp. They sent her to Auschwitz. She survived and from Auschwitz they sent her to Bergen-Belsen. So we got to know each other again, got acquainted. She became my wife. I married her.

Oh, wow. So that's where you met her.

That's how we met. So I met her first in prison and later on...fate that we had to meet again seven, eight hundred miles away in the same spot.

And I bet she had her own set of stories in surviving.

Oh, she did. She had her own stories, sure. She became my wife.

So what year did you marry?

Nineteen forty-six, a year later.

And where did you marry?

We got married in Bergen-Belsen. In fact, I have a picture where we got married.

Oh, good.

We got married there. Three couples got married in one day. First we got a civil wedding; a civil ceremony we had to have in Frankfurt am Main, and the religious ceremony we got in Bergen-Belsen. Wait a second. First we got in Bergen-Belsen, the religious ceremony and later on I got in Frankfurt am Main.

So you got married multiple times.

Twice.

That's good. You sealed the deal.

Twice.

So had Bergen-Belsen been liberated yet, then?

Yes.

So people stayed there, anyway.

Yeah.

What was that like?

Bergen-Belsen was a camp and Bergen-Belsen was liberated by British. Right next to the original concentration camp was army barracks and those army barracks were excellent barracks and fairly new. Whoever survived in that camp, Bergen-Belsen, they moved all those people to those barracks and those barracks were much better condition and it was living condition. So that's where the people lived right after liberation.

Well, there's so much more. This is a very complex story. But let's—

You could write a book. I could write a book.

You could, yes.

I could write a book. I'm trying to shorten the whole thing.

I appreciate what you're trying to do. But yeah, there's just so much to this.

Every single day that we...weeks what we went through and everything.

So how long did you live as a couple, then, in Bergen-Belsen?

I didn't live in Bergen-Belsen. I took my future wife because I had an apartment—it helped me a lot because I spoke German. So I demand things and somehow they gave it to me. I demand apartment and sure enough, I got—not apartment, but I got a room in some people's home. And they were actually nice. They were glad to have somebody like me. They thought that maybe I'd be protecting them because they didn't know what's going to happen after the war.

So they saw this act of kindness as something they could hide behind or redeem themselves with.

Right. So I took my future wife and we—I didn't live in Bergen-Belsen. But we used to go there because we knew other people over there.

That was your community.

Yeah. So we lived in a cellar. Later on we moved to Frankfurt am Main where we had our apartment—not apartment because you couldn't get apartment, but you got a room. And the room was just like our apartment. In 1946, we came to United States. My wife had relatives in Newark, New Jersey.

I was just going to ask you. You had to have some sort of connection in order to immigrate to the U.S.; is that correct? I mean just because you were liberated, you couldn't just say, "Oh, I want to go to the United States." You had to have someone who lived here.

There was two ways. There was two ways. When people had relatives, the relatives used to send affidavits. So they had priority to come to United States. But later on, United States opened up a quota and a lot of people came in and they were brought here by the Jewish Federation or Jewish distribution of the highest—there were three different organizations, charity organizations where they used to bring people here and they paid their fare at that time.

So where did you end up?

I end up in Newark, New Jersey, in Newark because my wife had family over there.

What kind of work did you do in Newark?

My first job...because my father was a watchmaker and I knew a little bit about jewelry, so I got my first job in a jewelry wholesale house. They used to sell parts for watches. It was a big jewelry wholesale house; that's what it was. So that was my first job and I got twenty-eight

dollars a week.

Wow.

At that time that was big.

That was a good salary then.

Good salary. And I couldn't speak one word of English.

But you had the other two languages covered.

Not one word English.

Wow. What did you do? How did you get by?

How did I get by? I tried to sweep the floor. I tried to do anything. And the guy was pretty good. He spoke Jewish, so I could speak to him, the owner. He took me in as a pity, but he needed somebody to do some work. I wanted to be useful, so I was looking for something to do that he shouldn't fire me.

So years ago, mostly watches used to be square and there was no plastic crystal. There were regular raw crystal and the raw crystal had to be fitted. I don't know if you...

I remember looking at old watches. I know what you're talking about, yeah.

Today everything is plastic. I mean everything is molded. But years ago, you had to cut to fit the crystal. So we had a wheel with water and you know how you polish the glass; that's how.

And I knew how to do that and that's how. So I became useful.

Good.

So the jewelry stores sent cases to the wholesale house to fit the crystal and that's what I was doing. My wife was a dressmaker. So her first job was she got fifty dollars a week because she was a very good dressmaker.

I guess. Good.

So she had fifty and I was getting twenty-eight dollars; that bothered me.

Oh, okay.

That bothered me. My ego bothered me, see. So I went to work as a painter. And from twenty-eight dollars a week, I got seventy-five dollars a week and I was working as a house painter. After house painting my wife's uncle, he opened up a bakery. He was a baker. He opened up a bakery. Wintertime my painting boss had to let me go because there was no job for painting during the wintertime. It's seasonal work. So my wife's uncle says, "Henry, why don't you come? I need help in the bakery. Work with me for the wintertime and summertime you can go back to painting. But I cannot pay you seventy-five; I'll pay you fifty dollars a week." So I say, "Okay, better than nothing." So I work in the bakery for three months and then summer came back and my painting boss says, "All right, Henry, I need you again." So my uncle says, "Stay with me and I'll pay you the same thing." Because I became such a good baker.

What did you like to bake? What were you good at?

I became a cake baker.

Oh, yum.

And I worked for fifteen years as a cake baker and I made a good living in being a cake baker.

Oh, yeah. So you did that in New Jersey that whole time?

In Newark, New Jersey, until 1960.

What happened in 1960?

Nineteen sixty was another big thing in my life. Nineteen sixty, I was invited to a bar mitzvah.

You know what's a bar mitzvah?

I just was at one last weekend. Yes, I know. My kids had bar mitzvahs. Yes, I know a bar mitzvah. It's a very special occasion. It's a big deal.

Huh?

It's a big deal. I always admire that.

I was invited to two bar mitzvahs, one was in Montreal and one was in Newark, New Jersey, on the same day, same day. So I said to my wife, “You know what? I want to go to Montreal.” So my wife says, “Why you want to go to Montreal? Bar mitzvah here in Newark on the same day. Why should we schlep to Montreal?” The guy who invited me to the bar mitzvah in Montreal was a friend of mine, which he was a tailor. And I went with him through the ghetto and two years in prison and I knew the guy. We were friendly. He was my age. He was a young guy at that time. And I knew that he did well in Montreal. I want to go to see him because I didn't see him for fifteen years. I want to go see him. And my wife said, “No.” I said, “We're going.”

Sure enough, we drove up there. I had a car and I drove. And it was snowing, we had a flat tire; everything what she said was true. But at the bar mitzvah, sitting at the table—and most of your people were Holocaust survivors. So you asked the people, “Where were you during the war? Where were you doing during the war?” So I asked one guy, “Where were you during the war?” He said he was in Russia. I said, “By any chance, did you meet, maybe you heard about my sister.” She was very young when she got married and she married a guy who was a musician and he used to have his own orchestra. And his orchestra, he became famous, not very famous, but he got name recognition of the orchestra because he was a good musician. So I said, “By any chance, did you hear something about my brother-in-law?” He said, “Oh, yeah, sure.”

What was his name? What was the name of the orchestra?

At that time it was a Polish name. So he said, “Oh, yeah, sure.” I said, “By any chance is he still alive? Did he live through?” “Oh, yes, he lived through. He lives in England.” I says, “Oh, yeah? How about his wife? Did you know his...?” “Oh, yeah, I knew his wife, too.” My sister.

“Is she alive?” He said, “Oh, yeah, she's alive.”

Oh, my goodness.

I said, “Where does she live?” “In America.” They got divorced. And here I found out that my sister is alive.

