

Oral History Interview  
with  
Arthur S. “Art” Cook

Date: Saturday, June 2, 2012  
Interviewer: Robert David Breton  
Location: Mission Viejo Library  
Mission Viejo, California

This is a transcript of a video-recorded interview conducted by the Mission Viejo Library and funded by a Library Services and Technology Act grant administered by the California State Library. The initial, verbatim transcript of the interview was sent to the interviewee to give him or her an opportunity to check it for typographical errors, to correct any gross inaccuracies of recollection, and to make minor emendations. This is the edited version of the original transcript, but the original video recording of the interview has not been altered.

The reader should remember that this is a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word. The interview must be read with an awareness that different persons' memories about an event will often differ. The reader should take into account that the answers may include personal opinions from the unique perspective of the interviewee and that the responses offered are partial, deeply involved, and certainly irreplaceable.

A limited number of visual and audio data from this copyrighted collection of oral histories may be used for personal study, private scholarship or research, and scholastic teaching under the provisions of United States Code, Title 17, Section 107 (Section 107), which allows limited "fair use" of copyrighted materials. Such "fair use" is limited to not-for-profit, non-commercial, educational purposes and does **not** apply to large amounts or "substantial" portions in relation to the transcript as a whole, within the meaning of Section 107. Beyond "fair use," **no part of any transcript, video, or audio may be reproduced, disseminated, or quoted for publication without written permission from the City of Mission Viejo and the Mission Viejo Library.**

Arthur S. Cook

June 2, 2012

Robert David Breton,  
interviewer

BRETON: Today is June 2, 2012, and I'm Robert David Breton. I'm interviewing Arthur [S.] Cook, former Director of Community Relations for the Mission Viejo Company, at the MVTV [Mission Viejo Television] studios inside the Mission Viejo Library as part of the Oral History Project.

Good morning, Art.

COOK: Good morning, Robert.

BRETON: Where were you born and raised?

COOK: Born in Fargo, North Dakota, but no memories there because we moved at a very early age to La Crosse, Wisconsin. It was in La Crosse where I was raised, went to grade school, high school, and grew up with my four brothers. There were five of us there. Lived in a big home that was just nine blocks from the Mississippi River, where I grew up, so it was very fortunate raising by my parents and family.

BRETON: In Middle America. Where were you educated?

COOK: Well, my high school there, I said it was in La Crosse. It was Aquinas High School. Then I went on and attended the University of Wisconsin for my first year, but transferred to a small private school in Dubuque, Iowa, Loras College, and I took up business administration as my major there and economics, mostly business side, and got active in a lot of community events there, field events, I should say.

Of course, the one that I always tell and remember best is I enjoyed drama, I guess getting up on stage, and my junior year I got into drama and played a role that was played by Robert Cummings back then, *Dial M for Murder*. But the following year, my senior year, we would have three or four plays during the year, but the senior year we had a musical in the springtime, and my college was an all-boys', and, of course, wherever they have that they have an all-girls' college as well, which was Clark University, where my wife attended school, and she has a very, very good voice. [Patricia P.] Pat [Cook] sang at her school a lot, and, of course, the girls from the college would come over and participate in our spring musicals, and she had one of the two female leads in the production we did that year, was *Showboat*. Our director had very good contacts with Hollywood [California] out here, and it used to be the Eugene Loring Dancers, and they would bring a troupe of ten dancers. So in our little all-boys' school, we had the girls college singing and participating, and we had the Hollywood flair with the Eugene Loring Dancers and we had quite a good time.

The reason I bring that up as a great memory is because that is where I met my wife in the spring of my senior year. I guess I knew her before, but we say we had a backstage romance at that, because right after that—of course, back then they still had the draft, and I was eligible for the draft, but rather than being drafted, I preferred to maybe look at [Navy] Officer's Candidate School, which I did. I went into the Navy as Officer's Candidate School up in Newport, Rhode Island, where I received my commission December 19<sup>th</sup> of 1958, and that was the year I graduated, in June of '58, and I had to go right away, about two months later, to Officer's Candidate School. Came back the 19<sup>th</sup> of December when I got my commission. We were married December 28<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, somewhere in there. Hope my wife doesn't see this. It was the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Then we went off and I had three-year career in the Navy, which was my obligation that I enjoyed so much. I went in as a supply officer, with my business background was in supply, and my first assignment was the West Coast. I remember they would ask you, when you're getting ready to graduate, "Where would you like to go, to the Mediterranean or to the Orient?" Well, the school back there was in Athens, Georgia, the only University of Georgia college, and most of them wanted to go to the Mediterranean. Well, I would have liked to have gone to the Mediterranean, but, still, as I was growing up, I saw too many Saturday afternoon matinees of Westerns, of the cowboys, the Roy Rogers, the Gene Autrys, and all of those guys. I saw them every Saturday. I loved it, and ended up wanting to go west. I never traveled when I was growing up. I think I went to Chicago to watch a Cubs game one day. My senior project, we did take a trip to Washington, D.C., but other than that, I didn't travel at all.

In our first year of marriage that I mentioned, we traveled and hit all four corners of the United States in my first year: Newport, Rhode Island for Candidate School; down in Athens, Georgia for [Navy] Supply Corps School; my first assignment was Long Beach, California, on a repair ship; and a couple months later that ship was scheduled for decommissioning, and so we went up to Bremerton, Washington, for decommissioning and re-commissioned another ship and came back to Long Beach; and then got my six-month tour onboard ship in Japan and the Philippines. Great, great opportunity to grow up that I had. I look back at it today, and it was a wonderful experience, wonderful experience.

BRETON: What was your degree in?

COOK: Degree was business administration, yes, it was.

BRETON: After the Navy, then what?

COOK: After the Navy, we, of course, were faced, like many that are getting out of the Navy, what do we do now? Where do we go? We sat down and we thought of a couple places we might like to go. Of course, you always think, first of all, of going back home, which was the Midwest. I was from Wisconsin and my wife was from Davenport, Iowa, and we thought of going back to the Midwest or at least Chicago area, maybe, or something like that. But then we thought, you know, I was up in Bremerton, Seattle [Washington]. That was kind of nice. We enjoyed it. We would go on weekends and watch the [University of Washington] Huskies play football and things like that, and we enjoyed those times. But still we thought, “Gosh, it’s nice here in Southern California.” That’s why we first came out, and we decided to stay right here in California, and we lived up near Bellflower. We then, of course, bought our first home in Orange. Our children were born, and we had our five children then were there. We had four boys and one girl. She was number four.

Then we decided, well, this little three-bedroom home is nice and the neighborhood we enjoyed, but we just thought, “Let’s look for something different.” That was in 1969 when we started looking to the south in this place called Mission Viejo. Mission Viejo was only three years old at that time. I mean, people had lived here only three years, because the first resident moved into Mission Viejo in April of 1966. We moved in in 1969. But it was growing so fast. By the time we moved in—and we’d bought and then we had to go through the period of waiting for the home to be built, and it was another five months—the city had already grown to almost 10,000 people, 9,000-something people, 1969 in the fall, when we moved in in October. So that was our entrée into Mission Viejo. I remember it today.

My wife still loves to tell the story about how she used to drive what is today the 5 Freeway, Interstate 5, San Diego Freeway, Santa Ana Freeway, and how she would drive up to

near the junction of the 91 and the 5. Nabisco used to have a shop up there. She'd go up and get our desserts for a month for the children. Nabisco, I believe it was up there. But anyway, she used to drive up to South Coast Plaza with no problems. A little bit different today. Still shopping, I should say. She still enjoys shopping, but she does most of it locally. And our trips today, we take trips, and we've been to Europe now four or five times, fortunately. So I made the right decision way back when I was a young ensign in our decision to go to the West Coast.

BRETON: How is it that you came to be interviewed by and hired by the Mission Viejo Company?

COOK: I was hired in 1973, March 19, 1973, so we'd lived in the community four years. During that time Mission Viejo already was involved in activities, and community involvement was very common by everybody. As I mentioned, we already had five children, and we were active in swimming. Now, there was a flair in Mission Viejo for swimming in those early days, and, of course, today we know what it is.

The home we bought was a Granada series home, which is down in the southern portion of the community down near Sierra Recreation Center. Sierra Recreation Center was just being built when we were there. They already had in Mission Viejo the Montanoso Recreation Center, and Sierra was the second of the centers, major centers, being built, and it added an 8-lane 25-yard competition pool as well as general recreation facilities. So we wanted to get our children active in swimming, which we did, and they all swam, all five of them. Our daughter swam the backstroke and kids were swimming freestyle. So we got active in the event. That was the first community activities we got involved in, were the swimming activities.

Then my wife got active in the Mission Viejo Activities Committee. They had a program going, the Five Nights of Christmas. Then it went to the Twelve Days of Christmas, and then it

went back to the Five Nights of Christmas again. The particular program which she was involved in that was one called Las Posadas, and it was mid December, because Santa's arrival kicked it off first weekend of December. She was in Las Posadas and was in charge of the choirs, and it was a program where Mary and Joseph were depicted. Mary would be on a mule, and they would ride around—both years it was different locations—the Medical Center down at La Paz [Road] and Chrisanta [Drive], and then over at the little shopping center there, the Mission Viejo had its office, where the bank is today and Starbucks is today. They would walk around and there would be people up in the second levels, and they would sing back and forth. They were looking for a place to stay. So they would sing back and forth, “No, we do not have a place to stay,” and they'd go to the next. So that was the original entry into the Activities Committee for her.

Then we got involved in other Activities Committee events, and, of course, I think it was our involvement and my involvement that must have been being recognized at that time, because as the community was growing, the activities wanted to grow, the events were growing, and so it was in 1973 when the combination of the activities and the concept of the lake [Lake Mission Viejo] was being started at that time. Residents didn't know it yet, we didn't know it, but the company wanted to hire somebody who would meet with the residential groups, meet with organizations, and inform them of this new lake that was going to be built. So that was primarily, I guess, the reason I was hired, to fulfill that function. That we can talk about later if you wish, but I could go on and on with it.

BRETON: So you're hired to assist with public relations.

COOK: I assisted with public relations.

BRETON: Who hired you? Who interviewed you? Do you remember?

COOK: Nobody admits it. Nobody admits it. They kid me about it yet today. When I got relocated back from Colorado where I was—I will mention that later—from Colorado back into California, I said, “Well, who got this change back here?” Nobody admits it. [laughter] Nobody admits why I was shifted back and forth. I think it was that they wanted to get rid of me, maybe.

BRETON: To whom did you report?

COOK: There was the two of us. The guy that interviewed me was [Martin G.] Marty Russo. Marty was doing all those functions at the time with the Activities Committee and the community, and as the community was growing, Marty needed help too. I sat down with Marty. Marty interviewed me. Maybe this can be cut out, but I tell how he interviewed me. I was working at that time, and I’d been working for eleven years with North American Aviation, North American Rockwell, then Rockwell [International] up at Anaheim [California] and living here.

So one evening I came back from work and I met Marty at the Mission Viejo Country Club Inn for the interview after work. It was five-thirty, I think I met him. So we sat there in the clubhouse and we talked and talked. We talked a lot about the events we had both been attending, of course, that he was really the organizer, implementer of, and we got to the point where we’d have another beer. I’d think, “Gosh, maybe we should get something to eat,” and then I just, “No, no.” I didn’t have any money in my pocket to buy beer at the Country Club. I wasn’t sure how expense accounts worked either, so I wasn’t going to ask Marty, “Marty, should we have lunch or beer?” I mean, not another beer—we didn’t need that—have something to eat.

He says, “Well, yeah, maybe,” and we didn’t. After about eight o’clock, we went home. I had to be at an interview, I found out.

I think the whole purpose of that meeting there and having it at that time of night is we had a lot of meetings together in the evenings with Activities Committees and everything, and we would go after the meetings with groups of the residents to clubs somewhere and finish with a beer or two. I think he wanted to see if I could hold my beer. [laughter]

But in reality, Marty was the one that we worked together. Marty reported directly to [James G.] Jim Toepfer. The reporting within the company was unique. Some would report right up and some would jump up to others and some worked by themselves, it seemed like. I mean, there was a structure, but it wasn't one that was implemented that you reported to him, you don't talk to him, you talk to him. It wasn't that at all. You had the freedom within the company, and I think that was part of the success for it, is that everybody worked with everybody. They trusted everybody. There was no backbiting or anything like that, and it was a fun place to work, and that motivated, I think, a lot of people to work even harder and make it work, and it worked. But who really hired me? Marty was the interviewer, and we would do our thing.

BRETON: Was Harvey Stearn here at the time?

COOK: Harvey was there at the time, but it was still at that time [Philip J.] Phil Reilly and Jim Toepfer were the two president and executive vice presidents, and Harvey was the vice president. There were a couple of other vice presidents of finance and others.

I mentioned earlier the Activities Committee, which I'll go back on a couple of times throughout this discussion because it was such an important part of the community. Harvey started the Activities Committee. Harvey at the time was a resident, just like my involvement and my introduction to the community, to the company. Harvey was one of the first residents in the company. He lived in the Deane Homes, which April of 1966 was when they were opened.

Harvey became an employee, as did others in Mission Viejo Company. Mission Viejo was good about hiring within the community. I guess they knew pretty much who you were by that time. You had gone through probably a process. But they were very good about hiring a lot of people. A lot of people who weren't in Mission Viejo Company lived in Mission Viejo Company as well. But who hired me? I really don't know. I think I do. [laughs] I think it was Jim Toepfer and Marty Russo.

BRETON: You've described the company atmosphere as being fun to work in, exciting, collegial, people were cooperative, open-door policy, access to everyone.

COOK: Very much. Very much. I might jump ahead a little bit here. Actually, I'm probably jumping up to cityhood already in your period. I went from Mission Viejo Company 1979, then I got relocated to the Colorado operations, and I want to talk about that, even though it's Mission Viejo Company, not just Mission Viejo California. Went to the Colorado operations, where I was located for nine years, then got relocated back to the California operations, and at that time it was 1988, in May of 1988. I know that rings a bell for you, because that was the year of the first City Council-hood. We become a city in 1988, and you, Bob Breton, were one of the first council members.

So why did I come back? Well, Mission Viejo interfaces a lot. You've heard some of the earlier individuals talk about knowing when they went to get a plan approved by the county, it was pretty much known that they would get it approved because they had met over and over with the staff up there and gone over all the questions. Same was true. We met with everybody. We didn't want to pull any punches. We always let them know what the plan was and how important it was and how this was helping it continue on its way. So, same thing with the city. When the city was then incorporated, we then started presenting our plans for approval. We'd

done it through MAC [Municipal Advisory Council] and some of the early organizations, but for approval through the City of Mission Viejo, and the planners would go through the city staff.

It came time for their presentation to the Planning Commission and the councils, and they had processed the plans through, but now it was the time for the hearing. At the hearing I was always there. I was always out in the audience. I came back from Colorado to the California operations, and one of my functions was to monitor the city operations on behalf of the company so that we kind of didn't—I mean, Wayne [E.] Peterson would be there to present the plan. [Richard] Rich Watson would be there to present the item of the plan, or whichever commission, as well, was being presented to.

But I was always there. He said, "Art, you go to all the meetings in the evenings and just let us know what your concept of it is," and I'm not in those areas, but look at it as the layperson, I guess you'd say. So I attended every meeting the city held those first year. There was the City Council, city planning, city traffic, which was separate at that time. Transportation's separate, city recreation. They were all evening meetings, and twice a month or once a month I was going to meetings all the time in the evening.

So what did you do? I'd take a note or so. Even though we didn't have an item on the agenda, I was there. It might be talking about an expansion or continuation of Oso Parkway east to Ladera [Ranch], but I would write it down and come back, and the next morning they would have at least on an eight-and-a-half-by-eleven yellow sheet a handwritten note of what happened at last night's meeting. Then I would sit down. Back then we didn't have computers and we didn't have machines to dictate. My secretary took dictation, and I dictated then, so about eleven o'clock it was done, I'd send off, and on everybody's desk would be the review of an outsider's view of what happened at the meeting last night.

But I've jumped way, way ahead already.

BRETON: So getting back to your tasks for the company, you started in public relations dealing with the public, but you also segued over into governmental relations. You were [unclear].

COOK: It was not so much governmental at that time still. It was pretty much just community. We met with groups. Still today, if someone has a concern in Mission Viejo, they call up the city and say, "Hey, what's happening here? Why isn't this being fixed? What's the matter? And keep them updated and things like that.

