An Interview with
LINDA ROSEN STERLING
and PAUL VENZE

An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada

Tonopah
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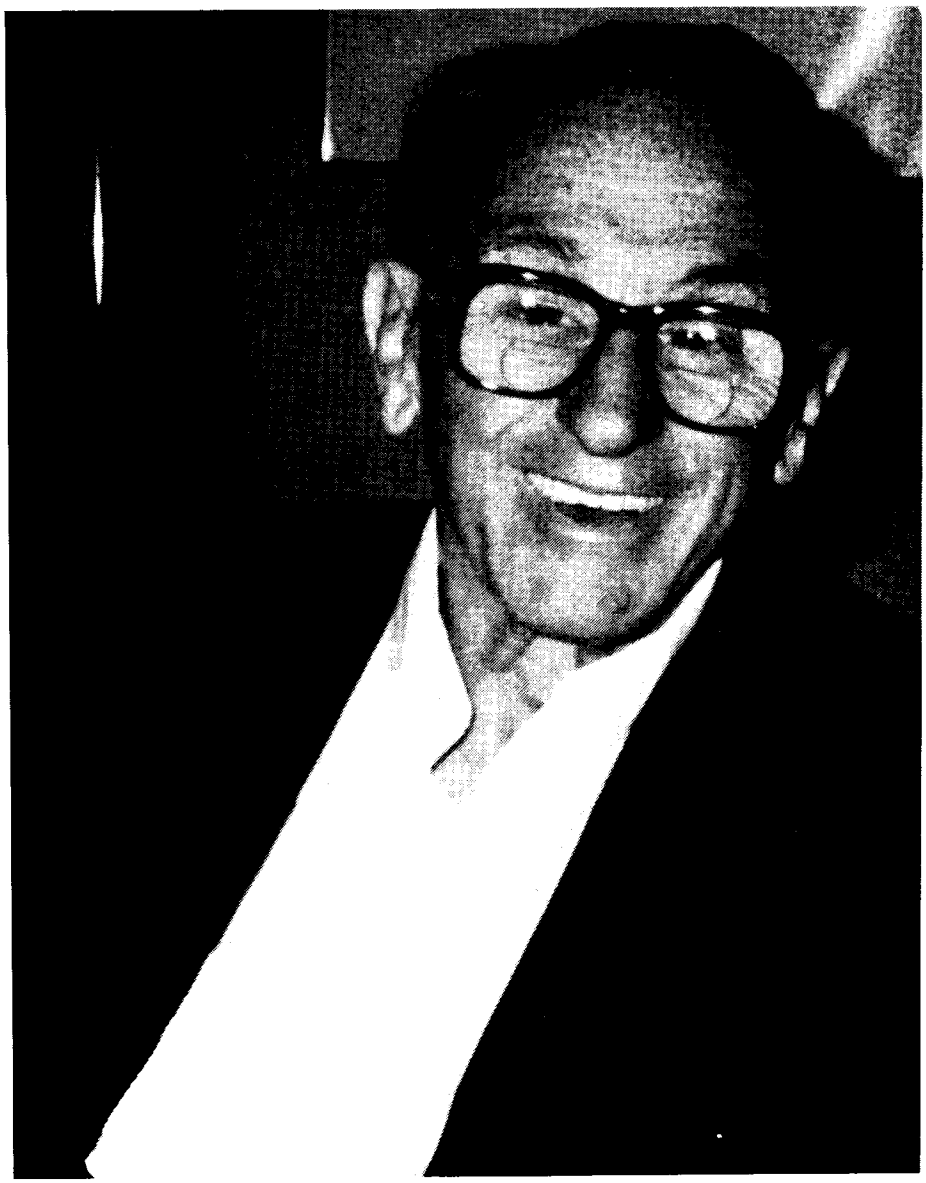

Leonard Rosen
circa 1980

PREFACE

The Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP) engages in interviewing people who can provide firsthand descriptions of the individuals, events, and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are not history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned. Verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the NCTHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the NCTHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts, and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherency. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the NCTHP will,

in preparing a text:

a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the uhs, ahs and other noises with which speech is often sprinkled;

b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;

c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context;

d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible; and

e. make every effort to correctly spell the names of all individuals and places, recognizing that an occasional word may be misspelled because no authoritative source on its correct spelling was found.

As project director, I would like to express my deep appreciation to those who participated in the Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP). It was an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to obtain oral histories from so many wonderful individuals. I was welcomed into many homes--in many cases as a stranger--and was allowed to share in the recollection of local history. In a number of cases I had the opportunity to interview Nye County residents whom I have known and admired since I was a teenager; these experiences were especially gratifying. I thank the residents throughout Nye County and southern Nevada--too numerous to mention by name--who provided assistance, information, and photographs. They helped make the successful completion of this project possible.

