

Oral History Interview  
with  
Robert T. Bunyan

Date: Saturday, February 25, 2012  
Interviewer: Robert David Breton  
Location: Mission Viejo Library  
Mission Viejo, California

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Robert T. Bunyan

February 25, 2012

Robert David Breton,  
interviewer

BRETON: Today is February 25, 2012, and I, Robert David Breton, am interviewing Robert [T.] Bunyan of the Mission Viejo Company at the studios of Mission Viejo Television inside the Mission Viejo Library as part of the Oral History Project.

Welcome, Mr. Bunyan.

BUNYAN: Thank you, Bob.

BRETON: What is your full name?

BUNYAN: Robert Terry Bunyan.

BRETON: Where were you born and raised?

BUNYAN: Bremerton, Washington.

BRETON: Where were you educated?

BUNYAN: University of California, Irvine, 1967, with a B.S. [Bachelor of Science] in economics and a master's degree from the Graduate School of Administration at UCI [University of California, Irvine], 1969.

BRETON: Degree in what, master's in—

BUNYAN: It was an M.B.A. It wasn't called an M.B.A. at the time.

BRETON: But not a master's in public administration.

BUNYAN: No. This was with a business emphasis.

BRETON: After you graduated, where did you work first?

BUNYAN: Went to work almost immediately for Macco [Development] Corporation, a division of Great Southwest [Corporation], a major national development company. They started Coto de Caza, for instance. That was in 1969.

BRETON: Were you involved in real estate with that company, private real estate development?

BUNYAN: Yes, I was mainly private real estate development. I mentioned Coto de Caza. They had divisions around the country, and they were in all facets of real estate, from housing, apartments, commercial industrial, retail, every facet. They were a major player in the country.

BRETON: When were you approached by Mission Viejo Company, and by whom?

BUNYAN: Well, I was actually recruited by an executive recruiter in October of 1971, and ironically, at the same time I was also recruited to interview with the Irvine Company in Newport Beach. They were both at the same time.

BRETON: Why did you choose the Mission Viejo Company, choose to accept their offer?

BUNYAN: Well, the Irvine Company wanted to hire me as a market analyst. I was in my mid twenties. They told me specifically they wanted me to evaluate how to strategize housing programs that could specifically prevent their buyers from continuing south and actually buying houses in Mission Viejo [California]. I thought that was kind of interesting, since I was interviewing with Mission Viejo Company. The Irvine Company put me through a personality profile test and concluded that I was too aggressive and wouldn't stay with the company very long, so they didn't make me an offer. Mission Viejo Company did. I accepted their offer and ended up being with them for twenty-seven years. So much for personality tests.

BRETON: Are you one of the longest-serving executives from the Mission Viejo Company?

BUNYAN: Yes, I think I am. I've never really gone down the list of all of our long-term employees, but I started in '71. The company was sold to Shea [J.F. Shea Company, Inc.] in '97.

I stayed on for another five years. My job was really to close the company down, sell off the assets, complete the transactions. I think I may be the longest-serving employee there. I certainly was the last person out the door, as far as management's concerned.

BRETON: With the Mission Viejo Company.

BUNYAN: With Mission Viejo Company, yes.

BRETON: If you were too aggressive for the Irvine Company, you must have fit the profile for Mission Viejo Company to a tee.

BUNYAN: I guess. I mean, it was a combination of having the right degree—college degrees were very important at the time. They still are, but had the right degree and the right experience. The company was looking for somebody for their Corporate Planning Department under Harvey Stearn. I was a corporate analyst for the Corporate Planning Department with Macco, so strategic planning, acquisitions and mergers, feasibility studies, financial analyses. I was sort of tailor-made for that position. Harvey liked me, I liked Harvey, and [James G.] Jim Gilleran interviewed me right after Harvey, and we all seemed to have a mutual like, and so they hired me. That was December 8, 1971.

BRETON: To whom did you report, directly to Harvey Stearn?

BUNYAN: Correct.

BRETON: Were you trained at all when you first arrived?

BUNYAN: There was orientation. I really didn't need much training because I'd already had a couple of years with Macco doing similar types of things. However, there was quite a bit of orientation going on. Mission Viejo Company was unique in the sense that it was a master-planned developer. Every company had their unique style and culture. So I would say that, yes,

it was training, sort of on-the-job training, but they didn't give me a book and say, "Memorize this and take a test."

BRETON: Did they give you the PC [Planned Community] text and ask you to read it?

BUNYAN: I know I looked at a lot of things when I first started, and I know I did look at the Planned Community exhibit and spent a lot of time going to different departments to understand better what are you building, where are you building, how are you building, that sort of thing.

BRETON: What was your first assignment, if you recall?

BUNYAN: Really the first assignment of any magnitude was Omni Housing Systems [Inc.].

Omni was a factory-built house, and, in fact, one of the buildings here in Mission Viejo that was just recently torn down was an Omni house. I believe it was KinderCare. The site is now a Chase Bank. They were unique houses in that they were hinged at the roof and they folded up. Stack them, put them on a truck, and take them out. That was the first assignment. I was tasked with putting together what we called appropriations request, which was a request for funding from the parent company, Philip Morris [USA, Inc.], and we did get that funding. I still have a copy of that appropriations request.

BRETON: That prefabricated building that was used for KinderCare, was that at the Corner of La Paz [Road] and Marguerite [Parkway]?

BUNYAN: Correct. Right next to the ARCO station.

BRETON: What do you say was distinctive about the company, about the Mission Viejo Company? What made it different from others?

