

TEMPE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
Tempe Historical Museum  
809 E. Southern Avenue  
Tempe, AZ 85282

Project Director:  
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Narrator: PATRICIA A. HATTON

Interviewer: LISA K. MILLER

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MILLER: This is Lisa Karen Miller for the Tempe Historical

Museum Oral History Project. Today is Wednesday, January 31, 2001, and we are in the home of Pat Hatton.

Pat, could you give us a little background about yourself to start with?

HATTON: I am originally from Columbus, Ohio, and I went to Ohio State University. I have a bachelor's degree from the School of Social Work at that university with a group work major. This does not qualify you as a social worker with a master's degree, but I graduated in 1950 and at that point in time an undergraduate degree was really a sufficient education for the kind of work that I was doing in my early career. I worked primarily in youth serving agencies, was executive director for Camp Fire Girls in Columbus. My first job was a settlement house in East Los Angeles in the Mexican community. I worked for the YWCA, and that's what brought me to Phoenix. My brother was living here, and I worked in the early '50s a lot, which was down on Monroe right off 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. I met my husband here, and he was also from Ohio. He was in the military. We ended up going back to Ohio, and he went to the university there, and then he came back to Arizona and eventually finished his degree.

Anyway, we were here in the '50s. Then we came back in 1964 and moved to Tempe. We have three children who are now in their 30s and 40s, and we have four grandchildren. We have lived in this same house ever since 1964. When we came to Tempe, this was the last subdivision south, so the freeway didn't come through.

There were cotton fields all around us. Compared to a lot of Tempeans who are natives, this is fairly recent history, but I never would have dreamed we would have this much growth in the time that we've been here.

MILLER: Besides the City Council, what other Tempe social organizations do you belong to or have you belonged to here?

HATTON: I have left a resume here for you which includes the organizations that I did belong to and do belong to. When we first came, one of the great things about this community is we have neighborhood schools, and so you could volunteer and be a part of your school when your children were in elementary school and junior high school, and I did that. I was a member of the League of Women Voters early on. Another organization that was very strong in the Valley was called Parents Study. It was organized out of the Phoenix College system using volunteers to set up the program, find a place for it. The classes were set up for mothers that attended a class for the age of child or children that they have. Eventually I was chairman for that in the Tempe area.

I also was involved in two or three people's campaigns who ran for mayor or Council and worked on those campaigns. Once I went on the City Council, it was kind of an interesting thing. Dottie Nelson was the first woman, and then Bev Hermon. Bev was still on the Council when I was elected to the Council. And then there was a period when she left and I was the only

woman on the Council. Then Carol Smith and Barbara Sherman came after that. But it was kind of interesting. The men always seemed to have more attention by the press to get called and be quoted more than some of the women, so I felt it was important to involve myself in as many civic organizations as possible in order to have a woman's influence and to become a force in the community. It was an interesting time. I was elected in 1976 and served for 16 years, and at the time that I ran the first time, there was a lot of emphasis nationwide about women running for political office. There was quite a push. One of the lucky things for me in my first election was that there was not another woman running, and so you did pick up a significant number of votes from women who thought there should be women involved in the community.

MILLER: What do you think it was that caused you to get involved in local politics?

HATTON: Well, I had always been kind of fascinated with the whole political process. I had been a member of the League of Women Voters in Ohio and then in Tempe when we came here. Just by association, people I knew, I got involved in their campaign. I was involved with the Republican women's organization before I ran, and someone suggested that I might consider [running]. I always think back and laugh because at the time I thought I wasn't ready. My youngest child was in junior high school at that point, and my daughter and son were in high school. Then the more I thought about it I thought, well, maybe I will. Actually it was on

my birthday, which is in the first part of January, that I went to City Hall and picked up a nominating petition that first time. I can remember riding up in the elevator, going to the clerk's office and picking up the papers and almost running back to the elevator because I felt quite uncertain. I've always thought about what I was thinking about when I went up and down that elevator. Over the years I did many, many, many times. It was a challenge. When I look at the list of all the people who run for elective office in Tempe, I am always amazed because I did get elected the first time I tried, which is pretty amazing.

MILLER: What is it that you count as your greatest achievement, either personally or professionally?

HATTON: Probably serving on the City Council, and raising a family of very great kids that we have been proud of.

