

TEMPE HISTORICAL MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #: OH-271
NARRATOR: Richard G. Neuheisel, Sr.
INTERVIEWER: Aaron Monson
DATE: August 4, 2008

RN = Richard Neuheisel
INT = Interviewer
_____ = Unintelligible
(*Italics*) = Transcriber's notes

Side A

INT: Today is August 4, 2008, and this is the Tempe Historical Museum's city building renovation interview with Richard (*Dick*) Neuheisel. Let's go ahead and begin. I'll start by asking you where you were originally from and how long you lived there.

RN: I was born in Wisconsin, on the Mississippi River, in a town called La Crosse. And I was fortunate, I believe, in looking back, to have had the pleasure of living in several small towns and enjoying small-town life growing up. I went to the University of Wisconsin undergraduate school, and wound up getting accepted to a couple different law schools outside of Wisconsin. But my wife and I decided to get married and stay in Wisconsin, so I spent seven years in Madison, Wisconsin, getting an undergraduate degree in Business and a Law degree, graduating in 1961.

And I went through the ROTC program at Wisconsin, and at the end of law school, I had a two-year obligation, so I spent that two years mostly in California, at a place Ft. Ord up on the Monterrey Peninsula. And going to California from Virginia, where I went through the training for the Judge Advocate General branch of the Army, that's the legal branch, I came through Arizona, stopped to see a guy by the name of Dick Merkel, who was a classmate of mine in law school, and he said, "You ought to move to Arizona." So for the next two years that I was in California, he would call me or write me and say, "Boy, this is where you need to come, Dick, because there's lots of opportunities here." So I came back through here when I had my two-and-a-half year commitment in the Army completed. I was heading to Milwaukee to join a law firm, I think the law firm was about 60 in number, and I was offered a position at Arizona State University, where I taught Business Law then for the next fourteen years.

So that's how I wound up in Arizona. I got here in 1963, and first lived in Mesa for half a year, then we bought a home in Tempe. So I've been in Tempe since the summer of 1964.

INT: What are some of the changes that you've seen in Tempe since you got here?

RN: Well, it was really a small town when I arrived here. When you called me, I reflected back and I made a couple of notes for this interview, and it was fun to do so. One of the things I did was try to remember the fourteen candidates that ran when I ran for the City Council, and I couldn't come up with all fourteen. I'm just lost, which surprised me, how I would forget the names of people that I was running against, but I could only come up with nine. Maybe I'll ask you to look this up for me when you get back to your offices.

But the changes are pretty staggering. The university, for example, was about 13,000 when I arrived. In fact, I wrote those numbers down, because I want to be accurate in this interview. Let me go get them; I didn't bring them with me. I was looking at some numbers about Tempe's growth last night.

But as I recall, in 1963 when I first arrived in Tempe, the population was about 23,000, and by 1980, it was like 85,000, so that's substantial growth. One of my campaign gimmicks when I ran for the City Council in 1968 was I would remark to a coffee I'd attend and say that "The biggest problem Tempe faces is to provide for orderly growth; we know growth is coming, but it needs to be orderly. And that's a little foreign to me, because where I grew up in this small town in Wisconsin, where I went to high school for four years, Cashton, Wisconsin, the population was constant, there was always 707 people." And someone would say, "Well, how can that be?" And I'd say, "Well, the reason for that is because every time some girl gets pregnant, some guy leaves town. That's small-town America." And it got a lot of laughs, and inevitably someone would say, "Is that why you left town?" I'd of course deny that.

But it was a fun time for Tempe, to watch that growth. When I look back at the university, it was riding sidesaddle with that growth. The university had about 13,000 students when I arrived on the campus, and today it's, I believe, the second largest university population in the country, it's got over 53,000 students. The side-by-side statement about the university and the town, the town-and-gown relationship, I think has been fantastic. You read about many cities that have the good fortune of having a university in its midst, and you see a lot of in-fighting between town and gown. In my experience, that has never been present here in Tempe. The relationship between the two institutions has been really quite wonderful.

