

Henderson Memories:

**City of
Henderson
Living Histories**

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

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LIVING HISTORY VIDEO

CITY OF HENDERSON POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICE CHIEF MICHAEL MAYBERRY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY APRIL PARRA, CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

1 CHIEF MICHAEL MAYBERRY: I was born and raised in Las Vegas
2 and I first started on with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department in
3 1976'ish. And I was employed as a corrections officer in the jail, but I wanted
4 to get out on the street. And I had been a reserve in Henderson for a couple
5 of years and I was given the opportunity to test and, fortunately, was hired in
6 1978 to be a full-time police officer for the City of Henderson. So that's what
7 brought me to Henderson.

8 I had moved to Henderson prior to that, but that's what really brought
9 me here, the police department.

10 INTERVIEWER: Why did you move here?

11 CHIEF MAYBERRY: Because it was a nice little city. It was - - I
12 moved into a little house over on Federal Street and I lived with some of the
13 other policemen. I lived on (inaudible) Street and a number of other little
14 locations around the city. It was just a nice, small town. And you knew
15 everybody and it was just a place to be.

16 INTERVIEWER: So when you decided to move to Henderson, I mean,
17 did you see some differences in the city of Henderson and Las Vegas. I
18 mean, what did you see different in the city of Henderson?

19 CHIEF MAYBERRY: Having grown up in Las Vegas, when I first
20 moved to Henderson, everything was kind of new to me, everyone was kind
21 of new to me. But as I got to know the people, it was - - the atmosphere just
22 was a little friendlier and the people, we all seemed to take care of each other
23 a little better.

1 Prior to that, the only time I came out to Henderson was to beat them
2 in football or basketball or baseball.

3 INTERVIEWER: When you first came to Henderson as a police
4 officer, were you a beat cop?

5 CHIEF MAYBERRY: I was.

6 INTERVIEWER: Did you walk a beat?

7 CHIEF MAYBERRY: Well, I actually started - - my first job with the
8 police department was riding along with the other officers in the police car so
9 there would be two of us in the car. In those days, there wasn't a lot of
10 training. Once I got hired to be full time, then they put me with Officer Saiz
11 (phonetic) who many will remember - - the real old-timers in the town will
12 remember him. He spent three weeks not talking to me and then I just kind of
13 hit the street, and it was either swim or sink and, fortunately, I was able to
14 swim.

15 INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's a unique perspective, I mean, being
16 a beat cop in Henderson. I mean, just in seeing some of the changes, really,
17 in a very grassroots way?

18 CHIEF MAYBERRY: Well, I can tell you that in the 1950s when this
19 police department first started, when there was a call for service, a red light lit
20 up on the corner of Boulder Highway and Lake Mead and as you were driving
21 around in a police car, if you saw this red light, you would go and make a
22 phone call, then you would know where to go for that call.

1 That changed to the time when I hired on where we, actually, had
2 dispatch center that had one whole person in it who would take calls from the
3 citizens and everything. At the time it was probably 18 or 19,000 people. I
4 mean, that change was significant from the '50s. Well, from that time to
5 where we are today, the change has been even more striking.

6 I can remember a time when we patrolled the streets of Henderson
7 with three police officers and a sergeant. And sometimes if you had a
8 baseball team after a softball game, got intoxicated, got a little out of hand, all
9 three of us would go down and try to extricate them from one of the local
10 drinking establishments. So it was interesting at times.

11 It was a different, you know, it was a different caliber of town in those
12 days. It was a different caliber of people. Although we sometimes had to lay
13 hands on people to get them to move on, it wasn't - - we didn't face the kind
14 of dangers that we face now.

15 We had one dispatcher and at some point during your shift,
16 particularly, if you were the low man on the totem pole, you would have to
17 come in and replace the dispatcher. I can remember doing that and hoping
18 that the phone wouldn't ring. But if it was a police call and the phone rang,
19 you were all right. But if the fire alarm went off, big problems, because you
20 didn't know - - I wasn't sure, exactly, how to press the buttons for the fire
21 department. So I would just call the fire station on the phone, if we had a fire,
22 and say, I don't know how to wake you guys up, but we've got a fire and then
23 they would go.