MILLER: Do you think they developed any interest in politics as a result of your service?

HATTON: I think so. A funny thing happened. My youngest daughter was helping me up in north Tempe pass out brochures and going door-to-door when I ran the first time. She was just in junior high school. It was really funny. There was a woman by the name of Dee Hershberger, and she was quite an activist in that community. So, when I knocked on her door, she wanted me to come in and she wanted to talk to me. I go in, and I am talking, and my daughter is with a friend going up and down handing out brochures, and they

didn't know what happened to me. They were really worried. Finally we finished our conversation and I got out of there and went searching for my daughter and her friend. We have laughed about that a long time since then.

MILLER: At that time, of course, you probably didn't have any qualms about letting your teen go up and down the street and knock on doors.

HATTON: No, it was so much safer. My family did help me with the campaigns. There are a lot of unpleasant tasks. You had to have somebody put up those wonderful signs and you did a lot of walking in the community.

MILLER: So they were understanding about the hours you had to spend?

HATTON: They were always very supportive.

MILLER: Do you feel that you and the other women who have served on the Council, and there have been six of you in the history, right?

HATTON: There was Dottie Nelson, Bev Hermon, myself, Barbara Sherman, Carol Smith, and now Barb Carter. Six.

MILLER: Do you think that the women made some unique and separate contributions? Do you think that they added something that perhaps a man could not have?

HATTON: I have always been bothered a bit by that whole

business of people saying, Well, you should vote for her [just] because she's a woman. You also want a woman who brings something to the table, who has some background that will benefit the community and will serve the community. When I look at all of the women who have served, each one had different talents and different interests. Dottie Nelson's husband had been a city manager. You've already interviewed her?

MILLER: No, but we hope to soon.

HATTON: She had a real strong involvement with the community because of him. Bev was always involved strongly in Republic politics. Carol Smith has a strong involvement with Federated Women's Clubs. I served on the Council and the Maricopa Association of Governments Human Resources and Social Services Committees, and because of my background in that field, I felt it was a good area for me to be involved. As you look at your community and the needs, I think the things you know the most about are the ones sometimes that you do work on. One of the things I feel really good about is that I helped facilitate the city in bringing together the Tempe Community Council as an agent to review requests of the city for monies to run all those special needs that we have. They now are an oversight group, and they use citizens who sit on that community who are volunteers. But they look at all the requests for funding that come to Tempe. That list has grown in the amount of money that they support. It's a much fairer system than what we had in place before because then it was just an emotional appeal of [unintelligible] and

how you could get through the process to get money for your agency. This group was very thorough through the Tempe Community Council. They look at budgets, and they look at staffing and the role that's being done and what's needed.

For instance, now they are bringing to the city the request for more services for the homeless. It's interesting because in the papers in the last couple of years there has been criticism that we did not have a homeless shelter on the east side and that we didn't do certain other things. But, in the beginning, Valley-wide, it was tough to get the money from all the communities to fund that shelter that's in central Phoenix. I was chairman of that committee at that point in time, called MAG, and we really worked hard to just get all the individual cities to put money in the pot to fund that first shelter and the services that go along with that shelter because you've got to have a health component, you've got to have an employment component, and mental health. It isn't just a matter of having a place for the people to sleep. You've got to do all those other things. So, I think probably my involvement with the social services is one of my strong interests.

The other thing that I feel that Tempe has done such a good job on is the whole development of the downtown. When we came in 1964, that whole area was decaying, the buildings were run down, and the businesses were not very successful. That redevelopment project for the downtown took literally about 25 years. It is



interesting that now you hear from the news media and read in the paper that Tempe is the only community that has a downtown that's vibrant. We're the only ones that have done this, and this, and this. But it took a long time, and it was always a difficult process. It continues to be that today. We had some horrendous public hearings in the early years because there were people in some old buildings with very cheap rents. They didn't want to be moved. Some people didn't want to give up their property, and the only way you can do the job that's been done is condemnation. That's a painful process. People are paid for their property. They are paid for moving the businesses, but it still is wrenching.

