



# **Nevada Legislature Oral History Project**

**JOHN W. MARVEL**  
**Republican**

**Assembly, 1978 – 2008**

**DECEMBER 1, 2008**  
**CARSON CITY, NEVADA**

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LEGISLATIVE BUILDING  
CARSON CITY, NEVADA**

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Get Consensus, LLC  
Under contract to the Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau

SUGGESTED CITATION:

*John W. Marvel*. An oral history by Dana R. Bennett. Carson City, Nevada:  
Legislative Counsel Bureau, 2009.

The record copy of the interview transcript is printed on archival quality paper and on file with the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau in Carson City, Nevada.

## **PROJECT INTRODUCTION**

The 2007 Nevada Legislature approved an appropriation for a project of conducting oral histories with former state legislators, and in the summer following the conclusion of the session, the Research Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) conducted a competitive bid process to identify and obtain a contractor to carry out the project. A committee consisting of LCB and other state personnel with expertise in Nevada history and politics evaluated and ranked the proposals received. In January 2008, a contract was signed between LCB and Get Consensus, LLC, for an 18-month program.

Administered by Donald O. Williams, Research Director, and coordinated by Amber Joiner, Senior Research Analyst, the Nevada Legislature Oral History Project consists of video- and audio-taped interviews, which have been transcribed, edited for readability, and indexed. An initial list of suggested interview subjects had been presented to the Senate Committee on Finance when it considered Senate Bill 373, which proposed an appropriation for the creation of an oral history of the Nevada Legislature. Using that as the starting point, LCB staff considered several factors—such as age, length of legislative tenure, contributions to the State of Nevada, and whether a formal oral history of the individual had been published or was underway—when identifying the former legislators who would be interviewed. The final list provided to the contractor revealed a careful balance of legislative house, political party, and geographic distribution among the interviewees.

After LCB staff acquired the written permission of each subject, the contractor would proceed with scheduling the interview at a time and place convenient for the former legislator. Each interview was simultaneously filmed and audiotaped. The audio recording was transcribed verbatim and then edited by the contractor for readability. Each interviewed legislator was provided the opportunity to review his or her edited document, and any misstatements or errors in the videotape were corrected in the text. The contractor produced three copies of each final product, which includes the text and a DVD of the interview film. Copies were presented to LCB's Research Library and the State Library in Carson City; the subject legislator also received a copy of his or her interview. The repository of record for all digital film and audio files is LCB's Research Library.

Together, these interviews make a significant contribution to the annals of Nevada politics and provide incomparable context to the state's legislative history. The official legislative record outlines the chronology for actions taken by Nevada's lawmaking body; these oral histories vividly portray the background and circumstances in which such actions occurred. Invaluable for understanding Nevada's politics in the latter half of the twentieth century, these interviews present interesting explanations, entertaining stories, and thoughtful observations that might otherwise have been lost.



**John W. Marvel**  
**December 1, 2008**

## JOHN W. MARVEL

Born and raised in Lander County, John W. Marvel began his 30-year tenure in the Nevada Assembly in 1978. The Republican chaired the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means in 1985, co-chaired it in 1995, and served as Assembly Minority Leader in 1993, the only three sessions of his tenure during which the Democrats did not control the Assembly. Throughout his career, he served on the Assembly committees concerned with agriculture, taxation, and the state's budget. An Army veteran of World War II and a graduate of the University of Nevada in Reno, Mr. Marvel married Wilburta Shidler, also a University of Nevada graduate, in 1951 in Carson City where they currently make their home.

In this interview, which took place in Room 3100 of the Legislative Building in Carson City on December 1, 2008, at 2 p.m., Mr. Marvel refers to his recent hospitalization for pneumonia. Physical health issues plagued the Assemblyman in 2007 and 2008, but his memory was sharp during this interview, which lasted about 60 minutes. Mr. Marvel discussed the reasons he sought public office, how committees functioned, important issues of the time, his personal perspective on key political figures, and the impact of legislative service on family life. As the former Chairman of the Nevada Tax Commission, he brought to the Legislature a strong background in taxation and concentrated on tax legislation throughout his career. Here, he recalls his opposition to tax caps, his concerns about local government financing, and his controversial final vote on the tax legislation of 2003.

As a lifelong sheep rancher and former President of the Nevada Cattlemen's Association, Mr. Marvel was actively involved in the development of state and national policies concerning the use of public lands. He served on the Nevada Legislature's Committee on Public Lands during his many legislative interims. Prior to his legislative tenure, he was one of only two Nevadans appointed to the Advisory Council to the Public Land Law Review Commission, which was created by Congress in 1963. He details his work on public lands issues in this interview and also talks about other issues important to him, especially cultural resources and prison industries. He highlights the cultural affairs legislation he co-sponsored with Democrat Senator Nick Horn of Clark County, reminisces about many of the people he met during the past three decades, and praises the staff of the Nevada Legislature for their professionalism and necessity to the process. As the grandson of one of Nevada's first major sheep ranchers (Edith Jenkins) and the son of Nevada's first Cattlewoman of the Year (Louise Marvel), Marvel talks a bit about his family history and, in the process, muses on Nevada's transition from a mostly rural state to a mostly urban state.

During the redistricting process after the 2000 census, a large urban population was added to his once-rural district. Mr. Marvel explains how this change resulted in his defeat in the 2008 Republican primary election. Although a lifelong Republican, Mr. Marvel has consistently had the respect of his peers in both parties. In recognition of his years of public service, the Legislative Commission appointed Mr. Marvel to Nevada's Commission on Ethics in December of 2008 and early in 2009, the Assembly added Mr. Marvel to the Assembly Wall of Distinction.

Dana R. Bennett  
May 2009

**Dana Bennett:** Good afternoon, Assemblyman Marvel.

**John Marvel:** Good to have you with us, Dana. I miss you at LCB [Legislative Counsel Bureau]. It's always a pleasure to have you with us.

**Bennett:** Thank you very much. I think I'm going to enjoy our conversation today.

**Marvel:** So am I. I've been looking forward to this. I'm glad I'm out of the hospital so we can have this get-together. It's nice to have Gwen here, too. I've known her from the past.

**Bennett:** Yes. I think it's going to be fun. Let's start out at your first day of your first opening session. Imagine that it's January 15, 1979, and you've been newly elected to the Assembly. What were you thinking as you began your service?

**Marvel:** Dana, it wasn't my first experience being exposed to the legislative process because I had been Chairman of the Nevada Tax Commission, and also President of the Nevada Cattlemen's Association, so we spent quite a little time at the Legislature attending hearings and whatnot. So I knew how the process worked. I got into politics because the people of my district—like Dean Rhoads who is a Senator now but who was an Assemblyman at that time and, of course, Senator Norman Glaser who represented rural Nevada—more or less asked me if I would run. That was after Bode Howard had

unfortunately passed away here during a session. They asked me if I'd be interested in running, and since I'd had a background with the legislative process, I probably had nothing to lose by trying it. So we decided to get into it.