Appreciation goes to Chairman Joe S. Garcia, Jr., Robert N. "Bobby" Revert, and Patricia S. Mankins, the Nye County commissioners who initiated this project. Mr. Garcia and Mr. Revert, in particular, showed deep interest and unyielding support for the project from its inception. Thanks also go to current commissioners Richard L. Carver and Barbara J. Raper, who have since joined Mr. Revert on the board and who have continued the project with enthusiastic support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the project within Nye County and before the State of Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office and the United States Department of Energy; both entities provided funds for this project. Thanks are also extended to Mr. Bradhurst for his advice and input regarding the conduct of the research and for constantly serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. This project would never have

become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Bradhurst.

Jean Charney served as administrative assistant, editor, indexer, and typist throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Louise Terrell provided considerable assistance in transcribing many of the oral histories; Barbara Douglass also transcribed a number of interviews. Transcribing, typing, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Alice Levine, Jodie Hanson, Mike Green, and Cynthia Tremblay. Jared Charney contributed essential word processing skills. Maire Hayes, Michelle Starika, Anita Coryell, Michelle Welsh, Lindsay Schumacher, and Jodie Hanson shouldered the herculean task of proofreading the oral histories. Gretchen Loeffler and Bambi McCracken assisted in numerous secretarial and clerical duties. Phillip Earl of the Nevada Historical Society contributed valuable support and criticism throughout the project, and Tom King at the Oral History Program of the University of Nevada at Reno served as a consulting oral historian. Much deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

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--Robert D. McCracken
Tonopah, Nevada
June 1990

Historians generally consider the year 1890 as the end of the American frontier. By then, most of the western United States had been settled, ranches and farms developed, communities established, and roads and railroads constructed. The mining boomtowns, based on the lure of overnight riches from newly developed lodes, were but a memory.

Although Nevada was granted statehood in 1864, examination of any map of the state from the late 1800s shows that while much of the state was mapped and its geographical features named, a vast region--stretching from Belmont south to the Las Vegas meadows, comprising most of Nye County--remained largely unsettled and unmapped. In 1890 most of southcentral Nevada remained very much a frontier, and it continued to be for at least another twenty years.

The great mining booms at Tonopah (1900), Goldfield (1902), and Rhyolite (1904) represent the last major flowering of what might be called the Old West in the United States. Consequently, southcentral Nevada, notably Nye County, remains close to the American frontier; closer, perhaps, than any other region of the American West. In a real sense, a significant part of the frontier can still be found in southcentral Nevada. It exists in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents. The frontier-like character of the area also is visible in the relatively undisturbed quality of the natural environment, most of it essentially untouched by human hands.

A survey of written sources on southcentral Nevada's history reveals some material from the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915, but very little on the area after around 1920. The volume of available sources

varies from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Tonopah's first two decades of existence, and the town has had a newspaper continuously since its first year. In contrast, relatively little is known about the early days of Gabbs, Round Mountain, Manhattan, Beatty, Amargosa Valley, and Pahrump. Gabbs's only newspaper was published intermittently between 1974 and 1976. Round Mountain's only newspaper, the Round Mountain Nugget, was published between 1906 and 1910. Manhattan had newspaper coverage for most of the years between 1906 and 1922. Amargosa Valley has never had a newspaper; Beatty's independent paper folded in 1912. Pahrump's first newspaper did not appear until 1971. All six communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities after their own papers folded, although Beatty was served by the Beatty Bulletin, which was published as a supplement to the Goldfield News between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of southcentral Nevada after 1920 is stored in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Nye County's close ties to our nation's frontier past, and recognizing that few written sources on local history are available, especially after about 1920, the Nye County Commissioners initiated the Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP). The NCTHP represents an effort to systematically collect and preserve information on the history of Nye County. The centerpiece of the NCTHP is a large set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Nye County libraries, Special Collections in the James R. Dickinson

Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada. The interviews vary in length and detail, but together they form a never-before-available composite picture of each community's life and development. The collection of interviews for each community can be compared to a bouquet: Each flower in the bouquet is unique--some are large, others are small--yet each adds to the total image. In sum, the interviews provide a composite view of community and county history, revealing the flow of life and events for a part of Nevada that has heretofore been largely neglected by historians.

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. These pictures have been obtained from participants in the oral history interviews and other present and past Nye County residents. In all, more than 700 photos have been collected and carefully identified. Complete sets of the photographs have been archived along with the oral histories.

On the basis of the oral interviews as well as existing written sources, histories have been prepared for the major communities in Nye County. These histories also have been archived.

The town history project is one component of a Nye County program to determine the socioeconomic impacts of a federal proposal to build and operate a nuclear waste repository in southcentral Nye County. The repository, which would be located inside a mountain (Yucca Mountain), would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Nye County Board of County Commissioners initiated the NCTHP in 1987 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions, and quality of life of Nye County

communities that may be impacted by a repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided near the site. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nye County, material compiled by the NCIHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken interviewing Linda Sterling and Paul Venze at Linda's home in Henderson, Nevada - May 9, 1988

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Linda, could you tell me your full name as it reads on your birth certificate?

LS: Linda Rosen. My name today is Linda Rosen Sterling.

