

Henderson Memories:

**City of
Henderson
Living Histories**

CITY OF HENDERSON
LIVING HISTORY INTERVIEW
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PART 2

1 INTERVIEWER: It sounds like you take a lot of pride in the park and
2 recreation facilities that Henderson has. If I was gonna ask you, do you take
3 pride in the park and recreation facilities, could you answer that and then tell
4 me why.

5 MR. JONES: Oh, absolutely. I take a lot of pride in the facilities that
6 the city of Henderson has for the citizens here in parks and recreation. One
7 of the things that is so interesting, I think we passed three bonds, but I keep
8 hearing people say we passed two bonds. But I think we had the citizens'
9 support three times. We did over \$76 million, I know, in bonds that we
10 passed, and it was a synergistic thing because I never believed in paper
11 tigers, so I never promised anything that I wasn't sure I could do. When we
12 promised the people we were going to do something, we did it. And the
13 people appreciated that and they reacted that the next time we asked for
14 funds, they came out and supported it. We had great support for people that
15 knew the value of parks and recreation in the programs and facilities that we
16 were offering because they saw how good they were and how good they were
17 for their community.

18 INTERVIEWER: When you think about Henderson, and you visualize
19 certain locations that are important to you, what do you see?

20 MR. JONES: What do I see when I think about the important things of
21 Henderson? It goes beyond parks and recreation, of course. Our city has had
22 award winning water treatment facilities, public works facilities, the fire
23 training facilities, police academy, things that have happened to improve the

1 quality of the services that our city offers. I just see a lot of the whole
2 spectrum of things for our city that are good when I think of the city of
3 Henderson. It goes beyond parks and recreation, although I am very, very
4 proud of the standards that we have set in parks and recreation.

5 INTERVIEWER: In moving away from just parks and recreation, you
6 know, just in terms of landmarks or significant places, what are the things that
7 come to mind when you visualize Henderson?

8 MR. JONES: Okay. I'll compare what comes to my mind today with
9 what used to come to mind. And it came to mind to many, many people that
10 passed through our city. When I would go to conferences and tell people I
11 was from Henderson, they'd say, where is that? And I would have to tell them
12 it's between Las Vegas and Boulder Dam. Oh, I remember that place. It had
13 all those rusty old buildings on the side of the road. Well, that was the BMI
14 complex. That has been greatly improved.

15 And what also I'm very proud of that I forgot to mention even at all
16 before, is we were in on the ground floor of Boulder Highway improvement.
17 That was just a big wide ditch when I came out here -- just dirt, no
18 landscaping or anything. And it happened that in some of the times that were
19 economically down for us, there happened to be a fellow passing through our
20 city on his way back to Utah - - a landscape architect - - he was just looking
21 for business and he dropped into my office and asked if there was anything
22 that he might do to help us.

1 And I says, well, you know, what about Boulder Highway? What about
2 taking a block, from one stop light to another, and just showing us what that
3 might look like. So he did. He went back and drew a beautiful picture for us,
4 and I had it in my office on an easel. When Gary Johnson, the Chamber of
5 Commerce director at that time, came in one day and we had a meeting. As
6 he was leaving, he saw that picture and he said what is this, and I told him.
7 He says, can I take this with me? And that was it. Gary Johnson took that
8 ball and ran and now we have the beautiful landscaped highway that we
9 deserve, I think.

10 INTERVIEWER: In terms of a positive experience in Henderson, one
11 of the sayings that we're coming up with for our 50th anniversary is "living the
12 American Dream". Do you think you've been able to live the American dream
13 in Henderson and if so, can you tell us how?

14 MR. JONES: I have been able to live the American dream, whatever
15 that really means. To me it has meant raising a family of four children in an
16 environment that I never ever was concerned about. I always felt safe. I
17 always felt secure. And I knew, I knew our police and fire chiefs and staffs,
18 and I knew the kind of work that they did. I knew their commitment. The
19 recreation facilities and the schools. Our schools have always been
20 exemplary, even before I came here. Teachers would try to come to
21 Henderson schools because the parents had always kept their children under
22 control much different than other parts of our valley.