Oh, my goodness. I can't imagine how that felt.

Twenty years later I found out that my sister is alive.

Oh, it takes my breath away.

Huh?

It takes my breath away.

So that's fate. That's fate.

So did he have her address?

No. That's what I asked him. That's fate. If I couldn't go to Montreal...

Right. That fork in the road.

...I would never find my sister, never. So I said, “Where does she live?” He says, “I know that she lives in America.” Because that was Canada and he was in Canada. So I said, “Where in America?” He says he doesn't know, but he says, “I know somebody who lives in Long Island, New York, and I know that he is in touch with your sister.”

So when I came home I called up the guy. I told him who I was. So he said, “Oh, yeah.” And I found out twenty years later because I thought my sister is dead. I didn't know that she was alive. So he tells me...Where does she live? In Las Vegas.

Now I tried to get a telephone. I couldn't get a telephone. He gave me her address, but he didn't know the telephone number and she had an unlisted telephone number and I couldn't get the unlisted telephone. I talked to the operator at that time and the operator says, “Look, if I

give you her telephone number that's unlisted"—at that time unlisted number was a no-no, secret.

Right, right.

So I told her the whole story. I said, "After twenty years I'm finding out that my sister is alive and I'd like to know where she is." So she says, "I can't tell you because I'm going to lose my job and I don't want to lose my job." But she said, "I know that your sister just moved and the people who she used to live before, the telephone number is the same over there. I can give you that number and maybe they know where she moved."

Oh, my goodness.

So she gave me the telephone number of the other people where she used to live and they knew her well and she gave me the address. That's how I called my sister after twenty years. She was looking for me and I was looking for her. Right after the war—I forgot to tell you—I went to Poland to look for her and didn't find nobody. I went to the border. That's another story to talk about. Because there was a German border, a Polish border. At the time the borders were very...on the Russian border they shoot you. It's not like today's borders.

Yes.

And that's how; my sister came to Las Vegas and I came to Las Vegas to visit her. After that I realize that Las Vegas might give me a little better future than Newark, New Jersey. How long have you lived here?

I've lived here twenty years.

Twenty years?

Uh-huh. So I always ask people tell me how you got to Las Vegas. It's never this

interesting. That's amazing because of a choice in bar mitzvah and the kindness of an

operator. Oh, look at this. This is terrific. How do you pronounce your sister's name, Layla?

Lala.

Lala. Very pretty. So this is a Newark Evening News article. Oh, this is terrific. I can only imagine the first time you saw each other, how emotional that must have been.

When I called her she didn't know exactly if I was her brother because a lot of people...right after the war people were using all kind of tricks in order to get a ration or a card or food or something like that. And so a lot of people used to say when people were looking for somebody, "Oh, yeah, I know your brother; I was with your brother." So naturally, they created a contact with somebody and by creating a contact, "Oh, can you send me something?" And the people used to send them things. So because she was looking for me, she used to get all kinds of different contacts, people just saying, "Oh, yeah, I was with your brother," and never been with me. So she used to send them food or something like that.

How did you convince her, when you showed up or were you able to convince her on the phone?

There isn't much things to try to convince because there are a lot of things when you're brother and sister you know things what nobody else knows.

Right. Those intimate details, yeah. So you came to Las Vegas.

Came to Las Vegas.

What was it like the first time you arrived here?

Las Vegas? It used to have fifty thousand people when I came to Las Vegas in 1960. My brother-in-law used to own the pawnshop.

Which pawnshop? I think I've heard—which pawnshop was it that he owned?

He used to own Pioneer Jewelry and Loan. You know Pioneer?

I think I've had people mention because the pawn business is a good business in Vegas.

It was. It was better than it is now. It was. I'll show you a picture of my pawnshop.

So you got into the pawn business, then?

So I realized that bakery—I have to tell you before I go any further. I came to Las Vegas and I realized that Las Vegas could be a good place for me to start a new life. My brother-in-law was in the pawnshop business. He used to be on a side street and he open up a large pawnshop on Fremont Street. So he enlarged his place. My sister wanted me to come here and the only thing I would come here was if I could make a living. So he told me he was going to sell me a partnership in his pawnshop. So I jumped to the occasion and that's why I came to Las Vegas.

Two years later, 1962, we moved here.

Did Lala like the idea of moving here?

Oh, definitely because I was her only brother. She didn't have any children.

I meant your wife. I said your sister's name. But your wife, she was okay with moving to Las Vegas?

My wife was locked in because she had all her family in New Jersey and my daughter was devastated.

How old was your daughter?

Twelve years old. But when I decide to come over to Las Vegas, decide to move—a year before I moved, before I even found out about my sister, I want to go open up my own bakery. Where are you from originally?

Iowa.

Iowa. They just built a new neighborhood in New Jersey not far from Newark, New Jersey.

They used to call West Orange. That was a good opportunity for me to open up a new bakery and I want to open up a bakery. And a friend of mine and I—he was a bread baker and I was a cake baker. So we want to open up a bakery. There was like fifteen miles away from the house where I lived and I had a two-family house. So I tried to sell my house. I had the location already picked out and everything. So in order for me to open up the bakery there, I had to sell my house because I had money in my house and I needed the money to open up the bakery and I had to live close to the bakery. So I tried to sell my house. I couldn't sell my house. I could not sell my house. I tried in the worst way. Finally, I couldn't sell my house; I couldn't go into the bakery. Then I found out about my sister and I decided to move to Las Vegas. Somebody comes to me and says, “Henry, I heard that you were moving to Las Vegas.” I said, “Yes.” “You want to sell your house?” I said, “Yes.” “I know somebody who wants to buy your house.” I sold my house in two days.

Oh, my goodness.

Without a broker. So that's what you call fate.

Oh, my goodness, yes. How wonderful is that?

See, fate tells you...I couldn't sell my house. If I would be in the bakery over there, I would never move to Las Vegas, never.

This is perfect.

So sometime everything works like it should. Make a long story short, I was with my brother-in-law.

And his name was?

Bob Powell. Originally he used to have a gift shop at the Tropicana Hotel. Years ago having a gift shop in any hotels used to be a very lucrative business, very lucrative. The reason

why...because there was nothing around, so you had a captured audience. There was no shopping centers. There was no shopping malls. There was no shopping district. There was a few stores. There was nothing here in Las Vegas, nothing.

So that was a good business.

The whole Las Vegas was Fremont Street and there was three hotels; there was Sahara, Dunes, Riviera and Flamingo.

And then the Tropicana.

And Tropicana. Caesars Palace wasn't there. Nothing was there. Across the street was Frontier was the hotel, Frontier Hotel.

Frontier, right. And the El Rancho, was it still—

The El Rancho burned down.

It burned down, okay.

So there was nothing. I was three years with my brother-in-law. And later on after two years I met some other fellow, which I didn't know him. He came to town and he wanted to go in the pawnshop business and we got together and we bought a pawnshop on First, Stoney's Pawn Shop.

Okay. Now it's all coming together for me. Stoney's, yes.

You know Stoney's?

Well, I've heard about Stoney's.

You heard about Stoney's?

Yes, yes. Everybody talks about Stoney's.

Years ago Stoney's was...like somebody says Scotch tape instead of tape; that's what they used to call. They didn't say go to pawn shop. They used to say go to Stoney's.

So where did the name Stoney's come from?

There was a guy by the name Stoney who used to have a coffee shop, a little coffee shop, and people used to come into his coffee shop and they couldn't pay for the coffee or breakfast and they gave him a ring. That's how he had the idea to open up a pawn shop.

Oh, my goodness.

And his name was Stoney and he opened up a little pawn shop on First Street. That's what he did.

Interesting start to a business.