RM: When and where were you born?

LS: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, June 17, 1941.

RM: Could you state your mother's name?

LS: My mother's name is Dorothy Gertzenberg Rosen. She is a native of Toronto, Canada.

RM: When was she born?

LS: She was born December 25th, 1917.

RM: And what was your father's name?

LS: My father's name was Leonard Rosen, and he was born in Baltimore, Maryland, October 28th, 1915.

RM: Was his family from Baltimore?

LS: No. My father's older sister, Edith, was the first one in his family to be born in Baltimore, and she was born in 1913.

RM: Where did his family come from?

LS: Actually, I'd like to refer you to my cousin, who is much older than I am, and therefore [laughter] has a much better grasp on what happened back then.

RM: OK. Paul, could you state your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

PV: Paul Venze.

RM: And when and where were you born?

PV: I was born September the 4th, 1925, in Baltimore, Maryland.

RM: Could you state your mother's name?

PV: My mother's maiden name was Anna Rubin. She was born in Minsk, Russia, in approximately 1900.

RM: And what was your father's name?

PV: My father's name was David Venze. He was born in Kiev, Russia, in approximately 1900 also. There are 3 different ages that I have on records - 1899, 1900 and 1901. My father took the birthday of the Fourth of July because he thought it was good enough for the country, and it was good enough for him.

RM: [chuckles] That's good. Now, what is your relation to Leonard Rosen?

PV: I'm a cousin. Leonard's mother and my mother were sisters.

RM: And where did you grow up?

PV: In Baltimore.

RM: Linda, could you say something about your childhood and education?

LS: I went to school in Baltimore, Maryland until I was in the 10th grade. My father, up until that time, had had various careers. When he was 12 years old his father died in a streetcar accident in Chicago while he was there on business. His father was also a pioneer - he was the first one to have black movie theaters. Actually, they were for black people, and at that time they were called "colored movie theaters."

His father died very tragically - he was struck by a streetcar - and my father was only 12 years old. So he left school at a very early age and went out to work and he was always what we would call, in the vernacular, a hustler. A hustler, not in the Paul Newman sense . . .

PV: Or in the Jesse Jackson or Vice-President Bush sense. [NOTE: During the 1988 Presidential campaign, Vice-president George Bush called Democrat

Jesse Jackson a hustler in a derogatory sense.]

LS: Right; he knew how to scramble and how to scrapple for a dollar. He always lived by his wits, even when he was a man of tremendous financial means. He never stopped sparring for a second. I chose the word 'sparring' very much on purpose, because for a while my father was a professional prizefighter. We used to call him Canvasback Rosen. [laughter] That was the joke, because he had a lot of knockouts.

From that career he went on to be a pitchman, and by that I mean he went around to various carnivals and fairgrounds and sold gadgets. Whether they were slicers or dicers . . . his favorite was a medicine man, where he used to sell a cure-all. He was very proud of the knowledge he gleaned of the human body by selling this medication.

He met many of [the people] who were to be his life-long friends on the carnival circuit, and he also met my mother on the circuit. He was doing a fair in Toronto, Canada, and my mother was working at the same fair. It's called the Canadian National Exhibition, and to this day it goes on and is cause for great celebration in Toronto every summer. He met my mother at this fair, and they were married very soon after that - in 1939.

My father came back right before the war and he went into different types of installment businesses until the late '40s.

RM: By installment businesses, do you mean financing refrigerators on time, or cars?

PV: Refrigerators, household appliances, clothing - things that you could purchase and pay for over time on the installment plan.

LS: I was born in 1941, as you can see well after Mr. Venze. [laughter] It was [chuckles] a very warm, close, insulated first 10 years, because my cousin Paul, who was very much a part of my first 10 years, and my uncle

Jack, who was my father's brother, weren't married, and I was the first grandchild. I had a tremendous amount of love and caring from cousins and uncles and aunts. My father's older sister, Edith, did not have such a happy marriage and never had children, so I was like her surrogate little girl. Until she passed away very tragically at 34 years old from cancer in 1947, I was the daughter. I was the child in the family. And my grandmother - my father's mother - was just the most wonderful . . .

We were a very, very close-knit family and we were a family that all worked together. My mother, my father, my cousin Paul, my uncle Jack, my father's sister, my father's sister's husband . . . everyone worked in the installment business, so we consequently spent tremendous amounts of time together. I really had very little contact in the larger arena of the world.

My world was the family world, and the family interests all seemed to coalesce in certain areas - the business, the family, and Israel. They were all very Zionistic - this was the early stages of the birth of Israel. Each in their own way was very, very, very involved with that. And everything seemed to center around my grandmother - she was very much the epicenter of our family. Those were the early years.

Around 1948 or '49, some changes started occurring. Number one, we had our first big family tragedy - the death of my Aunt Edith from cancer. The second change was that my cousin and my uncle got married.

PV: That was 1952.

RM: Did that take them out of the tight family circle?