1 So we've come from that type of atmosphere to where we are today,
2 which is one of the most technologically-advanced police departments in the
3 United States of America. So it has been quite a change.

4 INTERVIEWER: You talked about that change from the '50s to the
5 first dispatch. Any other benchmarks, you know, like, any one or two things
6 that happened in the last 20 years that are really significant?

7 CHIEF MAYBERRY: Well, I would say that for us in the police
8 department, there are a couple of events that kind of marked our careers.

9 The PEPCON explosion was one of them. It was a time where our
10 entire police department went to 12 hours on and 12 hours off. And we
11 mobilized and we were able to take care of the city at that time. But it was a
12 significant event for all of us. It was - - how to describe PEPCON - - let me
13 think here.

14 INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's something that helped bring the
15 community together in any way?

16 CHIEF MAYBERRY: I think that the PEPCON explosion - - I think that
17 it did a couple of things for Henderson. I think that it did help bring the
18 community together in some ways. But, for sure, it helped us, as a police
19 department, become better prepared to handle emergencies. Now, we took a
20 look at how we responded in that and - - you know, we did a good job and the
21 fire department did a wonderful job. But then we started making plans for
22 those types of events.

1 INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me some of the changes you've seen on
2 Water Street in the last 30 years. Let me rephrase that. In terms of when you
3 first came here, Water Street was the focal point of attention. The city has
4 grown a lot, we've annexed more land, it's Lake Las Vegas, it's Green Valley,
5 it's now Anthem. Take me through some of the changes and expansion from
6 your perspective of this nucleus on Water Street when you look at the red
7 light up on Boulder and Lake Mead to where we are today.

8 CHIEF MAYBERRY: I, certainly, remember a time when Water Street
9 was the focal point of this city. In many ways, it still is, to some degree. In
10 the '80s and early '90s, we saw, in the police department, the building of the
11 emergency services building and jail facility, which is on Water Street. But,
12 we've also seen this tremendous growth of the city.

13 I'll say that it is the fastest-growing city in the United States for the
14 entire decade of the '90s. And we've seen this where our eastern border has
15 gone as far as Lake Las Vegas, and our western border is still continuing
16 around the mountain in areas, where I will tell you, you used to be able to
17 drive a police car and you would not see another car. The only thing that you
18 would see when you took State Route 146 or Lake Mead - - back in the days
19 when I was on the street - - was a coyote as they would cross the road and
20 you were headed out that way.

21 I can remember times when - - I remember one time we had a snow
22 storm. I think it was in the last '70s. And I was sent out to Lake Mead to see
23 if that road was open to the freeway and there was not a car on the road from

1 Henderson to I-15. And I got about three-quarters of the way out there in my
2 police car and had to - - I realized the snow was getting too deep and I wasn't
3 going to make it back if I didn't turn around. I just barely made it back into the
4 city. And so, we, of course, took that snow storm very seriously and went
5 over on Sunset Road - - I heard, you know, I didn't, personally, participate in
6 any of this - - but I heard that they, you know, did brodies and spins and all
7 kinds of stuff with the police cars in the snow. It was quite a fun time. But all
8 of the eastern part of the city - - what we called Pittman - - was just covered
9 with snow and just looked like a beautiful little old country town.

10 INTERVIEWER: In terms of living in Henderson, are you proud to call
11 yourself a Henderson resident and, if so, why?

12 CHIEF MAYBERRY: You know, there's been an interesting transition
13 that we have gone through in Henderson. When I first came to Henderson,
14 my brother worked for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and I
15 left the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department - - what was then - -
16 actually - - I should start that over.

17 When I first came to Henderson, I had left the Las Vegas Metropolitan
18 Police Department to come here and my brother worked for - - and still works
19 for - - Metro. And he would say things to me like, Did Ma Barker's chickens
20 get out today? And did you catch them? And everyone kind of - - they would
21 kind of look down on you a little bit because you lived and worked in
22 Henderson.

