

Oral History Interview
With
James G. Toepfer

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Interviewer: Robert David Breton
Location: Mission Viejo Library
Mission Viejo, California

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James G. Toepfer

January 22, 2012

Robert David Breton,
interviewer

BRETON: Today is January the 22nd [2012], and I, Robert David Breton, am interviewing James [G.] Toepfer, former [Senior] Vice President of Planning for the Mission Viejo Company, at the studios of Mission Viejo Television inside the Mission Viejo Library as part of the Oral History Project.

Jim, where were you born and raised?

TOEPFER: In Charles City, Iowa, July 27th, 1928.

BRETON: Where were you educated?

TOEPFER: At University of Wisconsin.

BRETON: Did you obtain a degree?

TOEPFER: Yes, I did.

BRETON: In what?

TOEPFER: In regional planning.

BRETON: What was your previous occupation before you came to work here in Mission Viejo?

TOEPFER: I was the Planning Director for the City of Santa Ana [California], and before that, I was employed by the County of Orange for a short period of time, and came from college right out here with a six-month-old baby and moved into the job there with Orange County.

I almost didn't make it out here. We got onto Main Street in Santa Ana, and the smog was so terrible, and I said to [Suzanne S.] Sue [Toepfer], "I don't like this." I could hardly see

down the end of the street, and I'd read about it and all the planning stuff and how bad L.A. smog was. I said, "Let's go home." True story.

She said, "Jim, whatever you want." I love my wife. She passed three years ago.

Anyway, I said, "We'll turn around and go back." This is a true story now. Pulled down to the end of the street, turned in to a motel, and I said, "We're going to stay here tonight." Lo and behold, it was the motel I had made a reservation in ahead of time.

Next morning we woke up, and it was the most beautiful, beautiful day I've ever seen, clear, the sun was out. I said, "This isn't bad."

So I went down to the county offices, to the Personnel Department, and went in and met the secretary there to Bill Hart, who was the head of the Personnel Department, and I knew the girl from high school. She graduated with me from high school in Madison East [High School] in Madison. Every place that I applied for jobs—there were hundreds of planning jobs, but they all wanted you to go to the city. I didn't have any money. I think to recap my beginnings, my folks had lost everything in the [Great] Depression. I had to hitchhike, bus, all the way through college. Anyway, I said, "Margaret,"—I believe her name was Margaret—"are you responsible for me getting this job?" Because they had offered me the job without taking an exam.

She said, "I knew were you a good guy, Jim, so I told Bill Hart to hire you." And that's how I ended up with Orange County, really close to just turning around, and, of course, everything that's happened after that would have been gone.

So I was there for, I think, about a year and a half, and then the Planning Director for Santa Ana left, or he wanted some help. So I talked to Harry Berg and [Kenneth] Ken Sampson, who were the head planners for the county, and I got this great job with Santa Ana. It's really

more the job I like, city planning, not just a lot of records and stuff that the county was doing, and they said, “Go, Jim. Go.”

So I took that job, and for about three years I was the Assistant Planning Director for the city.

One day Carl Gudat, he was from York, Pennsylvania, and he said, “I’m going back.” He was separated from his wife, and he said, “I’m going back to York and be with my wife.”

I said, “Okay.

“Would you take me to the heliport?” which was in [City of] Orange at that time.

Took him over there, and I said, “I’ll see you Monday.”

He said, “I’m not coming back.”

I said, “You’re not coming back?”

He said, “No. It’s your job.”

I said, “Didn’t you tell Carl Thornton?” the city manager.

“No.”

I said, “You can’t do this. You can’t do this to the city. You can’t do that to me.”

He said, “See ya, Jim,” shook hands, and away he went.

I got back to the office and Carl Thornton was suffering from—what do you call them? What do you get when you’re all nerves and all that [shingles]? Anyway, he was sick in bed. So I told Carl [Thornton] , I said, “Carl [Gudat] , what’s-his-name left, but this is not right. What do I do?”

He said, “Jim, just hold the fort. Take care of everything, and I’ll talk to the City Council when I get back. We’ll just see, but I don’t know if you’ll qualify for the position of planning

director because you need five years of experience. You've had three and you're a graduate in planning."

So anyway, to make a long story short, he went to the Council, the Council said, "Give Jim the job." So I became the Planning Director for Santa Ana. So that led up to what will eventually be my going with Mission Viejo Company.

BRETON: How did your position enable you to meet someone on the [Orange County] Planning Commission by the name of [Philip J.] Phil Reilly?

TOEPFER: Phil was a young attorney who I thought did a very fine job of representing his client before the City Council and the City Planning Commission there in Santa Ana. So anyway, there was an opening, and I went to the Planning Commission and I said, "I know this young attorney."

They said, "Think he'd be good for the Planning Commission?"

I said, "I think he'd be excellent."

So they went to the City Council, came back, and they said, "We're going to hire Phil Reilly." They hired him. They appointed him to the commission.

It was about maybe a year later in the spring of 1963 when Phil, after a Planning Commission meeting, he said, "Let's go over to the Yacht Club and have a beer. I've got an interesting proposition." The Planning Commission meetings, they went on forever in the city and in the county. So anyway, we went over, and he said, "Jim, [Donald L.] Don Bren has got this idea of creating a city, and he wants me to come and be more or less the attorney, and I'd like you to be the planner, engineer."

I said, "You're kidding."

He said, “No. The deal has not gone together yet. We’re still negotiating with the Moisos and the O’Neills and what have you. As soon as this occurs and we have a deal, I will let you know, and you can give your final summons or whatever you want to call it to the city.”

So I said, “Fine.”

I went to Carl Thornton, I told him what I anticipated I was going to be doing, because I didn’t want to leave him, and he said, “Jim, it’s a great opportunity. Take it. You’re young enough to survive if it fails.”

I said, “Well, thank you, Carl.”

So anyway, that was, like I say, spring of ’63. Of course, I talked to Sue. “Jim, you have a wonderful job here with the city. You’re planning director. I don’t know.”

I said, “Sue, this is an opportunity. How many people get to build a city?”

Later on, I remember sitting in Bren’s office October 23 in 1963, and Reilly, Bren, the first time we all met together in his office, and we all stared at each other. Bren looked at Reilly and threw him a checkbook, as I recall. Reilly threw me the checkbook and he said, “Plan it.”

I threw it back at Reilly, and I said, “I think I need some help here. How many people have created a city?” It was that real. So that’s where it all began.

So he said, “We’re going to do it,” and from then on, it became a matter of all the things that we can talk about here of who we hired and what we did.

BRETON: How long after that did you find out that the deal had been consummated and that, indeed, there was a company being formed?

TOEPFER: October the 23rd, that’s the date the Phil called me and said, “The deal, it’s done.

The O’Neills and [Anthony R.] Tony Moiso and all that group, they accepted our offer.” I think

they were competing against Macco [Development Corporation], Pennsylvania Railroad, all these different big companies.

So anyway, they went with them, and it just happened. That's why to this day Phil always says, "Jim, we have to be so thankful to the O'Neills and to Tony and Alice [O'Neill] Avery and that whole batch of family," which were wonderful, "that they gave us this opportunity to build a city and to give us the option on those—," I think it was 10,000 acres, "— and to go out there and do a thing that we had never done before.

BRETON: You took a big risk.

TOEPFER: We did. Well, it was a big risk. Don had a nice business. He was, I think, twenty-seven, twenty-nine years old, and Phil was thirty-three, I think. I was thirty-five. But to sit like we are today and bring in one of your people here and say we're going to build a city. They tried it at Reston [Virginia], they tried it at Columbia [Maryland] back east, and they had an awful lot of problems. Of course, we had some pretty good examples of where to kind of watch out and look out for. But October 23rd was the day I heard about it. October 23rd Phil called me and said, "It's a deal. We'll meet at Bren's office tonight," and that's where it all started.

Went down to the Karam's, Karam's in Newport [Beach], and the three of us sat there around a great big black roundtable, three director's chairs around there, we sat, and that's where the check passed from Bren to Reilly, to me, and I threw it right back at him. I said, "Let's do this together, guys."

BRETON: Did you feel up to the task?

TOEPFER: Oh, yes. I never had any problems thinking that it would be unsuccessful. I never thought of that. I've always been a positive person, and I had enough tough times getting through with my education, because it was tough. My dad had a heart attack. That's another

story. So I've been a very positive person, and I never even thought of failure. I knew enough about people that I knew, and I knew the planning people in Orange County, Forrest Dickason [phonetic] and [Stuart W.] Stu Bailey and Berg and all these people, and I knew some of the county commissioners and just got to know a lot of people.

So it was much easier to accomplish, I think, the thing here that I had to accomplish when we moved to Colorado and were looking at 22,000 acres and we made the deal with the people there in Colorado and bought the property. Phil said, "Jim, it's all yours. See ya," and he got back on the plane and he left me there in Colorado to develop a 22,000-acre city now called Highlands Ranch.

But, no, I never ever had any concerns. I think the ones that were concerned were probably Phil Reilly's wife, Valley [S. Reilly], and my wife Sue because I'd be up at five. I wouldn't get home until nine. It was almost seven days a week, and there were just the three of us. Don had his things going there in Newport with the Dover Shores project, and he had his little business going. Phil and I were the ones kind of strung out there because Phil was leaving a very nice position as an attorney with Rutan & Tucker [LLP], and I had a good job there with the city. So, to answer your question the long way, I never had any concerns. I knew we were going to do it.

BRETON: We're going to talk later about the Moiso s, the O'Neills, about their heritage, their legacy, and we're going to then move on to the master plan process. But before we do that, let's just focus on the company itself. How fast did the company grow?

TOEPFER: That's a great question. As I say, there were three of us, Don, Phil, myself. Emily Maxwell was Don's secretary, and there was a young lady name Sue—I forget her last name—who was kind of the bookkeeper, and that was it. Phil was doing the bookwork, the financing

stuff and whatever there was, and I got my USGS maps and we sat down and I said, “Phil, we need an engineer for the planning, the sewer, the water. We’ve got to form districts. We’ve got to do all these things that put together a city.”

There were just the three of us. It was really basically Phil and me initially, because Don was pretty well—but Don was the catalyst who had the dream, and Don, I think you’ll find when you interview him, he is a dreamer. He thinks very refined things. He’s got a great mind when it comes to the delicate things, the streetlights and the mission bells, you know. He came up with the concept, and then he handed it to us and he said, “Jim, here’s a guy in San Diego. Check with him and see if you can come up with a design for the streetlights,” and they did.

We ended up coming up with a design Don liked—he was very good at that—and went to Long Beach and talked to people there, and they said, “We’ll make these things for you if you give us a—,” I think a \$75,000 contract, that many streetlights and scrolls. So I think they made those in Tennessee and South Carolina, and that’s how we got the mission bell. We got a certain time period as the sole proprietors of those things.

Then Don had these ideas about block walls and these little refined things. I remember his parking lot there in Karam was full of pallets.

BRETON: You said Karam?

TOEPFER: Above Karam’s Restaurant there in Newport. That’s where Don’s office was.

BRETON: What street was that on, do you remember?

TOEPFER: Pardon?

BRETON: The street that the restaurant was on.

TOEPFER: No, I don’t. I don’t remember that. I’m not sure even Karam’s is there anymore. As a matter of fact, my two daughters and I ate at the Crab Cooker, which was just around the

corner from that office, just two days ago. We wanted to go back, you know, memories. But I didn't look to see if Karam's was there.

Anyway, they had a small parking lot there. You know, on the island there wasn't too much space. But we filled up that doggone parking lot with these pallets of different-colored block, and Don wanted a specific color, I think reddish color. Too dark brown, too gray, and finally, "That's it." And that became the adobe walls, which you see all over the community in the tree wells. We carried that theme on all the way into Colorado with the same color walls, initially the streetlights and the mission bells there with the Aurora [Colorado] project.

BRETON: As the company grew, as you began to bring on new vice presidents, new executives, and then hire staff, what was distinctive about this company in its management style?

TOEPFER: If I may, I'd like to kind of speak to the initial point there. Phil was sitting there in his office one day and he was trying to develop numbers. He lost his temper, said, "I've got to get help," and that's when we hired Wendell [F.] Strong as a financial guy, because Phil had just had it.

I can't color all these maps that we need to take to the various agencies and all this, so I hired [Martin G.] Marty Russo, and Marty, you know, has that nice thing you did for him here in the parks. Marty was a roofer, and you could look in [unclear] when I hired him in Santa Ana. He was the only guy that applied for a draftsman job, and he didn't even know how to hardly pick up a pencil. So I hired him, just a young kid, and I had him print, very thin line, probably quarter of an inch, every day printing, printing, printing. Then when he finished, then he could do some other work. He became a really adept draftsman. So I hired him with the city, and I dragged him away from the city, as I did eventually [Paul] Van Stevens. Nice having friends. But anyway, he came out and he became my draftsman. He colored more maps so we could give

them to the different agencies, the county, San Juan Capistrano, which is another story, and he did a beautiful job.

I remember [Jerome] Jerry Moiso came in, and I said, “Jerry, you want to go to work for me?”

He said, “Yeah, Jim.”

So he came in, I guess the next week, and I had him coloring maps. I think by Thursday, no Jerry. You know Jerry. He is one of the kindest-hearted guys. If he sees a bird that’s a little bit—he’ll go and pick it up and pet it. He’s just a wonderful—he quit. He said, “I don’t want to color maps.” [laughs]

I said, “Why didn’t you tell me at least?” We’re all laughing.

He said, “That’s not my shtick.” So anyway, that was the initial part of it.

Then, as I say, we had to hire help, and that’s when I went to Boyle Engineering [Company]. The biggest guy to help me there was Roy Seeman. Roy was one of their planners, and with Roy, myself, and Marty, we did more coloring of maps and coming up with schemes for the plan. Every time we came up with something that looked pretty good, Phil would call a meeting, and he would call the meeting with [Richard J.] Dick O’Neill and, I guess, [James E.] Jim West, who was the attorney for the family. I’m not sure if Tony attended. Probably he was at some of those meetings, and Alice [O’Neill Avery], and we’d present the plan. “Okay, we like it,” or, “We don’t like it,” we make some changes, and that’s how the plan was developed. It was essentially Roy Seeman and myself with the input from Don. Everything went through Don. Neat guy. I’ll tell you, those people, Phil and Don, they have always said they are so appreciative of the Moisos and Dick and Alice, [Marguerite M.] Ama Daisy [O’Neill], the grandma, of them going with us, with we three guys, and trusting us.

BRETON: Well, let's move on, then, to the formation of the partnership. The original idea was Donald Bren's.

TOEPFER: Yes.

BRETON: The original partners were who?

TOEPFER: Well, to me, there was only Bren and Reilly and myself.

BRETON: The Board of Directors included—

TOEPFER: Initially it was Dick O'Neill, and I think Jim West was on there. I'm not sure who was on that board.

BRETON: The three Moisos were Jerome Moiso and—

TOEPFER: I don't know. Jerry could have attended the meetings. It was really a family thing until Philip Morris [USA, Inc.] stepped in there. Then the board changed and that sort of thing. But it was essentially Dick O'Neill and, I think, Alice and Jim West, that we would always meet at Boyle Engineering office and present the plans and go back and redo.

BRETON: What was the overall strategy? What was the purpose? Were you trying to develop a balanced community that would contain homes, schools, churches, shopping areas, parks, recreation, an attractive total environment? Were you trying to do that?

TOEPFER: Oh, yes. The whole basic idea was to develop—people said, "Can't you self-contain the thing, just enough industry, just enough commercial, just enough school, just enough parks?" That's impossible. There's too many outside influences that affect you. But the idea was to develop a community which the people accepted, and if you don't have the people behind you, then you're not going to be successful.

I met a lot of subdividers at the city. They'd file our maps with us. They were nice guys, Harry Tancredi and [William] Bill Lyon and all of them.

So anyway, when we finally decided that we've got the ranch, we're going to build everything ourselves, Don said, "We're going to build this whole thing ourselves, all the houses." Maybe commercial, that'd be different, but we're going to build.

I went to all these builders and I said, "Don, do you want to come out here and buy some property?"

"Jim, it's kind of far out there. It's 12 miles out. I think it's too early."

"But this is a great opportunity. We're going to have what we hope will be pretty much a total community, just enough parks and just enough schools, other than the other industrial uses. They just can't do it all."

"It's just too far out, Jim."

Well, a few years later after Don decided that nobody wants to—two people came out and built, Deane Homes and one friend of Don's. I think his name was Harlan Lee. I could be wrong. Harlan bought a little piece of property right next to the golf course and built some homes. Phil Reilly ended up, I think, on Portofino, if I've got the street right.

I was kind of the busy guy. "Jim, Deane brothers are going to be out here. Would you take them out and show them the land?" Because they were the ones that were interested.

I said, "Sure," and I think I had a Mustang or a Falcon, my car. I remember driving into the area where Deane Homes had their area. I forget if it was 100 acres, 200 acres, whatever it was. I got Deane and Jim in the backseat in my little Falcon driving up in these weeds. Weeds were about this high [gestures at 3-4 feet high], could just barely see. By the time I finished the tour of the land, got back to the office, I think a lot of the paint on the front end of my little car was all beat off. I said, "Phil, this isn't working. I'm not going to go out there. Look at my car."

He said, “Well, I think maybe we’re going to start to have to get some cars.” That was the start of a bad thing, because pretty soon I had one, then Phil had one, then Don. Don had a Jaguar that was always in the shop. He had his own car, but Phil and I, I think we ended up with a company car. It eventually grew. I’m not sure, but I always flaunt the number of like two or three hundred cars for the employees. That’s how it just got out of hand. Eventually, maybe twenty years later, we decided to go an expense account situation and let them get their own cars, most of the guys.

BRETON: Did you feel that you were actually blazing a new trail and going into uncharted territory in this venture?

TOEPFER: Not really uncharted, because, like I say, there was Columbia and there was Reston, new communities back east. They were examples of the new town concept. You can go way back to India with Mohenjo-daro and all this stuff. Well, we had Laguna Niguel [California] going, and Irvine [California] was, I think, just starting. So we were really the frontrunners, I think, in this particular—other than Laguna Niguel, that was doing their thing.

Interesting thing. Before I left the city, Ross [W.] Cortese built Leisure World [Laguna Woods]. Ross came into the office and he said, “I want an annex to the city,” and that’s a long ways out there.

I remember Carl Thornton called me and he said, “Jim, come out. Ross Cortese’s here to talk about annexation.”

I went up and Ross came in, big tough guy, you know, throws out this ticket he got for parking in the wrong spot downstairs, said, “Would you fix this for me, Phil?”

Carl threw it right back at him and say, “Pay your own bill. You owe the city this much money.” I laughed, just sitting there, and here’s big Ross and Carl.

So anyway, we went to try to annex it. The point I'm trying to make here is that it's possible, had that annexation gone through, who knows that maybe Mission Viejo would have become a part of Santa Ana. I won't mention names, but our attorney, one of you people, I think, kind of screwed up, if I may put it that way, on the legal description, and Irvine found it, and they found the flaw, and they stopped the annexation. Otherwise, it could have been very likely that we would have had a ten-mile strip a few hundred feet wide going all the way out there and then enveloping Leisure World. Like I say, who knows where it would have led, because with Phil and us being close to the city, it would have been probably a very desirable thing to annex to the city. But that fell through, but it was just a sidelight to know that maybe Mission Viejo could have become Santa Ana. It's just a thought, and maybe a real one.