*Melvin "Bode" Howard (R-Humboldt) served in the Assembly from 1960 until his death in 1977.*

**Bennett:** How big was your district the first time you ran?

**Marvel:** The first time around, I had all of Lander County, all of Humboldt County, and all of Pershing County. Then Lander County was split up later during reapportionment. Before this last reapportionment, I probably had the best district you could possibly have. It was half of Lander County, all of Humboldt County, all of Pershing County, a big part of Eureka County, and about a third of Elko County. So it was, you might say, a complete district. We were on the Humboldt River; we were on I-80; and everybody had similar problems. It was a much easier area to represent because people all thought pretty much the same.

Of course, I've always prided myself on being a rural legislator. I wasn't very happy when I was thrown into the urban area, like the city of Sparks, because unfortunately about 80 percent of my constituency became that urban area. I knew from the get-go that it would be difficult to ever win in Sparks where people

*Marvel's district was re-drawn in 2000 to include northern Washoe County and portions of Sparks.*

really didn't know me. We didn't live in that area, and we really didn't have that exposure. I tried to explain that to the Governor, but it kind of fell on deaf ears.

**Bennett:** Let's talk about your first campaign. How did you run for office that first time?

**Marvel:** The first time was pretty easy because you didn't have so much TV. It was mostly personal contact, and I'd had a lot of exposure, having just been through the Sagebrush Rebellion. I was in most of rural Nevada all the time. That was when I was President of the Cattlemen's Association, so I had a lot of name recognition. We came through with some mailers, but it was mostly contact, a little house-to-house. Matter of fact, my wife was probably the best campaigner of all because she was the one who did all the house-to-house until the dogs kind of scared her off. [chuckles]

**Bennett:** That's a lot of territory. How did you cover it house-to-house?

**Marvel:** We were very selective about where we went. We probably spent more time going house-to-house in Winnemucca. I'd been pretty well known in the Winnemucca area for years because Winnemucca is one of the main shopping areas for Battle Mountain. I'd been in the ranching business, and I'd bought most of my equipment in the Winnemucca area. So

people were pretty well familiar with us. It wasn't a matter of people having to learn who I was; it was just a matter of whether they felt I was capable of representing them.

**Bennett:** You had lived in that area your entire life. Had you known the previous legislators?

**Marvel:** I was born in Battle Mountain—perhaps one of the last babies ever born at home, which was very difficult for my mother. After that, most babies were born in the hospital. But for some reason she decided that I would be born at home.

**Bennett:** That was out on the ranch?

**Marvel:** No, we lived in town. At one time, we had a large outfit—sheep and cattle. Battle Mountain was kind of a focal point because our sheep used to run in the wintertime down around Fallon and in the summertime they'd go as far north as Idaho. So Battle Mountain was kind of the central point between the summer range and the winter range. We had a big shearing plant on the Western Pacific Railroad, so when the sheep came through, we would shear them and load our wool off a big loading dock right off the railroad spur. When we had 18,000 head of ewes, it was several thousand pounds of wool.

**Bennett:** When you were growing up, did you know any of the legislators who represented your area?

**Marvel:** Of course, we knew Bill Swackhamer. He'd been an Assemblyman for years. Reapportionment got him, too, and he eventually became Secretary of State. We knew Snowy Monroe. In those days, you knew everybody. Nevada was still pretty much a rural area. You knew everyone.

*William D. Swackhamer (D-Lander) was in the Assembly from 1946 to 1972 and Secretary of State from 1973 to 1987.*

*Warren L. (Snowy) Monroe (D-Elko) served in the Senate from 1958 to 1976.*

**Bennett:** After you'd won your campaign and you showed up here as an Assemblyman, what surprised you the most?

**Marvel:** I don't think I was surprised by anything, but I had something to learn. One of my ideas was to get rid of the inventory tax. Unfortunately, I made the mistake of telling Norman Glaser what I intended to do, and he introduced the bill before I had a chance to. [chuckles] It turned out to be a great bill for merchants and for people who had to declare an inventory every year. It took a lot of burden off of our shopkeepers, and we were able to take our cattle and sheep off the inventory so you didn't have to go out and inventory your merchandise every year.

*Norman D. Glaser (D-Elko) served in the Assembly from 1960 to 1972 and in the Senate from 1976 to 1984.*

**Bennett:** So when you came here, you already had some ideas about legislation?

**Marvel:** Yes, we had some ideas about how it should work, and my experience on the Tax Commission was a big help. I'd been on it for five years and ended up being Chairman when Paul

Laxalt was Governor. That really gave me a leg up as far as knowing the tax end of it.

*Paul Laxalt (R) was Governor from 1967 to 1971.*

**Bennett:** It seems like most of the bills you introduced were about taxes.

**Marvel:** They were. I felt very comfortable and very familiar with taxation and its problems and issues.

**Bennett:** How did you learn the legislative process? Was there anyone who helped you?

**Marvel:** It's by experience, [laughter] just like anything else. It's kind of hands-on. The big thing is you learn to work with people. You learn the people you trust, and you learn the people you have to keep at arms-length. I had friends on both sides of the aisle. I would be very candid with you and say that when I was first elected, I probably had more support from our Las Vegas people than from northern Nevada because, at that time, Washoe County was the dominant power in the area. That was before the power shift went south. I had an awful lot of help from the Las Vegas people, and so I was very fortunate during my legislative career. About every bill I introduced, I was able to get passed, and I've only been in the majority once and a half. The half was in 1995 when we were a tied house, so we co-chaired all the committees and had co-Speakers. I think it probably turned out to be one of the smoothest sessions that I've ever

spent of all the sessions I spent in the Legislature. We had more people who were complimentary about how smooth the session went.

**Bennett:** You co-chaired Ways and Means that session, didn't you?

**Marvel:** I'd been Chairman of Ways and Means before. I ended up being the ranking Republican member on Ways and Means. Of course, I was the ranking Republican member in the Assembly.

**Bennett:** Tell me how that worked in terms of your relationships with the various Chairs of Ways and Means over the years.

**Marvel:** I had a good rapport with all the Chairs. That's one of the things I learned in the Legislature is that you make friends; you don't make enemies. You respect other people, true enough. You realize a Democrat's a Democrat and a Republican's a Republican, and we have different philosophical ideas, but at the same time, you can disagree, but you can still get along. I probably have just as many Democrat friends as I do Republican friends. I think the secret to being a decent legislator is to make sure that you're there as a person. Particularly as Chairman of a committee, I've always told people, "Remember that the person testifying could be one of us. As a man, you put your trousers on one leg at a time, and none of us change."

*In 1995, the Assembly was tied with 21 Democrats and 21 Republicans. The leadership positions and chairs were shared by the two parties. Marvel co-chaired Assembly Ways and Means with Morse Arberry (D-Clark).*

**Bennett:** Who are some of those people who stand out in your memory that you've worked with over the years?

**Marvel:** Probably one of the greatest people was Jim Gibson, who was Chairman of Senate Finance. He'd really had some cantankerous times with some of the previous chairmen of Ways and Means. They didn't quite see eye-to-eye with him. When he was Chairman of Senate Finance and I was Chairman of Ways and Means, one of the nicest compliments he gave me was this. "John," he said, "having you over there is like having a breath of fresh air. I have somebody I know I can work with." So Jim and I had a great relationship.