It happened then, too, but that call came to me, and I'd take it and look at it and say, "Let me get back with you. I want to check out that slope," or whatever it be, that street. Then I'd pull out the maps and we'd look. Marty Russo and myself would sit down and say, "Well, this is what we were. This was the intent. This is the background of it." I'd call the person back or we'd have a meeting with the neighborhood. I'd go down, at the invitation of someone to meet in their home where the particular wall or fence might have been located affected more than one homeowner. I'd go down to the homeowner's home at their invitation and meet and talk and discuss about what it is, can it be fixed, how can it be fixed, will this fix work, that type of thing. So that was the business interface with the community.

BRETON: Did you meet with the Homeowner Associations or attend their meetings?

COOK: Interesting, Bob, question. I'm glad you raised it, because throughout these series, Homeowner Associations today is interesting, interesting in that back then in the sixties, early seventies, there were no associations. There was no Mission Viejo Homeowners Association. There was no La Paz Association, no Granada Association, no El Dorado Association, no Monterey Master Association. There was a Deane Homeowners Association, but these others, they didn't have association. You didn't pay dues. You were an individual homeowner on your

street. The associations as we know them today came along a little later in the Mission Viejo development plan.

Today there's still, in those that I mentioned, no formal associations. Lake Mission Viejo Association is now a conglomerate, I would say, of all associations in Mission Viejo, and in those areas near the interstate where there were no associations, they sat down and they outlined pretty much by the home pattern plan what would be an association. "This is large enough." They made several associations by boundary, but not by the associations as we know them today, not dues-paying associations as we know them today for maintenance. Slopes were all maintained by the individual, a top or bottom, or a top owner owned down to a ditch, and then the other owned further. You didn't have to get approval for a fence and then have it approved by an association.

Until later did the associations come along, and associations are very good to keeping what was already established. Fortunately, we helped as a company to maybe play the administrative role of a function of the association in those areas that had no association. But today there is no Mission Viejo Company. There are these associations, and they're a necessity for maintaining what Mission Viejo is today. The city does the public areas, the slopes along major arterials, most of them, and the median strips and things like that, but the associations for approval as to what color can I paint my house and build a wall or add an extension, these today are all preliminarily approved or reviewed by associations before even coming to the city, and it takes a lot of the questions out of the issue before it hits the city, fortunately.

So associations are good, and I live in an association and I attend my association meeting regularly. I'm a [unclear] delegate, and so I'm still involved. I'm guess I still like to be involved in Mission Viejo because it is such a special place still today. The city just took right over and

implemented not only what we did, but other items that make it such a great place to live today, added additional activities. Our activities back then were so much fun, so much fun. Are we going to talk about that later?

BRETON: Later.

COOK: Okay.

BRETON: I noticed that you're wearing cowboy boots, and you've worn them ever since I've known you. Could you tell us a little bit about the ranch heritage that we inherited here in Mission Viejo and how that has been furthered in the architectural features, the activities? In what ways was Mission Viejo designed to advance the rancho image, the Early California image, and what we inherited from the O'Neills and [Anthony R.] Tony Moiso?

COOK: That heritage is so important, and I'm so glad we were able to build upon it, because the Moisos and the O'Neill family, with their 53,000 acres, they believed in the land and they do today, and those who do make it work. Fortunately, we were able to join with them in a venture, because they were very much involved in our planning. They were on the boards. Tony [Jim] West, Tony Moiso, and the others were all on the boards initially to see that we were going in the right direction, and the direction being what they knew and they wanted for their ranch to become. It is still today a very active ranch with a great heritage that they're building on still today. We were proud to be just a part of it.

We had as part of the activities in the community equestrian facilities here initially in Mission Viejo. I think it relocated three times just to keep it. It was one time up by Marguerite Recreation Center up in that area, and then it got moved and relocated down to where Newhart [Middle] School—the park is over there, Oso Viejo [Park], where Norm Murray's facility [Norman P. Murray Community and Senior Center] is, right there. It was the second time. The

third time it got relocated down to the very southern extremity of Mission Viejo down south of Avery [Parkway], and it was great for the time that we were still early Mission Viejo and still had the location for them to do their equestrian facilities.

BRETON: Was the equestrian center at any point ever down there by the Home Depot?

COOK: Yes, a little further south than that, a little further south than that. Actually, you know, when you come in on Avery, if you come in Avery, Avery—

BRETON: The sand and gravel operation at the end.

COOK: Sand and gravel operation. You took a right down there. There used to be an RV storage area down there at one time down by the high school, so it was down more in that southerly—

BRETON: Did you have a horse in the stables?

COOK: I never had a horse or stable at that time. We'll get to that. I wasn't equestrian at all at that time, except liking the Roy Rogers, Gene Autry things that I mentioned earlier.

BRETON: Tell us a little bit about your experience at the Country Club. Did you play golf?

COOK: Never, never played that [unclear]. I played Casta del Sol once or twice, but I'm not a golfer.

BRETON: What are the features of the [Mission Viejo] Country Club, the design of the Country Club, that evoke in you the image of a early ranch house?

COOK: The Country Club was one of the very first things here. In fact, the only entry into Mission Viejo was La Paz, but yet the Mission Viejo Country Club was built, and it was finished, I want to say, before Oso Parkway came in, so people came in on La Paz, Chrisanta, and on down to the Country Club to get to it. Access was very poor, but it was a great Country Club, designed by Robert Trent Jones [Sr.], a professional player, and openings were always fun

places to hold there. Dick Whittinghill from KMPC [Los Angeles], major radio station in Los Angeles years ago, was there, entertainment always, as one of the featured guests.

It was such a beautiful spot. You've heard the term, and it's been named Mission Impossible, an eighteen-hole course. It's got all the features, I guess, most of the features you want of a golf course, although I'm not a golfer, as I say, but from what I hear, it's got a good challenge to it. The Inn, the Country Club, had a design that maintained the flair of ranch. It had the woodsy effect at the time, but still it's been redone recently to where it's class facility. It was just a good attraction.

You know, at that time if you had a golf course, you had something that you could reach out to other people who might be interested in moving to your location or speaking about your location. "I was down at the Mission Viejo Country Club." See, they've got the word "Mission Viejo" in. And we were still new. People up in North County, let alone Santa Ana and areas there, didn't know Mission Viejo. The golf course helped very much in those early years in establishing that feeling of Early California and the feeling of community and place.

BRETON: Did you ever speak to the schools? Did you ever go to the elementary schools or middle schools to speak?

COOK: Oh, Bob, so great that you mention that. Before I talk about the schools, I'm going to mention an individual. His name is Truman Benedict. Just this past week he died, and there was a wonderful ceremony dedicated for him. An elementary school in the Capistrano [Unified School] District has been named after Truman Benedict. He was an amazing gentleman in the school district. Schools had good administrators.

We dealt with a lot of schools. Schools is very important to the community at all levels, and so I would oftentimes go and speak to the schools at the meetings, the district meetings, not

the schools themselves. I would go to their meetings, just like I mentioned earlier, the city meetings, where if there was something that was on the agenda—I didn't go to every one of their meetings, but if it was an agenda item, we didn't necessarily have an input on, but I would go to it and talk to the—not talk to them, but listen to it and report on it and [unclear].

But, yes, schools at all levels, the elementary schools, how important they were, because we were attracting young families, and the elementary thing was first thing on their mind about “Where will my children go to school?”

Mission Viejo High School, I would like to talk about that a little later or detail it now, whatever, but there's a great story there as well—

BRETON: Go ahead.

COOK: —stories. Okay. Of course, the location of the high school was quite important. Right there at the first intersection was La Paz, and it has visibility from what was then Highway 5, now the interstate that it is. We started the school—I think you've heard earlier about who was there attending it and how it went, but, you know, Mission's involvement in schools was important, such that we dedicated even the land for the football field and an additional seven acres, which kept the rural feeling of Mission Viejo.

As you drive in on La Paz and approach the Chrisanta intersection, you look to the south side there of La Paz and you see this lower area, rural area. It's seven acres of agricultural property that we dedicated, gave to the high school, on the condition that they use it for agricultural purposes, not for building, building, building. We liked that entry feeling of ruralness, openness, the trees. There were big eucalyptus trees there at the time, which a couple of them, I understand, had to be removed because of danger. But we gave that to them, and they ran their 4-H program and other agricultural programs there that enhanced the feeling of Mission

Viejo, that enhanced the feeling of Rancho Mission Viejo, and it's a great opportunity for children today still to learn about the agricultural. It's not just all technology today.

Recently the district has done a good job of maintaining it. They've done such a nice job of keeping it updated. Back in the early days when the land was donated and fences were built, the ranch, keeping their involvement, they donated eleven cattle to the high school for their program, and to make sure it just wasn't a piece of grass that they had to cut or scythe down the weeds and everything. So it was a continuing program of keeping the ranch involved, keeping the appearance of the community involved in establishing it, and the school, it's a great school. Then the others came along. We have Capo [Capistrano Unified School District] and Trabuco Hills High Schools and the intermediate high schools.

BRETON: Staying with the Mission Viejo farm or the agricultural complex there, could you describe it more? It had a barn, didn't it?

COOK: It had a barn. It has a barn which was used for—a lot of the storage of things were in that barn, but it was built in the farm yard barn system, not just a shed, and they grew crops. They would have crops, maybe a patch of about 20-by-40 feet of this crop and another one, good size crops. The classes were maintaining and classes were planting, weeding, fertilizing, and reaping. In addition to the cattle that I mentioned, they had goats and sheeps and chickens. So it was a full lifestyle farm down there.

BRETON: Full operation, Was it linked to the schools?

COOK: It was directly linked to the school. I mean, they had classes, agricultural classes in these areas, and it would be midday even, you know, and they would have a history class in the morning, and then latter part of the morning maybe go down to the ag facility and do some ag learning. They had a classroom facility down there also, and they would learn about their

products, and then they would come back and go for lunch and have an afternoon high school session again. Then the afternoon group would come down. So it was an integral part of the high school education.

BRETON: Made it feel like you're back in Fargo. [laughter]

COOK: Fargo, yes.

BRETON: Did you have any other involvement with the high schools, with the PTO [Parent Teacher Organization] or PTA [Parent-Teacher Association]?

COOK: With Capo District I did. You see, today what we know as Saddleback and Capo District are the two districts within Mission Viejo. Initially those two districts didn't exist. Our negotiations for Mission Viejo High School was with the Tustin Unified [School] District, Tustin District, and it was the San Joaquin District of some type, which we now know as Capo District, but when I was here, it was already into those Saddleback and Capo Districts. I know that the question has come up not so much recently, but earlier, about why didn't they organize it all into one district.

BRETON: Consolidate.

COOK: Consolidated. Exactly. It was probably a good question to be raised, but when you look back, was it really necessary? You can get too big sometimes. They're both very big districts, as it is right now. Capo District goes all the way from here in Mission Viejo all the way down through the southern end of San Clemente. Likewise, Saddleback goes north all the way up through to the Irvine districts, so they're very large as it is now. I don't know, maybe it's good for the competition element. I never really thought about why we all one or what they should do.

BRETON: Did you ever participate in the roundups or the cattle branding done by the ranch?

COOK: I did it one time, but not locally, not here in the ranch.

BRETON: No, it was in Moulton.

COOK: I'll tell you about the Moulton, Aliso Viejo, and I'll tell you about the Colorado one, which was the *real* ranch. [laughs]

BRETON: Tell us about it.

COOK: I want to come back to Mission, the early days of Mission yet, but what happened is I was involved initially in the Mission Viejo events and the lake things, you know, that were going on. I was now out talking to people about the lake, and I'm going to show you a little piece of information that is about Lake Mission Viejo. This is kind of how we did it back then, not real flashy, but it was a folder and it had an information sheet. There's a little picture. People were familiar with the Mission Viejo boundaried area. There was a lake comparison showing the people how large the lake would be in relation to other local lakes, one in Lake Forest and one in San Juan [Capistrano], and their comparison to show them, "This is really a lake, folks. This is how large it's going to get." Again, we always showed them where we are in Orange County.

Inside that was a letter by Phil Reilly telling them, "We're talking about a lake in a couple of years, and here's a list of forty questions of answers that we think will—and it's very simple, you see, just eight-and-a-half-by-eleven sheet of paper double-spaced, easy for you to read." We didn't want to be fancy. It isn't a real classy brochure, but it was intended to be an informational brochure. Now, that was 1973, I think. I'm looking at this. It was 1973, and the lake was opened, of course, in 1976. I was talking a lot about the lake during that period of time, 1976.

I'm jumping ahead back and forth a lot here. 1976 personally was a very interesting year, the lake information coming along and seeing it into realization, but in the fall of 1976 I got a call from Jim Toepfer, our executive vice president. I was sitting in the office.

He says, "This is Jim, Jim Toepfer."

"Hi, Jim."

"Art, we just closed on the Moulton Ranch."

"Oh, fine."

I didn't know we were even in negotiations for it, you know, but, "We just closed on Moulton Ranch," which today is Aliso Viejo. He says, "I want you to go over there and become property manager," property manager of Moulton Ranch.

I said, "Jim, I only have two questions. Where the hell is this place, and what does the property manager do?" [laughter]

Well, about four o'clock that afternoon I was over—I had a [Chevrolet] Suburban at that time, and I drove up and found it, drove down into the central portion of the ranch, and there was the ranch facilities. It had barns and machine sheds and a residential area and a bunkhouse, and sitting there on the bunkhouse were five, six people. I pulled up and I said, "Oh, boy." So I looked and I kind of got out and I introduced myself and they all did likewise. There is Mike Fisher, who is the ranch hand and in charge of security, and Mike, he was in charge of the ranch, kind of, because there were several lessees on the ranch.

Another one of the individuals was Louise [Moulton] Hanson. Louise Hanson was a Moulton by marriage, and she lived on a nice home in the hill up there, and she was there dressed in her Western gear. And two Basque brothers, the Echeverria [phonetic] brothers,

Johnny and Louis Echeverria. They were the farmers on the ranch. They grew grain, wheat grain and garbanzo beans.

Another that I knew was Gratian Bidart. Gratian was the rancher. He had cattle, as did Louise Hanson. They both raised cattle. Gratian at one time had cattle here on Rancho Mission Viejo as well, the O'Neill ranch, but one time when he moved his cattle from the Rancho Mission Viejo to Aliso Viejo on one early Sunday morning, drove a herd of about sixty head of cattle, what today is La Paz Road, across the La Paz bridge, under the freeway pass, over to Aliso Viejo. Gratian Bidart was the other one.

So I made my introduction and said, "Well, if I can help out in any way. It'll be a transition." They were all aware of what was going on, unlike me.

So I thought, "Gee whiz, this is going to be fun," after I was there for a couple of weeks and got to ride around in the truck and see all the different pastures. I think there were twenty of them at the time or so, and Wood Canyon over there that butts up to Laguna Beach and up to as far north as El Toro Road up there.

Well, we went around and got used to the ranch, and the property management function, I called it a ranch manager. I like that term better. So I got involved with Mike Fisher, the ranch hand, the guy around. He took care of Louise Hanson's cattle, and he was the guy who I would go around with and watch her cattle. Now, she was leaving. She went up to Buellton [California]. She'd already made those arrangements. She was gone in six months with her cattle in ranches up in Buellton. The others were all making arrangements also to relocate. I think the farming was the last of them to go.

But Phil Reilly said, "Look, we want to raise cattle on that until we know what we're going to do. Art, go ahead and do that." Well, I knew nothing about cattle, but Phil did. Phil

has a place up in northern central California where he had a ranch, and he had a large animal veterinarian who assisted him on that ranch with another ranch hand. He said, “Art, you go be the ranch manager, but you’re going to have help of this animal consultant, large animal consultant, vet.” George [Crenshaw] came down and we worked. He taught me all I know. [laughs] We raised cattle here. We raised steers and heifers. We didn’t do any cow calving or anything like that, just steers and heifers, and let them graze on the property.

Now, here’s the reason. I was unaware until quite late that the reason we’re in the ranching business is there are tax benefits. Rather than just let the land go fallow for a couple of years, before you start your construction, you’ve got to go all through the planning. Rather than let it go fallow, you just raise cattle on it. Okay. I didn’t know that at first, and I do my annual budgets, and, oh, gosh, crunch numbers, and why isn’t the price of cattle higher and all this stuff, you know. Anyway, the real benefit was in the tax benefits for the agricultural property, smart use, smart part of the government to give that, to acknowledge that, to do that, and it helped us as well.

Well, that’s where I got my horse. Actually, he wasn’t my horse. He was the ranch horse that I was able to use, and it was a paint horse, black and white paint horse, and we called him Paint. That was his name. So learned how to ride on Paint, and we’d do the gathering, and Mike Fisher and I would go out on horseback occasionally to just gather the cattle or inspect the condition of the grasses when they were grazing, check fence lines and stuff. We rode, of course, in pickups a lot, too, but still that’s where I got my horseback riding skills.