BRETON: Later we'll discuss how it might have been annexed to San Juan Capistrano.

Did the company originally plan to build a model planned community and then to purchase land in other parts of the United States with this same concept to build successful towns in Arizona or Colorado or other places? Was this part of the original concept, or was that [unclear]?

TOEPFER: Well, the original concept was to build the city of Mission Viejo and to try to include all of the things you talked about, the proper amount of schools, the parks, and have it done in a very, very nice architectural fashion, and trying to continue the heritage that the ranch enjoyed, and the Spanish theme. Don was excellent in his forte. He just had the feel. Phil's an attorney. You know, you attorneys, you guys got no imagination. [laughter]

The planners, I found as years went on—Bob, being from Wisconsin, and I joined all the societies and all this stuff, and this is not a criticism, really, but I found that an awful lot of planners, as such, became too much statistically inclined. You had to have percentage of this

and this and this and this, and without really considering the people, their feelings. You have to express their sentiments and their desires, and not just yours and forcing it upon the other people. A lot of this thing, I think, happened in Reston and back in Columbia, where they didn't take into consideration people, and that's why one of the things about [Arthur S.] Art Cook, which we'll mention later, and Marty, we just got so involved in the people, and we wanted to make a community that really those people liked. We formed the [Mission Viejo] Activities Committee, we formed swim teams, we formed Mission Viejo Days, and just all these things that attracted people, and they loved it.

BRETON: When the company was creating this new town model, development model, that could be emulated throughout the United States by the building industry, what do you think were the key ingredients to the company's success? Was it this innovation, this vision, aggressive planning and building, environmentally sensitive landscaping, imaginative marketing? What was the key ingredient? You mentioned the willingness to listen to what the people wanted and to survey and find out what they desired.

TOEPFER: It includes all the things you've said. You've got to have a concept, and you're not going to build 50 percent commercial and 5 percent residential. You've got your percentages, and you develop your street widths based upon the anticipated density of the various areas, and you make roads, correspondingly, able to handle all the traffic.

But the key thing to me was anybody can sit down, in my opinion, and develop a concept that is, on paper, beautiful, but the key thing, I think, that we did was we tried to make sure that it represented what the people wanted. We just didn't sit there as big-shots and developing our theme. We certainly, through Don, through his feel, we made it nice, in my opinion. But without having the people—Phil moved out here right away and I moved out here right away, I

think in '65, and we got to know the people. We became involved with the people, especially myself.

I'd go to the store—we have the little Thriftimart. We built a little Thriftimart store, and Kory Bastell [phonetic] was the manager, and I go down there and about, oh, two hours later I come home and Sue said, “Where are you? Where you been?”

I said, “Down there at Thriftimart.” Well, it couldn't have been any bigger than ten times the size of this room, that little store, but I'd get trapped by the people, and I became a part of the community. I realized that they wanted to be together, and thus we had the Activities Committee formed initially. Art eventually came with the company and took that thing over, and Marty was with me initially at the beginning. It became a very cohesive thing, and people knew they could come to our company, ask for things, and not just be pushed off. They knew that they would have an ear, and just like I was mentioning, we wanted this to be multifamily right here, right where your library is.

BRETON: Was it important for the company that the top executives live in the community?

TOEPFER: No, there wasn't anything, but you're building something, and it looked pretty doggone nice to me, and all these other things you wanted to talk about, schools. It's fascinating, everything that happened.

BRETON: Was it the company atmosphere or climate that enabled you to think outside the box, that encouraged you to be creative?

TOEPFER: Well, I'm not sure I understand the question.

BRETON: Well, let me restate it. In what way did you feel less inhibited by working with this group of individuals rather than Santa Ana, in your thinking about the planning process? Did

you think that you could be more creative and that you could have a more expansive view of an ideal planned community than if you had been in another city or with another company?

TOEPFER: Well, again, I'm not exactly sure of the question, but I'll try to answer. We bought a piece of ground, and we knew it was critical to have various elements just on little piecemeal things. We knew we had to have schools. We wanted churches. We wanted commercial. We wanted industrial. We wanted parks, all these things. By being out here, at least for me, it became a very sensitive time because I could talk with people. Normally, people go and talk to developers, and I'm not sure they really get their way, but with us, we had a very sensitive ear and we listened to the people. I think the basic thing about our company—and this is just not me, but we were sensitive to what the people wanted, and, thus, it was with this very sincere feeling—I did, I went to the different school boards and talked to Ralph [A.] Gates and I talked to the high school district and you name it, and the churches, as you know.

I related the incident about getting stuck on the tracks and asking the nuns, who were out there to look for a church property, being stuck out across the tracks, the train due in a few minutes. They got out, were going to help by praying. They were kneeling. Anyway, that didn't work, and finally the three of us pushed the thing off of the railroad track.

But it was a matter of trying to provide the things initially right away, and that's why we worked hard to get a church in here. We got [Ralph A.] Gates [Elementary] School. We got the high school. It became something that people could feel initially rather than, "We're going to have it, Bob. We're going to have that church. We're going to have that thing." A lot of the things that we did here carried over to Colorado, because I knew the ALC, American Lutheran Church, or LCA [Lutheran Church in America], they changed it to, and they came over to Colorado and they built the same kind of church ahead of time. So we anticipated, tried to get as

much in as we could initially without promises. You can promise all kinds of things, but to fulfill the promises is, a lot of times, very difficult.

BRETON: You master-planned the community. How important was it to the future homeowners, to the potential homebuyers, for them to know that this single developer, this single owner-developer, would carry the entire master plan on to completion? How important was it to the potential buyer to know that all of these projected amenities would be built, and that the company would stand by the quality of the amenities and the beauty of the streets and slopes and medians and the parks and the rec [recreation] centers? Was it important to the homeowner to know that?

TOEPFER: Well, you're asking what was a homeowner. I'd answer your question in a dual way. As an executive with the company, trying to plan and provide for these amenities and all the things, that's one thing. To live in the community and then to go and be just like one of the homeowners and be sensitive to what the others and my friends are saying it's even more, "Let's get it going. Let's do it." So it wasn't just our company. If you don't get the backing of the people, you're going to have nothing but problems. I mean, you just are. You see it all the time. I'm sure you've experienced it in your lifetime as being an attorney. It was very important for us to live up to our word.

Phil Reilly said something to me when we just started. It's almost a quote, but not quite, "Jim, we're starting a new community, and one of the most important things to me is that we do it honestly and with integrity. There's just too many promises going on on this and that throughout the state, through any part of the country, promises, promises. But we're going to be honest. We're going to do it right, as right as we can, but right for the people as well as the company." Those were my marching words. I just had to be sensitive to what the people were

saying rather than just be big Jim Toepfer, planning director for a big city. That doesn't go. We carried through the same philosophy in Colorado, and that's why today it's—I'm not speaking big-shot stuff, it's just that we did the same things there, and we got the same amenities, we got the same stores and churches, and it came together as one big piece. We were always honest. You start one bad thing and it carries right on through, and it affects something else.

Phil said, "We're going to do it right and we're going to be honest," and he always kept repeating. He said, "The O'Neills, Dick O'Neill, Tony Moiso, Averys, and all these people, they gave us the opportunity. They gave us the opportunity to do something right that's going to sustain the heritage of the ranch, and that's very, very, very important to me and to you and to our company, so we've got to make sure we do it right, as right as we can, with integrity and feeling.

So that's why Art Cook—I mention Art and I mention Marty and [Mark] Ziggy [Wilczynski]. He came on there and became—but he was here, and people loved him and they trusted him. It came together. Fortunately, it came together. Don did a great job with the financing. I'm not sure where you want to go with a lot of these—we struggled financially with trying to make ends meet.

I got to know Joe Long, for example, head of the [Southern California] Edison Company, and I found out they wanted a big easement through the ranch, which is down south here. He wanted to buy that easement. Through negotiating with him, Phil said, "Jim, we're going to be building in there. Can you kind of get an idea through some kind of subdivision so we can see what the damage might be and severance and what have you? We've got to be very careful in that area." We put it together. Edison Company bought it. They paid us a million and a half dollars. That was really manna. I mean that was manna. I'm not sure if you want me to go

offshooting on some of these things, because it was important to have money to be able to do what we had to do.

I'll never forget the time that Phil had a friend in. I'm sure this is how it went. We just had an office, Phil's, my office, a meeting room, and Don's, and then out here was a little—and he had in some friends from Gulf Oil, and I could hear them in my next office. They were not shouting; they were just talking nicely. Finally the door opened and Jim [unclear] from Gulf Oil left and was just about out the door, and he said, “Are you the Reilly—didn't your wife go to Catholic whatever something?”

“Yeah.”

“Were you in that ice ball fight up there at 'SC [University of Southern California]?”

“Yeah.”

“Let's go talk about that,” and they went back into Phil's office. They came out about a half an hour later, and Phil said, “I'll have those three legal descriptions for you tomorrow.”

BRETON: Wow.

TOEPFER: He sold three sites, and you'll appreciate this, because we didn't have any great detailed subdivision maps. We had USGS maps that we were working off of, essentially, to start with. He said, “Jim, draw me up three legal descriptions.”

A mile is that, and I'm trying to—so Saturday morning I came in, got him three legal descriptions as well as I could, sold three sites to Gulf Oil, I think for 150,000 each, and that was manna.

Then the high school situation was another one. You're going to have to lead me where you want me to go, because I can sit and meander all over the place because one thing leads to

another and it reminds of this. The high school site acquisition was an absolute funny, wonderful story, but go ahead.

BRETON: We'll get to that later. You're a treasure trove of wonderful anecdotes and memories.

TOEPFER: I've got some great ones, you know.

BRETON: Why don't we take a short break right now.

TOEPFER: You bet you.

BRETON: Let's discuss the O'Neill family. Apparently, they were aware of the uncontrolled growth that was approaching from Los Angeles County and North Orange County as it advanced toward their ranch, and this boom in commercial and residential building must have had them worried. What was their approach? As far as you know, what did they discuss amongst themselves as far as a way to avoid urban blight and deal with this increasing pressure to meet the demands of a burgeoning population and the new offers from other developers to develop their land?

TOEPFER: I can't answer your question. I think that the people to ask would be Don Bren and Phil, because they're the ones that carried on negotiation with Moiso, [Richard J.] Dick [O'Neill], Alice Avery, and so forth. So they really are the ones who would have to respond to that.

The only thing I know is the fact that Don and Phil wanted to carry out the trend of the ranch, the heritage of the ranch, and that was my—"Okay, Jim. Do it." But I can't answer of their fear of the spread of blight or spread of all this stuff coming from Los Angeles, because they're the ones that had to negotiate and possibly assure the O'Neills and Moiso—I'll call it them the O'Neills for the purpose of they're all that group—assure them that what we were

going to be doing was in keeping with what they had in mind relative to the ranch. It goes way back, and there's so much history dealing with the ranch. Probably Art could answer more about that than I can. But I just know that they thought that they had a buyer, Bren and Phil, that they would carry out the integrity of the ranch.

BRETON: Were there other developers bidding at the time that you know about?

TOEPFER: As far as I know, there were, yes.

BRETON: Why was the O'Neill family, do you think, willing to take such a huge risk with a group of relatively untried individuals to develop a fifth of their most treasured resource, their land?

TOEPFER: Well, I was going to make the [Timothy R.] Tebow symbol of—but I don't know what went through Phil's and Don's mind in their discussions with the O'Neills. They have to answer that question, because as far as I was concerned, when they said, "Okay," they had obviously met with some sort of common ground and was assured that we'd carry out this stuff. Of course, they were an integral part of the first makeup of our board and the review process and all this sort of thing.

BRETON: Do you know whether Phil Reilly and Donald Bren had carried out any feasibility studies or market analysis or planning research in order to make their presentation to the O'Neill family?

TOEPFER: I don't know. I don't know what they presented.

BRETON: Do you know why they wanted to purchase the 11,000 northwesternmost portion of the ranch? Why did they select that quantity of acreage in that location?

TOEPFER: I guess it made the most sense geographically. It was on side by the Trabuco, and development on the west side seemed like probably a great piece of land to develop as one.

BRETON: Did they acquire all of the land during the initial negotiations, or did they simply agree upon options?

TOEPFER: I believe it was options, and I think they bought 400 acres initially. Much of that was the Deane property, and then other—

BRETON: Was this to enable them to build up their cash flow in order to purchase, as they could afford, the additional options?

TOEPFER: I don't know about cash flow. I never got involved in the cash-flow aspects of the project. It was really a Phil and Bren thing, and my job was to plan and not get involved with the financial aspect of it, other than what I've said before, which went from gaining monies from the Edison Company and the school districts, what have you.

BRETON: You mentioned that Phil Reilly and Donald Bren gave assurances to the O'Neills that the Mission Viejo Company and the planned development would protect and preserve, as much as possible, the original character of the ranchland.

TOEPFER: I can't answer that directly. Again, you'd have to ask Phil and Don what they said behind closed doors as they were negotiating. I only know that I was given the objective primarily from a design feeling aspect by Don to make sure that we do this in good taste in keeping with the heritage of the ranch, and those were the key words.

BRETON: Describe your own feelings about your sense of stewardship over this historic rancho.

TOEPFER: Well, first, I think that to be given an opportunity of developing a piece of ground like that, just unheard of, as far as I was concerned. Like I said before, I had enough confidence in myself to be able to believe that I could do it, not that I had done it before, because I hadn't. But I think that you couldn't have asked for two nicer guys to start with in Don Bren and Phil,

because they're no dummies. Don, as young as he was, he was doing a beautiful job in Newport Beach with Dover Shores and all these things, and Phil was a very learned attorney. So you're not talking to a bunch of—Phil is a very dedicated individual and honest, a great deal of integrity. I'm not saying that this is true—well, you've got your different developers and different—some are out just for profit, not that our company wasn't out for profit. They certainly were out for profit, but they wanted to make sure that whatever they did was done in good taste and in keeping with the ranch. That's about all I can say, is we struggled to do that, and I think we did a good job with all the little nuances that happened as we developed.

BRETON: This resulted in the creation of what was called the Environmental Systems Division. Were you its head?

TOEPFER: Yes. We tried to stay with the fancy names way back then, and everything was Environmental this. Fortunately, the Environmental Impact Statement didn't come along until a little later after I left. When they got into the Aliso [Viejo, California] project, I understand that Van Stevens had books of yea high and yea wide of requirements that the feds and everybody wanted. I didn't have to get involved in that at all.

BRETON: How did the company find a way to be dedicated to social involvement and protection of the environment here on this precious land, while at the same time performing its primary role of providing a profit? You could have just made it all flat. You could have simply torn down the hills.

TOEPFER: Well, you couldn't have made it all flat because the cost of development would be—you just don't ignore contour. To go there and flatten it would have made it probably absolutely not viable. So they have to lead with good engineering practices and cut and fills and

making sure that they were substantially equal, and thus you end up with a development that is sensitive to the land. Just to go in and level doesn't do it.

If I may just allude to the Colorado project, Mrs. [Mildred Stregack] Weissman, who was president of Philip Morris, who became owners of our company, I'd take her on tours over there in Highlands Ranch. I took her out one day, and she said, "Jim, would you make sure that we don't just level—but please, the hills, and make sure that you just don't build houses one after the other." We couldn't have done without building in that fashion because it wouldn't have been financially viable.

But I said, "Mildred," Mrs. Weissman, "understand this. Imagine you living in one of those homes right up there, that line."

She said, "Well, I don't think—."

I said, "But go inside of one of the homes, go upstairs, look out the living room and the back, and what do you see? Well, you see the beautiful Rocky Mountains." Each one of those separate tiers had a beautiful view of the mountains.

She said, "I never thought of that."

If you look from the outside in, towards it, you're not getting the true perspective. That's true with a lot of things, development or whatever. So sometimes you get inside and look out, and you can see a totally different picture. And she bought that.

Here people can say, "Why didn't you level it?" Why didn't you do this? Well, number one, it isn't viable, because you just need to make it as economical as you can from a feasibility and an even-stein thing. Like I say, the sensitivity of Don and Phil—and the instruction was to make this as pleasing as we can. Then with having Boyle Engineering and Voorheis-Trindle & Nelson do a lot of our project, and we went through and we even had the—you've seen the

model of the big first area that was done in Styrofoam. A company in San Diego did that for us. It gave the people an opportunity of seeing actually what it's going to be like on a large scale, not just a little five-acre parcel. Everything had to be tied together, the streets, the street systems, the lighting system, and all the innovative things that we really did, joint trench, telephone cable, everything electrical in the same trench, so many new things that we did that added so we didn't have to have poles sticking up all over. So it was done, I think, in good taste, and it was done so you could afford it.

BRETON: Did you feel that you were honoring the legacy of the O'Neills by not destroying the ridgelines, by preserving the arroyos, by setting aside abundant open space?

TOEPFER: Absolutely. We made it a point to try to preserve as much land as we could, and again, I have to allude to Colorado because we followed the same thing there that here. We ended up, I think, with, of 22,000 acres, I think we ended up with close to 15,000 acres being open space.

One of the things that they appreciated here in Colorado, it was one developer, one controlling aspect of the design of streets, layouts, not a myriad of you, one subdivision, Art another, me another, you're cutting it into little ten-acre parcels and everybody getting their stuff. We wanted to preserve as much of the open space and the natural area as we could, and we did, the Trabuco Canyon and other—we were fortunate, lucky, or certainly we had some incentives, which was, as you say, to preserve the integrity of the ranch, and hopefully we did.

BRETON: How was the grading done to avoid excessive scarring of the land?

TOEPFER: Well, I'm not sure of your question, but the engineers have to try to balance as closely as they can cut and fills. So like I say, you could go out there, and I'm not sure where you'd store the dirt. If you level everything, you've got to put it someplace. But it's an

economic thing from an engineering standpoint that you just try to live with the terrain and build accordingly and design accordingly.

BRETON: Well, for example, the curvilinear streets. Could you describe the decision there to go with curvilinear so that it would follow the natural contour?

TOEPFER: Well, yes, we followed the natural contours as well as we could, but to me as a planner, I don't like straight streets. I like things, even if it's just even the slightest little deviations in the direction and alignments, to give it a little bit of a flare and a little bit of a feeling of something. Again, you can point to so many areas. Of course, the area north of the ranch was much flatter, so they didn't have the hills to work with like we did. So you get [Rancho] Santa Margarita and you get Mission, and the terrain itself lends itself to—you've almost got to do it. You just can't do straight stuff.

BRETON: What was done to the original horse trails and cattle pasture? Was that just left alone until time came to develop those areas?

TOEPFER: Yes. The O'Neills continued their ranching operation with their cattle, and as we developed, naturally the fence lines had to be moved back. I think we even at one time rented, I think, to Gratian Bidart{ XE "Bidart, Gratian" }—he was on the school board, one of the school boards, Tustin High School Board, I think, and he raised sheep. We'd have sheep out there grazing, and, of course, it was a good thing. I'm not sure if they had the agricultural incentives that I think they do today. In other words, if you keep a property zoned agricultural area, it certainly attacks incentive. It certainly is true over there in the other state.

