

October 15, 2018

---

I am Catherine Kauffman, chairman of the Historical Committee along with Kathryn Gasser here to interview Sally Thompson

Catherine: We would like to thank you for coming today. Do we have permission to quote you in part or in whole from this interview?

Sally: Yes

Catherine: What brought you to Arizona and particularly the Town of Paradise Valley?

Sally: My husband was a corporate pilot for Greyhound/Dial Company. The Greyhound Bus Company started in Minnesota in the early 1900s as a little bus company that took miners from town to town. In the early 1970s, Greyhound bought Armor Food Company, a meat processing company, which owned the Dial Soap Company.

In 1971, the City Phoenix and the CEO, Gerry Trautman, made a deal to bring its headquarters from Chicago to Phoenix. In June of 1971, about five hundred families from the executive offices were brought out to Phoenix on various weekends to look for houses. If the families wanted to move out to Phoenix, the company would pay for all of the moving expenses. They gave us names of realtors who were all eager to help us out. We had friends that had moved out a few years earlier living in Scottsdale. My husband called them and told them what we were looking for in a house. "We have 5 kids that don't want to move. Their conditions are - water, trees, grass - otherwise they were staying home!" Our oldest was 17 and the youngest was 7. We flew out on a Friday and looked Friday afternoon and all day Saturday. By Sunday morning, we were just exhausted. Greyhound had put us up at the Camelback Inn. That Saturday night, Greyhound had a big party for us at Mountain Shadows, which was so cool because it was hot during the day and beautiful out at night. It certainly showed off what the desert was like. On Sunday, our friend, Jim, said that he might have found something for us and asked us to come over. We probably looked at 40 houses. We were used to a big yard so we wanted a nice yard. We weren't worried about what the inside of the house looked like as long as it was big enough to accommodate us. Jim said, "It looks like a really nice house and I think you are going to like it." We asked where it was and Jim said, "I think it's in Scottsdale." We didn't know that we bought a house in Paradise Valley until after we signed the papers. I still live in the same house - one block west of Scottsdale Road on San Miguel. My property was originally part of 80-acre citrus orchard so it is irrigated. I'm pretty sure that the Stone family owned this property. (Refer to Roberta Stone interview) A Stone family lived around the corner from us but I haven't made any connections yet. My daughter knew the daughter and her name was Bobbie Stone. I think it was Bobbie Stone, the granddaughter, who had written a little book that my neighbor had a copy talking about what it was like living there. I gave the book back to my neighbor and never made a copy. We moved here in August 1971.

October 15, 2018

---

The first Christmas we were out here, our neighbors decided to have a Christmas Eve party because there were so many new families. My husband had to leave that afternoon. I asked him where he was going and he said he didn't know. I asked him when he'd be home and he said he didn't know. I said is this something serious and he said he thought so. So here I am introducing myself, and my kids, to the neighbors. They were asking where is your husband? I said, "Well gee, I don't know!" It turned out that there was a threat by someone to poison some vats of bologna and hot dogs from the meat packing company. They wanted a sum of money at a certain location. They left Phoenix with the money and many FBI agents on that plane. That was the first scare out here and then there was another threat. Someone was going to blow up a plane. They had to fly the plane somewhere else and no one knew where they were going. These things never hit the newspapers because they kept those things pretty quiet. It was traumatic but you learned to live with it.

When Mr. Trautman retired as the CEO, they had a big party for him at a Scottsdale hotel on the east side of Scottsdale Road across the street from where the Plaza is. I can't remember the name of the hotel. When Mr. Trautman looked at the list of those invited, he noticed that the pilots were not on the list. He scratched out some names and added all of his pilots and mechanics plus their wives or significant others to his retirement dinner. Mr. Trautman said that they were some of the most significant people because they took care of him.

Catherine: Did your kids go to Kiva School?

