



Jerry Brooks
Mayor of Chandler: 1984 – 1988
Interviewed: November 17, 2005
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Public History Coordinator

- JR: Tell me the name of your father and where he was from.
- JB: M. L. Brooks, he was born in Woodward, Oklahoma, he came out here with my grandparents in either 1918 or 1920 and they lived in Scottsdale. My grandfather was a hay farmer there. My earliest recollections are helping him irrigate as a little tyke in now what is downtown Scottsdale. He was a school teacher most of his life and from 1946 – 1956 he was a state superintendent of public construction in Arizona.
- JR: What was your grandfather's name, the one that had the farm?
- JB: Charles H. Brooks
- JR: Where was the farm located?
- JB: On the west side of what's now 70th Street, south of Earl Drive in Scottsdale. My mother's parents lived in an adjacent farm and their little house is still there on the corner of Earl Drive and 70th Street in Scottsdale.
- JR: So your family grew alfalfa on the farm?
- JB: Yes.
- JR: How many acres?
- JB: I really don't know. I imagine it was 20 or 30 acres maybe.
- JR: Did they raise just alfalfa or did they have any livestock?
- JB: My mother's family had an apricot orchard around their house, they grew apricots and other fruits, I remember they had grape vines. I think the Brooks were mostly hay farmers.
- JR: Did you eat a lot of jam when you were little?
- JB: Oh yes, everybody was canning all the time.
- JR: So, your father, he decided to become a teacher?
- JB: Yes.
- JR: Where did he teach?
- JB: He went to school in San Marcos, Texas, then he came back to Arizona, when he graduated he married my mother and he took a teaching job in San Antonio, that was his first teaching job. They moved back to San Antonio. By the way, I was born in San Antonio. They came back here when I was less than one year old.
- JR: So they stayed in San Antonio for a very short period of time?
- JB: Yes, just one school year.
- JR: Tell me a little bit more about your father as far as the family – what was it that brought them to Arizona from Oklahoma?
- JB: I can't be sure, my grandfather migrated across the country in the late 1800's and in fact I still have the deeds to some lots he bought in west Texas in a little town called Claude, Texas. I guess they were just looking for a place to settle down and farm.

JR: Now where did your father teach once he came back here to the valley?

JB: An interesting kind of a historical note, at one time he was the head teacher with two other teachers and taught, what Scottsdale has come to call, the Little Red Schoolhouse. It was a school for Hispanic children in the town, and they were segregated. My father was head teacher there, but we had quite a different history out of this as a kid.

JR: What grades did he teach?

JB: He taught shop, manual training. Probably all he taught. He taught in many different districts, at Monroe School in downtown Phoenix for awhile, taught in Scottsdale, of course, one of the schools in south Phoenix.

JR: Tell me a little bit about your mother. What's her name and where was she from?

JB: Her name was Viola Barnes. As I said earlier her folks came to Scottsdale in 1920. She was a homemaker most of her life, however, later in life she went back to school and got a teaching degree and she taught school, particularly after my father's death in 1964. She taught in Heber Overgaard area back when it was just a little one-room school house and she taught in some private schools in Phoenix and in California too. She and one of my sisters did quite a bit of traveling.

JR: So, was she born in Scottsdale?

JB: She was born in Aberdeen, South Dakota. My grandfather had a lot of acreage and a big wheat farming area and I suspected after he got older, he was quite a bit older than my grandmother, so he probably couldn't keep up with all that heavy duty wheat farming they did there and they came to Arizona.

JR: Did she ever tell you, were they drawn by the climate or maybe more opportunity or something?

JB: No, nobody has asked me that before, I never thought about it. I don't know how they wound up in Arizona.

JR: When did she actually get her teaching degree?

JB: Probably in 1962.

JR: Was it elementary education?

JB: Elementary education, she got the degree from Grand Canyon University.

JR: As she was teaching in Heber and other locations as well, was her home base still in Scottsdale?

JB: They moved to Phoenix just before the war or maybe during WWII, they moved to what's now downtown Phoenix. Both the Brooks and the Barnes moved into town.

JR: Were they still involved in farming? Were they renting out the farm or did they just stop farming?

JB: They sold the farm, I'm sure; they didn't go back to it again. They were retired by then.

JR: So you were born in San Antonio, Texas. When were you born?

JB: November 23, 1930.

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JR: You lived on your paternal grandfather's farm from a little boy until about 10 or so?

JB: No, we didn't live on the farm very much, in fact I don't think we lived on the farm at all. My folks rented houses in Scottsdale and we lived in various locations in Scottsdale in the late 30's until the middle of WWII.

JR: Do you have brothers and sisters?