BRETON: When you first moved to Mission Viejo, the cattle were roaming on the hills in the east.

COOK: Right here, right on the east side of Marguerite. There was nothing over there when I even came in the early seventies. La Paz came down to Marguerite. Oso finally got in and to Marguerite. Nothing was over on that side, and you could see cattle over there. The ranch maintained their ranching activities, and there would be a morning when you would see part of the herd on the side of the slope, grazing, and all that made you feel you picked the right spot to live again, you know. “I don’t mind going to work today. It’s a good spot. I can come here again.”

BRETON: Before we take a break, I’d like to talk a little bit about the YACC climate [Youth Athletic Coordinating Council] and a little bit about the lake. Did you assist Marty at all or anyone else in the company with the YACC climate organization, Youth Athletic Coordinating Council? And how important was that to establishing Mission Viejo as a sports mecca and coordinating all of the youth sports?

COOK: Oh, boy, it was one of the prime activities. You’ve heard me talk about events, activities. It was a continuing activity. It wasn’t like the Olympics that we had. It wasn’t like President [Gerald R.]’s visit to Mission Viejo. It wasn’t the one-time activities. The YACC climate was going to be a continuing activity. The Youth Athletic Coordinating Council took in all the activities, the Little Leagues and the girls’ softballs. Then came—

BRETON: AYSO [American Youth Soccer Organization]?

COOK: AYSO, the soccer programs. They’re all tied together, fortunately, with this coordinating group, the Youth Athletic Coordinating Council, because there could be a lot of buffering between the different groups using the same fields and facilities.

That group, Marty dealt with most of the athletic things. Marty died February 4<sup>th</sup> two years ago. He knew, he had an insight that just knew how important youth athletics were, and he

would work with each of the groups. Well, it became much easier when there was a single council over all of the groups, and they were members of each of those groups, and it was a great idea, a great idea that kept out any of the friction that could easily have developed.

We were continually adding facilities, fortunately. There were times when the Little League had to play on a temporary field. There's one where there's homes today right across from Montanoso Recreation Center on the north side there, those homes. I forget the series. But that was a temporary Little League field for two years. We needed a field facility. It was flat, and so we made a field out of it, and they went in and played there, knowing that the youth athletic part, which eventually came along, was going to be really a facility that they were looking forward to having.

Another reason those organizations are so important is they were comprised of the residents. We helped in the organization of them or if there was some initial funding and assist them there and get them going and work with them, but we were working with the residents, and the residents were the secret. It's no secret. It's the residents that made it work. We, as a company, helped facilitate the activities that are still going today, whether it be Little League, whether it be softball, whether it be soccer, whether it swimming. Well, you heard me talk earlier about our children all love to swim. Swimming was a great activity, too, as it is still today, as the others are.

I don't know if this story was told. Jim Toepfer was one of your interviewees, and Jim understood the importance of community involvement. He had two daughters that were also involved at that time, you know, seven, four, and things like that, who were involved in a lot of the youth activities, and so it behooved him to be involved in it too. They were both in swimming as well. He was down then in Sierra [Recreation Center] when it was first opening in

'71, '70, I guess. He participated. Everybody participated. You were a timer. You were a judge. You helped out with getting the kids to the blocks. Everybody participated.

Jim was the announcer, so he would announce the meets. Now, I kind of like to talk, I guess, and one day at one of the meets he had to excuse himself to go to the restroom, so I was there, and he says, "Art, could you hold this for a moment and do this?"

I said, "Well, I'll try."

BRETON: Hold the microphone?

COOK: Do the microphone, announce, "Okay, now heat number five to the blocks," you know, kind of keep it moving. So I did, I helped him out. He came back and I was in the middle of a heat, you know, and I said, "Let me finish this." "The winner is in lane five, and looks like a new time, best time," you know, that type of thing, kind of tried to enhance the excitement of the meet. Well, I had so much fun that I never gave the microphone back to Jim. He remembers that today. He tells that story himself when I'm not around, I think. He tells that story now. I took away the microphone from him. That was still while I was a resident, so that was probably two, three years before I was hired. Well, once I was hired, I had no problem with him then. [laughter] He's a great guy.

BRETON: Tell us a little bit about how important the Contiguous Area Reports [CARs] were in dealing with the homeowners.

COOK: Bob, I'm glad you brought that up, because it was so unique to Mission Viejo, and others have since taken it on. The Contiguous Area Report, or CARs, were a necessity from the very beginning, and I wrote a lot of them. Marty wrote a lot of them, and [Susan C.] Sue Herigstad, but I loved to write those. Now, understand that a Contiguous Area Report tells you

what is around, what is contiguous to your tract, so that it is important that the resident knows what is going to be in their general location.

There were certain areas that always told about the school district. You're in school district Capo, you're in school district Saddleback, the business areas are here. But the most essential part of that document were the paragraphs that got down to talking about their tract, and this was for every tract, not just development. It wasn't for just La Paz Homes. It wasn't for Granada Homes. It wasn't for Madrid Homes. It was for every tract within Granada, Madrid, La Paz Homes. So, every tract. There were a lot of tracts. Consequently, a lot of Contiguous Area Reports had to be written before the days of computers, and rewritten and rewritten.

So we get down to the part about what's your tract. I'll just take a tract near La Paz, let's say, up near La Paz and Olympiad, Felipe [Road]. It changes right there at La Paz, so let's take the tract on the southwest quadrant. What I've done is I've selected my own tract so I kind of keep track of directions. What was in that Contiguous Area Report, it told you about your location. It said on the north side is La Paz Road. It is an arterial within Mission Viejo, four-lane arterial highway in Mission Viejo. On the east side will be Felipe. Felipe wasn't in yet. La Paz ended right there, so Felipe wasn't in, will be another arterial, and it will be called Felipe.

On the west side is a series of homes known as Belvedere, single-family residential, or you'd have to say multifamily or what the development was, adjacent. On the south side will be another development, single-family development, that has a park located in the interior near it, and we named the park.

We also told them about then the parks on Felipe that are known. The [James G.] Gilleran Park is right there near this tract. So we talked about a future park facility—it was *future* park facility—with the possibility of lighting, night lighting. You know, you wanted to

advance and tell them, so you told them about these things. Whether it had it or not, maybe it'll come later, lighting. Fortunately, it all came together in one package. The city was very much an implementer of all three parks along Olympiad, and those parks were mentioned in the Contiguous Area Reports for those residents.

But it was such an important document, and it was a protective document for the company as well, because if someone would say, "I thought that was just going to be another road over there. I didn't know it was going to be a major arterial," well, our Contiguous Area Report. Now, those are a part of the documents that they acknowledge receiving, so if another homeowner buys from, it's that homeowner's responsibility to make sure that they get that. That sometimes became a problem, did they get transferred. They were on record, anyway. They were on with the county, so it became a very important document in that respect, Contiguous Area Report. Fortunately, the initial ones, when you go into the new areas, you had to have a little information about it, but some of the internal tracts became pretty easy, and you could do those.

BRETON: So they served the important function of notifying, of informing the buyer of the possible developments in the areas around the home that he was going to purchase. How specific did you have to be? Did you have to say, "Well, this is zoned commercial," or did you say, "This is going to be a shopping center," or, "This might be an office building"? How specific did you have to get?

COOK: Very good. Yes to all of those questions. Yes, we told them if we didn't know what was going to be there—we knew it was commercial—that is the whole premise of Mission Viejo being successful. It had the general plan. We knew where the commercial was going to be. We knew where the light industrial was going to be. We knew where most of the recreation was

going to be. I say “most” because the lake was not in the original general plan, but we knew it was recreational area up there. We knew where most of the recreational areas were. The Oso Creek area comes down from the north in Mission Viejo, comes down through the Youth Athletic Park, down through Lake Mission Viejo, down through Casta del Sol golf course, down through the Aliso Creek Trail there, down through the Mission Viejo Country Club. We knew that was pretty easy recreational, but we knew also there were recreational areas that were going to be neighborhood parks, and so we knew where we would put them to keep them spaced throughout this entire general plan.

So by the time we got to the housing stage, we pretty well knew that a park was going to be located maybe on the north side and what type of a park facility it was going to be, general recreation, or was it going to be girls’ softball? Was it going to be baseball, soccer? But we knew it was going to be recreational, and if we knew, we would say the specific use. But many of the times if lights were a concern, we would say the possibility of night lighting exists, the youth athletic parks, the parks along Felipe and Olympiad.

So we told them as much as we knew, and if we didn’t know, we would put it in as a possibility if we thought someday it might be a real concern to residents. “You didn’t tell me there were going to be night lights on this,” or something of that nature. So it was an important document, a document that went right from the very beginning, again, the importance of the initial planners to include that type of a document, to take the time to draft it, write it up.

Eventually it became pretty easy to do. I looked forward to doing those, in fact. I really did.

BRETON: In doing those, did it enable you to see the brilliance of Jim Toepfer’s master plan?

COOK: , I would never admit it. [laughs] I love that guy. He is a super guy. It was. It was one of those primary elements in—if you were to list all the reasons you think for the success of

Mission Viejo community, that is one that easily get lost, but it belongs right up there in the top five, I would think. To include letting the resident know what's going to be there, it was so important.

BRETON: Did they not also put some large signs on the parcel, on the vacant undeveloped parcel, that would announce that this is the future site of a school or a park or a shopping center?

COOK: , So true, so true, even in the commercial areas. We'd call it a commercial area if we didn't know specifically what was going in. You could call it shopping area. Probably be a little more defined, but a commercial, industrial were pretty well a general categorization other than residential housing and recreation. But those two, the shopping and commercial, we put in as much as we knew, and we waited until—the home was under development by then, so we didn't really publish that until signing the documents, you know, the document stage when it had to be in their document package by that time. So it gave us time to really get a better handle on what we knew was going to be in there. Remember, contiguous area is what's north of them, south. For a home here by the library, we didn't have to tell them about Interstate 5. We would tell them about the major arterial, La Paz. We would tell the library, the city about Marguerite Parkway and major arterials. But it was a very important document and saved much administration and probably legal.

BRETON: Let's take a short break, and we'll talk about the Activities Committee when we come back.

COOK: Great.

BRETON: Thank you.

[Begin File 2]

BRETON: Let's talk a little bit about the lake. Tell us why you think the lake was the crowning jewel for Mission Viejo. What impact did it have not just in raising the market value of the property in our area, but what impact did it have as far as becoming an icon of the community and a place that would be a source of pride for everyone?

COOK: Well, it is truly a source of pride. I looked at it kind of as a continuum of the good place to live. It came along in the plan. You see, the lake was not originally in the general plan. Although it was in that what I would call a recreational corridor, would probably have been just another park, big park, or some other use of recreational area. It was recreational.

BRETON: I think that Harvey Stearn said it was originally slated to be the second golf course.

COOK: Yes, another golf course. Well, today we have three golf courses.

BRETON: That was before the Casta del Sol golf course.

COOK: It was before the Casta del Sol.

BRETON: So today, of course, we have that and the Arroyo [Trabuco golf course], but at that time it was the Mission Viejo Country Club golf course, and then this was going to be the second golf course.

COOK: It would be. Size-wise was there, kind of was easy to see it as another golf course, but when we got to the questioning of the number of golf courses and things like that, I guess—"Is there anything else?" And they came up with the idea of a lake. It was certainly another amenity that would bring people again to continue, "Let's go down and look at Mission Viejo again. You know, they've got a lake down there. Let's go down there and look."

So there were times when people would come down to wait for the home openings, you know, what do they call those today, campouts. You go to pick up a new iPad or new iPhone or something and you have people waiting two days before. They waited eight days before. They

camped out eight days. This is earlier in Mission Viejo's period, camping out eight days to get their name on the list for this new series of homes to come online.

Well, the lake was a new amenity that generated a lot of that new excitement again for, "Maybe we should move to Mission Viejo. They've got this lake down there." The design concept of the lake was fantastic yet today. When you look at that lake, it's just not a piece of water; it's a contained piece of water in an area that was—it was almost meant to be. See, first of all, it's in the Oso Creek area, but it had a hard bottom on it that you could fill out. We took it out and used much of it for the dam, which is Alicia Parkway. The lake, it's 125-acre lake, and the uses around the lake, of course, are recreational, with the main beaches, main beach on the north and east beach, and there's little bit of commercial there on the west side, but then there's residential-type, multifamily as well as single-family. So it's a good mix.

The design of incorporating a bulkhead, that's the secret, I think. The bulkhead that surrounded the lake is like an imitation rock bulkhead of about two and a half feet and maybe a foot on the top thick that formed the perimeter of the lake, and from that bulkhead out into the lake area about 15 feet is a soil-concrete mix that was based there, and then you get your dirt base. From that bulkhead to the residential area, it swerves down and then up, because around the entire perimeter of the lake is a drain system which captures any of the water coming down from the areas surrounding the lake. All the runoff goes down into these drain areas, never enters into the lake because that bulkhead there, which has got this small swail in it in the drain pattern, and it drains all around the lake down to the south end, and there's an area where it exits there. But it is such a unique concept of how it was designed and the reason today it's so successful.

**BRETON:** To maintain the purity of the water for fishing and swimming.

COOK: Exactly. It's one of the clearest lakes that's ever been recorded, one this long, this longevity. It's a clean lake. And then the question was, well, how do you fill it, just regular water or what? Yes, we do. Santa Margarita Water District is the source for it, unless when the rain comes. You know, a year ago we had great rains, well over the average, and I think they only had to fill it once or so. They add to it. It's got an elevation of about 700 feet above sea level, which they use as their monitor, and they didn't have to fill it hardly at all last year. Consequently, their budget is very good. They didn't have to raise dues or anything like that to pay for additional water. There are a couple of wells around which are running, that provide water into the lake. The design, though, was fantastic and the reason it continues to be such a very clean lake today. There's no odors emanating from it. It's clean for swimming and all the other recreational activities.

BRETON: Partly because they do not permit motorboats, gasoline-powered motorboats.

COOK: Right from the very beginning, Bob. You're right. Various types of boats are on the lake, fishing boats, sailboats. Only motorboats are your patrol boat, your maintenance boat, and both have engines, motors, but the others are—electric motors. They have electric motors and sail and paddle. But that is a major reason why it's still very clean.

BRETON: What was your role with the company with regard to informing the residents and the prospective buyers, homebuyers, of the lake before it was filled?

COOK: I was primarily there to inform. We wanted the residents to know what was being built, why it was being built, and where it was being built, why it was selected as that site.

I mentioned Alicia Parkway, which is the south end of the lake, and that's where the dam is, and much of the earth from the base of today's lake was brought up and used for the dam, very good clay base material.

BRETON: Impervious.

COOK: Exactly. Exactly. Alicia Parkway had not yet been put through. Of course, the dam was being built, and across which then was the multilane arterial with landscaped median strips and everything on the sides. About the time the dam was built, we had a dirt road across most of it then, and at the over—what is the name of the units, the multifamily units over in the—

BRETON: Finisterra?

COOK: Finisterra homes over there, the Finisterra homes, over in that general area by the dam, though, before you got to the Finisterra.

BRETON: Are you talking about the Cypress Point?

COOK: No, Finisterra. Alicia Parkway was dirt, and we put up an exhibit trailer there, and again, for purpose of letting the residents know what it was going to look like. "This is where it is," and we told them where it was going to be and about it, but this is it. "Take a look up there." We had map exhibits and everything, hardboard map exhibits, to show the people the shoreline. We could point out the shoreline, and there were graders down there. There was a grader down there. He's down now pretty much at the base. That's 70 feet down there at the base, generate up to 30 feet average, with the north end being the beach. I think we had that open—every Wednesday afternoon and evening I'd be there and Saturdays for a good long time period so that it was available for residents. Now, they'd read about it, they'd seen it, read about it in the publications. Now come and take a look at it.

BRETON: At the Information Center.

COOK: It was this little information trailer with the exhibit in it. It wasn't a big a center, just a trailer, and it had a lot of windows in it so they could see out of it, and we would post the exhibits on it. I'd be there to answer any type of questions that they might have.

I remember one group, it was a PTA group, I think in the Capo District in the southern portion of the community, that was interested in learning more about it, you know. I said, “Well, come on up and let’s take a look at it.” A group of about—I think then I had a company van, fifteen-passenger Dodge van, at that time, and we had them come up there one Saturday and I got them all in the van and we took a drive right down into the base, that 70-foot base of the lake, showing what it looked like from down below, a fisheye view of it, what it looked like. We tried to do anything to get people not only interested that were already there, but to give them a perspective as to what it was going to really look like.