Sally: All of the kids went to catholic school in Chicago. We have 3 boys and 2 girls. The oldest girl started school at Scottsdale Community College – it's second year of existence. My daughter was surprised that all of the buildings were military barracks. When it rained out there, they had to put 4 by 8 plywood sheets outside because it was so muddy and there were no sidewalks. Our oldest son and next daughter went to Saguaro High School. Neither of them was too thrilled with the school. My daughter, Susan, asked me: "Why do they have policemen at the door?" Also she said at an assembly when they were saying the Pledge of Allegiance, some kids turned their backs to the flag. My kids were aghast. This was in the 70s. The next 2 kids, Michael was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and Robin was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade were at Kiva. Michael pleaded the loudest – "I don't want any more nuns!" He wanted to go to the public school. Michael was in Kiva for 2 days and came home saying, "Mom I'll take a classroom full of Sister Rita Marie's but get me out of this school." I asked him what was wrong. He said, "Mom there is no discipline there. The kids wear flip-flops to school. The boys wear blue jeans with holes in the knees. It's disgusting. They chew gum in school and they're rude." They were used to real organization in school. In Chicago, their catholic schools had up to 50 kids in a classroom. You had to have discipline. So I went to Father McGuire over at Our Lady of Perpetual Help and said, "Father, I need your help. None of my kids are happy at public school." Father McGuire said, "Why did

October 15, 2018

you do that?" I told him that I figured we were taking them out of their comfortable environment and putting them in a place they didn't know. I thought at least I would give them some comfort and I told Father McGuire, it didn't work. Father McGuire said that he would make a deal with me. He said, "The school is full but I will tell the principal that she's got to take 2 more in provided that you take the 2 high school children over to Gerard Catholic High School." Gerard was over on 44 Street and Thomas. Father Gerard was the first Catholic ordained priest here in 1877. His first mission was in Florence, AZ. He helped build St. Mary's downtown and St. Mary's in Tempe. He was a diocesan priest. The sister school to Gerard was Bourgade Catholic High School on the west side of Phoenix. Both schools are named after priests. When my youngest, Robin, went to high school, Gerard was set to close within the four years, so he went to Scottsdale High School.

Catherine: Did you any of your family move out here too?

Sally: My mother came out here about 8 months after we came out. My dad had passed away the year before. My mom was a young 66 at the time. She was born in 1907. Her parents were still alive living in Chicago along with my brother and his family. Plus there were many aunts, uncles and cousins all living in Chicago. My brother and his family would take care of her but he has 6 boys. My mom really needed to think about what the future held for her. When my mom told my grandmother about moving to Phoenix, she said, "What, go to Phoenix – yes – right now! I'll start packing!" She was so excited because they had spent a couple of winters out here and loved it. So they all came out and bought a house in Scottsdale where my mom lived with my grandparents. Then grandma had breast surgery a year after. She didn't tell my mother she had cancer until the night before they were going back to visit in Chicago. Grandma didn't come through the surgery too well. Grandpa celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday out here. He was totally blind. We baked him a cake, which was sitting on the kitchen table. He came into the house laughing and joking with the kids when he lost his balance. While trying to catch himself, he put his hand right in the cake! He felt so badly but we told him that it was his cake – don't worry about it! After that my mom was worried that she couldn't afford the house in Scottsdale by herself. My husband said she better live with us. We switched around the bedrooms and my mother lived with us for 35 years. She lived to be 101.

If I can digress, I have a story to tell about my mother. Grandma drove until she was 93. We had 8 of us living in the house and 8 cars. For my husband to get out in the morning, everybody had to have their car parked in the right spot. Sometimes, he would have to leave the house at 3 am if he had an early flight. Grandma's spot was on the far side of the acreage so that she wouldn't bother anybody and nobody would bother her. It was October and I was doing a workshop in Miami-Globe for the school district up there. My husband went up with me because I was traveling with a lot of books and needed his help. Everything was fine when we

