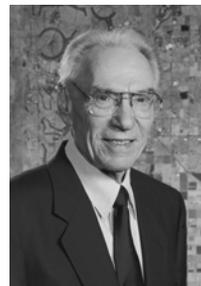




**JOHN F. LONG**  
1920-2008

**Honored as a Historymaker 2001**  
Visionary Builder and Philanthropist



The following is an oral history interview with John F. Long (**JL**) conducted by Pam Stevenson (**PS**) for Historical League, Inc. and video-graphed by Bill Leverton on August 29, 2000 at John F. Long Properties office, Phoenix, Arizona.

*Transcripts for website edited by members of Historical League, Inc.  
Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Heritage Center Archives, an Historical Society Museum, Tempe, Arizona.*

**PS:** This is an interview with John F. Long on August 29, 2000. Ever think you'd see 2000?

**JL:** No that seemed like eternity. A few years back.

**PS:** Why don't you give me your full name to start so we'll have that on the tape in your own words?

**JL:** John F. Long.

**PS:** What does the "F" stand for?

**JL:** Oh, Fred, for Frederick.

**PS:** Tell me about when and where you were born.

**JL:** I was born in Phoenix, 918 East Willetta. I'm not sure whether that was in the City of Phoenix at the time, 1920, when I was born.

**PS:** Where was your place in the family, as far as the children, you have brothers and sisters?

**JL:** Yes, there were four of us. I'm the oldest. As I said I was born 1920.



**PS:** And why was your family in Phoenix, back then there weren't a lot of people in Phoenix.

**JL:** My father came here, I think it was for his health. And my mother, came here from Germany. There were friends from a village near where she lived that visited in Germany and were recruiting help for housekeeping and that sort of thing, here in the Valley. Anyway, that's how my mother wound up here in the Phoenix area.

**PS:** And your father. Had he been here long before you were born?

**JL:** I think he came about 1910.

**PS:** And he also came from Germany?

**JL:** Yes.

**PS:** Directly from Germany? Or did they come to New York and then come out here?

**JL:** Naturally they go through the immigration at Ellis Island, but then they came right to Phoenix.

**PS:** What made them choose Phoenix?

**JL:** I think that my father was looking for a warm, dry climate and his uncle had a grocery store here, in Phoenix. A Graebels (sp ?) grocery. And he worked for his uncle. Then my mother came over in 1914.

**PS:** She came to the United States in 1914?

**JL:** Yes.

**PS:** And do you know why they decided to leave Germany. They came separately obviously.

**JL:** Well, better opportunities, I think naturally that was it. They'd heard from others about opportunities and lifestyles in the United States, so that attracted them.

**PS:** How did they meet then? Did they meet when they were in Phoenix?

**JL:** Yes, through mutual friends. There was a small group of German families that lived within the Valley and through them, is how they met.

**PS:** The Rovey family that I mentioned, I've interviewed. They also were German. So I guess there was quite a German community in Phoenix then.



**JL:** Yeah, there was quite a few.

**PS:** Then your parents got married here in Phoenix?

**JL:** Yes. I think they went to Catalina Island for their honeymoon. Which was quite an event at that time. And I was born, in fact, I was born on their first anniversary. My mother had mentioned several times about the doctor coming out at that time most children were born at home. And the doctor came out on a streetcar, which was on Tenth Street. Imagine today asking a doctor to come out, to ride a bus or some sort of transportation to come to a house. I don't think he'd ever show up.

**PS:** Phoenix must have been a much different community.

**JL:** It was, yes. It was a small community.

**PS:** I heard somewhere that when you were born, there was a storm that day?

**JL:** Yes, a thunderstorm and lightning and thunder and hail and my mother said that she was kinda frightened by it. And so the nurse was even more so, and she said when I was born "if this little fellow lives through this, he'll grow up to be something", I don't remember exactly, but something along the line that things wouldn't bother me. (laughs)

**PS:** What did your father do for a living when you were a boy?

**JL:** They had the grocery store. His uncle passed away and then they had the grocery store. And then my father died when I was two years old. And, my sister was nine months old. Then my mother worked for the Wagners, out in Peoria. The Wagner Ranch. I don't know if you're familiar with that one. But then she remarried when I was five.

**PS:** So you never really knew your father then?

**JL:** No, I think I was 22 months old, I wouldn't have remembered.

**PS:** He must have been a fairly young man to die.

**JL:** He was 45, when he died. He was a little older than my mother.

**PS:** Was it an accident or...?

**JL:** No, he had a stroke. It was rather early in life to have a stroke and in those days I guess they really didn't have much medical check up to determine whether he had a problem or not.



**PS:** So your mother worked, out at the Ranch. Did you go out there with her?

**JL:** Yes, we lived there for two years I think it was. I think it was a good experience. They had the ranch hands that came in and what we called Grandpa and Grandma Wagner was a real comforting for us.

**PS:** What are your earliest memories as a boy growing up?

**JL:** Oh, probably four or five years old. I remember some of the things. Nothing real exciting, but when I was say, four and five.

**PS:** Anything special that you remember about those times?

**JL:** I started to school when I was five. I remember that.

**PS:** What do you remember about starting school?

**JL:** One thing that I recall that fascinated me, there were chickens right next to the school and I would give them half of my lunch just to watch them eat (laughs). And then I remember telling my mother about it, and she convinced me that wasn't the right thing to do.

**PS:** And what school did you go to when you first went to school?

**JL:** That was Fillmore. Close by Grand Avenue and Fillmore Street.

**PS:** How did you get to school?

**JL:** Walk. In those days we didn't have buses or transportation. When you went anywhere, you walked.

**PS:** Was it a long walk?

**JL:** Oh, probably, a mile, maybe a little more. But that wasn't considered very far. And naturally in those days, it was safe to walk along Grand Avenue because it was just a narrow, two-lane street.

**PS:** No street cars out that way?

**JL:** Yes, the streetcar track ran to six points and into the fairgrounds.

**PS:** Did you ride on the streetcar?

**JL:** Very seldom because it cost a nickel, and a nickel was a lot of money in those days.



**PS:** So that would have been sort of a treat to get to ride the streetcar? .

**JL:** Yeah. I rode the streetcar, started riding it when I was selling newspapers. I was 8 years old, and when I'd get out of school, I would ride the streetcar to downtown area to sell papers and then in the evening, I walked home to save the nickel.

**PS:** Your mother spoke German? So did you speak German as a boy?

**JL:** In fact, I spoke German before I spoke English. And then it was after my father died that I started to learn English. So, I've gone through that same thing that they talk about, you know, bi-lingual.

**PS:** Do you remember it being difficult, to learn English?

**JL:** Oh, I don't think so, you know kids you play with talk in English and I was talking German. But eventually, it worked out.

**PS:** Do you still speak some German?

**JL:** Very little. I visited there several times. I speak better German when I've drank a few beers (laughs).

**PS:** Have you gone over to Germany to see where your parents were from?

**JL:** Yes.

**PS:** What was that like?

**JL:** Both of them are from small villages and some of the families, or some of my cousins still live in the area.

**PS:** Tell me a little bit more about, as a boy in Phoenix as you were growing up. Did you live in Phoenix all the time as a boy? Or did you move around?

**JL:** My stepfather was in the construction business and we moved around the state as I remember. Shortly after they were married, we moved to Globe. He worked in a mine up there. We rode the bus to Globe, I remember that. They called it the Pick Wick Stage. Dirt road all the way. And then in the summer time it was real hot on the desert and naturally no air conditioning.

**PS:** Must have been quite a trip.

**JL:** Yes. And then later, he worked in Prescott. We lived there for a while. And, in fact, he worked



on the high school. They built a new high school at that time. That would have 1928 I think. And I sold papers in Prescott.

**PS:** How did you get to Prescott in those days?

**JL:** We drove up. We had an old, I say old, at that time it was a pretty nice car, a Maxwell, like the same model that Jack Benny used to have in his TV program.

**PS:** And where did the road go to get Prescott from Phoenix?

**JL:** It went through Wickenburg and then up to Yamell Hill, and in those days going up the Yamell Hill, there was cars stalled all the way up, steam coming out of the radiators and it was a natural custom at that time for everyone to carry water bags. And some for drinking and some for putting in the radiator.

**PS:** How long a trip would it be?

**JL:** To Prescott from Phoenix it was an all day trip. All day from Phoenix to Prescott. Now we complain if it takes more than an hour and a half.

**PS:** You mention selling newspapers, was that your first paying job that you had?

**JL:** Yes. In the Phoenix area. I was 8 years old when I started and my first comer was at Central Avenue and Jefferson in front of the Lightening Delivery. And that, that was quite an experience. You know, you meet a lot of different people in selling and I think that it helped me, maybe in later life in selling homes and so forth.

**PS:** How does an 8 year old, how did you get a job like that?

**JL:** Well, you ask for it (laughs).

**PS:** Did somebody tell you about it, or had you seen other boys do it?

**JL:** I think one of our neighbor boys was selling papers and I thought well, that sure would be a good way to earn some money, and so I asked my mother and she said it'd be all right. So I went down and, I was hired.

**PS:** Tell me about how that worked. How did you get hired, by the newspaper itself?

**JL:** Yes, at that time I was selling the Gazette. It was separate from the Republic at that time. We would buy the newspaper from the publisher. We paid two-and-a-half cents and then you'd sell it for a nickel. So you made two-and-a-half cents.



**PS:** How many newspapers would you sell in a day?

**JL:** Naturally, it varied, depend on the news. And the number of people that may be in town for any one reason. But it'd average probably somewhere around ten, twelve papers a day. Now some days you'd only sell four or five. Some would be 20; just depends on the news. I remember in those days, if there was some special event, they always had an Extra. And with an Extra you sell more papers. Real quick. I'll never forget the time, and this would have been probably around 1929 or somewhere in there, that some desperados were coming from the Midwest and they had been spotted by Mesa headed towards the Phoenix area. And they were stopped at the bridge between Tempe and Phoenix. And they ran up on the Tempe Butte and there was a gun battle and so forth. So we had Extras. There was the Extra when they were stopped; and then another Extra when they were captured and, I don't remember how many papers I sold that day, but it was a real stimulant (laughs) in selling.

