

Henderson Memories:

**City of
Henderson
Living Histories**

CITY OF HENDERSON
LIVING HISTORY INTERVIEW
CITY MANAGER PHIL SPEIGHT
MARCH 20, 2003
PART 3

1 INTERVIEWER: For someone who doesn't live in Henderson, if you
2 were going to describe the pavilion and what it was, how would you describe
3 it?

4 MR. SPEIGHT: The Pavilion is the largest outdoor amphitheater in the
5 state of Nevada. It has approximately 7,000 seats when you count both fixed
6 seating and the lawn seating. It is a facility which is utilized for all types of
7 cultural activities: plays, concerts, and bands, and you can basically use it for
8 anything. It has a very functional stage, allows you to utilize an orchestra pit
9 or cover the orchestra pit and use it as an extended stage. So it's a great
10 facility for those kinds of events.

11 INTERVIEWER: Can you think of some recent or any special events
12 that have been held over there that are memorable to you?

13 MR. SPEIGHT: We opened it in the fall of last year, and the first event
14 was a concert and opera put on by the Southern Nevada Opera Company
15 and the Southern Nevada Symphony. And the following evening we had Lee
16 Greenwood doing a concert. That was basically the opening and the closing
17 for the season of that facility. Just last weekend we started the new season
18 and had the jazz group The Yellowjackets and about every 3 weeks or 4
19 weeks now we'll have different functions at that facility -- including we'll have
20 Mark Twain there with Hal Holbrook during our birthday celebration.

21 INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what was on that site before the
22 Pavilion was there?

1 MR. SPEIGHT: It was vacant land. It was provided to us by American
2 Nevada Corporation and that was to be utilized, the entire parcel was utilized
3 for not only utility facilities and reservoirs but also the library and the multi-gen
4 facility, the Pavilion, and the police sub-station.

5 INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us a little bit about Lake Las Vegas and
6 Lake Adair? I don't understand the connection...

7 MR. SPEIGHT: Originally, Lake Las Vegas as we know it today was
8 owned by a gentleman named Carleton Adair, and the National Park Service
9 wanted to ensure that no one individual owned land within the park boundary.
10 Mr. Adair owned land and they ended up giving him a large parcel of property
11 just outside the park boundary, which then was Lake Adair. He was unable to
12 put all of it together to start development. Transcontinental Properties came
13 into this community in 1989 and through a fairly arduous process of permits
14 and approvals was able to initiate Lake Las Vegas. Lake Las Vegas had
15 approximately one and half billion dollars in the ground before you started to
16 see anything come out in vertical construction. And by that I mean the dam
17 and the lake and all of the infrastructure and facilities that made that up, you
18 really couldn't see because it was all buried. But now you see Lake Las
19 Vegas as it is. It was very difficult for me in the beginning to visualize what
20 that development was going to look like because when you go out there in the
21 very beginning and look at the desert and they would say this is a golf course,
22 this is a hotel, this is where the lake's going to be, this is up-scale homes, I
23 just didn't have that ability to conceptualize what the entire project was going

1 to look like. Now when you go out there I think it's one of the premier resort
2 destinations in the world.

3 INTERVIEWER: Do you think Lake Las Vegas was important to the
4 city of Henderson?

5 MR. SPEIGHT: I think Lake Las Vegas was very important to the city
6 of Henderson. I think that there was in the beginning some issues that
7 concerned us, and we worked through them. I think that we're now very good
8 public-private partners in working on that development. There's a lot of
9 processes that we still work with the Lake Project on. We're looking at
10 improving Lake Mead Drive out to the project together with working with the
11 state and the federal government. We're looking at continually working with
12 BLM on getting them additional property. So there's a number of different
13 activities that we're kind of intertwined still, and we work very closely with that
14 development team out there.

15 INTERVIEWER: Would you say that there was a change in the way the
16 city looked at Lake Las Vegas where at first it was a big developer coming in
17 with some grandiose plans and not really understanding it but then I guess
18 working with the city and maintaining some of those family-oriented values in
19 planning and everything else that it actually turned out to be something
20 special?