Of course, Bill Raggio has been great to work with, and Lynn Hettrick. I understand you've done a history of Lynn. He is super-intelligent and just did a fantastic job. Looking back over the years, I served with some great legislators, like Roger Bremner. He was Chairman of Ways and Means and is still involved in state government. It's hard right off the top of my head to go back.

Oh, Nick Horn! Nick and I worked together on cultural resources and on prison industries. Before Nick's demise, he and I worked very closely together on cultural resources, and we were able to get legislation

*James I. Gibson (D-Clark) served in the Assembly from 1958 to 1966 and in the Senate from 1966 until his demise in 1988. He chaired the Senate Committee on Finance in 1985.*

*Douglas Roger Bremner (D-Clark) served in the Assembly from 1972 to 1984. He chaired Ways and Means in 1981 and 1983.*

*Nicholas J. (Nick) Horn (D-Clark) served in the Assembly from 1976 to 1982 and in the Senate from 1982 until he passed away in 1992.*

through for the bond issue that got passed and preserved many of our cultural resources. It's a \$2,000,000 bond every two years, and people have never objected to it. It's done a tremendous lot of good in preserving our cultural resources in the state of Nevada.

Nick and I also worked very closely on the Prison Industries Committee. That's one of the positive things you can say about prisons. We give these people a gainful occupation and training, and when they go out on the street, they have a worthwhile occupation. Plus we've collected millions of dollars in room and board and for victims of crime. A certain proportion of it goes to capital improvements. So it's been one of the most successful things I've seen. It turns a negative to a positive.

**Bennett:** That's a program you worked with your entire career?

**Marvel:** I've been on the committee since 1987. I've been Chairman of it for the last six or seven sessions.

**Bennett:** What was it that sparked your interest in that particular project?

**Marvel:** I've always been interested in prisons because I was on the site-selection committee back in 1985 when we had to build prisons for the State of Nevada. We traveled around the United States looking at prisons and at prison indus-

tries, and then we had to locate sites in Nevada. We had an agreement at the time that Clark County did not want any prisons. Washoe County said they didn't want any, either, but if we were desperate for a site, they would consider it. At the time, we were thinking that we'd like to help rural Nevadans by siting some prisons, say, at Lovelock in Pershing County and, of course, at Ely. Ely got a bad rap in 1979 when they were promised a prison, and it was jerked out from under them. We realized that there were going to be some logistical problems for both places, until we finally got the staff settled and we had people who would stay in the system. We realized it was going to be difficult for the first few years. I've been involved in prisons my whole legislative career. When I go by Lovelock, I say, "There's Marvel Manor." [laughter]

**Bennett:** Did you have a particular philosophy in deciding what to introduce as a bill?

**Marvel:** Oh, no. Dana, when you look at that bill, it's not so much the philosophy as the need. Take cultural resources. There were things like the Nixon Hall in Winnemucca. I can remember it from when I was a kid. People like Will Rogers used to show up during the Labor Day festivities. Well, here we had something that had some real historical significance, and that's one of the reasons I really got involved in it. Of

course, there have been places like the Fourth Ward School in Virginia City and all kinds of areas in the state of Nevada that are worthy of restoration. Being a native Nevadan and getting up in years, I could appreciate it more. That was one of the reasons that I got involved with that aspect of legislation.

**Bennett:** Was that a difficult bill to get through?

**Marvel:** No, it really wasn't. When people saw the merits of it, and we were able to show them the good it would do, we really had good support for it. It was like anything else. Any time you're spending money, people are going to question it. But this was a bond issue, and so it's repaid itself many times over.

**Bennett:** What was the toughest issue that you can remember working on?

**Marvel:** Budgets are always tough, and every session is different. 1983 was tough; 1993 was tough. We didn't have much spending. And we had some bountiful years. The hardest part in a bountiful year is saying "no" when there's money. In the lean years, when you say "no," they understand every part of what the word means. But sometimes when you have surplus years, people don't understand the word "no." You have to be careful that you don't create programs that you have to keep funding perpetually.

So you have to be very, very careful. That's why we have to be very careful with the federal money we receive, so we don't build programs that, when the feds pull their money out, the State of Nevada is strapped with a program we can't afford. This has always been one of the conditions: that when the federal money disappears, the positions disappear.

We've been through quite a few budget cycles, good and bad. This is repetitious, but in the good years, it's pretty tough because everybody wants money. When you get federal money and they want to add staff to be able to implement the federal grants, you have to make sure the condition is that the positions are there only as long as the federal money stays. They can't build a program that the State has to pick up eventually. That's been a very concise understanding that that program goes away when the federal money goes away.

**Bennett:** Over the years, have you had to say "no" more often than "yes"?

**Marvel:** No, it's been about 50-50. In times like this, you have to freeze every position and don't fill them. Hopefully, you don't have to have lay-offs. It's tough when these people have families. There are a lot of good benefits out there for people in state government, and you hate to cut them off and leave them in the lurch.

It's hard on their families. But at the same time, maybe they have to take a reduction as long as you maintain their benefits. That's a lot better than laying them off entirely. So we'll see what the Special Session comes up with.

*The Legislature met in Special Session on December 8, 2008.*

**Bennett:** Tell me about tax policy and how that changed over your tenure. Tell me a little bit about the tax shift in 1981.

**Marvel:** Everybody calls it the tax shaft. I was part of the tax shift. At the time, the State of Nevada used to take 36 cents of every tax dollar.

**Bennett:** Property taxes?

**Marvel:** Yeah, property taxes. At the time, there was a consensus of most legislators that the State should get out of the ad valorem, and we should let that go to the counties and to the schools. The State used to take 25 cents plus 11 cents for indigent care. We got out of that completely, and we gave the counties, the local governments, and the school districts what the State was taking. Hopefully, that was going to help cure a lot of their fiscal problems, too, by giving that extra money from the ad valorem tax. I think it was a benefit for a long time.

Of course, over the years, the sales tax has kind of crept up. We've had the BCCRT [Basic City County Relief Tax] and the local school support tax that comes out of the sales tax, and that's exactly how you fund schools.

One of the reasons I hate to see the local economy get bad is that more local support means less dependency on the State General Fund to support the Distributive School Account. But when local money goes away, then the State has that responsibility to come up with the distributive school money. That probably is what's happening right now. I think the only counties probably in good shape are Humboldt, Lander, and Elko where we have good mining conditions and property values haven't decreased.

I really have to be honest with you. I know it doesn't sound like a conservative but I hate these tax caps because they really limit the scope of local governments and the school districts being able to fund what they need. It's just difficult to work around these caps. I think that's why you elect people to your county governments and school boards: you're looking for people who have some kind of fiscal responsibility. I don't think they're going to go out and just spend money wantonly. But the caps really get in their way.

**Bennett:** Looking back from your perspective in this difficult year, was there something during the tax shift that perhaps should have been done a little bit differently?

**Marvel:** Everybody's talking about re-examining where we are. But what do you re-examine? If you

start taking money away from the counties, who's going to take care of them? The Speaker keeps talking about having to re-examine our sources of taxation. Well, if you starting dipping into what the counties are receiving right now, who's going to bail them out? We can take it away from the schools, but we still have a constitutional provision that we have to provide for school funding whether we like it or not. Otherwise, we're going to be in court so quick. The Supreme Court ruled on it: you have to treat all the students alike, and so Nevada will have that responsibility. You have to be real careful you don't rob Peter to pay Paul.