**PS:** Did you stand on the comers, like you see in the movies, and say "Extra! Extra!" ?

**JL:** Yeah, yeah. You gotta holler it out (laughs).

**PS:** You said you had the comer at Central and Jefferson?

**JL:** Yes, that was my first comer and I had several different comers. One in front of the Ford Hotel, which would have been Second Avenue and Washington. And then I was across from the Adams Hotel, at Central and Adams. And at one time, just shortly after the Orpheum Theater opened, I had the comer in front of the theater. But I learned real quick that people don't buy newspapers when they go into the theater; and when they come out they're talking about the movie and they're not interested in the newspaper. So that didn't work out and I asked for a transfer.

**PS:** Did they assign you a comer?

**JL:** Oh, yeah, yeah.

**PS:** So how many years did you do that?

**JL:** Two years. I saved a hundred dollars in that two years. And bought my own clothes and so forth. It was nothing fancy, but I start earning my own way when I was 8. And I saved a hundred dollars, and in 1930 we moved to a small farm and I bought a cow with my hundred dollars. And then later, when the Depression really hit in Arizona, I think it was in 1932 that I sold the cow for \$20, so I lost \$80. I never forgot that, one of my uncles said, that I was young and that I would have an opportunity to earn it back and that, he was much older than he probably wouldn't be able to regain what he had lost. But that wasn't a whole lot of comfort at that time, you know, a kid, at that time I was 10 years old, and so my hundred dollars to go down to \$20 after two years of hard work.



**PS:** That is pretty discouraging. Eighty dollars was a lot of money back then.

**JL:** It sure was..

**PS:** A lot of newspapers. You say you moved out to a farm, where was the farm?

**JL:** That was at Glenrosa and 23rd A venue. And I was in the Alhambra School District. I went to Alhambra two years. In the sixth grade, Mr. Simpson was my teacher, and that was his second year of teaching and then quite a few years later, he became the superintendent of the district. And then when we built houses over on 35th and just south of Bethany Home, that was the first school site that I donated to the Alhambra School District. At that time, he was the superintendent and he came to see me and they didn't have money but they needed a site. And then we did the same when we started here in Maryvale. We donated a site again.

**PS:** The connection went way back.

**JL:** Yeah. Oh, yeah.

**PS:** Why did your family decide to move to a farm?

**JL:** It seemed like that it would be a much better, again, keep in mind, this was during the Depression and, on a farm you have your milk cows and chickens and eggs and this sort of thing. And it had just been something that we had talked about, or they had talked about, for some time and had an opportunity to rent this five acres. So, anyway, we made the move.

**PS:** And what did you think of that as a boy?

**JL:** Oh, I thought it was great.

**PS:** But it meant you had to give up your job downtown selling the newspapers?

**JL:** Yes, and then I was involved with milking cows and the chores around the farm.

**PS:** So when your family moved out to the farm, was there already a farmhouse and everything on it?

**JL:** Oh, yes. Small farmhouse. Outdoor plumbing.

**PS:** How about electricity?

**JL:** To start with we didn't have electricity as I remember, we just had lanterns. And later, it seemed to me



like maybe a year or so after we lived there, that electricity was brought in. And that was a real luxury.

**PS:** Growing up then in Phoenix in the summertime, as a boy did you notice the heat. How did you keep cool during the summer?

**JL:** Well, swimming in the canals helped. But if you don't have air conditioning, and don't think about the heat, it's not nearly as bad.

**PS:** People today would find that hard to believe.

**JL:** I guess that's true, but we worked outside in the field as I was growing up. Never thought too much about it. In fact, the evaporative cooler it was, about 1938-39 before we had an evaporative cooler. And that was a real luxury.

**PS:** That's what I heard. Mainly swimming in the canal was the only thing you did to keep cool?

**JL:** Oh, it was entertainment, I would say, more than just trying to keep cool. All the kids swam in the canals then.

**PS:** The Roveys said they even had like surf boards and surfed along the canals. Did you do that?

**JL:** Yes, in later years, when I say later, in the 30s, late 30s. Pull a surfboard with a pick up and ride it down the canal. That was real sport.

**PS:** Have any pictures of that?

**JL:** No, I don't think so, no.

**PS:** Did your family stay out on that farm for a while?

**JL:** We stayed there two years and then moved to a larger farm on 19th Avenue, just south of Indian School Road. And then I went to Osborn School from there. I went to six different grammar schools. I went to grammar school East of Flagstaff, that was one room, one teacher, all eight grades were in one room. I think there was around 15-16 kids in there.

**PS:** When was that?

**JL:** That would have been about, I think 1928-29. And that was quite an experience, the older children helped the younger ones. I remember, one girl and I, I was in the third grade I believe and she would have been 7th or 8th grade. But she would help me with reading and there was always some of them helping the younger children, because the teacher couldn't get around to everybody. But I never forgot, and I was



impressed at the time of what interest she took and how enthusiastic she was. I have no idea who she was in later years.

**PS:** Why was your family, in Flagstaff? Why were you up there?

**JL:** My father was working for Kester Farms at that time. It was northeast of Flagstaff. This was the school that we went to, it was just a country school, I don't know that it even had a name.

**PS:** How long did you go there?

**JL:** Just one year.

**PS:** Did you spend a winter in Flagstaff?

**JL:** Part of it, but the school was during the summer months and was closed during the winter because most of the children were from the ranch areas, farm areas and so forth. And it was difficult, with the amount of snow in the wintertime, to get to school so they reversed it and go to school in the summer.

**PS:** That was different.

**JL:** Well, adapting to the conditions there at the time.

**PS:** As a Phoenix boy, was that the first time you'd seen snow?

**JL:** The first time I'd ever seen snow, yeah. Quite a novelty.

**PS:** Sounds like you moved around a lot as you were growing up.

**JL:** Yes, within Arizona. As I mentioned, I went to six different grammar schools and two high schools.

**PS:** Makes it harder though to make long-term friends and things.

**JL:** I guess it depends on the person. It was maybe a little slow from time to time but I didn't have any major problem.

**PS:** Do you still have some friends you remember from a boy?

**JL:** Yes, most of them have died in the last few years. You know, I'm 80 so, most are gone. There's a couple of them maybe that's still living, but very few.

**PS:** Phoenix was a lot smaller town back then too.



**JL:** Oh, yes.

**PS:** You talked about some of your chores as a boy in addition to selling papers and milking cows. Were there other chores that you had to do as a boy, do you remember?

**JL:** Working in the field, and taking care of the chickens and animals and so forth. It gave me a sense of responsibility and also helped me in adjusting my time to be sure that I got my chores completed before I went to school. So early years, I learned to schedule my time, I guess that and responsibility.

**PS:** Working in the fields, what kind of fields, what were you growing?

**JL:** Most of our crop was alfalfa and grain. Alfalfa for the hay for the cattle.

**PS:** So what kind of things did you do? Did you drive the tractor? Did you have tractors or did you have horses?

**JL:** We didn't have tractors at that time. Had a team of horses and they pulled the mowing machine and the rakes and the wagons that you haul the hay in on. No tractors.

**PS:** Let's talk a little more about school. Did you have some favorite subjects when you were in school?

**JL:** I think took more of an interest in history and that seemed to be my favorite.

**PS:** Did you play any sports?

**JL:** Yes, I played softball and baseball and track. In fact, when I went to Alhambra School we competed in the state tournament at the fairground. And so that was quite an experience.

**PS:** And which sport was that? In track?

**JL:** In track, yes. I was running the relays and broad jumping and high jumping.

**PS:** Were you pretty good?

**JL:** Well, I thought I was. I was good enough to make the team every time.

**PS:** What kind of a student were you?

**JL:** Not the best. I guess no need to going into a lot of detail there.



**PS:** So you went to two high schools?

**JL:** Yes, Phoenix Union and then I graduated at Glendale. I graduated in Glendale, 1939. And then I served on the Glendale High School Board in 1960 to '66. And that was quite an experience...

**PS:** We'll talk about that later.

**JL:** Okay.

**PS:** I want go along chronologically. Let's see, 1939. So you were in high school during the Depression years then? Any stories you remember about those times? Did you work other paid jobs in high school?

**JL:** Worked on the farm, milking cows. You know you had to milk the cows before you went to school. And we weren't the only one. Most of the kids that went to the Alhambra School were from farm areas.

**PS:** The Roveys went to Glendale High also.

**JL:** Yes, I think Rovey, he was a little ahead of me. I think he was.

**PS:** Ruth Rovey is the youngest and Ruth was born 1920.

**JL:** Yeah, I met her out at the Saguaro Ranch. At some function they had here a year or so ago.

**PS:** So you didn't ever go back to any other paid jobs as a boy in high school or anything. You were busy with the farm?

**JL:** Yes.

**PS:** No more selling newspapers?

**JL:** No, no selling newspapers.

**PS:** You mentioned having to sell your cow during the Depression. Were there other problems that your family had getting through the Depression?

**JL:** I suppose they would call them problems today. In, in that time everyone was basically affected the same way, it was just something that you lived with and we never thought too much about it.

**PS:** So after you got out of high school, then did you want to go to college, or what did you want to do then?



**JL:** I never really thought too much about going to college. I guess in 1940, a little while after I'd graduated from high school, I went to work in construction over in San Diego. I worked on a bombproof hangar at North Island. Which is there in the San Diego Bay. At that time it was considered bombproof. Today, it wouldn't stand up under any kind of circumstances. But that was what I considered at that time a real high paying job. It was 62 and a half cents an hour. And I ran a vibrator. This was on concrete work and that paid 12 and a half cents an hour more. I don't know if you've ever seen that, or noticed that domed shaped hangar out in North Island? I worked on that, up on the top of it, you'd hang on with one hand and hold the vibrator with the other and it's a-shaking and that was quite an experience.

**PS:** But it paid you so well.

**JL:** It paid what I thought was real well, yeah.

**PS:** How did you get to San Diego. What took you over there?

**JL:** A friend of mine, a neighbor boy. There wasn't much job opportunity here in the Phoenix area so we went to Los Angeles and then someone had told us about job opportunities in San Diego so we went there, and were hired. Worked there for a year or so. And then I went to Denver worked up there on the concrete crew pouring runways. Then I had an appendix attack. When I arrived in Denver I had a dollar and a half. And I went into the Denver General Hospital and they took me in as a non-paying patient. Operated and I stayed there. I was there for two weeks.

**PS:** That must have been pretty scary. How old were you then?

**JL:** I'd just turned 21. And then from there I went to uh Salt Lake City and worked on the Remington Arms plant there for a while. And then I went in the service.