LS: It didn't take them out of the family, but we lost a lot of control. [laughter] And there was a new business that the whole family was in, a very exciting business, and it put us financially - I would say - on the

next rung of the ladder. We had been a middle-class family and we were working our way up to an upper middle class strata. That business was Charles Antell Formula Number 9. It was a manufacturer of shampoo, and it was the first product to introduce lanolin as a key element in the nurturing of hair. No one had ever used lanolin as a modality for selling a product before.

RM: How did you shift from the installment business into that?

PV: Leonard had a close friend named Charles Kasher, and somehow they got the product; I really don't know how it was formulated.

RM: Did Kasher formulate it?

PV: No, Kasher did not formulate it.

LS: He was not the chemist.

PV: But somehow they started with the product and began selling it on television.

RM: I remember it; yes.

PV: They were the initiators of the first 30-minute commercial, such as you now see on cable television, and the hour programs which are on cable - this was taking place in 1951.

LS: Right. And I have video tapes for you of a game show that they initiated called Liberal Bill, and my father was Liberal Bill.

PV: This was in '53, '54 . . .

LS: It was the first giveaway game show. And they used that show as a vehicle for advertising and promoting Charles Antell.

PV: But the big thing the program did was raise funds for charity every week. Each week people bought things at auction, and all the money raised went to the charity of the week, whether it was the American Red Cross, the Heart Fund, for cancer, etc.

RM: Now, was that a Baltimore program, or . . . ?

LS: No, it was nation-wide.

PV: It was network television.

LS: And they had guests like Ralph Bellamy, Robert Alda . . . it was very substantial. In 1954 or '55 they sold the company to A. Babbitt and Company, which was - Bab-O, the "foaming cleanser" was their main product.

PV: A 99-year-old company.

LS: Right; out of Massachusetts. So now we have another change. I want to backtrack and say . . . my sister will be 37 September 22nd, so 38 years ago would be 1950. In 1950 my parents took a trip to Las Vegas and the west coast, and my father was smitten with the desert; he loved the desert and bought property from the man who owned the Desert Inn Hotel.

RM: Was that Wilbur Clark?

LS: Whoever owned it at that time. I remember that they stayed at the Desert Inn and he dealt with them, and a man named Cohen was the lawyer. He bought property here with the idea of one day coming out and doing something; maybe moving right away. He really loved it. My mother became pregnant, and she said that she wasn't going to move, having just become pregnant, and the idea was put away. He didn't sell the land just then.

RM: Where was the land?

LS: The land was on the west side, but I don't know exactly where. Anyway, that was the end of that. Instead of getting sand we got Sandy, my sister. [laughter] And that is the genesis of her name. Sandy is her real name.

PV: Now, just to go back a second. Even in those days, not only did we sell the Charles Antell Shampoo and Formula 9 for hair preparation, we sold vitamins.

RM: What were the vitamins called?

LS: Vita-Yums. That's right. The vitamins introduced were a vitamin for children.

PV: In fact, today when you see vitamins for children disguised as a candy product, that was the origin. That was back in the '50s.

RM: Your family was involved in several innovative products, as well as marketing, in those days, weren't they?

LS: Right; always. Marketing was their real game.

RM: How did they come up with these ideas?

PV: They were just very, very creative. Leonard and his brother Jack and other members of the . . .

LS: And my cousin Paul.

PV: But I really didn't play the part that they did; they were really creative geniuses. They were not only creative from the standpoint of coming up with products - as Linda said, marketing was the game.

LS: And they were innovators. Somehow or other, I think a lot of it had to do with not being boggled down with MBAs. They were totally uneducated, but they had a sense of the people. They were street people, and their . . .

PV: Well, uneducated - I wouldn't quite say it that way. Formally uneducated, but Leonard and Jack both - especially Leonard - were very prolific readers.

LS: Yes - they read about 3 or 4 books a week, of most esoteric ilk. They could quote Thoreau [or] the guy over at Cal Tech who is the big business economist [equally freely]. You're right, Paul - they were. But you see, when Leonard was a pitchman, when he was out at the fair, right in the middle of the people . . . [in that situation] you learn what the people

want and what the people respond to. It's hands-on marketing. He carried their message and he never, ever lost it. My Uncle Jack also had a tremendous sense of what the people want and what the people respond to. I must say, they surrounded themselves with very good people. And they always conducted their businesses, no matter how large they got, like a family.

RM: Was Jack younger or older than your father?

LS: Younger. But he passed away in 1969; he had a heart attack in 1969.

RM: Then [their success] was a combination of having their fingers on the pulse of the people, as well as maybe all their reading. Now, did the installment business give them the capital to go into the shampoo?

PV: Right.

LS: And they took their money from the Antell business, when they sold it, and my father went to the west coast of Florida and decided he was going to build a city.

PV: Well, did he go because he had arthritis?