JB: I have three sisters. One deceased. Charlotte, was the oldest and then Janice and Donna Margarite.

JR: You were about 11 or 12 when you moved into Phoenix?

JB: Yes.

JR: Where did you grow up then after that in Phoenix?

JB: We moved a lot, I don't know why, we lived in several different residences in east Phoenix; 2615 E. Willetta Street, which was in the county; we lived on Pierce Street, several places...Mooreland Street - that was downtown then.

JR: What was Phoenix like while you were growing up?

JB: I think Phoenix had an inferiority complex. I think we felt that the rest of the world was passing us by. Everything was greater and better in California or back on the east coast. We didn't really start growing very much until after the end of WWII and started feeling our own oats, I think.

JR: Do you remember anything from WWII?

JB: Oh yes, I studied it constantly. I remember sitting in front of the radio listening to live broadcasts of the invasion in North Africa and some of the Pacific Islands. There was a great scare here at the time, by the way, when the war first started that Japan may invade Mexico and come into the United States from southern Arizona. I, as a child, had nightmares about the Japanese invading through southern Arizona. My father taught school at Rivers, where the Japanese relocation center was during the war. He was a teacher down there on the Gila River Indian community properties.

JR: Were you involved in any activities on the home front? A lot of people were working to support the war effort at that time.

JB: Yes, I think all the kids were. We were always in scrap metal drives, of course, we had a big victory garden, we had a vacant lot next to our lot at one point and we cultivated that and grew all kinds of vegetables in there and I remember, aluminum drives, scrap iron drives, and all that sort of thing during the war. We all lived the war. We were not in combat of course, but the nation was totally immobilized.

JR: What school did you attend?

JB: I went to many different schools. I started school at Creighton School, we lived on north Sunset Drive, it's now 26th Place, just north of Bell Road, near Creighton School. I started school there, then we went to Scottsdale, we moved to Tuscon for a year or so, then I went to school in Tuscon. I went to Emerson School in Phoenix and Phoenix Union High School for a couple years.

JR: Did you graduate?

JB: No, I was so enthusiastic about joining the service that I went into the Marine Corps on my 17th birthday. I disappointed my parents tremendously by, in effect, running away from home and joining the service before I finished high school.

JR: How did you get interested in joining the military?

JB: It was totally the WWII experience. I admired the armed forces during WWII, I just loved to see the newsreels and follow what was happening in the combat theaters. I was disappointed I wasn't old enough to serve in WWII. I went in 1947.

JR: So you joined the Marine Corps in 1947?

JB: Yes.

JR: Where did you train?

JB: I went through boot camp in San Diego. Then I trained in Camp Pendleton. I was stationed at El Toro Marine Corps Air Station for a while. Then I competed for an appointment to the Naval Academy. They had a fleet competitive examination system and they let sailors and marines take tests and if you scored well they let you advance. I was discharged in 1950 and entered the Naval Academy. I stayed in the Naval Academy about 15 months, came back home and got married, then went back to ASU and got my first undergraduate degree.

JR: Think back to when you were a kid and living in the Phoenix area, did you ever know anything about Chandler or go to Chandler or anything like that?

JB: Certainly did. We lived in Tuscon for awhile and had some family members down there and I clearly remember during the 30's driving from Phoenix to Tuscon. Chandler was considered the last stop post as we would drive through Tempe and Mesa and go south through Chandler then you would hit the desert until you got to Tuscon. Chandler was kind of the last green spot as I remember driving Route 87 and looking off toward what is now Ocotillo and the big grove of palm trees and eucalyptus trees off to the west of the highway. I was pretty familiar with Chandler, was through here quite a bit.

JR: Did you remember seeing the hotel?

JB: Oh yes and I can tell you an instance there in 1953. I was newly married and some other young friends of mine and I heard about a New Year's Eve party out at the San Marcos Hotel in Chandler. The San Marcos was a luxury that was far beyond our means and we got a flyer and it said that for \$15 we could come out and celebrate New Year's Eve at the San Marcos. So we saved our money up and came out here, about three or four couples of us and it was the most fantastic evening in my life at the time I thought. It was so nice, we had a big party in the garden room and they provided favors and a nice dinner and everything for \$15/couple. That was really quite an experience.

JR: Can you describe what the hotel looked like at that time?

JB: It was very impressive. They had a lot of the cottages rather than so many rooms, the nicest part was on the west toward the golf course where they had the beautifully manicured lawns and gardens and these cottages set up back there, it was very nice. Even at that they closed it up in the summer time. Just flat closed the doors and wait for the winter visitors again. Very nice. As a teenager I spent

quite a bit of time coming out here, we knew some kids out here and we'd come out to Chandler and hang out a little bit, when we could find enough gas money.