One of the things that happened just about the time I got on the City Council was the Architectural school coming up with a plan to do something with the Salt River that sometimes flowed through Tempe, and that was a product of ASU. What we see today, when we look at the Tempe Town Lake, that idea germinated with the university. We've had other successes like that, too. I think we've been blessed in this community to have a good relationship between the two great institutions.

There's been lots of other changes as well. The downtown.

I was pretty young when I got elected to the City Council, so I was like 32 years old, which is kind of unique. If you look at the eastern part of this country, that doesn't happen very often, because new people are suspect. You have to be around for a long time before people trust you. That's a general statement, but it's true in the political arena, too. I think I lived in Tempe only three years and I was elected to the City Council. So I was probably more progressive, as a young guy serving on the City Council, the youngest, in 1968 than my colleagues. But in looking back, I probably tried to bring about too much change; it frightened some people. A lot of people can't accept change, and a lot of people have difficulty going too fast.

My son (*Rick*) is a football coach, he's a coach at UCLA. And when he took the head coaching job up at (*University of*) Colorado, a comparison is in order, because he was my age when he got that job, and he went too fast, he admits that today. Today, he's the coach at UCLA (*2008-2011*), but he's had some hurdles along the way. And one of the things you have when you have youth is you have probably a little more energy and you want to do more things. And that was true with him at Colorado when he took his players rafting, and he took them on songfests, he took them skiing. And, you know, football has the image of toughness, and not in fun, and he made it fun. I'm not saying I made it fun at City Hall, but I made it interesting.

I remember one of the big issues was the development of downtown Tempe. It was a bikers' bar haven. It wasn't a place anyone really wanted to go in the late '60s, or the mid-'60s for that matter, as well. So my analysis was that to get a renewal in operation in downtown Tempe, it would necessary to get some federal assistance. And to get federal assistance, the first order of business is to have a housing code in place; otherwise, the federal government wouldn't talk to you. So to get a housing code in place was a real obstacle that Tempe faced. For whatever reason, no one really wanted to do that, because a housing code had certain federal provisions, like there was a housing code inspection, and this meant that someone other than the homeowner would have the right to come in and inspect the home, which makes sense. But the conservative element in the community said, "Well, I don't want anybody coming into my home, telling me that we need to fix the plumbing or something; that's a denial of my constitutional rights." So other Councilmembers fought this idea of getting a housing code. Well, after a lot of debate and some public hearings, we finally prevailed, but it was close. And it marked the start of what today is the downtown redevelopment, getting that housing code in place so we could get some federal assistance.

It was similar to something else we passed along in that same time period, and that was the design review ordinance. I remember getting a lot of criticism for making it possible for the City board, called the Design Review Board, to tell you what your commercial development had to look like. But that, too, was a long battle, but we prevailed, and Tempe was the first city to have a design review ordinance in Arizona.

I remember campaigning for the City Council and suggesting that we ought to copy what some other areas of the country were just starting, and that is an emergency call number, 9-1-1. And “Oh, no, why would we want such a thing, we don’t need that.” And the obstacles were again placed in front of us. We didn’t succeed at the time, but eventually it came to pass.

I believe that we had vision in those days. When I joined the Council in the summer of 1968, we were meeting in Danelle Plaza, which is down on the southwest corner of Southern and Mill. You probably don’t even know where that’s at. But that’s where it was, in the Danelle Plaza shopping center. We had a City Hall operation out of there, makeshift, like sitting in a storefront, big windows, look in and there’s the City Council at work. And it was absolutely imperative, if this city was gonna become vibrant and successful and progressive, it had to have a decent-looking City Hall.

Well, the first issue was where was it gonna be built? The Mayor at that time, who was elected at the same time I was in ’68, was Elmer Bradley. He and I were the only two that wanted to have the City Hall down on Southern. Frank Conley was the editor of the newspaper, publisher and editor, and he had his offices downtown. I don’t know if it was visionary on his part or because it was better business-wise, economic-wise, but he was fighting hard to have the City Hall at the old site, where it currently is today. When I was on the City Council, there was an old building called City Hall down where the present City Hall is, and the Council had a majority that believed it should stay there. And we felt that the downtown—this is before we had the housing code in place, before we had the redevelopment of the downtown—we thought, “Gee, that’s not a very inviting place.” But, as it turned out, I was wrong on that issue, and so was Elmer Bradley. But the next battle So we decided to have it downtown, by a 5 to 2 vote. And the next issue was I think it was 5 to 2; it may have been 4 to 2, because Bill LoPiano, who was on the Council, he would always abstain, because he had some property across from City Hall, and he claimed a conflict of interest.