BRETON: What about the trees?

TOEPFER: We tried saving as many trees as we could. I mean, if we cut a tree down, no, no. But you've got to cut some trees. But that's a very good point.

BRETON: What about the fossils and the artifacts? Did you have paleontologists on retainer? Did you do anything during the grading process when you suddenly unearthed fossils?

TOEPFER: I don't remember unearthing anything, really. Maybe Ziggy would know more than I do on that one.

I remember that along the ridgeline, as you go across the land and you drop down into the Trabuco, I used to take my daughters, we'd go up there and dig for sharks' teeth. We filled up bottles of sharks' teeth, these little bottles, and I mean sharks' teeth that were that big [gestures]. It was, to me, interesting to think that the water level was up there at one time. It was underwater. But other than that, the paleontologists, I don't remember being hampered, you could say, by somebody doing something good. I don't remember ever having to contend with contenders.

BRETON: You have certain links, still, in Mission Viejo to the O'Neill family. We have a lot of streets named after them, Felipe [Road] and Avery—

TOEPFER: Avery Parkway.

BRETON: Marguerite [Parkway].

TOEPFER: O'Neill Parkway. That's right.

BRETON: What about the Mission Viejo brand? They gave to the city the original Mission Viejo brand. Do you remember when the Mission Viejo brand was part of the company lore?

TOEPFER: I don't. I don't remember. I know it was. As a matter of fact, I'm not so sure—and I'll have to check with Art, but I think that somewhere in my garage I have a Mission Viejo branding iron. If I do, if I can find it amongst all the—I will send it to you.

BRETON: Thank you.

TOEPFER: I'm pretty sure I've got that thing.

BRETON: What did the company do, or did this occur after you left, to try to undertake an aggressive campaign to reduce per-capita consumption of natural resources, such as working with water reclamation, recycled water, the model homes that were established, energy-saving model homes using solar energy, water-saving showerheads, drought-tolerant plant material? Were you here when any of that was being done?

TOEPFER: I could have been, but I don't remember us ever doing any water reclamation. I know we had the Moulton Niguel Water District and Santa Margarita [Water District], but I don't remember that we had an aggressive program like we do in Colorado, where we even replenish the aquifers by pumping effluent, treated, back down into the aquifers. But I don't remember us ever doing that sort of thing here.

BRETON: Now let's move on to the master plan process itself, which you headed. How do you create a community from scratch? How do you build something from nothing?

TOEPFER: Well, first of all, you have to have the property to be able to do anything. So what we did was to try to find people that were sensitive. This is such a new thing, Bob, I mean creating PDs, planned developments, even, and to think of creating a new community was really—like I say, Laguna Niguel. There just weren't many around here.

So you start out with an idea, and if you're in planning school, which I can talk about that, you learn that you need so much commercial for this and square feet of industrial. Of course, everybody thinks that you can have the perfect city, you can put walls all around the whole thing, and there are just enough people to live there and work there and draw income and spend it there, then never having to go out into the outer world. That's not real life.

So what we do is we try to incorporate as many things as we can. We tried to preserve as many natural areas that we could, like you said, the trees. We tried to live with the terrain, and

we tried to augment the sterility of the land that was there by putting in all the block walls and the beautiful entry, circular tree wells and all of those little things.

We tried to go around and look at communities and look at fire hydrants. That was quite a story in itself, because we got the low-silhouette fire hydrant ideas from up north and brought them down here. We put in the low-silhouette fire hydrants. I had the churches come in and paint them all green, which ended up in all kinds of people complaining, because if they had a fire, they couldn't find the hydrant. So I had to go back with the groups and repaint, I think, the fire hydrants.

You've heard the story of—I said, “This doesn't make any difference to dogs, because they know where the hydrants are,” and I sent him a picture of a great big Great Dane doing its thing on one of the hydrants. I sent [unclear], too, but I never heard back from him. He just never responded.

BRETON: Well, speaking of hydrants, when you build a community, what's the first thing you need to get onto that land, and if you're going to build houses, what types of utilities and infrastructure do you need to establish in order to build that community?

TOEPFER: Well, you're hopeful that they've got electrical nearby, and in some cases you have to go out there and build your own sewer plants, and making sure that you get the various agencies, federal agencies and so forth, to approve the dumping into streams or whatever effluent from the treatment plants. So you need to have the right districts established so you can provide the services.

BRETON: What about water?

TOEPFER: The ranch had water rights, but I'm not exactly sure if it was Moulton Niguel or where they got the water from. We never dug wells, deep wells. I'm not sure where we got our

water. It's a blank for me. But the rest of the things, electrical we knew was there, telephones, electrical. Water, sewer lines we had to build. Everything except water and sewer, that was the sticky one because you had to make sure that the water districts had the necessary capacity to be able to handle any of the sewage and be able to have the proper discharge permits and all that sort of thing. That was more of a Phil Reilly type of thing as far as that aspect of water districting and some of the associates that he had.

BRETON: Who came up with the idea, the concept, of a planned community text, a planned community ordinance and development standards?

TOEPFER: We did, Phil and me. We just knew that we wanted to have our own thing. So as soon as that October 23rd, 1963 date, I had given my notice with the city, and I told them that by around the first of January, I was leaving permanently. I was spending half time trying to get things handled there with the City of Santa Ana.

One of the first things that Phil and I did, I did, was write the code. It's a book about that thick, and I have it at home. I'll make sure that you get it. I worked day and night writing that ordinance.

BRETON: How long?

TOEPFER: Oh, jeez, weeks. Phil, he's like you, he's an attorney and a stickler. I'd sit in his office and we'd be reviewing the different sections, and there's some times I just wanted to cry because he'd say, "Jim, this is not right. We need to change this," and I thought of the many hours I anguished over that particular thing, but he was right. He was right. As we went on with development, you could understand why he was right, because there's so many nuances, again, in dealing with interpretation of a code, and he wanted to make sure that we were clear.

So it took weeks for me to get him satisfied, and which, in turn, then became a part of our plan so a company with the big maps and our land-use designations was accompanied by the ordinance and how each of these planning areas were going to be planned, and restrictions dealing with—everything you do in a zoning code. But we developed our own zoning code, and we subsequently had it approved initially by the City of San Juan Capistrano, which is another story, and ultimately by the County of Orange when we finally ended up staying in the county.

BRETON: Let's go back to the initial review and approval process. After you formulated the plan, it was given its final approval by Phil Reilly?

TOEPFER: Yes, and Don.

BRETON: Then it went to Don, and he—

TOEPFER: Bob, there wasn't really a distinct formality. There was only three of us. You'd say hi to each other, and Don would go his way and Phil would go his way. We'd meet and we'd talk, but we never really got into the details of the ordinance with Don. He was a man with the feel, not that we don't have feelings. As you go down the line, attorneys are the least—I'm just kidding—

BRETON: Thank you.

TOEPFER: —imagination. Phil and I prepared the code, the ordinance, so to speak, and the Planned Development Guide, and it was made into this package, which we filed initially with San Juan Capistrano.

BRETON: And Donald Bren signed off on it.

TOEPFER: Oh, yes, sure, everything.

BRETON: Did you show it to the O'Neill family for their consideration, review, or approval?

TOEPFER: The map, naturally, was, all of our plans, and everything was pretty much just verbally stated to the O'Neills. We did not go through section by section, page by page, of the Planned Development Guide, no. I never did. I'm sure Phil didn't.

BRETON: So you were the one that drafted the original PC area plan map with [unclear].

TOEPFER: I'm afraid I was, and I was the unfortunate one to be stuck with it, but we'd done a lot of this thing in Santa Ana when I was there and planning for the development of a final master plan for that community.

BRETON: How was flexibility built into the Land Use and Development Plan?

TOEPFER: Well, it gave you the right of variances, which planners hate because it's the one that has destroyed more zoning areas than anything. But there is an appeal period and you can file. Being an attorney, you know the kind of things that you can do and can't do, and there was provisions provided in the ordinance.

BRETON: Well, I'm sure it took a lot of hard work and ingenuity to formulate that plan, a lot of working late hours. How intense was the pressure at that time? Were you under any deadlines?

TOEPFER: There were never any deadlines or pressures placed upon me by either Don or Phil. We knew each other well enough, especially Phil and me, to know that I was giving my all, and he was doing everything he could to accomplish what he felt was important to him. So I pretty much did my thing. I did, I worked my butt off writing, writing, writing, and Phil checking and changing, and we finally ended up with it. But there was nobody saying, "Jim, you shall get this thing done by this—." There was none of that.

BRETON: How would you describe the plan? Was it multifaceted? Was it trying to create everything that the residents would need to live, work, worship, play, shop?

TOEPFER: Yes. I would say other than the industrial manufacturing part of it, but everything else, the parks and the recreation areas and the streets and the beauty of the streets and the parks and the schools, we tried to enmesh everything into what made planning sense, at least back then.

BRETON: That was a bold vision.

TOEPFER: Well, vision, but maybe just a lot of common sense, you know.

BRETON: Was it a fun process for you?

TOEPFER: Oh, man. I didn't mean to say oh, man. Yes, it was an incredible experience. I was alluding or mentioned something about all these planners and being back there at the university. I get these things after a bunch of years. Some of these people were so enmeshed in percentages and mathematical equations of land development. I just said to myself, I'd read this stuff and I'd say they missed the boat. They haven't talked one thing about people. What is it that people want and need? Because the social aspects, the things that are just as important as the numeric, and everything should be this. You can figure out the determination of what the traffic volume's going to be generated by all the different land uses. That's simple, houses and trips per day and all this.

The human element aspect, to me, was one of the most critical things that we did, and that's why I think we had so much success, regardless of what somebody may say, what transpired with the advent of the swim team and of Mission Viejo Days, [Mission Viejo] Activities Committee, all these other entities, and the recreation groups. We'd have different programs at Christmas. It was kind of new because it was just a neat thing together. And I have nothing but the greatest admiration for Marty and the bunch that served. I don't know if you want to talk about the Activities Committee.

BRETON: Later.

TOEPFER: They were so important, I mean, key people in the community, and if they said something—like you. You say something in your attorneys' group, they're going to listen to you. Being just a housewife and being active in the community, they carry a lot of weight. I always said that when you reach 10,000 people in a planned area, you kind of go over the board and then it becomes too non-personal. I don't know, but it just seemed like when we reached 10,000 residents, things changed. It was a little bit more tough, more people to satisfy. And I found the same thing was true in Colorado when we were developing Highlands Ranch. When we got to that 10,000-person mark, it just seemed like things became much more difficult and more people to satisfy.

BRETON: Well, that's an interesting concept. Is there an ideal size for a city, an ideal population or an ideal size?

TOEPFER: I guess I'd point to your community and Mission and say that's not bad. I'm not sure we could have improved on it. I think you said it outside there, that it's how you take care of things. You can build a beautiful community and let the people lay the trash all over the streets and not worry about a broken wall and a tree's down and so what, they'll pick it up later. Gee whiz, at the park, a big picnic, and who cares about the trash? It's the attention to detail that you people have done certainly after I left that have made this a very fantastic community. I'm not just saying that. I really mean that.

Nothing pleased me more than as I would talk with Art Cook, who did so many things and even became a pseudo rancher, so he thinks, but the care was taken out of my hands and placed in the Russos, and they did a great job, and you people have done a great job. You could save a few bucks here on taxes, do this and that, but the maintenance of what you've got is key,

and I'm so pleased with what I saw coming in here today. Really, it just makes me warm all over.

BRETON: That's very gratifying.

TOEPFER: This building here is fantastic.

BRETON: That's very gratifying to know.

TOEPFER: It's just beautiful.

BRETON: Why did the company decide to set aside such a large percentage of the land for recreational purposes? Were you trying to brand this as a recreation-oriented community?

TOEPFER: In my opinion, we didn't try to slant it towards anything other than a total community that had all of the amenities that we thought people liked, and I don't recall building anything that the people didn't like that we built anyway. You may know some things.

BRETON: How did you come upon the right blend, in your master planning, the right blend of parks, open space, schools, residential, the balance of the schools and the shops and the offices and the churches and the homes?

TOEPFER: Well, the school situation was pretty well dictated by what kind of homes you were going to have and the anticipation of how many children the households would have. When it comes to parks, we just felt that they were an integral part of the community, and the recreation centers. We tried to provide different things, racquetball, handball, up in the Marguerite [Recreation] Center. Sierra [Recreation Center] was more just for the swimming. Montanoso [Recreation Center] was kind of more of a social type of thing. So there was no magic. It was just a matter of down here feeling that that's what we wanted, and we built it and made sure that it was done architecturally in keeping with this thing that you're talking about.

BRETON: Didn't you exceed, by far, the county minimum requirements for park acreage per thousand residents? Didn't you build more parks than were required?

TOEPFER: We built the parks that we felt were necessary, and I don't remember there ever being, at my time, a requirement of X acres per thousand people or this sort of thing. We built our parks at locations that we felt would be desirable, and that's how we built them. I don't remember any ordinance that said, "You shall do this recreation-wise, this way park-wise."

BRETON: Why did you, as a planner, decide to put the neighborhood parks adjacent to the elementary schools?

TOEPFER: Sometimes you could call it double space of usage.

BRETON: Joint use.

TOEPFER: Yes, joint use. So the kids are off on weekends and not at school, but they have certainly the privilege of being able to play on the fields. It made a double advantage, so to speak. But that was one of our plans, put them together, and again, to preserve those areas that were so natural.

A golf course was another integral part. I'm not a golfer, but others thought that that was very important. Dick O'Neill loved golf.

So anyway, it all came together, and fortunately it seemed like it panned out. Like I keep reiterating, fortunately, there was a governmental group that eventually became incorporated that maintained this thing. That's why it's so pleasing for me to come back here, and I just hope that in another fifteen years—that Highlands Ranch in Colorado is as nice as this community has been maintained.

BRETON: Well, the company did plant a million trees, didn't it?

TOEPFER: Well, I wouldn't be surprised. That's one thing I didn't count. I didn't count the trees.

BRETON: Why did the company decide to provide these costly amenities and invest heavily in this community infrastructure without receiving immediate economic benefits rather than to cut corners in search of a fast buck?

TOEPFER: That stems back to what I think Bren and Phil had in mind when they purchased the land. They wanted to do something that would be lasting. You could go in there and do a fast deal and move away and forget about it. One of the fortunate things was that when we ended up not being able to sell a lot of land to builders, that we did it ourselves. You don't ruin everything by just having some sour grape type of development within your future building. So everything had to be pretty well tied in together, and you had to consider the various price ranges of homes and trying to provide not just real expensive homes and things that were, back then, maybe \$100,000 or 200,000. No. We started out with things that would start around \$19,000, La Paz Homes and what have you. But we knew that you just can't ruin the whole project by doing something quickie and just moving away, because that was not good business and it would have ruined this place.

BRETON: How did the company design the product that would fit the market?

TOEPFER: I will say that I had nothing to do with the design of the homes. I left that up to Don. He was the initial man who had that artistic talent. Then subsequently we ended up with Harvey Stearn and other people that augmented that, but that's after we knew that we were going to be building everything. We had to tool up, so we got our construction people, we got our purchasing agents, and our own marketing staff, and they're the ones that pretty well determined what we were going to do.

One side issue which I don't know if you ever heard about it, but it was funny. One of the planning areas that we didn't know what to do with is Planning Area 21. It's just right across the street here, the big hill that goes up the other side of Marguerite. I forget how many acres were there, but Phil kept insisting on, "Harvey Stearn, we need a plan for that Planning Area 21. Should it be horse estates? Should it be ranchettes?" We even looked at it as being the eventual Olympic Training Center. I don't know if you ever heard that one, but that's another story in itself.

So they finally ended up coming up with a design, and Jack [G.] Raub and [James G.] Jim Gilleran and Harvey Stearn and Phil, they had horses out there across the street here. We all met, and Jack Raub had these plans. Who was the guy in one of these Spanish movies? Don Quixote or somebody? He had all these big scrolls of maps, Jack, and he was sitting on top of this big horse. I had a nice white horse, but I may have had one or two plans, but the rest of the guys, Reilly, they just had their big black stallions.

So finally Phil said, "Are we all here?"

"Yep."

"Let's ride and take a look at these maps and go."

Okay. Gilleran, Harvey, Phil, away they galloped, and who sat down there in that gully? Jack Raub and Jim Toepfer. We have all the maps, and our horses wouldn't move, and we never saw those other three guys for two hours. [laughs]

When we got back to the office, they said, "What happened, you guys?"

I said, "All you wanted to do was have a jolly ride on your horses. Our horses wouldn't move." We never did solve anything that day, but it was so funny if you could have seen—do you know Jack Raub? Did you ever meet him?

BRETON: I've met him, yes.

TOEPFER: It's funny. Anyway, but with him with all these great big, long rolled-up maps, hanging onto them, and away those three guys ride. I don't know whatever happened to Planning Area 21. I don't know whatever happened there.

BRETON: Some Pacific Homes were built up there.

Speaking of Jack Raub, he was such a trusted friend of the company that eventually Philip Morris acquired his company, correct?

TOEPFER: Yes.

BRETON: Was he in on the original engineering plans?

TOEPFER: I think he was, Raub and Bein and Frost [Robert Bein, William Frost & Associates]. I forget exactly what they were involved with. I think that most of our design subdivision work was done by VTN, but there may have been some things done by Jack. I know he was heavy into the water and sewer and that sort of thing.

BRETON: Let's talk about the Boyle Engineering and lead engineers. They were well known, well respected in Santa Ana. Whose idea was it to bring them in, and why recruit them rather than some L.A. engineering firms?

TOEPFER: I think I can explain that one very easily. When we sat there the night we sat on October the 23rd around the big black table, one of the first things when I threw the book back at Phil, said, "I think we have to do this together."

Then the first thing he said, "Well, okay, Jim. Who should we hire?"

I said, "I would say Boyle Engineering," and I said that because I was very familiar with their work because they were a Santa Ana company and they did an awful lot of work for the City of Santa Ana, and you feel comfortable if you know somebody, and even look at them as

being honest and forthright and what have you. So I recommended that they come in there, and they did. As I say, Roy Seeman was especially helpful to me because he helped me with the design of the community as such. He was great.

BRETON: Were the L.A. firms considered and rejected? Were they not suitable? Were they not as innovative, not as creative as Boyle?

TOEPFER: Everybody that we used were local people, and they were known for their work in water, sewer, or planning, and Boyle Engineering, VTN, [unclear] Nelson, Jack Raub, so they were local. I don't remember us ever using any L.A. firms. I could be wrong, but—

BRETON: Getting back to the way that the company was so willing and anxious to listen to the residents, did the company survey the residents? Did you ever modify the master plan after receiving input from the residents or finding out what they desired in their community as far as amenities, as far as either tot lots or rec centers?

TOEPFER: I don't remember ever, at least during my stay, surveying the community. They could have, but I don't remember any. Everything was pretty well all set in so-called concrete. Nothing's set in concrete in planning. They could always amend things. But we had the plan approved, and we had little skirmishes along the way, like I said, with this piece of ground right here, multifamily versus commercial, but there was no huge move to modify any real part of the plan substantially, if at all.

BRETON: What about gate-guarded communities? Was that conceptualized at the beginning, that you would set aside certain areas for a gate-guarded community because the residents, you thought, would want that, or a senior living community, such as Leisure World, only in Mission Viejo?

