

Henderson Memories:

**City of
Henderson
Living Histories**

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

MARCH 20, 2003

LIVING HISTORY VIDEO

CITY OF HENDERSON

CITY ATTORNEY SHAUNA HUGHES

1 CITY ATTORNEY SHAUNA HUGHES: I've been City Attorney for 20
2 years.

3 INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me a little bit about what the City
4 Attorney does?

5 MS. HUGHES: Well, my office provides legal assistance and advice to
6 all the City boards, the City Council, City department heads. We have a civil
7 department and a criminal department. The criminal department prosecutes
8 the misdemeanors that are committed within the city of Henderson, and the
9 civil department handles just about everything else, from planning, zoning,
10 environmental, property management. If it's got a legal issue, we handle it.

11 INTERVIEWER: Our video or project is kind of about the development
12 (inaudible) and changes of the city of Henderson over the last 50 years. How
13 long have you been in the City Attorney's office?

14 MS. HUGHES: I've been in the City Attorney's office for 20 years.

15 INTERVIEWER: For 20 years. Wow! Do you remember when you
16 first came in - - not necessarily from the criminal side, but more about the
17 development and growth side of things - - some of the things that were going
18 on 20 years ago, in terms of what was coming across your desk?

19 MS. HUGHES: When I started 20 years ago, there were two attorneys
20 and one secretary in the office. And shortly after I began working for the City,
21 Green Valley began developing. So, my early years in the City Attorney's
22 office were focused primarily on the development in that Green Valley area of
23 town.

1 INTERVIEWER: Anything that you remember about it, I mean, in
2 terms of what the City wanted, was that different than what the developers
3 wanted? How the plans came together, or just, I mean, kind of stories about
4 any of that?

5 MS. HUGHES: Well, Green Valley, actually began, as a - - it began
6 from a sale of federal land to the City and the City then turned around and
7 sold it to, I think, Greenspun and the Greenspun family. And, of course,
8 obviously, that's where the name Green Valley derives. We entered into a
9 contract - - the City entered into a contract with Hank Greenspun and
10 provided him the land at a very reasonable cost. But in exchange for that
11 cost, he had to build all the roads, build the sewer, build the water, and at that
12 time, it was quite a distance from what Henderson was then to the Green
13 Valley area. At the time there really were no connecting roads, certainly, no
14 freeways back in those days, so the expenses associated with bringing that
15 infrastructure to make that land develop were very significant.

16 INTERVIEWER: You mentioned there was a large federal land grant to
17 the City of Henderson. Could you tell us anything about that, like what had
18 happened, and any of - -

19 MS. HUGHES: It happened in the late '70s. And it took a couple of
20 years for the City to decide what they wanted to do and how they wanted to
21 handle it. That was slightly before my time here, but not too much before.

22 There was some discussion about what did we want the city to be,
23 because the land grant was a very, very large amount of acreage and it was

1 clear to the elected officials that it was going to change the character of
2 Henderson. So there was a recognition, at that time, that we were on the
3 brink of really potentially making some major, major changes to the
4 community and they wanted to be very careful and thoughtful that those
5 changes were positive.

6 And in the early years there was some controversy about
7 Green Valley. In the early years, Green Valley, of course, was the brand new
8 part of town. Not too much had been built in the older part of town for a
9 number of years. So I think there might have been some early jealousies.
10 And not everybody likes change. So in the early years, there were some PR
11 issues associated with development in Green Valley. But, I think, it quickly
12 became apparent to all parts of the community that Green Valley was offering
13 something wonderful and offering something new, and it was going to add to
14 and create a new dynamic for the community that would be positive for the
15 entire community, not just for the Green Valley area. In fact, that is exactly
16 what has transpired over the last 20 years.

17 INTERVIEWER: I think one of the dynamics of Henderson is it's, you
18 know, pretty much a community. You know, it started around BMI and
19 everybody worked in the same plant. You know, Green Valley, I guess, when
20 it first happened was, outside of that original community, one of the first
21 things. How do you think the community aspects of Henderson and, you
22 know, the values that were in the, you know, I'm sure, the government and

1 the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce, how do you think that
2 translated into how Green Valley was developed?

3 MS. HUGHES: I think there was a very conscious, deliberate decision
4 made by the elected officials to encourage the development of a
5 family-oriented community. They had a lot of choices they could have made.
6 They could have decided to build industrial. They could have decided to
7 capitalize on a commercial component. They could have done a lot of things,
8 but what they did do was focus on a project that was family oriented.

9 One of the first things Green Valley did was build a school. That was a
10 real focal part. And we built a park next to the school. So it was an attempt
11 by Henderson, even in those early days, to focus on a family and, I think that,
12 certainly in the 20 years I've been here - - what I think has kept Henderson
13 Henderson in the good sense of that is the focus on family.