So we decided to have the City Hall where it’s presently located, but who was going to be the architect? Well, the oldest in longevity and prominence was Kemper Goodwin and his son Michael, and they had been doing all of both the elementary and high school buildings in our community and had a good reputation. So after some discussion, they were picked.

And what of design? Well, Michael claims that he went to the mountains and somehow in either a bathtub or shower and had this vision of an inverted pyramid as a style and design for City Hall. Subsequently, maybe fifteen years later, I went down to St. Petersburg, Florida, to look at some minor league baseball—not minor league, but spring training—sites, and we looked at the one in St. Petersburg. And lo and behold, there, next to the pier, was an inverted pyramid, similar to the one we have as our City Hall. And I looked at the dedication date, and it was older in time than our City Hall. So we didn’t have the original inverted pyramid in Tempe as I had been led to believe for fifteen years.

At any rate, we did have a lot of fighting about that design. In fact, one of my great memories was that because Bill LoPiano claimed a conflict of interest, there were six votes, so what we needed to do was have four votes to get the inverted pyramid approved. Elmer Bradley was opposed to it, he was the Mayor. He said that if the cost of that structure was going to be one penny over two million dollars—which is peanuts today, of course—he'd vote against it. Well, Elmer and I went to meet with Michael Goodwin one night after a Council meeting, and we tried to figure out what the cost was going to be with Michael. And Michael said it was gonna be over two million, it may be close to 2.2 million. And I said, "So what? If we start over, we've got the issue of where it's gonna be located, who's gonna be the architect, and what's gonna be the design? So by the time we got those three answers, just inflationary processes would make it higher, so let's move forward and do it for 2.2 million." But Elmer wouldn't budge. He said no, no, no, no.

So comes the night for the vote, we're in Danelle Plaza, we're in a pre-session before the meeting, and Elmer walks in and says, "Well, the City Hall isn't gonna go. I've been talking to Joe Dwight all afternoon, and he's gonna vote against it. So Neuheisel, you don't have your three votes." I said, "Well, it was a good battle, all's fair in love and politics, so we'll have to live with that and figure out another plan." Then I excused myself, because fortunately Joe had not arrived yet, and you could look out the window and see the arrivals. So I went outside and got in a position where Elmer or anyone else inside didn't know where I was. So I waited for Joe, and when he arrived, I buttonholed him, to use that expression, and I was able to convince him that we needed to go forward, and he needed to do the right thing, and we could no longer be a first-class community meeting in this Danelle Plaza storefront. It took some convincing, but Joe did change his mind. And then we waited until the meeting started. We could see the Councilmembers coming in from the back room to the Council area through the big picture window. And when they came walking in, I brought Joe in, because now it would be too late for Elmer to have the last word with him. So the discussion was minimal, and when the vote came, because we'd been talking about this a long time, when the vote came, Joe kept his word to me and voted in favor of the City Hall complex, the inverted pyramid, and it was successful by a 4 to 2 vote.

There are a lot of fun stories about Joe Dwight. Joe Dwight had been a baker in this community and was beloved by all, a likeable guy who had a twinkle in his eye and had a friendliness that was unique. Everybody always liked being with Joe. But he was set in his ways, in a manner of speaking. He lived up in north Tempe and, as a result, he always felt like he needed to protect the people in north Tempe. And he would do so in one way by always opposing any—what would you call it? There was a place up there called Big Surf, and they used to have like rock concerts, musical events, that would attract young people. So Joe would never allow that to happen, because the neighbors complained about the noise.