But Pioneer Loan was the first pawn shop in town and my brother-in-law used to own Pioneer Loan. That's where I was. So I became Pioneer Loan and later on we bought out Stoney. Two years later I was in with my partner; we bought out my brother-in-law, two years later. So we owned two pawn shops.

Was your brother-in-law okay with that; with you going into competition and then buying him out? Was that a good thing for him?

Oh, yeah. He had no choice. He didn't treat me too well and that was the main reason. It was a good thing that he didn't treat me that well because if he would treat me a little better, I would never go. At that time it was no competition because there was eight pawn shops and every pawn shop was doing so well so that there was no competition. Actually, we were very friendly with each other. There was no competition, about two years later.

And who was your partner?

The guy from Portland, Oregon. I have a picture of him. And we bought out that was to be originally Stoney's.

And this was located on Fremont?

No, no. On First Street. Pioneer Loan was on Fremont Street. Now it's Vicky...Las Vegas Vicky or whatever; that's what it is. And years ago—you heard about Pawn Place? Years ago my store was the place in town and anybody used to come into Las Vegas to do any interviews or any...I have a lot of—you know what? I should have brought you. I have a lot of magazines, which I was in. That might be interesting.

That would be interesting, yes.

I have to look. I have them in the garage.

Okay. When you come back—you said you're leaving town for a while.

I'm leaving for a month.

Well, when you come back we'll get those.

So anybody went to the Chamber of Commerce, usually the Chamber of Commerce to find out where they can get interview of anything, they used to go to Stoney's.

You were the go-to person.

I used to be the place.

Before Pawn Stars.

Years ago they used to have a lot of lounge shows and I served a lot of comedians and everybody used to go to the lounge shows. Many times I walked into a lounge show there was a comedian. So here comes a guy, “Stoney, how is my ring doing?” Because I sell his rings. I used to deal with everybody.

So Stoney's became a thriving business.

Oh, yeah. Years ago a lot of movie companies used to use my pawn shop if they had a story about pawn shop. So they used to do a lot of filming in my—

So you became a location.

I became a location, yeah.

Like what movies? Would I know any of those?

Not movies, but TV stories. There used to be a whole series of—

Dan Tanna.

Dan Tanna, yeah.

Oh, yeah.

And he filmed five segments in my place, five of them. But I never took pictures. But I took pictures when Telly Savalas came in and here is when they were filming.

Oh, this is wonderful.

In the segment what they did, they put a thing, “going out of business.”

But you really weren't going out of business.

No, I wasn't going out of business. They put a thing, “going out of business.”

Oh, this is wonderful.

Here, “going out of business.” And my customer from Arcelia pass by and he saw that I'm going out of business. And I have customers from all over the world, not country, all over the world. I had a customer from Germany. Each time he used to come to Las Vegas, he used to bring his buddies to my store. So I had a customer from Arcelia. So this guy was passing by from Arcelia and he went back home and told the other friend from Arcelia, “Stoney is going out of business.” He says, “What? Stoney's going out of business?” “Yeah.” So he came back a month later. He said, “I heard that you were going out of business.” I said, “No, I'm not going out of business.” I said, “They were filming here.” That's my story.

Well, that's great.

And later on we remodeled. That's how it looked originally, see. That's how it looked originally.

It looks like just a single story.

Yeah. We remodeled.

So this is in the same location.

The same location.

So when you remodeled did you enlarge the store, then, too?

No, we didn't enlarge the store, but we beautified the whole neighborhood.

Did you own the building? Which is good, right? Yeah. Be your own landlord.

I owned the whole section.

Oh, okay, the whole center.

That's the whole pawn. You know what is now there?

What is there?

Golden Nugget.

Oh, okay.

Golden Nugget is there.

Oh, then I see the Plaza is back here. So you sold to the Golden Nugget?

I sold to Golden Nugget.

It was a good thing to move to Las Vegas.

Oh, yeah.

The chain reaction of events that happened in your life.

This is when we just took over the store.

Is that you?

Yeah.

So you sold crystals.

I sold everything.

What do people mostly pawn?

Mostly? Rings.

Did they usually come back for it?

Rings, wedding bands they never came back. A lot of people, wedding bands they never came back. There was a lot of divorces. We used to have a ton of wedding bands. Everybody had a wedding band with them. Most they left the wedding bands. Rings, wedding bands and watches; that was the most common things. But I had 80 percent of coming back people. Twenty percent was left and 80 percent people pick it up. But I was doing big business.

That's great. So about what year would this photo have been? I'm looking at the width of that tie.

This? Probably '65-66. That's how my store looked inside. I had like a whole museum here.

So you had to learn how valuable they were?

I learned.

Just learned.

I knew something about jewelry, so I learned. This guy was a milkman. That's people that worked for me. Every Christmastime we used to have our ad in the paper. So we used to put a picture in the paper. So the guy that was a porter used to come in and take pictures all the time. I have pictures from every year.

So in the back row, can you tell me the names?

This guy used to be a milkman and he used to come in occasionally to my store and look for camera because he was a camera enthusiast. Very nice guy. And I told him, I says—his name is George—I says, “George, how is your milk business?” He says, “Ah, not so good.” I said, “If

you quit your milk business, I'll give you a job." And they quit; no more milkmen. Years ago milkmen used to come in.

Sure, deliver it to your door.

Yeah. And he went out of business. So I gave him a job. This guy used to be a dealer, twenty-one dealer. He says he liked the pawn shop business. So I said...But he was a very nice guy, nice kid and very personable and he was willing to learn. I hired him. He worked for me five years. He's got a pawn shop in Iowa now.

Really? What's his name?

He's got a pawn shop in Iowa.

Do you remember his name?

I have it marked down someplace. He quit me. He went to work as a postman, work in post office for a while. He work, I think, two years in post office because they gave him better benefits than I did. He went to Iowa for vacation someplace and he said there was one pawn shop and he realized. He opened up a pawn shop. He's doing very, very well.

Interesting.

This woman used to be a showgirl in the movie and she used to date Ronald Reagan.

Oh, my. This is the lady in the animal skin coat.

Yes. That's the coat I had for sale. See those furs? This woman used to work for me, thirty-five years.

Oh, wow.

Okay. Now here I want to show you. I have something from my wife. I was known as Stoney, but my name was—everybody knew me as Lilly—are you Jewish?

My family is, yeah. I never converted, but I identify as Jewish. My husband and my

kids—yeah, yeah. I should just say yes. I wasn't raised Jewish, but for the last forty years almost I identify.

This is my wife. She was very, very...I mean she was very active in a lot of Jewish organizations. She was raising a lot of money. They used to call her Raffle (NAME).

Raffle?

Because she used to say hundred-dollar raffles for the Temple Beth Sholom. She used to have a soft sale. She used to go to businesses. She raised more money than anybody else. So everybody know me not as Henry; you are Lilly's husband. Everybody knew me as Lilly's husband. If you are twenty years here, you remember Schulman's Meat?

Yeah.

All right. This is Schulman's wife. This is our mayor. Oh, no, this is our mayor.

Oh, yeah, Carolyn.

This is Barbara Greenspun. You want that picture?

Oh, yes, yes. I want to borrow your photos. I'll scan them and bring them back.

No, you can have them. I have copies.

Okay, great.

This is Mack, Jerry Mack's wife.

I just talked with her the other day. That's Joyce?

That's Joyce, Joyce Mack.

How wonderful is that?

If I see Joyce, she says—we are the original—the last Mohicans. There's Art Marshall, Joyce, I.

Nobody else is left.

That's why it's important that we talk, yes.

This is Art Marshall's wife.

That's Jane, then?

That's Jane. And this is...she was very good. Named school after her.

Oh, is that Dorothy?

Dorothy Eisenberg.

Yes.

Did you talk to her?

Yes.

You did?

Uh-huh. I'm getting around.

