

Henderson Memories:

**City of
Henderson
Living Histories**

CITY OF HENDERSON
LIVING HISTORY INTERVIEW
DUNDEE JONES
MARCH 20, 2003
PART 1

1 MR. JONES: My name is Dundee Jones and I'm a former Parks and
2 Recreation Director for the city of Henderson. I was here for 24 years, from
3 '73 to '97. I saw a lot of growth there. Right now, I'm retired and I'm tying flies
4 and wrapping fly rods and using them as much as I can.

5 INTERVIEWER: Do you still live in the city of Henderson?

6 MR. JONES: Oh, yes.

7 INTERVIEWER: Why?

8 MR. JONES: Well, we came from Southern California at the beach.
9 My wife's family has a house right on the beach in Hermosa Beach. So, why
10 do we need to move? We have the best of both worlds. We can live here
11 and visit there as often as we want to.

12 INTERVIEWER: Is that where you came from in 1973 when you came
13 to - -

14 MR. JONES: In '73 I came from the city of Las Vegas. I had been
15 there four years and 11 months.

16 INTERVIEWER: What was Henderson like in 1973?

17 MR. JONES: In 1973, there were a little over 17,000 people here,
18 according to the population sign coming up Pittman. And it was pretty barren
19 compared to what it is today. I don't think people can even imagine.

20 I remember we could count the number of houses on the north side of
21 Boulder Highway on our hand. That was pretty amazing at that time. And
22 then they built the high school over there, and with that, a lot of development
23 took place.

1 INTERVIEWER: When you came to the City of Henderson in '73, did
2 you come to work in the park and recreations area?

3 MR. JONES: Yes, I did. That's why I came here, to be the parks and
4 recreation director.

5 INTERVIEWER: So you came here as the director?

6 MR. JONES: Yes.

7 INTERVIEWER: How large was the department back in 1973?

8 MR. JONES: Oh, boy. When I came here, the staff, we had - - in fact,
9 I'll tell you, honestly, I did not know I was - - I was the first parks and
10 recreation director for the city of Henderson, and I didn't realize that. I just
11 figured I was replacing another one. But I was, actually, the first time the
12 parks had been combined with the recreation department here. And the staff,
13 I think, we had about five parks maintenance people and there were about
14 four recreation. And they were like - - they called themselves recreation
15 leaders, but they were really maintenance people. And they just kind of
16 supervised the facilities. We had a gymnasium and they just kind of kept that
17 clean and other things that they could do and supervised free play, basically,
18 is what that amounted to.

19 INTERVIEWER: And what constituted parks and recreation facilities at
20 that time? I mean, how many parks or about? It doesn't need to be exact.

21 MR. JONES: Okay. We had Morrell Park was the largest park at
22 about 15, 16 acres and we had Wells Park, a little three acre park. We had
23 the Youth Center Park up here, which was another two or three acre park.

1 Then we were using the Timet Field with incandescent lights for our adult
2 softball program. And we also used the Chrysler Field, which is over at the
3 Boys' and Girls' Club now. And that, again, had incandescent lighting. And
4 those were - - there were some nice experiences that went along with those
5 facilities.

6 We had the BMI pool and the Youth Center, and that was basically it.
7 The (inaudible) indoor pool - - a contract had been let to build that and I
8 remember there was a concrete strike that summer that I came here, and it
9 postponed that building by about two months while they settled the concrete
10 problems.

11 I was also on board to hire the architects to build O'Callaghan Park,
12 which was a 17-and-a-half-acre site, which would just about double the park
13 acreage the city had at that time.

14 INTERVIEWER: Did that happen?

15 MR. JONES: Oh, it certainly did. Yes, it did.

16 INTERVIEWER: When was O'Callaghan Park opened?

17 MR. JONES: I think it was about '79. We got two phases of funding
18 from the State from the Land, Water Conservation funds. And it took two
19 phases to build it, but we got her done. Had the governor out there to
20 dedicate it for us. Mike O'Callaghan was the governor at that time. And that
21 was a pretty exciting event.

1 INTERVIEWER: Henderson's obviously had tremendous growth over
2 the years and even being America's fastest-growing city. Do you think
3 Henderson considered parks important in their growth?