BUNYAN: It had several distinctive features. The most distinctive to me was that it was a very well-focused management. You had people who not only were driven, but they knew what they wanted to do. There wasn't a lot of, well, should we do this, should we do that, in terms of basic

business strategies. They had quite a bit of orientation, learning, internal management discussions to get up to the point where they started first selling their houses in 1966, but they were very well managed, and they got along very well as a unit. They worked as a unit.

The other major factor, distinctive factor, that I remember is Mission Viejo Company, while it was called a company and it's a corporation, it was really more like a family. I know in my case, that's one of the reasons I stayed on as long as I did. There were many opportunities to go and leave the company and go to work for somebody else, but it was a family. We felt like we belonged and were treated like family. You did have to perform and you did have to produce, but that actually was not that hard when you had a product like we had and a location like we had.

BRETON: Was it exciting?

BUNYAN: Oh, yes. As a young man in my twenties, to go to conferences and when people asked you who you were with and you said Mission Viejo Company, instant recognition. That was pretty neat. The location here in Orange County is unique. I've lived here almost all my life, saw it grow, and to be able to be a part of this was very exciting.

BRETON: Was the company known in the building industry as an innovator, as a company that had integrity? What were some of the characteristics that built the reputation?

BUNYAN: One of the characteristics that is very, very established out in our industry, and not just in our industry, but in the private sector and the public sector, the jurisdictional agencies, when Mission Viejo Company said it was going to do something, it followed through. It was only as good as its word, and that was established very early on. Unlike a merchant builder where you would come in and subdivide, build, and move on, Mission Viejo Company had thousands of acres. They were going to be here for decades. So they made it a point to have

high integrity. When Morris bought the company, it ratcheted up to an even higher level. We used to use the expression that Mission Viejo Company gold-plated everything. It was kind of a—I guess the word “euphemism.” It was a way of describing that quality was number one, and that you gave the customer quality, and that was very important to the company. So that was a major distinction.

BRETON: What talents and qualities was the company looking for when they were recruiting and hiring?

BUNYAN: Well, they were looking primarily for people that were experienced in the building business, depending on what discipline you were in. So they were looking for people that had good applicable experience. They were looking for people that were—how should I say it—able to thrive within a culture like Mission Viejo Company. At the time in the sixties, real estate companies of the size and the magnitude of a Mission Viejo, a lot of them had reputations as being sort of high fliers, suede-shoe cultures where it was make the buck fast. I learned about a lot of those companies because I did the company’s competitive intelligence. So we were a company that had a very strong reputation for doing what we say we’re going to do and high quality, and we carried that on through to the end.

BRETON: To what degree did the company top-level management engage in micromanagement?

BUNYAN: Well, you had maybe a dozen executives broken into functional departments. What I saw—and I was basically at a junior level when I started at the company, and as I worked through, became a vice president, there was a lot of delegation of authority and quite a bit of autonomy. It really depended on what discipline you were in and who you worked for. Some of the managers were very arm’s length, and others you had to report in a couple times a day.

BRETON: So the company was really looking for self-starters, self-initiative.

BUNYAN: That was pretty important, yes. That was pretty important. That was a key.

BRETON: To what degree did the company and the president of the company create an atmosphere in which there would be rivalries between different executives?

BUNYAN: Well, I had a lot of observations. I worked with all the executives, and the work that I did for the company, many times I had projects that I had to actually sit through and interview those folks to determine—I'm doing feasibility studies on expanding their area or creating a new opportunity.

What I observed was that [Philip J.] Phil Reilly was a master at getting the most out of the people that worked for him. He was a master of orchestrating an atmosphere and a culture of can you do better, can you do better than what you're doing, and, in fact, can you rise above your peers. That was something that the executives picked on very quickly, and so they all tried to excel. It did cause rivalry, but, frankly, my observation was that—what's the old adage? You may not like somebody, but you pride yourself on being able to work with them. Or you may not like something they do, but you're all professionals. It's kind of like agreeing to disagree. All these guys were very highly skilled professionals, so I think they understood the process, and it worked. When the executives had a joint project, everybody pulled together and there was quite a bit of cooperation. I worked directly with Phil on a number of projects and sat in numerous meetings with him and the other folks. Frankly, I learned a lot about how to manage.

BRETON: So would you say there was camaraderie, but at the same time, the kind of competition that was healthy and that led to a better total product?

BUNYAN: Yes, I think that's a good way of saying it, Bob. The camaraderie was that we were all pulling for the same thing, and that was making the best products we could for the customers

and the profit for the parent company. So at the end of the year when things were announced, everybody broke out the Miller beers. Miller [Brewing Company] was one of the sister companies. But yet there was quite a bit of competition to excel.

BRETON: Now moving on to the initial stages of the company, at what point did you realize that this company was actually creating a new town development model for the American building industry, a template of master-planned communities?

BUNYAN: While they started out trying to put together—they did. They designed a master plan. It wasn't until—I believe it was 1975 when Phil Reilly sent myself and another gentleman in our department to go look at other planned communities. I might have gotten the dates wrong, but it was somewhere in the mid seventies where we went to Columbia, Maryland; we went to Reston, Virginia; we went to [The] Woodlands, Texas, and we looked at these pioneering master-planned communities.

I was able to then come back. I did a report. I think it was called “A Comparative Analysis: Mission Viejo.” I compared our company and our community to these other master-planned communities and became very aware that we were unique, we were different. We were definitely—I guess we'd use the term today “state of the art.” That's one thing about master-planned communities that I learned, is you can go back to new towns in Europe back in the thirties, forties, and each generation these master-planned communities or new towns evolve and they change depending on oil crises or environmental concerns or no growth. At the time, Mission Viejo didn't have to take a backseat to any community. It was really state of the art.