TOEPFER: We had Casta del Sol [California] for that.

BRETON: Right, but did you designate that as part of the master plan, that area as a senior living?

TOEPFER: I'm not sure that was designated as a Casta del Sol project, but the density that we had for the projects in different planning areas, it allowed flexibility in type of development, as long as we didn't exceed the various densities that were permitted. We never thought of anything being big guarded gate at the entrance of La Paz [Road] or down at Avery [Parkway] and that sort of thing, but we did have the one at Casta del Sol.

BRETON: On the street design, was it en vogue at the time to build into the plan a lot of cul-de-sacs?

TOEPFER: I love cul-de-sacs myself, and the more cul-de-sacs we could build, the better, because I think it restricted traffic, speeds of traffic, and it provides a little bit of a more cozy atmosphere for living. So again, a lot of times it's a matter of the terrain dictating how you design. You just don't go in and lay streets out. A lot of places you could easily come in there with a small cul-de-sac, and through the design techniques, you could pretty much hang on to the densities that were required for these various planning areas. But as far as conceptualizing or believing in a great big community with all kinds of guarded gates, that never even was even a thought.

BRETON: Why was it critical to the success of this master plan that there be a single developer?

TOEPFER: Well, initially the idea was to get in a lot of builders and try to control.

BRETON: The idea was that you would sell off entire subdivisions to a builder and say, "You can build homes on these two-hundred tract lots"?

TOEPFER: “We’ll sell you a hundred acres, and you come in with your plan, subdivision design.” We’d make sure that it would fit in nicely with the project. Deane Homes bought their piece of land. They developed their own subdivisions.

But the difference between us, I think, and some other areas—Don, Phil, and they certainly back their ideas—was to try to control the development so it made sense rather than, like we said earlier, piecemeal it off and that sort of thing. So anyway, you can have it both ways. You can sell land off and control through deed restrictions and plan review and that sort of thing if you going to sell it off to different builders. Because of the lack of, really, buyers who didn’t want to take the chance, we built it ourselves. So it really made control pretty easy because we had to control ourselves.

Don and Phil were cognizant of the need to do it right, because if you put in some sour-grape stuff in there, it’s going to adversely affect that whole particular area. I’m sure you’ve seen it in different cities, where just because of its opportunity for somebody to sell it, they’ll change the zoning and get a variance, and they’ll do this and do that. But we were pretty doggone firm. Well, with us under the control, we pretty well could decide exactly what we wanted to change, if anything, and, fortunately, we didn’t change much of anything on the plan, as far as I know. They may have in later years.

There was a special thing that goes along with you owning at all and being able to control everything. Again I allude to Colorado and Highlands Ranch where we had a heck of a time because we were all new there, that what we were doing is right, but they were convinced that having one builder build 22,000 acres, all the homes, was much better than having 50 subdividers come in, builders, and doing it piecemeal. That’s one of the big key things that was

successful in Colorado, was the fact that it was under one ownership and not going to be just subdivided, and they were scared to death we were going to ruin the ranches and all that.

It was wonderful here to have that one big piece, and I know the O'Neills appreciated that, because what you build here is going to affect Santa Margarita, Tony's projects over there. It's all been complementary, as far as I can tell. Maybe somebody knows things that haven't been. Gee, it was so beautiful. You see the Plano Trabuco over there, where the missionaries would stop. It just is a beautiful place, and, like I say, what I saw today was really refreshing to me. I keep saying that, but it's great.

BRETON: When Donald Bren left the company to set out on his own in 1967 and Phil Reilly succeeded him as president, do you know why Mr. Bren did that? Was he too involved in other building pursuits in his other company?

TOEPFER: I think I'm going to avoid answering that because I'm not sure what went through Don's mind at the time. I think Phil could adequately answer that question. I know Don felt he'd accomplished what he'd wanted to here, and it was moving just exactly the way that the three or four of us had decided design-wise, and everything was on plan. Don's a dreamer. He loves the refreshing aspect of creating something new, and this was pretty well done. All we had to do was follow the guidelines, and we did that. So Don moved on to Valencia and took a lot of our employees, [James L.] Jim Manley and Wendell Strong, moved up to Valencia and developed that new community up there.

We were also interested in buying some land up there. Union 76 had some land that they wanted us to develop, but that's another story.

BRETON: Let's get back to the very first category or section of questions. As the company grew and hired more employees, could you describe the atmosphere, the interface with all the

staff and employees? Was there a positive attitude? Was it exciting for everyone who worked here to be able to contribute to this project? What kind of an atmosphere pervaded in your company offices when you moved corporate headquarters here to Chrisanta [Drive]?

TOEPFER: Well, the feeling in our company was always strong. They believed in each other, and nobody seemed to be stepping on anybody else's feet. As I say, once we decided that we were going to have to build a lot of the stuff ourselves, then we added the Maurers and Osbornes and the other Bouchers [phonetic] and all these people that would be doing the construction. I don't recall there being any dissention or jealousies, if that's what you're alluding to, at all. Phil got frustrated sometime because of indecision.

BRETON: Was he a taskmaster?

TOEPFER: Well, yes, he was, but he worked just as hard as anybody else. He was not a guy that sat back there and smoked a cigar or pipe. But I remember one time it had to do with this P.A. [Planning Area] 21 again, I think it was, and Phil was insisting on getting this thing planned. So I flew over from Colorado to participate in the meeting, and there were sixteen people sitting in there. Phil came in and said, "Now, tell me, Harvey, have you got a decision on this piece of ground?" Harvey Stearn.

He kind of said, "Well, we've been analyzing this thing. I just haven't concluded what we should do."

Phil lost his temper and said, "I want an answer now. I'll leave the room, and when I come back, you tell me what you want to do with it." Phil left. I don't remember what the conclusion was, but I guess it was not to do anything.

When the meeting was stopped, said, “Okay, leave,” and everybody left. Phil said, “Jim, get in here.” I’m over in Colorado, but he always confided in me, for some reason. He said, “Who in the Sam Hill got sixteen people in on this meeting? This is ridiculous.”

I said, “You did, Phil.” [laughs]

He turned as red as that little light over there, “Okay. There’ll be no more of these big meetings like this.” You know what some of those meetings can turn into. They just turn into a—

BRETON: Was there a camaraderie in the Mission Viejo offices, a feeling of teamwork?

TOEPFER: There were always—not always, but there were sometimes skirmishes. I think Don or Phil and Jim Gilleran, they didn’t see eye to eye on a lot—not a lot of things, but some things. But as far as I was concerned, everything was solvable, worked it out, whatever the differences were. My time here I thought of as just a wonderful group of people. Even the secretaries were okay. I’m being facetious. I thought we just had a great bunch of people. You know, offices can be very non-friendly the bigger you get, but there was something about our company that nobody was afraid to talk to Phil Reilly. I mean, they could say their piece, and Phil didn’t always like what they said, not for print. But he got so angry at Russo one time, he took one of these little stands that you pin notes on, threw it at him, and it stuck in the wall. He left, and I said, “Phil, why’d you do that?”

He said, “I was just so angry.”

So I went over on this beautiful wall. It was a cork wall, and I made a great big circle and “anger,” put on the word, and he never erased it. Anytime he lost his temper, I always would say, “Phil, look.”

There were many instances of that. But it was great. They even liked Art Cook. He got along with Phil. Don't tell Art that.

BRETON: Obviously, when you build a new community from scratch, you have to worry about access. What freeway connections were there to these 11,000 acres?

TOEPFER: The only place was, I think, Avery Parkway down there. We had to build La Paz [Road] Bridge and Oso [Parkway] and all that stuff. The La Paz Bridge was our initial entry. I don't know if I mentioned this story there, but we had to get access, and Santa Fe Railroad [Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway] had an easement that we had to get. I contacted Chicago Santa Fe office time and again, and I never got really a reply, except, "We'll take care of it."

So we went ahead and built the bridge. A few months later, a gentleman comes out from Santa Fe, came in to see me in the office. He says, "Can we go take a look at that easement?"

I said, "Sure," and we went over and stood on the La Paz Bridge.

He said, "Now, where is this easement?"

I said, "We're standing on it." [laughter]

He look at me and started laughing and he said, "That's all."

But I never really got a written approval of a quit claim or something dealing with it. But I'll never forget the look on his face. "Where is this easement you want?"

I said, "You're standing on it." [laughs]

BRETON: When you built those, did you have to petition the state, work with Caltrans [California Department of Transportation] or anything to build the off-ramps?

TOEPFER: As far as I knew, we just went ahead and built according to the county road departments, whatever their controls were, and that was it.

BRETON: Well, I'm talking about the off-ramps from the freeway, the freeway off-ramps. Did Caltrans build that to your specs?

TOEPFER: I don't remember that. All I know is the interchange occurred, and we just took care of the bridges and that leading on to the ranch.

BRETON: How did you determine the placement and the width of the arterials, the major parkways that would flow through Mission Viejo?

TOEPFER: That's all engineering determination, and what you do is simply have to calculate the number of trips—I mentioned this earlier—the trips per day that hypothetically is generated by a home, type of single family versus multifamily. Everything is figured out engineering-wise as to the number of trips that's anticipated in that particular area, and therefore you build your roads in agreement with what those projections are. So it's really mathematical. If you want to make things wider, I guess you could, but it's an additional expense. I learned later on in life that it's better, more practical, if you can build a full street width at the same time instead of half streets. Going back in there and have to dig up half of a street and that sort of thing is very bad. So we learned that lesson, at least, and then we applied the principle in Colorado. But it's all a projection of anticipated trips, and I forget what the number was way back then, nine trips per day per household or something like this. Then that's related to the width of street, volume it can handle, number of intersections, that sort of thing.

BRETON: Marguerite was originally just a two-lane when La Paz ended at Marguerite, but it was probably planned to be divided arterially.

TOEPFER: Yes.

BRETON: Who was contracted to construct the roads, do you remember?

TOEPFER: If you name somebody, I'd be able to tell you right away. I can't think of the name right now.

BRETON: Sully-Miller [Contracting Company]?

TOEPFER: Yes, Sully-Miller was one. They were one. As I recall, I think Phil and Don, they opened a line of credit with those guys so they would build the streets out in front.

BRETON: Isn't that a miracle, that you were able to, just on a promise, say, "We'll pay you nine months from now"?

TOEPFER: I mean, it was that situation, as I understand it, because we just didn't have the— Don had his contacts with the George A. Fuller Company, which became a part owner of the company at one time, big New York firm. A large real estate company in Texas [Trammell Crow Company], they became a member of our board. They asked to be out because they said, "This will never be a success."

BRETON: Oh, really? That's not the George A. Fuller Company?

TOEPFER: No, no. They were probably the largest construction company in the United States at that time up in New York.

BRETON: Were any materials from the old sand and gravel operation off Avery utilized to build these roads, as far as you know?

TOEPFER: I wouldn't know. I don't know.

BRETON: Why did you decide to put the streetlights in the medians? Was that conventional, or was that a new idea?

TOEPFER: Well, I'm not sure whose idea it was, but, as I say, the engineers and a few people we had would come up with a concept, and we'd pass it by Phil. Once we determined that, then it was a matter of constructing. I spent more time up in Pasadena area going through olive

groves, picking out trees that would be transported down here and put into the medians. Initially it was very easy because they had very beautiful trees, but as time went on, we kept getting trees, and the orchards became less and less, and everything that used to look bad started looking better. You know how it is. Anyway, we'd come up with a concept, cross sections, and that's how it would be approved.

BRETON: Well, let's continue. What other trees were planted besides olives?

TOEPFER: The eucalyptus that are there, I don't remember planting a lot of eucalyptus along the streets or anything, but a lot of different varieties were planted in our model compounds.

BRETON: Any pine trees?

TOEPFER: Oh, I'm sure we used all kinds of trees in the landscaping.

BRETON: Sycamore. Who selected the specimens of the olive trees? You were the one?

TOEPFER: I did it initially, and then I always would make sure that they like it. So you can say I did, because I may have brought one bad one in, and that was a no-no, Jim. So you learned real fast.

BRETON: Was the landscaping an effort to recreate Spanish atmosphere, the early California atmosphere? Were the plant materials that were chosen designed to recreate the early California atmosphere?

TOEPFER: Yes, I think they were. I think they were.

BRETON: How about the split-rail fencing and the corral fencing? Did that enhance the ambiance of a ranch?

TOEPFER: I don't know. Those were the Western themes, so anytime you got anything that's Western-ish, it would fit in.

BRETON: The entryways and the major intersection quadrants, how were they designed to recreate this early California feeling? You had the Barcelona walls, the native shrubs.

TOEPFER: Yes, this all came really out of a conglomeration of landscape people, consultants laying on these different concepts to us, and then ultimately shown to Phil and Don, and that's what was installed.

BRETON: Why was it important to you and Phil Reilly and Donald Bren to landscape the medians with grass rather than cement, and to have these beautiful slopes that were covered with ground cover?

TOEPFER: We were not interested in just paving everything. We knew, as I said earlier, that hopefully we thought this would be a long-established development of a community, and if you start doing things initially that are kind of contrary to what you're philosophy is, you're not going to carry the theme through. So we were very careful to try to make sure our intersections and where we did have block walls and block-long planters in the medians, they were all consistent. So it was simple. Once you got a criteria established and you know what you want to do, it just was carried out throughout the community, as far as those initial years were concerned.

BRETON: Well, it may sound simple, but the idea of, for example, at quadrants, of having the reverse-bay gas stations, that may be a simple idea, but it was a brilliant idea.

TOEPFER: Well, I'm not sure it was brilliant, but it was initially thought as a headache by a lot of people, just inside-out and, gee whiz, it's not going to go. I remember our first little one that we had over here at La Paz entry. But it was fun because it was small, the KFC [Kentucky Fried Chicken], little nursery we had there. We had the bank and we had Thriftmart and real estate office, and it was comfortable. It was all designed with a Spanish effect, so to speak. Anyway, it

just worked out. But consistency is so important. Some people will argue this, that you can do one thing over here, and variety's the spice of life is the antithesis of that.

BRETON: Did the company not feel that it was just good business to construct tree-lined streets, that it's going to be beneficial to everybody if you have grassy medians and tree-lined streets?

TOEPFER: No question about it, but you have to always remember it's a matter of cost. You can go out there and do all kinds of what would be called outlandish, beautiful, magnificent things, and not have it cost-effective. I think that the things that Reilly and Bren finally decided in our meetings, it was cost-effective, and let's do it. So it was carried out, and obviously it proved to be okay financially, because it worked. You don't have people sitting out there waiting for a week to buy a house. They were comfortable times, just wonderful.

BRETON: The company then was able to amortize the costs, the exorbitant costs of these medians and slopes, over the years through the sale of homes.

TOEPFER: I'm not saying it was exorbitant cost, but it was not to what was normally expected in most developments. But you had to start someplace, and if you start badly, you're going to end up probably badly. So whatever the cost of those medians and the raised planters in the middle of the streets, it was very appropriate, and it had to be cost-effective. Otherwise, we never would have been able to do it.

BRETON: It must have added to the value of the homes.

TOEPFER: Oh, yes, without any question. I look back, and, to me, I bought my first home here, one of La Paz Homes, I think for \$20,000. Phil probably paid 35, 40, 50 for his. Later on, those same homes would be selling for—when I moved to Colorado, the company bought my home back, and it was \$100,000 and some thousand dollars I got from my little house. It's phenomenal what happened with the real estate values, and I think a lot of it was because of how

we designed things. It was what you've been alluding to all the time, is consistency, and you just don't go splashing here to one thing and something over here. Initially it may look nice when it's built, but then eventually one thing could drag the other down. Consistency in what we designed, Harvey Stearn, it paid off, and with Bren's thinking. I don't think this is for print, but Phil didn't have that much artistic talent. He'll tell you he did, but don't you—get the hell out of here. [laughs]

BRETON: The company must have anticipated, or at least hoped, that the first-time homebuyers would move into their new home, and then sell and move up to a more expensive home, but stay within the community because they loved the community so much.

TOEPFER: Yes. I don't know how much moving up there was. Most of the people that I became friends with over the years, they pretty much loved living where they were living, and I didn't see a lot of my friends—I'm trying to think of one—that went up into a more expensive home. It seemed like the appreciation of the land value themselves, they were very happy with it. But I didn't see that much movement of people within the community.

BRETON: How did the company try to prevent vehicular traffic conflicting with pedestrian traffic in shopping areas? Had you left by the time they were concerned about that?

TOEPFER: Well, no, there were certain standards that you can have an entrance from an intersection, so it pretty much was according to engineering standards of the county and approval of our plan. I'd say it was kind of a no-brainer, because you try to limit the access, and you can limit the access by not having every street lined with commercial buildings and, of course, concentrating your commercial at the intersections. It made it a lot easier from the standpoint of access. There wasn't necessary for that many driveways along these things.

BRETON: Let's talk a little bit more about the utilities. You've already discussed that you weren't involved in discussing with the various water districts, how they would import the water. There were no wells to be built.

TOEPFER: No. Phil took care of most of that with [Alexander] Alex Bowie, I think, with his firm. I think he was the engineer for Moulton Niguel, I think it was. I concentrated on the zoning and planning aspects of it. As far as the utilities, water and sewer, that was really not my shtick, so to speak.

BRETON: And the same with electricity and gas?

TOEPFER: Well, we talked the electric companies and so forth to go in there with television, TV, and electric, and all in the same trench.

BRETON: Was that innovative? Was that new?

TOEPFER: Well, I think it was kind of new. Utility companies weren't used to that. Of course, they weren't used to many big projects like ours.

BRETON: Whose idea was it to have all of the electric lines underground?

TOEPFER: It was really the recommendation of our engineering companies.

BRETON: It would have been cheaper to be up above, wouldn't it?

TOEPFER: Well, maybe, maybe, but again, it's a matter of what you want.

BRETON: Aesthetics.

TOEPFER: You could have built a house out of just shingles or built a nice home, and the same thing applied. The more utilities we could hide, the better off it was, and we tried to think in terms of taking the big power line that Edison used across the south part of the ranch, putting that underground. That required about \$1,200,000 a mile back then. As I understand it, you run all

these wires through the stuff, and it's got to be enmeshed or covered in oil. Very, very expensive. So as a result, you got overhead power lines.

BRETON: How about storm drains for flood control? Did you determine the size and location?

TOEPFER: No, that was really the engineers for the flood control department.

BRETON: Public safety, police. Were you involved in negotiating with the county, assuring that there would be enough coverage here in South [Orange] County with a substation out in Laguna Niguel, more patrols, have policemen patrol your parks, patrol the construction sites in order to protect your equipment?

TOEPFER: Most of the onsite security stuff was taken care of by us. We had two or three officers, security guards. As I told you the story about the young man during the swim meet, it was going a little bit too far in our security measures. Most of these things were created through the county service area, which provided really the same services that the city provides. The only difference is that today you're really under your own constraints and operate yourselves.

BRETON: Did the county require the three separate fire stations, or did you incorporate that into your planning?

TOEPFER: It worked out, I'm sure, with the county fire department cooperatively. We couldn't dictate, "Put one here, put one here, put one there." It was always a cooperation aspect, and I don't remember ever having any problems with anybody, except when we were anticipating annexing to San Juan Capistrano, and the county was saying, "Jim, people, they can't serve you."