Part of this recall that we have going are people complaining that there's too much development going on downtown. One of the complaints they're saying is that it's too dense, and we don't want this much. When I think about how hard we worked in those early years. When I went on in '76, the very first project came to fruition. There had been a contract let, and the person who was given it for the very first renovation of the first building didn't follow through. It was a downturn in the economy. It just didn't work out. So, finally then, in the second proposals we had two people that applied to redo a building, and that's the building on the West Side of Mill Avenue between 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. Now people are saying, It's too dense, it's too this. But it has taken a lot of financial commitment—federal monies and local monies to get us to this stage, and nothing stands still. It you

have the momentum and put this project together piece by piece, and then you get to a certain stage, and then you have another group who comes in who wasn't here way back then (from my point of view), and they don't have an appreciation for how hard this community worked to bring us to this point. I really feel so proud and pleased that we have been able to do what we've been able to do.

MILLER: That, in general, has benefited the community?

HATTON: Well, if you look at the financial investment and then you look at the values now on the properties and the tax return and the uses that are there, it really is a successful endeavor.

MILLER: Do you have any comments on the recall effort?

HATTON: I think it's a group of people who haven't been able to get elected. They've tried two or three times. Now this latest-LeFaro (or whatever his name is), he has not run for office before, but several of those people have run for office and not been able to be elected, and I think they just see it as another opportunity to maybe make that happen. Several of those people are well-intended and they think they're representing the best interest of the community, but if you don't have people who are willing to have some vision and put it into practice and take some risks, you're not going to have these exciting things happen.

I think the Rio Salado is an example. One of the

things in the petition statement that they made was that they didn't get to vote on the Rio Salado Project.

Actually, in fact, when there was the Valley-wide vote on it, Tempe was one of the few communities who had a majority vote for that process. It was part of the overall Valley vote, but the citizens did support it. Here again, it's a project that was begun in the School of Architecture by Dean Elmore and his students, and I never really thought I would ever live long enough to see it come to fruition. It is so exciting. One of the first committees that I was on for the League of Women Voters was about the Rio Salado Project, and that was in '64, but already there had been things that had gone on before that.

And then other things happened. When the decision was made to put the freeway on the north side of the river, this helped to facilitate this whole process because ADOT had to do the grating and excavate the river which made the channelization possible. The cost of doing that for Tempe alone would have been astronomical, and ADOT did it to build the freeway. There were a number of steps that happened because something before it had happened. I think most of the people in this community support the Rio Salado. It's interesting because it is costing us a lot because some of the commercial development hasn't happened as quickly as we'd like it to happen, but it didn't happen in the downtown either.

They look at it now, but it really was a 20-25-year process. I think with what the lake offers, those big hotel projects and those other things will come about.

The cost then to the city for the operation will be lessened. You've got to have some vision and you've

got to be able to take some risks in order to make good things happen. If I sound a little exuberant, I am. I was talking politics to a friend last night, and she said you had better take a "sweetness pill" before she comes tomorrow.

MILLER: You may have already answered this question, but what is your fondest memory of service on the Council?

HATTON: I think I probably mentioned that in our previous discussion.

MILLER: And did you encounter any stumbling blocks on your service on the Council?

HATTON: I think I touched on that a little bit. There were times in that period when I was the only woman on the Council, but I used to get a little disturbed (distracted is not the right word) because the men would just sort of overlook you, and you really had to stand up and be counted. Sometimes you felt that you weren't making any impact at all. The staff has always been very supportive on the women. I think as you interview the others you'll find that they would say that, too. Sometimes your fellow councilmen would give you a hard time.

MILLER: Did you find that often the men would be voting together, and you would be on the other side by yourself?

HATTON: It wasn't that simple. When you're discussing issues,

having your viewpoint count is what it's all about.

MILLER: Just feeling that they're listening to other people?

HATTON: Right.

MILLER: You served on the Council for 16 years, which I believe, is longer than anyone?

HATTON: No, Bill Ream was on the Council [longer].

MILLER: I'm sorry, any woman.

HATTON: I guess so because Dottie didn't serve that long (I believe three terms), and Carol served three terms. So, I guess I am at this point.

MILLER: You've already talked about this some, too, but in that 16 years can you discuss some of the changes that you witnessed during that time.