LS: Oh, that's right - he had been in the hospital, and they couldn't figure out what was wrong with him; he had very bad arthritis. Someone told him about some place - Punta Gordo - on the west coast of Florida, near Fort Myers. He saw all this swampland, and he bought it and said he was going to build a city. There were some developments at a very, very minor level going on at that time. He came back and said we were going to move to Florida.

I said, "What do you mean, move to Florida?" I was a young adolescent, [and at that age] there is nothing more traumatic than to have to uproot yourself from your school and your friends and what you thought was your perfect life and move to Florida. But move to Florida we did.

Then there was yet another whole change in the family life and in our personal life.

RM: Meanwhile, had they sold out the shampoo business?

PV: Yes. And the vitamins were sold to that same company.

RM: So basically he had some money, and he was looking around for something else?

PV: Right. He started a new enterprise.

RM: What do you think made him decide that he wanted to build a city?

PV: I don't know, but he always said, "I want to build a city."

LS: My Uncle Sol, who is my father's brother-in-law (my aunt's husband), who is still very much a part of our family circle, said that my father, in his very early 20s, wanted to build an ideal city in Virginia. He had bought an old factory town that was totally desolate.

PV: Well, he was manufacturing furniture.

LS: He was manufacturing furniture there, and he wanted to try and build an ideal town. This was in the '30s - 1939, 1940 - and he wanted to build a town like . . . He bought an old deserted town and he was manufacturing furniture there and he wanted to equip it and make it the perfect town - a Brook Farm, if you will, or an Elmyra, New York, which started out as one of those [utopian communities]. But it was not a commune; not that kind of concept.

RM: It didn't come out of the Jewish communus tradition?

LS: The kibbutz?

RM: Yes, in Israel.

LS: No. It had nothing to do with the kibbutz; it did not emerge from that. But the antecedents [of his wish to create a city] go back. No one knows why he thought he could do it, but he knew he had a formula with

which he could sell anything. He was very sure of himself, cocky and very confident, and knew that he could sell anything. He knew that he could build a city and that he could sell it.

PV: And he could sell anything.

LS: And he could sell anything. He sold himself every day. He was not an ordinary kind of person. He was not the kind of person who ever walks into a room unnoticed. He really made his presence felt - sometimes by force . . .

RM: How did he do it?

LS: He had several methods. One was his dress. If he had an interview with you, he would come in sweaty old dirty tennis clothes and an old pushed-in terry-cloth hat. He'd walk into the room, and you've heard all these things about him, and he would come in like a dusty old miner who'd been out in the desert, and you would say, "Huh?" And he would dazzle you with his stories - he always had stories and jokes. Or he would come to a board meeting, and everybody else would be very formal and the press would be there and he'd walk in with tennis clothes. He was the proverbial bad boy; he was Peck's bad boy. He was always the bad kid on the block, and he never outgrew that. He would do it by his stories, he would do it by grand gestures.

RM: What's an example of a grand gesture?

LS: If a friend was in trouble, without telling anybody, he would just take care of it. [He might say,] "I can't have that lot? What do you mean, I can't buy that property?" He would buy everything around it and squeeze the person out. You know what I mean - when I'm saying he would do it, he would just do it by grand gesture.

PV: But even in walking in the room . . .

LS: Yes, he had a charisma . . .

PV: I remember his coming to our home, and this was in the '80s, when he wasn't feeling well (he went through a series of bypass surgeries). We had a gathering for someone else in the family, and very few of the people knew Leonard. I noticed he sat by himself for maybe 15 or 25 minutes, and lo and behold, I look around, and he had a crowd of people around him. Somehow he had the ability - because he was a great salesperson and a great story-teller; a delightful story-teller. He had this charisma about him and when he started telling a story, everyone could listen. I often wish that I could commanded the attention of a crowd. But I know I can't, so I don't try. When you heard that commercial of E.F. Hutton . . . [on T.V. in the middle 1980s]

RM: Everybody listens; yes.

PV: Yes - everybody listens. When Leonard would start talking, and he would sit with his arms folded like this, people would listen. He just had great warmth and charisma about him.

LS: And another great gesture that I'll always remember . . . my father was always involved in charities; he was very involved in the community. If he would go to somebody and ask them for money and they wouldn't give him any, or they'd give them a check, he'd look at it and say, "Five hundred dollars? You're only giving me $500? I wouldn't insult you by taking this." And he'd tear it up. Meanwhile, the person he was raising the money for would be sweating, because they were salivating for that $500 - it might've meant 3 scholarships. But he wouldn't settle.

And he had a way of talking very quietly, and then his voice would get louder and louder and louder. He would get up on the table if that's what it took.

PV: He was a showman.

LS: Yes - that's right.

PV: But in this one particular event in our home, he was not a showman; he did not do anything. His dress was the same as everyone else - he was dressed for the occasion with a suit, shirt and tie - and he sat there quietly. But just because of his tremendous warmth and charisma and knowledge . . .

LS: And life experiences.

PV: He was knowledgeable on just about everything.

LS: Except computers. [chuckles]

RM: [chuckles] Did his brother Jack have these characteristics, too?

PV: Jack was a one to one man. He was a very deep person.