BRETON: Let’s move on to the Activities Committee. What was your involvement with the committee, and why do you think that the Activities Committee was so important in the creation of community spirit and pride in our community?

COOK: Well, the initial thing you’d want to jump to is that it provided a lot of community activities for the residents to enjoy, but when I look back at it, the real importance of that Activities Committee were the members themselves involved in it, their participation.

Remember, we’re a small community back then, under 10,000, 15,000 people. They were involved and they were participating. We met in a trailer, again. We’d hold our evening meetings twice a month usually, and a little more frequently, maybe, as the event approached, but it was a meeting of the residents, and all we did, Marty Russo and myself, we would go to those meetings, we’d provide for the beverages and things, but they would meet and they would elect a resident to be a chairman for that event, like many organizations would do. They’d then say, “Okay, you can do this, you do this, you do this.”

I think one of the main events that was held that really got it kicked off to a good start was one called Mission Viejo Days. It was in the early seventies. You know, the Mission Viejo

Activities Committee would start with the St. Patrick's Day Parade in March in the spring, the Fourth of July activity in the summer months, nothing in the fall, because we did have the Five Nights, Twelve Days of Christmas program, but nothing in the fall, so we developed Mission Viejo Days in the fall. What a fun hometown down-to-earth event. It was in the fall, and they all got together and everybody wanted to do this or that. They'd participate in this and that. It was great to see this interplay, because it became a whole weekend festivities. Dances were held at Montanoso Recreation Center in the evening, and the kids had their dance at Mission Viejo High School.

Then we had this Mission Viejo Days event on Sunday, and it was at Mission Viejo Country Club. We were the owners of the club, and we could close it down maybe for a day on Sunday. Nobody plays golf on Sunday. So we closed down twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth holes, which are in the north side, north side of Oso Parkway, closed them down, and that's where we'd hold Mission Viejo Days on the Sunday.

BRETON: A picnic?

COOK: It was a full-scale picnic. They had tents and we had fun earthen games. We had horseshoe throwing. We had mud—

BRETON: Tug-of-war?

COOK: Tug-of-war, tug-of-war in the mud with the kids, and even the adults got into it eventually. But the event that got everybody around it was the greased pig contest. This contest was hosted by the ranch. They brought in the pigs, and we'd put an old wooden snow fence around the perimeter of this area that was going to be conducted. It was probably 75 feet wide by 150 feet, and the ranch hands would come over with the pigs and then they'd grease it up. It would be probably a small pig, you know, not the big ones, and they'd grease it up at one end.

We did it by age groups, seven and eight, nine, ten. These kids, they couldn't wait. If they'd seen one the year before, they couldn't wait to participate. Even if they were at the low end of the age group the next year, they wanted to be in it.

Well, we waited until about two in the afternoon when everybody was pretty much there, and they'd grease them up and they'd have all the kids at one end of the location, and at the other end the ranch hands would have the greased pig there. Then on the signal was, "Go!" Everybody ran toward the pig, the pig ran, of course, and there were times when they couldn't catch that pig and they were missing it. The older-aged kids figured it out after they watched a little more, but it would always be, okay, who's got—there were three kids on the pig. Okay, who's [unclear]. They'd all get the prize, you know. But that was the event that I think drew out the families with kids in those age groups. That was the one they all wanted to participate in.

The story along that goes we only did it for about two years. I was with the company and I got a call one afternoon in late August, early September, and the individual identified himself as officer Torres [phonetic], and he said, "We're here from Santa Ana, and I understand you're having this event."

"Yes," just told them about what it was and everything.

He says, "Well, we don't think you should have it."

I said, "What?"

"Well, you shouldn't have it."

I said, "We've had this for a couple years now. It's the highlight of the—"

"We think it's unfair to the pigs."

I just tried to describe it a little more as to, well, it's not really—who knows, pig might be having as much fun as the kids. I don't know; shouldn't say that. But anyway, they said, "Don't

have it anymore.” We were two weeks before the event. It had been published in the [*Mission Viejo*] *Reporter*, the local newspaper, and everybody was looking forward to it.

But anyway, they said, “Don’t have it anymore.” So Marty and I sat down, I says, “Well, what we’ll do, Marty, is I will start making an announcement.” Maybe I’d have a big trailer. A truck would bring in its trailer and that would be the bandstand and the central area. So I got up out and started at noon and made an announcement, “Is Officer so-and-so here? Would you please report to the stage?” Nobody came up. Next hour at one o’clock said, “Officer so-and-so, would you please come up to the stage to have a little talk, conversation?” So nobody came up. Nobody was there.

So I said, “Marty, what should we do?” We thought about it.

“Let’s do it. We’ll do it.” We did it. Nobody knew about it. We weren’t going to do it or anything, but that was the last year we did it, and maybe that was the purpose of his call.

The event was so much fun. It was a combination of events, like softball during the week it would be held, and the culmination of it would be the championship meet and others like that, and it was so much fun.

BRETON: Were the people organized by states?

COOK: Well, that came along, and that’s another favorite. [laughs] Fourth of July we would have picnics, and on the same golf course, same location, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth hole, and ran some events again. But what the committee as a group decided to do was, “Let’s have a 50 States Picnic. Great idea. Let’s try. Let’s do that. How should we do it?” Well, what we did is we had signs made for each of the states and we mounted them—you know, probably a sign located each state. Wisconsin took a little longer than Massachusetts, little bigger, but anyway—

BRETON: I wonder why. [laughter]

COOK: And Iowa was small. [laughter] Not true. But anyway, we had these signs made up and everything, and we publicized it, that individual participation is welcomed, and that's all we needed to do, because the community was already very much involved in their events. So they came dressed up in Fourth of July outfits, dressed up in their local state outfits, and they brought canopies. Most of them brought canopies, and that was a sight to see on the golf course, all these people. Of course, our band played very popular Fourth of July songs, helped make it a big event, the stage band. To see the color, the red, white, and blue, everybody was American. Everybody was so patriotic. And that's why today it's still mentioned as one of the feature events that was held in previous years.

BRETON: In what ways did the Mission Viejo Company support the Activities Committee?

COOK: Well, they supported it through the participation of Marty and myself, and then we could reach into maintenance people or someone else if we needed help here. [Mark] "Ziggy" would help, Ziggy Wilczynski, today "Mr. Mission Viejo," he would help a lot so much in setup. We would help in setup, because each of the events and activities were residents, and they knew how to do their thing. "What do you need?"

"Well, we could use this," and we kind of helped implementing what their needs were to get it set up.

BRETON: Some of the logistics.

COOK: The logistics and, you know, funding to the degree that maybe for that Fourth of July party we needed that flatbed trailer, and we made arrangements with one of the contractors, you know, to use theirs, to bring it in that day, it's clean and everything. We were able to facilitate in that respect very good.

BRETON: Do you know how the St. Patrick's Day Parade began? I think that might have been the first activity or one of the first activities.

COOK: Yes, it was, it was. It started as a bet in the Mission Viejo Country Club by Tommy Mitchell [phonetic]. Tommy Mitchell ran the restaurant there. Tommy Mitchell and another individual made the bet, "I bet we could get a parade on St. Patrick's Day." I don't know the details of it, but I sure had fun participating in it. I enjoy the microphone, of course. I always like microphone events.

BRETON: Hog the microphone. [laughter]

COOK: I'd announce and things like that, but one year I said, "You announce it this year," and so, sure, he liked to announce it. But the best year I had was that year and all the events. What was Art going to do? This was when the parade went from Mission Viejo High School to Chrisanta, down to Estanciero [Drive], over to Marguerite, Marguerite south to Oso to the Country Club. That was the parade route that year, starting at Mission Viejo High School. So I was going to go over there, and if you've ever been a parade master, parade starter, you know what I'm going to say. It was one of the most powerful feelings anyone ever had. "Mission Viejo High School, you're next on the block. Get up and get ready! Followed by local high school group. Girl Scout group so-and-o, get ready now. You're next." Just being what you thought was total control. Whether you were or not was a different story, but the parade went on. You got to tell them who's next, who's next, and that was fun.

BRETON: What made it so wonderful?

COOK: : First of all, we have the beautiful weather of Southern California. We didn't have rainouts. And we had floats with participation. I'm talking a lot about events and activities, participation. We had floats put on by neighborhoods, the neighborhood associations at that

time. Remember I mentioned earlier that we didn't have a lot of associations, but there were neighborhoods, and they would develop a float and put a float in the St. Patrick's Parade. They put a float in the St. Patrick's Parade, and you'd see your neighbor up there on the float and waving and laughing and cheering, and they'd get down.

The parade ended, of course, at the Mission Viejo Country Club, and there was a big stone, big stone about this big, big round stone this high [demonstrates]. They called it the Blarney Stone, and so the people would kiss the Blarney Stone when they got to the end of the parade, and they'd go on in and have a little beer, maybe, or something. [laughs] Fun event. That was a real kickoff event.

BRETON: Were there bands?

COOK: Oh, bands. Mission Viejo High School was the biggest band, of course, being the local band. There weren't that many high schools around at that time, consequently not that many bands, but bands came from Santa Ana down to it. So, yes, there were bands marching. Of course, probably the most were the Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts packs, you know, and that was their first parade.

BRETON: They got to march in it.

COOK: They marched in their parade, their hometown parade. And merchants are very good about supporting groups. If a Cub Scout group needed something for their marching, they could go to a merchant and a merchant would sponsor them. They weren't big sponsorships, but they were enough for maybe their sign, and they had a little logo on it or something. So you got support not only from the residents, but from the merchants as well.

BRETON: It sounds like you almost had more people in the parade than on the sides, the street side, watching the parades as they went by.

COOK: So true, Bob, so true, because they loved to be in their parade, their hometown parade, especially. It was their thing, yes.

BRETON: No equestrian units?

COOK: There would be. There would be a couple of equestrian units in it. I remember seeing them. I think there were maybe a group from the local equestrian facilities that I'd mentioned earlier that were here in Mission Viejo would enter in a couple of them, yes, yes.

BRETON: Who was the mayor, the Lord Mayor, at that?

COOK: Well, what was his name? He was Irish and white-haired and kind of pot-bellied.

[laughter] He filled the role great, laughed just as great. You knew he came over just the day before from Ireland.

BRETON: Now, when you moved here, were they still having the Cinco de Mayo celebrations, do you remember?

COOK: Cinco de Mayo was the very first celebration. It was the first celebration in Mission Viejo. We often think of the other events we've been mentioning and talking about, but Cinco de Mayo was the first communitywide event, and it went so well it lasted for days, three days. It was initially sponsored by the high school. Mission Viejo High School was going to have it. Whether they'd had it before or not, I don't recall, but they saw the potency of having it get participation from others in the community, which they did, and it turned out just spectacular. They had it for several years. I forget the number of years, but they had it for several years, and it was extremely, extremely popular as an event, particularly as the kickoff event.

BRETON: Tell us a little bit about the [Mission Viejo] Bunny Days. Do you know anything about that?

COOK: Yes. Back then, of course, we didn't call them Bunny Days. We called them Easter egg hunt. [laughs] It was Easter. The Easter egg hunt was held—you know, that wasn't done so much by the Activities Committee which we were involved in. What group would that have been?

BRETON: The recreation center?

COOK: Oh, recreation centers.

BRETON: Jim Hudson or—

COOK: The Easter egg hunt is what we had called it at the time, and that event was sponsored primarily by the recreation center. I must tell you at this point, the recreation centers, which were such an important part of the success of Mission Viejo community, sponsored a lot of events as well, the longest ice cream sundae event held.

BRETON: The 500-foot-long—

COOK: Five-hundred-foot-long ice cream sundae held down at Sierra Rec Center.

BRETON: Banana split.

COOK: Banana split. But they really got involved in a lot of their activities as well, so it just wasn't isolated activities, which was the company. Jerry Curran was with the recreation centers and managed that.

BRETON: Didn't they have the Halloween haunted house?

COOK: Haunted house. They had the haunted house.

BRETON: The New Year's Eve dance.

COOK: The New Year's Eve dance was kind of a continuation of—well, yes. Initially it was Activities Committee, but, yes, they picked it up.

BRETON: Movies in the Moonlight.

COOK: Yes, yes, and then they got into some of the spectacular ones where they brought in notables, the tennis event.

BRETON: Oh, the Seventeen tournament [Seventeen Magazine Tennis Tournament of Champions] or—

COOK: Seventeen tournament.

BRETON: The [Celebrity Challenge] Battle of the Sexes.

COOK: And Challenge of the Sexes. That was the recreation center extending them just, well, beyond their three facilities, and they got into that as well. I mean, that just made the whole community gel. There was always, always something going on.

BRETON: I think there was a Balloon to the Moon.

COOK: How many could get to the balloons, a lot of balloons? I forget.

BRETON: You would attach your name and address to a helium balloon and let it fly, and it might land in Phoenix or something.

COOK: The winner of the Balloon to the Moon contest was the one who got back their name that was tagged onto the balloon, and whoever's balloon was returned, the furthest distance was the winner. Yes, gosh, they did it.

BRETON: Tell us about the importance of the *Mission Viejo Reporter* in informing about these events that were happening.

COOK: The *Mission Viejo Reporter* was the publication that was used to keep everybody in the community informed. I'm so glad you brought it up. I brought with me the copy of the initial *Reporter*. This was volume one, number one, January 1966. Now, remember, the first resident didn't move in until April of 1966, but we were ready and rarin' to go with meetings to keep residents informed about what's going on. This was a monthly publication that included pictures

and articles about what's happening, what's happening. Well, in this first issue there's no residents. It was all company people because that's all that was here at the time. We hadn't even had the first opening of the Deane Homes, because this is January. They came in April of '66. But this was the document. This was the means that then came out published every month, telling them what was going on, who moved in, what was the success. We're now at 10,000, and we had contests going on to see a year before what do you think will be the population by the year later. People would enter, and it was all over the place. I think the guy who won it missed it by three people, or three or thirteen, missed it.

But this was the document. As you can see, it's not just flimsy, and this is back in 1966, so this is good sturdy material that people got used to. It changed colors, a little lighter color at one time, and at one time it was more in a magazine format. This was sent to every household in the community. Another way we supported the community was to get local groups to participate in the delivery of it. It became pretty competitive. It was a good fundraiser for them. We'd have Cub Scout, Boy Scout groups, Girl Scout groups, youth athletic teams, all wanting to participate in this monthly program of delivering the *Mission Viejo Reporter*.

We generally at that time could divide the community up into three parts, north, central, southern part. They would then pick up the paper. We kind of coordinated that, the delivery. We weren't in charge of the publication, our group or my involvement at all. Wendy Wetzel Harder was more involved in that. It was publication materials that she was very much involved in, and thank heavens that she did that job, because it was quite a job. We did the delivery of it. That was fun. But that was the real success and means to keeping the people, the residents, informed of what went on, see if you find your picture in there, and what's coming up, that type

of thing. It was just a fantastic—like a marketing tool, I guess you could say, but still it was an information tool.

BRETON: Tell us about the presidential visit, 1976.

COOK: [laughs] Oh, Bob, yes, 1976. Gerald was running for president.

BRETON: For reelection.

COOK: For reelection, 1976, reelection, and he was making a Western trip and he was going to stop in South County, wanted to stop in two places in South County. Well, he stopped in Leisure World and he wanted to stop in Mission Viejo. Well, the president to Mission Viejo. We thought, “This is great.”

We were notified two weeks before. We had two weeks to prepare what we’re going to do, what would be the format, and all that, plus all the security. Of course, we started meeting, and Marty Russo and myself met a lot with the people in the trenches, the special security forces and things like that, as to what can do, what can’t we do, can we do this, can we have this type of a parade, can we hold it over here. Well, that’s what we did. We met with them and went over the routine.

The routine was that we held it at Mission Viejo High School out in their external auditorium, the outdoor auditorium. The had a stage there and platform, and big grass area was there at the time, so that’s where it was going to be held, and that there would be a parade entry that came in from Chrisanta area over there, assemble on Chrisanta, La Paz area.

So I got selected to be the emcee of the event. My goodness, my goodness. So we had the MAC at the time. John [Noble] and his group were set up over here.

So I got to go through all that stuff, you know, and figure what it was. We had the band and the cheerleaders that participated and, of course, the public. So Phil O’Reilly, President of

Mission Viejo Company, escorted then President Ford up onto the stage, and I handed the microphone, of course, to Phil to make the introduction of the President of the United States here in Mission Viejo, Gerald Ford.