*Barbara E. Buckley  
(D-Clark) has been  
Speaker of the  
Assembly since  
2007.*

**Bennett:** Let's think back to the first couple of years you were in the Assembly. What was a regular day like in the Legislature, especially as a member of the minority party?

**Marvel:** Up until about 1983, it was just business as usual. You got the bills through; you had to hold the hearings; and there was really nothing too contentious. At that time, there weren't any partisan politics, and I didn't see too many people who were getting ambitious to go to another place. Most of the people just wanted to get the business of state done. I think as time progressed, you saw more people who decided they wanted to be a United States Senator or a Congressman, and they had their own agendas.

I've had a good relationship, even up until now, with most of our legislators. You can see what's happening. It's difficult for me, coming from rural Nevada, to see the power all shift to Clark County. After this last election, that's precisely where it's gone. We have only one Senator from the north, and the bulk of the power committees are from the south. We still have people like Bill Raggio, and people like that who still command a lot of respect, but it's not like it was. I would say the session coming up is not going to be a very pleasant one.

**Bennett:** It's really looking tough, that's for sure. You talked about some of the legislators that you've worked with over the years. Who are some of the lobbyists you remember?

**Marvel:** I don't know if you knew him or not, but probably one of the best lobbyists in my book was Jim Joyce. There was a man who was one of the most honorable people I've ever worked with. He'd come to me and tell me just who he represented and why. He'd tell me his point of view and what's on the other side, and then it was up to me to make up my mind. He didn't lie to me. He told me the truth. I think that Jim set the standard for most lobbyists.

By and large, most of the lobbyists have been really great to work with. Guys like Scott Craigie and John Sande—I could just go down

*William J. Raggio (R-Reno) has been a Senator since 1972. He has been the Senate Republican Floor Leader every session since 1977, except in 1981.*

*James A. Joyce of Las Vegas was a fixture in Nevada politics and the hallways of the Legislature from 1973 until his sudden death in 1993.*

the list and name a bunch. They've all been excellent people to work with.

**Bennett:** What's the mark of a good lobbyist from a legislator's perspective?

**Marvel:** Truthfulness. As long as they don't tell you a lie, and you can trust them, then you listen to their story. But if one of them lies to you, you'll never ever have any regard for them. As a matter of fact, some of them you won't even let into your office.

**Bennett:** Did that happen over the years?

**Marvel:** Oh, I told my secretary that if so-and-so wanted to come in, then I was busy. I won't name names. I don't think that would be proper in this setting.

**Bennett:** Did you hear much from your constituents during session?

**Marvel:** I'd get phone calls. I like the phone because I like the one-on-one. I'm not much of a letter-writer because a letter, while it's good to have in the files, isn't the same as a call. I think people appreciate that you take the time and have a personal touch with them. During most of my career, I tried to have the one-on-one, and people appreciated that.

I already told you that I feel everybody is just the same as I am. I've got to learn, too, and that's one of the reasons I believe in the

hearing system we have. I'd go home and people would complain about things, so I'd say, "Please do this for me from now on: If you know of some subject matter that is going to be heard, please show up because we don't know everything as legislators. We learn from you people. If you show up at a legislative hearing, that gives us something to go on, so we can evaluate your concerns versus what maybe somebody else has." So it gave me kind of a measuring stick.

**Bennett:** Because your home was so far away, you obviously couldn't commute back and forth every day.

**Marvel:** I tried to get home every weekend. I had a good district that was on the freeway, and I was going through most of my district most of the time, so I'd see people who had a problem. I'd just stop by and see them on the way through. That's the reason I hated the last reapportionment because everything was just so diverse. If I came down I-80, I had to make a dogleg over into Sparks, which was terribly impractical. Now my replacement comes from Sparks, and he will not be able to represent Winnemucca and Battle Mountain like I have.

**Bennett:** Where did you live in Carson during sessions?

**Marvel:** For a while, we rented, then my accountant suggested that we buy a place, so we did. It

*Donald G. (Don) Gustavson defeated Marvel in the 2008 Republican primary. He had served in the Assembly previously (1996-2004).*

made good sense because I was a director of a bank so I was down here a lot in the interim. We spent a lot of time in Reno or in this area, so it worked out well having a place. Unfortunately, this last year, it's been great because of the illnesses my wife and I have had. All of our doctors are here, and this is a great hospital here in Carson City. It's worked out to our advantage from a selfish point of view.

**Bennett:** Tell me about working with staff.

**Marvel:** Dana, I want to say this: I have never known or been around people more qualified than the people we have in LCB. That goes from the grounds people right on up through the director's office. These are the most professional, ethical people I've ever worked with. They don't let politics get in their way. They do their job, and they're very professional in what they do. I've had the opportunity of working with the Fiscal Division people; I've been on the Audit Subcommittee since 1987; and they do a lot of work for me in the Research Division where you were. We've got great people; they're dedicated people. The legislative police! You can't ask for more accommodating people. In general, the people in the LCB, I think, are in a class by themselves. I think some of them probably have more to offer than some of the legislators do. [chuckles]

**Bennett:** How did that change from the time when you first started to your last session? Did you see any kind of a change in how staff worked?

**Marvel:** Oh, no. I think staff was just improving with age as we went on. As times change, this society is more sophisticated but our staff has the capability of keeping up with all the changes and all the technological changes. Our people are really up to snuff on just about every area, so I think the people of the State of Nevada should be proud of what LCB does. *All* the divisions! I've had more people comment on how beautiful the grounds look. So that whole thing carries through to the work and the product that LCB puts out.

**Bennett:** Tell me something about interim committees. You served on several.

**Marvel:** I have been on the Interim Finance Committee since the very beginning. I've been questioned in the past whether or not it's constitutional, but we've gone all these years and never been challenged. It's a good way to know what's going on in the agencies and keep track of them. I've enjoyed the Prison Industries Committee. I enjoyed that very much because we're bringing in new industries from time to time, and it's a money-making proposition. I think it does help rehab some of our people.

Of course, I've been on the Audit Subcommittee. You probably learn more about how government operates by being on the Audit Subcommittee because those people get in and dig up *everything* about how these agencies should work. I've enjoyed that experience because I've learned more about how an agency works than I did just by being a legislator because those people just put it out in front. They do an excellent job.

**Bennett:** You served on the Public Lands Committee for a while.

**Marvel:** I've been on the Public Lands Committee since its inception. I've enjoyed it. I was President of the Cattlemen's Association and, at one time, was on the Advisory Council to the old Public Land Law Review Commission. I represented the cattle industry on that commission; we were there for seven years. We traveled all around the United States, visiting all the public land areas and listening to everyone from miners to foresters to any category that used public lands. It really was a great experience.