14 All of our master-planned communities are family-oriented
15 communities. They're built around parks. They're built around schools.
16 They're built with bike systems, trail systems. They're built in kid-friendly
17 ways, so that children can walk safely to and from their schools.

18 All of our park and rec facilities are family oriented - - and that's been
19 very deliberate over the years. And that is why, I think, that Henderson does
20 still have the family feel, the close feel, the small community feel, even though
21 we're not a small community by any means anymore.

22 INTERVIEWER: I'm going to make the assumption that you've been
23 involved in planning workshops or things outside the city of Henderson where

1 you've gone to conferences or things along those lines. What do you see
2 that's different about the city of Henderson, you know, as an American city,
3 than some other things that you might have witnessed.

4 MS. HUGHES: Well, actually, I moved to Henderson when I was 26
5 and prior to that I lived in many, many areas of the country. So, I think, when
6 I look back on my own life and growing up in different parts of the country,
7 what I see about Henderson that, perhaps, differs from any of the places I've
8 lived - - and I've lived in very small, rural areas all the way to very large cities.
9 So I've experienced a lot of what our country has to offer in terms of
10 environment - - living environment.

11 And what I think sets Henderson apart - - number one, what sets
12 Henderson apart is that we're new. We're celebrating our 50th, and obviously,
13 that's what this video is all about - - 50 years is new. It's very, very new for a
14 community in this, or any, country. So, quite a bit of what we have is new and
15 I think new, and clean and planned and organized - - I think those things have
16 all made our community strong.

17 We don't have the kind of urban blight and the problems that are
18 associated with that that many, many other communities have because we're
19 new. Everything is new. Even the older part of town at 50 years is very, very
20 new in terms of a typical community. We have new schools. We have new
21 parks. We have new roads. We have a new mall. We have new
22 entertainment centers. We have new restaurants. We have the best - -

1 absolutely the best - - of everything that a community would need, up to now,
2 a new college.

3 I think that was the one piece of the puzzle that was missing to make
4 Henderson a complete community. There's always been an emphasis on
5 education in this community, that in my opinion, surpasses the emphasis on
6 education, in other areas of town.

7 (A recess was taken to change the tape.)

8 INTERVIEWER: You were talking about the newness of Henderson, I
9 mean, in terms of things of new. I mean, what are some of the new things
10 over the last 20 years that have just popped up?

11 MS. HUGHES: Well, I can remember when I first started working at
12 the City, we were this very, very small one-story building, which was our city
13 hall. The only place you could go to lunch was the Pizza Hut. That was one
14 of the first things I remember being built on Boulder Highway. And I
15 remember how excited we all were when the first movie theater was built up
16 on Greenway. And that was a very big deal. Then I remember the first really
17 nice restaurant that was built in the Green Valley area and that was Renata's.
18 And the first athletic club, which back in those days, was called the Green
19 Valley Athletic Club.

20 And, of course, I think one of the - - the greatest commercial
21 evolutions was the mall. That completely changed the community. We no
22 longer had to leave Henderson for anything, really.

23 INTERVIEWER: What mall would that be?

1 MS. HUGHES: Galleria Mall.

2 INTERVIEWER: Did the Galleria Mall change the city of Henderson?

3 MS. HUGHES: The opening of the Galleria Mall marked a real
4 changing point, I think, in the city's history. From that point on, we really
5 didn't have to leave Henderson for anything. We had great shopping, great
6 restaurants, entertainment venues all conveniently located within our city.

7 I think it was a real psychological advantage to be able to live, work,
8 recreate, everything, all in Henderson. And I think that the opening of the
9 mall really signified the beginning of being the kind of complete community
10 that we are now today.

11 INTERVIEWER: And I'm sure that Leslie and Joan would love to hear
12 you say that.

13 MS. HUGHES: Well, they sure spent a lot of years to get the land
14 assembled and then to find the four cities to partners, then, of course, the
15 construction. They put their heart and soul into that project and it was a long
16 time coming.

17 INTERVIEWER: I mean, I guess, a lot of people, once they get to
18 Henderson, they just stay here. Why do you think that is?

19 MS. HUGHES: Well, I don't think there's anything lacking in the
20 community. The only thing that I have ever found lacking in this community is
21 an ocean. That's it, we've got absolutely everything else. I think that a
22 person, and a family, or a retired person get a lot here.

1 INTERVIEWER: In terms of your own personal history in the city of
2 Henderson. Any things that stand out as far as landmark events?