BRETON: So Reston and Columbia preceded the Mission Viejo planned community by several years or decades, I'm not sure. In your comparative analysis, did you conclude that Mission

Viejo had actually raised the bar and had created something that was far better than anything that you had seen on these trips back east?

BUNYAN: Well, it achieved some things that the other communities hadn't really done a good job of achieving. One of them was profitability. Columbia and Reston had a lot of parts of it that were social experiments. Mission Viejo really wasn't built to be a laboratory for social experimentation; it was a community to appeal to what people wanted in their living environment, in their lives, their social lives, their business lives, their recreational lives, and their home. So it was better in some of those aspects, but the other planned communities had some things that could have been borrowed and may have been borrowed. I know we took some things, and I can't recollect exactly right offhand, but we did take some of the things from those communities, and we brought them in and we discussed them with management. Some of them, I think, might have been incorporated.

BRETON: So Mission Viejo Company decided to build upon some of those features that they borrowed from—

BUNYAN: It was a learning trip. It wasn't a critique trip. It was to go back and to look at them and say, what are they doing that might be better? What can we learn from them? And that's what we did.

BRETON: But from your experience, Mission Viejo was always top-drawer, always a notch above whatever you saw?

BUNYAN: Yes, the execution, just the level of maintenance. You know, we have the Lake [Lake Mission Viejo], and our lake is real clean because we designed it that way. Some of these other communities that had water, continuing maintenance problems, those types of things.

BRETON: What do you think are the key ingredients to the company's success? Was it environmental sensitivity, aggressive planning, innovation? What was the real key to the success? Because this is something that was started from scratch, and yet took off like wildfire, just really became a booming town within the space of ten years.

BUNYAN: Right people in the right place at the right time. In 1963 when [Donald L.] Don Bren and the O'Neills got together, I was a college student. I was working for *The Orange County Register* and worked for them for nine years, actually till '69, and seeing how the population was booming in the county. So you had the baby boomers coming through. You had this bulge, and they were going to need housing. If you lived in Orange County, in central Orange County, we called it hodgepodge development, low standards in terms of signage and architecture and control, flat, no hills. Mission Viejo, rolling terrain, country, a great microclimate, so, yes, the smog would come down, but it didn't come down as many times as it hit the flatland areas, and a population that wanted housing. When the freeway came through, 5 Freeway [Interstate 5] came through, made it accessible. So all you needed then was the product and the people. The O'Neills had the land. [Donald L.] Don Bren and Phil and [James E.] Jim West, all those folks, they were experts in producing. It was almost like—I don't want to call it the perfect storm, but all these ingredients came together. Hard to replicate that today.

BRETON: Fascinating. The explosive growth didn't come without a price. I think you have a company that, to attract buyers, had to invest enormous amounts of money in the infrastructure at the beginning, roads, slopes, parks, medians, rec [recreation] centers. At what point did this create a need to seek some other source of revenue for outside funding to increase the cash flow?

BUNYAN: My recollection was that it really started to hit them pretty strongly in late '67, somewhere in the '67-'68 period, which is the time when they realized that it would take a lot of

cash to continue expanding beyond that small area, and that one of their options was to seek a money partner, a big money partner. That's when the idea of having someone buy the company emerged. I came into the company in '71, so Philip Morris had already purchased its 51 percent, I believe, of the company with an option to exercise of the 49, which they did in '72. It was one of the largest—I think it still is—cash-flow companies in the world, and that became the banker. So when I came into the company in '71, one of the things that we discussed, or that was discussed in meetings, was infrastructure and cash flow, and that's how Philip Morris entered the picture.

BRETON: What was Philip Morris looking for at that time? Why were they interested in expanding?

BUNYAN: Arthur D. Little did the study for Philip Morris. I was given a copy of the study way back then to read it. In that study, my recollection was that Philip Morris wanted to diversify. They were very heavy into tobacco, of course. That was their main product, but they had diversifications in a lot of different areas, wines, I think it was Chiclet[s] gum. They had many, many diversifications.

At the time in the late sixties, mid to late sixties, with the baby boomers coming through, many of the industrial companies in the country, like Alcoa [Inc.], U.S. Steel [United States Steel Corporation], International Paper [Company], CNA Financial [Corporation], were getting into real estate, and the reason why was because there was a huge demand for houses and shopping centers and libraries and all of that. So the Little study demonstrated to Philip Morris that there was a big opportunity there, and so that rose to the top for Philip Morris and started them to think about acquiring.

BRETON: What do you think Philip Morris found to be so attractive in the Mission Viejo Company in its financial status or the feasibility or management?

BUNYAN: Well, it was management. It was a combination. It was the right location. By the time that they really took a look at Mission Viejo Company in the late sixties, I remember when I was working at the *Register*, we couldn't keep up with the changes in the maps, all the new streets that were going in. This place called Mission Viejo, nobody knew where it was, because we had to take papers down there for the paperboys. But it was the location and it was the management. They are very management oriented. It's the people that they rely on. Try to remember, they're in New York and Mission Viejo is here on the other coast. In later years I liked to jest that the other reason they liked Mission Viejo is because they could come out here and play cowboy. [laughter] They could come out on the land and put on their cowboy boots and go see the land. They had Board of Directors meetings out here in the rec center, and I would be involved in helping with the presentations sometimes, got to talking to some of the nice gentlemen. They liked that.