We really thought it was quite a trip to come out here and that's another thing when I was a youngster, living in Scottsdale after my grandparents had moved into Phoenix; people can't imagine today how sparsely populated Phoenix was. After church on Sundays we'd go into see grandma and grandpa and boy it was a big deal loading up the car and driving all the way from Scottsdale into Phoenix for the afternoon with the grandparents.

JR: Tell me a little bit more about your military career as far as what you did while you were in the Marines? What was your position you held? Your duties?

JB: Every Marine is an Infantryman, so after boot camp I went through advanced training in Infantry and I scored very high in my general classification test scores; and so because of that and I caught on to things pretty quickly so I became an instructor in one of the schools down in Camp Pendleton for awhile. Hard to believe I was only 17 years old and I was teaching people how to disassemble and reassemble weapons and things. Then I got transferred into the first Marine Air Wing at El Toro and I did all kinds of things there.

In those days the major bases had sports teams, we had football teams, basketball teams. At one point I got the juicy duty of being the manager of the football team. I got to travel around the country where we played colleges and so forth. I even got to travel clear back to the Naval Academy. We played the junior varsity at the Naval Academy. That was a big treat and very worthwhile. I was even the chaplain's assistant. Some of my friends will find that hard to believe. I was the assistant to the Protestant chaplain at El Toro for several months. I was jack-of-all trades until I got to the Naval Academy.

JR: How long then did you serve?

JB: I was in the Marine Corps just less than three years.

JR: Tell me about your wife, what is her name?

JB: Sheila Conway. She grew up in Long Island, NY. We've been married five years now. She has two children here and one lives in Louisville, KY.

JR: This is your second wife?

JB: Yes.

JR: Your first wife, what was her name?

JB: Donna Garver.

JR: Was she from here?

JB: Her father was a career Army soldier and he retired from the Army at the end of WWII and when they retired they came to Chandler, they lived in Chandler a few months right after he got out of the Army in 1945 or 1946. Then they moved into Phoenix, I met her in Phoenix. I met her through my sister, she was a friend of one of my sister's.

JR: Did you say you were married in 1953?

JB: Yes.

JR: Did you have children together?

JB: We had four children. Jerry, Jr., Barry Glenn, Nancy Jean and Paula Sue. I adopted her daughter from a previous marriage, Deborah.

JR: So you have a big family then.

JB: Yes.

JR: What happened after you got out of the Marine Corp?

JB: I went into the Naval Academy. I was academically stressed. I had even had high school algebra and I had to work like a dog to get through that the first year and it was a real strain. After three years in the Marine Corp and a year in the academy, I couldn't take any more of that so I came back to get married and went to ASU.

JR: What did you study at ASU?

JB: Education. But I actually got my degree in construction. They didn't have an engineering school then. I think we called it construction engineering.

JR: When did you graduate?

JB: 1954.

JR: Once you finished at ASU in 1954, what line of work did you go into?

JB: I went back into the service. I was commissioned in the Air Force, through the Air Force ROTC program at ASU. So I went back on active duty in the service, went to pilot training and then I got subsequently grounded on a failed physical examination. So I left flying and got into communications electronics systems engineering and then in 1962 the Air Force sent me back to ASU full time to get my electronics engineering degree. I served out my career then until 1977 as a systems engineer in command control communications systems.

JR: Sounds like an interesting job.

JB: It was extremely interesting. After I went to Vietnam I came back to the Pentagon and served in contingency operations there which put me right next to all of the operations of the DOD and [it was]very educational, very fascinating. Far beyond my expectations as a captain and a major.

JR: Did you have a specialty? Anything you did specifically as a systems engineer?

JB: In that capacity and at the air staff I was monitoring building of the long haul point to point communication systems we built in Thailand and Vietnam. You deployed and set up tropospheric scatter and microwave and submarine cables around the coast of Vietnam and Thailand. All of that had to do with engineering, design and installation of these communications to support the troops there.

JR: You served in Vietnam during the war then?

JB: Yes.

JR: Were you in any particular areas within Vietnam?

JB: First five months over there I served as Director of Maintenance Engineering for Seventh Air Force, which was the senior Air Force command in Vietnam. Then after five months I reactivated the base at CamRan Bay and I went up as commander of the communications unit there and installed and brought up all the communications to support the combat operations out of CamRan Bay.

JR: You talked a little bit about growing up during WWII and sort of being impacted by the war and that experience, and then you were involved with the Vietnam War; just out of curiosity, did you see differences between the two different military conflicts as far as here in the United States?