Oh, yeah, I see that. I think this is Steinberg.

Faye? Not Faye? That doesn't look like Faye.

I'll show you Faye. Faye Steinberg is here, too. This is Lynn Rosencrantz. You know Lynn Rosencrantz?

I've met her husband, but I have not met her yet. I've met Arne.

That's Lynn Rosencrantz. This is Faye. This is our mayor, Goodman. I know Faye is here, too.

I think I got the names—oh, here it is.

Oh, perfect. Yeah, that's great. Oh, Elaine Steinberg. I don't know her.

There's Faye Steinberg and Elaine Steinberg.

All right, good.

This is Faye right here and this is Elaine Steinberg.

I don't know Elaine yet. Great cast of characters there.

That's Kravitz.

Where was this at? What building is that in, do we know?

Caesars Palace, Palace Court. I have something. I don't know if you want it. Well, I have some plaques.

We don't do the plaques, but I might take photographs of them. But we don't take plaques.

You don't take plaques?

Yeah. But I think whatever the honor is, is important. So maybe we can set a time to come back and take a photograph of those and then the magazines, if you get those out.

I have to look for them.

May I keep this?

Yeah, you can keep that. You know her?

No, I don't know who that is.

She's actually in university, Sabbath, Roberta Sabbath.

Oh, that's Roberta?

You know Roberta?

I do know Roberta, but I only know her like recently.

I used to play cards with her.

Oh, how nice.

He committed suicide.

Oh, I didn't know that. I knew he was deceased.

That's my wife.

Pretty lady.

And that's Carol Goodman.

Pretty lady there, too.

You know who was very busy with—my wife was very, very—oh, that's my partner. This picture was taken in 1945-46.

And what was his name again?

His name was Dave Pearlmother.

Dave what?

Pearlmother.

Pearlmother, okay.

He was from Oregon.

These are good. I love old pictures.

He's my friend now. I might go with him to Poland.

Now, who is that?

You know him?

No. Who is it?

You don't know who this guy is?

Well, he looks familiar.

Our governor.

Oh, it is him? Oh, wow. Again, I get people that—I know Mike Cherry. So that's Mike Cherry.

That's Mike Cherry. I knew Mike Cherry when he was a kid. I'm here about fifty-two years.

My wife.

So that's Sandoval.

I met Harry Reid when he first came out of law school.

So you're going to let me borrow these to scan?

Yeah, you can scan them. That's Jane Marshall. My wife.

So the one thing we haven't talked—have you got a few minutes more? We can set up another time when you can come back.

What do you want to talk about?

I want to talk about the Holocaust Resource Center and the education because your name is on that. That's an important part of your—

Yes, yes, yes. We can talk about that. That's another...listen, my name is on it.

Yes, your name is it on, predominately on there, and it's a very important center. Do you want to save that for the next time we get together?

We could.

Okay. We covered a lot. Let's do that. We'll pause this for now.

[Pause in recording]

You had that foresight.

I knew a lot of officials. I knew all the commissioners. I knew everybody. I knew the city councils, all of it. I was very friendly with Paul Christensen. I don't know if you know that name.

I know that name, uh-huh.

You know the name?

Yes.

They used to own the jewelry store, Christensen's originally. His father used to be a watchmaker; that's how he came to town, to Las Vegas. Of course, Las Vegas used to be a railroad city, railroad town. Every railroad person had to have a pocket watch because they had to be synchronized with the timing. The railroad has to run on time so he was a watchmaker

and he opened up a jewelry store on Fremont Street. So I was very friendly with all the Christensen brothers. There was Vern Christensen, Paul Christensen, Danny Christensen. In fact, his son was a doctor. He was my doctor. He's not a doctor anymore because the family had a lot of business ventures. So he's running the businesses now.

But coming back what I want to say...I had the foresight. Las Vegas is a desert. And all of a sudden, they start building lakes. And they use the water from Lake Mead to build lakes. They built Sahara Lakes and they built another lake. And I used to tell Paul, I said, "Paul, how can you allow to build lakes in Las Vegas? The evaporation of the water from those lakes, how much water evaporates in the summertime? You realize how much water evaporates from a pool in the summertime. And here, you're building lakes? This is not Minnesota. This is a desert. And someday you're going to run out of water." He said, "Oh, Henry," he says, "We've got so much water. It's going to be years and years we can have it, never use that much water we have here."

That's true. Las Vegas had a lot of water. We had a lot of ground water. When they built high-rises in downtown Las Vegas, they went down forty or fifty feet and they hit water. When they built the high-rise of Golden Nugget, they start building the foundation, they got water. They had problems with water. That's how much water was here. But they never expected Las Vegas going to have two million people, but now we're short of water. We got stuck with the lakes.

Because they have so many people. Great. Thank you.

[End of Session I]

[Session II]

Today is April 13, 2015. I'm Barbara Tabach sitting with Henry Kronberg. Emily Lapworth is sitting with us today. We're going to pick up from where we left off.

You've got some photos there, though. What are those photos?

I think I showed you these.

Oh, those are the ones you showed me the last time?

Yes. That was me after liberation.

We went to Yom HaShoah yesterday.

I was there.

I thought I saw you across the room. I was to the right of you in back a little further.

Yeah, I was there.

I couldn't get over to say hello. Emily came with me.

Oh, yeah?

Emily and my husband were there.

Yeah, I was there. This was a picture of—we had in Belsen-Bergen—our wedding.

Oh, yes, I remember you showing me that.

I think I showed you.

Yeah.

I was twenty years old here. I look older, didn't I?

EMILY: Yeah.

Twenty years. And this guy, he was in late thirties.

Was he really?

Yeah. He was late thirties, this guy, and he looked like a man of sixty.

Oh, at least, yes. Oh, it's just terrible what you went through. I can't imagine. Yesterday's service, the commemoration service for Yom HaShoah—

It's exactly seventy years to the date when I was liberated, 4/11/1945.

Is that memory as vivid today as it was when it was happening? I mean all these years later, how do you think about that? How does it feel?

How do I feel? You know, many times I don't try to go over that and think about it. I'm not trying to think—not to think about it. I'm always thinking about it. But I'm not trying to...What's the word I want to use? To analyze it. It happened.

Yeah. And you moved on.

And I'm lucky that I survived. But if I'm going to start analyzing and I'm going to go through it, it's not going to be a good outcome. The more you're analyzing yourself, the worse it is. You know what they say that every psychiatrist needs another psychiatrist. So that's why I'm trying to not analyzing myself.

And so yesterday's service was just a commemoration.

That was a commemoration, yeah.

Where I really wanted to started to—we may come back to the Holocaust Resource Center, but we'll start with Stoney's, with the business in Las Vegas where you thrived. You came here in 1962 and then you told me you purchased Stoney's in 1964. And how did that come about that you bought that business?

Originally, I came to Las Vegas because my sister lived here. And my brother-in-law was in a pawn shop business. He had a pawn shop on Fremont Street right next to the Las Vegas Club on Fremont Street. It was a big, big place. He sold me a share of his business. At that time we were open from eight in the morning until twelve o'clock at night because Fremont Street was

the place in '60s. The Strip was only about four or five hotels, but it was not as busy. All the tourists congregated on Fremont Street. That was the heart of Las Vegas was the Fremont Street. There was traffic going. Now the street is closed, but at that time it was traffic. That was a very, very busy street. We used to keep our store open from eight in the morning until twelve o'clock at night and we were doing business until twelve o'clock at night. That's how busy that place was.

What businesses were you located next to?

There was Las Vegas Club and next door to us was a bar. Across the street was a bar; it was a bar and a restaurant. And on the corner was a slot place. In fact, the slot place still exists. We were between Main Street and First Street. So that was the first block. On the corner was...And across the street from us was the Pioneer Club, which the sign every five minutes or every three minutes, he says, "Howdy, partner; howdy, partner." And that used to drive us crazy.

