

KATHY GEORGE  
MARCH 17, 2022

Catherine: May we have your permission to quote you in part or in full anything from this interview that we put on the Town website?

Kathy: Yes, we can do that

Catherine: When did you come to Arizona and particularly the Town of Paradise Valley?

Kathy: I've lived in Phoenix since I was 10. When I was going into high school, my father was ill – he had asthma and emphysema. He got so ill that he wasn't able to shave himself and he could hardly get up and walk. He was a veteran and there was no room at the veteran's hospital in Phoenix. They said we could put him in Prescott's veteran's hospital and so, we did. My mother would take us 4 kids every weekend to visit him. He improved remarkably in the climate there. And all of a sudden, he's walking all over the hospital, he could shave himself. He said to my mom, I think that we should live here. Of course, that was devastating to us kids. But once you go to Prescott, you love Prescott. I graduated from Prescott High School and then came back to Phoenix to go to college. I moved to the Town of Paradise Valley in 1993.

Catherine: How did you get involved in the TPV Women's Association?

Kathy: As we all know, when you live in the Town of Paradise Valley, you drive into the garage and shut the garage door. You really don't get to know your neighbors, particularly if you are working long hours. One day I read this little blurb in the PV Independent that a woman was starting the Town of Paradise Valley Women's Association saying she just wanted to get women together to bond and create friendships – maybe go to lunch or go for walks. It was just social and fun. If anybody was interested, please contact her. Her name was Ruth Smilovic. Since I worked in Phoenix, going to the lunch was a little challenging, but the walking sounded very interesting to me. I reached out to her. She said, "ok, I have a lady who lives on Hillside, Linda Star, who is a longtime resident here and she wants to walk. So, you two can hook up." After a while, I asked if anybody else wanted to walk with us. So, we did a walking group in the morning before I would go to work. Then of course it got to be too hot, so a few years later, I started a water aerobics group in my backyard.

Before we incorporated in 2015, we were a social club – but we wanted to also help women and children in need. That's what Ruth wanted, and we all liked that idea. When we used to have our Christmas party, I always asked the ladies to bring either toiletries or cans of food. For years, I would load up my car and drive down to the Vista Del El Camino. They were always really appreciative. We would also collect money from the different activities we did. We formed a subcommittee to decide which charities we would support. Once we incorporated in 2015 and adopted bylaws, we had to play by all kinds of rules, and you could only spend so much money.

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Ruth was the president from 1995 to 1996. I was the president from 1998-2000. Even though I worked fulltime then, I would organize the lunch making sure that I could get to the lunch from my work. We would do evening functions. Back in the day, we would open our homes. Everybody would bring an hors d'oeuvre and their own beverage so all you really had to do was clean your house. People would visit or network. I think the first time we gathered, back in 1994, there were 15 members. Now we are over 200 members.

In 2003, one of our members at the time, Dee Christy, suggested that we start a Paradise Valley Men's Club. Her husband retired and she would tell us he is driving her nuts! So, they started the Men's Breakfast Club and it goes on to this day.

Catherine: What is your position in this group now?

Kathy: I am the Day Time Outing Chair. I organize events for people who want to go on an outing. We did the Ollie Trolley and the holiday lights. We used to go to the concert series at McCormick Railroad Park. That was always fun. We did October Fest. We did the MIM tour and cocktails. We did a lot of culinary classes. I've taken them on a light rail experience to learn how to use the light rail and get downtown. Then we had a walking tour of downtown Phoenix. We met the firefighters and got a tour of the fire station. We had the police talk to us about safety in Paradise Valley. We learned about YANA – You Are Never Alone. We have a lot of programs here in Paradise Valley that our residents don't know about.

We took a bus to Kartchner Caverns for a day. We have done the Taliesin West Tour multiple times. I have chartered a bus to Tupac, which is a charming arts community. I remember one of the first times we ever did it, probably 2002 or 2003, we decided that we would drive up to Prescott one day. It was not summer yet. We went to the antique shops on Cortez. The women have been everywhere!

In the summer I didn't have outings because it was too hot here to do anything. Then I asked the ladies if they would like to come to Prescott. There are several members who live up there and opened their homes to us. I would have some activity arranged – maybe a museum, or a walking tour of Prescott with the leader. In the summer, Prescott has a lot of wonderful activities on the town square. On the way home we would stop at one of our members' home in Prescott and visit with food and drink. Then we would drive back home.

During Covid, I still wanted to continue, so we gathered at Lynx Lake. I made all of the food and had the champagne for us because we like to have a few bubblyies now and then. We hiked around Lynx Lake and then we came back to the picnic tables where we could socially distance ourselves and enjoyed our lunch. We were outside. They just loved it. Before heading home, we would stop at a members' home to visit.

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Catherine: How long have you been the Day Time Outing Chair?

Kathy: For a while - you can keep the job as long as you want unless someone is beating down the door. A lot of the women have had their jobs for a long time. The newsletter lady usually changes out because that's a big job.

Catherine: How does someone become a member?