BRETON: Let's get back to the fire. When you wrote the planned community text and when you were making your zoning designations, did you consider where you would want the fire stations to be?

TOEPFER: As I recall, you wouldn't put it in exactly where the fire stations are going to be.

That's a matter of in the opinion of the entities that control, where the best place is to have a fire station and police station and that sort of thing. Of course, we contracted with the county for security.

BRETON: We have a picture of—I believe it's Station 24 when the ribbon-cutting was taking place with the branding iron.

TOEPFER: Oh, dear.

BRETON: Mr. Dick O'Neill, got the branding iron, had it heated up, and there was a tape across for the ribbon-cutting. He had the "Rafter M" brand heated up, and then he seared it into the ribbon to cut that. We have a picture of that.

How about a hospital? Did you, in your planning of the master planned community, did you consider placement of a hospital?

TOEPFER: We made provisions for hospitals, but we did not designate a specific location, period. You know, it's amazing. I'm not sure what you call this, but Phil knew so many people and I knew so many people and Bren knew so many people, and they were friendly people. I don't know what the feeling would be today with so many people and so many more things. It was very easy to work with the various entities, except, was I say, when we anticipated going with San Juan. Then things got a little bit heated, and you may want to talk about that later.

BRETON: We will. We're going to talk about that next. But getting back to medical, you're building a new community. You're trying to convince people that it's feasible for them to buy a new home out here in the sticks, and you want to assure them that they don't have to worry about police or fire or taking their family members to the hospital. Was someone placed in charge of trying to attract medical offices?

TOEPFER: We built the first medical office here.

BRETON: Who built it?

TOEPFER: The company. We built the first one at La Paz right there at Chrisanta. It goes by the high school.

BRETON: That medical center. That was built by the company?

TOEPFER: We operated it. We leased out the offices, but we didn't have any doctors.

BRETON: Where was the closest hospital?

TOEPFER: Maybe at Laguna Beach.

BRETON: So you had provisions in the planned community for a hospital, but no negotiations for—

TOEPFER: No. We had provisions that they were allowed, and just with public necessity, we ended up selling land to the hospital where it is down there on—what is the street?

BRETON: It's on Medical Center Road right now. It's called Medical Center, between Crown Valley [Parkway] and Marguerite.

Let's talk about governmental approvals. Was it first anticipated, when you were writing and drafting the master plan, that the community of Mission Viejo would be annexed to San Juan Capistrano?

TOEPFER: Our druthers, ours being Phil's and mine—and I'm not sure Don didn't really care. I don't mean that in a bad way. But we wanted to annex to San Juan because we felt that we could determine our own destiny there instead of becoming a part of some other entity and staying in the county. So we had all kinds of ideas in going to the San Juan city and becoming a part of their city, not incorporating, and just annexing to the city. I spent many hour and days

convincing them that our plan was appropriate, made great friends with the City Planning Commission and the City Council.

Maybe I noted in one of my notes I sent you, but, you know what, it was interesting that most times if you're going to be going for something, you take gifts to others, to the city officials, in asking for favoritism, so to speak. I used to laugh because I would go down to the Planning Commission meetings before we had our public hearings, and they would bring me melons from the farm and pumpkins. "Here, Jim, here's some cucumbers you can take home." It was so different from what—you're trying to buy off somebody else, you know.

So anyway, we proceeded, and I spent an awful lot of time going down there and finally getting our plan approved. It was all approved. Our planned development code was all okayed. But then we started incorporating the incorporation idea, and the county didn't like that.

BRETON: The annexation idea?

TOEPFER: Yes. They didn't want us to annex.

BRETON: Because?

TOEPFER: Because they said, "There's no way in the world they can be able to supply the services for your community that the county can."

BRETON: At that time, how recent had LAFCO [Orange County Local Agency Formation Commission] been formed?

TOEPFER: I'm not so sure, but things used to be just gerrymandered something terrible up in north part of the county. Somebody went up here and annexed that little piece of ground. Then somebody else would come around the other side. So LAFCO, it was created, the various mayors of the communities, and it was in place.

BRETON: So you had the annexation application before LAFCO.

TOEPFER: You have to go to LAFCO to get approval for the annexation, and the county informed us that they would fight us all the way, that they could not provide the services. Mr. Cook was the highway department head there, and he assured us that we'd have a tough time getting certain services and roads and all this sort of thing.

The night before the hearing before LAFCO, Phil got a call—I think it was from [Cecil M.] Cy Featherly—advising Phil, “Please don't go ahead with the annexation. Please. We will do whatever we can to make the processing of your plans through the county as quickly as we can, but, please, because we know we can provide better services to your community.”

So that night—and I think Don was involved, maybe not, and we decided to pull out, which leads me to a funny story. They, being the county, we had to then go through the—we had all of our zoning, everything in place, in San Juan, so I had to file everything with Forrest Dickason and all the boys up there, [Stuart W.] Stu Bailey, all the guys I knew.

BRETON: Had they made a promise to you?

TOEPFER: Well, they said they would process this thing through as fast as they could. It was a year, to the date, one year, I went up to a—maybe you've heard this story, but I went up to the Planning Commission. I was on the agenda, and they moved me to last, but I took a cake in with a candle. Nobody was crazy, but I took the cake in with the candle. Mr. Smith was the chairman with this one. I said, “It's been one year to this date. You promised me that you were going to help us process, and you still haven't done it.” Naturally, it brought the house down. Nobody was going to do that except a nut like Toepfer, bring in a cake with a candle on it. They got the point, and they really went through fast after that, that cake.

But it's an interesting thing. We had such a relationship, and once we got our zoning, it seemed like I was up there all the time before the commission for something. It got to the point

where they'd look at the agenda and they'd say, "Toepfer's on the agenda again. He probably wants another church approved. Put him last on the agenda." Every time I had something on the agenda, I was shifted over to be last, which meant it was going to be probably at least seven, eight, nine o'clock in the evening, and they'd sit there and they'd laugh, and, "Just relax, Jim." It was fun times, but it was frustrating for me. I had to sit there till eleven o'clock in the evenings. They were really good to us, and tough.

BRETON: The Planning Commission recommended to the Board of Supervisors that your plan be approved.

TOEPFER: The plan was good, and the code, building, development guide was all approved. So we were on our way.

BRETON: Good to go. Okay.

TOEPFER: I don't think the cake was any good either, but that's okay.

BRETON: Well, now that we're talking about cake and favoritism, let's go into community relations. Why did the company take the initiative to dedicate and set aside land for schools and a library and parks rather than wait for the land to be condemned for those public purposes?

TOEPFER: Well, I'm sure you would agree, that would be silly, because our goal was to provide the services in advance so people didn't have to worry about it, and it was certainly a good selling device. On a promise that there's going to be a school, that doesn't really sell as well as having the school or having the little library up and everything here. So it was a matter of good business, to me, to have those services available, and the recreation, schools, parks, open space. That's attention to what the people wanted, and not so much of what we wanted, nor did we really cut corners trying to just delay, delay, delay. That was not the philosophy of Phil.

BRETON: Most builders look at the government as obstacle, as creating an impediment to what they want to do. It seemed like, and my question is, why did the company value and listen to the voices of education, the voices of government and of the people, in addition to the voices of the building industry and of the financial institutions? Why was it so anxious to engage them in a dialogue with the government and with the school system and the people in order to provide what you were trying to build?

TOEPFER: Your being an attorney, you know that it's a lot better if you talk to people and can get people to agree rather than to have to go through a lawsuit or whatever it is and then try to resolve problems. It was always our intention, as I've said three or four or five times, to provide the services and try to cooperate with the entities, because you had to live with them for a long time. It wasn't a one day in, one day out. We had to look towards tomorrow, next month, a year from now, two years from now, because we had a big piece of ground, and the last thing you want to do is alienate people, be it the government agencies or just your residents. It was crucial to us to get people involved and to try to at least meet the government agencies at least halfway. That didn't mean we just laid down and let them walk all over us.

BRETON: Isn't it true that sometimes in the building industry they want to play with their cards close to the vest, and they don't want to divulge this inside data as far as what they planned to be building in the next five years or something? They want to keep that hidden because that's privileged information as far as their projections, and yet the company was willing to meet with the schools and say, "This is exactly what our absorption rate is going to be, what we anticipate building, and this is what we're going to need from you."

TOEPFER: I spent more time with [Robert] Bob Dahlberg over at the Tustin Tustin [Union] High School District and with Ralph [A.] Gates and the other districts and down there in San

Juan Capistrano, and convincing them that our plan was good, and as a result of that, we ended up getting the high school and we got a nice new elementary school. The high school, we promised them a 4-H area there just off to the right as you're coming in on La Paz. We did a lot of things for them.

It was an interesting situation. I appeared before the Tustin High School District with Dahlberg, and finally one of the guys said, "Jim, just relax. You're doing a good job and we think we're going to approve your plan." But I used to get uptight on some of their thinking, but we ended up, naturally, as friends.

BRETON: Didn't the utility companies, for example, or the schools appreciate knowing what they were going to need in the future—I'm talking about pipes and wires—so that they could order those materials in advance or order the schools and have the schools built in advance, rather than you build the homes and then suddenly there's a need that they can't meet?

TOEPFER: I don't recall any problems of material shortage. We sometimes lost some of it because we had a contractor, too, that I'd be sitting at my home up there in the hill there and looking down and seeing some smoldering, some flames. Somebody got in there, was trying to burn all the covering off of all of our copper wire that we had stored. You know, we had tons of copper wire there in the Oso Creek area. But I don't remember ever having a problem of supply shortage in any of our stuff, sewer lines, water lines, everything. It seemed like it was there.

BRETON: Wasn't that in part due to the fact that you were meeting with these entities and telling them, "This is what's coming down the road. This is what we're going to begin to be doing next year and the following year"?

TOEPFER: We did that, certainly, but what went beyond that as far as administrative decisions and to store and not store and available, that was them. But we never encountered, to my knowledge or recollection, any shortage of any materials.

BRETON: How about the company avoiding bad publicity? Wasn't one of the reasons that you were trying to build good relationships with the local government, with the county, and with the school districts and with the water districts, etc., was to avoid bad publicity, to always be considered to be a reputable town that had integrity throughout the process?

TOEPFER: There's no question about it. As I said, I think, earlier, Phil always said that one thing we're always going to have is we're never going to lie. We're not going to deceive or be deceptive to any agency or any person. He said, "If we fail, we'll fail because we have that kind of direction." I don't remember having any problems or fights with agencies. I think we stuck to our word. As little as we may have started out and as we grew, we always kept our word, and that means so much to anybody. Bob, you know that. Just to be deceptive for maybe some political reason or whatever, it just wasn't in our nature.

BRETON: The county was able to place confidence and trust in your description of the projects, right?

TOEPFER: Yes. We were just a close-knit group. Nobody ever did us any favors that were not legal, and there was an awful lot of stuff going on way back then that I look at.

BRETON: Well, you did curry favor with some of the gatekeepers, some of the decision makers, by inviting them to ballets or concerts or deep-sea fishing trips, but that was mainly to get to know them better.

TOEPFER: Well, let me tell you about our deep-sea fishing trips. Over the course of all the time I was here, we probably had four or five trips. We'd go out of San Diego or we'd go out of

Long Beach. I would always invite the mom and the dad and their kids. I would never just invite a man or a woman. I always made sure it was a family event, and we didn't go overloading. No wining or dining. We went out and fished for the day. We did this with the Homeowners Associations that were in the community.

The number of county people that we took out, I'm trying to think of somebody that went out with us. Mostly it was just done with our local people. Jeanne Gagnebin, very involved in the community way back. She showed up, and we were going out albacore fishing for the day. She showed up in an absolutely beautiful white suit. You can laugh at that one because there's nothing more gory than bringing an albacore aboard that's all bloody. But she had to wear that beautiful blue suit. It was cute, because the husbands and wives that would go, it was just a fun time, but like I say, it was just very low key.

We never did any partying for any of the county commissioners and planning commissioners. I don't remember ever taking any of those people. It was usually just mostly the local people.

BRETON: Let's talk now about design elements. You've mentioned already that it was a conscious decision on the part of Donald Bren to incorporate the Spanish theme and early California motif as a nod to the O'Neill family as well as to San Juan Capistrano and the anticipation of the possible annexation. Did the company do any research in California or in Spain in order to find out more about what these motifs would entail?

TOEPFER: I don't know of any. Don seemed to have that ability. That was his thing, his forte. We didn't do any research looking at Spanish stuff. Our architect that designed our scroll and stuff and our streetlights may have.

BRETON: Or for the residences.

TOEPFER: Yes.

BRETON: I mean the homes that were being built, any of the motifs, they didn't do research on that?

TOEPFER: I don't know. You'd have to ask Don.

BRETON: Let's talk a little bit about the streetlights then. You said that Donald Bren conceived the idea. He wanted it to be an authentic replica of the mission bell.

TOEPFER: He wanted an idea of something different than the straight old streetlight, and so he recommended an architect—and I forget his name—in San Diego who I met with and told him that we'd like something different. He came up with several different designs, one of which, or a combination of a couple, they came up the streetlight with the scroll and the mission bell and that sort of thing. Don approved that, and Phil, and they said, "Great. Get them." So there were a couple of these things built in Pasadena.

BRETON: Roy Dahlin?

TOEPFER: Dahlin. Boy, that name—

BRETON: Of Edison Company?

TOEPFER: Could be, yes, could be. That name rings a bell.

BRETON: Walter Scott?

TOEPFER: No. Dahlin rings something.

BRETON: Rings a mission bell.

TOEPFER: Yes, ding, ding, ding. [laughter] That's very good.

So I talked to this group in Long Beach—I may have mentioned this before—this company, and they said they would design them. So they were designed and they were going to be fabricated either in South Carolina or Tennessee. I think the scrolls, one was designed, I

think, in Tennessee, and the streetlight was designed or manufactured, I should say, in South Carolina.

They insisted, they being the Edison Company, insisted that we place a special order in order to get that design preserved pretty much just for our community. I think it was to the tune of \$75,000 worth of streetlights. Maybe that doesn't sound like a lot today, but back then I think it was substantial. But we went and agreed with it, and we got an exclusive for those streetlights and the scroll for a long time. We incorporated them into our project in Aurora, but then they started using them at Capistrano, down at Dana Point Harbor and all over the place. But it was an interesting thing. I did not conceive of the design. It was something, really, that came out of conversations that Phil had and I had with this architect, and it came out beautifully, I think.

BRETON: Of course, there were other design elements and features in the community that reminds one of Spain or California, such as the arches, the tile, courtyards, the tile roofs. Was this all part of the palette that Donald Bren conceived, the thick stucco wall finishes?

TOEPFER: Yes, I think Don was pretty much involved. He loved house design, naturally. He was a house builder. Then, of course, Ernie Reynolds, I think, one of our early landscape people—you know, it's been fifty-some years ago, so you have to appreciate the fact that I'm eighty-three years old and I'm old and I forget some things.

BRETON: He brought in the bougainvillea, palm trees, jacarandas, geraniums.

TOEPFER: One of the things about the landscape architects, we designed a complex, a model home compound. My gosh, they can design. Those landscape guys can put in more stuff in there, and you go in there and it's absolutely lush when they build it. A year later, they've all grown up so much, you can hardly see the model homes. When I was with Santa Ana, I questioned not the integrity, but the things that a lot of builders would present to the Planning

Commission. There would be these multistory buildings, and they had these big tall trees that were all grown. In real life, they plant the trees and they're this big, and it takes thirty years before they get that big. By that time, buildings are dilapidated.

We all had a say, kind of, in the design of our model home complexes and the landscaping and that sort of thing, and I can't think of where anybody just dictated this or this or this or this. We didn't have that many people, and it was easy—"easy"—to at least get some consensus.

BRETON: The Barcelona walls, who designed the globes at each end? What do they represent, do you know?

TOEPFER: The globes?

BRETON: The big balls at the end of each Barcelona wall.

TOEPFER: That's just part of the design. You know, you could have come up with that idea. I mean, really, there was nothing—we didn't have to sit there and mull that over about ten or twenty weeks as to should we have the ball or not have the ball.

BRETON: Whose decision was it to have the low-silhouette fire hydrant?

TOEPFER: That was kind of a threesome, primarily probably me recommending them to Phil. Don, I don't think that he would be involved in the hydrants. We went up north to one of the projects up there in San Francisco, and they had the low-silhouette hydrants there, and I liked them, and I said, "Let's do it." So I went to the fire department and they approved everything, and that's what happened with the church. I had them all paint them green, and they couldn't find them. Then people started complaining because what happens in case of a fire and they can't find the fire hydrants because it's too much like foliage. So we went back in and repainted most of the hydrants.

BRETON: You had volunteers from a church paint them?

TOEPFER: Mount of Olives [Lutheran Church] did, and I was a member of the church. I don't know if we paid them or not. I think they just went out there of their own volition.

BRETON: When you drafted the PC [planned community] text, did you include in it some sort of CC&Rs [covenants, conditions, and restrictions]?

TOEPFER: Oh, yes.

BRETON: Who drafted those?

TOEPFER: I did, and I think—was [Gerard D.] Gerry Ognibene aboard at that time? He became in charge of those types of things. But the CC&Rs, as I recall—I could be mistaken and they can call me a liar—I thought that I had written pretty much those conditions, of which Phil, you attorneys, scrutinize very—you know how you guys are.

So anyway, they were approved and we tried to make them consistent. I took the same CC&Rs over to Colorado, and we used them in the Highlands Ranch project and they're just verbatim. The only problem that we've had is that in Colorado it's unincorporated, but we have a Community Association, and they started getting a little bit too tough, and they started imposing, "You can't have that type of shingle." I put a new shingle on my place. I've been retired since 1988 there from all the projects, same time Phil retired. I got my house replaced with roofing, gee, five, six years ago. I had them re-shingled and roofed and went down there to try to get approval. I didn't know who was in there, and they said, "No, this isn't right."

So I complained to the roof guy, and he said, "I'll take care of that."

Well, he went down, and the guy that was checking the roofing materials for the CC&R in the Highlands Ranch Community Association was a relative and approved. [laughs] That just really gets you.

BRETON: How important were the CC&Rs?

TOEPFER: Very, very important.

BRETON: Why?

TOEPFER: Because it meant that there'd be some sort of continuation of maintenance, which you guys have done here, and I know you've stuck to those CC&Rs diligently. If you don't, then everything pretty much goes—we've had houses painted red, we've had them painted pink and orange. There comes a time when you've got to just say no, to keep everything kind of harmonious and looking good. By your own being here with the city, what happens if you just ignore some sort of basic control? Because people will start doing everything they want, anything they want, and, in my opinion, it just kind of goes to pieces.

BRETON: What about commercial CC&R signage? How important was it that you have a strict sign program?

TOEPFER: It was good. Sometimes the company maybe would get a little bit too stringent later on after I'd left. I was in Colorado. I know Jim Gilleran insisted on compliance, and I know in a couple of instances he made some of the commercial buildings change some of their signage and so forth so it would be more in keeping with the community, rather than just let them go out there and do something kind of terrible.

BRETON: As far as size and color and neon and placement.