[Laughing] Finally, they stopped the recording. Every three minutes or every..."Howdy, partner; howdy, partner." And the sign is still there. I don't know if you remember or not.

Yes, yes.

The sign is still there. So he used to move his arm and say, "Howdy, partner." And just like I said that drove us crazy.

I was with my brother-in-law for almost two years, since '62 through '64. Late in '64, a fellow I met and I decided to leave my brother-in-law. I wanted to be on my own.

So was your brother-in-law called Stoney?

No.

He wasn't Stoney.

No. My first pawn shop, which I worked, was Pioneer Loan. Pioneer Loan. That's what my

brother-in-law used to own, Pioneer Loan. Stoney's was where I was, around the corner on First Street. At that time Stoney's was owned by somebody else. After I decide to leave my brother-in-law—that's why I left my brother-in-law because I found out that Stoney's is out for sale. A fellow, which I met, he was interested in going in as partner with me and that's how we bought Stoney's Pawn Shop. Him and I, we bought the store.

And who is your partner?

His name was Dave Pearlmother. He passed on a long time ago. He was originally from Portland, Oregon. So him and I—at that time we were both real young—started working and we were working day and night and we made it a success. And two years later we bought out my brother-in-law. So we used to own two stores; we used to own Stoney's and we bought out Pioneer Loan, too. So he was running Pioneer Loan and I was running Stoney's. We were partners; we both owned the business. We were partners, I think, for five or six years and then we decided to split. So he stayed with Pioneer Loan and I stayed with Stoney's. He wasn't as hard worker as I was, so I made a better success in the business than he did. Now, the rest is history.

So who were your customers? Where did the customers come from?

I got customers...Just like I say, downtown years ago used to be the heart of Las Vegas. Well, once they started opening up the hotels and casinos, the main business moved to the Strip. But in '60s and '70s and even early '80s, downtown was still the place to come because it was centrally located and it was not as spread out as the Strip. So tourists used to go to hotels on the Strip, [but] they still were interested in old Las Vegas because downtown was the old Las Vegas. So they used to come and, naturally, they used to shop. So we had customers from all over the world, not United States only. I say from all over the world. So there was a very interesting

business because almost every single day you dealt with the different people and very interesting people. And because I had the oldest pawn shop in Las Vegas, we used to have a lot of antiques. And so people were always looking for something different, antiques and something that catches your eye. I used to collect those things. So people used to come in and my store became very famous.

I spoke German and I spoke Polish. So many times customers came in from Germany and I spoke to them German. So they felt more relaxed because they spoke in native language. And I spoke Polish. There were a lot of Polish people, too. But mostly it was...

One time a young couple came in. They decided to get married here in Las Vegas. They came in, wanted to buy wedding bands, two wedding bands. We used to have plenty of wedding bands for sale because wedding bands and watches, this is the most things what the pawn shop used to have because if somebody lost all his money and they needed money to buy gifts to go back home, they always sell. Everybody had a wedding band or everybody had a watch. So they used to pawn the watches or in the worst scenario they had a wedding band, so they sold their wedding band. They figured, *oh, I buy a different one*. And so we had a lot of wedding bands for sale.

So one day a couple came in and they spoke German to me. I said, "Where are you staying?" So they told me. There used to be a hotel Hacienda. I don't know if you ever...

Sure.

You remember Hacienda Hotel?

Barely, but I do remember the Hacienda, yes.

That's where...What's the hotel with "M?"

Oh, Monte Carlo.

No, no, not Monte Carlo.

Oh, Mandalay.

Mandalay Bay.

Yes, yes.

Mandalay Bay is right there where Hacienda used to be and that used to be the last hotel before you hit the Los Angeles Highway. So I asked them, "Where are you staying?" So they told me they were staying at Hacienda. So I said, "Tell me, why did you come from Hacienda so far? You pass by so many different stores. What made you...? Curiosity, I said, "What made you come here to me?" So he says, "Because you are written up in the German tourist paper." I said, "I am?" He says, "Yes." In magazine, not the paper, magazine. So I said, "By any chance, do you have the magazine?" He says, "Oh, yeah, I have it." And they showed it to me and it says, "Stoney's, the jewelry and loan of Las Vegas. If you go to Las Vegas"—that was German tourists' magazine—"If you go to Las Vegas, you can look up Stoney's Loan and Jewelry. The owner speaks German and he gives you good value for your money."

How wonderful.

I didn't know about it and that's how I got all over reputation that I was a good business, which you can get good value. That was not an advertisement; that was something which somebody wrote about me. So I had a good reputation all over.

So what were some of the unusual things that people would pawn?

People would pawn everything—I mean try to pawn everything. Sometimes people try to—we didn't take it. Sometimes people tried to pawn their false teeth.

Their false teeth?

Well, sure, because if you're in an emergency and you have to go back home and you lost every

penny...Some people will use their last nickel to put in the slot machine because they figure maybe this last nickel is going to bring me back. They must have lost maybe a hundred dollars or three hundred or five hundred thousand, whatever, and they figure maybe the last nickel is going to bring. They lost their last nickel, too. And now people used to come in and try to pawn—and we used to take it—spare tires when they were coming from Los Angeles. Because we used to get a lot of customers from Los Angeles for the weekends used to travel and they lost all their money and they didn't have money to buy gas. So they pawned the spare tire. And I asked them, "What are you going to do if you have a flat tire and you're pawning the spare tire?" He says, "I have to take a chance; I have no money to go back and I have to go back." So they pawn the spare tire. They came a week later and they picked up the tire.

So when somebody pawns something, you as the merchant, you expect they're probably going to come back and pick it up?

In front of the pawn shop years ago I used to have three brass balls. So people used to say, "What's the significance of those three balls?" Usually pawn brokers said, "Two to one that you don't come back." [Laughing]

So that was the rule of thumb that you worked.

Two to one that they don't come back. But in my place they used to come about 80 percent; 80 to 85 percent people used to come back. But the 15 percent, which didn't come back, I did big business. So we used to have lots of merchandise to sell [from] that 15 percent of people didn't come back.

So when people came in to buy things, they were looking for jewelry.

Well, sure, because if you pawn something, we never gave somebody—let's say somebody paid for an item, regardless what item it is, let's say it's worth a hundred dollars or something, we

never gave him what he paid for it. We used to give him maybe one-third of it. And if he paid a hundred dollars, we gave him one-third, and we used to sell it later on for 50 percent. So the item, hundred-dollar item, you bought it for fifty dollars. We made a few dollars on it and people used to get bargains. We had to turn over the merchandise because we didn't want to keep it because we needed cash to loan money for the next item. So that's what it was.

Well, I was noticing on the license that there was a separate license for firearms.

Yes.

So did pawn shops always deal with firearms?

Most of them, yeah. This used to be Wild West.

Yeah. Tell me about that.

In '60, people used to carry six-shooter revolvers on their belt. This used to be the Wild West. During hunting season you used to see all the time all the hunters coming in with rifles and shotguns. We used to sell shotguns, rifles, revolvers, guns. Pawn shop used to deal in firearms. So you have to have special license there. That's a federal license.

So like in the days of the Hole in the Wall Gang and the guys that were stealing, robbing from people's homes and stuff like that, would they bring that stuff into Stoney's to...?