I think a lot about that still today. As I was preparing to come over here today, I looked and I have my tie clasp pin, and it has “Gerald Ford” etched on it with the President of the United States seal on it, and I got together with this a set of cufflinks, but I don’t wear cufflinks shirts yet today. [laughs]

BRETON: I’m impressed.

COOK: I was too. I was impressed.

BRETON: The Secret Service gave that to you, or President Ford?

COOK: , and it has “Gerald Ford” etched on it with the President of the United States seal on it, and President Ford, he directly. Phil got one, and a couple others were given that, too, yes. I realize this is such a wonderful country and our town is a part of it. This is such a wonderful town to be a part of such a wonderful country. You never know what’s going to happen. Two weeks earlier, we had no idea.

Rose Parade [Tournament of Roses Parade]. Are you going to ask me about the Rose Parade?

BRETON: Let’s go back, just a couple more things. Do you know why President Ford selected this area to launch his presidential bid?

COOK: We were so busy at that time, I had no idea to ask questions like that.

BRETON: Did you know that his son was here, his son was actually here to study equestrianship, to riding horses?

COOK: I had no idea, Bob, yes.

BRETON: His son is the one who told him all about this area and about Mission Viejo.

COOK: South County and Mission Viejo and Leisure World, yes. Oh, good, good, good.

BRETON: Okay then, let's talk about the Tournament of Roses Parade.

COOK: I mentioned earlier '76 was quite a year, presidential visit and everything. In 1976, Phil Reilly came to us, to Marty and myself—I keep saying Marty Russo, such an important guy in the company. We worked together, and that made it so much easier for both of us, I suspect. But he came to the two of us and he said, “Art, I think it's time for Mission Viejo to have a float in the Rose Parade.” Wow! So he says, “Can you guys see what it takes to get into it?” Okay. We didn't have a lot of time, maybe mid year.

So I made the contact with the Tournament of Roses people up in Pasadena and met with them on several occasions up there. The Rose Parade is very structured. They have bands, they have floats, and they have equestrian units. They have a couple football teams. They have so many units in each of those three categories, and within the categories of floats, for example, they have commercial and community, so we would fall into that community aspect of a float, and they had an opening. We told them this was a community float. It's not a company float; it's a community float. And that appealed to them, since we were in that community category.

So in meeting with them, they had to then select a float decorator, and we went through the list and selected one that had had several champion floats, Tournament of Roses floats. Raul [R.] Rodriguez was the primary decorator, designer of the floats for this company. He is still a designer of floats in the company. This was back in '76, and he'd been before then, and we're talking today, 2012, he's still a designer. Raul, fantastic guy. We selected the right company.

The thing I remember Phil telling me, he says, “Art, yes, we want to get into the float. It doesn't have to be a champion this year. In fact, make it community-structured.”

I says, "Community-structured? What's he talking about?"

"Give a flair of the community." Okay.

So I mentioned that and we went over with Raul what's it going to be like. Well, our first float was one that was designed with almost, like, a patio cover, long, lengthy, and up at the top it had fancy design covering and everything. It was covered in flowers, as you can imagine, all over, but it was to depict a patio in one of our homes, you know. It didn't go into that, but that was kind of the theme. Some of the residents would inquire, "Why did you select this theme?" It more depicted an element of the community.

Then who rides on your float? Well, the Olympians, 1976 Gold Medalists Brian [S.] Goodell, Shirley [F.] Babashoff, they had to be on it. They were up in the front. They were up in the front of it. To show that we're a community, broad community, we have Casta del Sol community and everything, we had Harvey Stearn's parents. Harvey Stearn was vice president of the company. His parents were the first ones living in Casta del Sol, the adult community, and we wanted to represent that aspect. His folks rode on the float, and we had several others.

But it was so unique in that we were, first of all, playing with the big folks up at the Tournament of Roses, and we were looking at our own community for their participation, and their participation included the design of it. The two high schools, Capo—even we included El Toro [High School]. Trabuco wasn't online yet. We had Mission Viejo, Capo, and I think El Toro High School, participate in the decoration of the float. Nobody ever did this, especially when you're 60 miles away from where they're decorating them in your living. So I made arrangements with the Capistrano Unified School District, Saddleback, one of the school districts, to bus during that period students twice a day, a morning crew and an afternoon crew, up and back. As we got closer to the final design, an evening crew even went up. So we were

using our own high school students and volunteers, as well, from Mission Viejo to participate in the decoration of the float.

I mentioned Raul Rodriguez being the designer, fabulous designer. He designed a lot of the fronts of the Las Vegas Strip, the big clubs up there. Another personal thrill that I had was he invited my wife and myself over to his house one year following the big festivities, must have been February, March of the year, to his home one year and just wanted to thank us for our participation in it. It probably was the second year.

I was involved in the decoration of the float, not only getting it in, let's say, but keeping it in and getting it in and decorating it for the first three years, '76, '77, '78—actually it was '75, '76, '77. Seventy-eight was the last year, so eight, seven, six, okay, those three years, and it was fantastic. Worked with Raul those years as well as with the community.

Then I got orders to go to Colorado. [laughs] So I was there for nine years, but when I went to Colorado, there was already people here that knew how to do it. Elaine Carter, Ziggy, those two really took over the work on the float, which we continued for a period of ten years, and then it was getting pretty expensive. I understand the city had one while I was gone or something. The city had one too.

BRETON: Describe the worldwide recognition that was attained as a result of that.

COOK: It was. Of course, throughout the world everybody recognizes Budweiser and the Cokes [Coca Cola] and some of those people that ran the commercial side. They didn't know what this little Mission Viejo was, but the announcer crews, they knew how to do this parade. They would tell people very much about who this is, where this is. When they came to Mission Viejo, this is a new town in Orange County, which is near here in Southern California, so whether you're watching it in Holland or in France or wherever, this was a town, new town,

relatively new, in Southern California, you know, that type of thing. It wasn't so much the world that we were interested in, but it was interesting to see the United States' awareness of this town and what it was. It gave us good recognition.

BRETON: Didn't the float in the second year receive the Sweepstakes Award?

COOK: Sweepstakes Award. It was amazing, I mean, the best of all the commercial entries and other entries. It was the top, and everybody was so excited. Now, everybody gets an award. We thought we were excited in the first year because we qualified in the 15,000 to 30,000 population category. [laughter] We got the award for that category, but to get the Sweepstakes Award for Mission Viejo, California, everybody wore a good, proud lapel when that was awarded.

BRETON: Tell us about the [Mission Viejo] Nadadores and how they brought not only global fame and recognition to the community, but pride in their achievements.

COOK: Well, "pride" is only a five-letter word, but it sure was a big word in the minds of the residents. The Olympics is what I was referring to and winning the Gold Medals, but before that, you heard me mention Jim Toepfer, who said, "I want a swim team." His daughters were involved in the swim team, and it was a little swim team that started at Montanoso, graduated then, because Montanoso only had six lanes and then Sierra had eight lanes, and that was a good competition pool, 25-yard pool, and continued there. We had Craig Brown and Mike Lilly, were the two coaches, that they just knew how to work with the kids so well, and kids wanted to respond by winning, not only having fun, but winning, and the coaches knew that. They'd have fun too. They'd do fun things.

Well, then it was in the early seventies when the swim team was starting to look pretty good. They were getting competitive. It was no longer just a recreational swim team. There were teams that wouldn't swim with us because we weren't good enough, you know, locally in

Orange County. So we got pretty good, and we ended up thinking, like, we're going to be good competitors in the Orange County Swim Conference, level up, level up.

Then the company hired a swim coach named Mark Schubert. Mark Schubert went on to coach the Olympic teams for the United States, won awards and everything. This was before I joined Mission Viejo Company, but I was the Booster Club president of the Mission Viejo Nadadores swim team at the time when Mark Schubert came online. Controversial? I don't know, not as much as you might expect something like that to be today, but all of a sudden we're going from a fun recreational team to a competitive team, probably because we've got a good coach who came from Ohio, Youngstown, Ohio. He was a competitive driver, and he was now really going to coach these kids to be competitive swimmers. He raised some eyebrows in some of the parents, saying, "Oh, what's happening?"

But it didn't take long. I kind of was his buffer, so to speak, and that let, "Mark, you get on with your coaching," and everything turned out well. He really turned it into a competitive team.

Now a couple of us Booster Club members are thinking, "This is competitive. How about an Olympic pool?" So some of the residents on the team, Tom Stout, [Robert H.] Bob Reinicke, Ron Bora, residents, and myself, we said, "Well, let's put together a proposal for an Olympic pool and submit it to Mission Viejo Company."

So we got together and we did a pretty novice job, but, you know, it was all right. I say that because the company wanted it, I guess, also, and they wanted the support of maybe even better coming from the residents than from the company asking us, "Want another pool?" It came from the parents of the swim team, and thus came Marguerite Recreation Center with the Olympic-distance pool, 50-meter pool, the diving pool.

From there it just kept going, because now we were competitive as an Olympic swim team, competition pool, and we had our own Gold Medalists in the community, Brian Goodell, Shirley Babashoff, who were competitors all the way up from kids up through the fact where we had our own residents as Olympians, and they carried that Gold Medal around their necks and on their chests so proudly.

I remember one time when they competed. I believe it was in the eighties when they were held in Canada.

BRETON: In Montreal.

COOK: In Montreal, and they did well up there, earned Gold Medals. They came back and the Booster Club and residents from the community met them at LAX, Los Angeles [International Airport], and that was before the time—we could go up into the terminal, whatever you call them up there. Now you can't go up by where they debark and disembark from the airplanes, but we could go up there, and they got off that plane and there was such a big cheer—it was about nine, nine-thirty in the evening—to welcome them back, our hometown heroes, Olympians, coming back to Mission Viejo. It was LAX then, but down into Mission Viejo. It was really a mark in the hat for Mission Viejo, and the residents understood that.

BRETON: In what ways did volunteerism in our community unite the community and energize the community?

COOK: That's the foundation of the whole success of all the events that we had. You know, we've talked about the Mission Viejo Activities Committee. That was volunteerism. They volunteered. They volunteered, but what made it so much fun was to see the extent to which they were able to get all the support for each of their committees to participate in the sale from this booth or that booth. It was all residents. It wasn't commercial. The residents would go out,

and if it was a drink booth with Coke or root beer or whatever, or if it was 7UP were the beverages, they went and bought them all. It wasn't one of those booths coming in, and they ran those booths. So now you're getting down into the levels of real volunteerism when you've got the residents coming in and working those booths and making sure that it all works well, and it did.

[Begin File 3]

BRETON: How do you measure the contributions of the volunteers in our community?

COOK: They're so great. They did so much, and what made it easy to work with them, they were dependable. I mean, if you had someone signed up for this or that or you said, "We need five people to do this operation," the chairman of that group or somebody would get his five people and they all showed up. There was never a question of—if they said, "This is what is needed," those volunteers were there, they showed up, they made it work.

What was nice is I found out a lot of times they came back to do it the second and third year. They said, "Well, I did it this last year. Can't I do it this way? Did I do something wrong?"

"No! Great!" So they were very dependable, helpful, really made it work easier for everybody.

BRETON: How did Mission Viejo Company create a sense of place here, a sense of belonging to the community, the feeling that you're now in a home town that cared about you, a sense of identity?

COOK: Probably some of that was through the advertising program that was implemented, and others will be able to address that, but, you know, it was things like "Where Home is a Hometown Again," just use the name "home" over again. People can relate to home. They want

to relate to home. They want to be able to go home after a day's work or whatever. So we used the word "home" a lot in our promotion campaigns, and it seemed to work, because everybody likes home.

BRETON: When you moved into Mission Viejo, how were you welcomed by the company? In what way did the company give you a welcome home packet, new homeowner's packet?

COOK: Your salesman, salesperson, they really had a concept of following you all the way through that first visit till you eventually signed your papers and you got through that. This was before your home was completed, in most cases, and you had to wait several months. You had chances then to work with the Home Decoration Center, and you'd work that through your counselor again, and you'd go over and get it done. So by the time it came for you to move into your home five months later or so, you felt very comfortable. It was already your home. It wasn't, "Well, here we go, move in." It was already your home, that it was through the counselor, it was through the Home Decorating Center people, but you didn't get shoved from one to the other. That was the point. First the counselor stayed with you through each of those various steps till you moved in.

BRETON: Through all the escrow phases.

COOK: Through escrow, making sure you knew when your appointment was, where you were to meet, who you were going to meet, so you felt comfortable going into that stage, next stage, but it was always with your counselor in the beginning of directing you to that point. That's a good point. You forget about it until it's brought up, but that's exactly what I can remember. We moved into our home five months after we had purchased it, so I had that exact experience, and remember, we moved in three, four years before I was hired by the company eventually, too, so it was strictly as a homeowner.

BRETON: You could do almost everything under one roof or within a few steps as far as title insurance, financing, escrow?

COOK: They had a Decorator Center, too, which was located right adjacent to their office areas. Of course, the sales personnel were out in the model home areas, but you'd go there a lot of the time. You just wanted to see your home over again, and you'd go and meet with them again, and then your next appointment would be with finance. You'd go to this address. They're down there. You'd meet with so-and-so. Or then you've got the home decorating, you know. You go down there to this place. It was smart marketing to keep that homeowner involved with you, the sales counselor, because you're still not into that home. It was a smart marketing approach to use the sales counselor as a continuum of your purchasing experience, rather than saying, "Okay, you will now be ready to go on, and I've got this appointment this afternoon with someone else." You felt all the time that you feel free to call on him or anything. I think that's done a lot. I hope it's done a lot today. I don't know.

BRETON: How important was the Home Warranty Department or the home warranty policy?

COOK: It was important in that it gave you that comfort feeling, I guess, hoping you don't have to use it. What was important was the home maintenance, because when you moved into that home, something probably was going to need attention. [laughs] I think we had an air conditioner that was undersized, couldn't figure out why, but through my new Home Warranty Department, which was maintenance there, Home Warranty Department, you could go to them and say, "Gosh, I'm having a problem here. It isn't cooling down. Something doesn't seem right."

They'd come out and inspect it, and rather than to cover it over and pretend that they fixed it, "We put in the wrong size. Oops, oops. Thanks for bringing that to our attention," and

it would be fixed. You'd get a whole new air conditioner. So you felt free to talk to them about those problems. Today I think everybody talks about them, I don't know, but back then you were a little apprehensive of bringing something up, but when you did, you got attention.

BRETON: Who came up with the idea for the "Beautiful Mission Viejo" license plate frame?

COOK: The Mission Viejo lamp lights, that was Jim Toepfer. Jim Toepfer was asked by Phil and the group, "Let's make this unique, keeping it with the ranch theme," the "Mission Bell," the Mission Bell light post, and it's just not the Mission Bell. We're starting to see the Mission Bell—we've seen in adjacent communities to the west of us and to the south of us, San Juan, Laguna Hills, portions of their entry areas are using the Mission Bell, too, but you look, and nowhere else have I seen the Mission Bell with the additional feature with the scroll that's on top of the pole there and with the piece that sets up straight, the scroll and—what do they call it? But the additional decorations to the Mission Bell streetlight all carry that theme right on through to the very last unit that was being built.

Where you see that is when I drive out the canyon, the Silverado Canyon Road. There's Painted Trails division up there. There's part of Mission Viejo, subdivision, and there's another one out there, and along El Toro Road, up in that section east of that area, you see the Mission Bell streetlight on El Toro Road, Silverado Canyon Road now, because they are part of Mission Viejo. It keeps that theme. We didn't say, "No, we don't have to do it out there." Kept it all the way through. The landscaping, right from the beginning you saw it at La Paz and Chrisanta, the planted median strips. You see them today throughout Mission Viejo. The theme was carried out of planted median strips, not just the slopes along the major entry areas and community, and people get used to that. They like it.

BRETON: Sure, it's an identifying feature that unifies.

COOK: Exactly.

BRETON: Do you have any memories from the Beautiful Mission Viejo campaign or the House Beautiful Committee? Do you remember when they would give awards for outstanding landscape design to a different homeowner each month?

COOK: Yes, it was. I must admit I didn't have any direct involvement in it, but I would see the results of it. They would be published in the *Mission Viejo Reporter*. Families were published in there very often, children, of course, a big attraction for *Reporter*, but the Mission Viejo Beautiful campaign and the House Beautiful Campaign, individual homeowners landscaping their property so that it was very well done, and entered into contests and they'd get the prize. It was not selected by the company. It was another volunteer group that was the group that ran that campaign, and we would publish it and things like that. It was a campaign of ladies that wanted to start that and carry it off just great.

BRETON: What about the license plate frame?