But on this one occasion, a promoter comes to the City Council and was asking for permission to put on this big concert at Big Surf. And he brought some placards, little posters, that he put up on—remember now we're meeting down at Danelle Plaza, and we

had blackboards all over the place—and on the chalk tray, he was able to place these posters or placards that were promoting these events. Well, one of the posters was on behalf of the Rotary Connection, which was a musical group that I wasn't familiar with at the time, still am not. But the Rotary Connection (*a psychedelic soul band in the late '60s*) was a musical group that was going to be performing at this facility called Big Surf up in north Tempe, on Hayden Road or McClintock, whichever you want to call it. Well, Joe's attitude changed immediately. Joe had recently become a member of Rotary, the service organization, and Joe was head over heels involved with the Rotary organization. He later became president, and I think he was the regional governor; in fact, I know he was the regional governor for Rotary in this area. I don't know if he was at that time, but he had become a member of Rotary. When he reads, at this meeting, that the Rotary Connection is involved with this concert, he says, "I know that if the Rotary is involved, it'll be okay." So he voted in favor of the concert, and we all joined in. And the Rotary Connection, I'm sure, performed in a wonderful manner at Big Surf.

That's one Joe Dwight story. I like to tell these stories because it's really symbolic of how councils and legislative bodies operate, not always in the most sophisticated manner, and sometimes in just kind of a fun manner.

The other thing that I've often told about Joe Dwight is that while Elmer was Mayor, I told you how he was really conservative, he never wanted to spend any money, he was notorious for that. In fact, he was a family friend, and I know his wife—poor Elmer's gone now, I miss Elmer, he was a good friend for many years. But he had his own style, and his style was he wanted to hang onto the last nickel. For that reason, he was probably a good balance on that Council. When it came time to giving the City employees a cost-of-living increase, this is about 1968 or '69, Elmer didn't want to give them any cost-of-living increase, because he said times were tight. He said, at most, he'd give them only a one percent or two percent increase. And we were told by the City Manager, Ken McDonald—I'd like to speak about him later—Ken McDonald's research indicated that if we wanted to continue to be in the mainstream of city employment opportunities, we would need to be in the area of three to four percent. So as a lawyer, you don't start out asking for what you're willing to settle for; the art of negotiation would suggest you ask for a little more. So I suggested to the other Councilmembers that "Why don't we raise the salaries of our City employees six percent," a six percent increase, "and then we'll be the most enticing city in the Valley? People will prefer working in Tempe than in Scottsdale or Mesa or Phoenix. And why don't we try to take that approach, rather than lowballing it? We'll get better performance," was my argument.

Well, we debated that for over an hour, went around the table, seven Councilmembers, everybody had something to say. In those days, the policy was, let's figure out what the consensus is, so that when you went out in front of the public, you had some feeling for what was happening, rather than just having general debate without making your positions pretty well known. So when we went around the table, Elmer wanted one-and-half or two percent. And when they got to me, I said six percent. When they got to Joe Dwight, he said, "Well, Dick, six percent of what?" Joe missed it, you see. Joe didn't figure out that it wasn't six percent of any one figure, it was six percent across the board,

so all the salaries would be increased six percent. So when he said, "Six percent of what?" then you knew that he'd been thinking about something else during that hour of discussion.

But nevertheless, I tip my hat to Joe Dwight and think fondly of him. The only thing I don't like to remember about Joe Dwight was that he was the guy that went down—one of my major disappointments—he went down to Chandler, and unknown to a lot of us, he was dealing with the Chandler municipality in trying to figure out where to draw the line, the border. I believe to this day that Tempe could have and should have gone down to what we called in those days Williams Field Road; now they call it Chandler Boulevard. We should had both sides of that boulevard. And Joe thought it would be better relations with Chandler if he negotiated something different, so now the border's a mile north of that. And that, I think, was a mistake for Tempe. We lost out on some valuable property and some valuable—Intel is down there, for example—some valuable industry.