Tell me about the experience—whose decision was it to tell Kentucky Fried Chicken that they couldn't have the bucket, or McDonald's that they couldn't have the arches?

TOEPFER: Well, back in those days—I've got so many stories—we were not a publicly held company as such, Bren and Reilly and myself. So Phil let me and an attorney friend and a

couple others venture out and do some things. We imposed those conditions on ourselves because we owned the Kentucky Fried place.

BRETON: Who did?

TOEPFER: I did and a couple of my friends, attorney friends.

BRETON: Oh, really?

TOEPFER: Art Donahue and [James S.] Jim Okazaki. Maybe you know these names, maybe you don't. Jim was a very involved attorney with the county in San Juan. But we said, "You can't have a bucket, Jim," saying that to myself, looking in the mirror. So we imposed the conditions on ourselves, really.

But we were good people. When they had the terrible fire out there, the Trabuco [Canyon] and up near O'Neill Park, it was terrible, years ago. You were too young. We supplied Kentucky Fried Chicken to all those firemen up there free of charge, PR [public relations] a little bit.

BRETON: We're going to talk about landscaping, just a few things that we haven't mentioned. Why did the company insist that even in the light industrial and research and development zone, that it be landscaped and park-like rather than just a wasteland of shops and factories?

TOEPFER: Well, it was just part of the plan to make sure that there was consistency not only with the residential, and our parks and playgrounds and schools, that there should be certain landscaping that should occur in the industrial section just as well. Again, it was to try to keep some semblance of order, not just build.

BRETON: Why was it important to the company to set aside land for churches?

TOEPFER: Well, to us—at least to me, churches, stores, the schools, parks, they were all an integral part of the plan, and the religious aspect was just as important to me as some of these

others. So that's why I contacted ALC [American Lutheran Church], or LCA [Lutheran Church in America], here in Mission and talked to them, and I said, "Would you come and build a church?"

"There's nothing there, Mr. Toepfer."

I said, "Well, but there will be."

So they sent a guy out, Gene Harper. I don't remember all these names. Gene said, "What did you want, Mr. Toepfer?"

I said, "Well, I'd like you to build a church here, and I'm asking the Presbyterians and the Catholics. Are you interested?"

"Well, we may be." So they came out and they came up with the design of Mount of Olives.

So anyway, convinced them to build the church, and we gave them a very good price on the land, but that was one more element that was fulfilled, the schools, now we had the church, a little bit of commercial there, and the Thrifty [Thriftmart] Center. Everything together act like a glue, so people came out and they go to church. They weren't all the same denomination, but if it's the only church—and that denomination just grew. As a matter of fact, Art Cook could probably verify this. Mount of Olives Church is maybe one of the largest churches in the state in Lutherans. I'm not sure. So anyway, churches were very important, and that's when we brought the nuns out to look at a site.

BRETON: On behalf of?

TOEPFER: Of the Catholic Synod in L.A.

BRETON: The diocese?

TOEPFER: Diocese, L.A. diocese, right. That's when I took them onto the ranch. I don't know if we talked about this before, but they came out, and the only access we had at that time was a dirt road across the railroad track up here where it comes in from El Toro [Road]. I brought them, and we got hung up on the train track.

BRETON: Your car?

TOEPFER: The car. It was high—whatever you call it. So I said, “Sisters, we've got to get this off the track. A train's due here in about fifteen or twenty minutes.” They got out and I got out my side, and I looked at the car underneath there to see what was hung up just a little bit. I went around the side and I looked for the sisters, and they were both kneeling. They were praying for help, and I said, “That's not going to do it, sister. Push!” And we got off of there. About fifteen minutes later, the Santa Fe train came through there, roaring.

But they eventually built a church, Catholic church, there. So I used the same ploy when we got to Colorado and contacted the same people, and we ended up with a nice Lutheran church there again. As I say, it was just an important element to have all these things that meant a lot to a lot of people.

BRETON: Did you incorporate that into the plan as far as the location of the churches, or did you go to the churches and let them choose the sites?

TOEPFER: The first church, we told them where they had to go, I mean nicely. [laughs] And they built a very nice church there.

BRETON: Did you allow the Catholic church to pick and choose any site?

TOEPFER: They pretty much picked their own site. There were a lot of areas that we grew where churches were allowed, but it was important to get a church into that central location where models were and what have you.

BRETON: Do you know anything about the negotiations with the Jewish synagogue off Los Alisos [Boulevard] or the Mormon [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints] church on Marguerite Parkway or Shepherd of the Hills?

TOEPFER: No, nothing.

BRETON: Let's then move to schools and library. Why did the company feel that it was in its best interest to have a fine school system, not just schools, but a fine school system?

TOEPFER: Well, I mean, the finer the school system—and by finer, I assume you mean not just a beautiful-looking building and a structure, but the whole administration and all the things that make it great. I found that the San Juan Capistrano [Capistrano Unified School District] and Tustin High School District and Saddleback [Saddleback Unified School District], they really were good school districts. Well, we had no choice, really, but fortunately they were good school districts. The administrators were excellent. Ralph Gates and I, we kept in contact till about five years ago when we quit writing Christmas cards because he died. He ended up in Connecticut. But it was that kind of relationship that I maintained with so many of these people, not as a business thing, but just as friends.

BRETON: Was it important that the school be established during the first phase?

TOEPFER: Well, the sooner we could have one established, the better off it was. If you come out and you promise the site—you alluded to it again earlier. Promises don't mean too much. It excites people, maybe, but unless you carry through with the promise or whatever, you become meaningless, "There's one of Toepfer's promises again," or Breton's promise, whatever it is. So we just made sure that we tried to keep our word, do a good job, and help them as much as we could, not give them everything, but at least have an incentive, and maybe reducing land price a

little bit to the school, give them the land, to get that doggone thing built, and they did it and they were wonderful.

BRETON: What did the company give for the Mission Viejo High School construction?

TOEPFER: Well, that's a story in itself. I'm surprised you asked that. We got to be very good—not friends, but a business relationship with the Tustin High School District, and Bob Dahlberg was the director and the superintendent. Phil knew Ed Akins, and I knew a couple of the other guys that were on the board, and I went down and made presentations to them. They had to decide between a new high school at El Toro or a new high school someplace else. So I said, "Would you gentlemen please come down, and I'll have Phil Reilly with me, and we'll look at a good site," where the high school is today, "and take a look at this and see if we can't work out something."

So Ed Akins and Bob Dahlberg and a couple others came down, and we looked at the site where the existing high school is. As we're sitting there talking, Ed Akins said, "Jim, Phil, aren't there jet planes that fly over this place every so often from El Toro, the Marine base?"

"Well, not too often."

"But the flight pattern of takeoff and landing is right over the community, isn't it?"

I said, "It's up quite high and over."

"Well, what about the trains? They come down around that corner," almost where the nuns were, "and hitting pretty high speed, and they make a lot of noise and there's a lot of vibration."

"But very infrequently, very infrequently. I mean really."

"Well, how about the trucks that come down the freeway, those brakes, [demonstrates sound]? They make the big noise."

I said, “You’ve got to believe me. It just doesn’t happen that much. I mean, this is a great site, and we’ll do things for you.”

Phil said, “I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll make a deal. You come, and, believe me, the things you’re mentioning here, they just aren’t that—believe us. I’ll build you a stadium. We’ll build a football stadium for you, the bleachers.”

Said, “Okay,” and we settled on a price that was just ridiculous. So we got the high school.

We were walking away back to our cars from the site, and honest to god, Bob, right away a train comes through there. I mean, it’s true. It couldn’t have been a couple minutes later, the jet goes landing into El Toro Marine base, and a truck comes down that thing, [demonstrates sound]. And I’m telling you, Ed looked at Phil. He said, “Why, you dirty son of a gun. We’ve been had.”

And Phil said, “Is the deal off?”

He said, “No, we’ll go ahead with the deal.” [laughs] That’s how we got a high school.

Later, Phil bought the band their uniforms. Then we helped them build their 4-H thing down there in the trees.

After I moved out there, I think probably once a month I got a call from some neighbor, “Hey, Jim, there’s another bull loose,” out there on a Sunday, chasing after a cow up on one of the streets there. But it was quite a thing.

Then Ralph Gates was wonderful with the elementary school situation. It just worked out beautifully.

BRETON: On the elementary, how did the Mission Viejo Company forecast its scholastic need? Did they do demographic studies, or did they just leave that to the school district?

TOEPFER: Well, the school district determines pretty much what—again, they’re allowed almost anyplace by special permit or whatever, and you need the schools. But the school district, we didn’t dictate where they had to have the school, as such.

BRETON: The company was fortunate to have a daycare center in the very first year, wasn’t it?

TOEPFER: Yes, we had a daycare center. I think that was in the church. Again, it was just another little thing that people looked for when they moved there, and be at the little Thriftmart, just a little dinky store, and a bank, a cinema. The cinema’s a good story.

BRETON: Tell me.

TOEPFER: When they made the deal with us, they said, “Jim, we’ll go ahead and build a cinema.”

BRETON: Was that James Edwards [II]?

TOEPFER: Edwards. It was Edwards.

They gave me a letter of acceptance, and they said, “If you have any friends, just come on down and get in for free.” Well, Toepfer, being naïve, in a sense, I brought down half of the swim-team parents one night after a meet or something, and there must have been ten or twelve of us. They let us in, but I got a letter right away from Edwards saying, “No more of that, Jim. When I said friends, I meant you and your wife or maybe a couple kids, but not the whole swim team.” So that ended that goodie. But if you could have seen the people I had there. I said, “Well, we got permission from Mr. Edwards that I could bring friends down.” So it ruined things sometimes.

BRETON: You have too many friends. [laughter]

TOEPFER: Swim team is another thing.

But anyway, the school situation was beautiful, and we ended up also negotiating with Saddleback for the new college, which they went in. I think we offered them two hundred acres down there. I'm not sure if that's the right acreage.

BRETON: Do you remember the presentation that you made on the night to the trustees of the proposed—

TOEPFER: Phil made the presentations on the site, as I recall, and Governor [Ronald W.] Reagan was there. It's amazing how you end up meeting these people, and then he became president. A number of people that I ended up meeting with, being associated with the company, all the governors, and became really friends with over in Colorado, [Roy R.] Romer and [Richard D. "Dick"] Lamm.

BRETON: How did you, in developing the planned community text, determine the sites for the schools, the zoning, when you're making your zoning designations?

TOEPFER: As I say, you could almost build a school anyplace through special permit, but I think we probably designated the sites, but we only did a lot of this stuff after conversing with the superintendent or members of the school board.

BRETON: Wasn't it your intent to place the elementary schools so strategically that every child could walk to school?

TOEPFER: Well, that's nice of you to say that. I'm not sure that that was really a specified criteria. Again, you place it based upon the anticipated population of those areas and the number of kids you're going to have. In Colorado we've got sites that still are not built upon, but they're held in abeyance.

BRETON: The company, in some of its marketing materials, was touting Mission Viejo as a family-oriented community and was selling the idea that when you buy a home in Mission Viejo,

you can be sure that your kids can have a neighborhood park and an elementary school that they can walk to. So that must have been part of the original plan.

TOEPFER: Yes. It's amazing, on some of the slopes there at the schools they would try planting with ice plant or whatever, and I'd get calls from the residents, "Well, the kids are using pieces of cardboard and sliding down the slopes on the dirt." You have no idea the little things that I was confronted with. Building something, that got to be simple.

BRETON: Why did Tony Moiso donate seven acres for the Farm? You had that 4-H. Did he donate that land? Do you know anything about that?

TOEPFER: He could have. I had nothing to do with that. You'd have to ask Tony.

BRETON: Let's talk a little bit about the portables. The first school was O'Neill, Marguerite O'Neill School [Marguerite M. O'Neill Elementary School] in '67, and the second one was Gates. Why was there a need for portable schoolrooms in the Capistrano Unified School District? Was that always anticipated by the school district as a cost-saving measure, and they didn't anticipate that the children that were growing up would stay, and therefore this would become a senior community, and therefore we don't need to have permanent facilities? Do you know anything about that?

TOEPFER: No, I don't remember. Obviously there were some portables, and perhaps it was just because we grew too fast and we needed the space, and therefore the only solution was more portables until they could build another school and take that load off of the existing schools.

BRETON: Despite the housing recession, you were growing faster than you had anticipated, weren't you?

TOEPFER: We did okay. Like I said, if people set out there for a week or two weeks in a tent or in their car waiting for an opening—and you can read some of the reports in the *Mission Viejo*

Reporter of all these people that would sit. We'd even cater some hors d'oeuvres during the week, just to keep them happy. But they just thronged in there, and it's wonderful to see, as a builder. Then, of course, you've got to ask the question, why didn't you raise the prices, which is always something in the back of your mind.

BRETON: The portable schoolrooms were principally in the Capistrano Unified School District schools. Do you know anything about the reason for having two separate school districts within the boundaries of Mission Viejo?

TOEPFER: They were simply the boundaries, and trying to get you to move your boundary and me trying to get you to move your boundaries, it's one of those kind of impasses that sometimes you just can't resolve.

BRETON: There was no effort made to try to consolidate or to move the boundaries, shift the boundaries?

TOEPFER: I may have tried that. I may have tried talking to them, but not in a belligerent tone, just to try to find some meeting of the minds, because it would have made a lot more sense to have the whole community in one district rather than have them split in Capistrano and the other in Saddleback. So anyway, it just happened that it stayed the way it did, and we never became enemies with the districts. We always were gentlemen and so forth with each other.

BRETON: On good terms.

TOEPFER: Yes.

BRETON: Do you remember anything about the first library? You had a bookmobile from San Juan Capistrano coming up, and then you had the first permanent library on Chrisanta. Can you tell me anything about that?

TOEPFER: Just that it occurred. If you would have asked me that thirty-five years ago, I could answer your question. I just know that we wanted to get a library again, and I think it became maybe a county service area thing. So they did put in the temporary library.

BRETON: That was critical, wasn't it, very important to a community?

TOEPFER: You can say libraries, some kind of little medical area, fire place, post office. We built our first little post office, a little building.

BRETON: You've mentioned county service area, and this was one of the first really substantial county service areas, wasn't it?

TOEPFER: It was a good size, yes.

BRETON: How did that work? What was entailed in the formation and the services provided by a county service area? Is that so that the county could administer the police and the fire and the library services?

TOEPFER: They cannot do zoning. The county service area cannot do zoning, but they can provide all the other services, fire and police and other things. The one thing that you couldn't get them to do was act on behalf of the Orange County Planning Commission and do the zoning aspect of things, but most of the other things were pretty well—just like how the city operates, with that exception of having the police power that you have.

BRETON: That was formed by whom? Is that a friend of yours, the county attorney by the name of Jim Okazaki?

TOEPFER: Okazaki. I think he was the county attorney and helped formulate that district. Jim always remained a real close friend. He moved out to the ranch and had a nice home, and he still lives in the same house. Fine attorney. His son is an attorney. We got to the point after we got everything going, we'd meet every morning about six o'clock or five-thirty and play racquetball

for an hour, then take showers, and he'd go to the office or wherever he went and I went to my office. As a matter of fact, we still remain real close friends.

BRETON: Let's move on to parks and recreation. How did the company anticipate and determine the recreational needs of its future residents?

TOEPFER: Toepfer would sit there and go in to talk to Reilly and say, "We need recreation for the community."

"Okay, Jim, what do you have in mind?"

"Well, let's build a center over here."

"Okay."

So we built Montanoso, and I can't think of any statistic that would say we should build a rec center here. I just know that we needed recreation as a supplement to the other goodies that we were providing for the buyers out there, and then we subsequently built, like I mentioned before, Sierra Center and we built what was the Marguerite Center. I think the Marguerite Center is now the—who owns that now?

BRETON: The city still owns it, but it's leased to the YMCA.

TOEPFER: Yes, that's what it is, YMCA, yes.

BRETON: And the Felipe Tennis Center.

TOEPFER: So we said, "Let's build one here," and we did, and, of course, they proved to be very good.

BRETON: What about other recreational needs?

TOEPFER: We had the stable. We built a stable. Not exactly sure why, but there were people, I guess, that wanted to have a horse. I'm not a horseman. Mr. Cook is. He'd ride for the Denver group, and he came into my house one afternoon there in Colorado and his seat was so sore, he

wanted to take a shower, and then asked me if I had any painkiller that he could rub on his bottom. [laughs] He was hurting. But with respect to the stable and so forth, it evolved.

BRETON: Did you have bridle paths?

TOEPFER: Not really. They just pretty much had places they could ride, but we didn't have bridle paths, stop stations and all that, that I recall.

BRETON: Your rec centers had what amenities besides swimming pools? Tennis courts, barbecue, volleyball.

TOEPFER: We had tennis courts. We had the volleyball courts. We had swimming, handball, racquetball, diving. I think they even had some arts and crafts that they could do, depending on which center you were at. We held a lot of community functions at Montanoso Center. I think each Christmas we put on a special program of having some person of notoriety perform. It was always seemingly that same group, that community group, that came in there and just helped me just immensely. We'd meet and have programs. Marty Russo became quite involved in the—

BRETON: How did the company assure the residents, the homeowners, that their children would be safe at the rec centers when they were by themselves in the rec centers?

TOEPFER: Again, I go back to what I had said maybe two or three times. People may complain about too strict rules or what have you, and as I mentioned, Phil said way at the beginning, "Jim, if we're going to fail, we're going to fail because we're too good," not from the standpoint of too great, but just having rules that are right, and just not letting people do anything they want, and if we fail, we fail. But we're going to do it aboveboard, it's going to be legitimate, and we're going to do it right, right as we can. That was our credo. So if people complained that it was too—we held tight to the rights, to make sure that the kids were as safe as we could make them. As I said, we did have a police—not a force, a couple people that would go through the

community that were employed by us, as well as the county sheriffs [Orange County Sheriff's Department], and we just tried to make it, like I say, as safe as we could.

BRETON: So the parents knew that the rules were being enforced strictly at the rec centers?

TOEPFER: I think they did. I think they did, yes.

BRETON: How was the company able to keep the rates for belonging to the rec centers affordable? Did they subsidize that?

TOEPFER: Well, I suppose initially we had to subsidize because there weren't enough people out there, but eventually probably the Association dues. That's a very good question. I just really don't know how that worked. I guess they had Association fees, but I can't answer your question, Bob. I'm sorry.

BRETON: It's okay. We've touched a little bit on the riding stables. Did the company decide that prospective buyers might want a ranchette where they could keep a horse, or did they find out from the prospective residents whether they wanted to have a horse?

TOEPFER: I never had anybody approach me and say, "I'd like to have a house with a horse," or be able to buy a house and have a horse there.

BRETON: Why did the company decide to build that Mission Viejo Saddle Club? Was it near the golf course?

TOEPFER: I think it was down near the south end of the community. I know we had one down further south down there where the college was, but I'm not sure what happened after that. Do you have a horse stables here now?

BRETON: No.

TOEPFER: Okay. So that disappeared.

BRETON: Now let's go to commercial development. Of course it was important for the company to provide shops for the new residents, some kind of a store, whether it was the Thriftmart or whatever. So the company completed the fourteen-acre Mission Viejo La Paz Plaza by September of 1966. What did it include? Do you remember?