---

October 15, 2018

got home. I saw grandma and asked about her day. Grandma said, "It was wonderful." So we sat at the table for dinner and then when we got up to do the dishes, there was a knock at the side door. I went to answer it and there were 2 Paradise Valley Policemen standing there. I said, "Yes can I help you?" They said, "Yes, we have a warrant for the arrest of Marjorie Janisch. Is she here?" My heart went *blip*. I said, "My mother - my 89-year-old mother - you have a warrant for her arrest?" They said, "Yes, is she here?" I said, "Yes, we are here doing dishes." So I went and got her. I was thinking oh my goodness; I have never had the police come to the door for any of my kids but my mother! I was beside myself. I said, "Mom, you didn't say anything today." So we go outside and they start talking to her asking if she was driving her car today. She said yes. The cops asked, "Were you involved in a hit and run?" She said, "Well know, not really." "Did you hit someone?" "Yes" "Were you driving down Tatum and making a left hand turn on Lincoln?" The cops said, "Well you hit somebody." Mom said, "Oh ya I did." The cops replied, "But you didn't stop to find out if everyone was alright?" Well she looked at them and she said, "Ya know, if that man was any kind of gentleman, he would have gotten out of his truck to see if I was okay, but he didn't and we were in the inside lane with 2 lanes of traffic. Do you think I am an idiot that I am going to get out of the car in front of all that traffic?" The cops were looking at her and I'm thinking mom where did that come from? She was really upset and determined. The cops said, "We have this warrant. Where is your car?" Mom responded, "It's over there." The cops asked, "Well what is it doing over there? Are you hiding it?" Now it was pretty dark out and they said, "We want to see your car. We still don't know why you put it over here." By this time, there was only one kid at home so there wasn't much car movement. Now mom could have parked closer but she stayed in her usual parking spot. She liked it over there. Now the cops had to pull out flashlights to find out what the damage was. They walked around the car shining their lights looking for damage. They ask her more questions. "Did you take this car into a shop today? Did you have it worked on?" She said, "Well no, why would I do that? There's nothing wrong with it." They said, "Are you sure? Did you have it painted?" "Why would I have it painted? There's nothing wrong with it." The cops asked, "Where did you hit this guy?" She said, "My side view mirror. My side view mirror tapped his side view mirror. There's nothing wrong with my side view mirror." So they looked at the side view mirror and there was a little bit of white paint on it. So the cops held a pow-wow and came back and said, "Is that all you did?" She said, "Yes that's all I did to him." They said, "Don't worry. We'll have the warrant taken away. We'll call the insurance company." They didn't say it but you know what they were inferring - that whoever this guy was in the pickup truck obviously had some bad damage before my mother even came near him and was going to collect on this little old lady who wasn't going to be able to handle herself. I thought good for you mom. The police couldn't have been nicer. After they got all of the facts, they asked to borrow the phone to call the police station to get rid of the warrant and called the insurance company.

October 15, 2018

---

Catherine: Did you work outside of the home?

Sally: The first year we were here in Arizona, I did not work. I was not happy out here to be quite frank. I had a complete life in Chicago with a big family. I was working as a school librarian. I didn't want to come out to the desert. I didn't like the heat in the summer. Coming from Chicago where everything was paved, I would drive here on roads with ditches on the side of the roads. I still don't like the heat but I have since grown to appreciate the desert.

Then in 1972, I was hired as a Librarian at St. Theresa's. I was there for 8 years. At St. Theresa's, I was connected with the Balsz School District because the federal government gives money to schools earmarked for books. The money was allotted per child in each school assuming you met the requirements. In Arizona, the public schools handled all the money for both public and private schools and the Balsz School District handled the money for St. Theresa's. The Balsz School District is an old district that was started in 1888. Balsz was a German farmer and the wife wanted the kids educated and there was no school there so the wife started the school.