21 MR. SPEIGHT: Well, I think that the developer and the city have
22 always had a pretty good working relationship. I think that there's times when
23 in the best interest of the community, you have to take a stand, and we have

1 done that at various times. On the other hand, the developer is trying to
2 ensure that he gets the highest development dollar out of the project as
3 possible. So I think that not always are you going to be able to work in
4 concert, but there's never been a time when we have been so adversarial that
5 it has not been to the benefit of the community. And I think over time, that
6 development will continue to grow and develop and become even better than
7 it is today if some people were to say that's possible.

8 INTERVIEWER: In terms of thinking about the annexations and the
9 growth of the city, you know a lot of people might say you're looking at a lot of
10 these little islands. You know, you're looking at Anthem as an island and
11 Green Valley as an island and Lake Las Vegas as an island, do you think you
12 see them as islands or do you see them as part of a cooperative city and
13 why?

14 MR. SPEIGHT: Well, I think that you have to look at them as part of the
15 community. I don't see Lake Las Vegas any differently than I see Water
16 Street, and I don't see Anthem any differently than I would see the River
17 Mountain subdivisions as different. They're all part of the city of Henderson. I
18 think that the way people feel about those communities really just kind of
19 develops over time, and the people that live in the downtown area are just as
20 important to this community as the people that live at Lake Las Vegas. I think
21 that we can never forget where we came from, and we need to ensure that
22 the amenities that are throughout this community remain throughout this
23 community. We cannot place ourselves in the position of only favoring one

1 geographic location of this city because if one part of this community starts to
2 go down in quality, it'll affect every part of this city. So I think to ensure that
3 we're all on the same playing field, so to speak, we need to ensure that over
4 time no portion of this community is neglected.

5 INTERVIEWER: Kind of taking that same idea of boundaries, you
6 know, Anthem and Lake Las Vegas from a different perspective, you know, if
7 you were describing the city of Henderson to someone and say you know, at
8 one time, the city of Henderson was just the area around the BMI factory, the
9 plant town that grew up, and over years we've grown, and we've gone from
10 16,000, or I guess originally, 6,000 people in 1950 to 200,000 people now --
11 and in a descriptive way, saying what is the city of Henderson today, you
12 know, in terms of geography? Can you tell us a little bit about the growth of
13 Henderson from 1953 to now?

14 MR. SPEIGHT: Well, when it was first incorporated the city of
15 Henderson had about 6,000 people. I think that it increased over the years at
16 a very slow rate. And it was primarily a community that was a town where
17 people lived but didn't work. And probably almost 100% of the individuals who
18 lived in this community would migrate into what we would consider the greater
19 Las Vegas area to work, except for those individuals who either worked at the
20 plants or had some job in the commercial activity in the downtown corridor.
21 And I think over time we have been in a position of striving to have more
22 people live in this community as well as work in this community. One of the
23 goals that we had in the early 90s was to increase the number of individuals

1 that didn't have to leave this community to go to work. And we went from
2 about 11% at that time to now we're almost 30% of our population actually
3 works in the city of Henderson and lives in the city of Henderson. So we're
4 starting to see Henderson turn from a bedroom community into a fairly
5 diverse economic center.

6 INTERVIEWER: When I think of Henderson I think of Water Street.
7 How would you correct me in that and say Henderson is a lot more than
8 Water Street, it's -- what is Henderson?

9 MR. SPEIGHT: I think Henderson is quite a bit more than Water Street
10 although I think that Water Street is kind of the heart of this community, for a
11 lot of different reasons, but I think that one of the things that we can never
12 forget is this is where we came from. Now when you look at Henderson and
13 say, what is it all about? I think it's a place that you can say is very
14 comfortable. It's a place where you can work and live and play and do all
15 those kinds of things and shop and that, but it's also the home to very high-
16 end commercial properties. It's the home to very high-end residential
17 properties, and it has all the amenities and all the things that work. If you were
18 to take the city of Henderson and set it in a location that was 300 miles from
19 its nearest neighbor it could sustain itself. I don't think there's a whole lot of
20 communities that you could say that about. I think that we are the only full-
21 service community in Southern Nevada, and I think that if, we would have no
22 fear of taking these 200,000 people, plopping us in the middle of the Sahara
23 Desert, for example, with enough water, and saying, you gotta make it on

- 1 your own, with all the amenities and attractions that we have, we could do
- 2 that.