HATTON: I came on in '76. [We had moved here in '64.] The population in '64 was about 25,000, I think, and now we're 100,000 and something (I am not sure what figure they're using.) There was tremendous population growth, and there was a lot of development. We went from a bedroom community to a community that now import people for jobs. The planning staff, I think, and the professional staff of the Council together did a wonderful job of designating the industrial developments areas because of our proximity to the airport on the west side and on the southwest side of

Tempe, and really made a strong effort to build an employment base so that we would have a much better tax base because a bedroom community doesn't do it all. The challenge was to meet the growth that happened so rapidly, both in the schools and [unintelligible].

MILLER: You stated that families and children were your priorities during your service. What were your favorite projects in this area?

HATTON: I also served on the Parks Board before I came on the Council, and I had a strong feeling in the area of the development of the parks. Before I came on, the Council adopted a policy of having a small neighborhood park adjacent to every school that was developed in the community so that really from Broadway south, every elementary, junior high, and high school has an adjoining park area so that you maximize the use of the use of the open space for each individual community. Sometimes some people think that we maybe built too many elementary schools, and they have gone through a period when they've closed a couple, but they are reopening one of those that they've closed because the population didn't turn over fast enough in given neighborhoods to support the growth. You'd have a neighborhood like ours where every family had three to five children, and the school was crowded, and then as those children grew up and moved away, if the house didn't turn over.... On our block alone we have about six or seven people who are original owners, and so they have grandchildren now and some have great grandchildren. But the school population in our

immediate area has picked up. There was talk a couple of years ago about closing this elementary school.

We have one of the best recreation programs of any of the communities in the whole Valley. If you're interested in it, there is a class for it, there's an activity for it, there's something.

MILLER: In 1994 you received the Don Carlos Humanitarian of the Year Award. This is evidence of a community that believes in and supports what you stand for. What has been the most gratifying aspect of public service for you?

HATTON: I grew up in the era when you grew up, you worked awhile, and then you got married, and you had a family and you were involved in the community. And so, my goal was to really be able to be involved in my community and to give back and to do things to make it better. I've been very fortunate in being able to do that because my husband worked, and I was able to be at home and to volunteer. That now is a lot more difficult because in almost every family you have two who are working. So the amount of volunteer time that people have now is different. So, some of the things that we benefited from are going to have to be done in a different way probably in this next generation.

MILLER: It is there anything else you would like to talk about? You talked about Rio Salado and being the chair of the Parks and Recreation Board. Anything else you would like to add that, say in 100 years someone is listening

to a version of this tape, you would like them to know about Tempe or about you?

HATTON: I think one of the best things about Tempe is that it's been a community where you could have involvement if you wanted to, and it had an emphasis on things for families and family life. You have a small-town feeling even though the community grew, and still I think we have-I hope we'll continue to have it-the development of the neighborhood association programs within the community are strengthening that whole concept. I have no idea how many neighborhood associations we have now, but that program Harry Mitchell and the Council put into place. I suppose the first one must be going on almost 20 years now, and as long as you're involving people in the community so that you get the input of what they think is important in the place where they live, I think you have a good community.

Another thing that I think has benefited Tempe so much is that we've always had a group of Council people that brought different points of view to the process, but they work together. Sometimes we got a little feisty with one another, but it was never mean-spirited. It was always put out your point of view and sometimes you worked to get others to join you in whatever that point of view was. But you did work together for the benefit of the community. There was not (I didn't feel) people that were self-serving. They really wanted to contribute something to the community. We did work together, and after we'd be through and have a drink or



a cup of coffee, we were good friends. If there is one thing that distresses me at this particular period of time, [it is that] you do not see that same group cohesiveness and that same working together, and I think that's a shame.

MILLER: Do you think that's a reflection of the growth and that the Council now represents all these different sectors of the community?

HATTON: I think it certainly represents the times because when I look at Scottsdale or any of the big cities on the West Side or Mesa, there seem to be similar patterns everywhere. You see people running for their councils and voicing feelings about being against those instead of being for those. I think in the past you didn't get elected to City Council if you ran a negative campaign, but that certainly has changed recently, and I hope it will turn around and go back to the way it was. That's not to say we didn't have strong differences over the years because we did, but we worked together and we were friends. It was a much better process, I think.

MILLER: Anything else you would like to add?

HATTON: I guess not. I'll probably think of things after the fact, but I guess that's about it.

Miller: I'd like to thank you again, Pat Hatton, on behalf of the Tempe Historical Museum.

END OF INTERVIEW