4 MR. JONES: I think they do now. I know in my first years - - I was
5 hired by Don Dawson, the City Manager at that time. And he and I got along
6 real well and we had some real difficult times convincing the Council in those
7 early years of the importance of parks and recreation at the time.

8 One of the first things we did, for lack of money, was enter into
9 joint-use agreements with the school district and develop an additional five
10 acres on the school sites so that we'd have school parks. So that added
11 grass to our inventory.

12 INTERVIEWER: Can you take us through the years? What were
13 some of the significant key developments in growth in the parks system? I
14 mean, O'Callaghan Park being one obviously.

15 MR. JONES: That was actually the first park we did. We only had
16 three elementary schools here when I came and we developed all three of
17 those as school parks. Many of those are well used today.

18 I have to give a lot of credit to a planning director that we had in those
19 early years in the '70s, Bob Gordon, who had come from California, where
20 they had adopted legislation that gave the cities, it was enabling legislation
21 that gave the cities the opportunity to require builders to donate land and/or
22 funds for parks, specifically. And with his support here, we got that on. And
23 that was a very major step in our development of the park systems here

1 because we began to get the developers - - and development was starting to
2 go pretty good then - - to start contributing land and some dollars for every
3 dwelling unit that they built. And that, along with the federal government's
4 Land and Water Conservation Act funds, which was derived from off-shore
5 drilling taxes, we were able to get our funds and combine them and come up
6 with enough dollars to do some things. And we might have done minimum
7 development at the time, but it was development, and it was a step forward.

8 We were very fortunate to have the city's support. And I took a survey
9 in the early years, and we had the SITA (phonetic) program which was a
10 federal program where they would, kind of, donate employees for you to use
11 as they were training to get a full-time job later. And we sent them around,
12 house to house and did a survey of the residents. And we got a real good
13 response. The response was so impressive that the state of Nevada took it
14 and used that as a model themselves for later examples.

15 INTERVIEWER: Probably one of the, I mean obviously the key
16 development in the city of Henderson was Green Valley master-planned
17 community. How did the Green Valley master-planned community impact the
18 park and recreations department?

19 MR. JONES: Well, if we hadn't of had the support out there of
20 Brad Nelson, we might have been in a real world of hurt. Because the
21 development was so extensive - - as you well know now, as we all know and
22 can see - - that if we hadn't have had their cooperation and the land-

1 dedication ordinance that we had adopted, it probably could have been a lot
2 less green as Green Valley is today, as we know it.

3 INTERVIEWER: Do you consider the outcome of Green Valley to be a
4 positive outcome in terms of parks and recreation for the city? Do you feel as
5 someone who has a lot of knowledge about parks - - if you compare
6 Henderson to other cities - - do we have a lower amount of parks, a higher
7 amount of parks?

8 MR. JONES: Yes and no. We have a higher amount of parks than
9 many and we have a lower amount of parks than some.

10 My goal was to adopt the National Recreation and Park Association
11 land standards and facility standards. And we had some difficulty through the
12 years getting that on. But we finally did that. And that was a standard that
13 said, for every 1,000 people there would be 10 acres of park land. And that
14 did not count private land, which would be like private golf courses, because
15 it's green and people like to try to use those. But it wasn't fair because a lot
16 of that was private and real expensive to use.

17 We were very fortunate and we became an exemplary city for our
18 parks and recreation lands and facilities and programs, not only throughout
19 Nevada - - not only throughout the County - - but Nevada and the United
20 States as well.

21 I like to remember that we had some of the first things happen in
22 Henderson that the County and the city of Las Vegas were able to follow
23 through with because of our examples. They could go back to their people

1 and convince them how much it was needed because they could see what we
2 had done.

3 INTERVIEWER: Could you give me an example of a couple of those?

4 MR. JONES: Oh. O'Callaghan Park, Arroyo Grande Sports Complex,
5 the indoor swimming pool - - we had the first, we had the first indoor
6 swimming pool in Southern Nevada outside of the university, in parks and
7 recreation anyway. And - - oh, we had some of the best lighted ball fields in
8 the state, in the southwest as far as that goes, in some cases -- but certainly
9 within the County here.