No, no. We never knew when somebody brought something. But if you're in business, you can feel mostly if somebody is legit or not. Sometimes some people are such a good con artist that you can't detect it. But we shied away from any stolen merchandise or something because we lost money on it. If I took some stolen piece of merchandise and later on it turned out to be stolen, we had to give it back and we didn't get paid for it. So let's say I took something without realizing that it's stolen, any item we took in, we had to fill out a report to the police department, every single item regardless if we bought it or we pawned it. And we had to keep the item when

we bought an item, we still had to—it was in triplicates; one copy stayed with us and two copies went to the police department. They were picking up those tickets from every transaction every single morning. So if we bought a piece of merchandise and it turned out to be stolen and I paid fifty dollars or a hundred dollars or ten dollars, whatever it was, and it turned out to be stolen, I lost the ten dollars. So why should I take a chance on it? So we used to shy away from it. Occasionally, we got caught—not caught; I mean we missed it. There was many times we had to lose the money on it. So we shied away from it.

So you had to be very intuitive about people.

Oh, yeah. You become now a business. After a while you become a psychologist because you deal with so many different people and dealing with a lot of con artists and dealing with a lot of gamblers, a lot of gamblers. And a gambler is just like a drug addict. Some of those gamblers, they need five dollars or ten dollars to get back the money, which they lost. So they come up with all kinds of different stories in order to get the money. We dealt with a lot of drug addicts, too.

Any other interesting stories about pawn shop work that you can remember, unusual stories?

I can write a whole book about it.

I bet.

So we don't have enough time here to tell you all the stories what I could. I had one time...It shows you how people get addicted. I dealt with one guy; he used to be a songwriter from Los Angeles, very intelligent guy. He had quite a few hits. He used to get residual checks every two months or every month or—I don't know—quite often, and some of those checks were like twenty, thirty thousand dollars. So he was a successful songwriter. With his residual checks he

used to come to me. When I first met him he didn't come with the checks to me, but originally he pawned...I don't remember what he pawned, a ring or something because he was a gambler. And he used to come to Las Vegas almost every second weekend to Las Vegas. When he won he came in and he bought something from us. Next week when he came, he lost everything. So he came in and he pawned the ring, which he bought from me. So that's how I got acquainted with him. Then when I found out that the guy was a songwriter. Through the months and years when he would come, he told me what he was doing and we got a little more acquainted. So once we got a little more acquainted, when he got the big checks, he used to come in with the checks to me and I used to cash the checks for him. But before I cashed it, he says, "Henry, you keep the check here and give me a thousand dollars or two thousand dollars and you keep it." And I give him a thousand dollars. He lost a thousand dollar. He came back. He says, "Henry, give me another thousand." To make the long story short, he used to come in Friday. By Sunday night he drew all that money.

Oh, my.

And he lost everything. Many times he said, "Henry, give me ten dollars because I need gas money." He used to do that for years, for years that guy. Very interesting guy, very intelligent guy, nice guy, good-looking guy. But people do...

I used to have...Now I can talk about it. One of my best customers used to be Redd Foxx. He's dead now, so I can talk about it, but otherwise...I had a lot of people, which I don't want to mention names. I don't know if they're still alive or not, so I don't want to mention it. But Redd Foxx was a very good customer of mine. He used to be addicted; he used to play keno. That guy could lose five to ten thousand dollars just in a couple of hours.

On keno.

On keno. He used to write thousand-dollar tickets. When he used to come to the store, he used to entertain all my customers and everybody there was...Very, very funny guy.

Yeah, he was a funny guy.

Yeah, very funny guy.

That's amazing. So did you have a relationship with the sheriff at that time?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, Sheriff John Moran. He was very good friend of mine. In fact, we socialized together years ago, too. I shouldn't say because his son is still alive here. He's a very prominent attorney here. He was a very good guy. I met Sheriff John Moran when he was a lieutenant. In 1960, everybody knew everybody. It was a small town. Just like I mentioned to you, I knew the street cleaner; I knew every judge; I knew every cop on the beat. Years ago the cops used to walk the beat and there were not too many. So everybody knew everybody. And I knew a lot of politicians because the politicians used to come in when they were running for the offices. So they would come in for support. So I used to know everybody. I used to know the governor. I used to know the mayor. I used to know every commissioner, every judge.

I was myself nominated by one of the mayors. We had a downtown business association. The business association became a branch of the City Hall for approval of...We had some funds from the city, which were supporting for beautification of the downtown. So I was on the committee there, too, and that's where I met on the same committee our future governor, governor...What's his name, the guy who fell off the roof?

Oh, Guinn, Kenny Guinn.

Guinn. I was with him on the committee.

Wow. How did you identify with the Jewish community at that time in the early '60s when you came here?

The main thing around Jewish community was Temple Beth Sholom. Temple Beth Sholom was the only temple in Las Vegas. The casino owners, most of the hotel owners were Jews, so they used to support the temple. They built the first temple. The first president of a temple used to be Nate Mack from the Thomas and Mack. He was the first banker here in town. Banks never loaned money to gamblers. He was the first banker who opened a bank here in Las Vegas and he was loaning money to the hotel owners. He was the first bank. Naturally, because they're Jewish, so they were looking to open up a temple and they did. They opened up Temple Beth Sholom.

When I came here the Temple Beth Sholom was built on Oakey; it was already built; that was a brand-new temple. But years ago they had a small, little house I think off Stewart Street, I think it was.

They supported the temple. They built the temple. Temple didn't owe any money. They raised the money to build the temple. We never had a mortgage. Jack Entratter was the president of our temple. Anything that had to be fixed at the temple, he used to send the mechanics from the Sands Hotel to do all the fixing. Temple Beth Sholom was a steppingstone for every Jewish person who came to Las Vegas; that's where they made their acquaintance; that's where they met everybody and that was the steppingstone. That was the steppingstone for all the gamblers and all the business people.

The first thing when Steve Wynn came to town, where do you think he came in? The first thing when Steve Wynn came to town, he came to the Temple Beth Sholom. His wife, Elaine, especially with my wife, was very, very active at the temple. That was the beginning.

We used to have a federation and the federation used to have fundraisers. And who do you think was the emcee at the federation? Steve Wynn. Today he doesn't want to know

nothing about his Jewish ancestors and Jewish thing, but that's what it was. He used to come to the temple every single Friday.

Elaine with my wife were very busy in selling raffles for the temple. My wife used to go many times because she used to work with Elaine Wynn on all the Sisterhood. But now...that's a different story.

So it was a social hub.

Sure.

Everybody came.

Yeah, it was a social hub. Most of the attorneys, all the new attorneys, all the new accountants, all the doctors, everybody went to the Temple Beth Sholom. That's where they made their first acquaintances. That's where Steve Wynn met—Steve Wynn came in here to Las Vegas because he bought, I think, twenty shares or something, twenty points or ten points or whatever at the Frontier Hotel and he became a slot manager. He didn't know nothing about the slots, but he became a slot manager. But he sold his shares later on and he met Thomas and Mack—Thomas.

Parry Thomas.

Parry Thomas, yeah. And from the money what he sold it, I think he went in the liquor business. He used to own on Wynn, Wynn Street—you know where Wynn Street is?

Uh-huh.

He used to have a liquor and wine distributorship; that's the Southern Wine and Liquor that used to be his.

Oh, I guess I don't know the history of that. Okay. So talk about...go back to Jack

Entratter. What kind of person was Jack Entratter?

Oh, he was a very good-looking guy. Originally Jack Entratter used to be—because of his

stature; he was a big guy, husky guy—he was a bouncer in Copacabana. That's where he met a lot of Jewish guys.

This is back in New York?

Back in New York. When they opened up Sands Hotel, they needed some front and he became entertainment director. Years ago every hotel used to have entertainment directors. Very famous director was in Sahara Hotel. He passed away a couple of years ago. I forgot his name now. That was the power, the entertainment directors. They were the most outgoing; I mean they were the most visible managers of hotel. You didn't know the casino [manager] because they were in the back. But they were representing—

The face.

They were the face of the hotels.

So most of those were Jewish men.

Most of them.

Why do you think that was? How did that happen?

Because there was a lot of Jewish entertainers. Besides that...Hollywood, right? There's a lot of Jews in it. So maybe that rubbed off. I don't know. Whatever.

