

Henderson Memories:

**City of
Henderson
Living Histories**

CITY OF HENDERSON
LIVING HISTORY INTERVIEW
MARCH 25, 2003
MAYOR GIBSON
PART 3

1 MAYOR GIBSON: The Sunday after the PEPCON explosion, every
2 congregation in this community, interestingly, the prayer was a prayer of
3 Thanksgiving. And I remember because I was involved. I was an attorney for
4 the company. I was maybe a little defensive about everything that had been
5 happening, but anxious to find the truth. But so many people had escaped
6 injury when intuition would have suggested otherwise, that the entire
7 community, every congregation, if you talk to anyone in any congregation,
8 they shared their experience of Thanksgiving for not having continued to sit at
9 the picture window.

10 For some reason, they got up and walked in the other room and
11 abandoned the quilt that they were making. And the explosion hit, the glass
12 broke and shredded the quilt, but they were in the other room and didn't
13 feel it. Or they turned around and went another way, or didn't go down
14 Gibson Road that day. They went on another street. They walked into the
15 grocery store, did their shopping, got out and got in their car and just as the
16 explosion hit. Or they were back in the store far enough that when all of the
17 glass broke, no one was injured. I mean, it really was a rallying kind of
18 experience because people recognized that there were some miracles, some
19 larger than others, that had happened that they felt during that time.

20 INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us about the '90s?

21 MAYOR GIBSON: The '90s were really an important time for the city
22 because we reached a level of maturity that we had been striving for. We
23 didn't know what it was going to take. But there was almost no commercial

1 development in the city, and we were approaching 100,000 people. We
2 wondered, will we ever attract any, or will we always have to travel to the
3 Boulevard Mall to do our shopping?

4 I like to tell people - - and I'm probably close to accurate - - that you
5 couldn't buy most clothes that I wore or that my kids wore anywhere within
6 the city limit in Henderson until after 1995. In 1995 is when we broke ground
7 for the Galleria Mall. If you were to stand on the 215, Lake Mead, at about
8 Gibson Road, you would have had nearly an unobstructed view all the way to
9 Russell Road. And if you were standing on the 95, looking across to
10 Stephanie, you would have had an unobstructed view all the way to
11 Stephanie in 1995. There was nothing there but a rendering plant. Maybe a
12 few industrial facilities, but other than that, there was nothing. Of course,
13 today there are - - I am told - - something on the order of 4.5 to 5 million
14 square feet of retail space just in that corridor.

15 Of course, in 1990, as I said, we were 64,000 people. We got to
16 100,000 in 1993. And today we're over 220,000 people in the city. So,
17 we've had explosive growth in that time.

18 But if I have to reflect on what I think is maybe our finest moment, I
19 would say - - or, maybe our finest accomplishment, it would be that we
20 have grown out from underneath the cloud, we have seen incredible
21 master-planned and other communities grow up here. We have the finest
22 commercial districts and retail districts that you can have anywhere. We have
23 still accommodated industry, and we have grown faster than any other city in

1 the United States in the decade of the '90s, and we still have a small-town
2 feel in this community. It has been done in an orderly way that invites people
3 to continue to come every single month.

4 INTERVIEWER: Is there any special pride, do you think, in knowing
5 that this mall that really changed the face of Henderson and having all the
6 shopping here where you don't have to drive down the street, came out of
7 Henderson residents?

8 MAYOR GIBSON: Well, I think so. You know, Les and Joan have
9 worked very hard to get where they are. I think that they probably suffered a
10 little in the early years because the sign that advertised the coming of a
11 regional mall. I don't know if it had to be repainted, but it sat there and was
12 weathered for a long, long time. I remember all of us were so excited when it
13 went up. And then for the longest time, months, if not years, we continued to
14 read the same sign. And, of course, it was announcing, coming soon a
15 regional mall. It took a lot of commitment and a lot of tenacity to hold his
16 investors together and to keep that dream alive.

17 Les deserves a lot of credit along with Joan. They have worked as a
18 team. And it's satisfying to know that somebody from the east didn't fly over
19 and say, wow, those local guys don't know what they're doing; they're missing
20 an opportunity. Rather it was someone local was able to go out and induce
21 the financing that would finally bring that kind of thing to our city.

1 If you really want to talk about recent milestones, the development of
2 that commercial area over there is really, maybe, the beginning and maybe
3 the most significant recent milestone.

4 INTERVIEWER: What are you most proud of in the city of Henderson?

5 MAYOR GIBSON: I am - - it is rewarding to know that as fast as we've
6 grown and as much as it's been difficult to keep up with the pace of
7 everything that's happened, we have a community of neighborhoods. I mean,
8 it's not just a mass or a sea of people; it's a community of neighborhoods.
9 And now we have attracted the kind of development that we have, say, at
10 Lake Las Vegas. We have a resort on the 215, the Green Valley Ranch
11 Resort. We have seen the age-restricted communities that are beautiful
12 communities, you know, in Anthem and MacDonald Ranch.

13 We have seen a more educated demographic. In other words, we
14 have a higher percentage of people who value education here today.
15 Although, I hasten to say, that in the history of this city, if I am correct on my
16 facts, I don't believe that there's ever been a time that we, in Henderson, as
17 voters did not pass every single school bond issue.

18 And that remains the fact today. Even though there were some that
19 did not pass, they weren't in Henderson. They might not have won County-
20 wide. I'm proud of the commitment that we have sustained for education from
21 the very beginning. And it helps us that the people that are moving in are
22 educated and see the need for education. It isn't just that they're educated,
23 though, that it makes us a community that is committed to education.