JB: Certainly. Oh yes. We were totally mobilized in WWII, everybody I met was totally behind the war effort which was absolutely necessary in that one. In Vietnam I was just very, very disappointed and hurt in the political atmosphere and the way the war was conducted and so forth. We didn't feel very good about it. I met a lot of wonderful people, the Vietnamese, brilliant people and I just always felt we pulled the rug out from under them sold out and I'm still bothered by it somewhat.

JR: Let's move up to 1977, that's when you retired?

JB: Retired from the Air Force and came to Chandler.

JR: What was it that brought you to Chandler after you retired?

JB: Before I retired I bought a lot in Fountain Hills. We thought we might retire in Fountain Hills. So I came out on leave and stayed out on Williams Air Force Base quarters while I was looking for a builder to build a house. One day I was driving through Chandler to see one of my sisters and as I drove through town, I drove by Senate Acres, irrigated acre lots, and it occurred to me that it was more like the Scottsdale and east Phoenix that I had left in the 40's and that's what I really needed to come back to rather than way out there at Fountain Hills. So we whipped in there and drove around and found a house and made an offer on it and bought it, just like that. That's how I wound up in Chandler.

JR: Where is Senate Acres?

JB: It's just east of McQueen Road, south side of Chandler Boulevard. Small subdivision with about 40 homes on acre lots. At that time in 77 it was way out of town.

JR: So you came here in 1977, you retired from the military. Did you work or do anything while you were here?

JB: I went to work, I commuted, my first position was with Talley Industries Company, we formed a company to do service contract work and I was about the first employee, we went out and bid on all kinds of projects. I mostly chased technical projects and lot of federal government jobs. Federal Government decided to do these benefit analysis to see if it was more cost effective to perform some support functions in the military through contract services rather than use uniform people. So we went out and bid those contracts and I won quite a few of those contracts and got it going.

After three years of that I went to work for Waste Management of Arizona. I was assistant general manager for Arizona for a while and then happened to run into John McCain. John had just retired from the Navy and was coming to Arizona and decided he wanted to run for Congress; so I quit my job and managed his campaign. Of course he was elected and we know what happened after that. He's on his way. That's how I got a taste of politics. The same time I was doing that I had seen all the turmoil in Chandler with recall and there was a lot of nastiness in Chandler at the time, political bickering and so on. So I started going to the

council meetings and trying to figure out what was going on. Next thing you know I was asked to run for the council, which I did and won and it goes from there.

JR: Before we get to that point, I'm curious, were you actually campaign manager for John McCain?

JB: I was his campaign manager, we had a campaign, we had a strategic plan written by professional organizations, but I was the office manager and scheduler and ran the plan in the district.

JR: What year did he run for Congress?

JB: It was 1981.

JR: Do you have any memories that stand out in your mind of something that happened during the time of his campaign?

JB: Quite a few things. I can tell you one thing, I was so impressed, one time we went down to Sun Lakes to meet people, the whole recreation center was filled with people sitting around tables and having a good time and John and I went through the room just walking around shaking hands and everyone was introducing themselves to him and after the affair was over we were driving back to the headquarters in Mesa, he said, "Jerry, what was that couples' name back in the corner, there were six of them sitting at the table, who was the couple next to the window"? I had no idea, I didn't keep track like that. He remembered the name of every one of those people I think. We sat and talked about it a little and then he said, "Oh yes, I remember, it was the Johnsons". That was the first time that I realized he had such a sensational memory that he could grasp things, it was very impressive.

JR: Who was he running against?

JB: There were four other candidates, the former state senator, a state legislator lady, a couple other people. Of course John had just retired and coming back to Arizona, and we had the "carpetbagger" image at that time—that was a big thing, but John's become an Arizonian through and through now, I think.

JR: Was he running against an incumbent?

JB: No, John Rhodes had just retired. He had been in the Congress for 30 years and had just left the office.

JR: You talked about how you were drawn to coming to the city council meetings because you wanted to know kind of what was going on?

JB: Here's another interesting thing, it turns out the city manager at the time was Bruce Knutsen, and Bruce was retired from the Air Force, and I served under Bruce when we were in the Air Force at one time. I didn't even know he was in Arizona when I moved here. When I looked in the paper and saw that Bruce Knutsen was involved in the city government and this fracas going on, I thought, my goodness I can't imagine Colonel Knutsen getting involved in this, I better find out what's going on. That's what prompted me to go to the council meetings and start listening to what was going on. The city was small then and so set in politics, one way or the other, diametrically opposed to one another. Everybody was trying to get me to come to their side I remember and I didn't feel like doing that, nobody could recruit me so I kept my distance for awhile.

JR: What was the main sort of issue that was going on that was creating this controversy?