Because of the federal money, I had to work with the Balsz School District, which had 4 schools at the time. After I left St. Theresa's, I went to work for the Balsz District. I liked to read to the kids and at St. Theresa's they wanted me to shelve the books. I would bring in speakers and authors. At one time I had an author speak at St. Theresa's and invited the superintendent from the Balsz District to have lunch with the author and teachers. That is when the superintendent saw what I was doing and was very impressed. He hired me. I found my niche at Orangedale School and loved it. I also served on a lot of national committees then. I would review all new books. I served on a Caldecott Committee and several other committees along with chairing some committees for the best books of the year. I had every book that I wanted at my fingertips. Because I got so many books from publishing houses and I could put them into the library, the money I got from the school districts, I used to buy resources like encyclopedias. The librarians around the area were in tune with what everybody else was doing. We collaborated a lot with programming where we shared information.

I retired in 1999 from the Balsz District and then went to work as a librarian for Pope John II Catholic School on 60<sup>th</sup> south of Bell Road. I was there for 7 years. With me came the books I still had at home from all the books I had reviewed nationally. We started out with 15,000 books. I gave them all to Pope John School. I was 72 years old when I retired. The principal, vice principal and I all retired the same year. I wasn't going to train another principal! So when they retired, I retired! That was in 2007.

Catherine: Where did you go to college?

October 15, 2018

Sally: I started my undergraduate degree at the University of Illinois and then finished at ASU. In the early 1980s, I got my masters degree in computer science from Lesley College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Computers came into the library and I knew nothing about computers. If you didn't go to school, you were going to be left behind. Our instructors flew in from MIT to teach us on the weekends. There were about 18 of us. It was a 2-year course. We were the first ones to do this masters program.

Catherine: Did you ever work at OLPH?

Sally: I didn't volunteer much while I was working though I always found time to volunteer a little bit. I did volunteer at OLPH the first year we were here. I volunteered and taught 2<sup>nd</sup> grade for a couple of weeks while one of the teachers was sick. Before they had an art program, when my youngest was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I taught art to 7<sup>th</sup> graders that year. We did batik. We had to take the ironing board outside to get the wax off of the cloth because they didn't have a room to put us in. When my granddaughter, Alex, went to Kiva, I volunteered in Kindergarten to share books with the kids. I went in once a month. The teacher gave me an hour to work with the kids and read them stories. Alex is 16 now.

Catherine: Do you have other grandchildren that live in the Town?

Sally: I have 2 grandsons that live in Scottsdale besides Alex and one great grandchild. The 2 grandsons are dentists.

Catherine: How did you get involved with the Old Mission Church and the Camelback Cemetery?

Sally: After I retired in 2007, I became a docent at the Old Mission Church. They were opening it back up after being shut down as a church since 1956. As docents, we had programs that people would attend. Many of the ancestors of the Mexicans who built the Mission would come and they would tell their stories about what it was like out here. The Mexicans who worked on the Mission were parishioners. We got to know them and learned a lot of the history.

For the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mission, a group of us docents got together and formed the history committee. After, we decided to stay together and write a book about the Mexicans who built the Old Mission. It's a terrible way to write a book but that's what happened. I said that I could do the typing. I'm not a writer. I am a critic. I'm a reader but I am not an author. One of the group members has her doctorate in research from ASU so she is the one that did the research. In the beginning, we thought we were going to write a story about the church. As the months progressed, we decided that the church was just a building. It's the people we need

October 15, 2018

to write about. We had the legacy there in the church that they built but it's how they did it and what they did. How they worked together. Karen, the researcher, thought it was interesting that we didn't have anything about prejudices. I said they never talked about it. Karen asked, "Don't you think we need it in there?" I said, "Why?" Karen said, "Because it was there." I said, "Most people know that prejudice is around. They aren't going to think just because it's not here that there is no prejudice." I asked Karen, "Have you heard any of the Mexicans say anything about prejudice?" Karen said, "no." I said, "Neither have I."

The Mexican parishioners built the Old Mission Church on the corner of Brown Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Street. It became Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. It was the first parish in Scottsdale. In 1956, after WWII and Motorola came in, it was too small for the congregation. They built the second church on Miller and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. The Old Mission Church is still owned by the Parish.