So consequently, was there ever anti-Semitism experienced here at all?

Not at that time, no. Nope, nope, nope. Not at all. Not at all. Not at all. There was no anti-Semitism, no. No.

Then years later, the Imperial Palace, Engelstad; that episode. Do you remember that?

Imperial Palace guy—yes. Listen, there is always some—there was anti-Semitism before. Senator McCarran, he was a well-known anti-Semite. And Hank Greenspun used to have all the thing with him because he used to expose him in his newspaper all the time. Yeah. And

McCarran history...he seems to have squeezed the hotels and Hank Greenspun lost all—because Hank Greenspun used to get all the advertisements from all the hotels. And because he started with McCarran, McCarran put the squeeze on the hotels and they took out all the advertisements from Hank Greenspun's newspaper. The hotels took out all the advertisements from Greenspun's newspaper.

So you saw the city change a lot.

Pardon me?

You saw Las Vegas change a lot.

Oh, yeah. It was a nice city.

It was, you say.

It was. It was.

When did it stop being a nice city?

When it started growing. I never knew that this city is going to grow that much. Now, many times, just like I said—this has nothing to do with the Jewish history. But I used to know a lot of commissioners. One day they start building lakes here, Sahara Lakes and other lakes. And I went to friend of mine, a commissioner; it was Commissioner Christensen. I talked to him. I said, "Tell me, how the heck can you allow to build lakes here? This is a desert. How much water those lakes are using and how much water evaporates during especially the summertime? If you have a pool, you don't realize how much water evaporates from that pool. And you're making lakes? This is not Minnesota. This is a desert country. Why you even allow to have artificial lakes?" He says, "Henry, we've got so much water. We have plenty of water. We've got too much water." I says, "You've got too much water? Well, I hope someday you're not going to eat your words." And that's what this is.

And look at us today.

And look at today.

We're definitely worrying about it.

Yeah. We need those lakes like a hole in our head.

Right.

And all the lakes use the water from Lake Mead. We used to have a lot of water. Well, why Las Vegas became Las Vegas is because we had a lot of water here. The railroad, when they're going across the country, they need water and this used to be a water hole. Las Vegas, downtown Las Vegas, when they were building Golden Nugget, they went down—not Golden Nugget—the Mint Hotel they were start building. They went only maybe twenty or thirty feet down and they found water. There is lots of water in downtown Las Vegas; it used to be. I don't know about now. It used to have the ground water, a lot of ground water.

Right. Not so much anymore.

But I don't know. They probably used it.

So tell me about the Holocaust Resource Center, how you got involved, and your name is on that. So how did you get involved in that?

How I got involved in it? Mostly through my wife because my wife was very dedicated in the Jewish causes. She used to belong to the Sisterhood, she used to belong to the Federation, and she was quite busy. She was always raising money for both. They used to call her Lillian, the Raffle Lady. Originally we had one temple and every year they used to try to raise money, so they used to sell raffles. I remember at Flamingo Hotel right in the front in the lobby, lobby, my wife and a couple of other women used to come in and have a little table and in the hotel they were selling raffles for Temple Beth Sholom. So she was very much involved.

How that thing started...Katz—

Edythe Katz.

Edythe Katz was very much involved. She came here long—did you ever interview her?

She's been interviewed several years ago. I didn't have a chance, no.

Edythe Katz was very active at the Federation. She was very active in Federation. She was actually the one who wanted to start something, like a little library or something. She approached my wife. We donated some money and that's how it started. Her family's name— not—

Sperling. Was it Sperling?

Sperling, yes. That's her maiden name. Sperling, Kronberg, and Mack came in later. That's why. Originally it was Sperling and Kronberg and Mack came in later.

So are you actively involved in anything that goes on there?

I am on the committee right now, but I'm not as active as I maybe should be. It's not my cup of tea. I am not very...I am more in the background. I'm supporting it, but I'm not the one who is in the front and being active. It's not me. Everybody has a different...

So who are some of the interesting people along the way all these years that you've been here? You've mentioned Entratter and Steve Wynn. You mentioned Hank Greenspun a little bit. Who are some of the other interesting cast of characters that you've crossed paths with?

You know who is also—not very much active in the temple, but...I forgot her name.

Don't you hate that when that happens?

Huh?

I hate that when that happens. You know it. I wish I could help you.

Yeah, you get a senior moment. The movie "Casino" was actually—

Oh, Frank Rosenthal?

Frank Rosenthal.

You knew him?

I didn't know him—I knew him—he came in a couple of times. My brother-in-law knew him very well. My brother-in-law was here longer than I was, so he knew him. He knew him. In fact, he came in a few times to the store, Frank Rosenthal. But my wife and his wife, they belonged to the temple and she used to help in raising money for the Temple Beth Shalom. It was a small town and the Jewish community was very, very active. So no matter what they used to do, they used to remember that the parents were involved in the synagogue or something. So something rubbed off. So he was...Who else was a character here? I'm trying to think about it.

I have a picture of—I have to show you that picture. I don't know if I showed you that. Have I showed you a picture with Max Schmeling? You know who Max Schmeling is?

No, I don't think so.

You know Joe Louis?

The boxer?

Yeah.

Yeah, I know who that is.

That's me.

Oh, wow.

That's Max Schmeling. Joe Louis fought Max Schmeling before the war in 1938. Max Schmeling knocked out Joe Louis. They had a rematch and Max Schmeling, I think, came to United States for rematch and Joe Louis knocked out Max Schmeling.

So who are these other people behind you here?

This guy was a city commissioner. A lot of low-budget apartments are named with his name.

What's his name?

This guy was a character. He used to originally own my store.

Oh, really?

Yeah. He bought that store; this is Max Goot.

Max Goot?

Goot.

G-O-O-T?

Yes, Max Goot. This guy is Levy, Levy Real Estate. That's his father and he was very active here in the Las Vegas, Levy. They have Levy low housing. I think I told you that. He was very active.

This guy used to be a Small Business Administration director in Las Vegas.

Was he Jewish, too?

Yeah. All of them.

All these men are Jewish here.

That was a Federation lunch in Caesars Palace.

Ah, okay. All right.

This guy was the Caesars Palace director. They're all Jewish. Everyone is Jewish here. That was Jewish Federation.

Got it. That makes sense.

How about with racism in Las Vegas? You were located on Fremont Street and then there's the Westside not too far away. What were your thoughts or interactions? Did

you think about the segregation?

You see, this guy...Originally I wanted to open up a pawn shop on the Westside. Oh, yeah. The Westside was a very—my brother-in-law, he came here in '54 or '53. They built on the Westside the Moulin Rouge. They built the Moulin Rouge and my brother-in-law had a gift shop there.

At the Moulin Rouge?

At the Moulin Rouge, yeah, he had a gift shop over there. He invested a lot of money. He had a lot of souvenirs made with the name of Moulin Rouge. Spent lots of money. The whole Moulin Rouge was open, I think, six months or a year or something. He lost every penny what he put in there. The mixture with colored people was actually very, very good. Before '60s, it was a different story where they could not come into the hotels on the Strip, but they used to come downtown. In a gambling casino downtown, they could come in no problem. But the hotels...that was a different story. On the Strip hotels...that was a different story. Downtown they used to come in to all the casinos, Binion's Casino and all the others. There was no problem. It was okay with the black people. I had a lot of black customers, lots of black customers.

So what kept you from opening up a pawn shop on the Westside?

The opportunity after I bought Stoney's. See, I figured that Stoney's was a better deal.

It's always timing.

A good thing I didn't open up because a couple of years later they had the riots and they burned everything.

Yeah. Pretty tumultuous time for sure. Well, anything else that we should talk about that you can think of? Any other people you want to mention?