Kathy: We have several realtors in our organization, and they'll say if you buy in the Town of Paradise Valley, there's a woman's club that you could affiliate with. I believe that it's actually a selling point for the Town of Paradise Valley. They are coming here and don't know a sole. The dues are \$50 and there is any kind of activity you want to do. You could keep busy 5-6 days out of the month or more. We have a coffee usually every 2 months. We make sure all of the new members come and we introduce them. We let them tell us who they are or what they are all about. As the Day Time Outing Chair, I go around and introduce myself individually to every one of them and say, "now you watch for the newsletter. Pick and choose what events you would like to attend." Everyone signs up online – Send in Blue – which is an app that we use, and it works really well. We have a private Facebook page where we post all of the pictures of our parties and our events. We provide a membership roster which we share with all of the other members. So, if you go to a coffee and you like a lady but never really got connected with phone numbers or emails, you can find her name and you connect that way. Right now, I would probably say the average age of the women are 45 – 50. One thing we did, which is important, is that if you are not married, it doesn't matter because there are divorced, widowed, and single women in our Town and they shouldn't be discriminated. Whatever it is, if it looks like it's more couples oriented then two women can go – whatever you want to do.

Catherine: What other activities does the group do?

Kathy: At the beginning, we had cookie exchanges around Christmas time. We had every lady only bring homemade cookies – no store-bought cookies. We did that for several Christmas's. Then I said, why don't we do it where the men come – the husbands. We ended up doing it in the evening when we used to have the happy hour cocktail parties close to Christmas. But then we stopped it because more and more women were bringing store bought cookies and that wasn't the standard. So, we had to say no more cookie exchanges.

Then we started Girls Night Out, Happy Hours and Dirt Diggers. When we started Dirt Diggers, we had a master gardener come and talk to us. A lot of the women decided they wanted to become master gardeners. We would travel all over to look at farms and learn about at gardens. It was really fun. If you wanted to start a garden, we would come to your house and consult with you. We would also get into consulting on how you could fix up your backyard –

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how to upgrade it – redesign it. We were just women having fun going over and saying well if this was my backyard, I might do this and that. We would have coffee or whatever. We had another member suggest that we learn to grow our own vegetables. We had somebody come and build us raised bed gardens. I had to get some assistance from a farmer I know in Glendale because I don't know anything about this. I really like the idea of getting fresh vegetables out of my garden, but all of the preliminary work was more than I was interested in.

We started doing a fashion show in 2004. We had it at one of the local hotels with a sit-down lunch or dinner. We used to use it as a fundraiser. The members were the models. We would wear 2 outfits from a local boutique who would work with us to make sure we got the right clothes, the hat, the purse, the whole thing. Now it's an official fashion show – very high end with music. We have really changed it now from when we started. Now that Covid is over, I understand that the officers decided to have the fashion show again.

When Charlene Strike became the president - she is deceased now – she was an interior decorator and back then the interior decorators would get buses and drive down to Nogales. She suggested that we do a trip. We chartered the ladies for the bus and met at the Ascension Lutheran Church parking lot. They were always such a gracious neighbor. We loaded the bus at 7 and we returned at 7. Members would buy all sorts of stuff for their homes. I still have a beautiful silver candelabra. We made it a party bus because we are fun ladies. We would have ladies in charge of bringing the champagne, orange juice, muffins and fresh fruit for the way down. It was almost like being on an airplane. When we got to Nogales, we parked on the American side and walked over the border. We would shop all day. Then we would all gather to eat and drink some margaritas. We all bought more than we needed, so we would find the children over there – like young boys to help us get the stuff back across the border. One time a lady bought a beautiful outdoor table set with chairs all out of iron and it was heavy. The bus had a lot of cargo space. On the way home, we would have a different group ladies who would contribute for the happy hour food and the wine.

We used to hold Paradise Valley Candidate Forums for those running for Town Council as a service to the residents. It was open to the public. We would let the people in the audience ask questions. I really had an interest in this because I think it's important to educate people about who you are voting for. This was nonpartisan. We would have a neutral moderator. Then we started getting a TV personality to be our moderator. It kept getting bigger and bigger.

We have happy hours at someone's home. We have a golfing group, a hiking group though in the summer, the hiking group goes kayaking at Lake Pleasant or a different lake because it's too hot to hike. We have a photography group and of course a walking group along with a water aerobics group. We have doggie play dates, bridge, mahjong, lots of book clubs and of course daytime outings. We have a lady's luncheon once a month which are very organized. You pay

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in advance with a set menu – 3 or 4 choices. We have an out to lunch bunch and they are always on a Thursday. Out to Lunch bunch is always a smaller group who explore new restaurants that people may want to try. We also have the evening socials – someone opens up their home. They are more formal than they used to be. Now that we have incorporated, we are required to have a bartender. There's just lots of different activities available for our women. You name it – somebody comes up with an idea and then we say yea lets go for this. It sounds like a fun thing to do.

One thing that is very special about our group is if one of our members dies, or the husband dies, we all get together and help if that's something the woman wants. If she wants some assistance, we do that. We are a supportive group. We enjoy our friendships for lots and lots of years.