Then that book *One-Third of the Nation's Lands* came out. It wasn't quite the way I wanted it to come out, but unfortunately, I think Congressman Aspinall let staff write the report rather than what the people had testified. I know it deviates quite a bit from what the

*One Third of the Nation's Land: A Report to the President and to the Congress was published by the U.S. Public Land Law Review Commission (PLLRC) in 1970. The PLLRC was created in 1964 by a bill introduced by U.S. Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall (D-Colorado). He chaired the committee throughout the study period. It disbanded upon publication of its report.*

mining industry had suggested. But it was a good experience, and it educated me pretty well in public land issues. I'd been Chairman of the Public Lands Committee of the Cattlemen's Association locally, and then I was Vice-Chairman of the National Cattleman's Association. So I was involved in public lands issues for years. I spent seven years as Chairman of the Lander County Planning Commission, which is always involved in land issues. It was kind of natural to be on the Public Land Committee.

When I was President of the Cattlemen's Association, I had Dean Rhoads as my Public Lands Chairman. So we got him really involved. After that, Dean took hold and was one of the prime sponsors of the Sagebrush Rebellion. It was quite an experience. I think we actually saved the cattle industry and the livestock industry from being completely subjugated by the Federal Government. We got enough attention nationally that people realized that we had a problem. But for a while, there was a terrible tendency, particularly with the environmentalists, to put livestock people completely out of business.

*Dean A. Rhoads (R-Tuscarora) served in the Assembly from 1976 to 1982 and has been in the Senate since 1984. In 1979, Assemblyman Rhoads introduced A.B. 413, which provides for the control of certain public lands by the State of Nevada. The passage of the bill triggered western-wide unrest over Federal land controls and became known as the Sagebrush Rebellion.*

**Bennett:** Tell me a little bit more about the Sagebrush Rebellion.

**Marvel:** The Federal Government had strings of rules they were promulgating that would have made it practically impossible for people in Nevada to have operated a cow outfit or even a sheep operation. It was based on slope, on where the water was, and on so many, you might say, extracurricular things that there was no way in the world you could have complied with them. It would have put everybody completely out of business.

When I was President, we had a meeting in Elko, and I think 96 percent of all the ranchers in the state of Nevada showed up. I tell you what: we weren't belligerent; we stated our case; and from there on, we just kept going. We finally got the attention of Congress, so they were able to back off. One of the greatest things that ever happened to us was when Ronald Reagan was elected President because Ronald Reagan understood the livestock problem, and he was able to turn the environmentalists around a little bit. We had James Watt who was Secretary of Interior at the time—and of course, he wasn't very popular with the environmentalists—but he was able to kind of keep us, you might say, rather healthy.

**Bennett:** You've mentioned the Federal Government a couple times in different aspects. What is the relationship between the Federal Government and the Legislature?

**Marvel:** From the perspective of the public lands issues, where I worked from most, I think we have an esprit de corp. We're getting along a lot better than we used to because they respect our position and we respect their position. There have been some better appointees at the federal level that we've been able to work with. In Nevada, we're very fortunate. We've had some excellent BLM [U.S. Bureau of Land Management] State Directors, and they've been good to work with. They understand the problems. A lot of these directors have come up through the ranks, so they know from the ground up what the problems are. So it's been a good relationship. But I realize there are certain laws, and they've got pressures from every group out there. They have to keep a balanced agenda, so you can't get everything you want, but at least you try to come to some kind of a fair compromise.

**Bennett:** During most of your tenure, you were in the minority. But in 1985, the Republicans took the Assembly, and you chaired Ways and Means. Tell me about that.

**Marvel:** It was really quite an experience! Bob Thomas was my vice chairman and, of course, Marvin Sedway was a member. He was always having trouble with the people at the Public Works Board, so a couple of times when he'd get a little nasty, I'd have to recess the committee just to calm things down a little bit.

*Robert (Bob) Thomas (R-Carson City) served in the Assembly from 1982 to 1988.*

*Marvin M. Sedway (D-Clark) served in the Assembly from 1982 until his death in 1990.*

That was when I really got to know Jim Gibson who was Chairman of Senate Finance. Jim and I worked very closely together. He closed the budget one minute and I closed it the next, or vice versa, so there was never any conflict about what was going to happen in one house or the other. The budgets always came out the same on either side.

I enjoyed the work. It takes a lot of work. You spend a lot of time after-hours going over budgets and working with staff, but it was a good learning experience for me at that time. I really learned how the agencies work and how they're financed. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

**Bennett:** Did you think that, at some point, that you might chair Ways and Means again?

**Marvel:** I was always in a position to do it. In 1995, when we had the tie, we split chairs. Morse Arberry and I split Ways and Means, so he was Chair one day and I'd be Chairman the next. It worked; it was a good relationship. Plus we had good people in Fiscal. They're non-political, and they give you the straight answers. They're not trying to bias anybody. They have no prejudices coming in. It's just a good type of relationship. And that's the way I like to legislate. I realized that, a lot of the time, you have certain pet projects, and maybe you let a little

*Morse Arberry, Jr., (D-Clark) has served in the Assembly since 1984 and has chaired Ways and Means since 1993.*

bias get in your way, but for the most part, you try to be fair.

**Bennett:** How did things work with you and Mr. Arberry splitting the chairmanship that session?

**Marvel:** Oh, real good. Really good.

**Bennett:** Did you two meet on a regular basis?

**Marvel:** Actually, we had our offices real close together, and the Fiscal people worked with both of us. It was excellent harmony just like with Lynn Hettrick and Joe Dini as co-Speakers. They had an excellent relationship. They alternated every other day. People thought it worked out beautifully. It was a good team. They got along well. Joe was an excellent Speaker. He understands a lot of the rural problems, but he also knows the State of Nevada. I was kind of sad to see Joe leave because he really did an outstanding job.

**Bennett:** In 1993, you were Assembly Minority Leader?

**Marvel:** What happened there—I won't name names—but there was a Las Vegan who was Minority Leader, and his own people from Las Vegas weren't very happy with his performance. Of course, I had seniority, so they asked me to take over. They more or less inducted me as Minority Leader.

Then, in 1995, I got to putting together my committees. That's the responsibility of the minority and majority leaders. No matter how I

*Joseph E. Dini, Jr., (D-Yerington) served in the Assembly from 1966 to 2002. He was Speaker during a record eight regular sessions and named Speaker Emeritus in 2001.*

worked it, I kept coming out with a tie. So I called Mouryne Landing and asked what we do in case we have a tie. She said that they used to flip a coin, but I knew they had done away with that. So I said, "You know, I don't like that. Let's work on something else." We thought about that for a good month. I finally decided to look at other states that had the same situation, and I said, "Let's just do this: Let's just split everything." And that was the ultimate solution. That worked out real well.

*Mouryne B. Landing was the Assembly Chief Clerk from 1973 to 1995.*

**Bennett:** Do you mean you split the committee memberships?

**Marvel:** Yes, everything was even. All committee assignments. We had equal numbers on every committee. We had the Co-Chairs. We had the Co-Speakers. It really was a great relationship. You wouldn't have thought so, but it worked out real well because everybody got along in 1995. We had a good session.

**Bennett:** Why were you Minority Leader only one session?

**Marvel:** I was there twice.

**Bennett:** Oh, twice?

**Marvel:** Well, I'll tell you, I got out of it the second time [in 1995] because I wanted Lynn Hettrick to be Speaker. Otherwise, I'd have been Speaker, and I didn't want to be Speaker. So

*Lynn C. Hettrick (R-Douglas) served in the Assembly from 1992 to 2006.*

that took me out of the leadership because I thought Lynn would do a better job as Speaker than I would. I wanted to be Chairman of Ways and Means anyway. That was the way I felt about it. I had been Chairman of Ways and Means, and I understood it. I didn't particularly care to be Speaker. So it was just a matter of how I personally felt about it. It worked out good because Lynn was a good Speaker, too.