**PS:** Why did you decide to go into the service?

**JL:** I was drafted (laughs). That was a pretty good reason.

**PS:** When was that?

**JL:** I guess I was drafted sometime around September of 1941. I was in the service, prior to Pearl Harbor. At that time you was drafted for one year. One year and six months if there was an emergency.

**PS:** Which branch of the service were you in?

**JL:** I went in the field artillery and then later transferred to the Air Corps.

**PS:** Where were you stationed?



**JL:** When I went in I was at Fort Bliss. Fort Bliss, Texas. And then from there I went to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. And then from there to Chanute Field south of Chicago. And that's when, I went to school there. And then later to Salt Lake City and Spokane, Washington. And then to the Mohave Desert and from there we went overseas.

**PS:** Got to see a bit of the country. Sounds like you traveled all over.

**JL:** Yes, and then when we went overseas and you travel from Los Angeles to Virginia by train.

**PS:** Where were you sent overseas?

**JL:** To Italy. We got to Italy in 1943.

**PS:** What were you doing over there?

**JL:** I was on the maintenance crew. And maintaining the B-24 bombers.

**PS:** You didn't actually fly them then?

**JL:** No, no. My whole experience was on the ground.

**PS:** What did your family think about all of that? When you were back home? Were you in touch with your mother and brothers and sisters when you were in the service?

**JL:** Periodically. I never wrote as often as I should. Naturally, parents are concerned. But there wasn't a whole lot that you could write about, so, I don't know why I didn't write. (laughs).

**PS:** Were other brothers in the service also?

**JL:** Yes, my youngest brother, he was in the Navy. And then I have two sisters, at that time they weren't in the service.

**PS:** Are there any special things about your time in the service that stand out?

**JL:** I guess there would be, I'd just as soon not talk about it.

**PS:** So how long were you in the service then? You say you drafted for a year?

**JL:** I was in four years. Got out September of 1945. It was rumored, and there's always a lot of rumors in, when you're in the service, that we were going to the Pacific. When the war ended in Europe in May, most



of our outfit went home and I was attached to a special squad that the rumors were that we were going to the invasion in Japan. And then when they dropped the H-bomb, then that cancelled that out.

**PS:** So you were in Italy most of the time in Europe?

**JL:** Yes.

**PS:** When you got out of the service, what did you want to do then? Did you have any idea?

**JL:** I thought that I wanted to go into farming and then as I looked around most of the farmland had been leased by the large vegetable growers. So there wasn't anything available. And I worked on several different kinds of jobs. And then we were married in 1947 and decided to build our own home.

**PS:** Why don't we back up a little bit, so you came back to Phoenix? You'd seen the world by then. Was there ever any question, that you were going to come back to Phoenix after the service?

**JL:** It was the only natural thing to do as far as I was concerned. My family was here, and my friends and, Mary was here, and we later married.

**PS:** Why don't you tell me about how you met your wife.

**JL:** Well, I met her at softball game. She played softball for Webster's Dairy. At that time almost every business had a softball team of either men or women, girls. She was playing at University Park. I think that's about Tenth Avenue and Van Buren. Something like that. It was a night game. So anyway, her cousin and I were, just running around and he said, "well, let's go see the softball game." "Yeah, okay." And I met Mary there and I took her home instead of him. (laughs)

**PS:** How old were the two of you at that time?

**JL:** That was 1937. I was 17.

**PS:** She was how old?

**JL:** And she was 18.

**PS:** So were you boyfriend and girlfriend after that immediately? Or how did that work out?

**JL:** Pretty much so, yes: And then it was a few years after that I went into the service and then when I got out, why then we were back together again.

**PS:** Did you stay in touch all those years?



**JL:** Off and on. I wasn't one to write a whole lot.

**PS:** What about her? Did she write to you?

**JL:** Once in a while (laughs).

**PS:** So tell me about that. You came back to Phoenix after the war. And she was here? Did you just start dating again?

**JL:** Yes, I was just home a day or two when we went out on our first date. And it was pretty much steady from that time till we got married.

**PS:** Did you ask her to marry you, or was that anything special?

**JL:** Well, naturally, I asked her, but I think we both kinda thought that it was leading in that direction and it was no big surprise. (laughs)

**PS:** So 1937 to 1947. You'd known each other almost ten years by then.

**JL:** Yeah, but I was in the service and out of the Phoenix area for four years right in the middle of that time.

**PS:** She had never married anyone else?

**JL:** No.

**PS:** By then she would have been almost 28, old at that time for a girl to get married; wasn't it?

**JL:** Well, I don't know, I guess she thought she'd wait for me. (laughs).

**PS:** What kind of a wedding did you have?

**JL:** Oh, it was nothing spectacular.

**PS:** Tell me about it, where did you get married?

**JL:** In Las Vegas. We went up there and we spent several days there, and played slot machines and, and, shooting craps and, as I remember we won about \$250, shooting craps so that was a big help in our first few months of marriage.



**PS:** After you got married then, you were both from Phoenix and you were looking to settle here in Phoenix?

**JL:** Yeah. The first house we built was a GI loan and we planned to live in the home. We did practically all the work ourselves, too. Took six months to build it. And then we had an opportunity to sell it, before we had it finished. And it took quite a lot of persuasion to convince Mary that that was the right thing to do. But she agreed and we sold that one and the next one was to be our home, and we sold that. And we sold, built and sold about twelve houses before we build our own. Or one that we could move into.

**PS:** How much did a house sell for back then? You say you got a pretty good offer.

**JL:** I think we sold that house for \$8,450, as I remember. And it was about \$4500 profit. When I say profit that was our labor for six months. Today that wouldn't be very much, but then it was. I remember in talking to Mary about it, that we'll have it made, you know \$4500, I'd never seen that much at one time. And I convinced her that we'd have it made. No more worries (laughs) .

**PS:** So then you just kept building individual houses for a while?

**JL:** Built individual houses. In 1949, I started the first subdivision. And those were three bedroom homes that sold for \$6,600.

**PS:** Did Mary work in the business, when you were getting started. You say, "we built the house" Was that you and Mary?

**JL:** Oh, yes. Yes.

**PS:** Did you have other help?

**JL:** On the second house, I hired some help. Third house I hired, another helper. And so forth, but, Mary continued on doing part of our job up to 1952, '53. When Many (sp?) was born, our first in 1953, I let her off for a while (laughs).

**PS:** (laughing) That was generous.

**JL:** Yeah. Yeah. (laughs)

**PS:** So, you're married in 1947 and you didn't have your first child till 1953? You were busy building houses all that time.

**JL:** Yeah.



**PS:** Tell me about your first subdivision, you say that was in 1949?

**JL:** Yeah.

**PS:** And where was that at?

**JL:** At 26th Avenue, just north of Glendale. We had 32 homes there.

**PS:** So by then it was really pretty serious business?

**JL:** It was real serious. As I said, \$6,600 for a three bedroom home. And they sold, they sold fast. Most of the buyers were young veterans. In fact, there's some of the people, the original buyers that still live there. Now that's 47 years. This is kinda jumping ahead but when we were building individual houses, I built a house in Sun View Estates, I believe is what they called it, about 15th Avenue, south of Bethany Home Road. And this would be in 1949, it was a three bedroom, two-bath, fireplace, double garage. I sold it for twelve-five. Just recently, the, the owner sold it for \$190,000 (laughs). That's quite an improvement; isn't it?

**PS:** It certainly is. Must be a pretty substantial house if it's still in good shape.

**JL:** Oh, yeah, yeah. But it's a comforting feeling to know that people are able to sell their home for considerably more than what they paid.

**PS:** How did you know how to build houses? You'd been working some construction, but it sounds like you were working on bigger construction than houses.

**JL:** Well, on the farm, I remember one time tearing down an old barn and building a new barn out of the old lumber. But I guess, I was always involved in working with my hands. So it was just kind of a natural thing, I believe, just to fall into that.

**PS:** Would you consider yourself a carpenter, then,?

**JL:** Yes, I did all the work, carpenter work, plastering, concrete work, and my experience with the heavy construction, you know, concrete work is the same, where ever you're pouring it. And carpentry to a certain degree is basically the same.

**PS:** Those first houses that you built; were they frame or block, or what ?

**JL:** The first house was a frame stucco, and from then on it was masonry. At that time I met, Coach Thomas, who started SuperLite block. And Coach used to be coach at Creighton Elementary school. And we played, when I went to Osborn School, we played against them. And that was where I met originally.



And then, when, I started building, I don't remember exactly how we got back together but, I tried out his blocks and from then on, I used their block.

**PS:** You said you had a brother, did your family work with you, or was it just Mary that worked mainly with you?

**JL:** On the homes? Kust Mary. And then the second home, we hired one extra to help us. And the second home, I think had two. And we were moving pretty fast; as I remember we'd compete a house in about 30 days. So, this is on the tenth, twelfth house. So, it looked to me like the logical thing to do would be to start a subdivision.

**PS:** That was a pretty big step though; wasn't it?

**JL:** At that time, I didn't feel that it was anything major, I guess it was. But again, I was never one to hold back and accept responsibility.

**PS:** To start a subdivision, you have to go buy some land, then you have to put in roads, and all that...

**JL:** On the first subdivision, I made a deal with a fellow that owned the land, and he put in the streets. And then I bought the lots from him and paid for him as we closed escrow.

**PS:** So you didn't have to get like a million dollar financing?

**JL:** No, no that was helpful.

**PS:** So that first subdivision you say that was how many homes? Did it have a name?

**JL:** Glenwood Terrace ...thirty-two homes.

**PS:** How long did it take you to build that subdivision?

**JL:** I started there in the latter part of 1949 and then I had finished there by early part of 1950. And then I started the next subdivision.

**PS:** Were you still out there working, pounding nails and things?

**JL:** Well, by that time, I wasn't involved in the carpentry work as much as over all supervision and handling the FHA work and the VA and financing and so forth. And supervising the construction.

**PS:** So you sold the houses yourself? You didn't have realtors and things back then? **JL:** I sold the first subdivision myself. The second one I sold about half of it.



**PS:** Tell me about your second subdivision.

**JL:** I started the second one in 1950, just before the Korean War broke out, and then I had a three bedroom, two bath home, at Tenth Street and Glendale Avenue in a citrus grove. Beautiful setting. \$7400 and we sold, oh gosh, 50 or more homes within just a few weeks. And then when the Korean War broke out, prices of materials skyrocketed and there was a lot of the builders, several of them at that time that had real financial problems. Some went out of business because of the increase in material costs and so forth. That was a real tough time. But I managed to get through it and we honored all of our contracts, at that price.