I think that's about—maybe someday I'll remind myself for about it. [Laughing]

All right. Well, I'm going to thank you very much. This is great.

[Pause in recording]

So you said when you moved here in '62...

I decide to move to Las Vegas in November 1962. I packed my car and I rented a U-Haul. I didn't have a horse and wagon, but with a U-Haul going across to Las Vegas. I found out that there were two Las Vegases. When I rented my U-Haul, they asked me, "Where are you going?" I said, "Las Vegas." After I got that piece of paper, I see "Las Vegas, New Mexico." So I saved myself twenty dollars because Las Vegas, Nevada was a little further. So I saved myself twenty dollars. I didn't realize, but found out there were two Las Vegases.

Now, to make a long story short, when I called up the telephone company to tell them that I want to disconnect my phone—

And this is in Newark, you said?

Huh?

You were in Newark.

I still lived in Newark, New Jersey, yeah. So the telephone operator asked me, "For record we ask people where they're moving." So I said, "I'm moving to Las Vegas." She says, "Las Vegas?" She says, "You mean people live there?" [Laughing] I say, "Yeah, people live there because I'm moving there." And that's the way the people were thinking at that time; they thought that maybe all they had is gambling and nobody lives there. Well, somebody has to operate those gambling.

And I had another story. I sold my house. I had a two-family house. So I had some money from the house and now I'm moving to Las Vegas. I went to my banker. He was a friend of mine. I said, "I'm moving out of town and I want a cashier's check for my savings." So he

asked me, "Henry, where are you moving?" So I said, "I'm moving to Las Vegas." "Las Vegas? I'm not going to give you your money." I said, "Why not? I'm not coming back here." "You're going to gamble all your money and you're going to come back later." He says, "I'm not giving you." And he wouldn't give me a cashier's check for my money because he was so sure that I'm going to...I said, "I'm moving with my family." He says, "No. You will write a check and we will honor the checks." He would not give.

Sure enough, a couple of months later I transferred my funds to an account in Las Vegas. But he would not give me; he didn't want to give me my money because I'm going to gamble my money away.

So you did start to make a comment, too, about coming here in the '60s, early '60s that you felt like you grew...?

I came to Las Vegas at the right time because Las Vegas started to develop. I came here to Las Vegas in 1960 and I found an apartment building, which I said, "In case I ever want to move here, I would like to live in this apartment building," and my sister rented an apartment for me in that so when we came here I should have a place where to live. We come here with everything and we want to move into our apartment. The manager of the apartment says, "Hey, wait a second. You have a child." I say, "Yes, I have a child. She's twelve years old. So what's wrong with it?" He said, "I'm sorry, but we can't rent with children." And he wouldn't rent me the apartment.

Oh, my. So what did you do?

What did I do? They built a brand-new apartment motel on Spring Mountain Road that's right now where the Treasure Island is. That's where it was. That used to be Spring Mountain Road there. They built brand-new apartments. So that's where we moved in and we lived there for

three months or four months until we bought a house. We bought the first house on (Casa Bien).

Where's that at?

It's between Sahara and St. Louis below Maryland Parkway; that was the area. It was about three blocks away from the temple, temple at Oakey. That used to be the Jewish neighborhood, 17th Street, Oakey.

You know who was a big character here in this temple? Louie Wiener.

Oh, tell me about Louie.

You heard about Louie Wiener?

Oh, yes, yes. Louie Wiener. Jr., yes.

Huh?

Louie Wiener, Jr.

Junior, correct. Louie Wiener used to own 15 percent my brother-in-law's pawn shop.

Oh, really?

Louie Wiener was a character. Louie Wiener was a very prominent attorney here in town and whoever came into this town and wanted to open up a business and they needed, let's say, a business license...So if you have a business license, you go to an attorney. So people say, "All right, I would like you to arrange a business license for me." So the people used to ask him, "How much? What's the fee?" So he said, "Eh, you don't have to pay me nothing. I'll tell you...I'll take 10 percent of your business." So people felt if the prominent attorney is going to be my 10 percent partner, he's going to bring me more customers. He used to own 10 percent in twenty or thirty different businesses here.

Very entrepreneurial.

Very, very. He used to own 15 percent in my place. He used to own 10 percent in the

restaurant. He used to own also 10 percent, I think, in...I'm not sure, but I think; don't put it on the record.

[Pause in recording]

Un-pause it, okay.

He used to own 10 percent in every single—not every single, but lots, and that's how he made lots of money.

Were you familiar with his representation of Benjamin Siegel? Do you remember Bugsy, those stories?

No.

That would have been before you.

That was before my time. That was before my time. I didn't know that. But you probably heard the story when he passed away?

No.

Oh, you never heard?

When Louie passed away?

When Louie Wiener passed away.

No, I don't know that.

There was a big funeral at the Temple Beth Sholom. Temple Beth Sholom was on Oakey at that time. Naturally, because he was such a prominent attorney, so he had huge, huge, huge funeral.

But in the front of the Temple Beth Sholom was an armored car and under armored car was a big sign, "Who says I can't take it with me?" That's what he did.

Oh, my gosh. Who arranged that?

Huh?

Did he arrange that himself?

He probably must have arranged it.

Left it in his will or something.

In the will.

I've never heard that story.

Yeah. "Who says I can't take it with me?" With a big...right under armored car.

What a character.

Yeah, he was a character.

Well, thanks again.

He was a gambler. Louie Wiener, he had a little, short hand; one right hand was short. He used to bet sport bets; that was his passion, football, baseball; that's what he was. Right next to me—years ago there was no sportsbook. Hotel didn't own sports wagers, sportsbook; that used to be a separate license. And right next to me, next to Stoney's—that's the reason Stoney's was so successful because right next to my store was a sportsbook. All the gamblers used to come in and bet horses and sportsbook and when they needed a loan, they came into me for a loan. And who was the biggest? Louie Wiener. Every morning when I opened up my store, I see Louie Wiener was placing the bet next door.

And who was also gambler? Shecky Greene. He used to come next door to me.

Okay. Anything more?

Okay?

We keep talking here. You'll be here all day.

[Pause in recording]

Years ago there lounges in hotels were more popular than the shows, the big shows. So

everybody used to go to lounges. The reason why I used to go to lounges because you had free entertainment, good entertainment, and just if you bought one drink. So those lounges were very popular. Like Louis Prima in the Sahara, they started in lounges. So many times I used to deal with a lot of entertainers in town. Most entertainers, one day they got a job and they were making money and a couple of weeks later they lost the job and they didn't have any money. So they used to come in and hawk their jewelry.

I dealt with one comedian and he was quite popular in Las Vegas lounges. So one time I walked into the lounge where he was entertaining. He spotted me coming in and he yell, "Oh, Henry, how is my ring doing? Is everything okay?" So everybody knew Henry. Henry and Stoney; that was my name. So wherever I went somebody called me Stoney or somebody called me Henry. But that was the part of Las Vegas.

So nobody was embarrassed that they were—

No, no.

—hawking or pawning their materials?

Oh, no. "Here comes the guy; here comes Stoney; here comes my ring. I hope you're taking good care of my ring." [Laughing]

So what was your biggest competitor? Were there other pawn shops then?

I didn't have no competitors. At that time there were only eight pawn shops and there was a mighty business. My competitor...I didn't have a competitor. In fact, right next to me was a friend of mine. He used to be Jerry Jorey.

Okay. That's another name I've heard, yeah.

Jerry Jorey used to be a navy commander. He was a pawn broker, very, very nice guy. He was also Harry Reid's (adjunct). That was his (adjunct). When Harry Reid went to different

countries as a senator for government business, he used to take Jerry Jorey with him as his military (adjunct).

Interesting. Wow.

He was also a pawn broker. We didn't have no competition. We were friends.

[End of recorded interview]