JB: It had to do with dissatisfaction in the police department basically. The police and the firemen decided they wanted the council to fire the police chief. Bruce was one of the staff and he wouldn't do it, and the council backed Bruce; and they said, well, we'll recall them. So they recalled five of the council members.

JR: Prior to getting involved politically as far as being elected to council, were you involved in any city boards or commissions?

JB: The first thing that I got involved in, Ken Thomas, who was Mayor at the time, had seen me come to the council meetings a few times and I remember he came down and introduced himself to me at one time after one of the council meetings. So he learned who I was; I was a new face and I wasn't aligned with anybody so there was a push made to hire a consultant to come in and review the police department, and write a report on the effectiveness of the police department. So they decided to form a citizens committee to select which consultant to use and Ken came and asked me if I would chair that committee, since I had appeared to be independent and not aligned. So I said sure I'd do that. I, with two other people, one pro police chief, one anti police chief and me, the three of us decided on who we would pick. That was my first goal as an arbitrator I think in politics. Then I served on the airport commission and some other ad hoc committees and so forth.

JR: You mentioned that it was someone that asked you to run for council?

JB: Yes.

JR: So you just kind of said, "sure, why not"?

JB: Well, no the first time I said no. I was working in Phoenix and didn't have the time. I thought it was more fun to watch it. Two years later I decided that I would so I threw my hat in the ring. I was campaigning in 1981. Around the time McCain was elected.

JR: What are some of the significant memories you have from being on the city council?

JB: The growth was just moving on us. Residential growth was starting up in north Chandler coming down from Dobson Ranch area in Mesa. We were building communities without infrastructure. It caused me great concern and there was a lot of turmoil because Warner Road wasn't paved, Ray Road wasn't paved out in the west, Price Road was a dirt road and I just couldn't stand it. I kept pushing them to get infrastructure expanded. Of course we had a big challenge, we were a small city, we didn't have the financial strength to do everything we needed to do. So it became very challenging, I really got deeply involved in it. After two years I decided that I'd resign and run for Mayor, I'd either get a bigger hammer or I'd quit. I resigned mid-term and ran for Mayor and was elected Mayor.

JR: So you started on the council in 1982?

JB: Right, 82-84.

JR: Were you involved with anything related to like Intel coming in?

JB: When I was on the council I joined the, the predecessor to GPEC (Greater Phoenix Economic Council), but they had another organization at the time, it was all the cities in the metropolitan area that had representatives and I sat on that. I went to a lot of the seminars and things we had for trying to recruit business with Department of Commerce and so on and I got involved in that. It was an industry supported citizens group.

JR: That was part of how Intel came in?

JB: Intel had already selected their site at Rural Road and Chandler Boulevard and they were starting to build that site. I can relate to another sensitivity I had at the time, since I had grown up in east Phoenix and Scottsdale, I lived there when they looked like Chandler looked then. I remember Thomas Road and Indian School Road between Phoenix and Scottsdale, there were dairies along there, there were farms along there.

While I was in the service for basically 30 years, I'd come home every two or three years and I'd see how the growth had just taken over and I knew that it was going to happen in Chandler. There wasn't anything to indicate to me that it was going to stop. So I wanted to get the infrastructure into Chandler, get it in place, before we experienced more problems like we did in north Chandler where we had the residents but not a support structure. As a matter of fact it was interesting, I came home on leave in 1959, my father was so pessimistic about all the growth, he hated to see Phoenix growing the way it was, and he would always sit me down and say, tell me what had happened since I've been in town. I came home in '59 and he said, "Guess what they've done now"? I said, "What's that dad"? He said, "They just ruined Papago Park, they built McDowell Road right through the middle and cut the park right in half". He was so upset about that. I could hardly believe that, Papago Park was way out of town then. So I jumped in my car and drove up there and I can remember driving up the pass between the buttes there and I looked over to the east and they were actually building houses over there on the other side of the canal in Scottsdale. So I thought at the time, maybe dad's right, maybe it is getting out of hand. By the time I became involved in civic affairs in Chandler I knew that we had to plan ahead for this stuff. I could just visualize traffic zooming up and down Pecos Road like it is on Indian School Road in Phoenix. I think that's what motivated me more than anything else to stay and fight the battles.

JR: Another question about Intel, I'm curious how did Intel come to select Chandler as a place to come?

JB: I can't say really about the first plant, the one at Rural and Chandler Boulevard, I know that Donna Bolen was the real estate broker that brokered the land to sell it to them. So as far as I know she was the most influential person in bringing Intel in here initially. There were obviously the state and everyone else anxious to have them, but as far as I know she was probably more influential than any other one person from my experience. When I got in I wanted to build a feather nest and make it real nice and fluffy and inviting for any high paying employers we could get so we pushed hard to upgrade standards of development, raised medians

in the roadways, changed the name of Williams Field Road to Chandler Boulevard and so on, with the support of a good bunch of people on my Council.