So those are some of my memories, and when other things changed. We had the chance of annexing Ahwatukee during my term of office. And my best friend from the City political days is Harry Mitchell. Harry's a member of Congress now, and one of my heroes, I really like Harry Mitchell. We get together often and drink good bourbon. In fact, he was supposed to have been over last night, but I guess he had a conflict. But I still chide him a bit, because during the four years I was on the City Council, we could have annexed Ahwatukee, and we could have had the Pointe Resort—I guess they've changed the name now—but we could have had that golf course, and we could have had Mountain Pointe High School, and Ahwatukee Golf Course, all of that would have been in Tempe, it should have been in Tempe. The people there wanted Tempe to annex Ahwatukee; it was preferred over Phoenix. But when I recommended it, I couldn't get any support, including Harry. Couldn't get any support because Harry—brand new on the Council, he got elected to the City Council in 1970—he probably was so new to the governmental process that he relied heavily on the City Manager, who was one of the great people I've known in life, Ken McDonald, and Ken thought it was too big of a risk. He did not want to annex Ahwatukee because of the water problems. What are the water problems? Well, if you ask anybody at the Salt River Project or any water expert, you'd find that the City of Tempe has better water rights than any other city in the Valley, because we're mostly in the Salt River Project. Now, Ahwatukee's not in the Salt River Project, but we could have gotten water for Ahwatukee. Phoenix, obviously, did subsequently annex Ahwatukee, and they provide water to Ahwatukee. So if we've got better water rights than Phoenix, better access to water than Phoenix, why couldn't we do the same? Well, we could have.

But it's interesting commentary. I may be sorry I'm telling this story, but Ken McDonald died in the early or mid-'80s, but before he died—and the golf course, the municipal golf course, is named after him. And before I tell this story I'm going to tell, I'm going to say that, in my judgment, he put together a truly outstanding staff of department heads and key City employees. He brought in a great Finance director, Jim Alexander, who later became City Manager. Jim was just truly a great guy and had great talent. He brought in Grover Serenbetz, who was the Public Works director; again, great dedication. He

brought in Don Hull, Community Development—in those days, we called it a City Planner, but it later became Community Development director—and he was a visionary. In fact, he told me once that when he came out here to interview, he was happy with his job back in Michigan. He said one of the reasons that he did come here is he believed that Tempe had a vision that would be exciting to work with, and he said that realization came first when he saw our City Hall. Because it is innovative, it is different, it does give you the impression that, “Wait, this city is not just another humdrum place in the world, it’s got some vibrancy, it’s got some different attitude that would be fun to deal with.” So then he also had a great City Attorney, David Merkel. He had Jim Casey as an Assistant, Jim was a fine young guy. He just was surrounded by talented people. David Scott was another, he was the Building Department director. And as you go through, he had Ron Pies as Parks director. All these people made really valuable contributions to the City, including Ken McDonald.

So now, after giving you the good side, this story is probably true in much of the world. Ken had some bad luck. He had a family, I think he had maybe five children, I know he had at least three boys, maybe four. Two of the boys had car accidents, within a year or two apart. Both boys had brain damage, they suffered brain damage, so they needed hospitalization, they needed medical treatment, and insurance needed to be in place for that coverage to be continued. Well, what happened is that Ken McDonald said to me before he died, that “It was too big a risk to go ahead with any plan to annex Ahwatukee, too big a risk for Tempe and for me.” For him, because had it not worked, what happens to a City Manager when things aren’t going well? Well, he might lose his job. If you lose your job, you lose your insurance. You lose your insurance, who takes care of these two boys? How does that happen? So he had a unique pressure. I don’t fault this, but I’m just saying that it is too often the case in government, where the courage is missing because the risk is too high.

You know, John Kennedy did a book before he became President, I think it was written before he even got to the Senate, Profiles in Courage, and that was the story about six or eight Senators who, in each case, made political decisions that cost them dearly. And that’s one of the things that you have to be watchful for. If you’re in a position of political trust, do you look at what’s best for you, or what’s best for the political body for which you’re serving? That’s an example. Now . . .

INT: Before you go ahead, I’m running out of tape on this side, so I’m just gonna go ahead and flip it so we don’t cut you off.

(end of recording)

Side B

INT: Okay, we’re back.

RN: Just to continue with this nostalgia, the four years that I served, from 1968 to 1972 I was on the Tempe City Council, were wonderful years, great memories that I have of those

four years. Some disappointments—I just described the failure to annex down to Chandler Boulevard, the failure to annex Ahwatukee.

But there were more good things that came about. I've mentioned the housing code, the design review ordinance. Also the sign ordinance was brought into existence, where we could control signs. You don't see the golden arches on every corner in Tempe. We've got lower-profile signs in Tempe. If you drive around Mesa and you drive around Tempe, you see the difference in signs. Not to knock Mesa, but they didn't have the same vision.