**Bennett:** At one point in the Nevada Legislature, there was a cow county caucus. Did that still exist?

**Marvel:** Yes, we still have it. It still exists. Of course, that's going to be so sad the next session because it'll be one less. There won't be as many members. But we would get a lot of lobbyists to sit in with us and get the people from BLM, the Department of Agriculture, and the Forest Service to come in and sit with us. We were able to sit down and have a one-on-one with these people. It's a good way to have a sounding forum. I really enjoyed the meetings. It was an opportunity for the rural legislators to sound off to each other. Everybody's serving on different committees, and you find out what's going on in other committees. Being here every day, you just don't know what's going on in each and every committee, and this is one way you can keep yourself up to speed on with what's going on, say, in Judiciary, what's going on in Commerce, and what's

going on in Education. It gives you a pretty good background about what's happening in the session.

**Bennett:** From the time that you started towards the end of your legislative career, were caucus meetings a fairly common thing?

**Marvel:** We've always had caucus meetings. I like the caucus meetings because it's one way for legislators to get to know one another. There, they can get up and speak their piece so you understand where they're coming from. If they're having trouble getting a bill passed or something, they can bring it up in the caucus, and sometimes the caucus leaders can talk to the Speaker, or the powers that be, and see if they can get a little help in pushing through somebody's bill, if it's a bill of merit. A lot of times, you get some frivolous bills. I always tried to avoid the frivolous bills and support a bill that had some merit to it. That's where the caucus is good. People are able to vent their frustrations as well as talk about their positives and what they're getting done. You keep that contact, and you figure out your strategies, especially if you're in the minority. I've been in the minority so much, but sometimes you've got to know where to head them off at the pass, you might say. [chuckles]

**Bennett:** Since we're talking about caucuses, I have to ask you about the Republican caucus and the tax fight in 2003.

**Marvel:** See, there were three major bills in the tax bill, Senate Bill 8. We had two very important—*critical*—school bills. The Distributive School Account and the class size reduction were in that one bill. Lynn and I tried to get them divorced in our Taxation Committee, but the Democrats would not do it.

Finally, we were just at a loggerhead on the floor. We needed just one more vote to get the two-thirds—the super-majority—to get it out. I was starting to get calls from a lot of the rural school districts because they couldn't even open the schools. It was in July, and some of the schools couldn't open because they didn't have any money to hire teachers. They couldn't sign contracts. So I told Lynn—I said, "Lynn, I'll bite the bullet, and I'm going to switch my vote. I'll vote for it. We've got to get that bill out of here. It's not doing any good. It's not helping anybody." So I get charged now with being a tax-and-spender, but my motive for that was to get our schools open. My vote was for the kids, not for raising taxes.

I'm also a director of a bank, and that bill had a very onerous section about banks in there. I talked to the bankers that day and told

them that it wasn't constitutional, but the bankers are treated quite differently than anybody else. They're paying twice as much on the payroll taxes as other industries. So I got their blessing to go in and vote for it. But my main reason was to get the schools open.

Of course, it was used against me during this last campaign. They went back that far, and they kept using it. That's the same thing that happened to Bill Raggio in his primary. They kept using that against him when it was for the good of Nevada. It was good for the schoolchildren of the State of Nevada, and just about every Republican Senator, except for a couple, voted for Senate Bill 8.

It got me in the end. It happened. I'm still pleased that my own Republicans would come up and hug me for doing it. They said, "Thank you, John, for getting us out of here" because that ended the session.

**Bennett:** That had to have been a tough decision to make.

**Marvel:** It was the *right* decision. As far as I'm concerned, if you're going to be a statesman, be a good one. Maybe it appealed to my statesmanship. If I was going to do something, let's do it right. It turned around and got me in the end, but at the same time, it was for the right reason.

**Bennett:** In your memory, are there any other bills that rise to that level?

**Marvel:** Not right off hand, Dana. There have been so many of them over the years, but I can't think of anything that had that much controversy. Probably the original tax shift. You know, people kept calling it the "tax shaft." It worked for a long time.

I'm really not sure how we're going to be able to remedy it. With the Governor now, I wonder whether there's going to be appetite at all to raise taxes next session. We know we're in trouble, but at the same time, it's about what that man in the street can afford. If business isn't doing well, if we're having massive lay-offs, that's not the time for a tax increase. I just hate to have to keep doing this, but we have to keep looking in that budget and see what still can be lived without. So it's going to be a difficult session. I sympathize and empathize with the people who are going to be on the money committees this next session. It's not going to be easy.

**Bennett:** What things were you able to work on when you chaired Ways and Means?

**Marvel:** I did a lot of good things. One of the things that I'm proud of concerns disabled people who were institutionalized. I had a little trouble on this issue with the Budget Office, but at the

time, there were a lot of people who were handicapped or in wheelchairs who didn't want to be institutionalized. Being institutionalized costs the State of Nevada a lot of money. I was able to get money out so we could keep these people in their own private homes. They'd have care provided to them, but we kept them out of institutions. You'd be surprised how many of those people came up and thanked me.

One of the other things during that session that I was able to get was the AHEC [Nevada Area Health Education Centers] program, which allowed teaching nurses on the job. The School of Medicine ran it and used Elko as their pilot project. They were able to videoconference with the hospital in Elko from the School of Medicine and give nurses on-site training. So they're right there, say, in the operating room, and somebody supervises them from the School of Medicine. The nurses were just so delighted with the program. We're using it every place now.

**Bennett:** There were some other issues that you worked on.

**Marvel:** Just little things for some of the little rural towns like Midas, Golconda, and Tuscarora. I was able to get money for them so they could bring their water systems up to date. I think it was a big help, especially in Midas where, at

one time, it was a luxury, you might say, if your water ran. [chuckles] But with the help of people like your dad, they were able to get a decent water system, and I think it's been fairly adequate. At least they have water pressure so they can fight fires.

*Bennett's parents, Dan and Joan Bennett, are long-time residents of Midas, a small town in Elko County.*

**Bennett:** Yes, they can do that.

One of the other major shifts that happened when you were in the Legislature was decreasing the sessions to 120 days.

*Until the voters changed the Nevada Constitution in 1998, regular legislative sessions were not restricted to any particular length, although legislators' salaries ended on the 60<sup>th</sup> day of the session. The longest session on record was 1997, which ran for 169 calendar days.*

**Marvel:** That was a compromise, I think, between Senator Raggio and the people who wanted annual sessions. Senator Raggio came up with the 120 days. I've been here when it went a lot longer than that. Of course, the 120 days may not even be realistic anymore because sometimes we just can't wrap it up in 120. I realize things should get done as quickly as possible, but at the same time, that time restriction means the option is to go to special sessions, which we've done several times.