COOK: I have it on my car still today. I have two. I have one in front, one in back, of course. On the front is the license plate frame, "Mission Viejo Beautiful," and it was in the bronze, brown color, the earth-themed colors. My rear license plate will probably be blanked out in this section. It says "Green Bay Packers, Wisconsin." [laughter]

BRETON: Whose idea was the license plate frame, do you know?

COOK: You know, that came out of the marketing side of the company. We were more in the community side. That was very unique in how they did their marketing program. They had the community relations, which we were located, Marty and myself were located, and then they had the marketing relations.

I think one of your speakers will be Wendy Wetzel Harder, and fantastic job she did on that. She would interface and relate to the exterior of the company, to newspaper, the ads, the publications, magazine articles. Anything that was exterior relations-wise was under her umbrella instead of dividing us into that as well. That relieved us immensely, as you can imagine, thus gave us better and more time to focus directly on the community rather than having the company split our responsibilities. Very clever, very smart in splitting the marketing area, external marketing, internal.

BRETON: How about the street names themselves? Do you know how was selected to devise all of the street names within the city, within the community, some lady that [unclear]?

COOK: I'm not familiar with how that came about.

BRETON: That's okay. We've talked about community pride and community spirit, community identity. So all these things together created an image that Mission Viejo was a family-oriented community. Could you expound on that?

COOK: Well, you've heard me talk about the volunteers. The volunteers, of course, were families, and they helped, but when you get right down to it, where did the volunteers come from? They came from the families, and it was usually because there were so many children. It was a young community, and the families, of course, with the children, they wanted to make sure their family was able to experience the most benefits from the place in which they lived, the community of Mission Viejo. So you expose yourself to it.

The City of Mission Viejo today is hosting numerous programs through the Norm Murray Community Center, through the Lord of the Strings programs at the Civic Center, a guitar program, and offering all these additional programs, and it turns out it's the variety today which is appealing to people. They might not want this one or they're busy on this weekend or

they're out of town, but my gosh, next weekend there'll be another activity, and that was a great carryover from the city recognizing that the—

BRETON: From the company?

COOK: Carryover on behalf of the city from company activities they learned. They saw where a lot of residents participated in company-sponsored programs and Mission Viejo Activities Committee programs and softball, youth athletic programs, and so I think the city recognized that. Not only did they have the responsibility to maintain the facilities that they received, but they implemented it by creating great programs. The Norm Murray Center's programs today, I can just see those being such a success, and they would have been earlier. That's just another example of how the city, instead of saying, "Let's do it my way," I will recognize the city for enhancing what the company did and what the community did pre-cityhood in making sure that the feeling and the atmosphere of the city was maintained, it was carried on.

BRETON: Well, let's talk about a few of those. How do you view the library that we're in now, the building of the library?

COOK: This is a fantastic facility. It's got this television studio inside the library. It's got a children's section, totally different. It's just not small books and bookcases and reachable bookcases, but a room with the sky and story land [Wickiup] and everything. The first library was down near the initial part of La Paz and Chrisanta right off of Chrisanta there. I think it was 10,000 square feet, maybe. It was a scale library sufficient to take care of the initial needs, good for its size, but certainly rather than try to enhance it—and I believe you were very much involved, Bob Breton, in making sure that this library today got the facility, which is a top-ranked facility, that is what it is today.

There is also a community of Mission Viejo in Aurora, Colorado, only one square mile, 640 acres, and we went out there in the early seventies and thought, well, we'll expand and show what Mission Viejo is, repeat a community of Mission Viejo. We built similar style homes, only the quality had to be different for the weather, snow and rain, but design was very close to Mission Viejo, California. They had a program there which really followed on Mission Viejo, California programs. They had a recreation center, and then they had a committee, but it wasn't as big and expanding as the Mission Viejo, California community got to be, being particularly 640 acres compared to the 11,000 acres of Mission Viejo, but it was a program where you tried again to get the residents to volunteer and become active in their community, and it was neat. It worked.

BRETON: Could you reflect a little on some of the festivals that they city has begun to sponsor, such as the [Mission Viejo] Readers' Festival in September or the Arts ALIVE in April or the [Target] Symphony in the Cities in July?

COOK: That Arts ALIVE, they've just recently had that last month, and it's just fun. I don't have anymore children that are young. We used to take our grandchildren that are grown. We used to take our grandchildren down there to watch the artists paint on the street, you know, in chalk, and to go down and see the booths that are erected and the people that are milling. You know, the people that are milling around there are those with the little kids again, and that's what's keeping this community alive, is those kids and the opportunity for those programs of that nature, arts festival and the others, to bring the kids in, that brings the parents and the grandparents down. We brought our grandkids down. They've now grown up to be teenagers and getting ready to go on to college. But they're continuing those types of programs, and the

Lord of the Strings program that is held in City Hall, the [Pacific] Symphony program in the summer. It's coming in July, is it?

BRETON: July 28<sup>th</sup>.

COOK: July 28<sup>th</sup>. Went to that last year. We enjoy the symphony. We attend the Orange County Performing Arts programs [Seegerstrom Center for the Arts], the symphony there. To have that come down, their whole—

BRETON: Pacific Symphony.

COOK: —symphony group come down—Clair, the director?

BRETON: Carl [R.] St. Clair.

COOK: Carl St. Clair, he is such a showman. I love to just watch him and attend them and listen to the music as the background, and to have that exposure here in town, and the whole park is filled with people, and when they perform in that afternoon, the poor booths aren't making much money at that time because they're all being exposed to this level of entertainment, and it's so professional. You know, the city could have continued on with its programs that I enumerated earlier, but to see the level that they're continuing to increase to such as the arts festival, the Pacific Symphony—

BRETON: We named the arts festival for you. Arts.

COOK: Oh, named it after me. [laughs] Okay, missed that one.

BRETON: Now, all along from day one, the Mission Viejo Company must have known that it was creating something unique, something magical, something wonderful, because they documented every step in the entire process. They kept all of their photos, all their slides, their newsreels, their films, their press releases, their *Mission Viejo Reporters*. All of their documents were archived and then given to the city for us to preserve here. How important was that?

COOK: I think the basis for that importance is that there was a general plan. The general plan was the secret. These fellows, [Donald L.] Don Brens, Phil Reillys, Jim Toepfers, that group, when they first met, they organized in '63 and the first home was occupied in '66. During that three-year period those guys had to build their company, had to develop a general plan. That general plan still today was the secret. You know, it used to be subdivision work. Everybody was a builder. Everybody would subdivide. They'd fine 500 acres here, 300 there, 20 over there, and they'd subdivide an area, build a very beautiful series of homes or build a nice commercial center.

The general plan for Mission Viejo was a plan right in the beginning. The boundary changed very little, but it showed where the commercial was going to be, where the recreational areas were. I mean, there was maybe a neighborhood park that was put in a certain area that might not have been on the general plan, but we knew there were needs for those, but it showed the major areas of the shopping, commercial, light industrial, schools. It showed not where every school was going to be located, but they knew that they would need so many schools, and they put them near parks and residential. Like Newhart right here could be used with Oso Park, and right adjacent the school can use the park for their physical education classes or whatever they call it now today, and use that.

But I want to get back to the general plan. That general plan, those fellows sat down and they did it for the entire 11,000 acres. They didn't say, "This is a big piece of property. Maybe let's take a look at 500 acres, and then if it goes there, we'll move on to another 1,000 acres." They did it for the initial 11,000 acres, and there were little tweaks to it, but the general plan existed.

I looked at it this morning before I came over, and that's exactly the way it was. I showed earlier a map that was in 1976 that showed where the lake was in relation to the community, the general plan area of Mission Viejo, where it was. The lake was the only real significant change to the general plan in that it was going to be, as I mentioned, maybe another golf course or another recreational area. We knew it would be recreational because it was in the Oso Creek area, as the other amenities that I mentioned, but the lake was something that had to be processed as a change to the general plan. But when you think of that change in relation to all 11,000 acres of Mission Viejo, that was the secret. That was the heart of the success of Mission Viejo. The people that planned it and the people that implemented it, it just was a work, work, work, win, win, win situation, and I think the people that worked recognized the importance of that general plan. Now, of course, the city, it's calling it, I believe, master plan, probably the city refers to it, but it's the plan, and that's the important part of the success of the community and now the City of Mission Viejo.

BRETON: How can Mission Viejo be described as a world-class community, the quality of the work that was done here? In other words, it seemed like the phrase has been used, "gold-plated." When Mission Viejo did something, they did it the right way. They didn't skimp. They didn't take shortcuts. They did it the right way. They built a rec center or they built a park, and they made it world-class.

COOK: Well, Mission Viejo is a world-class facility, community, city. It was started out, as I said, as a general plan. It combined all of the uses of a general plan of a city. It combined the recreation, the residential, the commercial, the light industrial, the educational. It combined all that, and I think the way it was done, the way the general plan was implemented earlier, was done very well. It was done well, and because it was done well, it subsequently became a world-

class name. I mean, the world-class might have come along later. It was a recognition of the way the community, the city, was planned, yet we all like to think and appreciate we live in a world-class community, but it became that. There were certain areas, landscaping associations throughout the country who would come in and look at how it was done, and they would be focusing on the landscaping. They weren't interested in what type of housing, single-family, multifamily. They would look solely at the landscaping in the community, and then they'd go back to their organizations and then they'd write up something that would appear in one of their publications, and it would become national that way. Well, that was just one area, residential.

Bob, I remember one time five busloads came into Mission Viejo, and I was to escort them throughout the community and show them what Mission Viejo is. These were all from Japan. It was organized not through us, but it was organized through Caterpillar [Inc.]. Caterpillar was very big in doing the grading operations that were going on here, and one of the marketing guys from Caterpillar would come to us and say, "You know, you use so much of our equipment, and it's all in such a confined area. They don't have to go from here to Central California to San Diego. It's all right here. You're doing so much of it right now. Can we bring in a busload of folks to see it?"

"Okay, we'll do that. We'll have them come in," and that's how it started, one busload. Eventually it got to five, as I said.

But what we would do is I would take them on a tour of Mission Viejo, and we'd stop at areas along the way such as, by the that time, the recreation centers. We'd show them the recreation centers. We'd show them the fields and everything, and we'd, of course, show them areas under grade, because it was Caterpillar that was doing all of the funding of this operation for them, for these tours.

Then we'd go up to Wilderness Glen [Park] way up in the northern portion of the community, a facility that is totally overlooked, but it's such a natural, beautiful area, and we'd go up to Wilderness Glen. The bus would stop and we'd all get out and have lunch. Nobody's around, you know, and we'd have lunch up there.

Well, when the five busloads came in—and they didn't understand me, I don't think, at all. I'd move from bus to bus to bus. I remember stopping there, and we stopped at Marguerite Rec Center and they all had box lunches, so we had a box lunch at Marguerite swim center, recreation center.

But it was through those exposures, through the Caterpillars, through the landscape associations that would then publish—it became wider and wider and wider, and subsequently a world-class, because we were doing it apparently right. They kept coming back wanting to see it.

I'd take tours of Mission Viejo High School architectural students through the same tour, show them how the house is being built, and I arranged with the supervisor who was doing a certain home, I'd said, "We're going to come by. Can you show students a little bit about the construction of this home, show me what a 2-by-4 is and how it works in the home?" So he'd be ready to go, and we'd stop at the house and the area that was being under construction, and he'd take the time and talk to the students, Mission Viejo High School architectural class, about how the foundation, the electrical's put in, how the walls go up and the ceilings and the second floors. They were very basic, not to me, but I had a good crew that would take the time to show these students how to do it.

So it was all through that time everybody took to show everybody. We weren't secretive, "Don't tell them how we did this." Show them how we did this. That became broader and

broader, and the Rose Parades that we talked about, it became broader and broader. Maybe that was the connotation for world-class. I don't know. I don't think it was anything we put on it.

BRETON: Were you here to assist in hosting the world International Cities Conference or were you up in Colorado at the time?

COOK: No, I was back at my favorite Colorado. [laughs] I'm saying Colorado only because it took all the goods things, all of us from Mission Viejo California. Jim Toepfer went over and he was able to incorporate all these ideas all over again into a place that was twice the size, 22,000 acres, there. If anybody has the chance and you're on a vacation trip and you go near Denver, stop by Highlands Ranch, Colorado, where I was once the ranch manager, ran a real cattle operation with a couple thousand head of calves instead of steers and heifers. Enough said. [laughs] Got it in.

BRETON: Speaking of world-class, tell us about the 1984 Olympic event here and the bicycle road races.

COOK: I would love to tell you about it. I don't know about it. I was in Colorado. [laughs] No, I remember it. One of the adjacent ranchers to our Colorado operation, she had 6,000 acres and was very influential over there, but we invited her to come back to see the Mission Viejo Olympics, the Olympic function here, so it was something that was a draw not only for the public's realm, but we brought people back from Colorado to see what happens in Mission Viejo California. [laughs] All that's going to get cut out. Don't worry about it. [laughs]

BRETON: Tell us about the company's attitude toward the MAC, the Municipal Advisory Council. You mentioned a John. Are you talking about John Noble?

COOK: John Noble. Yes, you guys.

BRETON: What was the attitude of the company towards the MAC? Was it a useful sounding board, a useful way to involve the community in local planning or to go to the county with a stamp of approval? How did the MAC fit into the picture?

COOK: You know, we knew that someday Mission Viejo would be built out. So what happens? We knew that it would probably be best if it's all built out that it be a city here in South Orange County, but when that came along, I don't know, I didn't know, certainly, but when it would come along, and when would be the time for that cityhood initially wasn't really defined at all. But what were the steps to get there? At that time there was the Municipal Advisory Council, the MAC, and as the term advised, it was, as stated, advisory. They didn't have approval process, but I think one of your other earlier speakers talked about the importance when we brought a project, a new home series, let's say, a Granada home series, a Madrid homes series, when we brought a new series to the approval body, to the county, that it had already been walked through the staff at the county and it had been interfaced with them to know what this is, what the numbers were for this new subdivision, so by the time it got to the [Orange County] County Board of Supervisors, which was the stamp of approval to go ahead on the project, it was almost a slam-dunk or whatever they say today, because all the county already agreed with it. The recommendations were already made to the county commissioners, as to the planners, for approval, but for discussion, and we had good questions. Well, with that background, we knew also that the city is going to—we learned from the county, let's do it again with the city. So then we have a process of going through.

BRETON: The community, you mean.

COOK: The community, with the community. Not the city, the community. Very good. Thank you. With the community of getting their inputs. The community was growing, and so we

recognized the fact that they wanted representation, too, input into what type of home, maybe. Was this the right type of home? Should it be single-family or multifamily, or should it be small shopping or should it be a large mall, you know? Input was necessary. It's always necessary in this business, and I think our people knew how to go about doing that.

The Planning Department knew how to interface with the county and with the residents of the city, and that became the avenue, the MAC, to do that. We'd go through just as we did with the county. The same exhibits, the same presentation we would do in front of the Municipal Advisory Council that we used to do with the staff at the county, and because of that, there was understanding. Well before the county ever got the approval, there was understanding with the MAC, with the local jurisdiction, that now they knew, and they did input. They would input to say, "Well, what if we did it this way or that way," or, "What is that going to be on the other side?" They'd raise questions about the development. "Is it going to be a continuation of the program or is it going to be a different program? Is it going to be multifamily?" They'd ask those questions, too, good questions, and so the MAC was certainly a necessary transition, a natural transition into cityhood.

BRETON: And a valuable tool.

COOK: Now the residents were feeling it too. It wasn't just the company understanding what the function was of the Municipal Advisory Council, but the residents now were reading about it in the *Mission Viejo Reporter*, and I think maybe the *Saddleback Valley News* had come along by that time from the extension of the [*Orange County*] *Register* to South Valley area, and so they were covering the MAC activities, hearings, as well, and this was a way that now the residents were learning a little closer about what was being planned instead of through the *Reporter*, "This is what's going to be over here. This is what's being planned." In

retrospect, it worked, again, very, very well to making the transition to eventual cityhood. You, yourself, were a member. You were a member of the MAC and made the transition to cityhood.

BRETON: Yes, I was. I started on the Planning Committee of the MAC, which was like a Planning Commission, with Norm Murray, and then I was chairman of the MAC. Then there was an interim in the metamorphosis that was an interim body that I belonged to that was an elected body, the [Mission Viejo] Community Services District. Remember that, just before cityhood, the Community Services District?

COOK: I must have been in Colorado. [laughter]

BRETON: That was in '86.

COOK: I was in Colorado. I get back in May of 1988. Was that an important date?