And all these things, with that vision, came about In fact, I introduced the housing code, I introduced the sign ordinance, and the design review ordinance. It helped because I was young, perhaps it helped because I am a lawyer and I'm more aware, probably, than non-lawyers of legislation in different parts of the country. I've always had the belief that you don't have to be original in life, all you have to do is be smart enough to figure out what's working somewhere else and then bring it home, that same idea. It's true in business, too. So we have . . .

Obviously, something that is dear to me is the creation of the Sister Cities program while I was on the City Council. As luck would have it, I had the great support of Harry Mitchell, my fellow Councilmember, when we came up with this idea in 1970. I went to a national conference that I learned about through the National League of Cities magazine, and went over to San Diego and met a lot of great people who were involved with international citizen diplomacy. So I thought it would be a rare opportunity for the people in Tempe to participate in making people-to-people relationships around the world and helping the cause of world understanding and even peace. And I think it has.

So Tempe embarked upon a great adventure. We started in 1970 by forming a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that could be in charge of the program. And we had the idea that we should be the first to reach into eastern Europe with this idea. A State Department official, John Richardson, Assistant Secretary of State at the time, told me no one had had the courage to do this before. And I thought, "Wow, Tempe could be the first." So we were the first. And we formed a relationship with Skopje (*formerly Yugoslavia, now Macedonia*), which has been extremely successful. The Mayor of Skopje will be with us for the Oktoberfest in a couple months. We've had lots of students here; since 1972, we've been exchanging students, over 200 on both sides, 200 from Skopje and 200 from Tempe. We've had the President of the country spend three months here in 1989. So it's made a difference, and that all happened during that four years between 1968 and 1972.

And then I think, as far as ASU is concerned, ASU has, as I said at the beginning, increased dramatically in size of enrollment. But it's also, I believe, increased dramatically in stature. If you look at the publications that rank institutions, ASU ranks high in many of the areas, including Law, including Engineering and Business.

And I think that we had the first Bowl game, the first Fiesta Bowl game was held in 1971 when I was on the City Council. I believe ASU played Florida State and beat the

Seminoles that year. I remember in 1970, when we were still working on the idea of having a Bowl on campus at ASU, some of us went to the Peach Bowl in 1970 to see how it all worked. So I remember Harry Mitchell went along, we both went. And I'm sitting in the stands in Atlanta at the Peach Bowl, and the snow was falling, and it was the first time Harry Mitchell had ever experienced falling snow. And there was such confusion after the game, because of the heavy snowfall and the traffic conditions, that we didn't know how to get back to the hotel. So Harry and I reminisce often how we just jumped out in front of a car and told them we needed a ride back to the Marriott Hotel, and they gave us a ride. (laughter) So, anyway, those are some of the memories I have.

It's interesting that the people who ran at the same time I did, in 1968, included Art Livingston and Joe Dwight, both of whom were elected along with me. And Bob Svob was a candidate, he came in fourth, he was an incumbent. So it was a pretty exciting time for Tempe, because you don't often get three brand-new City Councilmen, which happened on this occasion. And then what's also interesting is the fact that Dale Shumway was a candidate for the City Council in 1968 and wasn't close, he didn't win. I don't think he was fourth, Bob Svob was fourth. And nevertheless, two years later, in 1970, Elmer Bradley, who I mentioned a couple times here, was not the most popular guy because of some of his idiosyncrasies, and Dale ran against him and beat Elmer. So Dale lost for the City Council position in '68, but then won in both '70 and '72 for Mayor. In fact, in 1972, he beat me; I ran for the mayorship at that time.

INT: By twenty votes, I found that out.

RN: Yes, it was twenty votes.

Also interesting was Hut Hutson was a candidate in 1968, and then 36 years later, in 2004, he runs again and wins. He won as an old guy, when he couldn't do it as a young guy. And I supported Hut this last time, because of the long friendship I've had with him.