The Mexicans were coming to work in the cotton fields or the citrus orchards, which didn't pay too much. So they really had nothing. They shared everything with each other. The people there wanted a church. They had been here maybe 12-15 years without a church. They would have to ride horseback either to Tempe or Phoenix. As it became known that there was a settlement of Mexicans that would like to have a priest, periodically someone would come. The congregation was mostly Hispanic. The first 2 priests came from Ireland. Father McGuire stayed for 40 years. They used the Little Red School House to say mass. Sometimes they said mass under the trees and sometimes it was in basement of Johnny Rose's pool hall, which is now Mexican Imports owned by the Songs – the Chinese family.

Then Father Davis came along and said maybe we could get a church started. The Bishop of the Diocese bought 3 lots in Scottsdale in 1926. He said that was all he could do. He didn't have any money for a church. So the people collected \$250. This was getting close to the Depression. It was the late 1920s. The church was completed in 1933. The women made tamales to sell. They did what they could do. The men made the adobe. They started at the end of the property digging and using the dirt back there. They finally realized that if they continue digging, they were going to have a hole in the ground that could never be filled. When our committee interviewed George Cavalier III, he said that there were a couple of cars buried there in the back. He knew because his grandfather and great grandfather told him. They did an archeological search when they added on the last piece of the building back there this past year. They didn't find anything but I don't think they went deep enough. They eventually dug for the adobe at Schrader's Pond at Indian School and Hayden. Schrader's Pond was named for the family that farmed there in the early 1930s and 40s. Bill Schrader was the 3<sup>rd</sup> mayor of Scottsdale. He is known for taking the Indian Bend Wash and creating the Green Belt. They would cart the adobe over to the Mission site. I am just in awe of what they did.

October 15, 2018

Robert T. Evans, the son of Jessie Benton Evans, was the architect for the Mission. He was a builder and an architect and he worked with adobe and Mexican tile. Jesse Benton Evans was an internationally known artist and in 1911 she bought 40 acres where the Phoenician is now. She was from Chicago and came out here for her health. She built a beautiful house and the Mexicans helped her build it. She turned it into an Italian villa. She studied art over in Italy. She had been all over Europe with her paintings. She was having soirees in the early 1920s with all of these famous people. Her house is no longer standing. All that is left of her Italian villa is the bell towers from the Jokake Inn. She gave her son 14 acres of her original 40 acres and he built the Jokake Inn. Some of the Mexicans came to work for her. One became her chauffeur. One of the sons of one of these Mexicans, who worked for Jessie, gave his father a bible as a gift for Christmas and he still has it. He also has a letter that his father got when Scottsdale became a town in 1951.

About 2000, Scottsdale wanted to label their historical buildings and the Old Mission was one of those buildings. It was built in 1933 – all adobe. Scottsdale felt that this was a building that was going to draw tourists. The church wasn't sure what to do with it because it was being rented to the Scottsdale Symphony for \$1 a year. They were using it as a practice hall. The Symphony took it over in 1973 to about 2003. They didn't want to leave. By that time, Scottsdale had it labeled a historic building through the Scottsdale Park and Rec and it was on the historic register.

The church didn't have enough money to fix it up. The Scottsdale Historic Committee helped a great deal to get the grants that were needed. I think they got 2 grants for about \$300,000 each to help renovate the structure. The bell tower was falling apart. In 2018, it is now a historic building registered with the state. When I became a docent at the Old Mission, it was extremely fascinating to meet people from all over the world who came here to visit. The tourists see a sign that reads Old Adobe Mission 1933. They all said, "That's not old!" So you have to explain to them that in 1900 there were only 70 people in Scottsdale. Then everything begins to click.