1 If the American dream is to raise a family and just be as happy as you
2 can every day in your life - - I came to work every day to a job that I just
3 looked forward to, and that was wonderful. My wife worked here in the
4 schools for a while and then she moved to other schools out of Henderson
5 because she was on her way up. But it's been a very, very wonderful life, I
6 would say. And if that constitutes the American dream, I think we have
7 certainly lived that so far here.

8 INTERVIEWER: If you were traveling outside of Nevada and you were
9 just in some other city and someone was talking to you about, they wanted to
10 go find a place to live, and you said to them, you should really go look at
11 Henderson because - - what would you want to tell someone who'd never
12 heard about Henderson or had never been here? How would you describe
13 this city to them?

14 MR. JONES: Well, I would describe it as I have already stated. If I
15 was talking to people about encouraging them to look at the city of Henderson
16 to live - - and I just did that last night on the phone, by the way - - I would say
17 it's a safe city, it's a progressive city, it's a thriving city, it is a friendly city. I
18 mean, walk through the mall and you can say hello to people. I walk through
19 the City Hall - - well, that's not fair because I can do that anyway - - but it's
20 just a nice place to live.

21 I'll tell you one thing I was a little disappointed with is when we adopted
22 the slogan of "A place to call home" because I always thought it should be
23 called "A great place to call home".

1 INTERVIEWER: Any other people that you remember in your history
2 of Henderson that just kind of stood out in your mind?

3 MR. JONES: Father Caviglia at St. Peter's Church. And I'm not a
4 Catholic, I only went to the church for weddings. But he was a wonderful
5 parks and recreations supporter. A fine gentleman. He's officially now up in
6 the Ely area.

7 Gary Johnson, of course. Don Dawson - - I'll tell you, Bob Campbell
8 was a real, oh I'm not finished, Bob Campbell was a real instrumental city
9 manager for us here because he came on board at a time that - - we adopted
10 our parks and recreation construction tax twice in this city. It was adopted
11 once and a Council representative was elected later that came in and had it
12 repealed. And he even gave the money back that had been collected since it
13 was adopted the first time. And then we came back and had it adopted again
14 and it stuck. Bob Campbell was very, very helpful, especially in his
15 negotiations with the Green Valley American Corporation out there - -
16 American Nevada Corporation.

17 And Brad Nelson is their executive director. He was a wonderful man
18 to work with. It's been - - there's been other citizens - - Hal Smith has been a
19 great one to work with.

20 Oh, and I haven't even mentioned Harry Reid. Actually, I had played
21 baseball against Harry Reid in 1955 when he was playing for Basic and I was
22 playing for Mira Costa High School in Manhattan Beach, California. We came
23 here for the - - I think it was the quarter finals of the CIF playoffs and we

1 played at the old Burkholder - - it was Basic High School at that time and
2 there were no fences. It was a drop off. If the ball was hit as a homerun, the
3 outfielder just disappeared because the ball went over the cliff. They beat us
4 7 to 6 in that game.

5 Every time we've talked to Harry since then, Harry has people working
6 for him - - I mean, I have become good friends with people that were on that
7 team that we played against in 1955, and that's been an enjoyable part of my
8 American dream here. Knowing a - - not only a state - - well a governor and a
9 state senator before that even, but a national congressman, senator for us.
10 It's been a wonderful experience.

11 In the 1980s the city of Henderson was going through some really
12 challenging times and it was truly showing its dynamic side. And, I'll tell you, I
13 think one of the things that helped the city through - - and I know it helped
14 more than parks and recreation - - and that was the City Manager, Phil
15 Speight, when he came here.

16 Ever since he's been here, the City has been award winning in all of
17 the departments. And I can remember because I was never one to brag, so
18 to speak, and he called me into his office one time, and he says, did we get
19 these awards at the state conference? And I says, yeah. And he says, why
20 don't you tell people about that? Why don't you talk about that? I says, well
21 we just go around doing our business. I never thought about doing that. He
22 says you need to toot your own horn. And from then on, we started tooting

1 and he was tooting right along side us for parks and recreation, public works,
2 the water department. I mean everything just blossomed from that.

3 And today we have facilities that he's been around to help support and
4 the Council - - today's Council has just been marvelous. And without them, I
5 don't know if we would have the multigenerational facility out in Green Valley,
6 and the Promenade, and the water park and things like that that have come
7 since I have retired, even though there were 25 projects on the books when I
8 did retire.