BRETON: March 31<sup>st</sup> of 1988 is the most important date. That was the first day of cityhood.

COOK: When they went up to San Francisco?

BRETON: To Sacramento.

COOK: Sacramento, and got it signed off. Oh, yes. That's right, that's right, March.

BRETON: Why do you think local history such as this project that we're engaged in now, this oral history, why is local history so important?

COOK: You know, it used to be that it was current history through the *Reporter* that people were learning about what's happened in Mission Viejo, and today history is becoming in terms of forty, fifty years now, you know. Look at all the people who have moved in since the days we've been talking about, and a lot of them are wanting to know how it started, what happened. I think the library has done a sensational job on providing new residents, residents, that information.

There's a section here, whole corner of the library, one end is the children's section and at the far other end is the genealogy section. [laughter] In between you've got everybody, but in that section is a lot of the history of Mission Viejo, all of the *Mission Viejo Reporters*, which I've frequently made reference to. The entire section is there for anybody to look at. There's a big board there that was put up by Ziggy Wilczynski that shows the prominent items that were taken out of the *Reporters*. There's a big board. So much history is there in this library for the residents to look at and to see.

The library is such an important function of any community, any city. I mentioned the small one acre in Colorado. They have a library. It was built by Mission Viejo also, but it got to be when the crunch came here several years ago—and they're incorporated in the City of Aurora, but the city closed it up. Wow, what a rise in the people, and their Homeowners Association went to bat for them, and it was closed for several years. The community brought a suit against the city, and it is back up and operating today. This is about six years ago. It's back up operating today four days a week, but it is back up and operating, and it's a result of the importance of a library to keep people aware of what's going on in the history, not only come down and get new books and everything, but learn about, a place for storage of, here in Mission Viejo, all of our things. It's great. Come down sometime, anybody, and take a look at this section of the library and see what's here for you to look at. It's wonderful.

BRETON: How do you think that the Mission Viejo Company honored the legacy of the O'Neill family?

COOK: Well, initially, many of them were a part of its board. [James E.] Jim West was Chairman of the Board of Mission Viejo Company. The O'Neills, [Richard J.] Dick O'Neill, served on the board. Tony Moiso was a board member.

So it was very important to them as well as to us that they saw that what—we said, “We’re going to use this for building a new town down here.” We didn’t take all 11,000 acres at one time. We were able to work on an arrangement for options to take out parcels. Well, it all worked so well. But they were able to see, being on the board, that it was being done to the way they liked it, that it worked. They saw it worked, to the point where Rancho Santa Margarita today, which is their project, is continuing the planned-community concept, the total concept, not just pieces, as I get back to saying, not just subdivision work, planned-community concept, the real secret of making these new communities work. The Moisos were such an important element in making that transition from their wonderful ranchland to the community of Mission Viejo which is today, and the rest of South County has picked up on it as well.

BRETON: What was “The California Promise” in your mind, or what is it?

COOK: Living here is the California Promise. I think you’re going to have to ask someone else that question. Wendy would be able to tell you that. See, “The California Promise” was something we picked up on from the residents living here. The knew that it was a neat place, and all we did, our marketing external people did, put on the name “The California Promise,” a slogan, a thing.

We experienced it. Our experience was living here and experiencing a promise, but the promise was to tell people around other areas of Orange County, of Southern California, this place, “The California Promise.” It was a great tagline, and “[Mission Viejo:] Where home is a hometown again.” Those were to people who were living here. People living here were making it that, and it was easy for us to pick up on their living experiences, to include them in photos of ads, promotion programs, to what Mission Viejo is. So it was nothing other than living in the experience of that. That’s my California Promise, living here and experiencing it, and they

picked up on it and were able to share it with others, the California Promise. It's easy for us to say that and say, "Well, you should live here because we have this, this, this, this, this, this, this," and just say it's the California Promise.

"What do you mean, Promise?"

"Well, we do this, we went here, we did that this weekend." So it was a wonderful marketing tagline that worked, as were several others during that period.

We had a billboard program that was up in Tustin. I mentioned earlier I worked up for North American Rockwell Autonetics, and I would come back from the Anaheim facility, turn from the 55 Freeway to the 5 and go through Tustin, and there was a big billboard that was probably changed every two, three months, three months, maybe. One time it was all just a Little League batter up there and the bat. You could see the field and everything. Then later on it would be a soccer player. Then later on, it was a girl softball player hitting the ball. It was showing youth athletics, and they put them on those boards. You didn't have to show a house. You didn't have to show the shopping centers. It would say down at the bottom "Mission Viejo, California." That was it. I guess it was just enough to say, "Well, what is it?" and engage people and making them ask more questions about "What is this place? Where is it? Should we go there?" And they did. That was just one sign of many that we used.

BRETON: How was your life affected by this experience of living here and of working with the company?

COOK: This is a culmination. I'm telling it. When you've got something successful, you want to share it, and Mission Viejo has been so successful, and I want to share it, and our family has been a part of that success. They were all on the swim team. The three older boys were the Three Kings in the living nativity scene that Ziggy would promote as part of the Five Nights of

Christmas. We were involved, and to be able to share in the success of this community has been great. To live in it has been wonderful. When we came back from Colorado, we wanted to live no place other than in Mission Viejo, and that is a reality as well, and we're going to stay here. We just love to share this place with not only the friends that we've made in this community, but with others that we have—"Where are you from?"

"Mission Viejo." We no longer have to say it's in South Orange County near Laguna Beach and San Juan Capistrano. Everybody around here knows where Mission Viejo is today. It's just been great, and our family loves to share it as well. So that is probably the treasure today that we have in living here and sharing it.

BRETON: What advice would you give to future City Councils and future city leaders with regard to the importance of maintaining and preserving and even enhancing the amenities that the Mission Viejo Company left us?

COOK: Well, it's probably kind of easy for me to say because we were there in the beginning and we knew what we were putting in, and we can talk about those. I sometimes think about some of the older cities in the county or throughout the country. What do you do as a city official? What is your foundation? You don't have the company foundation. You're it. You're the foundation. What do you establish that on?

It might be a little easier—or I shouldn't say that. I don't know if it's easier to go in and be a city person, member in a new community or in a well-established older community, some of those to the north. I never had the ambition to be political. That's a good mark for me, I think. [laughs] I enjoyed those times I went to the City Council meetings, the Planning Commission meetings, and to observe them and watch them, and I came away with many friendships, I found out.

I mentioned earlier the City Council meetings that I would go to, and they'd have a break. I'd go into the coffee room with them and have coffee or rolls with them at the break time, never talked about the business, and that was one thing that was recognized both by City Council and the company, myself, in that when the company had something to present, they had a planner, they had a Wayne Peterson, a [David A.] Dave Celestin from the Planning Department go to the City Council, the Planning Commission, the City Council, and present it.

That wasn't my function. I would go to all those meetings with them and observe them and everything, but never had to present and never had to talk to any one of those Councils or Planning Commissions, and I came to understand that the Council and the planning commissioners understood likewise. In turn, they would never ask me. If there was another question about a development in a neighboring community, Laguna Hills or wherever, another adjacent that might have an effect on the extension of one of the arterials into those communities, "What effect do you think that'll have, Art, on Mission Viejo?" Was never asked that question. Was never asked a question about planning in Mission Viejo. Council members, city members understood that, and I very much appreciated that, and I never had to speak to them as well. We always had, as I mentioned earlier, the people, and that was one of the reasons I still like to go to City Council meetings. Once in a while I'll still go to meetings.

One time I went. This was maybe a couple years ago. The Youth Athletic Park, which is a great youth facility, was one of the first ones for Little League and others, and the gentleman you've heard me refer to, Marty Russo, did so much at the time to work with the youth athletic field. He worked with the youth athletics. Mine was more with the residual areas of community involvement. The Youth Athletic Park is a great facility.

A couple of years ago, Marty died, and we thought it would be well to name a facility in recognition of Marty's devoted activities to youth athletics, so I picked up and walked with it, adding the name of Marty Russo to the Youth Athletic Park. I was retired at the time, so I had no other things to do except to have fun and put that together.

Everybody wanted to do it. There are some that don't want to change anything, but when we went to the Planning Commission—we went, first of all, to another commission, [Mission Viejo] Community Services Commission, Planning Commission, and the city, and the support was fantastic, because we would go to each of those commissions and we would have maybe a dozen, maybe up to two dozen at one time, people that would be there in attendance to support the naming, people who knew Marty and knew his contribution to youth athletics, and particularly the youth athletic fields.

There were people who wrote, didn't know the history or the background, and would write some letters saying, "Well, why do we need this? Let's leave it this name. We all know where it is," and those letters were all included in the background of the city's review process. But I remember the people who came out and spoke in favor of that, several of them that we'd worked with years ago that knew Marty, just first time I had met them again in ten years, and they came out and spoke. He's on the Moulton Niguel Water District.

BRETON: Richard [S.] Fiore.

COOK: Dick Fiore. Richard Fiore. I saw him there. I didn't talk to him, ask him to come down. He came down and spoke. Bob, you came down and you were very supportive of it, and you spoke in great attributes about what Marty had done and everything, as did others. It made us feel so good about getting support other than just your local group that you were working with. It was just a total relief, and, of course, I'm sure that's why the commissions and the City

Council added the name Marty Russo Youth Athletic Park to it. That was a great feeling, great day.

You know, I'd like to give recognition to [James G.] Jim Gilleran.

BRETON: Okay, let's talk about Jim Gilleran.

COOK: But before I do that, I want to tell you two things. I'll talk about two things. One is how Jim Gilleran would come in the day following a presentation to the planning or city—

BRETON: Or the MAC.

COOK: No, this was—

BRETON: Oh, even after.

COOK: After I came back from Colorado. Upon my return from Colorado, I found cityhood, I'll say. See, I would come back from City Council meetings, sit down, write it up at two in the morning, as I mentioned, put it on their desks, and then dictate. Eleven o'clock in the morning would be the printed version. Jim would come in at eight o'clock in the morning and he'd sit across my desk, elbows on the desk, and say, "Art, give me the flavor of the meeting. Give me the flavor of the meeting." I thought it was so unique, because, you know, people didn't have to—I always got there at eight. I usually got there a little earlier. Some would get there at eight-thirty, but I was always there, and Jim knew that, and Jim was always there at eight, so at eight o'clock we knew each other would be there. [laughs] I like to tell that about Jim because it shows his interest in wanting to know right away how did things go. "What did it go? Did it work? Didn't it? What didn't?"

BRETON: I'd like to have been there when you reported on the day after we as a council were looking at the prospect of your proposal to sell the rec centers, and we wanted to keep the rec centers.

COOK: Very good, yes, yes. I'm not going to address that because I don't know too much about it. I won't talk about that and I won't address anything specific other than Jim and his feel and his smile, eight o'clock in the morning right there wanting to—and it exhibited his closeness to wanting to be aware of what happened directly. If he couldn't be there, he wanted to be—and he didn't go to his executive vice president Jim Toepfer later, eleven o'clock, to find out. He wanted to be there at eight o'clock to find out. That's Jim.

BRETON: And he not only wanted to know the nuts and bolts, but he wanted to know the flavor, the tenor.

COOK: The flavor was in the people too. He knew who was on the City Council and he knew the Planning Department as well, the commissioners. Has anything been brought up about the discussion of [Robert A.] Bob Curtis?

BRETON: No, nothing. I remember, of course, Bob Curtis served on the Council with me and at one point, had a major—

COOK: Yes, what was that over?

BRETON: —controversy with the company.

COOK: There was a recall.

BRETON: Yes.

COOK: As far as a recall, I guess won't go into it because I don't know the details, but the recall, and Bob Curtis beat Mission Viejo Company on the recall, I mean, Mission Viejo Company. There were residents who were really behind—we were behind the residents, I guess I should say. What was it about? I don't even remember what it was about. Anyway, doesn't make any difference. That was the first real—I don't remember. I can't speak of it.

BRETON: As you drive throughout Mission Viejo today—and you still live here—what is your greatest source of satisfaction?

COOK: Well, the fact that most of the time when I drive, the destination is in Mission Viejo, whether it be to the lake—we don't use the youth athletic fields any longer around town, the parks, but we go to the Norm Murray, Oso Park area down there to the functions that are put on there. We do, of course, most of our shopping here. It's got the mall [The Shops at Mission Viejo]. It's got all your support shopping areas.

The symphonies that we mentioned earlier that are here, and the programs are just great. When we started out, we were small, and it was maybe four a year, you know, the big events. Now there are events going on every two weeks, all the time, that you can get involved in.

So the destinations are local. If we want to go, we take a vacation, we take a trip somewhere. We go outside Mission Viejo. We go down to the beaches, certainly. We go to San Juan. Our children are in San Clemente, Carlsbad, Vista. We go places. I don't mean to say we're isolated here, but Mission Viejo offers a lot of destinations for its residents.

BRETON: Isn't that the beauty of the master plan, that it was designed to be a self-contained community that would offer everything?

COOK: It has, it has. You'd heard me talk probably a lot about the youth athletics. Adult athletics. Look at the tennis facility that's being constructed today. That'll be world-class, using that term, when we come back to it. Look at the Olympic diving and swimming facility that was here, world-class, held world championship meets, still being held. Look at the Country Clubs. You've got both levels. You've got the Casta del Sol short course. You've got the Mission Viejo Country Club, major facility. So you've got things here, and they all came along as part of the general plan.

Now, mentioned earlier by some of your earlier speakers was the fact that Philip Morris [USA, Inc.] acquired Mission Viejo Company in the early seventies, so by the time I was employed, '73, Philip Morris was already the owner of Mission Viejo Company. It was unique, another unique relationship and a hands-on situation. They were aware. They knew what was going on certainly financially, our financial people, the Jim Gillerans, who's involved in finances, knew, and how to present it. He came from the Philip Morris finance group originally, so he knew how to deal with them and present things to them. But they didn't come in and tell us how to do it. They were large enough in knowing, "They know how to do it. We like the way they're doing it. Let them continue doing it." We all worked out fine, and that's the way it worked. It was a very important time when they came along, too, in keeping things going.

We've talked about the plan and the importance of the general plan, certainly top item, but financially how it worked and the timing of how it worked, how Don Bren had his initial financial associates, and Reilly the lawyer, and Jim Toepfer the planner, that core that got started, but still how everything worked, and Philip Morris came in, just enhanced it with the financial input that they were able to provide at that time and to keep going the aspects of the general plan that we are still seeing today, use today. 1:03:40.7

BRETON: You' mentioned during the course of the interview three areas that, to me, illustrate the importance placed by the Mission Viejo Company on preserving open space, places where you can go and find solace, tranquility. You've mentioned the arroyos. You've mentioned the Oso Creek Trail by the Community Center. You've mentioned Wilderness Canyon and English Creek, and, of course, we have the Trabuco Creek, and English Canyon and Wilderness Glen being the Aliso Creek. How important was it that the Mission Viejo Company preserve in the master plan areas of open space where you can still get away?

COOK: You know, the master plan recognized those because they're unique. They were unique. It was just grazing area and hills and rolling grasslands and things of that nature, which made good location for building, but those that you've mentioned were natural here. They were creeks. They were wash areas. They were trees, Wilderness Glen. The tree areas were growing, because there weren't many trees in Mission Viejo initially. Look at today. The company, the city keeps enhancing its landscaping, but there weren't at that time, so where those trees were, keep them. Where that creek is, keep them. Keep them by incorporating them into the general plan, because that's there. The other stuff we can build. We can build the youth athletic fields. We can build the parks. We can build these other areas, but those that are natural to this 11,000 acres, keep and incorporate into the general plan, and they are.

You know, just this past year, the past mayor, [David K.] Dave Leckness, did a tour through Aliso, the creek here. I may have the wrong name on it, along the park and all that.

BRETON: That's Oso.

COOK: The trail, Oso Trail.

BRETON: The Oso Creek Trail.

COOK: He and [Jerome M.] Jerry Hill of the city did a walk up that walkway and would stop people that were walking in the creek, just stop and ask questions. That is a great piece. I'd like to see that repeated annually, almost, because it was so impromptu that they would ask the residents, and the residents reply so natural. "Well, why do you like to come here?"

It would be, "We're walking our dogs," or, "It's fresh air," and it was so real, you know. It wasn't staged or set up, except the two, mayor and Jerry Hill and [Michael E.] Eric [Winter] the photographer, probably.

It just made you feel good that these areas are being used, and they're being used by local residents who are doing their thing. It doesn't have to be a fancy Fourth of July celebration. It can be use this area for practice tonight up at the ball field or walk today the dog down the creek area or, you know, I haven't played golf in a long time. What if we go play some golf? It's all right here.

