

KENT WICK
January 21, 1998

Anne Andeen, and myself, Ann Townsend, have the privilege to interview Mr. Kent Wick, former Council Member and Mayor of the Town of Paradise Valley. Mr. Wick is Director of External Affairs at Judson School in Paradise Valley, Arizona.

Interviewer: Thank you, Mr. Wick, for allowing us to interview you. May we have permission to quote you in part or all of our conversation today?

Mr. Wick: Yes, you may.

Interviewer: Thank you. Mr. Wick, we've had the privilege of interviewing your father, Henry, in July of last year and it was fascinating learning about Judson School, the state's oldest independent college preparatory school, established in 1928. Your father came to Judson in 1938 and became its President and Director. No doubt, you are a native of Arizona.

Mr. Wick: That's correct.

Interviewer: And went through Judson.

Wick: That's correct.

Interviewer: And received your college degree where?

Wick: In Arizona. I attended both the University of Arizona in Tucson, and then Arizona State University in Tempe, so I haven't gone far from home.

Interviewer: Then you returned to Judson to teach.

Wick: I taught some, but mainly worked through a myriad of different things, including being a bus driver while I was in college, and gardener after college. I didn't come back to work for the school until 1982. Prior to 1982, I had a restaurant which didn't do very well in the Town of Paradise Valley. I worked for a tennis clothing company where I was the Regional Manager of the group out of Arizona, California and New Mexico. And I worked for Russ Lyon Realty with Danny Lyon who graduated from Judson. I worked on a number of things.

Interviewer: Then in '82, you came back and worked here in the school. Now you're in Administration, along with your father.

Wick: That's correct.

Interviewer: That in itself is a full time job, but then you took upon yourself to serve the Town in the governing Council and then its Mayor. You were Mayor from when?

Wick: 1990 to 1992. I was on the Council for six years, including Council and Mayor. Three elections, six years total.

Interviewer: You've put in a lot of time and hard work, too. Tell us about your experience on the Council. One of the things we'd like to know is what you feel in your administration were some really significant measures that you helped see through to keep our Town as wonderful as it is.

Wick: I'd be happy to share that with you. First, my interest became perked or peeked by the fact that I was starting to build a house in the Town of Paradise Valley. That put me in direct contact with the Town Council, Planning and Zoning and the various governing boards. I was actually building on the mountain in back of Judson School. I came in a lot of contact with everybody. I started to see a lot of things that I agreed with and that I disagreed with. I started to go to some of the Council meetings and some of the Planning and Zoning meetings, not necessarily regarding the construction of my house. I started to form strong opinions about this or that. Finally, Joan Lincoln and a couple of other people on the Council said, "You know, you have such good opinions about such things. Since you do have opinions and some are fairly strong about certain things, instead of just sitting here and telling us what you think is right, why don't you run for Council? I was born in the Town of Paradise Valley, lived here all my life, and, as I mentioned, haven't gone far from Arizona ever, so I thought that would be something that would be worthwhile and that I could make a difference. I have taken a lot and received a lot by living here, maybe I can give back a little bit. That was my motivation

to doing it. Although I hadn't guessed what was quite in store for me after starting. Of course, Anne Andeen knows from her husband's experience all that's involved by being on the Council, and the controversies that come forward. I remember first, as I was running for election, I didn't think I had bones to pick with anybody, a group of people started saying, "The only reason Mr. Wick is going to run is because he is going to level that Judson School and build a big high-rise there." I thought to myself where did this come from? I realized that you always have different opinions and people that feel differently. I went and talked with everybody who said that and we ironed everything out.

Interviewer: And there still isn't a high rise.