1 But we've seen this transition where Henderson has become the
2 premier community in the valley. Now my brother's begging me to hire him.
3 He wants to come out - - and all his friends, they want to come out - - and
4 work for the Henderson Police Department. People from all over this country
5 want to come here, live here, work here, and be a part of this wonderful
6 community.

7 INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that is?

8 CHIEF MAYBERRY: You know, I think it's a combination of things. I
9 think that the - - let me see if I can say this properly without sounding like too
10 much of a, you know - -

11 (A brief recess was taken.)

12 INTERVIEWER: Tell us why you're proud to be a Henderson resident.

13 CHIEF MAYBERRY: In any event, we've seen this amazing transition
14 between the way Henderson was thought of and the way it's thought of today.
15 It is the premier community in Southern Nevada and - - for that matter - - the
16 state of Nevada, and one of the premier communities in the entire United
17 States. But I think that's been a function of our elected officials, and city
18 management being smart about the way we've grown, and master planning,
19 and just a number of things. I know the police department is involved in the
20 planning of future master-planned communities.

21 INTERVIEWER: What role does the police department play in helping
22 to plan new master-planned communities?

1 CHIEF MAYBERRY: Absolutely none. Did I say that? We, actually,
2 started sometime back working with the planning department and what we do
3 is crime prevention through - - did you see that spit fly out when I did that?

4 Let me start that over again. How did I start that?

5 INTERVIEWER: We started working with the planning department.

6 CHIEF MAYBERRY: Some years ago, the police department started
7 working with Community Development and using Crime Prevention Through
8 Environmental Design. I have an officer who I sent to training who, actually,
9 sits down and looks at the plans of these new master-planned communities.
10 And they talk about landscaping, and lighting, and how the streets should be
11 and - -

12 INTERVIEWER: In terms of what a developer has plans for a new
13 master planned community, what impact do you have on those plans?

14 CHIEF MAYBERRY: I, actually, have an officer who sits in with the
15 planners and looks at the plan from the developer. We take a look at the - -
16 everything from the widths of the streets to what type of lighting, landscaping,
17 and those types of things that we can control, environmentally, to make this a
18 safe community.

19 There are communities all across America, with a population similar to
20 ours, who would die for the type of low-crime statistics that we have here.
21 And I really believe a lot of that has been due to the leadership of this city and
22 just good planning.

1 INTERVIEWER: If I'm someone new who moved in to Henderson
2 today, in terms of some little story or some person in the history of
3 Henderson, what one story would you really want me to know about the
4 history of Henderson. And I'm not talking about a big thing, like, we annexed
5 100 acres. I'm talking about, there was this guy (inaudible) - - or, you know.
6 What's something I should know about.

7 CHIEF MAYBERRY: Should I tell him about Alfredo? No.

8 Alfredo was a guy who got ran over by a car on the Boulder Highway
9 about once every three weeks. But somehow he always lived through it. I
10 could - - one time he was even crawling - - because he was always drunk.

11 Let me think. One guy. One story.

12 INTERVIEWER: In terms of - - changing subjects. In terms of living
13 the American dream, do you think you've been able to live the American
14 dream in Henderson?

15 CHIEF MAYBERRY: I have been able to live the American dream in
16 Henderson and more.

17 I can remember growing up in a small house. My dad died when I was
18 young. And I always had this dream of, you know, some day succeeding in
19 my career, and having a nice house, and a wife, and children, and dogs, and
20 the whole thing. And I can tell you, I started small. Early on with the police
21 department, living in the townsite area in these small houses that were built
22 back in the '40s and the '50s for the war effort, and then sold one of those
23 houses and moved to a little bigger house in a newer part of the city - - that is

1 now an old part of the city. And, slowly, as I made my way up through the
2 ranks on the police department, I was able to upgrade in housing and then I
3 married and have a family, and have children, and 3 chihuahuas and live in a
4 beautiful home in our western area command or in the western part of the
5 city. I've truly been blessed.

6 This city helped me with my education. I have a degree and a great
7 job and a lot of good friends and memories that I will always cherish.

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