LS: He was the poet.

PV: He was a poet. He was very deep, and a hard, hard worker. Jack was also very creative in marketing, and would've rather been known more for his marketing ability than for possibly owning Charles Antell or Gulf American.

PV: He was really a great marketeer. Things that Jack introduced from 1957 through 1962 are still being used by all the competition today, and no one has ever topped it.

RM: Do you mean on selling land?

LS: On selling land. Because their next project . . . the whole family moved to Florida.

RM: Could you discuss a little bit more about what it was about your father that gave him his great sales ability?

LS: First, it's intangible; I think it's a gift. I think some people are gifted, and of those who are gifted some know they are gifted, and some don't. Leonard knew. And he always had a sense of humor. No matter what, he never lost his sense of humor.

I think that was one gift. And this sounds really nuts, but he knew that no matter what he did, he always could sell his mother. No matter what he did, his mother thought it was terrific. I think he figured, 'It's good enough for my mother. Anything I do is OK with my mom; it's just OK.' It's just something inside of you. Just like . . . I know that I can't sell. I don't have that ability to go in and convince somebody the way Leonard had, and I'm pretty good. But the way he did - I think it's a gift; I just think it's a gift. I think he just knew that he could get what he wanted. He could always get what he wanted from his mother, he could always get her approval. And he never stopped; he was tenacious.

PV: When you say he would never stop, that's absolutely true. He would not take no for an answer.

LS: Right; he would wear you down.

PV: You would wear down, and eventually you'd give in. [If] Leonard came up with a project and wanted to do it, and if a lot of us said, "Don't understand it; don't understand it - don't think we should do it," he was so tenacious, and eventually wore everyone down, that finally everybody said, "OK, let's do it; let's do it."

RM: Was that how you made the shift from the finance business to the shampoo business?

PV: No.

RM: What gave you the courage to make that shift? That's a big switch.

LS: I think there's a big difference, here, between your history and my father's history. It would never dawn on our family to go out and be miners or prospectors. It just would be inconceivable. We've done a lot of new things and a lot of adventurous things, but we basically all had an immigrant mentality. It was that this was the golden Medema - this was the golden land. This was the land of opportunity and all the doors were open to us. There wasn't anything that we couldn't do, because his mother and father, my cousin Paul's mother and father, all their aunts and uncles, came to this country fleeing the pogroms in Russia, knowing that they were coming to the land of opportunity. My father's parents might've discovered there weren't streets paved in gold here, but you had that opportunity to make, and do, whatever you wanted. They didn't think that there was anything that they couldn't do. I think this is really key in understanding the Leonard Rosens - that everything is possible in this country. That was the immigrant mentality. And that's why - for the very best - so many Jewish people prospered. They did believe in that opportunity and there wasn't anything they couldn't accomplish.

PV: If memory stands me correctly, they did not just switch from the installment business and sell it and go into the cosmetic business. While they had the installment business they came up with the concept of selling the Charles Antell hair product, and it was sold via mail order on television. As I mentioned before, they came out with the 15- and 30-minute commercials to try this. It was done live, before an audience, and several of the programs did not go through at first - they weren't productive. That is, the results were not financially rewarding, and they were almost going to cancel the idea, but one day in trying their ideas on

television it was successful, mail orders started pouring in, and they saw they had a whole new business. They went into the mail order business, which eventually went over the counter.

RM: Were they selling other things mail order?

PV: There were also some vitamin products. They had a product called Javvar, which is a reducing coffee; by drinking the coffee you would reduce. They also had Pastrabs, which was a reducing item. These items went with the company when it was sold, but you see them on the shelf - they are constantly being reintroduced by another company as a new method of reducing.

LS: But it all started with them.

RM: But they had all these innovations one after another, didn't they?

LS: Yes. And then they went into the land business. And, indeed, they built a startling city on the west coast of Florida.

RM: Did the whole family move to Florida, then?

LS: Everyone moved; yes. Paul's family moved, my uncle's family, our family, my Aunt Sylvia's family - we all moved. And Charles Antell and its subsidiaries was happening in Baltimore, and when they sold the company a tremendous amount of the personnel also left Charles Antell and moved to Florida to help them with this new company.

And they developed most innovative techniques in selling land, that to this day are used by land companies all over the country. This is what my father said when he bought the land - and I quote: "When I got to Florida and I looked at this land, I realized that every day, all over the country, especially the northeast corridor, people got up (in the wintertime) and said, "'God! I wish I could be in Florida today.'" He said he did not believe ". . . that one person getting up in the northeast corridor in

February gets up and says, 'Boy, I wish I could be in Baltimore today.'" And therefore he decided (it was in February that he made this trip) to buy the land.

And Jack and Leonard - especially my Uncle Jack, although I don't want to slight my father in this - had a tremendous sense of the aesthetic. They wanted to create - not just a housing development - they wanted to build a city. A city with waterways and canals; a city with gardens; a city with golf courses; a city with every amenity that would be pleasing to the eye and soothing to the soul. A city that afforded religious worship for everyone. A city that afforded recreational activity. A city that afforded aesthetics. A community that would have a place for teenagers to go. And that, indeed, all the different pockets of the community would have the grand life.