Wick: And there still isn't a high rise. I got a kick out of that. I was elected to the Council and there were a number of issues that were very hot and on the agenda. The photo radar which was recently installed received a tremendous amount of both positive and negative input about that. There was a debate about whether we should improve Tatum Road. It was a very expensive proposition and a lot of people thought, "No, we should not encourage traffic, we should not do these things." In fact, we had a number of fatalities on the curve of Tatum heading toward Doubletree if you were going north. We looked at that when Bob Plenge was the Mayor at the time. Even though it was very expensive and had a lot of opposition, we determined that one of the most significant things we can do was to at least make it safe. Not larger, not more conducive to flow through traffic, but stop the fatalities. We all jumped in and worked on that project for a

long time. We all worked as a team because that is the only way we got things done. But I had the opportunity of working with a number of landowners around there, including Madeleine Babbitt, Carl Howell, and Don Laughlin. They owned land next to it and said, “Absolutely not, we’re not going to do that. You’re not going to take our land and do something with it and make this road better.” I could never imagine challenging these people about anything that they had to say, but we did. We worked hard and it is what it is today and I think we haven’t had any fatalities that I know of on that particular stretch, knock on wood. When you look back, things such as that make me really feel good. There is something that was done and it was a hard fought battle. We all worked together as a team and we accomplished something. When I drive down there, which I do regularly, it’s kind of good to see. I’m proud of that accomplishment. That was a successful accomplishment that I’m proud of, there was some other things I tried that didn’t work. I was advocating for years on trying to get a road to go from 32nd Street and Camelback to alleviate some of the problems that we had in the Town, through the Mountain Preserve connecting to what is now 32nd Street, it would have tied in to the Squaw Peak. I still think that would have been a great thing and it still should be done. We were stopped at every juncture on that. I went to meetings weekly. I was appointed by Council as the Representative on all the governmental offices to push that opinion with the Arizona Department of Transportation and Maricopa Association of Governments. I fought furiously to do that and it was unsuccessful. That was something I wish we could have gotten done but we didn’t.

Interviewer: Do you think that is a dead issue now?

Wick: It is for the time being. There is still a real need for it. All of us on the Council, and this was the standard line, thought there are 100,000 cars going through the Lincoln/Tatum intersection, I believe there are probably more now, and we only have 13,000 people in the Town, we are doing a lot for our neighbors to support their traffic congestion. Certainly, we use the streets also and there's a case to be made for that. But on the other hand, if there are other solutions available within the other communities, they don't need to put the burden of their problems all on us, and continually funnel everything up to Tatum. We've looked at the fatalities that I just mentioned on the Tatum curve, a lot of that was a direct result of the pressure being put on us by some of our surrounding cities. I thought that was a simple solution. Being very energetic and thinking I could do it, I thought I would have this wrapped in no time. But we didn't and I can still advocate it. I beat the pavement a lot.

Interviewer: What I thought would be an interesting idea is to build a tunnel through it, so you could save the mountain.

Wick: I hike up Squaw Peak all the time. Certainly that area which is a preserve can still remain that way. In my mind, it wouldn't have really impacted the area.

Interviewer: Maybe another generation will see the light. Is there anything else you want to share with us?

Wick: There were all sorts of different things that went on. I know one anecdote that you were mentioning. I had just become Mayor of the Town. Somebody called me and said do you have your number listed? I said, "Of course, the number is listed." Anyway, Wednesday night at one o'clock in the morning, the phone rings. "Is this Mayor Wick?" I was sound asleep and I said, "Yes, this is Mayor Wick." He said, "I just want to tell you that I went by your photo radar at 100 mph without my license plates on." Of course, you know photo radar only works if they can capture the license plate." I was directly made responsible for the photo radar. It was now my photo radar, not the Town's photo radar and it was one o'clock in the morning. I simply said, "Well thank you for sharing and I'm glad you got away with the 100 mile an hour speed." I had just taken office and thought, "Is this the start of things to come?" And it actually was, not so much at one o'clock in the morning. So many times we'd get calls about things that you would be amazed that people would be concerned about. It was really fun, and I really enjoyed the experience. I was saying, "Gosh this is really a privilege and an honor being the Mayor of the Town I was born in." I was the first one to be born in the Town and become Mayor of it. That was kind of neat for me. We had eight people over to dinner one night and the phone rang. The woman on the other end said, "I'm having a dinner and the whole dinner party is being ruined by these loud dogs next door. They are barking, barking, barking. Can you hear the barking? I really want you to come over here and talk to my neighbor and please help." I said, "You know, I'd love to help but I have some people over here. Not that my priority should be over yours, but why don't you try calling the neighbor first. Have you tried that?" "No, I haven't done that." "Call him and tell him what's going on and then if you have more problems, call me back." I never did hear from her again. It

