

Henderson Memories:

City of
Henderson
Living Histories

CITY OF HENDERSON
LIVING HISTORY INTERVIEW
CITY MANAGER PHIL SPEIGHT
MARCH 20, 2003
PART 2

1 INTERVIEWER: You know, we were just talking about some of the
2 growth in the '90s and then we talked about Stephanie Street and Sunset
3 Station. Anything else that comes to mind - - just in terms of, you know,
4 speaking to the current Henderson residents, what they should be aware of?

5 MR. SPEIGHT: As it relates to growth?

6 INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

7 MR. SPEIGHT: I think that anytime you drive around this
8 community - - I think that people need to get out as often as possible, just to
9 drive around because there's something new all the time. You know, you go
10 by one location one week and three weeks later you go by and it's changed,
11 significantly changed. And I think there's still more to come and I think there's
12 a lot of amenities that will continue to arrive and it will be good for all the
13 residents of Henderson - - new and old. And we'll continue to see new
14 people come in.

15 The city doesn't create growth, we respond to it. And I think that we
16 responded in a very, very good way that will benefit every resident we have,
17 irrespective of whether they've been here 50 years or whether they've been
18 here five minutes.

19 INTERVIEWER: What do you think some of the challenges are that
20 the city has faced that they've had to respond to and overcome?

21 MR. SPEIGHT: Well, I think that having adequate facilities, as far as,
22 places for our employees to work, places for our customers to come to, to
23 provide opportunities for residents not to have to come all the way down to

1 Water Street to do business. And I think we responded to those. You know,
2 we built satellite facilities where people can go and pay their bills and they
3 can also go to recreation facilities without having to come into town or
4 downtown. And they can go see a police officer now without having to come
5 here. So I think there's a lot of different things that we've done to respond to
6 those types of growth issues.

7 On the other hand, I think that there're some things that we're still
8 working on. You know, our transportation system is probably not what it
9 should be and we're continuing to work with the state and federal
10 governments in an effort to improve that transportation system, whether it be
11 improved highways and roadways and also improved bikeways and trails and
12 looking at light rail as an option as well. So I think that's something the mayor
13 and council want to see happen, and we're kind of becoming a mature
14 community and a mature region, and I think that we'll see those kinds of
15 facilities start to occur in the very near future.

16 INTERVIEWER: If you were going to start a response by saying,
17 growth creates, you know, strain on a community and we've responded to
18 that or something along those lines, how would you say Henderson has
19 responded to growth?

20 MR. SPEIGHT: Well, I think that Henderson has responded very well.
21 Once again, I think that we have had to respond to growth. We're not out
22 there creating it. It's created by others. And we're expected, then, to provide
23 services to those new residents that we have. And I think that over time

1 we've been able to come up with ways that are effective and efficient to
2 provide adequate services. I think that we have a premier fire service, a
3 premier police service, parks and recreation departments, I mean, these
4 people and this group of employees are able to put together some services
5 that are really not equaled in a lot of other communities.

6 INTERVIEWER: In terms of living the American dream, do you think
7 Henderson is a city that allows people to live the American dream?

8 MR. SPEIGHT: I think that we have, over the years, been able to
9 provide opportunities for people to live the American dream, assuming the
10 American dream would be, I'd like to have some freedoms. I'd like to be able
11 to go places that I want to go. I'd like to be able to own my own home. I think
12 that those things have been provided. I think that we have the capability now
13 to be a full-service community. I mean, you really don't need to leave the
14 corporate limits of the city of Henderson to do anything anymore. I think that
15 we have it all here. And I think that really kind of equates to living the
16 American dream.

17 I think there's other things that you could say are part of that American
18 dream that we maybe don't provide, but we're working on those. So, I think
19 that there are opportunities for people to have a very nice place to live and
20 play and work and all of those things that you would look at as kind of
21 fulfilling.

22 INTERVIEWER: Getting to the really strong sense of community that
23 exists in Henderson, I mean, it is a very tight-knit community and probably a

1 lot of that comes out of the newness of the community and that it has grown
2 up, you know, together. Do you think that provides a unique atmosphere for
3 people to live the American dream? I mean, in terms of, instead of just living
4 anywhere, to live in that type of a community?