**PS:** So you had the homes like pre-sold?

**JL:** Yes, they were pre-sold and guaranteed at a set price. Price of material went up, well as I said, we were able to work through it.

**PS:** At that time, Glendale and Tenth Street, that was outside of Phoenix; wasn't it?

**JL:** Yes, that was in the County. All the area around there was citrus.

**PS:** So when you built the houses, did you take the citrus out or did you just take enough out to put a house in there?

**JL:** We took out enough trees to put the houses in yes. And, the trees are still bearing fruit. Those that remain.

**PS:** And that was how many houses did you say?

**JL:** We had 90 in that subdivision.

**PS:** What was the name of that subdivision?

**JL:** Palm Terrace. There was just, two palm trees there so we named it (laughs).

**PS:** When did you finish that one up then?

**JL:** Actually there was three subdivisions there, a hundred and eighty homes total. I finished there just as the Korean War ended and FHA had a special program. During the Korean War financing was much more difficult, and more expensive, or a higher down payment I should say required. Then when the Korean War ended, FHA relaxed their terms and, as I remember, if the home sold for \$7000 or less, then you could sell it for 10 percent down. That was FHA. No down VA. But, then I bought, a 40-acre parcel and had a



three bedroom, bath and a half home for \$7,000. And they sold like hotcakes.

**PS:** Palm Terrace was the one you had during the War and after that you bought 40 acres?

**JL:** Yes. And again, this was a different location.

**PS:** Where was that?

**JL:** At 31st Avenue and Bethany.

**PS:** And that was 40 acres? How much did it cost to buy 40 acres back then at a location like that?

**JL:** I think it was a thousand an acre. It seemed to me like that's about what it was. And we built in that area around 3,000 homes. Over a several year period.

**PS:** Three thousand homes on 40 acres?

**JL:** Oh, no, no (laughs)

**PS:** You kept expanding in that area.

**JL:** Yes. I'd buy the next farm to us and then from the next one on and I don't remember now, six, seven hundred acres, something like that, that we bought in that general area. And then we started here in Maryvale.

**PS:** Did that one have a name, the one on Bethany there?

**JL:** Yes, that was, Maryvale; what did I call that? (laughs) Maryvale Something. I forget now. **PS:** And that was the early '50s? You were building there?

**JL:** Yes, and then we started here in 1954.

**PS:** You mentioned other builders having problems; were a lot of people doing the same thing that you were. Were there a lot of other competitors building houses like you were?

**JL:** Yes, I don't remember how many, but there were several builders. And most of them subcontracted all of their work, where we did practically everything ourselves. Even as we moved into the subdivisions. We just hired more crews and this way we were able to keep costs down. And sell houses at a reasonable rate and then we had the high volume.

**PS:** You sold 3000 houses out there, that's a lot of houses and you were taking over farms; it sounds like people today talk about, you know, the farmland disappearing. Did they say the same thing back in 1950?



**JL:** Most of them were anxious to sell (laughs).

**PS:** So tell me then about Maryvale. How did you start that. That was bigger than anything you'd done before.

**JL:** The reason that I picked this location is that it was all agriculture. There was no subdivisions within the area and it gave us the opportunity to do some long-range planning. And build a community where people could live, work and play all within their given area.

**PS:** How big of an area did you plan on doing?

**JL:** Well, it grew a lot larger than what my original thinking was on it. We built within the Maryvale areas, about 25,000 homes and then another 5, 6, 7 thousand in other areas. We built in Paradise Valley and in Moon Valley, so we've built over 30,000 homes. In this area here, as I say, I think it's around 25,000.

**PS:** When you say Maryvale, what were the boundaries?

**JL:** The boundary runs from about 39th Avenue along Thomas out to 83rd and then from McDowell to Maryland. Which is up in the Glendale area. At that time it was in the County. And those boundaries, it's not just a rectangle, it's irregular shape I guess.

**PS:** How did you get the name for it?

**JL:** Maryvale? Well, my wife's name is Mary. And Vale is a green valley. So this was a nice valley area, green. All the crops and so forth.

**PS:** And when you started it; where did you actually start the first part of Maryvale that you did?

**JL:** Our first subdivision was between 47th A venue and 51st A venue on the north side of Indian School. And our home was \$7,600. Three bedroom, two bath. And the monthly payment was \$52. That included everything: Principal, Interest, Taxes, Insurance, the whole thing. Now, the water bill is more than that (laughs).

**PS:** And was that in the City of Phoenix when you started? **JL:** No, that was County.

**PS:** Was that a good or bad thing? For you as a builder or for the people buying it? That it wasn't in the city.

**JL:** Well, there was less bureaucracy. The lead-time was a lot less than what it is today. You know, preparing a subdivision, and all the beauracratic hurdles you have to go through.



**PS:** Did you ever expect that it would soon be annexed?

**JL:** No, this area was annexed in several stages, part of it is in Glendale. Everything north of Camelback is Glendale. I think the City of Phoenix as I remember, they annexed Maryvale in two or three stages. It was a whole lot to take on at one time.

**PS:** Why did you choose this area, the West side of the Valley as opposed to more central location.

**JL:** There wasn't a large open space in the central part of the Valley. Or even in the East Valley. And again, prices of land were much less in this area than what they would have been over in the East Valley.

**PS:** Describe for me what it looked like, and what the community was like when you started building Maryvale. Was it considered to be like out in the country?

**JL:** It was in the country. Yes, it was all farms.

**PS:** So when people moved out here they felt like they were moving out of the city. How far was Phoenix?

**JL:** When we started here? I think the city limit was Thomas Road, and maybe 27th Avenue along in that area. This area was considered quite a ways out. And as I said, in order to accomplish what I had in mind, we did have to be out where there wasn't other subdivisions and so forth encroaching on our project.

**PS:** Why don't you describe for me what you had in mind when you started Maryvale. Did you have to go to the bank and get financing. How did you describe what you were doing to people?

**JL:** At that time I'd saved quite a bit of money, you know we'd built several thousand houses by that time and our land purchases were cash in most cases. Most of the banks that we dealt with we'd had a few years experience and I remember I wasn't in the meeting, but I was told later, Walter Bimson made the comment, when they talked about, I guess it was the Maryvale area, should the bank loan us this amount of money and his comment was that well, my financial statement didn't warrant the kind of loan that I was asking for but, he felt I definitely had something on the ball. So, they made the loan. Now, again, in those early years, the bankers were local people. Today, they're owned by outside interests. It's a different story.

**PS:** So you knew them; and they knew you.

**JL:** Uh-hum.

**PS:** So, how many acres did you start with when you started Maryvale? And how, big did you plan initially, when you first started, how big did you plan?



**JL:** The first acreage was 80 acres and then I bought this area where we're at now from Indian School up to Camelback was another 240 acre parcel; and I just kept expanding. As we were building it in those days, practically every one of the farmers was anxious to sell.

**PS:** Did you buy land way in advance of when you were actually going to build them?

**JL:** Some of the land that we still hold, land that we purchased 30 or 40 years ago. But when we were building up to 20 houses a day, here in Maryvale, that took quite an inventory of land in advance. But most of the farms here were good-sized parcels. I remember one of the larger ones, Marion Welbourn (sp?), they lived in the Glendale area I think it was about 480 acres, as I remember; so I didn't have to deal with little 10-20 acre parcels. Most of it was 160, 320 sections, this sort of thing.

**PS:** I know you bought land from Art Rovey. Then you bought his dairy? He could stay renting the dairy for quite a few years after you bought the land because you didn't really need it yet. He moved out to Buckeye. But he had his dairy here for a few more years.

**JL:** Yeah, I know in several cases, older people, I don't remember names, but one fellow, he had lived on his farm for 40 some years and he didn't want to move. But he wanted to sell. I said well, okay. I will buy your land, you can live in the house and I think he had around four acres around his house. I said you can live there the rest of your life. And after I'd made the deal, it was just a handshake deal, I thought about asking him how old he was (laughs) but I hesitated. He was the kind of the person that you really couldn't tell their age, you know, he was older than what he looked.

**PS:** Do you remember how many years he ended up living there?

**JL:** I don't remember for sure. It may be another four or five and then he moved in with his son as I remember.

**PS:** So did you have a big master plan that you drew out, like they do now with some of these planned communities?

**JL:** Yes, I retained Victor Gruen & Associates, they're land planners, and their main offices are in Los Angeles, to come over and do an over-all master plan for us. So that we'd have guidelines to be sure that we had school sites in places, and parks, recreation areas. And church sites, I think we have more churches per capita than anywhere else in the Valley. And then schools and parks were located so that in most cases, the children could walk to the school.

**PS:** So you planned all of that before you ever started building?

**JL:** No, that was after we had started. When it appeared that it was going to be much larger than what I



originally thought. I thought we'd better get some professional planning and that's when I brought them in.

**PS:** So the first houses you built out in Maryvale; how much did you say those sold for? **JL:** \$7,600. And those are reselling today from \$80 to \$90,000.

**PS:** They were three bedroom?

**JL:** Three bedroom, two bath.

**PS:** Were there any unique features about your homes that were selling features for you?

**JL:** Probably one of the features that most families found attractive was that our homes were larger rooms than what they'd get in most other subdivisions. And there was no one, at that time, that were selling homes in the same price range that we were. And a lot of homes in this area was four bedroom. Large families.

**PS:** I remember seeing the film that you made in the f50s. There's a promotional film about Maryvale, promoting it to people to come here. Do you remember how that film was made? Or why that film was made?

**JL:** I'm not sure, the one that you're talking about, but we probably used that for promotions of various types. I remember, we showed films at Kiwanis luncheons and women's club and garden clubs and at all these kind of things.

**PS:** It talks about how nice the homes are inside and shows them inside and then shows the grocery stores and Motorola and places that are being built, it showed ASU and people barbecuing in the backyard and swimming pools.

**JL:** Yes, I think we developed that in the mid or latter part of the fifties. Buster Keaton film was about 1959 or f60. One of the tenants that we had in the shopping center, he was also the sales representative for Twentieth Century Fox and at that time they were on strike at Twentieth Century, and so, we were talking about promotions that I wanted to do here and he suggested he could bring Buster Keaton over, and some of their writers, and filming equipment and so forth and, then Buster Keaton was the main theme, in the film. You've never seen that one? Where he was on the .. construction crew and, then he was a homebuyer and, then he was at the shopping center and so forth. (laughs) It got our message across and it was humorous.