was really neat to have such a small Town that this particular woman would be able to call and say I want the Mayor to come over here and take care of these barking dogs. I hope we never lose that sense of small Town, being able to call, even though I may have disagreed at the time of running over there to help her with the dogs. Another time, it was two o'clock in the morning, there were four horses out on Lincoln. The police called me and said, "Mayor Wick, get down here. I'm concerned they're Judson's horses, but can you come down and identify them." Before thinking, because I was sound asleep, I raced down from my house, went down to the Town Hall where they had the horses corralled in the Public Works area, and he said, "Are these your horses?" I thought I'm not going to know what all our horses look like, how am I going to identify them. I said, "I'm not sure." One of the horses was hurt. It had been hit by a car or it slipped, we couldn't tell which. It was bleeding badly. I couldn't think of what to do. I called my father and said, "We need to get a vet. Who do we use for emergencies." And he said so an so. We called him and he was out. He had a referral of a vet in Carefree. The nice guy drove all the way down at three o'clock in the morning to the Town and bandaged the horse up. I think he saved the horse's life. By then it was dawn and we were still out there. But we saved the horse. It turned out none of the horses were Judson's, but it was logical that they would have been because we are so close and had more horses than anybody close by. Again, all these things are funny, they are interesting and I hope we never lose that small Town feeling where we can call people and things get done in more of an informal level. I hope we don't ever get to the bureaucracy that some of our sister cities have become where it's layered with all sorts of rules, regulations and things that

are a little bit scary. Common sense, I think, dictates more than some of the published manuals on what you can and cannot do.

Interviewer: I think one of the things Paradise Valley needs is to clone you. You were a wonderful, friendly Mayor that helps people feel welcome that they could call you. I don't know that all of the Mayors have been that way. You are very special.

Wick: Thank you. It was a good experience. I was really lucky because we had a lot of good people to work with like Dick Andeen, Phil Edlund, Scott O'Connor, Oscar Butt and John Miller. A nice group of level headed people who had the Town's best interest at heart. They really did a good job. It was a pleasure working with them. That was fun. We all listened patiently and diligently to people in the audience and to various members of the Council. Everybody had a chance to speak. Nobody was ever cut off or put down. Everybody had their chance and whether we agreed with them or not, it was good.

Interviewer: There was a basic respect and stability that is fast departing our country.

Wick: Yes, that's true. I enjoyed that, I was lucky. I know we've had more controversy than some of the other Councils with some of the issues that have been very hot. It's been a tough battle. I admire anybody who steps up to the plate and serves because they doubled my pay at the end of the session. But double nothing, of course, is still nothing.

Interviewer: What might be your suggestions for today's or future Councils? We have elections coming up next month. Are there any prophetic things you would like to suggest? By the time this gets printed, it wouldn't be for this next Council but it certainly would be in several years to come. Experience gives you lots of information of what you would like to suggest to people.

Wick: My hindsight is 20/20. I would suggest to everybody coming up that nobody should run with one axe to grind or some particular issue that is so burning that it consumes them completely. To look at all the various issues that come up and work with everybody on the Council. Everybody had an equal vote and everybody should work together and respect the other individuals. They should keep the zoning in mind that we've preserved over the years and look at some of the really important features in the history of the Town and use that as a guideline. Let everybody be heard whether you agree with them or disagree with them. Let them make their case, their point. Even though it takes a little longer sometimes to do that, I think it's very worthwhile because so many citizens have absolutely changed my mind. I had an idea about something coming up, I had a staff recommendation about something, and I heard the people in the Town and I said, "You know what, they're absolutely right. I hadn't thought of this. These are new facts." So if you lose that, it would be a shame. Or if we get so entrenched in bureaucracy again where common sense doesn't have a chance, then I think that can be a big thing. There is a philosophy to grow, to departmentalize, and to have many layers of things and certainly the Town has the financial ability to maybe grow faster than some other communities because we do have a good source of revenue in the Town. I would

resist that. The Town is not going to grow as far as population. I think we should limit the growth of our government and keep it representing the people.