TOEPFER: Well, it was a bank, a Thriftmart. We had, I think, a barbershop. We ended up having our offices on the second floor of those buildings. I think our escrow department was downstairs. A service station. Then across the street we had the KFC, and we had a nursery down at the other end, and we had the church right next to it. So that's kind of the little composite.

BRETON: Do you remember anything about a cleaners or florist?

TOEPFER: I think there was a cleaners.

BRETON: Or hardware?

TOEPFER: No, I don't recall a hardware store.

BRETON: Coffee shop? Okay. How was it determined to build this fifty-acre Village Center at the corner of La Paz and Marguerite?

TOEPFER: How important was it?

BRETON: Yes. How was it determined? Did Phil say, "This is the hub of La Paz and Marguerite"?

TOEPFER: That was on our plan as being a hub. People that were interested in coming into it, they would negotiate with what we then—by that time, we had a commercial guy who would handle all that, and it was just simply a matter of negotiating and then building in accordance with whatever rules and regulations within the zoning codes that we had. So it was on the plan, so it evolved, not like what you got today. It's really pretty here.

BRETON: Even the Miner's Village sort of kept with the theme.

TOEPFER: Yes. That was back in those days, too, right on the other corner there.

BRETON: Then you had some recreational needs satisfied. You had a Skateway and a bowling alley.

TOEPFER: Yes. We had just a myriad of things, and it was a combination of all the things together, plus the various Activities Committee and all the people that got involved personally. It was really wonderful. It took a lot of time.

BRETON: You left before the Mission Viejo Mall was constructed, right?

TOEPFER: Mission Viejo Mall. Which—

BRETON: The regional shopping center down south of Crown Valley.

TOEPFER: Yes. I don't remember.

BRETON: As far as light industrial along Via Fabricante, do you recall Reilly trying to attract nationwide companies to bring their headquarters here or to relocate here for some aspect of their manufacturing, such as the Burroughs Corporation or National Cash Register, NCR?

TOEPFER: Yes, we tried getting Burroughs, and they were going to be where the college site was. Burroughs ended up over there in—it was a community up near Murietta way in the valley, way down there. So we missed out on that one, but the college went into that location.

BRETON: You're talking about National Cash Register?

TOEPFER: NCR, that's who it was. That's who it was, yes.

BRETON: Burroughs went in where, along Jeronimo [Road] up north by Los Alisos?

TOEPFER: I just don't remember Burroughs.

BRETON: It might have been right after you left.

Now, you've touched on this. We're going to go to residential building. You, of course, have mentioned how Harlan Lee and Byron Lasky were brought in, and Deane brothers, to build the first housing tracts. The intent of the company was that they would subdivide, they would sell to other builders. They were shy. They hesitated. They were reluctant to take a big risk. Later, after the company started building its own homes here, did those companies come clamoring for a piece of the pie? Did they suddenly come back and say, "Now we'd like to buy," and you had to turn them down?

TOEPFER: They did to me, some of those people that I'd asked just informally, "Would you like to come out and buy some land?" I'm not a hard negotiator. I was not in charge of land sales, but back then there were so few of us, that if one of us could pull in somebody, more power to us. But once we made that determination to build ourselves, it was pretty well committed that that was what we're going to do. I'm sure that a lot of people made overtures to Don or to Phil about land, but we were pretty well set doing it ourselves.

BRETON: It was too late.

TOEPFER: Yes.

BRETON: Let's talk a little bit about the golf course. How did the company arrive at its decision to place the golf course there, where the Mission Viejo Country Club is, the Mission Viejo Golf Course, the size and the placement of that?

TOEPFER: I'm not a golfer, but it certainly appealed to, I think, Dick O'Neill and some of the other people. They felt that a golf course was a very appropriate needed thing, maybe a little to sophisticated for what was going in there, but—that's a wrong statement. It was just, again, another integral part of an amenity which they felt would be good, and so it was built. We hired Robert Trent Jones [Sr.] as the designer to come in there and design the course.

BRETON: Did you always intend the golf course to be next to the freeway?

TOEPFER: It was where it is. That always was, where it was built.

BRETON: That was where it's supposed to be. Did the company make any efforts in approving the design or having Robert Trent Jones design it to make it eligible for championship tournaments?

TOEPFER: I think that was a statement that was bandied around, to make it a top course, and that's why we brought Robert Trent Jones in. He designed.

Maybe you've heard the story of that. He came out and would make his checks on the plans and so forth, which was very infrequent. Then we had rough-graded the golf course. He came out, and we'd had a deluge, and everything was in the state of rough grade. So Frank [L.] Fehse, my engineer, and I took him out on a field trip. Mr. Jones was a well-dressed gentleman, like you are today, very proper, and, to me, wasn't befitting of a guy looking at a rough-grade golf course, but that's okay.

We went out, and we're traipsing through the whole valley down there where the rough grade occurred, and I think he was in mud over his shoes. Both of us were. Really, it was not a time to go looking at a rough-grade golf course, because it was terrible.

We got back to the office, and he never even said anything about that. He thought it was great. He told me that he would never come out again. I said, "Mr. Jones, why?"

He said, "I've never seen anything so terrible in my life."

So he never came out again, and he assigned his son, Robert Trent Jones, Jr., I think it was, to be the man who would be our coordinator. The golf course got built and became a very nice golf course, as you know. I don't remember him ever coming back for anything.

BRETON: He must have expected to be escorted around on a golf cart.

TOEPFER: [laughs] He wouldn't get escorted that day unless in a boat.

BRETON: Why was it dubbed the "mission impossible"?

TOEPFER: Because I think that the only people that played it were novices like me, which would have to conclude that it is impossible to play a decent round of golf, and with the idea that it could be a really great course. What do I know about golf? I struggled to get 112 or 115. So I think most of the people that would play it, most of the residents in the area, they found it just kind of "mission impossible" because it was not a golf course that you could go out and play nine holes on, one of these pitch-and-putts, and get a decent score. So that's essentially what the problem was.

BRETON: Is that why you built Casta del Sol Golf Course?

TOEPFER: That was built as an adjunct to the development itself.

BRETON: But somewhat easier to play on.

TOEPFER: Yes, older people.

BRETON: How much do you remember about the Lake [Lake Mission Viejo]? Let's talk a little bit about the Lake now that we're moving into the recreational area. Did the residents want a lake? Did they want lakefront housing? Is that something that was originally planned?

TOEPFER: I never heard anybody come up to me and say, "We'd like to have a lake," or lakefront housing and that sort of thing. I think it was kind of more or less a dream of our marketing department, Harvey Stearn. They came up with a feasibility study, and they determined that it looked like it would be good, so we built the Lake.

BRETON: But it wasn't originally part of the planned community text.

TOEPFER: That's right. We ended up with the Lake, and it was a very easy thing to get approved. The Philip Morris board reviewed it and put their stamp of approval on right away, and we built the Lake.

It was an interesting thing because the state was going through an awful lot of drought, and water was really a precious commodity. Phil did a remarkable job in getting water for us through his contacts, political or otherwise. We otherwise just wouldn't have had it. So we built the Lake, and it was a great day when we opened the valve and it started filling. I remember the day that I took my daughter out and one of my associates, Gerry Ognibene, and we got a lot of bass. At that time we put in these great big huge tires from moving equipment as a place within the lake for the fish to have babies, you know, all that stuff, and went out there and we put all those bass that you people now catch, big lunkers.

The Lake was really a great thing. In Colorado we have an awful lot of bentonite problems, expansive soil problems. I mean that whole valley in Denver, it just is horrible. But they use bentonite as the main substance within the dam, and it really holds the water back. So you may have a big bentonite core, which you love here in California, and you go over to Colorado and everybody sues you because of the expansive soil and your foundation's moving all over. So it's really a fun thing.

BRETON: Moving on to the community college, why as land offered for the establishment of a college district here?

TOEPFER: Well, we just wanted a college. We knew they were looking for a site.

BRETON: Why? Did you want to offer an educational opportunity to your residents to be able to come here from kindergarten all the way through college?

TOEPFER: You can say that, but I'm not sure that in my mind it was a real—it could have been across the street and just as available.

BRETON: Didn't the company undergo, or at least Mr. Phil Reilly go to tremendous lengths to try to convince the college district to build it here rather than to establish it in some other area?

TOEPFER: I don't know if he went to great lengths, but he certainly was able to negotiate them to come in there and see that the college got established. That's when we had Governor Reagan out there and all that stuff. Again, we had good relationships with so many people. I'm not saying that in a bragging sense; I'm saying it just as a truism. People believed Phil. Don was long gone by that time. I think we gave them the two hundred acres.

BRETON: The district was formed, and there was a \$9 million bond proposal.

TOEPFER: It was to build a college, probably, but I think we gave them the land.

BRETON: An offer they couldn't refuse.

TOEPFER: I think. So you can verify that.

BRETON: Let's go into the fun part of this interview, which is how the company established community identity, community pride, community feeling. First of all, how did the company help the new residents connect to each other and become friends, the new neighbors in the community?

TOEPFER: There's probably a three-, four-, fivefold answer to that one. You're aware of the Activities Committee.

BRETON: Yes.

TOEPFER: I formed that with about four or five guys, and Bob Aldrich and Homer Meech and [Walter W.] Bill Knitz and [David] Dave Rukstalis and his wife [Ladona Rukstalis], and we got this thing generated to start having good things like the Five Nights of Christmas. We would sell

Christmas trees, and we did all kinds of things. We'd have special functions at the Montanoso Center. So that was a very critical thing. As we grew, more people became connected with it, and Marty Russo, as I mentioned before, became quite involved in it. Then after Mr. Cook came with us—Mr. Cook did a fantastic job. He was a lousy rancher—I'm being facetious—but he did just an incredible job in organizing and carrying through the projects. So we had that Activities Committee, which did so many things, and involved a lot of the key people in the community.

So then we had the swim team, and we started out with—I wrote down the names of these, but I've got several names that started at infancy and started moving up, moving up. I have the names if you want me to refer to them, but it was so many people that started at the infancy stage. Even Phil's kid [insert name] tried out for the team. Phil would come down to the Montanoso pool with his big bullwhip, and he would smash that thing, snap that thing, over the top of those kids. I mean, it was just all in fun, nowhere near hitting anybody, but it was just fun.

We ended up getting so many great swimmers, Brian [S.] Goodell and others. [Gregory E.] Greg Louganis ended up being there later on, diving. So anyway, the Goodells were very instrumental in getting this thing started. Phil was very receptive. Anytime I went in and said, "Phil, I've got this group of people. How about building a swim center at Sierra somewhere?" Do this or do that. Out of that, we ended up with the big pool at Marguerite. You've heard the story of where we competed against Los Coyotes [Country Club]. They didn't want to compete against us because we were such a novice group, and it did my heart good the day that they concluded their program and I could go in there and buy their 10-meter diving board. But the people were so great, and they attained such great—well, you know, the Nadadores, they've become national.

BRETON: Describe the process. Say I'm a new homebuyer. I'm in your offices. I'm signing the documents with my wife. We have a design center right there.

TOEPFER: I have a contract right here, Bob, if you want to sign one right now. [laughs]

BRETON: What do you offer me to make me instantly feel like I'm part of a family, of a neighborhood? Don't you offer me a welcome packet, or do you put a sign in my front yard with my name on it? What do you do to make me feel like I'm a member of a close-knit community?

TOEPFER: I know what you're speaking of. We used to have packets that we would give the buyers. But I think that as important as any packet, it was what they saw when they came out there. You can have all kinds of packets and promises and this sort of thing, but coming out and going across the bridge, having a very beautiful La Paz Road decorated with all the nice landscaping, a little shopping center off to the left there, and coming in, as we developed the high school and the schools, people could feel a sense of community.

BRETON: And a sense of belonging.

TOEPFER: Yes. You'd have to go through it—maybe you did—to appreciate what they had, and sometimes you say, well, maybe people didn't appreciate or didn't even know, but we tried to make it as—with our own little newspaper. We had the *Mission Viejo Reporter*, and it was very nice to be able to circulate that to buyers, and people could pick it up and they could see what was going on and what was promised or what was actually developed. So the *Reporter* was a very instrumental thing that showed what we were doing or what we anticipated doing. The fortunate thing is that what we anticipated doing, we usually fulfilled. It was not just a promise, as I mentioned earlier.

BRETON: Who paid for the *Reporter*?

TOEPFER: The company.

BRETON: Was it monthly?

TOEPFER: I think we had a monthly, yes.

BRETON: Was it distributed to every home?

TOEPFER: I think it was. I could be mistaken.

BRETON: What about the Chain of Title?

TOEPFER: The Chain of Title.

BRETON: Didn't every new homeowner receive a deed that came from the King of Spain all the way up to [unclear]?

TOEPFER: I think they did, but I couldn't honestly say I remember it that distinctly. I think it was a replica of something like that.

BRETON: What about the Mission Viejo Beautiful Committee? Did you have anything in the formation of that?

TOEPFER: Mission Viejo Beautiful—

BRETON: Where they would go around to the home and select a home each month that they considered the best landscaped home?

TOEPFER: I don't remember that. Beauty's in the eye of the holder. [laughs] Toepfer never had to behold anything that was beautiful.

BRETON: You've described the Nadadores and how you started that with the formation of a swim team. Was that mainly for the children of the employees, or for all the residents?

TOEPFER: Just anybody in the community. As a matter of fact, I don't remember many employees really having kids that were, other than Art Cook, my family. Phil's kids, they tried. But the rest of them, they were all people that some had been on swim teams outside of Mission Viejo, and they were just interested in a team, and it evolved into what you—

BRETON: That became an instantly universally recognized brand.

TOEPFER: Yes. It was very, very successful.

BRETON: Worldwide. What about the effort to build the Olympic Training Center here? Tell us about that.

TOEPFER: The Olympic Committee was looking for a site somewhere, and Philip Morris said to Phil, "I'd like us to go and get that thing."

So Phil called me in and said, "Jim, let's get the Olympic Training Center."

"Okay."

So anyway, I had an employee, [Walter S.] Wally Ris, who was an Olympic swimmer, and got advice from him and that sort of thing. So the Philip Morris people said, "Jim, we'd like to get this thing, and so put on a presentation." The presentation was going to be a few months down the line, and it was going to be held in Lake Tahoe area. I think I spent \$50,000, which then was a lot of money, to make our presentation. If there's one thing we were good at, it was maps, I mean pretty presentations. We had just extraordinary—a track and all this stuff. We did not have swimming in it.

So anyway, we put this whole package together. So then I took Wally Ris and Art Cook, and I think our wives went with us. We went up to make a presentation to the Olympic Committee up there in the Tahoe area, and our presentation was really outstanding, in my opinion. As a matter of fact, I think we were the only one that really put on a presentation. So we made the presentation, and for some reason or other, somebody stood up and said, "Your community's only for the rich, isn't it?" It had nothing to do with the Training Center.

"No," and I tried to explain, "we have all kinds of housing. But what does that have to do with the Olympic Training Center?"

It was to be located in Planning Area 21, which is right down the street here and in the hilly area. It was just beautiful. It was beautiful, and I know that Philip Morris would have spent money in helping to develop that thing besides just the 50,000 bucks for designing.

So anyway, we made our presentation, and this guy—not only he, but others started saying things that weren't even associated with the Center, "Well, but you've got a posh area down there. Who's going to come?" All this. I really got upset. But anyway, we finished our presentation, and the chairman of the committee thanked us, not profusely, but thanked us for putting on the presentation.

So then in comes the mayor for New Orleans, and he gets up, and the chairman, "Hi, Bob," I hear the chairman.

"Thank you for very much for having the city over there. You know that anything that we say, we'll do, so you just let us know what you need and we'll take care of that facility. You can count on it." End of presentation.

I don't even know if I ever got a thank you—I, we—for putting on the presentation. They didn't even consider us, but they sure considered the mayor from New Orleans. Bob, that really, if I may use the word, ticked me off a lot because our people had made such an effort. Maybe someplace in the archives you've got maps of this thing that we designed, the people designed. I think Philip Morris was disappointed, but they've had a lot more big disappointments than that one. I was very disappointed, but we sure attempted to do it. Probably Art Cook—we've talked about so much today—knows an awful lot about what happened, because it was really a downer. You know, you work and struggle really for weeks to come up with a really excellent facility that met all their standards relative to distances and sizes and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And to be shunned was really sad.

BRETON: What year was that, that you made the presentation to the Olympic Committee?

TOEPFER: It must have been in the seventies or something. They ultimately decided to go to Colorado Springs for part of it and all that sort of thing. I'm not sure what year it was.

BRETON: A little bit about Tournament of Roses. Were you here when they first entered the tournament?

TOEPFER: No. I thought it was great and watched it on TV, but I was not—

BRETON: How about the [Celebrity] Challenges of the Sexes with [William H.] Bill Cosby [Jr.] and Farrah Fawcett?

TOEPFER: We had that and the—

BRETON: Virginia Slims.

TOEPFER: Virginia Slims.

BRETON: *Seventeen* magazine.

TOEPFER: We had the Virginia Slims. We had put this thing out, and I remember we had a cocktail party at Roger Clark's home over there on the golf course. [Christine M.] Chris Evert and the wonderful tennis players were there. She came up, and who did she say I look like?

BRETON: Robert Redford?

TOEPFER: No. Oh, for crap's sake. I'm sorry. Who was the guy on the movie where he takes the motorcycle and he's driving—Steve McQueen. She said, "You look just like Steve McQueen," and she gave me a kiss on the cheek, and then as she backed off, "his father." That crushed me, absolutely crushed me. I hated her ever since. [laughs] "You look just like Steve McQueen, his father."

I remember watching above from some of the homeowners up above one of the greens on the golf course and the movie actors coming through there, and [Robert E.] Bob Richards, famous pole vaulter, and they were all having a ball.

BRETON: Mark [F.] O'Meara, was he playing?

TOEPFER: I don't know. And the guy that starred in the "Highway Patrol" movie.

BRETON: Broderick [Crawford]?

TOEPFER: Yes, Broderick. Yes, he was there. Miss America was the special guest. I remember I had a little motorhome, and she came down and dressed in my motorhome. Gee, I thought I was never going to clean it up. [laughs] Oh, dear, childish things.

BRETON: You're not talking about Farrah Fawcett?

TOEPFER: No, no.

BRETON: How about the '84 Olympics? You were in Colorado, but did you come down for that to see it?

TOEPFER: Yes. I brought my Activities Committee members with me, and we saw the race up there just where the northern end of the—and it was wonderful. It was absolutely wonderful.

BRETON: You were at the finish line?

TOEPFER: Yes. It was just wonderful. It was wonderful. It was so many things that the company did that people loved, and they even felt closer because they lived in the community, not just visiting, like if you see a special event.

BRETON: Didn't the Activities Committee result in a community that was just more than just a bunch of houses with people in them?

TOEPFER: I'm not sure what you—but as far as having activities, we had Mission Viejo Days and we had take over the golf course for a day or weekend and had baseball tournaments. People

throughout all the neighborhoods, they would compete in the big tournament of softball, kids this big on up.

BRETON: Whose idea was it to have the St. Patrick's [Day] Parade?

TOEPFER: St. Patrick's Parade, I'm not sure.

BRETON: Could that have come from the committee itself?