BRETON: In a way, the Mission Viejo Company fit their Marlboro Man image.

BUNYAN: Yes, they liked the conservatism. After Philip Morris bought us, we started wearing ties. We never wore ties before. We just wore jeans. A lot of the guys, [Anthony R.] Tony Moiso and Phil Reilly, they were wearing cowboy boots, really relaxed. I think it had a lot of things that made Philip Morris very comfortable.

BRETON: It's a good fit.

BUNYAN: Good fit.

BRETON: In what ways would you say that the Philip Morris Company then saved the Mission Viejo Company?

BUNYAN: Well, interesting you ask. I'll fast-forward to 1997 when they sold Mission Viejo Company. There was a group of us that tried to figure out how to save the company, and we couldn't round up enough capital. I think that if Philip Morris hadn't come along when it did—my personal opinion—there's a possibility they would have found another buyer simply because there were so many of these industrial companies that were looking to buy. Ironically, they did buy us, they did buy the company, and we, in turn, then had capital and started looking not only at geographical diversification, but corporate diversification, corporate in the sense of buying other companies, to be able to get into geographical markets, provide the management and buy the locations where they had the land.

BRETON: Did you do some of those studies?

BUNYAN: I did. We did a big one in '71 for management. That was called the 1971 Study of Housing Producers, which was sent up to Philip Morris. It was a compilation of statistics and information on the housing industry and gave them a good flavor for that industry. We actually did look at other companies. One in particular that we got pretty close to acquiring, did a major study on it, was S & S Construction, Shapell, a big California homebuilder. We did take a look at other companies like Kaufman & Broad, but it was very difficult to find management of those companies that fit into the profile, the style of Mission Viejo, the conservatism, the integrity, the quality, the camaraderie. It's very difficult.

BRETON: In what ways did the Philip Morris Company then provide a deep pocket for the company to go back to the East Coast and ask them to fund the Lake or to fund other major projects?

BUNYAN: Well, they were our banker. We didn't do any outside banking. Our Department of Business Planning did appropriations requests initially, the early ones. Casta del Sol was an

appropriations request. That was a bigger one. Lake Mission Viejo, [I] did the appropriations request on that.

We had a very good relationship with Philip Morris. The Board of Directors would come out periodically, I think on an annual basis or more, to visit and see Phil Reilly and Jim Gilleran, in particular, who came from Philip Morris. He was an auditor there and a vice president, I believe, at the time when he came to work for Mission Viejo Company, was very instrumental in helping us, the executives on Mission Viejo side, to understand Philip Morris and how to work with them, and then actually acting as an ambassador. He was very well liked by the chairman and the other folks, which certainly didn't hurt. So we became very acclimated to what Philip Morris wanted and how to supply that.

BRETON: How would you prepare your appropriation requests?

BUNYAN: Everything was based on market research. Phil Reilly, in particular, was, to me, very engrained in research. He had an insatiable need to know. One of the things I love to do is find out answers to questions. I love doing that and I love writing. I was one member of the team. I didn't do it all. Harvey Stearn, who was the Director of Business Planning, was very good at doing research and then taking the information and putting it into a form that can be easily read by management. I have to say I spent probably many months with Harvey learning how to write these appropriations requests so that management could understand them. So they would be turned into physical documents, typically would include financial analyses, projections to show profitability. They would describe the basis for the recommendations, and there usually was a transmittal from Phil Reilly.

BRETON: Wonderful. How did the Philip Morris' financial reporting systems and control procedures assist the company through its growing pains?

BUNYAN: We used to talk about, well, the first change was shirts and ties. The next change is that we're dealing with a lot more accountants. We were not a manufacturing company making widgets or cigarettes; we were a housing producer. So to a certain extent we had to try to envision what we do as basically the manufacturer of housing in a community. So Philip Morris policies and procedures started coming into place, and it gradually changed, over a period of a year or two, I guess, changed how we reported. So we worked very closely with them.

We produced the company's five-year plan, and in that plan, of course, strategies and financial projections and analyses of conditions, issues, and problems. So we learned from Philip Morris Corporate Planning—they had their own Corporate Planning Department—how to put those together. So we had corporate planning and we had accounting, and both kind of worked through Mission Viejo Company. It wasn't really that big of a deal. It wasn't that hard to do. It's knowing what the policies are and the people and how to do it.

BRETON: In what way would you be involved in the task of helping to determine what price level should be assessed on new housing or new potential commercial development based on the costs of the infrastructure that was surrounding or that was adjoining that development?

BUNYAN: Our business planning worked a lot with the team, the executives in the other departments, to design price, come up with marketing programs for housing, and in the early years I was involved in doing research on competitive companies and their products. We gathered a lot of research both individually and from outside sources, typically consulting companies that compiled data, and that raw data was inputted into our team. We would then analyze the kind of products we were producing, how they compared to other companies and other locations, and then we'd make adjustments.

It's kind of the same thing that an appraiser would do, basically an appraisal, except that one of the components that we were able to work with was profit, profit margin. It was kind of interesting to me to see how, from year to year and program to program, profit margins could vary. Some projects that had a lot of infrastructure maybe didn't have a lot of units to spread that over, so therefore you'd have a higher cost, maybe a little bit lower margin, but they were a product that was a niche in the market that we needed.

I've forgotten the name of the product, but I believe it's Miranida [phonetic] or Mira Loma. It was kind of a hillside project. The hillside was difficult for geological reasons, but it was a piece of property that we could squeeze out a profit. That compared to Madrid [homes]. Madrid in the early seventies started out very, very lucrative profit margins simply because they were building thousands of them and the areas they were building them in were fairly easy to grade and to put the infrastructure. Infrastructure was already there.