BRETON: Where you live just on the other side of the road are trails that lead down into O'Neill [Regional] Park, which is the other creek, the Trabuco Creek.

COOK: The Trabuco Creek down there. There's access to those, but we don't know about them. We don't know about them. I was exercising the other day. You know, I live out at La Paz and Felipe, Olympiad, the intersection of them. So I do my walk, and I walk down to Olympiad and come back up the other side where the dog park is, proposed location for the dog park up there. I walked up that little path because I saw a fellow flying a plane up there. It's got the good drafts, I guess, and they fly out over into the Trabuco area, over in that area. I walked up and I didn't hesitate to strike up a conversation with him, and so Cedric's telling me about all these paths down there. Bob, I don't know about all the paths on the other side of Mission Viejo down there in the Trabuco and how to get access to them. It's still a secret. There's paths down there and trails down there, but how to get to them, I don't know quite yet where to go to find them, and I don't think a lot of the residents know the trail system other than the trail creek here through the center of Mission Viejo. Get down there, and the Trabuco would great to walk down in there, natural, natural trail systems, and he did it. He told me to do it, and I want to do it. I'll have to find out how to get to it. [laughs]

BRETON: We'll show you how.

COOK: You'll show me how. That's a deal.

BRETON: In fact, the Community Services Commission is looking at working with the county to make connections to those trails and to put signs at each of the trailheads so that the residents are well aware of how to gain access down into the O'Neill Park area.

COOK: That'd be great.

BRETON: Now, to end, we've got about five minutes, so why don't you tell us about Colorado.

COOK: [laughs] Well, it was in the fall of 1976 when I was called again by Jim Toepfer. I mentioned the Aliso Viejo call I got earlier. He called me up and said, "Art—." Jim had been assigned to there, because we bought this piece of 22,000 acres, and it was called Highlands Ranch just 12 miles straight south down Broadway from the capital in Denver.

BRETON: You're saying "we," the Mission Viejo Company.

COOK: The Mission Viejo Company I'm referring to, yes, Mission Viejo Company. So this piece came available, and it was bought like that, almost, by Phil Reilly after seeing it once and everything. So he bought it, sent Jim Toepfer out there to plan it. He's the planner, did Mission Viejo California. Jim, you can sure do Colorado again. Sent him out there with a crew of about six guys, planners, to plan it, do the general plan, seeing the importance and the effectiveness of it in California. Surely, Jim, you can do it again in Colorado. It's twice the size, 22,000 acres instead of 11, but you can do it, Jim.

So he goes out there and he calls me after being out there about a year and he says, "Art."

I says, "Yes? Hi, Jim."

He says, "I want you to come out here."

Well, I thought, "Sure, I'll come out, and you want Pat to come along too?" Because he'd asked us to go out before to the Aurora [Colorado] project, which was the one-square-mile

piece, to put on a barbecue, to open a new rec center, something like that. “Sure, we’ll come out and put it on for you. Pat too?”

“Yes, Pat too. I want her to come out too.”

So I said, “Okay, when do you want me out there?”

He says, “Two weeks.”

I says, “Gee, it’s winter out there now, Jim.” It’s February.

He says, “Yes.”

I says, “Well, what do you want us to do?”

He says, “What you usually do.”

I said, “Okay, what do you want me to do, Jim?”

He says, “Come on out here, and we’re getting ready to go public with plan and we need someone out here to talk to the people who are going to be asking questions and presenting it to the locals and everything and tell them about the plan.”

“Wow, that’s going to take more than a week, Jim.”

He says, “Yes, you’re going to move out here.”

Oh, February. What am I going to tell Pat? I didn’t mind moving. I was ready to go with him. I liked the job. So I said, “Okay,” went home and told Pat.

She says, “What about the kids? They’re all in high school?” Waited until June, and then they went out and family moved in. We started out there.

The reason I liked Colorado is I was there a year, two years, before the first resident moved in. Talk about excitement. They moved in in October 1982, early eighties in October. The first event that happens, then, is Thanksgiving, November. Well, we’ve got to have a function. Thirty-two residents lived in the community now in a month. We moved them right

in, you know, thirty-two residents. Myself, Mary Putnam, who used to work here, was also transferred out there. She was with the recreation centers here. She and [Jeffrey] Jeff Kappes, another fellow who we hired out there, three of us dressed up and delivered—we dressed up. I was the turkey, the pilgrims, the pilgrims, and we walked to those homes and delivered turkeys to each of the thirty-two new homeowners.

Following that Thanksgiving comes Christmas, and, of course, I said, “We’ve got to have the Five Nights of Christmas out here,” so I sent back to California. I called and talked to them. I said, “Take a photo of Santa’s Workshop.” They did, sent it to me. I gave it to our construction people. We constructed the identical Santa’s Workshop, put it on the major entry to [unclear], and we had Santa’s arrival on December 12<sup>th</sup> or something like that. There were probably now over fifty people, probably close to seventy people, living there.

We implemented the programs, and it was so much fun being part of the initial crew, and that’s why I smile when I talk about Colorado. It is such an exciting location, and I encourage everybody and anybody if they’re ever in the area of Denver, Colorado, to just take a drive down and see the similarities of the successes that were enjoyed here in Mission Viejo California and how we were able to carry over those planning concepts and incorporate it in the general plan, because a general plan was also used in Colorado, learning how great it served the Mission Viejo, California project, and to see the similarities and the planted medians and things. They have snow, but it was great.

BRETON: You were able to taste the joy of the startup of that new community—

COOK: From the very beginning.

BRETON: —from scratch, and so what do you need to build a community from scratch? What is the first thing you need?

COOK: Well, you need, first of all, of course—you need the general plan, which we keep coming back to, and that's the people who know how to prepare those things. Many of them were relocated from California to Colorado, and we needed the general plan. We also had the finances from, as I mentioned, the backup of Philip Morris company and them, and we needed, of course—the property was ideally located. Sixty percent of it is left in non-urban use. The whole southern end, 3 miles of the south end and 4 miles of the north, whole southern end was left with the rolling hills, the trees, and just undeveloped, totally undeveloped.

BRETON: Undeveloped open space.

COOK: Some of that non-urban use I do refer to as parks and recreation centers and trails—and they're in the development area—are included in that, but so much of it was left in an undeveloped stage. It was very simple there, because I learned here the importance of the volunteerism that we talked about earlier, the inclusion of—we called it the Highlands Ranch Activities Committee there, HRAC, and we just used so many of the concepts that we learned that were successful here, starting with the general plan, the Activities Committee, the involvement of the community, and others.

Now, I mentioned how big that place is. It also was run as a ranch before. Guess what? We ran it as a ranch again until we really got involved in it, but that much—it's still portions of it, and over 100,000 people live there now. It's larger than Mission Viejo, California already. We ran that as a cattle ranch, and there's the memory that I will always cherish that Mission Viejo Company gave me the opportunity to enjoy, because we ran a real cow, calf, cattle operation. It wasn't just steers and heifers raising. I remember going out and buying bulls and additional cattle, and then going through the birthing and the calving of them in the winter months, February and March, and then April and May.

One more experience I've got to tell you about, though, is the time when I said, "You know, Jim it would be great to be able to tell our existing residents—now we're about a community of four or five thousand people, and they're getting involved and getting to know the heritage of this place, the ranching activities."

"What do you mean, Art?"

I says, "Well, they should learn about how the ranching goes on."

"How're you going to do that?"

"Well, you know, we're calving right now. We've been calving three months." We exposed the bulls for three months. We calve in three months, almost, so the calving season was late February, March, April, and into early May. So in May we'd done most of the calving, and it was nice weather now. It's beautiful weather there in May, and so I said, "Let's invite the residents to come out and witness the doctoring of the calves, the branding of the calves."

"How're you going to do that?"

"I can take care of that," so I did it.

Of course, I mentioned we had the same large-animal veterinarian there that helped me out there and taught me all the knows and hows, good ranch crew, three ranch hands and myself, and what we did is we invited the residents to come out to the ranch just two miles down the road from them. Now it's in the middle of the community, and we had big corrals. We had five barns there, seven corrals that extended out, and we brought in the remaining calves, about a hundred calves left that we had left, tail-enders, and we brought them into the corrals and we invited a lot of the local ranch hands from surrounding ranches, good PR, you know, because they liked to show what they do to people, "Ah, this ranch is having this thing. Let's go up and help them and

show them.” They got on their horses and they all came in, and so we must have had fifteen hands there on horses, and they helped us with the branding.

So we had all the calves down at one end and bleachers set up on one side of the corral where people all sat up there and came down and witnessed the first doctoring of calves, which included branding. We had the Bar HR [Highlands Ranch cattle brand]. It was Highlands Ranch. The Bar HR was our brand. So we doctored them and we gave them their initial shots, and, of course, included in that activity was the castration of the male calf, quite a learning experience, and I understand. I’ve heard since I’ve been back here in California that one lady has moved back here from Colorado who was there that Saturday who witnessed it and is telling everybody about this great experience she had in Colorado.

Then, of course, we’d go over at noontime, and we went over, we have the barbecue. We have a deep-pit barbecue, dig down 6 feet and about 4 feet wide and 8 feet long. You’ve been burning all the coals in there over the late afternoon, early evening, and at midnight you’ve got all these big tri-trips wrapped up in foil and you put them down in the burning coals, and then you cover the coals with dirt and let them cook until eleven o’clock that morning when they’re ready to have the barbecue. We had a great barbecue, and it’s all done on the [Phipps] Mansion grounds, which was the headquarters of all this. The mansion itself is 22,000 square feet, and it was the Phipps Mansion, built earlier, of course, than that. It was a great mansion. I had the responsibility of maintaining it, and we didn’t put furniture in it or anything like that, but we did use it for New Year’s Eve parties and everything that the residents came to, and we had our barbecues out there on the grounds that I mentioned, on the grounds, and people loved to go up to see it.

BRETON: To tie all that back to Mission Viejo California, we have here the Rafter M brand.

COOK: The brand. I always wear the belt buckle when I'm in jeans, and it's the Rafter M, which is the rafter with the M, which is the ranch brand. Mission Viejo Company, [unclear] from the ranch to use that brand with the circle around it, and that's the belt, also has the circle with the Rafter M in the center of it.

That's how things tie together, Bob. Don't forget your past, because it will help you in the future, and it just helped so much in the success of implementing the general plan, which I keep coming back to. It was great.

BRETON: Thank you for the memories, Art.

COOK: [laughs] This'll be probably shorted out to about five minutes, "And we have with us today Art Cook," or, "We're pleased that Art Cook was pleased to enjoy this today," and we go on. [laughs] You just treated me just so well. What memories, what great memories, what great opportunities. Pleasure. You heard me say before I tell people I don't remember going to work. I went to play. That was my mantra.

BRETON: Well told.

COOK: Gosh, it was great. I got to know so many neat people.

BRETON: Well put.

COOK: Look at this group right here. Yes, it is. It's opportunities.

[End of interview]

## Index

Babashoff, Shirley F., 48, 52  
Benedict, Truman, 15  
Bidart, Gratian, 21  
Bora, Ron, 51  
Bren, Donald L., 62, 79  
Breton, Robert David, 59, 69, 75  
Brown, Craig, 50

Carter, Elaine, 49  
Caterpillar, Inc., 64  
Celestin, David A., 74  
Cook, Arthur S.  
    education, 1, 2, 3  
    employment history, 4, 7, 9  
    hired by Mission Viejo Company, 5, 6, 7, 8  
    military service, 2, 3  
    moves to Mission Viejo, California, 4  
Cook, Patricia P., 2, 6, 82, 83  
Crenshaw, George, 22  
Curran, Jerry, 42  
Curtis, Robert A., 77

Deane Homes, 8

Echeverria, Johnny, 20  
Echeverria, Louis, 20

Fiore, Richard S., 75  
Fisher, Mike, 20, 21, 22  
Ford, Gerald R.  
    visit to Mission Viejo, California, 23, 45, 46

Gilleran, James G., 26, 76, 77, 79  
Goodell, Brian S., 48, 52  
Granada Homes, 5

Hanson, Louise Moulton, 20, 21  
Harder, Wendy Wetzell, 44, 58  
Herigstad, Susan C., 25  
Highlands Ranch, Colorado, 66, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87  
Hill, Jerome M., 80  
Hudson, Jim, 42

Jones, Robert Trent Sr., 14

Kappes, Jeffrey, 84

Leckness, David K., 80  
Lilly, Mike, 50

Mission Viejo Company

and O'Neill family, 71  
 community relations, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 24, 25, 32, 33, 34, 44  
 Contiguous Area Reports, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29  
 corporate climate, 8, 9  
 Home Decorating Center, 54  
 Home Warranty Department, 55  
 land acquisition, 22  
 landscaping, 56, 64, 80  
 master plan, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 62, 63, 78, 79, 80, 82, 84, 85, 88  
 Mission Viejo Activities Committee, 5, 6, 7, 8, 34, 35, 38, 42, 52, 59  
 Municipal Advisory Council, 10, 45, 66, 67, 68, 69, 76  
 organization, 8, 54, 55, 57  
 relationship with Aliso Viejo, 19, 20, 21, 82  
 relationship with government and community agencies, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18, 67, 68  
 relationship with Moulton Ranch, 19, 20, 21, 22  
 sales and marketing, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 71, 72  
 Mission Viejo, Aurora, Colorado, 60  
 Mission Viejo, California, 4  
     1984 Olympics, 66  
     50 States Picnic, 37  
     Arts ALIVE, 60  
     Balloon to the Moon, 43  
     Beautiful Mission Viejo campaign, 57  
     Bunny Days, 41, 42  
     Casta del Sol, 14, 28, 30, 48, 78  
     Celebrity Challenge Battle of the Sexes, 43  
     Cinco de Mayo celebration, 41  
     cityhood, 9, 67, 68, 69  
     community events, 5, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 58, 59, 60, 61, 72, 78  
     community identity, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58  
     Deane Homeowners Association, 11  
     growth of, 4, 6  
     Halloween haunted house, 42  
     Lake Mission Viejo, 6, 12, 19, 28, 30, 31, 32, 63  
     Lake Mission Viejo Association, 12  
     Marguerite Recreation Center, 13, 51  
     Marty Russo Youth Athletic Park, 28, 74, 75, 76  
     Mission Viejo Country Club, 7, 14, 15, 28, 35, 78  
     Mission Viejo Days, 34, 35, 36, 37  
     Mission Viejo High School, 16, 17, 18, 35, 39, 40, 41, 45, 65  
     Mission Viejo Library, 59, 69, 70  
     Mission Viejo Nadadores, 50, 51, 52  
     *Mission Viejo Reporter*, 43, 44, 57, 68  
     Montanoso Recreation Center, 5, 35  
     Movies in the Moonlight, 42  
     New Year's Eve dance, 42  
     Norman P. Murray Community and Senior Center, 13, 59  
     Pacific Symphony, 61  
     parks and recreation, 13, 14, 26, 28, 30, 62, 78  
     President Gerald R. Ford visits, 23, 45  
     ranch heritage, 13, 15  
     reputation of, 64, 65, 73  
     *Saddleback Valley News*, 68  
     Seventeen Magazine Tennis Tournament of Champions, 43  
     Sierra Recreation Center, 5

St. Patrick's Day Parade, 35, 39, 40, 41  
Sweepstakes Award, 50  
Tournament of Roses Parade, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50  
volunteerism, 52, 53, 58  
Youth Athletic Coordinating Council, 23, 24  
Mitchell, Tommy, 39  
Moiso, Anthony R., 13, 70  
Murray, Norman F., 69

Noble, John, 45

O'Neill, Richard J., 70  
O'Neill family, 13

Peterson, Wayne E., 10, 74  
Philip Morris USA, Inc., 79, 85  
Putnam, Mary, 84

Rancho Santa Margarita, 71  
Reilly, Philip J., 8, 19, 21, 45, 46, 47, 56, 62, 79, 82  
Reinicke, Robert H., 51  
Rodriguez, Raul R., 47, 48, 49  
Russo, Martin G., 7, 8, 9, 11, 23, 25, 34, 37, 38, 45, 47, 57, 74, 75, 76

Schubert, Mark, 51  
St. Clair, Carl R., 61  
Stearn, Harvey, 8, 9, 30, 48  
Stout, Tom, 51

Toepfer, James G., 8, 9, 20, 24, 25, 28, 50, 56, 62, 66, 77, 79, 82

Watson, Richard, 10  
West, James E., 13, 70  
Whittinghill, Dick, 15  
Wilczynski, Mark, 38, 49, 70, 72  
Winter, Michael E., 80