TOEPFER: Yes, it could have. I don't remember who. One of the things we found, as we had these parades, pretty soon, as I recall, people were coming in with their "Vote for" what you call it, Bob Breton, you know, "Vote for City Council" or for mayor or for state legislator. We had to start curtailing political stuff in some of these parades that we had.

BRETON: How did the company support the Activities Committee and subsidize its activities? Did they assign employees to help?

TOEPFER: The only ones we had were Marty Russo and Art and myself, and I stayed involved in it for a long time.

BRETON: Was Ziggy one that was—

TOEPFER: Ziggy, yes, he got involved in it. Ziggy, what a character. Loved him. We may have given some monies to the committee. At Christmastime we'd have in maybe some comic or some special guest, and he may have been compensated somehow, but the only money outgo that I knew from an employee standpoint was Marty and maybe Ziggy and Art.

BRETON: Let me mention some names here. Obviously Harvey Stearn was involved.

TOEPFER: Yes.

BRETON: Jim Rivines [phonetic].

TOEPFER: Yes, Jim Rivines. Jim Rivines was a stockbroker, and he lived in the community right down near the north end of the golf course. What was the next one?

BRETON: Bill Knitz.

TOEPFER: Bill Knitz was a member of our church, and became a member of the water district, I think Moulton Niguel Water District. Next name.

BRETON: Vince Esposito.

TOEPFER: Vince was a young man who worked for the company kind of in the PR handling of certain restrictions and that sort of thing.

BRETON: Homer Meech.

TOEPFER: Homeowner, wonderful guy.

BRETON: Bob Aldrich.

TOEPFER: Bob Aldrich, wonderful homeowner.

BRETON: Dave and Ladona Rukstalis.

TOEPFER: Yes, they were just beautiful people and very, very influential in the community. People knew them, and made a great contribution to the committee.

BRETON: Whose idea was it to have the Mission Viejo Fun Bus that would take people from one rec center to another and eventually to the Lake?

TOEPFER: I don't know. I don't know.

BRETON: How about the Fourth of July community picnic? Was that different from the Mission Viejo Days picnic on the north side of the golf course, north of Oso?

TOEPFER: Do you know what year it was?

BRETON: Well, the first Fourth of July community picnic was 1970, but I don't know when you had your first Mission Viejo Rancho Days, which would have been in September.

TOEPFER: Well, it could have been the same thing. I'm not quite sure. It was a celebration time to be at the picnic area. One year everybody had signs out from what state they were in, and it was fun going around to see if there was anybody from Wisconsin, maybe just me.

BRETON: Signs that would say what state you're from.

TOEPFER: Yes, where they were from.

BRETON: What about Cinco de Mayo?

TOEPFER: Cinco de Mayo, we had parades. As a matter of fact, I've got a picture of my daughter on one of her bicycles all decorated. It was another activity. They all complemented each other.

BRETON: Tell us about Soap Box Derby.

TOEPFER: You don't want to know about that. [laughs] I'm going to say this was probably Art Cook's idea, so he can—and I don't know where Art is today.

BRETON: We'll ask him.

TOEPFER: We had this Activities Committee, and we decided to have the Soap Box Derby so we could pick a representative to represent us wherever it was, in Tennessee.

BRETON: Was it statewide, or nationwide, it sounds like? Wasn't it in Ohio or Indiana?

TOEPFER: Someplace in there.

BRETON: Indianapolis.

TOEPFER: Anyway, so we had the competition, and we had the La Paz, coming from the top of La Paz down towards Marguerite. We had, we thought, enough stacked hay bales to protect the kids.

BRETON: Steep incline.

TOEPFER: Yes, but we didn't realize it was that steep an incline. I mean, I didn't, anyway. I thought it probably could have been a little steeper. Anyway, so we ran the race, and one of my church members slid off of the track and his son got hurt. I think they were going to sue us.

BRETON: Uh-oh.

TOEPFER: When they start suing and they lose the fun of the activity, then you start, "Is it worth it?" I thought I knew people well enough. Another friend who was a member of church and wonderful guy, but we just slurried La Paz and put in a coat just to make it look better, because it was a little weathered. He hit in and bounced his car into one of the round medians, tree wells, so he sued the company. He's my church member. He can't do that. The risk factor, we were insured. I think we were insured, but we quit having the risky things.

BRETON: Didn't your skating rink go the same way?

TOEPFER: Yes. You know, people think it's just a no-brainer, but there are so many things that you think you cover, but that's a good point, the skating. Somebody falls or hurts themselves, and it's the rink's fault.

BRETON: And those darn attorneys.

TOEPFER: Those darn attorneys like you would take these clients who had no business at all suing, and you're defending these guys, Bob. You're just terrible.

BRETON: Shame on me.

How about Balloon to the Moon contest? Do you remember that in 1968?

TOEPFER: Balloon to the Moon. That's where I'd like to have sent [Art] Cook [laughter].

BRETON: People, I think, would attach their name and address to the bottom of a helium balloon and see how far it would go, the farthest one sent back, from Desert [Hot] Springs or something.

TOEPFER: Yes. Sounds like something we may have done there in Colorado also, so I can't really address that one.

BRETON: Bunny Days, "Movies in the Moonlight," 500-foot-long banana split.

TOEPFER: No.

BRETON: Don't remember that one?

TOEPFER: No.

BRETON: You look like you've had a few. [laughter]

TOEPFER: I'm leaving. Cut it. Cut. Look, jabs can only go one way in this conversation.

BRETON: Oh, I'm sorry. You're right.

How about the importance of these activities so that the residents could boast to their friends about the wholesome environment and way of life that they could have here? Wasn't it important?

TOEPFER: Well, I think the word "boasting" is a little bit too much. If you make activities that people enjoy, they may pass on what a good time they had, but I'm not sure there was any boasting.

BRETON: Well, I mean spread the good news.

TOEPFER: Well, yes, without any question, and as things went on, I know that I used to have a lot of friends who would like to come down on Mission Viejo Days and just visit and go out there to picnic and join in the crowd. So I call them good times, and it was just an element of things that made our little community come together real good. I can't think of one community that I know of that I visited, be it Columbia back east or Reston, where they had activities that were really promoted for the good of the company—or the community, not the company, and we had fun. Here I am, vice president of a company, and I'm participating with all these people. A

lot of people might say, “Jeez, why does—.” I had fun. My family had fun. They were active in the community. My kids played tennis and field hockey and everything, basketball at the high school and went all the way through, and their friends.

To this day, my daughters say, “Some of the best friends we’ve ever made were there with the swim team,” and they’ve been everlasting friendships like Brian Goodell. He’ll call up on the phone. It was wonderful. Okazaki, we’ve talked about Jim and his being an attorney. His kids became great friends with my daughters, and they’re very nice. One’s a photographer, and now the other’s an attorney in Jim’s office. A lot of these kids, it gave them an outlet that they maybe never otherwise would have had, and you can see it prevail as time has gone on.

I’ve had kids stop in there in Colorado, bus drivers, and say, “Hi, Mr. Toepfer. Just want to stop by and say hello. I’m on my way back to California.” It just makes you feel good.

BRETON: And it was a wholesome family-oriented environment.

TOEPFER: Yes, it was just great, in my opinion. You can talk to some of those that have been here after I left and maybe you get a whole different feel, but the time I was here until I left in 1978 and took over the Colorado project, it was wonderful. It was such a great feeling.

Anyway, I can’t even really express the thankfulness I have for the residents that moved in here, because those early people were the ones who made it. It wasn’t Toepfer. It wasn’t Reilly. It wasn’t Bren. It wasn’t Cook for sure. I use his name an awful lot because he’s a good guy to kid. You’re going to become one too. [laughs] I’m sorry.

BRETON: How aggressive was your ad campaign?

TOEPFER: I don’t know if you call it aggressive. I thought it was a very good one, based on my knowledge of what transpired. I thought they were honest. We had a lot to toot, you know, with our swimming and with other activities, and the product itself was selling like a storm.

What else can you want? You just feel so fortunate, lucky. I'm not sure it's luck, but—so we have great ads. Is it the ads?

BRETON: What was the theme of your ads?

TOEPFER: It was hometown, again, and we carried on the same theme there in Colorado. I think there's records that you can get or play that you can hear "It's a Hometown Again" and all that sort of thing.

BRETON: Were you trying to depict this as the ideal community, a home that was surrounded by wonderful amenities—

TOEPFER: Oh, well, sure.

BRETON: —and good people?

TOEPFER: That was evident. You could pick up one of the *Reporters*, and you could see this, this, this, this thing, and maybe the center of attraction was the ad on La Paz Home sales. But all I can say is there wasn't any one thing, one person, that made this successful, except maybe two guys that negotiated the deal way at the beginning, Reilly and Bren. If they hadn't convinced the O'Neills what their idea of building a city was, it never would have come to fruition. So I'm thankful. I wasn't part of it, and I know everybody I know, they just love being with the company, and very fortunate to have had the sales and the success that we enjoyed and that you're enjoying now as a past city councilman and a prosecuting attorney, which I don't know about you guys.

BRETON: Serving the public. [laughter]

How did you decide to put your model homes right next to rec centers? Was that part of a plan to show the people as they came to look at your model homes, they could see the amenity right next door?

TOEPFER: I'm trying to think of where we had model home complex.

BRETON: You had a sales office right there built into the Marguerite Center, and then you had another sales office across the street from the Marguerite Center.

TOEPFER: I knew we had a sales office in that little shopping center. What was your question again?

BRETON: Your model homes were strategically placed close to the rec centers.

TOEPFER: Again, I'm trying to think of a model home complex that was close to Montanoso—I could be mistaken—or the Marguerite Center.

BRETON: There was by the Marguerite Center, right across the street from Marguerite.

TOEPFER: Okay. I take your word for it. The Sierra Center, I don't remember one being down there. But I don't know. The rationale is that you can see the rec center, and it's a great amenity, and therefore it's an incentive to, "Oh, I love this community, and let's buy here."

BRETON: And you had a sales office right there as you went into the Marguerite Center on the right-hand side.

TOEPFER: What year was that?

BRETON: It was in the seventies, '75, '76.

TOEPFER: That's a blank, absolute blank.

BRETON: Whose idea, or how did the company come across this idea of creating scale models of all the proposed development with Styrofoam?

TOEPFER: That was right at the beginning. We just had formed the company, and we started doing some design work of the subdivisions with the engineers and what have you. I think that it was Don that saw something like this someplace, and you've seen probably pictures of it in one of the *Mission Viejo Reporters*, if you go back far enough at the beginning. You'll see what a

beautiful job. So we took the topo [topographic] maps, or these subdivision maps, with the finished topo that we'd use for grading plans, gave these to this company in San Diego, and they would route out all these little lots and the streets, painted them, put trees and everything, and it was there for the public to see. It was really neat. It really was wonderful to be able to look at that and for people to associate where the house was going to be in relationship to that first great big area that we designated for development, which was the area south of La Paz towards the golf course, that whole area.

BRETON: They could see on there where the schools were.

TOEPFER: Yes. Really, I don't know how they do that. Of course, I don't know how they got to the moon. It's quite an art.

BRETON: Let's move on to a little bit dealing with local governance. Why did the company decide to establish a Community Association? Did you have anything to do with that?

TOEPFER: Well, that's what our CC&Rs really was involved in, and we had an entity that could control, other than just the company. So we turned this over to the property owners, and they are the ones that enforced.

BRETON: Was this seen as a possible seedbed for future community leaders, an opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors of the Community Association?

TOEPFER: I can say that probably there's an awful lot of people that have done that in some areas, but I don't remember anybody having a political ambition that wanted to be on the Association board. I don't recall that here.

BRETON: Did the company regard the Association as a sounding board for some of its proposals?

TOEPFER: Well, I'm sure they did, yes. We tried to listen to just about everybody, and you can't satisfy everyone, but you sure can do a job of at least mediating an awful lot of things and coming up with a satisfactory answer. So I just don't remember us having really any substantial problems which resulted in a huge, big community fight. Like I say, the only place that I—was this little piece of ground that you're sitting on here today, and I spent nights, several nights, in some of the swim-team parents' homes trying to fight to let this go to multi-housing. I lost, as attested to by the fact that we're sitting here in a commercial building here, the library.

BRETON: At what point did the company see the wisdom of promoting the creation of the Municipal Advisory Council [MAC] here in Mission Viejo? Were you here when the Municipal Advisory Council was created so that the planning decisions would first be made by the local Council, and then taken with a recommendation to the county?

TOEPFER: No. I didn't have that involvement.

BRETON: That was in '74 that the MAC was created.

TOEPFER: I was here, but I don't remember ever going to somebody with a plan and getting their sanction, and then going to the county or wherever to get approval. It could have happened. It could have happened, Bob, but I don't recall.

BRETON: Okay, let's talk about the last topic, the completion of the master plan. So you can relax.

TOEPFER: I'm relaxed. You've been very nice for an attorney.

BRETON: Thank you. [laughs]

TOEPFER: You're welcome.

BRETON: I resemble that remark. [laughter]

What accounts for such unprecedented growth of Mission Viejo, more rapid than any other new town in the nation?

TOEPFER: Well, why was its growth accelerated more than any other community? That's what you're asking. I think that one of the things that I keep repeating is trying to convey the truth to the buyers, and that what we said we would do, we would do. I can't think of one instance where we said we would do some big project and didn't do it where we really had the control of doing it. We would modify our stance on some things and we'd give in, but we were, I think, recognized as being fair and honest. Sometimes we might fight for some argument and win, but there was never anything that was so blatant that would cause really a disintegration of the community spirit. I think that the fact that we had so many good things going for us because of the people who supported us, that's what made us so good, because word of mouth is, without any question, a great thing. You can put all kinds of things in the paper of how great you and I are, but it doesn't mean anything unless it's something real. Like I said, I know that Bren and Phil and myself, we tried to do the very best we could in making a community that represented what the people liked, and not just some flamboyant, esoteric, whatever you want to call it, ideas of ours. We really tried an effort to get the people to like us through all the things we've talked about here.

I think people, for the majority, they like us, and I don't remember, maybe after I've left, you've had any significant zoning battles or that sort of thing. We certainly didn't have anything like that when I was here in Mission, and I attest it to the satisfaction of the people. We could have been real cruds and have done things in a belligerent ways, which some developers may have done, but we didn't do that. I say that so warmly because it was what our goal was, was to build a nice community, and having not ever built one before, it was more important than ever to

make sure that we tried to be successful, and hopefully that people look back—and when I look at what you’ve got there in the library back in there, I can’t believe what fantastic historical stuff you guys got, you people. You’ve done a magnificent job.

BRETON: Thank you.

TOEPFER: I just mean that so much sincerely.

BRETON: Was being true to your word, or the company’s being true to its word, the “California Promise”?

TOEPFER: Yes, I’m sure it had a lot to do with it. I forgot. I’ve got to send this to Cook. I think I’ve got a white teeshirt and a can that says “California and Mission Viejo Promise” or something. If I find that, I’m going to send that to you, and you where it to work, if you work.

BRETON: Sure.

TOEPFER: We promised, and I think we—

BRETON: And you fulfilled.

TOEPFER: In my opinion, we did what we said, and I have nothing but the highest regard for—I’ve said this a dozen times—for what you people have done after I left and how you’ve carried on with this community, which, to me, is fantastic. I’ve never heard anybody really say anything derogatory, you know, about this community. There may be some people out there that are jealous that didn’t participate or didn’t buy or whatever, but you guys did a—and I don’t throw out accolades just for throwing them out. I think you’ve done a magnificent job. Your councilmen and your mayors and your people here in the library have been very nice to me, so I want to thank you.

BRETON: How do you measure the success of the master plan that you wrote?

TOEPFER: Well, I don't look at it as I wrote anything. It was always a joint effort, regardless of me sitting there and pounding out maps with Roy Seeman, as I said, from Boyle and working late hours and spending, really literally, hours writing the code and Planned Development Guide. Anyway, it's fantastic.

I remember back in 1964, '65—this'll be hard to believe, but I would leave my home in Santa Ana, I'd go down to Karam's, where Don's office was, I would run down to San Juan Capistrano, I'd run back up to Boyle Engineering, shift over to VTN, maybe go to the Edison Company office and look at certain things up there in Pasadena, and come back to the office all in one day. You couldn't do that in today's traffic in a week. I just don't know how I ever did it then.

BRETON: Is that why they say that Jim Toepfer is the only man who could be in two places at the same time?

TOEPFER: If that's what they say, it's a lie, because I was in ten places at the same time.

BRETON: Did you experience something wonderful during this entire venture?

TOEPFER: Well, the most wonderful thing is that I was a part of it, and I look back with what I contributed, which is really just some basic stuff, and I look at the magnificent part is you've carried on what was started. It's been '64, '74, '84, '94, 104, almost 50 years of an idea, and to see it where it is today compared to some of the—I won't mention names, but going to some places, nothing local here, and to see what a great job you guys have done not under me, but under the people that were after me, I just can't say enough. I look at little articles and some of the things that Art sent me, and you know how a tear comes to your eye, because you've just been through all that stuff in the past. It's wonderful. You guys have nothing but great—you should compliment all your people that you've worked with over the years and this bunch of

people here in the museum [Mission Viejo Heritage House]. They're just delightful. Just watch out for Cook, though. [laughter]

BRETON: Well, you laid the foundation.

TOEPFER: Well, thank you.

BRETON: If there's anything that we've done to add to it, so much the better, but it wouldn't be possible without your vision and without your hard work, your dedication.

TOEPFER: You're very kind, but let's make sure we add Phil's and Don's, when he was here.

BRETON: Did you first realize that first year that you were part of some truly magical project, an unprecedented opportunity for you and your wife to be part of something big?

TOEPFER: I looked at it as the possibility of being something terrific and meaningful, and little did I know that it would come out as well as it did. I'm not bragging. I'm just saying that there's so many people. People say, "Gee, Jim, you did a great job." It wasn't me. I was a part of it, but you as a councilman, past councilman, and the other people that were with you and have preceded you and the people that work for the company, they're the ones that made this thing.

So many times Phil has said, "Jim, let's always remember it's not just you and me; it's the people that came and did what they did." All we did was help them along and give them a cane once in a while, and they stumbled on, and you end up with what you've got here today. Anybody that doesn't like living here, based on what I've seen and what I remember in the past, they're crazy.

BRETON: I'll tell them that. So you look back with fondness, great fondness on those early days.

TOEPFER: They're unreal. We had such a great team. We ended up with an awful lot of people. We ended up with a couple of projects in the lakes that was nice. We ended up in Mission Viejo Aurora [Colorado], which could have been disaster, but learned a lot, and the Highlands Ranch project is just like a duplication of this. So anyway, it's been a great ride, a great ride, except for the [Denver] Broncos last night. [laughter]

BRETON: How was your life affected by this whole process?

TOEPFER: Well, I've probably been the most fortunate guy in the world, because as I told you before, I came up as a poor kid, really, and not from the standpoint of love, but just as a kid, financially. To have been involved in something like that and to have been associated with some people that I have just nothing but the highest respect for, I don't look at it as a personal accomplishment; I look at it as a joint thing. I'm saying it again for about the tenth time. The people that carry on with the tradition or whatever you want to call it, this community, they're the ones to be complimented, because all we did was sow the seed. If you don't nurture it and throw out the water, what do you got? Dead plants. You guys have not deadened anything. You've been just great.

[End of interview]

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