**PS:** That sounds great. I'd love to see it (laughs) Do you have a copy of it?

**JL:** Yes. Yeah.



**PS:** What other things did you do that made your homes unique. I remember you had model homes, they were furnished, weren't they? Was that kind of unique then?

**JL:** Some of the builders furnished their models. But none of them had the array of models that we had, we had two bedroom, three bedroom, four bedroom, and different versions of three and four. We'd have seven, eight, nine, ten different model homes in our own home show. Whereas other builders would have maybe one or two models. So, people could come out and see a variety of homes. It depends on what their requirements are and what their ability to finance. Everyone was furnished and gave them the opportunity to see what a furnished house looks like. Where they would put the kids and all of that.

**PS:** Seems like it was almost an event on the weekends for people to come out to see your home models.

**JL:** Yes, it was. I've heard many times, people talk about that, they'd be something the family would do for the weekend. Come out and the parents would look through the model homes and the children would play in the playground that we had. We had a clown to entertain them. And even a nurse on hand in case one of them got scratched or whatever. And this way, the parents could shop and look at the models without the distraction of kids. And it saved the furniture and so forth (laughing) in the models.

**PS:** What other things did you do to advertise and let people know about your homes? Did you do television ads and things like that?

**JL:** Yes, we had television programs, radio and newspaper.

**PS:** You became pretty well known, didn't you? I just remember hearing about John F. Long Homes.

**JL:** Yes, with all the advertising and promotions and the various projects that we were involved with, we came pretty well known. And then naturally, when you've sold several thousand homes and that many families talking about their home and so forth. Wherever they work or shop or whatever. It all contributed to a good sales program. In fact, I forget the year now, we were on the "Wide Wide World" program. Do you remember the Dave Garroway Show? I think the name of it was Wide Wide World. We were on, and that's a nationally televised program, and we were on live. And I had our crews working, doing the framing on a model home and they were showing this live. And this was in November. And at that time there was a real cold spell back in the Midwest and back east. And in our model home area, it had a swimming pool and had models swimming and, again, this was nationally televised, and there was a big snow storm back in the Midwest, Back East, and for at least a year or more after that, we had people coming in from where ever they were, tired of the snow and so forth and bought our homes.

**PS:** That was pretty good, good promotion.

**JL:** Yes, it was and it lasted a long time.



**PS:** How did that ever come about originally. Do you remember how, they contacted you or did you contact them?

**JL:** No, they contacted us and I think it would have been through the local station. As I remember, the theme of the broadcast was something like the building boom that was taking place in the desert or something like that.

**PS:** You mention that you did some things differently to build your homes or more efficiently than other builders. Why don't you talk a little bit about some of the things that you did differently.

**JL:** We did practically all of our own work. By that I mean we didn't sub out, concrete and masonry and carpentry and so forth. We had better control; quality control, timing control and so forth. And our whole construction was set up on an assembly line basis, same as it would be in the car industry only our crews moved from one house to the other; rather than the assembly line moving. And this way, each crew became specialized in the type of work they were doing, whether it's carpentry, masonry, whatever. And they could perform their job in less time than in other places where they'd move from one house, or different type of house and so forth.

**PS:** You did some unique things too, constructing things off-site or indoors in warehouses and then bringing them out.

**JL:** We had our assembly plant here in the yard. All the components that we could build in the shop was built here and then installed at the sight. Trusses, we were the first builder to use trusses. This meant less time in the field and it was cooler in the summertime working here in the shop in the shade rather than out in the sun. As I said, all the components were built here, trucked to the site and just assembled.

**PS:** What were some of the other components that you built here?

**JL:** Wall sections, the gable ends and the overhangs and so forth. And then naturally all the cabinetry work, and doors.

**PS:** Today that seems so normal that they would have the cabinets and things constructed off site.

**JL:** In the early years cabinets were individually built in the house. And naturally it takes a lot more time. In our cabinet shop we had set up an assembly line basis again.

**PS:** Inside where it was cooler?

**JL:** And it was cooler; yeah.

**PS:** That was pretty innovative at the time; wasn't it? People weren't doing that.



**JL:** We were the only builder that was building the components as we did. Yeah.

**PS:** How did you get the idea to do that?

**JL:** I think it just evolved, I was always looking for ways to improve our quality and improve our construction time. And then we had a rivalry, competition between crews. The concrete crew. Naturally they'd pour the floor and then the masonry crew comes along and then the carpentry, framing and so forth. And each one of the crews would try to run over the one in front of them. So that always added an extra house or two per day.

**PS:** Quite a bit. Considering it took six months to build the first house.

**JL:** Yeah. And then getting up to twenty houses per day, looking back on it, it seemed like almost impossible task. But it was something that we grew into.

**PS:** And you employed all those people yourself rather than contracting? About how many employees did you have at the peak of your construction ?

**JL:** When we were building twenty houses a day I think we had, around a thousand employees. Of all .. crafts.

**PS:** That's a lot of responsibility. A lot of payroll, a lot of people you're supporting.

**JL:** Yes. Never seemed to bother me.

**PS:** Did you ever think though, when you got out of the Service that you'd ever be in charge of such a big company?

**JL:** No, that never crossed my mind.

**PS:** You mentioned some of the other things that you started realizing you had to think about when Maryvale was growing, like schools and parks. Tell me about how you worked with the school districts and how that came about.

**JL:** When we started here in Maryvale, the Cartwright School District was one school. And they had very little increase, a few kids graduate and a few come into the first grade. When we started in Maryvale, we were building eight houses a day. We built the first schools then because they didn't have the bonding capacity, as you know, it's a one or two year lag from the time you build a house until it's on the tax rolls. Anyway, they didn't have the bonding capacity. We built the schools and then leased the school to the district.



**PS:** Did the district come to you and ask you to do that? Or how did that come about?

**JL:** I'm not sure. I think we had a meeting with the school board. They were real concerned (laughs) real concerned. And we analyzed what their position was, and they didn't have bonding to do anything, and so it appeared the only thing open to us was to do it ourselves.

**PS:** That was rather unique though for a builder to build a school; wasn't it?

**JL:** Yeah. But then we were selling to families with children, so that was market.

**PS:** So how many schools did you end up building?

**JL:** We built what they called a John F. Long School. And then we built, oh numerous portable buildings for the school district. And we did the design and the engineering with our own staff. And anyway, the architectural association or whatever, filed a lawsuit against the school district because they weren't using the outside architects. And the lawsuit was settled, and the school district agreed that they would no longer have us build the school for them. So, that was the end of our school building. But we got em over the real crunch.

**PS:** What about parks? You say you had to plan for parks? How did that work?

**JL:** Well, again, we built the parks, swimming pools, these were neighborhood parks. Maybe, 8, 10 acres a piece. And build a swimming pool and a complete park, landscaping and so forth. And then turned it over to, at that time, it was in the county. And I don't remember now how many we built like that. But the park would be in and complete when the people moved into their neighborhood.

**PS:** And that was part of what you were selling, right?

**JL:** Yes, that was all part of our marketing plan. And naturally, the families that were moving in were coming from all different parts of the Valley. And it helped to have a neighborhood park where they could meet and get to know each other and so forth. And it's something for the kids to do. It's pretty well known fact that kids move into a new area; they don't know the other kids and they don't know what to do and so forth. And they can get into trouble. Break windows (laughs) these kind of things.

**PS:** Let's talk a little bit about some of your homes too, you had some other innovations in the homes. I remember doing some stories in the 1970s of ways to save water and save energy. Why don't you talk about some of the things that you tried.

**JL:** Oh, water saving appliances of all types. We bought toilets manufactured in Sweden that only used three liters of water per flush. Versus at that time, the American toilet was running five to seven gallons.



So that was a big savings in water consumption. Other types of re-use of water, I know we had a project by the 91st Avenue treatment plant where we were treating effluent, using nano (?) filtration and bringing it to a potable state. We tested various types of washing machines and water users of all types. I remember we even had some Japanese toilets that we tried out.

**PS:** What about your energy saving features? You had solar collectors on some homes at one time.

**JL:** Yes, on our Fiesta model, that was the first, roof-mounted home in the United States. Maybe within the world. We worked with Arco Solar on that project and the solar collectors were mounted, they were part of the roof. And being the first one, it worked out, it worked real well. The Secretary of Energy, Duncan I believe it was, came out to see it. And it was in the summer time, real hot and he had on a suit and so forth and by the time he got from the parking lot to the model home he was perspiring and then walked in, and the refrigeration was on, and how cool it was. And I remember him commenting to the press, there was quite a few people from the press there, that how amazed he was that photovoltaic cells were creating this electricity that was cooling the house. He was really impressed.

**PS:** How long did you have that, it was a test originally. Is it still there? Or what happened to that?

**JL:** No, that was the first one, later we removed the photovoltaic from the roof. Because, again it had been the first one, there was a lot of maintenance involved with it.

**PS:** Was the idea originally that you'd be able to generate enough power and sell it back to the utility companies?

**JL:** Yes, we were grid-connected and the electricity that *was* generated during the day was sold back to the utility company. And then at night, we draw it from the utility. That way it didn't require storage batteries. And that *was* the same process that we used in Solar One. Some of the home owners in Solar One, those that watched their time of use of appliances and so forth they had free electricity and maybe get a check *as much as* \$18, some of them, would get ten, twelve. I remember one family that several times they'd get \$18 a month refund from the utility company.

**PS:** Tell me about Solar One. What was that?

**JL:** It *was* a solar project using the photovoltaic cells and these were mounted on an array, and not on the home. We'd learned from the Fiesta model, naturally that the photovoltaic would have to be on the south side of the home, so it worked all right with the house facing north, but if it faced south, then the photovoltaic would be on the front and that didn't look, from the esthetic value, it didn't look all that great.

So, anyway, the Solar One *was* an experiment with how the homeowner, how would they do their laundry and so forth and in time of day use. Rather than doing their laundry say in the evening; do it in the daytime,



when they have solar energy. And, one thing that I found; there was a few of the families that conserved energy and functioned during the time of day. But most of them, it *was* free. Most of them, didn't pay all that much attention. I guess, it's human nature. If you get something for nothing, you really don't, you don't take care of it.