3 MS. HUGHES: Well, the landmark event in my life for the 20 years
4 that I've been here was the PEPCON explosion. I was eight months pregnant
5 with my middle child at the time that happened. My then three-year-old son
6 was home. It was a traumatic and terrifying day for everybody. But it was an
7 amazing day in terms of how the community came together. And the trauma
8 of that event unified this community in an extraordinary way and I don't think
9 it's ever changed.

10 INTERVIEWER: In terms of, you don't think it's ever changed in terms
11 of the unity of it?

12 MS. HUGHES: I think the unification of the community has remained
13 intact even though it was 14 years ago.

14 INTERVIEWER: What does it mean to live the American dream to
15 you?

16 MS. HUGHES: Well, I can give you a personal example. When I
17 arrived here, I was pretty fresh out of law school, burdened with student debts
18 that seemed astronomical at the time. I lived in an apartment for about two
19 years and then decided that I needed to move to Henderson. If I was going to
20 work in Henderson, I needed to move to Henderson for two reasons. One, it
21 wasn't easy to get out here 20 years ago. And two, it was obvious to me from
22 the very beginning that this was a special place, and I really wanted to live
23 here so I would have a better feel in my job for what the community was

1 about. So I was able to buy a house very early - - early in my life I was able
2 to own a house and raise a family.

3 My entire family has been born here. All three of my children were
4 born are being raised in Henderson and attending Henderson schools and
5 participating in Henderson soccer leagues, baseball leagues, swim teams.
6 And now I have a son in high school, graduating this year, getting ready to go
7 to college.

8 I have a daughter who's a freshman at a new high school, Coronado,
9 up in a brand new section of town that I'm very proud of because I worked for
10 years on the Anthem project and the annexation of land into the city of
11 Henderson in that part of town. And I can remember when the first project in
12 that area was proposed. It was miles from nowhere, but not very much
13 different than Green Valley was when it initially began being developed. It
14 was miles from nowhere. So I knew from past history that those miles would
15 develop quickly and close quickly and pretty soon everything would be
16 attached, all the communities one to another. And that is exactly what has
17 happened.

18 INTERVIEWER: You mentioned the annexation of Anthem, are there
19 any other annexations that come to mind over the last 20 years?

20 MS. HUGHES: Yeah. Oh, yes. We've had several major annexations
21 of - - I think one of the first ones I remember working on was the annexation
22 of what is now the property bounded by 215, Stephanie, Sunset and the
23 freeway. The entire area was a County island until it was annexed into the

1 city after PEPCON. And, of course, it came in as one large parcel, so we
2 were able to work with the developers and master plan the area. And now
3 that area contains commercial; it contains office; it contains single-family
4 housing, multifamily housing; it contains schools. It's got everything. And
5 what was important about that annexation is it brought together, literally
6 brought together, connected, literally, the older, original part of town with the
7 newer, Green Valley area of town. It was a giant chasm between the older
8 and the newer parts of town. As soon as that was brought into Henderson
9 and started developing, I think, a great change came over the community,
10 because there was not any more a feeling of new to old, us to them. I think it
11 became one entire community with the connection of those homes.

12 INTERVIEWER: What year was that? When did that happen?

13 MS. HUGHES: That would have been about 10 years ago, I think.

14 (Interviewer asked Ms. Hughes to restate her remarks.)

15 About years ago when we annexed the property bounded now by
16 Stephanie, 215, 95, and Sunset, it eliminated, literally eliminated, the chasm
17 that existed between the older part of town and the newer - - so called newer
18 part of town. And I think the community really became one at that time.

19 INTERVIEWER: Obviously, you have a unique perspective of growth.
20 Why is it important for the city of Henderson - - if you're talking out in the
21 viewing audience - - why is it important that the City continue to annex
22 property and to continue to grow?

1 MS. HUGHES: The issues of growth is really very interesting because
2 the people that are here now are largely the product of Henderson's growth,
3 but in some cases there's a feeling that we should stop growth and
4 concentrate on what we have and leave it alone. We're big enough. But, as
5 a practical matter, I think, most people don't understand and appreciate that
6 the way the laws are set up in the State of Nevada and the way the tax
7 distributions work to the communities back from the State, growth is an
8 important factor. Unless you keep growing, your tax revenues are adversely
9 impacted. And if that occurs, we won't be able to continue providing the kind
10 of quality services that we are providing to the people who are already here.
11 So there is an important need to, in an orderly, planned, fiscally-prudent way,
12 continue growing.

13 INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's also important - - I mean, I would
14 definitely say, like, you talked about the annexation of the County, that there's
15 definitely annexations that have been about rounding out the community, you
16 know, protecting your front door and being able - - you know, as you said
17 earlier, Henderson has been very much a family-planned community. Is part
18 of that growth and part of trying to acquire certain property really protecting
19 the heritage of Henderson?