So we set a lot of those prices. One of the more fun ones was Tres Vistas at the lake. That one's a little difficult because there weren't a lot of good comparables out there. Went to Westlake [Village, California] and some of the other places in San Diego, but really started to hone in on the coast and brought back the information. I've forgotten exact numbers, but I remember I made the recommendations and they turned out to be too low. The market was just so in demand, so we made some ratchet adjustments fairly quickly.

BRETON: I believe we heard about that from Mr. Stearn.

BUNYAN: Jim Gilleran was a very, very masterful in working and balancing profitability and profit margins with programs, knowing when we should eke out a little bit more or we should cut back a little bit more.

BRETON: But by the time the lake was filled, the value of the property around the lake was much higher than it had been originally pitched to the Philip Morris Company, wasn't it?

BUNYAN: Yes. My understanding is just the lot premiums paid for the lake, just the lot premiums themselves.

BRETON: At what point, then, did Philip Morris decide to acquire Jack [G.] Raub [Company]? Do you know anything about why they decided to include that [unclear]?

BUNYAN: Well, it really wasn't Philip Morris' wanting to acquire them; it was really Mission Viejo Company, Phil Reilly and the executives. Jack G. Raub Company was doing so much work for us that it made sense to bring the company inside as opposed to being outsourced, and we were acquiring Aliso Viejo and Highlands Ranch [Colorado], major, major projects, so you could justify amortizing bringing Jack G. Raub Company under our umbrella. I did the work to put together the appropriations request for the Raub Company, had some really good times interviewing with Jack, Jack Raub, and later when the Commercial Division was formed and Jack was made the president of that division, he hired me into that, that division.

BRETON: Before we move on to another topic, let's go back to the original biographical section. I forgot to ask you, what were your titles with the company at various stages?

BUNYAN: I came in as a corporate planner under Harvey Stearn and went through the department, became the Director of Business Planning. The Corporate Planning Department became Business Planning. Harvey moved on, I believe, to become a Vice President of Marketing. I became Director of Business Planning. I think that was in 1979.

Then in 1983 the company started the Commercial Industrial Division. There were several companies, but Mission Viejo Realty Group was the head company, then became Mission Viejo Business Properties. I did the marketing research first, but then spent the

remaining years as the VP [Vice President] of Sales and Marketing. My job was to basically oversee the design of the commercial properties and the sale of those properties. So we did Crown Valley Retail Center, the Trabuco Hills, Portola Plaza.

Planning Area 37 North, which is where the old K-Mart was located, was also one of those. We did studies on that one, and it was a project that was acceptable, but borderline in terms of feasibility. When Foothill [Ranch] developed and [Rancho] Santa Margarita developed, they created somewhat of an intercept and they sucked off business. So that's a project that we had some problems with later on.

But as far as the other projects in the city, I enjoy driving around and looking at a project and saying, "I remember that one. I remember what we did there." That's the exciting part.

BRETON: At what point did you move to Mission Viejo?

BUNYAN: Seventy-two. I moved to one of the Madrids over by the rec center.

BRETON: Did your title or position change at all when Mr. Phil Reilly left the company or retired?

BUNYAN: I believe Phil left in '87. I was already in the Commercial Division, which Phil was the champion of getting into that, so I owe him that part of my career. So I was already a vice president well ensconced into the business properties here and in Aliso Viejo and in Colorado, so I was flying back and forth and helping out on just about everything in commercial.

BRETON: To go back, I believe you mentioned in passing that you had worked for *The Register*.

BUNYAN: Yes, I was going to Santa Ana College and a friend of mine said, "I'm moving on. In the Circulation Department they have a nighttime, basically five to eight o'clock." If you didn't get your paper, you would call us up and we would bring a paper out to you. So, yes, I

worked with Mr. [Raymond C.] Hoiles, the elderly Hoiles, and his son [Clarence H. Hoiles]—they were both still alive—and learned a lot about Freedom Newspapers [Inc.] and about the conservative politics. Had some very interesting conversations with R.C. and C.H. Hoiles, really very interesting entrepreneurial people.

BRETON: Where did you grow up in Orange County?

BUNYAN: Santa Ana.

BRETON: Now let's move to the recreation centers. To what degree were you involved in an evaluation of the feasibility of the rec centers and cost-effectiveness?

BUNYAN: Well, the centers were built, the big one, the Marguerite Rec Center [Marguerite Recreation Center], my recollection was '71, '72. Somewhere in the mid to late seventies I was asked to do an evaluation of the centers, the operations, and what we determined was that they were very expensive to run. We knew that, of course. We had all the data. But we were trying to determine what to do with them. As the community would build out, some of these amenities would necessarily have to transfer over to some other entity. The company didn't plan to run these forever. So we did the study and took a look at various options, and eventually they were transitioned over.

What I remember most about those centers was the cost of running them from day one, but yet the value that they added to the community, particularly when you had the [Mission Viejo] Nadadores swimming there. It was far in excess of the capital cost and the cost to run them during that period, but once you reached sort of a saturation point as far as the marketing value, that dropped off and was dropping off, and so we made some recommendations to what to do with the properties afterwards.

BRETON: Primarily then it was hard to quantify their value as adding to the marketability of the homes.

BUNYAN: It was difficult to do that because the marketability is a combination of absorption and pricing. It was difficult. However, we were able to draw some associations, some factors that would associate having that facility there. I remember in one particular case talking to focus groups about what they perceived as having that type of a facility and living in the community and choices, would they move to Mission Viejo if it wasn't there, etc., etc.