**PS:** So tell me about when, when was Solar One built and where and how big was it?

**JL:** I think it *was*, as I remember, in the early 1980s. It seemed to me like we had around twenty homes in that subdivision. Enough to give us a variety of types of homes and homebuyers.

**PS:** Where was it located?

**JL:** At 71st A venue and Osborn.

**PS:** So it *was* really just a little experimental ?

**JL:** It was an experimental, *as* I said, it *was* more of an experiment, with the homeowner and not with the equipment. We knew the equipment would function.

**PS:** And, what's happened to it now. How long did it last?

**JL:** Oh, it's still functioning.

**PS:** Is it still selling its power back to utilities?

**JL:** I haven't checked with the association there in sometime, they were say, five, six years ago. I, I'm just not sure what it is today.

**PS:** But it never really grew to be bigger developments?

**JL:** No we didn't go beyond that one.

**PS:** Why, why *was* that?

**JL:** I was at that time, and prior to that, thinking of what we called New Town, out by Carefree Highway and I-17. And I *was* planning that to be a solar energy project. And, again I wanted to see prior to going into an investment like that, what the home buyer reaction would be. And I think that it was a good experiment. Again, to see just how the people would react to free energy and whether they would continue to conserve. And as I said, some did and some didn't.

**PS:** Typical of people.



**JL:** Yeah. Yeah.

**PS:** What happened with New Town? That was a big project. I remember hearing about.

**JL:** Yes, that was, still is, state land. And we could never seem to, well, with the state land department they didn't think that it was ready for development and just one delay after another.

**PS:** Wasn't there a problem about water out there, too?

**JL:** Well, there was several ways that we could work around that. You know, the CAP Canal was right there and we had the opportunity of buying water and taking it out of the canal. But we never really got down to the final on that. Well, it's quarter after twelve.

**PS:** If you're not late I've got a couple more questions here. Just over all why don't you talk about your general philosophy about how you run your business.

**JL:** Our philosophy is, and I guess mine has always been that way, is pretty much hands-on. Being familiar with whatever you're doing. I feel that if you're involved in something, you should know what you're doing. And that we've always felt that we have a responsibility to the community. I don't know how many projects we've been involved with of all types. From land donations to buildings and so forth. I never sat and down and figured it out. Say well, this is going to be my philosophy. I think it's just my nature.

**PS:** You have a lot of employees that have been with you for a long time?

**JL:** Yes, we had a dinner last week for one of the ladies that's been with us 27 years. And some have been here 30 years. They were young when they started. I know I commented about Betty, that she (laughs) I said that she dyed her hair gray so that she would look more mature (laughs).

**PS:** So it's sort of become a family of people that work with you and have grown up and grown old with you.

**JL:** Yeah, although we have new ones that have come on. That's one thing that we look for naturally when we hire, is long-term relationship. I think that it's certainly comforting to the employee to know that they've got a long-term job.

**PS:** And you've been here a long time. But originally, people started with you, they didn't know if you were going to be like other builders that kind of come and go.

**JL:** I think that one of the things that I was able to attract good people was that they saw that I was



working and I had worked on every trade. And, I knew what I was talking about. If, you know, if this job should take 30 minutes, or 40 minutes or two hours; whatever. I didn't place any unreasonable demands. Because I knew what it, and again, I didn't go along with if this job was taking four hours and it should be two, I didn't go along with that either.

**PS:** Did you ever think when you started Maryvale that it would ever become the big community that it's become?

**JL:** When I first started, I expected to have several thousand homes but I really didn't the first year or so, didn't visualize it to be this size but then as we were progressing and selling and, there seemed to be such a demand, as I mentioned earlier, that's when I thought well, we better do some long-range planning.

**PS:** There used to be, I heard, you know, quite a distance between Glendale and Phoenix. It was considered country in between.

**JL:** Oh, there was. It was, from six points, which is Grand Avenue and McDowell, from there out it was farmland. And right up to Glendale.

**PS:** Did you ever think as a boy that you would build houses on all that?

**JL:** Never crossed my mind (laughs).

**PS:** Quite an accomplishment.

**JL:** I remember one of the farmers, when I was just a young boy, several of them talking, and one of them made the comment that, Phoenix and Glendale would come together in time. And I know at that time, I thought my God he's been out in the sun too much (laughing). That didn't seem possible.

**PS:** Not only is it possible, but it's your houses that did it.

**JL:** Well, a lot of it, yes.

**PS:** Okay, I think we got enough for today. I've got a whole other section, I'd like to talk with you about next week. Some of your community service things and some of your involvement in the community. Maybe talk a little bit more about your family and your children and grandchildren. And just some of the things like that. Probably won't be as much time though I don't think. Probably do it an hour.

**JL:** Oh, okay.

*John F. Long Interview #2*



*September 20, 2000*

**PS:** We were talking about some of the projects that you did since Maryvale; like Solar One. Are there any of them that stand out in your mind that you're especially proud of?

**JL:** I have a lot of interest in every one of the projects. I don't know that any one is above the other. **PS:** Why don't you just run down a list of some of the major projects that you've done? If you remember all of them

**JL:** You mentioned Solar One and then our water conservation. We had a water lab for many years that we were operating. Experimenting with different types of toilets for example. We bought toilets from Sweden that used three liters of water per flush versus, at that time; it was 7 gallons, in American toilets. And now the American toilet has come down to about 6 quarts I think it is.

You know most people don't realize we live on a desert and very limited water supply, and the importance of conserving what we have. That was something that in our program we not only tried to educate our homebuyers but people in the entire Valley. And we had a lot of students from the various schools come through and see what could be done on water conservation and recycling. So that was an interesting project.

**PS:** You think you contributed to making some changes in how the builders used water?

**JL:** Not only the builders, but the ultimate user, the homeowner. That's the one that needs to be educated. And I think we did a good job on that.

**PS:** You were just telling me about how business has changed over the years. Tell me that again about how you used to be able to do business.

**JL:** When we first started, and up to just a few years ago. In the early years practically all business was just a handshake. Very, very seldom, in fact, I don't believe we ever had written contracts. Even when we were building as many as 20 houses a day. These were people that I had done business with for many years and we trusted each other. And today, I think part of the difference is that most companies, their many office is somewhere else. It's not here. So the people, local people, are not in a position to make final decisions and probably not in a position to make a final commitment for their company because again, they may be moved from one area to another and it just puts a whole new light on the business climate.

**PS:** You said even million dollar deals you could do on a handshake back then?

**JL:** Oh, yes. Several million dollars. I know Builders Supply was one. Coats Thomas, Ray Lumber, and numerous other, but that was some of the big contracts. My God, with Ray Lumber at one time we were running about \$700,000 a month. And that's a lot of money.



**PS:** A lot of money today.

**JL:** Yeah (laughs) Yeah. Yeah.

**PS:** And you did that without formal contracts?

**JL:** Yes, yeah.

**PS:** Because you knew the owners?

**JL:** Yeah, Charlie Ray, known him for many years. And, we did business together and it was just, a matter of extending from the two or three houses a month up to 20 a day. Under the same arrangements.

**PS:** If you hadn't become a home builder, were there any other careers that you ever thought about pursuing, or anything you wished you could have done?

**JL:** Well, if I could have rented some farmland when I came back from the Army, I would have probably been a farmer. But the large vegetable growers in most cases had leased up and bought up a lot of the farm land that was available.

**PS:** As it is you ended up buying a lot of that farmland.

**JL:** Yeah. well, I guess that's it. (laughs). You mentioned buying a lot of farmland. I dealt with I don't know how many different farmers. I did practically all the buying myself and to the best of my knowledge, I never had a dissatisfied landowner. In some cases, in quite a few of the cases, in this area, we would buy another parcel of land for the farmer that was here maybe, well if he had a 160 acres we'd buy 320. And trade him. Farther out. In some cases they'd even be more than the 320.

**PS:** So they were pretty happy?

**JL:** They were, they were happy with it, yes.

**PS:** Did you ever feel bad as you saw the farm fields being covered with houses? Some people today say they're sad when they see the farm fields going away.

**JL:** Well, the people that are coming here need a place to live. And you know some of these people that complain about houses being built; everyone of them lives in a house. And it's the same old philosophy that now they're in, don't bring any more. I don't know what the ultimate will be. I guess that's pretty difficult for anyone to say. But it certainly is not the same as it was 50 years ago and it never will be.



This managed growth they talk about, which will run the price of land up, which again disqualifies a lot of buyers. One of the major problems today is qualifying the young homebuyer for a starter home. Really, there isn't anything such as a starter home like we had 40 years ago. When we started here in Maryvale, a three-bedroom, two bath was \$7,600. Today the move in costs are about that much

**PS:** Pretty incredible when you think back isn't it?

**JL:** Yeah. Just a few weeks ago a person, a family that I had built a house for 1949, this is before I started in subdivisions, I sold a house for twelve-five. And just recently they resold it for a 195,000. That's quite an increase.

**PS:** Same family owned it all that time?

**JL:** No, I think this was a second homebuyer. The family that I built it for had passed away.

**PS:** Why don't we talk about some of the community service that you've been involved over the years. I know about the city council. What was the earliest community groups that you can recall getting involved with? Were you involved as a young man in high school or as a student in your communities?

**JL:** No, not in high school. I just don't recall, probably one of the major ones would have been the building that we built for Valley of the Sun, Handicapped Children. I believe that was the name of it. These were children that were mentally and physically handicapped; they were really in need of nurseries and so forth. So we built several buildings for them. That would have been in the 1950s.

**PS:** So as you became successful as a homebuilder, that's when you really got involved then with the community groups?

**JL:** I think just my very nature, but as far as making any large contributions and large involvement it was probably in the early f50s. Yeah, after I build a few houses.

**PS:** Tell me about how you ended up on the City Council? When did you serve on the City Council?

**JL:** From 1966 to 1970. One of the Council members, I believe his name was Jack Laney, passed away and this was just a few months after he had was elected. And Mayor Graham, came out to see me and wanted me to serve out the balance of the term. And I certainly didn't want to get involved with that, at the time we had a lot of work going and I tried to stall them off, but they just kept after me.

And there wasn't any representative, when I say rep, council member from the West Valley and they thought I would be a good representative, and anyway, I wound up serving and then went through one



reelection. And I said that, that was enough.

**PS:** So you served how many years?

**JL:** Just four years. When I say just four years it, it's a real time consuming job. It and one thing I noticed on the Council and also when I served on the Glendale High School board, people only show up for meetings if they have something to complain about. Very seldom has anyone ever come to a Council meeting or School Board meeting unless they have a grievance of some kind.