JR: Was that in 1985?

JB: Yes.

JR: So you served as Mayor from 1984 – 1988?

JB: Yes.

JR: Were there any other reasons why you wanted to become Mayor?

JB: No, I just always liked being in the middle of the action like when I was in the Pentagon, I liked the job I had there, a lot of excitement, a lot of progress. I've always felt that I had an obligation to do constructive things and that was probably at that time the most constructive thing I could find.

JR: What kind of traits do you think did it took for someone to be a Mayor at that time?

JB: I think I'm not a very smooth politician, but with my engineering background and my pragmatic approach to things it just seems to me now that that served the city pretty well because we just had to get on with the infrastructure at the time and do all these plans. We did master plans for (the city staff did them with our direction) everything that was coming down the pike. Everything from fire department master plans, where we would put fire stations, of course the land use plan was the big thing. The airport master plan, I wanted to save area around the airport so the airport could be developed without conflict with residential, so we did an airport master plan. We did waste water and water distribution master plans based on the land use plans we put together. Lots of plans were generated in those days.

JR: Was there anything that was initiated such as agreements between the school district and the city, or issues related to wanting to keep open space or any of those kind of things that are currently part of Chandler now, that were initiated back in the time you were Mayor?

JB: One thing I'm proud of, I think I foresaw a potential dispute in boundaries between Chandler and Gilbert as we both grew in the south of the Gilbert's then existing planning area. So I met with Mayor L. J. Reed of Gilbert and negotiated an intergovernmental agreement to establish the future boundary between Chandler and Gilbert so we wouldn't get in to civil wars over it later on which was common in other parts of the valley. So we very civilly negotiated the agreement, our councils passed it and you never heard of any disputes about who's going to get what with regard to the city limits in the southeast.

Of course we all wanted to advance the cultural base in Chandler as a part of the effort to attract high tech industry and good employment so we wanted a performing arts center. That was advanced by Jim Patterson when I was on the City Council, and I supported that wholeheartedly, but we didn't have money to do things. When I ran for Mayor about the same time the school board elections were held and a couple people were candidates for school board and they said they wanted a new auditorium for the school. So I kind of waited in the bushes until they got elected and then I went over to the superintendent and City Manager, and got everybody together and said, what's the feasibility of an

intergovernmental agreement. And we built one that serves both, and they thought that was a good idea, so I took it to their school board meeting and proposed it and everybody got on board. I'm extremely proud of the performing arts center that we have, we got the two parties together on that and built it for less than 10 million dollars, city acquired some of the land in addition to that, Arizona Avenue. That was less than 10 million dollars whereas the center that had been proposed was 19 million dollars. I felt very good about that and I still do.

JR: What year was that built?

JB: It was finished in 1989.

JR: What was Chandler like when you became Mayor in 1984? Kind of describe what Chandler was like, population, types of industries, just what it looked like...

JB: The population in the census of 1980 was 29,850. When I became Mayor it was probably 35,000. Four years later when I left office it was 76,000. It just swept in on us. We formed improvement districts and built all the roads in north and west Chandler through the improvement districts process, which they deferred a lot of the cost to the landowners. That was pretty controversial, some people didn't like it but I couldn't find any other way to do it. There wasn't any access to the freeway at Ray Road, there wasn't an interchange out there, I had to go out and convince the landowners on both Phoenix side and Chandler side to voluntarily participate in an assessment policy planned where the city would provide half the cost, they would provide a quarter of the cost, and ADOT would provide half of it and we'd get a free interchange going. It was just constantly things like that, always an uphill battle it seemed like to get things done.

The water pressure was so low in the city that the fire department kept telling me that they couldn't affectively fight fires in some parts; so we had to expand water production and storage and distribution, that was something. We were prompted to pass the first, what's now called, the impact fee system. We call it a systems development fee on any new construction. We started it on residential for water and sewer distribution. Over the years we expanded it and the recent council has made it pretty comprehensive, we do everything up to street signals and so forth. We just had to find ways to come up with money and that was awful difficult.

JR: How did you do that?

JB: I can't claim credit for the technical solution to that problem, we had an outstanding staff in the city, the management services director, Barry Weber, and our City Manager at the time, Don Brown, provided all the expertise in that. From a policy point of view I and the council had to be very careful that we didn't damage our bond rating because we had to sell a lot of bonds, we didn't want to damage the bond rating by going too far with that. So it was a balancing act the staff guided us on and I can't say too much for the quality of staff we had at that time, it was wonderful.

JR: During your time as Mayor, what was your vision for Chandler?