BRETON: The cost of running them was always higher than the return, than the proceeds from the memberships.

BUNYAN: Correct. They could never really make much money off of what they cost to run.

BRETON: So in a sense, the company was always subsidizing them, and your study reached the conclusion that it would be better to sell them?

BUNYAN: Well, the study was focused on coming up with alternatives. I don't believe that we made a real hard and fast recommendation, because we didn't appraise the value of the facilities, but we talked about opportunities or options, transferring them, doing a private sale, a quasi-public sale or a public transfer or to a nonprofit. We elaborated mostly on what options were available.

BRETON: As the community matured and you were approaching build-out, then they no longer served the initial purpose, which was to attract buyers and get them to purchase in Mission Viejo as opposed to surrounding communities. Do you think that if the city had not intervened in requesting that they be turned over to the city, that they might have been sold to other entities?

BUNYAN: Yes. The company used them certainly as a marketing tool to bring people in, but when people got here, I mean, they still had to exist. So the company wasn't interested in just, well, okay, last house built, bulldoze them down. They served an extended or a future value.

The problem is that—remember I was talking about gold plating. They were fairly expensive to run and to maintain, and so at some point in time the company felt it obviously didn't want to continue subsidizing, so my guess is they probably would have been sold or transferred to a private entity. Today, for instance, you might get a L.A. Fitness to simply come in, bulldoze the building, and build a state-of-the-art, and they know how to make money off of it now.

BRETON: But they were part of the original “California Promise.”

BUNYAN: They were, yes.

BRETON: People moving here with an expectation that they would continue to be there, even if their memberships were not always active there.

BUNYAN: Correct.

BRETON: Did the company try to keep the rates affordable? Why didn't the company simply raise the rates in order to help pay for the staffing and maintenance?

BUNYAN: The rates that they would have had to raise them to would have made them an elite executive club.

BRETON: Do you know at what point the Mission Viejo Country Club decided to go from being a public to a private membership?

BUNYAN: We did a study of the club—and I cannot remember the year; I want to guess it was '77—to evaluate the operations. It was losing money. I believe the land was owned by the O'Neills, but the club itself was owned by the company. My recollection is that when we did the

study, we concluded that we really shouldn't be in the business of running a club. It's a specialized business, takes specialized people. So we made a recommendation. I think that sort of set the tone for sale to the members, which was a conventional option for those types of facilities.

BRETON: With regard to the Lake, at what point in the initial planning stages was it decided that this should be an entirely privately run association with memberships that were practically mandatory so that it would spread the costs so evenly among so many residents that it would be very inexpensive for individual homeowners to belong?

BUNYAN: When we did the feasibility study for the Lake—it was part of the appropriations request—there was a lot of discussion about that subject, and attention was paid to other lakes that had been built and how they had been designed and operated and funded and the cost of maintenance.

My recollection was that the liability was a big issue, and to make the lake public and allow access at any point created an unacceptable liability issue, so the alternative of doing a private lake was looked at. Because it was a community-wide facility, the numbers were run to see how much you would have to charge on the existing number of homes and then on the future homes that would be coming in, and that's when the decision was made that that would be the best way to go. [Gerard D.] Gerry Ognibene was the vice president or executive vice president at the time. I think he was heavily involved with that decision, at least in moving it forward. Of course, you had all of the other top executives, Jim Gilleran, Phil Reilly, [James G.] Jim Toepfer. They were involved in the discussion.

BRETON: As you participated in the study of other lakes, private lakes, manmade lakes, it seems like this lake was truly gold-plated in the sense that it attracted worldwide attention and

brought engineers and designers from all over the world, from Germany, from Japan, from Australia, to look and see how this could be so well engineered that it wouldn't require dredging every ten years.

BUNYAN: Yes, it certainly got a lot of fanfare, and, in particular, when the '84 Olympics were held. It was just a wonderful kind of a jewel of the community. Still today, many of the historical documents, the Lake is featured. Yes, it was a wonderful piece of engineering. Jack Raub was heavily involved in that. He designed the dam, but I think he was the originator of the system of capturing runoff, clearly twenty, twenty-five years ahead of his time, because today we now have regulations that prevent stormwater runoff or preclude it.

BRETON: Speaking of liability and risk assessment, what led to the demise of the skating center? Do you remember that?

BUNYAN: Not only do I remember it, but my membership card in the Mission Viejo Skateway is sitting in a folder in my office. I kept that. I did the studies for Skateway both here and in—we did Cypress [California] also, and probably one of the most enjoyable assignments I've ever had. We went to Kansas City. I think we went to Denver [Colorado]. We went to a couple of cities to look at state-of-the-art skating rinks, and we concluded that it was a good amenity for the community. We built it.

Unfortunately, because of the litigious nature of our society, the liabilities combined with Philip Morris' deep pockets really wasn't an acceptable situation. So kind of like the golf club, it was a business we were running. It was run under our Recreation Department, and they did a very good job, but it was a business that we probably shouldn't be in for liability reasons, and so it was sold and turned into what is now Trader Joe's. So it went from one use to another use. I have to say with some affection for that, I wish that it was still there. I wish that I could have

taken my kids to it, but skating rinks are just very few and far between today because of liabilities.

BRETON: There had been a lawsuit or two, hadn't there?