5 MR. SPEIGHT: I think that you have opportunities here, perhaps, that
6 you may not have in other areas. You know, it's a very safe community. It's
7 a very small-feeling community. I think that we still have people who go to the
8 parks and picnic and have community activities and they're very, very
9 involved in those types of activities. And I don't think we've, you know, made
10 this such a big, big place that people feel alienated. And I think that we have,
11 you know, our elected folks as well as the developers to thank for that in that
12 they've looked at building the type of amenities that make it conducive for
13 people to go to the town center and congregate and spend time together, or
14 libraries and recreation facilities and all those things really are kind of
15 conducive to family orientation and making you feel very at home.

16 Our slogan is "A place to call home" and I think that we strive to try to
17 make that feeling one that is accepted by everybody.

18 INTERVIEWER: You know, part of what we're doing is for the 50-year
19 anniversary. We're celebrating 50 years of Henderson. What would you
20 say - - again, this could be very repetitive. It doesn't need to be new
21 information. What do you think Henderson is celebrating?

22 MR. SPEIGHT: I think Henderson is celebrating 50 years of life. I
23 mean, when you look back on this community, it has gone through very

1 similar stages to what we go through as people. I mean, it began in its
2 infancy, prior to becoming a city, as a company town. That is a very
3 deep-rooted sense of heritage for this community. And I think that you feel
4 that when you come down to Water Street.

5 I think you get that sense of this community started as a company town
6 as part of a war effort. And the things that we've enjoyed over the years have
7 really been because of the way this community kind of got its start. We've
8 seen it mature and at times we were looked at as the teenager, and we were
9 looked at as the rebellious teen as we were moving through our maturing
10 time. And now, I think, we've reached that point where we're kind of middle
11 aged and we're looking at things in a more sedate manner. We're not
12 charging ahead like we used to. We're kind of responding more to things
13 easier because we've probably already gone through some of those phases.

14 So, I think we've reached a point of maturation that we're a lot easier
15 going, and there's an easier feel about it. It's not as frenzied anymore. And I
16 think that makes everybody kind of take a deep breath and a sigh and say,
17 this is good. It's a great place to work.

18 (A brief recess was taken.)

19 MR. SPEIGHT: Is there anything that I want to talk about? No, I think
20 that this community, over the period of time that I've been here, has been
21 such an exciting place to be and a great place to be involved in. You've seen
22 some things happen that occurred that really make you proud. You have an
23 ability to kind of look around and people have come from places throughout

1 the United States to see how things are done in Henderson. And nothing, I
2 think, gives you that, perhaps, accreditation than for people to say, you know,
3 we want to be like you and we want to use you as an example. I guess that's
4 the highest form of flattery and I think that that's something that really kind of
5 gives you a very good feeling. And nobody, in my opinion, frankly, does the
6 work of municipal government better than this group of elected officials and
7 this group of employees.

8 INTERVIEWER: In terms of some of those developments, are there
9 any key events that you haven't talked about that come to mind?

10 MR. SPEIGHT: Well, I think that there are some, you know,
11 negotiating the Southern Nevada Water agreements was a very, very big deal
12 for us. We would not be in the position that we are today had we not been
13 successful in all coming together and dealing with the water issue for
14 Southern Nevada. I think that there were some detractors, but overall it's
15 worked to our benefit. I think that as we saw ourselves grow over 100,000
16 people, of course, the commercial establishments came in and that started to
17 send us on a new direction.

18 And I think that in the late '90s - - by late '90s I mean '96, '97 - - we
19 started to see the city of Henderson really mature and take its rightful place in
20 the region and the state.

21 I think that nowadays people look at the city of Henderson as a leader.
22 They want to know what our position is on certain issues as it affects the
23 region. We want to participate in the dialog with the state and we're really

1 kind of being paid attention to. And I think that that's something different
2 that's occurred over the last few years.

3 (A recess was taken to change the tape)

4 INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me about the Pavilion?

5 MR. SPEIGHT: Yeah. The Henderson Pavilion or Liberty Pointe as
6 it's called, I think, was the crown jewel for all of the parks and recreation
7 facilities in this community. It was something that we worked on over a good
8 number of years in an effort to make something that would be, kind of, the
9 finishing touch of a bond issue that was originally passed in 1989. And over
10 the years, we have built many, many facilities with that money, but I think that
11 that was viewed as one of the facilities that would provide opportunities both
12 for arts and also for active recreation. And it was a combination of passive
13 recreation as well as active recreation with the multigenerational facility and
14 the pavilion located on the same site along with a library.