JB: I wanted Chandler to be recognizable as a unique community. I wanted to do everything I could to build an esprit de corps about living in Chandler. I always liked that about the Marine Corps, once a Marine always a Marine. Marines are always proud of being Marines and I wanted Chandlerites to be proud of living in Chandler. To do that you had to build a quality city I thought. With the help with our staff, particularly Hank Pluster, we laid out new and upgraded some development standards everything from street design standards where we have raised medians, landscape medians, proper drainage everywhere, engineers got behind it and I think we've done a pretty good job of setting some standards. We set some standards that have been followed through the years that we can all be proud of, I think.

JR: Were there any other major issues when you were Mayor other than what we already discussed?

JB: Well, development of the airport master plan was a major issue with me. It took a lot effort and convincing of property owners, we had large landowners around the airport and every body wanted the highest and best use of zoning for their parcels. But to get that nine square mile area master planned was a time consuming job, I made many, many visits and coffee shop hangouts to convince people to get on board. I was so pleased when we finally put it together, I consider that a major accomplishment. I regret that the land use plan has been violated a few times, subsequently other councils have let housing move in to the areas that were zoned otherwise. But overall it was a great effort.

The annexation of all the land down toward Ocotillo, that was a major annexation and I jumped on that real quick and helped talk to landowners to bring that into the city. Several of us on the Council did that. I got extremely interested in that because I heard about the difficulty with Tempe back in '76, I don't know if that's been covered by Kenny or not. They attempted to annex clear up to Elliott Road and the freeway and that went awry. Before I went on the council I went to Ken and some others and told them I thought we ought to strip annex across the freeway from Harkin Lane over there to South Mountain Park so that would all develop eventually in Chandler, and I couldn't convince them; that was another reason I ran for council. I was so frustrated I couldn't get any one to listen to me on that. I said, if you don't want to annex all of that Ahwatukee foothills area, then at least annex over to 48th Street so we'd have the tax base on both sides of the freeway. They couldn't imagine Chandler developing out that far and it being a sound decision. So I said I'll get involved.

The privatization of the first waste water treatment plant we built, we could use industrial development authority bonds, and I'd been in the contract service business and I knew there were entities out there that would build that and operate it using their own money for a long term contract. So we got them to do that, it cost us almost nothing up front to build that wastewater treatment plant. There were so many things on the cooker at the time, an awful lot went on.

JR: The area that was annexed in the Ocotillo area, what were the boundaries, do you remember?

JB: Yes, it went clear down to Sun Lakes to Chandler Heights, from Price Road, Chandler Heights, over to Arizona Avenue and back up. They exempted Eddie Basha's corporate headquarters there. That's still in the county

JR: Thinking about the larger Valley, were there any significant events that happened during your time as Mayor that affected Chandler?

JB: I was vice president of MAG, Terry Goddard was president, when we did the first mass transit plan. I was on the Water Users Association board when we started the long negotiations with CAP and the Federal Government, everybody on the Indian water rights issues. Those were very big issues and generally outside the scope of any one local government.

The big thing for me was transportation. I wanted to see this freeway system built so badly and so MAG got started on that and they laid out a plan, Chandler was still considered so far out by the downtown central Phoenix people that they weren't giving us enough attention. They designed Loop 101 to come down from Scottsdale to 60 and stop but I said I wanted it to come clear down here to San Tan. I had a big, big fight with them over that. I finally got them to run some traffic models and they said ok, we'll build a parkway, that's traffic lights every mile and I said, no, Chandler is going to grow. Chandler is going to need that. So by the time we finally went to the voters with Prop 300 in 1985, that was included as a freeway. I think everybody would say, "Thank God we did that then". Now they are already talking about expanding it.

JR: Were there any changes that stand out in your mind during your political career in Chandler that stand out as being significant in terms of change in Chandler?

JB: Overall, the most general thing is demanding higher standards in development and starting the Systems Development Fee program, I think those are, if you look at the total spectrum of growth and development probably most significant.

Just establishing the idea that Chandler can be a unique and modern, progressive city, was my goal. When I became Mayor, the northeast corner of Warner and Alma School, which became the busiest intersection in Chandler within a few years, the northeast corner was zoned for a mobile home park. There were little 50'x30' lots all over that thing. I got that rezoned. Just thinking bigger and finer and we can do it. That's what I was trying to propagate.

JR: You talked about a lot of accomplishments that you felt happened during your time of Mayor, what would you term as your major accomplishment as Mayor?

JB: From a purely political point of view, I was always proud of the fact that I didn't have any referendum. I didn't have any public outcry. I got all these things done with just a lot of complaining, but never a recall, never referendum or any other organized public rebellion, I was pretty happy with that.