BUNYAN: Yes, there were, people falling, getting hit, that sort of thing. When we finished the study and made the recommendations and the skating rink was built, I was sort of like a nervous father ready to give birth. I was there on the Friday night, hoping that enough people would come to look like a reasonable crowd, and when I got there—I think I got there about an hour before they were to open—the line stretched all the way out in the parking lot. They had capacity crowds virtually every weekend and even during the weekdays. It was immensely popular. Kids loved it, and we loved to see them. It was part of the community.

BRETON: Very lamentable. Did that enter into the decision to sell the [Mission Viejo] stables?

BUNYAN: You know, I don't have firsthand information about the stables. My recollection was that it was a combination of factors, one of them being that the land down there was getting too valuable for stables. I think, too, that it might have had something to do with environmental factors related to stables. When you combine those together, that's, I think, why it was closed. When I was made the Vice President of Sales and Marketing, it was one of the pieces that we did subdivide and put a business park and a retail center down there.

BRETON: Let's move on then to the commercial retail. You've spoken about your appropriation requests and some of your marketing studies. Could you describe the marketing study for Casta del Sol, what the target was as far as active seniors and its placement?

BUNYAN: Sure. Casta del Sol was one of the first major appropriations requests that we did. In fact, it was the first major one. Lots of housing units, a golf course, and a very particular niche in the market, which was fifty-five and under [over]. The research we did went throughout

Southern California to look at how some of the others had done it, and a lot of unusual aspects about it. For instance, the types of individuals that would be living there, basically, for the most part, no children, empty-nesters, pay cash, for the most part, kind of unusual back in those days, mostly retired, but not all, a group of people that don't want to be thought of as old. They don't think of themselves that way. So we had a recreation center there for them and an executive golf course. That golf course was somewhat unique because it wasn't an executive golf course, it wasn't a regulation length, so it was shorter. You'd play it, and instead of five hours, you could play it in three or three and a half, something like that. It was somewhat of a self-contained community. It was a gated community, and a very, very successful and popular addition, at least, to Mission Viejo.

Kind of interesting is that it brought in a section of the demographic into Mission Viejo that really wasn't there when the community first started selling houses. We've got to remember that the first people coming in and buying houses were primarily blue-collar. They weren't executive professional retiree or nearing retirement. So Casta brought those folks in there, and they become a very important and, I think, an active part of the community, a good addition.

BRETON: This was a niche that was slightly different from the Rossmoor Leisure World niche, right?

BUNYAN: Yes, definitely. It was a more active senior group. Rossmoor Leisure World tended to be more advanced, sixty-five-plus, seventy-plus. So Casta was unique in that sense, and I think the fact that most of the units—well, all of the units—had garages, and while they were smaller in size, they were basically single-family residences.

BRETON: As I said, I wanted to move a little bit more into the commercial. Could you describe some of the other studies that you did for other commercial areas in the community?

BUNYAN: Sure. Well, we studied almost all of the remaining areas to be developed. I mentioned Planning Area 37 North, which is the northerly parcel. The Freeway Center is another one, Planning Area 67, where the stables were. Probably the most interesting one for me, and something where when you look back at what you did in your business life, something where you can say, "I had a part in causing this to happen," this one was a parcel that what is now The Shops at Mission Viejo, the regional mall.

In the late seventies I was heavily involved in the commercial industrial section of the company. We didn't have a division yet, but we had a lot of commercial industrial land. This was under the Business Planning Department. Part of my duty was to take some of these commercial parcels and determine what type of product could go there and basically what the land value might be, so kind of a land residual analysis. At the same time when I did the studies, I provided more impetus to this is how much money the company could make if it decided to develop it itself. Phil Reilly used to call it a surge tank of earnings. So you would build an income property. It would produce income. You would still hold it. It would go into his surge tank, and when you had dips in residential housing, usually the cycles were cyclical. When residential was down, typically commercial was moving up or was up, and you could sell some of these income-producing assets off to balance your earnings. That was the theory.

The mall parcel was one that was of quite a bit of interest to me, and I was following what the Irvine Company was doing on what was called the Golden Triangle, which is now called the Irvine Spectrum. They made no secret of it that they were going to be putting a regional mall there, and they actually had named some department stores. When I took a look at it, I realized that some things had changed, and what had changed was that South Coast Plaza and Newport Center had grown, and if the Irvine Company was going to put their regional mall

in the Golden Triangle, it was really too close to the others. It was not financially at critical mass yet.

However, our site was further south, and it could intercept all of the population of the south, and it's in its own market area. Did the study, went to my boss and showed him, and we went to Jim Gilleran. Then it escalated, ended up that the company sold the parcel to the DeBartolo organization [Edward J. DeBartolo Corporation], who were major shopping center developers, and it became the Mission Viejo Mall. The Irvine Company punted for a while until they decided to make the Irvine Spectrum. So that was a good one.

The other studies were done to, again, determine feasibility. We sold off all of the sites, and one of the things that I tried to give management in terms of information was the option of developing it themselves and selling it or keeping it versus selling the land. So eventually in 1983 Philip Morris gave the go-ahead to Phil Reilly. Phil was the champion. He wanted to do this. We got an individual commercial developer involved to partner. I did a study on getting into the business, which gave some guidelines. We brought the guy in, and we went off to build office buildings, industrial parks, and retail centers. We did that until about 1987, when Philip Morris made a decision they wanted to exit real estate. Then I went through the process of selling those assets off.

BRETON: Did you ever work with [Alfred] Al Gobar?

BUNYAN: I did. He was a good friend.

BRETON: On what projects, do you remember?

