

A Home and Legacy to Treasure

On January 24, The City of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission voted to place The Leroy and Carrie Christensen House on the City of Las Vegas Historic Property Register and in February, the house was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Below is an article Julia wrote in 1989 after she met Carrie Christensen while rehabbing the home as the Catholic Worker house.

by Julia Occhiogrosso

I was out on the roof when I heard a fragile yet persistent call. As we worked on rehabbing our newly acquired hospitality house, we were growing accustomed to curious visitors. I went downstairs to meet our guest. An elderly woman stood in the entrance way. Streams of daylight gave a soft glow to her brown skin. Her refined attire stood in contrast to the boarded-up windows and broken glass. She reached out to shake my hand. "My name is Carrie Christensen. My husband and I built this house in 1932," she explained with nostalgic admiration. Still holding my hand, she continued to tell bits and pieces of the story. "We had a prayer room in this house, and my husband and I prayed about every decision we made. We were just married and living out here on this property in a tent. This neighborhood was just desert back in those days." She continued, "I saw that we needed a home. I admired these stones I spotted down at the railroad yard. We had a vision that we could use these stones to build a home. We prayed that somehow we would get the stones. Then one day I convinced my husband to go down to the railroad yard and ask if we could have them. While he was inquiring, I waited in the car. Meanwhile, a man approached me. I told him what I was waiting for. He said 'Ma'am, if you want those stones you can have them.' I asked who should I say gave us permission. He told me his name and it turned out he was the manager of the railroad yard. Surely those stones were a gift from the Lord."

She paused for a moment and I explained that this house would be used to serve the poor. With enthusiasm she responded, "I always knew this was meant to be a benevolent home ever since my husband and I adopted twin boys."

She slowly moved out into the front yard. There she pointed out all the fruits she planted in honor of her favorite scripture stories. "Over there is the pomegranate,



Julia Occhiogrosso displays the wedding photo Carrie Christensen sent her 35 years ago – two weeks after visiting from Kentucky in 1989.

and there are the olive trees. On the side of the house are the orange blossoms; in the back, the fig tree still stands." There was a moment of silence as her eyes wandered about the house. I found myself wandering with her on a journey that seemed to be divinely connected to our life here at the Catholic Worker.

We visited for a good part of the afternoon and the next day she returned to show me her wedding picture. Her frail fingers carefully handled the photo. Gently tilting it in my direction, I had the sure sense that she was sharing a rare treasure. Yet more precious than the preserved paper image of her and her young groom was her ability and desire to remember. One could tell she drew strength and vision from this remembering. It was clear to me that even as a young bride she knew who she was, and who she would become was intimately connected to those who came before her.

Mrs. Christensen had to sell the house in 1977; she was a widow and could not manage the upkeep alone. She lives in Kentucky and continues to visit Las Vegas. It is a privilege to live in a house built on such a legacy of faith. This house still stands tall in this poor Black community. Many old timers who knew the Christensens have

commented that this was a special home, a place where they found good people and Christian love.

Today, as I look out the second floor window of this house, I try to imagine this area fifty-six years ago . . . I see the young, confident, African-American couple. I try to see what they saw. Before them a vast desert landscape. They were surrounded by a stretch of earth which provided infinite possibilities. Even with life's struggles, they were able to dream.

Donation Information:

Checks: Please make checks payable and send to:

Las Vegas Catholic Worker
500 W. Van Buren Ave.

Las Vegas, NV 89106-3039

Zelle: mail@lvcw.org (no fee)

PayPal Giving Fund:

<http://lvcw.org/giving>
(No fees taken out)

Credit / Debit Card:

<http://lvcw.org/donate>

Click the "Donate" button above the credit card icons, enter the amount, then click the bottom "Donate with a Debit or Credit Card" button.

Venmo: @LasVegasCatholicWorker



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Students Volunteer

On Saturday, Feb. 10, a bus full of Confirmation students from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church came at 6 a.m. to help with our monthly Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast for the homeless. **Above:** Students pass out corn bread. **Left:** Students came back after the pancake breakfast and helped clean up; here they are cleaning the 10-gallon pots. They also helped sort by size a room full of coats and jackets (5 cars full) collected by parishoners of St. John Neumann Catholic Church.

A Benefit for Nevadans for the Common Good (NCG) SECOND ANNUAL CHILI COOK-OFF

Sample Ten Chilis! Dine on a bowl of Chili plus toppings, corn bread, drinks and desserts.

Saturday, May 18, 2024

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Admission: Adults: \$25 (\$30 at door)

Children: \$15 (12 and under)

Cast your Vote for your favorite Chili!

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church

1811 Pueblo Vista Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89128

We will have an entrant in the Chili Cook-off, Frank, our Friday morning volunteer, will be entering the contest for the Catholic Worker.

For tickets:

nevadansforthecommongood.org/chili-2024



"The use of nuclear weapons, as well as their mere possession, is immoral." The Pope warns, too, of the dangers of nuclear weapons being used as a form of "blackmail that should be repugnant to all consciences of humanity."



- Pope Francis
Vatican News
June 21, 2022

Nuclear Stations of the Cross

March 29, Good Friday, noon
At the Mercury Gate of the NNSS (Nevada Nuclear Weapons Test Site) presented by the Las Vegas Catholic Worker, call (702) 647-0728 for more info and directions.

Sacred Peace Walk

March 24 - 29
Pilgrimage during Holy Week
65-mile walk from Las Vegas to NNSS (Nevada Nuclear Weapons Test Site)
(773) 853-1886

NevadaDesertExperience.org

PLEASE JOIN US

Volunteer Scheduling:

(702) 647-0728

or mail@lvcw.org

Thurs.-Sat., 6:00 a.m.

Morning prayer at Catholic Worker

Thurs.-Sat., 6:15 a.m.

Over 300 "To-go" hot meals served to the poor and homeless (6:15 a.m.: meal assembly, 7:00 - 7:30 a.m.: meal distribution)

Friday, 8-10 a.m.:

Clean the World Foundation shower trailer in our empty lot, up to 40 showers given. We provide clean clothing and hygiene supplies, Touro University students offer a monthly medical clinic.

Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.:

50 lunches taken to the homeless

Second Sat. of the month:

Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast for the homeless.

We are a Participating Member of:
Nevadans for the Common Good

100% RECYCLED PAPER, CHLORINE FREE, FSC CERTIFIED