**PS:** What were some of the big issues in those years when you served on the City Council?

**JL:** One, as I remember, was the freeway system. And we had approved an alignment. And then the Pulliam press decided that wouldn't be the best thing for the Valley. And it was killed. When I say killed, I mean, I think they had election on it. And the people, the public voted it down.

**PS:** Which freeway was that that they were trying to build?

**JL:** I-10, through the inter loop. So that set it back, at least twenty years, maybe thirty years.

**PS:** Any other major issues you remember from those days?

**JL:** We always had something going. The convention center, our Council was involved in the early planning stages and retaining architects and so forth. The actual construction started after my term expired. But all the initial planning and so forth was during out term.

**PS:** Why did you decide to serve on the City Council? You were obviously busy with your business?

**JL:** I mentioned, Milt Graham kept after me and persuaded me that I had a civic duty to follow. Which I did. I know there's people that asked was I gonna then run for Governor or something like that. No, I had no interest in that.

**PS:** You ever thought about doing that?

**JL:** No. Have been asked, but I don't think it would make sense.

**PS:** Well other real estate people have run for higher offices.

**JL:** Yeah.

**PS:** You mentioned you served on the Glendale School Board. Is that the main school board you served on or did you serve on other school boards?



**JL:** The Glendale High School Board. Yes, from 1960 to '66, I was on the school board at the time that I went on the City Council. Then I resigned the school board.

**PS:** And why did you go on the school board?

**JL:** Basically it was the same reason. A group of women convinced me that I should run for the seat that was up for reelection. And I had three children that two of them were getting ready for high school. And they convinced me that's another civic duty so, that's how I got in there.

**PS:** Pretty time consuming.

**JL:** Yes, yes. You have a lot of a consideration there for the taxpayer and the student, and people. Glendale High School, we had bus service that a student that lived within a half a mile of the school, they walked, and the ones that lived outside of that ring, they rode the bus. And as I remember, parents they would complain, the ones that live on one side of the street and then on the other, the kid on what would be the opposite side of the street they'd have to walk. And parents come and complain. You've got to draw a line somewhere. But it was interesting work to a certain degree. Always rewarding to see the students excel when we put forth the effort to help them out.

**PS:** What advice would you give to people today about serving on community school boards like that?

**JL:** I think everyone has a responsibility to their community. After all, the community is the people and if they don't pay attention, things can get out of hand. And, we've seen that at other communities, where the public doesn't really pay attention and after a while, then maybe the elected officials begin to think that it's their little domain and run it as they want.

**PS:** Have you ever been tempted in more recent years to get involved in some of the political systems? Go back on the City Council or anything like that?

**JL:** Oh, no. (laughs) As I said, everyone has a responsibility. And, I don't think anyone should stay too long in any one position. It should be a community effort, everyone do their duty and then bow out and let the next one come in.

**PS:** What about other community groups, I'm sure you've been on a lot of boards and served on a lot of community groups. Do you want to talk about some of those organizations?

**JL:** I served on the Gompers group, the Gompers School. And the Valley of the Sun for the Handicapped Children and Samaritan Hospital and I've served on so many, I don't even remember all the names.

**PS:** I was just wondering which ones stood out to you as the most meaningful that you've served on. **JL:** I think the Gompers and the Valley of the Sun School for Handicapped Children. In both cases



these were children that would probably never be in a position where they can thank you for whatever you did. But you know that you was doing something that would benefit them. And, the families that have real handicapped children, they have enough problems without being burdened too much with the care. And the Valley of the Sun School there was some real pathetic cases there that whenever I felt that I had a real bad day or whatever, I would go by the school and see these children in their position and I would then be thankful that I didn't have to face what they did, and whatever problems I had during that day were small compared to what theirs were.

**PS:** Your children were all healthy and didn't have anything like that?

**JL:** Yes.. And that's something that we can always be thankful for.

**PS:** Are you involved in any particular groups right now? Are you on any boards?

**JL:** I'm on the board of Westmark, which is a West Valley, West Maricopa County group.

**PS:** Tell me a little about what they do.

**JL:** They're involved in a lot of things that pertain to the West Valley. In most cases it's people that are in business. Although there are other members representing the community. It's a pretty good cross section of the entire West Valley.

**PS:** And what does Westmark do?

**JL:** They get involved with, for example, the Cardinal Stadium. They've been heavily involved with that. And naturally, we're involved with it, and Westmark, they bring in others such as the various cities.

**PS:** You brought up the Cardinal Stadium, I was going to ask you about that later but since you brought it up, why don't we talk a little about it now? Tell me about what you've been trying to do.

**JL:** We've offered a site, it would be on the uh 101 Loop just North of Thomas Road. I think that it would be beneficial for the entire West Valley. It would bring business opportunities that don't exist at this time. And it would provide an employment base that we don't have at this time. Practically every city in the West Valley, most of their people go outside of that city for employment. I think Glendale and Peoria and Avondale, it's around eighty-five percent of their workforce go out of the city for a job. If we can keep that kind employment in the West Valley that not only helps those individuals but it also helps on traffic congestion and so forth when they have to drive across the Valley.

So again, that's not only the stadium but the business park that we're involved with. Which would be along the outer loop of 101. Running from McDowell Road up to Union Hills.



**PS:** Quite a long way .

**JL:** Yes, that's a long ways. And, Avondale, Glendale, Phoenix, Peoria, they're all involved with that. We've brought them all together it had certainly appeared that it was important to outline areas, for this industrial and Business Park. Because of encroachment, once you build houses on it, there is never an opportunity then to put in the business.

**PS:** You've offered land before for stadiums and things like that, but nobody's ever taken you up on it.

**JL:** We offered land for the baseball facility. Those involved thought that it should be downtown and that's where it went. At one time, we did offer land for a football stadium but then that never went anywhere. This one has moved a lot farther than what we have in the past.

**PS:** Were you disappointed that you offered this land and they just don't seem to want to come out here?

**JL:** Oh, no. That doesn't bother me (laughs).

**PS:** It seems generous to make an offer like that.

**JL:** Well we donated the land for the Maryvale Baseball Park, which is here just south of Indian School Road on 51st. That was 60 acres.

**PS:** Were you involved with the Desert Sky Pavilion too? Weren't you somehow involved with that when that was built?

**JL:** When you say involved, we didn't do any of the building. We did, I guess help in the discussions and so forth with developers there.

**PS:** I just heard that one of the shopping centers here had been converted to a school on the West side? **JL:** Yes. The Maryvale Shopping Center. Maryvale Mall.

**PS:** Tell me about that.

**JL:** Where do you want me to start? (laughs)

**PS:** Well, did you build that shopping center?

**JL:** Yes.

**PS:** Why don't you tell me about sort of the history of it then?

**JL:** All right. We started the mall in 1959 and I don't remember for sure how many times we remodeled



and added to. Eventually we had about 600,000 square feet within the mall. And Target, Mervyns were key anchors, and they decided, in the early 80s I believe it was, that they were going out to 75th and Thomas. So when they did that then, some of our smaller tenants then naturally couldn't make it and eventually we closed the mall. And the Cartwright School District they were having a problem with the lack of available sites within the area. So we discussed the conversion of the mall to a Junior High and an elementary school.

As I remember, we donated, I think it was about seven million dollars, when I say donated, we cut the value by seven million dollars. And they've made a beautiful conversion. And they're now in operation on the junior high. And in January they'll start the elementary school. And I believe, it is one of the nicest schools, beautiful. Well laid out, everything just worked perfectly.

**PS:** So you actually sold them that site for profit?

**JL:** We sold, it is about half of the mall, what would be the north half. And as I said, we had an appraisal on it and we'd reduced that by seven million. So that helped them.

**PS:** That's a pretty (laughing) nice reduction. I would say.

**JL:** And another project that we're working on now is with the City of Phoenix, the Multi-Generation Facility in the Maryvale Park. And that's a facility where the senior citizens and the young people and so forth can all work together. And that's something that over the years, the older people have been set aside there to play checkers and that sort of thing. And maybe some professionals then are going to work with the young people. But there's a lot of good experience in these older people that can benefit the young people. And that's one of the things that we're working on there. And it'll be right next to the school. So we'll have an interaction between the elementary school and the multi-generation facility.

**PS:** You say you're working on it; are you helping construct it or ... ?

**JL:** No, the first thing is to get the city committed. And they have made the commitment now and it's in the upcoming bond election, which would be in March I believe.

**PS:** So you've really seen the whole evolution of Maryvale from when you built it for young families to now for senior citizens and do you want to talk a little bit about how you've seen it evolve?

**JL:** When we first started in Maryvale 1954, this was all farmland. And that was the reason that I chose this location because there was the open space, and gave us the opportunity to plan an entire community where people could live, work and play all within a given area. And we've pretty well held to that concept.

**PS:** But you've seen it change from being young families to...



**JL:** Originally it was mostly young families and it is going back to that. In the early years, most of our homes were four bedroom, large families, four or five, six children. And then naturally as those children grew up and moved out, people, a lot of them had their four bedrooms and just the man and wife. And, in some cases they wanted to buy a two bedroom. But the two bedroom at that time was more expensive than what they had paid for their four bedroom. So, anyway, a lot of the young families are moving back into the area. That's why the school had their problem of not having additional sites.

And, I think that it's real healthy to have a mix of older families and young families living together. When I say together, in the same areas. At one time we were thinking about separate community for the elderly. And, we did a survey, (laughs) and I remember one of the fellows commented he didn't want to live in a separate community where it was just old people. That he'd like to see a pregnant woman once in a while. So, (laughs) we just give up the idea then of a separate community for the elderly.

**PS:** There was a time, various times that Maryvale has had sort of a bad reputation put on it. People saying they didn't want to live in Maryvale because there was too much crime and things like that. How do you feel when you hear those things?

**JL:** In most cases those people had never been to Maryvale that made those comments. And one thing that brought that on the perception, is the Maryvale Police Precinct, goes all the way to the Salt River. And east to 27th Avenue or 19th Avenue. So a lot of the crime that they talk about, you know you'd read in the paper in the Maryvale Precinct Police said this or did this or arrested someone or whatever. Most of it was not within the Maryvale area. It was in the Maryvale Precinct, which went beyond our borders.