JR: Having been a Mayor, how would you describe Chandler in comparison to other local cities?

JB: I think Chandler is the best balanced, very balanced. Our job ratio, numbers of jobs within the city limits compared to population is very high. It's always been my thought if all the cities in metropolitan area developed that way we wouldn't have the transportation problems we have. I think people ought to live close to their work and it's good for the city, it makes the city healthy to have the diversified employment base to keep their people in the city employed. The billions of dollars we are spending on transportation issues are not as well spent if everybody developed like Chandler did. You start that with a good land use plan and stick to it, my opinion.

JR: What do you feel has made Chandler the city that it is today?

JB: More than anything else, I think it's the strong, professional management teams that we have put in place. The professional managers, the Don Browns', city managers and top echelon managers. Of course they take the signal from the council, the council has to give them an idea and support them when they want to exercise the strong and progressive, professional operations. I think we've done pretty well on that.

JR: If you were to look ahead to 2012, which is our city's centennial year, what do you think Chandler will be like?

JB: It will continue to build out according to the standards we have now. It will be a modern, vibrant city. I'm particularly pleased with how the city's current administrations are out there working on older neighborhoods to prevent their obsolescence and we're doing a great job on that so far. We need to keep that up. Chandler will still be a healthy city. Financially we've got to make a transition from all this income we have now from impact fees. So we're going to have to make sure we have the sales tax and industrial tax base that will maintain the city. That will be a challenge. The management seems to be addressing that.

JR: Do you think or predict that there might be anything new in Chandler?

JB: Oh yes, there will be a lot of things. When I was promoting the airpark I had a schematic put together showing what my vision of the air park area would look like. I see a very big job base out there and I see well-designed industrial parks that will be very attractive areas if they can follow through with that. I like to see jobs, good jobs, for the city. We've been diversifying now, I see with Covents coming in and others, we need to welcome diversification. We seem to be doing that with more financial institutions coming in. I think we can do more with healthcare and health research and development area. We still have a good nest built for them and space for them.

JR: In 2012 what do you think will be gone from Chandler?

JB: We will have redeveloped most of downtown Chandler, I think. We have some obsolete housing in the downtown area. They need to keep working as they are now to upgrade the housing in the downtown area. I think we have a ways to go to get the critical mass, we haven't maintained our critical mass from a business point of view, for downtown yet. We need more specialty retail, and really specialty. Things that cause people to drive to Chandler. Destination shopping.

We've got some beautiful shops and a nice start on that downtown but I think that's the future of downtown.

JR: What do you think will happen to agriculture?

JB: It will fade out just as it did in Phoenix and Scottsdale. It will move to other parts of the state. The record shows that's just evolution in metropolitan Arizona.

JR: Why is Chandler's history important?

JB: I think we can learn a lot from history. I remember when I first stumbled across Dr. Chandler's sketch of his master plan for downtown I had it hanging in the Mayor's office. He had it put together in 1926 and I think it was the first land use plan for any city in the state of Arizona. We learned a lot from that, I know that affected me in wanting to modernize and bring up to date the city's land use plan. It's truly remarkable what he had put together back then.

JR: How should Chandler's history be preserved?

JB: By doing these kinds of things and I think we need to celebrate the events appropriately. We did a very successful 75th anniversary party when I was Mayor, we anticipated that and had a lot of excitement, a lot of hubbub and talk and enthusiasm for that I think. I certainly enjoyed the celebration.

JR: So in the centennial year do think a big event or are you saying every year?

JB: No, no, you could probably wear the people out. But certainly on the centennial, we ought to really go after it, show the whole state.

JR: This is my curiosity question, what would you like to see as far as an event could happen in relation to that?

JB: I think we should celebrate the kinds of industry we have now. I think the school districts in the city limits should participate. They have quite a history too. They should be brought into it. Our industry, particularly this high tech business has changed so radically. When I left the Air Force almost 30 years ago, I was up to date on all the high tech stuff. Today I don't recognize anything in high tech. It's just absolutely outgrown me, I haven't been involved and the evolution has been so great that I think there's a great opportunity for Microchip and these folks to come during a bicentennial and show the people what their products do and how they have evolved since they came to Chandler. That would be extremely interesting, I think, to the whole state.

JR: Is there anything else you would like to add to the interview, anything we didn't cover, maybe something else you would like to say about being Mayor of Chandler?

JB: I would say that it was a very great privilege for me to serve the city of Chandler. I appreciate the support the citizens gave me, I learned a lot, even though I wasn't a very good politician, but we got a lot done and I thank everybody, the professional staff that I worked with and the citizens of Chandler that supported us. Thank you very much.

JR: Thank you for coming.