**Bennett:** When you think back on the unlimited sessions, how were they wrapped up? What was the process?

**Marvel:** Usually it was some little technical thing that held us up. One of those things was that Senate Bill 8, the tax bill. That kept us in until July because it kept changing every day. That's the thing you have to worry about. One day the

Assembly would change it, and then the Senate would change it. That kept our fiscal people going nuts, trying to keep the money straightened out and figuring out how much this was going to bring in. They didn't know where they were going to land, either. That's why I thought it was time to cut out the nonsense and get it over with.

**Bennett:** When you think back on your legislative career, what are some of your fondest memories?

**Marvel:** Oh, I think probably the people I met, not so much what I might have accomplished myself. You make some lifelong friends in both parties, and you work with so many great people on the staff—LCB people. I have some dear friends throughout the whole system. There are just some great people. The highlight of my legislative career has been the good people I've met and the friends I made.

**Bennett:** How did your legislative service affect your family?

**Marvel:** It actually worked out real well because when I entered the Legislature, I was ranching, and I was fortunate that I had good people on the ranch to run it. But I was home every weekend, and my son, who's an attorney in Elko, was able to come down on weekends and help keep things straightened out. The ranch wasn't so

large that it required me to be there every day as long as I laid out the work. I followed my budget, and we made sure ends met. It was good to have something else to do besides ranching.

**Bennett:** When you ran in 1978, did you have any idea that you would still be running thirty years later?

**Marvel:** No, I really didn't. It became easy because I really didn't have much opposition for a long time. It didn't get really bad until I got into Sparks because I didn't live there, and I wasn't about to move. At my age, it would have been ludicrous to have to sell everything and buy a home in Sparks or Washoe County. I figured the sacrifice wasn't worth it. I could give up this job and be just as happy.

**Bennett:** Did you ever think about running for any other office?

**Marvel:** You know, I never have. I really haven't. There hasn't been anything I've ever wanted to be besides this. This has been rewarding enough. By being in the Legislature, I could do a lot of little things for a lot of people. I think that probably the most gratifying part of your legislative experience is what you can do for people in between sessions. One of the advantages of being on the money committee is that I know everybody in state government pretty well. If

somebody has a problem, I know exactly who to call. I can call them up and get a problem resolved in a matter of a few minutes. If that person calls them, they might get a stall. But if you call them yourself, they'll listen to you and try to take action, so I've had a lot of success that way.

**Bennett:** When you think back on your years here, is there anything that you supported that you wished in hindsight you really hadn't gotten into?

**Marvel:** I'm not sure I can think of anything, Dana. If I had more time to think about it, I might be able to come up with something. But right offhand, I can't think of anything that I found really repulsive.

**Bennett:** I want to take advantage of our time and ask you about your grandmother. Tell me a little bit about Mrs. Jenkins.

**Marvel:** Yes, this is really interesting. My grandmother and my grandfather came from Wales. My grandfather came over in the 1870s, and not too long after that, my grandmother came. He started off as a miner. My grandfather started where Coeur-Rochester is right now, which has been a very successful silver mine. But my grandfather didn't do very well there.

**Bennett:** His name was William Jenkins?

*Edith Williams Jenkins came to Nevada from Wales after her marriage in 1892. Her husband died in 1899, and she took over the family's extensive sheep operation. A well-known Nevadan early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, she was, among other things, the largest taxpayer in Lander County and a director of the Lovelock Mercantile Banking Company.*

**Marvel:** W. T. Jenkins. His Welsh name was Gwilym Treharn. Gwilym in English is William. So he went by W. T. Jenkins. He started in Pershing County; he borrowed some money and bought sheep. Over the years, he kept expanding and buying ranch after ranch. He got pretty heavy in the cattle business, so the W. T. Jenkins Company then became about the third-largest livestock operation in the state of Nevada.

But getting back to my grandmother. As much as I would have liked, my mother was never too definitive about her mother's wealth. Apparently, she came from a rather wealthy family in Wales. My grandfather died when my mother and her twin weren't even a year old. So my grandmother actually ran the operation until she re-married about thirteen years later. But she must have been a lady of considerable means because she was able to send my mother and her twin to Miss Hamlin's Boarding School in San Francisco.

I've looked back through some of the old records, and there was always money in those days. I don't know why my mother was rather vague about what her wealth was, but I don't think she ever really asked about it. My grandmother passed away before I had an opportunity to get to the depth of it. She must have been quite a lady. She took the helm of the largest sheep outfit in the state of Nevada at

*Louise Jenkins Marvel had a twin sister, Dorothy, and two older sisters, Edith and Mary.*

*Mrs. Jenkins married George M. Southward, a prominent Winnemucca banker, on August 29, 1913.*

the time and ran it successfully until she died in 1918 of the flu. My dad was stationed at the Presidio in San Francisco and met my mother who was going to Miss Hamlin's. They were married, and after my grandmother died, he resigned his commission—it was right after World War I—moved to Battle Mountain, and took over the outfit. So that's the history of where we started from and how the W.T. Jenkins Company got going.

I don't know how many times we bought out stockholders, but we finally got everybody out over the course of the years. Then we got to the point where estate taxes were pretty formidable, and our accountant said that, for an old outfit that was incorporated in 1901, the capital gains tax or the estate tax was going to kill us if something happened, like a death in the family. So we sold the main outfit. That turned out better for everybody because I've got two brothers, and each of us had families, so we were all able to quit as friends. Then my wife Willie, my dad and mother, and I bought a small ranch. Willie and I kept it until 1991 when we sold it.

**Bennett:** So your grandmother was a livestock operator at the same time as John G. Taylor?

**Marvel:** Oh, right. Matter of fact, it's kind of interesting. At one time, John G. Taylor wanted to

*Louise T. Jenkins married Capt. Ernest R. Marvel in San Francisco on June 15, 1918.*

*In 1896, Sara Dix Hamlin, whose teaching experience included time in a Nevada mining camp, established an exclusive girls' finishing school in San Francisco. It is currently a college preparatory academy for girls.*

marry her. That's the story my mother always tells. [chuckles] My grandmother said that he always used to proposition her by saying they would be the sheep king and queen of the West if she would marry him. [chuckles] But she didn't want any part of John G. He was quite a dynamic guy.

*A native of Scotland, John Gilmore Taylor arrived in Nevada in 1883. By 1929, he was Nevada's largest sheep operator, running flocks on hundreds of thousands of Nevada acres and into Idaho and Arizona.*

**Bennett:** Your grandmother must have been something.

**Marvel:** She was quite a lady. There's no question about it. She was a lady in the truest sense. Looking at some of the things we've inherited over the years that my grandmother had shows that she was a lady of taste and apparently of considerable means at one time. But I don't really know what the means might have been because there's nobody left in the family who really understands her history. I don't know how that can be traced—genealogically, maybe—but it would be interesting to get into it sometime.

My grandfather is buried in Wales. When he passed away, my grandmother had him sent to Wales.

**Bennett:** Your grandmother died during the flu epidemic?

**Marvel:** 1918.

**Bennett:** That was quite devastating to Nevada.

*The international flu pandemic of 1918, commonly known as the Spanish Flu Epidemic, shocked Nevada. Public gatherings were banned, and scores of Nevadans died.*

**Marvel:** Oh, yes. I had an aunt die then, too, so there were two of my family who were caught up in the flu.

*Mary Jenkins Eckman was 22 years old when she died in November 1918.*

**Bennett:** We've gotten a little off-track here, so getting back to your legislative service. What do you think Nevadans think about their Legislature?