20 MS. HUGHES: We have, through the years, been very aware that we
21 need to annex property on our borders, which are ever expanding. And the
22 reason for that, and the reason why that's very important to us, is because
23 Henderson has development standards, which are different from the

1 development standards in the County. And it's not meant as a criticism, by
2 any means, of the County, they have a different role than a city has in the
3 community. But because our development standards are more stringent than
4 theirs, we are able to better control growth, in terms of making sure the
5 roadways are appropriate, making sure the houses and communities are built
6 in ways so that their values will be retained. We're very concerned about
7 what uses go next to what uses. We try not to have - - and I think we've
8 succeeded very, very well in not having haphazard zoning decisions, so that
9 you have incompatible uses next to each other.

10 And it's been important to us to control the growth at our boundaries
11 because there are some examples of things that the County has approved
12 that we would not have. And we want to continue imposing these more
13 family-friendly design guidelines to the development as it occurs in our
14 community.

15 INTERVIEWER: In terms of looking forward, you know, into the future
16 of the city of Henderson, what do you think we have to look forward to in the
17 future development and growth in Henderson?

18 MS. HUGHES: I think we have an opportunity to continue growing and
19 to continue growing in an even more positive way than what we've
20 experienced in the last 20 years.

21 I think we have a new focus on education with the establishment of the
22 State College. And, while I realize that there are still some people in the
23 community that aren't 100 percent persuaded about the value of that college,

1 I think that in the next five to ten years, the value of that college to this
2 community, and, actually, to the entire community of the state, will be very,
3 very apparent. What I see happening, in terms of Henderson's future, is
4 continued growth. Continued growth past the Anthem area, past the Seven
5 Hills area. Naturally speaking, that is where the growth will be occurring.

6 What else I see happening, that I'm very excited about, is a
7 revitalization in our redevelopment of some of the older sections of town. I
8 think that because we are one town, I think that there's a sentiment in the
9 community to look to the older sections of town and see what can be done to
10 revitalize them and to be sure that the people who live in the older sections of
11 town have good roads, for example, have communities that are strong. We
12 don't want to experience any kind of decline and decay, and we're actively
13 making sure that that doesn't happen.

14 We've got some - - a very interesting infill projects on the books - -
15 which, I think, in future years will be exciting. We've got, for example, the
16 Landwell Company proposing the Provenance project, which will take
17 extremely contaminated, un-developable property and, literally, transform it
18 into another family-oriented community. It's going to take years, because the
19 environmental efforts are monumental. But it's going to be a project, at the
20 end of the day, which will serve as a model for other
21 environmentally-challenged property and communities throughout the
22 country. And I think it represents, again, us being on the cutting edge of
23 technology, in this case, and environmental technology and in planning.

1 I see a great future for the city of Henderson. I think the next 50 years
2 will be just as interesting, if not more so, than the last 50 have been.

3 INTERVIEWER: In terms of, like, some of the things, you know, that
4 people might not be aware of on - - not that's every goal, but what are two or
5 three goals that the City might have in the future planning over the next 10 or
6 15 years.

7 MS. HUGHES: One of our goals is to try to remain on the cutting
8 edge. We want to be able to be responsive to the needs of our community.
9 We want to make sure that everybody who lives in Henderson understands
10 that their City government, and the employees, and the elected officials in
11 their City government really, literally, and truly are here for them.

12 We want to be able to stay flexible so that we can respond to the
13 changing needs in the community. That's been one of our major strengths for
14 the last 20 years that I've, personally, observed is our ability to be flexible,
15 and our ability to be creative, and our ability to respond to the changing needs
16 of the community. And there's no disconnect between the citizens who live
17 here and the public servants that are here to serve them. We really feel a
18 strong connection to our - - and I think we, as government employees, feel
19 that way is because we're part of the community.

20 Most of us, if not the vast majority of us, live here. We're shopping at
21 our malls. Our children are attending our schools, playing in our parks. We
22 are part of the community. We're not just people that come, work ten hours a

1 day, and leave. We, actually, go home to our homes in our own community.
2 So we have large, large stake in the outcome of our growth and development.

3 INTERVIEWER: Have you been able to live the American dream in
4 Henderson?

5 MS. HUGHES: I have absolutely lived the American dream in
6 Henderson. I have owned a home. I've had three wonderful children. I've
7 participated in community activities such as Safe House Project. I have had a
8 wonderful job that has been changing for 20 years and is still changing and
9 it's exciting to come to work every day. Every day is exciting to come to work.
10 I've got everything. I've got absolutely everything a person could ever want.

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