Catherine: Who decides on the calendar? Do you come up with a yearly social activity calendar? Do you have monthly meetings?

Kathy: No monthly meetings but we do have regular events such as the formal luncheon which is always the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday and we have a Coffee every other month. We have mahjong on Mondays and there is a beginner's mahjong group on Tuesdays. I don't have the same date every month for my outings. Everybody submits their dates to the lady in charge of the calendar what they are going to do for the following month, so it gets in the newsletter. What I always want to make sure is that I don't conflict with another event. I don't do weekends because most women want to be with their families. Only if I know ahead of time what I want to do, I would write to our lady who is in charge of the calendar and I ask if a date available and if so, to put it on the calendar.

Catherine: The PV Women's Association has been around since 1994. Do you have big parties to celebrate the different anniversaries?

Kathy: Before Covid, in 2019, we had a big party celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the backyard of one of our members who lives in the Judson community. I was the coordinator for that celebration, and my committee said wouldn't it be nice if we got Ruth's daughter to attend. I said absolutely. Her daughter would be so impressed with what Ruth started and what it has grown to. Ruth Smilovic died in 2000 and never got to see what her organization has become. Ruth did not have a child when she started the organization. But, while having lunch with the ladies, Ruth went into labor and Emma was born 24 hours later on August 21, 1996.

One of our members, Carol Adams, found the stepmother whom Emma was living with down in Phoenix. The stepmother would not allow Emma to participate at our anniversary party. Then Covid came so we haven't had any more anniversary parties. If we do another anniversary, it would be nice to find Emma and have her come and talk to us and let us tell her what a legacy

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her mom has left. It is significant. For our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we asked Emma to come to the party and I believe that she never showed up.

Catherine: Why don't you tell me about your professional life. What did you do before you retired?

Kathy: When I first came from Prescott, I started at Phoenix College. I was pursuing a degree in Business. My sister was also attending Phoenix College and she put her kids in the Phoenix College Day Care Center while she was going to school. I started to observe the kids there playing and having fun. The teacher suggested that I get an AA degree in Day Care Center Administration, so I switched from Business to Day Care Center Administration. Then I went on to ASU and got a degree in Education and my master's in Early Childhood Development and Marriage and Family Relations.

After ASU, I started my career. I was a home economics teacher for 7 years. I taught in the Cartwright School District – middle school and then at the community college in the evening. I taught at South Mountain Community College and a little bit at Glendale Community College. In 1973, when I was teaching junior high, I started the first ever co-ed Home Economic class, which the Shop teacher hated me for because that meant that he had to have girls in his shop class. It was a new concept. My principal was pretty progressive man, but he said I could have one semester of this and if it didn't work, we were going back. I taught them cooking, sewing, and child development. I actually started a careers program because some of them might not ever go on to college. My principal approved that I could walk the kids about a half a mile to a day care center. They would work with the kids for 40 minutes and then we would walk back to school. I thought it's either going to help them be good parents or for some of them, it might be their career.

I was also very involved in the women's effort to get the ERA passed – Equal Rights Amendment. I walked 500 protesters down Central Avenue. I believe in right to choose so I helped Planned Parenthood. I worked on political campaigns as a paid staff. After that, I said I can't go back to teaching because this was more exciting, so I quit teaching. Because I was always at the legislature, lobbying for women and children's issues, I met some women who needed help getting their organization up and moving. So, I started assisting them with press releases and helped them to get their issues passed. I used to teach teachers how to organize campaigns for school board elections and then for state elections. One day I was at a fundraiser and a person approached me said you know Kathy you are at the legislature all of the time and your compensation is probably random based on who you get to represent – right now the Arizona Education Association is looking for someone, you'd be great. I said ok. So, I applied, and I worked there for 28 years. The Arizona Education Association is a state affiliate of

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the National Education Association. It's membership-based organization. When a teacher became a member of the organization, the teacher could get any kind of assistance needed. For brand-new teachers who needed help, I would observe and then coach them to be better teachers. I would work with the principal and maybe the professional developer to see if this teacher could grow to the point where he or she would be successful. If not, then I would say probably isn't the best career for you. Now I do things as a citizen. If someone needs signatures on petitions or whatever, I can financially help a lot of causes which is a good thing to do.

The other thing I got involved in is the Scottsdale Sister Cities Association. It started under the Eisenhower administration I was the president and currently the membership chair. Some people wanted to start the Paradise Valley Sister Cities but it's a big deal because you have to get the government officials, the city councils and the mayor, involved. We have 8 Sister Cities in Scottsdale – Alamo, Sonoran Mexico; Cairns, Queensland, Australia; Kingston, Ontario, Canada; Interlaken, Switzerland; Haikou, Hainan, China; Marrachech, Morocco; Uasin, Gishu, Kenya; and Killarney, Ireland. We have a lot of Paradise Valley residents that are members of the Scottsdale Sister Cities Association.

Catherine: I want to thank you so much. This was a pleasure.