**Marvel:** I don't think the average person really understands what goes on down here. This is why I chastise them when I go home and they complain. I tell them what they have to do. After all, in this day and age, they can find out—through the newspapers or through the website or whatever it is—what's going on in Carson City. If they see some items that particularly interest them, they should get down there and testify. That's how we learn. That's how we legislate. Please tell us what's bothering you—how we can improve on a bill or how it affects you—and people will listen.

As I've always said, when I was Chairman, I'd admonish my committee members that they should treat those people on the other side of the table just like they were there themselves because we never know when we might be. That's worked out over the years, too. I'll stick my neck out and say that I think the average person is just ignorant of what we do down here. They don't really know what the Legislature does. It might be a lot of our fault, too, that

we don't get out and tell people how it operates. When you go home and catch it because something passed, you say, "Well, where were you?" So that's all I can say. The last election showed a lot, too, that people don't really understand the political system.

**Bennett:** We are getting close to wrapping up. When you think back on that first day when you walked in as a freshman Assemblyman and now to the end of your legislative career as the senior Republican member and certainly the senior institutional memory on fiscal and tax issues, how has the Legislature changed over that period of time? How has the institution changed?

**Marvel:** I don't want to sound disparaging, but I don't think we have the quality that we had at one time. Because at one time—and this isn't against people from out of state—we had pretty much of a Nevada-type legislator. We had guys like Keith Ashworth and Jim Gibson who were actually raised in rural Nevada, so they understood Nevada. They understood the whole state. I think we got away from that a little bit because people aren't putting the whole state in perspective like they should. They're doing more, I think, of the provincial type of legislating. If it affects their certain area, that's all they're really interested in. They're not interested in what's going to be good for the whole

*Keith Ashworth (D-Clark) served in the Assembly from 1966 to 1976. He was Speaker in 1971 and 1975.*

state. This is what you find. It's rather sad because when I first came in, everybody was here for the benefit of the whole state. And I still feel that way.

**Bennett:** Thank you very much for your time this afternoon.

**Marvel:** It has been a pleasure. I always enjoy working with you and certainly miss the days when you were with us on Public Lands.

**Bennett:** It was a pleasure. Thank you so much.

*Bennett was Staff Director for the Legislature's Committee on Public Lands from 1989 to 1998.*

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**RELEASE FORM  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau**

I, John Marvel hereby authorize Get Consensus, L.L.C. to  
(Interviewee) (Interviewer)

record my oral history for purposes of the Oral History Project of the Nevada Legislature conducted by Get Consensus pursuant to an Agreement between the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) and Get Consensus, L.L.C., signed on January 10, 2008. I understand that the purpose of the Oral History Project is to collect digital audio tapes or video tapes, or both, and written transcripts of my interview. In addition, I understand that I may provide to the interviewer selected related documentary materials, including, without limitation, photographs, manuscripts and other memorabilia. I understand that the audio tapes, video tapes and written transcripts will be deposited and archived in the permanent collections of the Research Library of the LCB or transferred by the LCB to an appropriate entity within the State of Nevada for permanent storage as determined necessary by the LCB. I further understand that any documentary materials provided by me may, as determined necessary by the LCB, be deposited and archived in the permanent collections of the Research Library of the LCB, transferred by the LCB to an appropriate entity within the State of Nevada for permanent storage, or returned to me.

The audio tapes, video tapes, written transcripts and documentary materials produced as a result of my interview, may be used for research, scholarly and educational purposes and may be used by the Nevada Legislature and the LCB in public educational presentations, including, without limitation, books, audio or video documentaries, slide-tape presentations, exhibits, articles or presentations on the Internet or successor technologies. I agree that the LCB may use the audio tapes, video tapes, written transcripts and documentary materials produced as a result

of my interview to compile the oral histories of former Nevada Legislators and that such compilation may be made available for sale by the LCB. I further agree that the LCB may use my name, video or photographic image or likeness, statements, performance and voice reproduction, or other sound effects, for purposes relating to the Oral History Project without further approval on my part. I understand that when the material is used, proper acknowledgment regarding my contribution to the Oral History Project will be made.

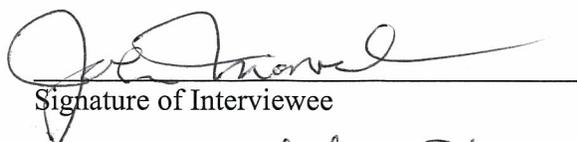
By giving permission, I understand that I do not give up any copyright or performance rights that I may hold and that this permission does not preclude any use that I may want to make of the content of the information contained in these recordings. I do not give permission for my oral history and related materials to be used for purposes other than as specified in this Release Form without further written permission.

I herein warrant that I have not granted exclusive use of my oral history or related documentary materials to any other person. The only conditions which I place on the use of my oral history and related materials are as follows:

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Signature of Interviewee

9/15/06  
Date

Address: 178 Lake Glen  
Carson City, NV 89703  
or J

892-2054  
Phone Number

P.O. Box 1270  
Battle Mtn., NV 89820



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Don ✓

JW

# Nevada Legislature Oral History Project Biographical Information Form

Full name: John Marvel

Date of birth: 9/1/20 Place of birth: Battle Mtn, NV

Parents: Ernest R. Marvel - Jessie J. Marvel

Date of arrival in Nevada (if not native born): \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse (name and date of marriage): Wilberta (Wilbe)

Children: Sharon Anderson, John Z. Marvel, Michele Stagle

Religious affiliation: Episcopalian

Education: B.A. - University of Nevada

Military service: World War II

Year of first campaign for public office and title of office: 1978

Home address in your district at the time of legislative service: \_\_\_\_\_

416 S. Scott, Battle Mtn., NV.

Occupation during legislative service: Ranching

Activities and hobbies during legislative service: \_\_\_\_\_

Ranching, Board Director

**Other elected offices held:** MT

**Occupations, activities, and hobbies after leaving legislative office:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Personal and professional achievements:** See Legislative Bio

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**Is there any other information you would like us to know about you before we conduct the interview?**

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**Get  
Consensus**

GROUP FACILITATION  
COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING  
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

## ***ABOUT THE PROJECT TEAM***

Get Consensus, LLC, is owned by Dale Erquiaga who serves as the project's manager and conducted some of the interviews. Dale is a native Nevadan with an extensive background in Nevada politics, having served as Director of the Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs and Chief Deputy Secretary of State. With both Nevada and Arizona clients, Get Consensus is based in Phoenix.

Dana Bennett is the project's leader and has conducted most of the interviews. Currently a PhD candidate in public history at Arizona State University with a particular interest in the women who served in the Nevada Legislature between 1919 and 1960, she has also conducted oral histories with former Arizona legislators. Prior to returning to school, she was part of the Nevada legislative process for many years.

Gwen Clancy is the project's award-winning videographer. Based in Reno, she hosts and produces the documentary series, "Exploring Nevada," which is seen on local TV throughout the state.

Jean Stoess transcribed and indexed the interviews. A long-time Reno resident, Jean is familiar with Nevada politics in both elected and appointed capacities and has indexed several Nevada history works.