I was at a birthday party for one of the retired priests. Paul Messinger was sitting next to me and another guy was sitting on the other side. He asked Paul Messinger how Jack Rabbit got its name. Paul said, "Tell me." I just heard that there was a man that lived on that road and he had company coming. The company didn't know how to find their way. The guy said, "I'll tell you what; I'll take a pole with a sign out there that will say Jack Rabbit and put it out at the road." That's how Jack Rabbit got named. Paul said, "You're right."

Kathryn: We were told that the Black soldiers would do their training in that area and named the roads after the things they saw – Cactus Wren, Jack Rabbit, etc. So maybe this guy knew

October 15, 2018

---

that they called it Jack Rabbit but no one had put a sign up until he did to let his guests know they were on the right road.

Catherine: Tell us how you came to discover these Mexicans were buried in the Camelback Cemetery.

Sally: When I walked in the morning, I would always go by the cemetery on McDonald. My father made cement burial vaults - Chicago Hercules Cement Burial Vaults. He took over the business when his father died at a young age. My grandfather patented the cement vaults for burial grounds. So I have been playing in vaults and cemeteries for a long time. My family roots go back so far in Chicago. When I was a little kid, my uncle was killed when he was 7 so my grandmother was still feeling the pain. Every week she went to the cemetery and took care of the grass or moved the snow. That's what people did. They took care of the cemetery. So it was not uncommon for me to go to the cemetery a couple times a month. Because of my dad's business, I was always hearing about cemeteries. When he closed his business, my grandmother and her sister were still alive. My father took the last 2 vaults that he made and had them buried in their plots in the cemetery so that when they died, they took those vaults up and were buried in the vaults he had made. This was near Clark Street and Lawrence Avenue – pretty much north side of Chicago. I had an uncle who was an undertaker. We used to play hide and go seek in the viewing rooms when no one was there. We even put on a play a couple years in a row and charged. The money that we made, we donated to charity. We bought food baskets for the poor. That was our claim to fame with our plays there.

Then I put it all together. Looking at all of the research coming in for our book - death certificates with burial sites, so many of the early ones kept saying Camelback Cemetery. I thought there are people buried right here. I am here 47 years and I didn't even know the name of that cemetery. The majority of those buried at Camelback Cemetery are pioneers that we can identify.

Catherine: For those that you know are buried at Camelback Cemetery, are those graves marked?

Sally: No – only a few

Catherine: So these Mexicans that you have identified, you only know that they are buried somewhere in that cemetery.

Sally: The markings are so bad over there that you can't tell any more.

Catherine: For the relatives that are still alive, they don't remember exactly where their family is buried?

October 15, 2018

Sally: It was out of the clear blue when we were standing at my doorway and I said to Nelly, one of the Mexican ancestors, the next time you are here, we have to go to this cemetery. That's when she said she had 2 children buried there. She can't remember exactly where her first 2 children are buried – one died at 2 months and the other at 6 months. She had 5 children after that. When I asked her what their names were, she said she had to ask her daughter.

Kathryn: How did Nelly get the connection to that cemetery?

Sally: She knew that from where I lived that there was a cemetery. There was no other cemetery in Scottsdale. Green acres Cemetery wasn't there yet. Some of the Mexicans were buried in Tempe and Guadalupe and St. Francis. The first people that were buried here were because they didn't have transportation.

Kathryn: It was close proximity to where they lived.

Sally: Right and there was no close undertaker. They were still having wakes at home. Because it was close, they could get the body to the cemetery and have a priest come.

Catherine: Did you know that this is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that cemetery?

Sally: I know it.

Catherine: Is anything happening for it?

Sally: I don't know of anything. I'm hoping that maybe together – my committee and the TPV Historical Committee could work together. Maybe get a sign. Maybe ask George Cavalier on Brown Street, the blacksmith in Scottsdale, to design something. The cemetery is a public place that people drive by all of the time and don't have a clue what it is. We need to protect it. This was Hans and Mary Weavers homestead. When their daughter's husband died, he was buried there first. The daughter and her husband were married 3 weeks. It was common for farmers to bury their family on their property.

Catherine: Thank you for your time.