And in fact they were able to accomplish this; not all at once, but the groundwork was there; the plans were there; the blueprints for this type of community were there. And today Cape Coral, which was the flagship city that they developed, is the fastest-growing city in that corridor of the United States; and is a very, very exciting community.

PV: Time magazine gave it a writeup a few years ago as one of the top 10 cities in the country.

LS: The city that he developed from scratch; from swamp. They were involved in that until they sold in 1969. They came out here and my uncle Jack died that year.

RM: Was that instrumental in him selling out?

PV: No.

LS: No. He had had a heart attack in 1964 and took care of himself and didn't take care of himself. You know, smoking . . . He took . . .

RM: I mean, was the death of your uncle the cause for him selling out?

LS: No; my uncle died subsequent to that. I don't really know about the buying of land here. I know my father's dream was to build another city. And he had it in his mind about Nevada because he had thought about being here in 1950, before my mother became pregnant. So he came back out here and bought the land in Pahrump, and that was the beginning of his new dream.

Education was always important; there was always - in the blueprints - room for schools and room for any kind of community project and community activity. And 7 years ago, May 30th, 1981, my father delivered the commencement address to the first graduating class at Pahrump High School. That was really one of the zeniths of his life, because if there was a high school graduating class, that meant that a community was growing and budding and it was a reality.

You might want to know how I remember that date. My niece Natasha Raymond, who was my father's youngest grandchild, was born at Desert Inn Hospital May 31st, 1981. We were sitting there saying, "Dad, it shouldn't be too long a speech, Sandy's in labor. We want to get back into Las Vegas." So that's how I remember; that evening is a very special evening.

RM: How did he hear about the Pahrump Ranch; do you know?

PV: That I don't know.

RM: Because Pahrump was really an isolated, out of the way place at that time.

LS: Well, it would not be difficult for him to hear about it. He would look at a map, he would fly over in a little plane . . . He would've come here and hired a little plane. He would've had someone like Tom Webber, who was his engineer from Cape Coral, with him, and they would've flown

over and looked at tracts of land. And when you look, Pahrump is a valley, and it's one of the few fertile places around; it would've just clicked to him - that this is where it should be. He couldn't afford to buy the amount of property that he would need right here in Las Vegas, so he would look and see what was the closest to Las Vegas that had the development potential - where there was water . . . There were certain parameters that would be required to build a city, and it would just all come together. And we have to remember how much of Nevada is owned by the United States government, so that also limits your options. And in fact, he traded land with the government quite frequently when he wanted to expand.

RM: Was he also involved in Arizona?

LS: Yes, he was involved in Arizona years ago.

RM: Was that after Florida, or before?

LS: No; simultaneously. It was outside of Tucson.

RM: Did he have the same vision there?

LS: Yes, but they really concentrated on the flagship property in Florida.

RM: Arizona was more of an aside, as far as they were concerned?

LS: Yes. He moved here to Nevada and he had a very difficult time. Several things happened to him when he moved here. Although he never had a heart attack, he had his first bypasses.

PV: Yes; he had 2 things happen in a row. In November of '69 his brother Jack died and then in November of '70 his younger sister Sylvia died.

LS: And then in September of '71 he had his first bypass surgery. And from that point on it was a tremendous struggle. He had tremendous financial reverses. I think this is the most amazing thing about my father. There are a lot of amazing things, but the thing that I hold onto . . . as high as he was, his lows were even lower. He was up and down

financially. He really saw the top of the mountain financially, and in short order lost it all. And he paid everybody back.

RM: You mean, the investors?

LS: He paid investors back, but mostly it was banks. He had borrowed money, and he paid all the banks back. And he never lost his dignity through all of that. He was able to build up a new business really from scratch, again by his wits.

And the publicity that followed my father was never good and was never kind. Horrible articles would appear in the paper. I would have gone and stood in the corner and never come out; I would never have shown my face again. And he would go out and flaunt his face. No matter what went on inside his heart - because he was a sensitive man, although he wore this armour - on his worst day, he would get up and say, "Hi Ho!" and he would sing a song, and find something to be positive about; on his very worst day.

And that lesson has been very helpful to me in my life. That you must always look for the silver lining. That's not being a Pollyanna; there's a very big difference. But as I said to you in the beginning, he always found someone to spar with and something to spar with and he always had a fight and he always lived through it. My oldest child is retarded. I remember when I called my father to tell him. He said, "That's impossible." He came, and we went from doctor to doctor. And after he saw the medical evidence and everything, he said, "That's not going to stop you, is it?"

I said, "No, it's not going to stop me. We're going to do everything we can for Steven." In other words, there isn't any obstacle that you can't overcome. And today, an infant that they told me to put away in a

home - that he would never be functional and would never do this or that - is working in a pizza parlor as a dishwasher. He is very retarded, and is working in a pizza parlor, as a dishwasher. It's really quite extraordinary.