But I just was at a Sister Cities event, a welcome-home party for the 28 delegates we sent to our Sister Cities, as well as a welcome to Tempe to the 28 that are the brothers and sisters, so we had 56 people as delegates this summer, they were present this past week at a dinner, and also present were their parents and others. But I sat at a table with an impressive group—three City Councilmen, Mark Mitchell, Shana Ellis, and the new one, Joel Navarro.

(brief interruption)

So, anyway, at this dinner are three City Councilmen, and they're all young, they're all in their 30s, and they were all getting along well and were friendly. So my challenge to them was that I hope that they would do two things: support the Sister Cities program in Tempe, and get along as well as you are tonight four years from now.

Because the Councilmember, or the legislative body member, needs to have a give-and-take attitude. There needs to be compromise. One of the sad commentaries in today's world is that there's too much partisanship in Washington. I sit and talk to Harry

Mitchell, and it's "them against us." It isn't like it used to be, where you could have a friendly debate, and the Democrats and Republicans would work out their differences. It doesn't happen so much. Now it's a mean-spirited attitude. In fact, Scott McClellan, who was the Press Secretary for President (*George W.*) Bush, in his book—What Happened? is the name of it, I've read most of it now—he talks about it's a continuing political process, it's a "permanent campaign," he refers to it as, where all the time, you're not looking at what's best for America, but what's best for winning. And that's a problem at all levels of government. When a Congressman gets elected in November, the first thing he has to do is figure out how he can start working to get a campaign chest so two years from now he can get elected again. It's a constant campaign process, and it's sad. I don't know how to fix it, but the general public needs to be aware of it. And it's too bad that Congressmen have to run every two years, because they spend all their time campaigning and raising money. But the Senate would have to support any change, and why would the Senate want to support any change, because that means the Congressmen would have an open time period when he could be running for the Senate? If he's in there for four years, the Senator at some time would be facing that Congressman, that's the fear. So it won't happen.

Now, the other thing that's kind of interesting is that people like Eldon Hastings, who was a candidate in 1968, he was a dentist, he later moved to Gilbert and served on the City Council in Gilbert. Then the only other two names I could come up with from memory was Richard Prior (*sp?*), who had a job at the university; I don't know whatever happened to Richard. And the other one was Jalma Hunsinger. Jalma had some ups and downs as a developer, but I see him from time to time, I know he's around. So those are the candidates.

We've gone through some of the accomplishments, and some of the disappointments. And I think that I can say that the 1968 City Council did a great deal to move Tempe in the direction that it went. It did a lot for the downtown. It got the building started on Southern. We did the Library building while I was in office—now it's your building, it's the Museum building now. We worked well with the university. The university began to explode, in its reputation as well as its student body enrollment. So it was a good four years.

Have you got any special questions?

INT: Well, just a few. What would you say are some of the city's strengths today?

RN: Well, the greatest strength of this city is the university, no question about that. Just recently, Tempe Sister Cities was contacted about having a Sister City relationship in Sweden, so we're going to go there probably next month, in September, 2008; that's why you see those two books on Sweden there. They had a lot of questions about the university. And the fellow that contacted me about this was a student of mine years ago, Tom LaDean is his name, and he lives in the town that's interested in forming a relationship with Tempe. Of course, he's very proud, in fact, he's an alum of ASU. But the university helps us a lot.

I think our progressive attitude. Developing the Town Lake. And sometimes it's luck. I look at a lot of things in life and I say, "Why did that happen in the way it did?" Like my marriage. I'll soon be celebrating, in a month, a month and two days, I'll have been married to the same lady, we're the original Dick and Jane, for fifty years. Now, how has that happened? I've got lots of friends that I thought were involved in good marriages, and they're divorced, or someone died. Luck has a lot to do with it.

And I think Tempe's really lucky to have great people. I think they have a unique spirit in Tempe. I think that's helped, in part, by the university. I think it's helped, in part, because of its diversity. I think it's helped, in part, because of the strong education system we have, and education leadership. I think we've had good principals, good superintendents, and a lot of great teachers. My wife and I raised four kids, they all went to public schools in Tempe, they've all done well, they all have degrees, three are lawyers—the other one is normal, by the way. So it's an element of luck.