Interviewer: Our borders are limited now. We're all locked in.

Wick: I don't think we need to grow too much more. Certainly safety and police issues should be updated. With the new police building and police facilities now, it should take us for years and years to come.

Interviewer: You've been wonderful and very articulate.

Wick: Thank you. Six years you can remember a lot. It was a good experience. When people say you went through this or that and say would you do it again. Absolutely I would do it again. But I also believe that six years is a long enough period of time for anybody to do it. At the end of the sixth year, you run out of energy a little bit. Your new ideas are not as fresh as they used to be. It's harder to get them going. I'm never for career politicians anyway. You can get entrenched. I believe people get out, do their best, spend some time down there and then get out.

Interviewer: What are the dreams or goals for Judson?

Wick: We have really done well in our foreign markets. By that we have a number of students from 30 different countries that actually live here at the school. We have 320

students enrolled. About half that live here and half that are day. The day market is expanding very nicely even though we are limited to one classroom teacher per grade. In other words, we only have one kindergarten, one first grade, one second grade, one third grade, one fourth grade, then it jumps to where we have a couple of fifth grades, a couple of sixth grades and a couple of seventh grades. We want to keep it that way. We don't want to get huge. I notice that Tesseract is building 12 new schools and bigger is not always better. We try to preserve a lot of the adobe buildings and a lot of the things that are here that were here in the '20's. The Heard Museum has taken a number of our bricks as samples when we had to do some structural work. We would like to continue like that. I would like to look at Thunderbird Graduate School Academy as a great model. They have such a nice group of foreign students blending with the American students. It is such a good experience for the younger students. I don't think we're going to get a lot larger, but I would like to continue that mix of the foreign students and blend those with the Americans.

Interviewer: I think that will be wonderful because we are a world community. If different groups of people from foreign countries can learn to get along together at a lower grade and grow up knowing that, we have a much better chance for humanities survival.

Wick: That's right. We have Jewish students and Arabian students living in the same dorm. Where it concerns some of their parents, it is absolutely amazing how well the kids get along. The same with some of the traditional differences between Japanese and

Chinese where there may be cultural differences that are very strong in their part of the world, when they get here, they all blend together. Koreans and Japanese, for instance, becoming best friends. Sometimes they are very competitive. That's neat. I was born here and my son was born here. It is really nice for him. He comes home saying, "Gosh, Dad, the Tower of Pisa is going to fall down if they don't support it pretty soon because Joey from Italy says that his Dad is ..." He has a little more of a global perspective. I like that. Plus my father has a great philosophy about the basics in making sure that everybody understands the math, the reading, the English, constructure and all that, before you move into the abstract things. You have to get the basics and everything else. That is what is taught here. No matter how they come up with new Math and all these things, the fundamentals are still really important.

Interviewer: How's your father doing?

Wick: He's doing great. You know he had that terrible accident in November of '97?

Interviewer: Yes, we interviewed him in July and he was just starting to walk.

Wick: Now he's much better. He's down for lunch and dinner all the time. He doesn't walk completely but he takes his wheelchair and walks, too. He's getting stronger and stronger. His comment to me was, "If I keep this rehabilitation up and keep working hard, when I hit 90, I'm going to be perfect." I said, "Now that's courage."

Interviewer: I think you have some of his enthusiasm for life too.

Wick: Thank you. I always enjoy myself. Never a dull moment around here though.

Interviewer: Not with over 300 hundred children.

Wick: And 100 on staff. When you get kids to live here, of course, that's always interesting. Kids will be kids. You get a second chance at childhood here because they all keep you young. If you dress with something, they'll say, "That looks pretty old fashioned, Mr. Wick."

Interviewer: I want to thank you so much for letting us come and interview you. It has been wonderful.

Wick: Oh, sure. Thanks for taking the time to do this for all the people. I know your salary is the same as mine was. It's nice of you taking the time.