RM: That's amazing; yes.

LS: And he participated in Special Olympics. One must learn lessons from Leonard, and his ability to overcome the odds.

RM: What was it, do you think, that made the constant negative publicity?

PV: [chuckles] Probably because he was such a strong pusher. And he innovated and did things his way.

LS: That's right; no rules. If there was a sign that said 'No Parking,' he would park. If the street said 'One Way,' he would go the other way.

RM: So there was an iconoclastic dimension to him?

PV: That's right. But on the other hand, he never intended to hurt anyone or hurt anyone's feelings. For instance, sometimes there'd be a sales meeting and a salesman had tickets for a show and would not say anything to him, and would stay there until 8:00, 9:00, 10:00 at night, and then he found out that the man's wife was terribly hurt. The next morning he would send her flowers or . . . He always sent people books, candy, flowers, to make up for any little hurt that he might have done. Because he always realized that because of his method a lot of people were hurt, but they just never said anything. If the salesperson, that evening at the meeting, had said, "Mr. Rosen, my wife is waiting - I have tickets to go to a show;" he would've said, "By all means go to the show."

But everyone was afraid to speak up. They were all in awe of him, and had tremendous fear of him.

LS: I think it was 'cause he had a big temper - a <u>big</u> temper.

RM: A flash, and then gone, type of temper?

LS: Yes. And he didn't understand if you were upset afterwards; like a flash flood.

RM: Maybe part of the reason for the negative publicity was because he was constantly on the frontier, where the frontier requires innovation and that kind of thing.

LS: I think that's true. And I think that he took shortcuts and liked to do things his way. He liked things to turn out right, and he liked to do it his way. And he was very brusque; he was just blunt. And he would stand up to anybody.

RM: Some of the pugilist in him from his old fighting days?

LS: Right; exactly.

PV: Absolutely. He was a fighter, and sometimes you just couldn't be a fighter in the midst of a show.

RM: You mentioned that in Florida he developed some innovative sales techniques that are still standard practices in the industry. Could you discuss those a little bit?

PV: We started out by selling on the telephone. In 1959 Jack came up with the concept of OPCs - outside public consultant - which is used today in Las Vegas and in Florida and other cities. People called themselves OPCs for years and never even knew what it was. That's the method of having tourist information centers, of having booths in the various hotels where you stop people and ask them to attend a sales presentation, and to offer a gift for their time. Jack came up with these innovations. He developed the idea of having the large format sales party, where you invited people to a reception. At times in the early days in Washington, D.C., we would have 50, 60, 100 people packed into a room to hear about ways of purchasing

property in Florida. And that became very successful. To this day people still follow these techniques. And not only in the real estate business, but stockbrokers throughout the nation. And the insurance companies all invite people to attend sales seminars. I don't know if they were the original innovators, but I know they brought it to the forefront, where it became a very popular method of selling. This was introduced in 1960, '61, '62 . . .

RM: How did they originally sell down there? You mentioned the phone. Did they work with phone lists, or how did they do it in those day?

PV: Originally there were several methods. One, they would run ads in Miami and would drive people to Cape Coral, Florida. Or they flew people to Cape Coral, Florida, and then they had various tourist attractions. They had a parrot jungle in Florida people would come to see, and as a result of being there they would see a display about the land in Cape Coral, and would take a trip there. Also at Cape Coral and Fort Myers, Florida, there would be roadside stands that gave away information or gave away orange juice and various things. People stopped and went to take a look at the property.

RM: Did they finance the whole operation with money they'd gotten from the Charles Antell sales?

PV: No, they got investors to invest and it became a public company. First it was a closed investment group, and eventually it went over the counter on the American and New York stock exchanges.

RM: Paul, were you involved in the operation when they moved to Nevada, then?

PV: Yes.

RM: Were you in it from the beginning?

PV: Right after the beginning.

RM: When they shifted to Nevada, was it still a family operation, or did it deteriorate in Florida as a tight-knit . . .

PV: Well, as was mentioned, the company - Gulf American - was sold in the early part of '69.

RM: And that was the Florida company?

PV: Yes. And then the land was purchased out here, and about that time, in November, Jack passed away. He was 50 years of age. I moved to California in 1971. Leonard moved out in . . .

LS: My dad moved out in September of '71.

RM: Did he move to Vegas?

PV: No, he moved to California. We originally had offices in L.A as well as in Pahrump, and also in Las Vegas. But it was very small here; we did all the administration in L.A., but our sales effort was here in Las Vegas.

RM: Was your market mainly people coming into Vegas?

PV: The tourists coming into Las Vegas.

RM: Was that one of the big things that you saw - the potential of Vegas as a tourist destination?

PV: Yes.

RM: Would you have settled here if Vegas had been just another town?

PV: I don't know. Leonard was such a strong salesperson that if he'd said, "Move here - move wherever," we'd have said, "OK, let's go."