And, you know, when we have the Oktoberfest, I think we have over 2,000 volunteers working. Where do you see that? I mean, some of the volunteers have been doing this for years and years and years. They do it because it's fun, like serving beer and brats and that kind of thing, and secondly, it's for a great cause. If you can help some young person get a trip to spend some time in China and see the Great Wall, that'll affect them all their lives, it'll change their lives. So the Sister Cities program allows people to take the blinders off, to not just look at your own household, your own block, or your own community; it takes the blinders off so you see the world. That makes you think differently.

So, what else? Any more questions?

INT: Yeah, two more. Just conversely, what do you see as some of the major challenges or weaknesses that face the city today?

RN: I don't know that Tempe has any weakness. I used to think that it's that there wasn't any substantial individual wealth in Tempe. We don't have a Bill Gates, we don't have anyone that I can name that can write enormous checks in the time of an emergency or municipal tragedy. But maybe that's better, because maybe that means everybody else pulls together, and there isn't a real distinctive class system. That's what has made America great, the great middle class. Well, in Tempe, I think everybody's middle class. I don't think there's a rich and a poor here. In much of the world, you have the extreme wealth and you have the extreme poverty. I think we have areas of poverty that could get more attention, but not You know, we've got the Community Council, we've got some systems in place that take care of most of our problems.

I don't see any weakness. People argue sometimes that you have to belong to certain organizations to get elected to office, and I don't put much stock in that. I belong to the Kiwanis Club, and as it turns out, we've had a history of a lot of political involvement. Neil Guilano, Mayor for ten years, was a Kiwanian; Mark Mitchell, Harry's son, is a

Kiwanian; and we have Corey Woods is a Kiwanian, and Shana Ellis is a Kiwanian, so I guess we've got three out of the seven (*of City Council*), but I think that's just because Kiwanis is fun. All of the Councilmembers except Joel Navarro are members of Sister Cities, and at the dinner the other night I made him raise his hand and swear that he'd send his check as soon as he got home. But that's just having involvement with organizations that do good things. So I don't think that's a weakness.

Anything else?

INT: Yeah. Just to kind of sum it all up, how do you see the City of Tempe developing in the future—ten, twenty, or maybe even fifty years out—with the massive population growth of the Valley, the university continuing to grow, how do you see that affecting Tempe specifically?

RN: I have trouble looking out and seeing what's happening tomorrow, much less years and years from now.

I think the evidence is pretty apparent that Tempe is not going to grow in an outward fashion, because we're surrounded by other municipalities, so our growth is limited. We can fill in some areas, probably with a little denser population. We can probably grow higher around the downtown area; that seems to be in vogue now. Those developments have slowed down, I guess, because of the economic crunch. Here in August of 2008, these aren't the best of times. I just heard over the weekend that if you want to fly US Air and have a Coke, you're gonna have to pay two dollars, which is kind of shocking. There's another article, I think in today's USA Today, not in the paper that I'm looking at here, but that if it continues to get as tight in the economy as it is, maybe the low-income people in our society won't be able to fly.

INT: Right, that was in the Money section, I read it.

RN: It was in the Money section; I knew I read it somewhere.

I think one of the keys is to have a city that's friendly and open and inviting and alive, young guys like Corey Woods and Joel Navarro to run for the City Council and have success, and have old guys like me supporting them. It's an embracing-type thing. It's so much easier in life to get things accomplished if large groups are working together and have a feeling of belonging to more people. So we've been lucky to have the great volunteer spirit, lucky to have the great municipal leadership.

As an example, I would rank much higher the successes of the Tempe City Council during my four years in Tempe than I would the state legislature. I see that body as involved with more fighting and name-calling and bitterness than is necessary. I don't know why that is exactly. It's a bigger body, in the legislature, than the City Council, and I suppose when it's bigger, it's harder to have a community interest.

But I think Tempe's done a great job. Great people. And looking into the future, I'll stay here as long as I can. Thank you.

INT: You're welcome. I want to thank you for your time, for contributing. If you don't have any other final statements or final remarks that you would like to make right now on the record, I will go ahead and conclude the Tempe Historical Museum's renovation interview with Richard Neuheisel.

RN: My pleasure. Thank you very much.

(end of recording)

Transcribed by Susan Jensen

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