Crime, I'd say it's about the same here as it would be anywhere else. There's been numerous articles in the press about crime all over the Valley. And they'll show dots of where crimes were committed and so forth. And it's no more on the West Valley than it is East Valley or North Valley, whatever.

**PS:** Do you think the West Valley's gotten kind of a bad reputation?

**JL:** I think so, someone will start the rumor and as I said, in most cases it's people that haven't even been out on the West Valley. But that's being turned around and you mentioned the brochure here on the West Valley Recreation Corridor. This will, in time, be a tourist attraction because of all the facilities that will be included. There's 17 trails that go across the Valley that now dead end at the River, no place to go. This will make a connection which would carry it clear on up 47 miles. And it'll serve thousands of people. Not only the West Valley, but all throughout the Valley.

**PS:** Why don't you tell me a little bit more about this West Valley Recreation Corridor? It looks beautiful here. Where is that exactly?

**JL:** It's New River and the Agua Fria River. It has been for many years a real eyesore. And it's a dividing line between, right down the middle of what would be the West Valley. And several years ago, I talked



with the various cities that are involved here and flood control and county parks and so forth, there was no coordination between them. In fact, in some cases, they didn't hardly talk to each other. So anyway, we got them all together and we're coordinating that effort between flood control and the various cities. And there again, it's all taxpayer money. And we can provide recreation and trail systems and wildlife habitat, water recharge. All of that within a given area and provide various types of entertainment. And there will be recreation areas, playgrounds and soccer, baseball, picnic areas, and equestrian.

**PS:** I haven't heard much about it, when did you start doing this? What is your timetable for accomplishing all of this?

**JL:** We started about three years ago. First discussions on it. There's been several articles in the paper. But something of this size, it takes a lot of planning and coordination. MAG is involved, the Corps of Engineers is now interested, and they'll be involved. The various cities: the City of Phoenix has asked for additional funds for in their bond issue. Glendale, Peoria the same thing. And Avondale.

So, the County Parks Systems, or Trails System is coordinating their trails with this facility. Also the Mountain Preserve, the City of Phoenix and Peoria, their trail system then will tie in with this. So it brings the whole area, to a point where it's accessible.

**PS:** How long do you think it will take to accomplish a lot of this? Is some of it already being done?

**JL:** There was a luncheon yesterday and talking about this, some of the city officials were touring the Agua Fria River from Lake Pleasant down to the Gila River.

We're getting to a point now where we'll be ready to start turning dirt maybe within a year, maybe two years. It is hard to say when you have a Corps of Engineers and the Flood Control and all these big agencies, they don't move as fast as I'd like to. But anyway, the main thing was to get them all organized and coordinated and get it started. And we're moving.

**PS:** And that's your job: You're the coordinator?

**JL:** I guess that's what I'd call it, yeah.

**PS:** That's what it says here, "coordinated by John F. Long"

**JL:** Yeah. Okay.

**PS:** So is that you personally? Or your organization?

**JL:** I'm personally involved with it, but our organization is involved too;



**PS:** Looks like a pretty ambitious plan, that's a long distance you're going from the Agua Fria and the Gila River all the way up to Lake Pleasant along the Agua Fria.

**JL:** Yes, that's on the Agua Fria then the New River branch, is off, and that'll go on north, a total of about 47 miles.

A lot of that will be hiking paths and equestrian, and there'll be restrooms and rest areas, where there's water and so forth. In time there will also be places where a person could stay overnight with their horse and have a place to keep them if they wanted to make that full trip, 47 miles. And the same thing with hikers if they want to go the whole trip, there'll be rest rooms and water and so forth. And they can bring their sleeping bags.

**PS:** Sounds pretty exciting. Sounds like you're still pretty active and got a lot of ideas.

**JL:** Yeah, I think, again, that's beneficial for the whole Valley, not just the West Valley. But I think that in time it'll be a tourist attraction. So there will be a lot of a business opportunities along that whole stretch, like renting bicycles and selling first aid kits and (laughing) on all these kind of things.

**PS:** Selling water maybe? (laughing)

**JL:** And water. (laughs) Bottled water.

**PS:** You've just been named The Historymaker, obviously from the Historical League and you've received a lot of awards over your lifetime. Are there any particular awards that you've received that are most meaningful to you?

**JL:** Oh, I don't think so. I don't how many live received.

**PS:** Any of them that stand out in your mind?

**JL:** No, I think to each one that has given the award that it was important to them and so I attached the same importance to each one they would attach to it. How's that? (laughs)

**PS:** (laughs) Sounds very political. Did you ever think as a young man getting started in business and things that you would be a Historymaker?

**JL:** No. Never, never thought about it.

**PS:** Why don't you tell me a little bit about your children and your grandchildren. You have quite a family that people would like to know about.



**JL:** Well, we're a close family and maybe to a certain degree rather private. Although they've gone to public schools and these sort of things.

**PS:** How many children do you have?

**JL:** Three children; four grandchildren.

**PS:** And your children, tell me are they boys? Girls?

**JL:** Two girls and a boy. Manya, she is the oldest and Shirley and Jake.

**PS:** And do they work with you in your business?

**JL:** Yes, Manya's not as involved as she was a few years back. But Shirley she serves on the Flood Control Board. And she's involved with our advertising and promotion. These sort of things.

**PS:** And your son?

**JL:** And Jake, he's the general manager. So he's taken on a lot of responsibility. And doing a good job with it.

**PS:** Did you start them out young working with you? You were always working as a young man selling newspapers and things; did they start working young, too?

**JL:** Yeah, I remember Jake worked in the cabinet shop, I think he was 10 years old when he started. In the summer months. They've all been involved. Over the years, they've seen me doing it, I guess, it wasn't something that I said at any particular time, you know: "Now you've gotta go to work." They were, as I remember always anxious to do something.

**PS:** As a father, were you able to spend a lot of time with them? Or were you real busy with your business and left that more to your wife?

**JL:** I spent quite a bit of time with them. And one beneficial thing was that they enjoyed going to the model homes and the shopping centers and out in the construction sites and so forth. So, I would take them with me. So it was business and a family outing together. That's how they grew up,

**PS:** And your wife, did she work with you in the business also?

**JL:** Yes, to start with, on the first few houses Mary worked right with me. On the first house Mary and I did practically all of the work. And then the second house, I hired one guy to help. As time went by we hired another and so forth and I think when we built our home, from that point on, she wasn't involved in



the field work, but she was still involved with the company.

**PS:** What about your grandchildren? How old are they and what are they doing?

**JL:** Jaime is the oldest, she's a senior I guess, senior in high school. And she has worked as receptionist for us, in summer months. And they're all showing an interest.

**PS:** Think they'll continue in the tradition? John F. Long Properties I think the sign says.

**JL:** Well, I think so. To a certain degree.

**PS:** What sort of advice do you have for young people today who are just getting started in their careers?

**JL:** Number one, they should choose a career that they're interested in. Not because of the money, but are they interested in it? And do they feel comfortable with it? Over the years, I've seen a lot people that were in a career that maybe they didn't really like, and almost anyone that has to have a few drinks after work to unwind, more than likely they're not in the job that they like. If you enjoy it, you don't really have that problem.

**PS:** It sounds like you've worked hard all your life, too. Do you think young people today work as hard as you did?

**JL:** Oh, no, no. (laughs) And that's one of the problems, young people today don't have that sense of responsibility. Not all of them, but I'd say the majority of them, don't have that sense of responsibility. That will be a problem for them as they get into the job market. It's an entirely different world. So many of them have just been kind of hand fed and taken care of up until, in some cases they get through college and then when they have to move into the real world, it is a big surprise for them.

**PS:** So what advice do you give them?

**JL:** My advice, naturally, the young people are not as willing to listen to it as would be their parents. The parents have the responsibility to see that their children can take responsibility and be responsible for whatever it might be.

**PS:** Why don't we talk just a little bit about how you've seen Arizona and Phoenix change during your lifetime? You've seen some pretty big changes. Think back, what are the biggest things that you've seen change?

**JL:** The influx naturally has been the big change. Over the years, most of the businesses in the state now, the large business I'm talking about. Banks that used to be, savings and loans and title companies and so forth were all run and operated by local people. Today every one of them is, owned by outside interests.



And their interest is not the same as the original, and I just mention Valley Bank, Walter Bimson, Western Savings, the Driggs family, Gene Rice, First Federal. These are all names that have passed. Another one was Phoenix Title and Trust, again that was a local. Now, they're all owned by outside interests.

**PS:** I imagine you probably had opportunities to sell your business, too, to bigger outside business?

**JL:** Oh, yes. Several times, to me it would be like selling my family. So we had no interest in it.

**PS:** What about the size of Phoenix. When you started Maryvale, it was in the county. Did you ever think that you'd see it grow to what it has become today?

**JL:** Oh, no, I didn't think that it would be of this size. When we started in Maryvale, there was some discussion about Phoenix annexing, but that was held off for quite a few years. So part of Maryvale is now in Glendale and part of it in Phoenix.

**PS:** Most people can't tell where one stops and the other starts.

**JL:** Yeah, well, Camelback Road is the dividing between Glendale and Phoenix. We went up to Maryland, which is a half a mile south of Glendale Avenue.

**PS:** Those used to be separate cities ...

**JL:** Years ago, they never came (laughs) close, from Six Points, which is McDowell and 19th Avenue and Grand Avenue. From that point on until you got downtown Glendale, that was all farmland in between.

**PS:** What do you see as the greatest challenges that are facing Phoenix area today?

**JL:** Growth, managed growth, managed properly I guess I should say. And this project that we're working on, the West Valley Business Corridor. I think those kinds of things, following the village concept, as it should be where people can live and work and play in a given area. And have all types of job opportunities, not just the low-paying jobs.

**PS:** How do you want to be remembered by future generations?

**JL:** Well, I hadn't even thought about being remembered (laughs). Why I don't know.

**PS:** What do you see as your legacy? What do you think people will remember you for? What would you like them to remember you for?

**JL:** Probably, within a few days after I pass, they will all forget about me. (laugh slightly)



**PS:** I doubt that.

**JL:** There are so many things to do now and, you know planning ahead, to think about what are people going to say about me when I die. It doesn't cross my mind.

**PS:** What are you most proud of? That you would want people to remember that you did?

**JL:** That I was a good citizen.

**PS:** That's pretty concise. I guess that kind of covers it all then.

**JL:** That covers it all. Were you finished now?

**PS:** I think so. Unless you have something you want to add?

**JL:** No, off hand I don't.