BUNYAN: Yes, we had Al do several studies in Mission Viejo, and one of them, I believe, was the Kaleidoscope property. It used to be Old MacDonald's Farm. I think we had Al do a retail

analysis for us down there. Yes, very good outside consultant. We used a lot of outside consultants, by the way.

BRETON: That was part of the company philosophy, wasn't it?

BUNYAN: Yes. We had so much business going that we were able to do that, but also there were certain consultants that had a good specialty. So, for instance, well, actually, where Old MacDonald's Farm was, and now the Kaleidoscope, that was going to be a hotel site, and we had KPF [Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates], I believe, was the hotel firm that's out there that does those, and they came in at the time and said it was premature. Sometime in the eighties, I believe, is when it was done.

BRETON: A lost opportunity for a major, major hotel.

BUNYAN: Yes, it really should have been a hotel.

BRETON: Tell us a little bit about your studies for the possible uses in Planning Area 87 on the other side of the freeway just south of La Paz.

BUNYAN: Yes, the Freeway Center. Planning Area 87 is a problematic parcel, or was a problematic parcel, for environmental reasons, for geotechnical reasons, for political reasons. It's a site in which people from Nellie Gail [Ranch] look down on. It's a site that's got a railroad track going through it, a creek. It's got power lines. It's got a freeway on one side. Very difficult site.

The early years, a lot of entrepreneurs came along. Back in the seventies and parts of the eighties, real estate development in Orange County, there was so much land available, there were many developers. Not all of them were very—how should I say—good at it, so we would get a lot of people who would drive down the freeway and see this wonderful piece of property. They'd go, "That would make a great miniature golf course." So we had a miniature golf course

opportunity to take parts of it and turn it into another what they call recreation centers, commercial recreation.

BRETON: Like a family fun center.

BUNYAN: Family fun centers, yes. Those types of things came and went.

Eventually—and I believe it was in the early nineties, late eighties, early nineties—the market was ready for more big box. Big box, they were a good attractor, and so land values rose to a point where we looked at building a box culvert, putting a bridge over the railroad tracks, dealing with the environmental permitting, it became financially feasible, and so we ended up putting that project together. The two gentlemen that I worked with on that were [Steven F.] Steve Delson and [James S.] Jim Tomlin. They were very good at what they did. Jim was primarily in the retail development end and Steve was primarily our executive vice president at the time.

BRETON: Was Toyota ever interested or any other auto dealer?

BUNYAN: Actually, Lew Webb was interested. I actually met with Lew when he had his dealership up here in Irvine, met with him. It was just too expensive. The visibility was great, but functionally didn't work well for his type of a layout.

BRETON: At what point did the company decide that it was ready not to continue in the homebuilding construction business and was ready to start selling entire parcels to other builders?

BUNYAN: Bob, that started early on. I want to say in '67. I wasn't there at the time.

BRETON: You're talking about the La Paz homes and the Deane homes.

BUNYAN: Yes, the very early years.

BRETON: But after that, they started building their own homes—

BUNYAN: That's correct. Yes, we did.

BRETON: —for a long period of time, and other developers tried to get in on the action and they were denied. But then at one point the company decided, let's go ahead and sell large areas to Barratt [American] or [William] Lyon [Homes] or whatever.

BUNYAN: My recollection is it started when Philip Morris made the decision that they wanted to exit real estate, which was right around 1987. There was a meeting that was called of various executives, and in that meeting we were told that Philip Morris had made a decision that they were going to exit real estate and that the company would be basically sold. We were asked if we would like to stay on, conduct our business, to dispose of the assets. So we had an option. You can either do that or not do that. I opted to stay and was very active in selling the commercial land initially. John Franklin was the vice president that was handling the residential. He stayed on.

We were told it would all culminate in 1993, so basically there would be a four- to five-year period, but they didn't count on the early recession of the nineties, and that pushed it down until 1997. At that time Shea Homes [J.F. Shea Company] was the winning bidder; 459 million, I believe, is what the sale price was at the time. I was one of thirteen people that were requested to remain on. I elected to do so, and my job was to sell off all the assets, all the land, complete the transactions and agreements, and sell off furniture, the hard assets, fixture and furniture. I believe it was in 1999. I can't remember the exact month, but I think it was in June. I remember we sold off everything in the La Paz building. It didn't belong to us anymore. We had sold it to another fellow. Took the keys and locked the door. I think we took a picture of it. It was my secretary and a couple of other co-workers. Took the keys and gave them to the landlord. We then moved over to Aliso Viejo, where Shea had an office, and became part of their organization.

BRETON: Shea bought it directly from Philip Morris?

BUNYAN: Correct. They actually bought the assets. They didn't buy the name. The name was still available. Mission Viejo name was dropped, so what we ended up with was a company that simply bought the assets and retained a few people that were left. Their focus was to build out the land and move on.

BRETON: When did the Mission Viejo Company dissolve as a company?

BUNYAN: Good question. Don't know the answer to that. I never did follow that one up. I think they still own the name, but I'm not sure.

BRETON: "They" being?

BUNYAN: Shea, Shea Homes Limited Partnership.

BRETON: As a result of the decision to sell, Philip Morris allotted a certain amount of time for the company to dispose of all of the assets, as many assets as—

BUNYAN: In an organized fashion.

BRETON: Those were remnant parcels? They were undeveloped remnant parcels?

BUNYAN: No. Some of them were large parcels. Planning Area 12 North, which is Stoneridge, that's an example of one of those. No, they weren't all remnant parcels. In fact, when you get right down to it, when Philip Morris sold the company, I had probably—I'm seeing the sales list. I had here in Mission Viejo probably about half a dozen of these sort of larger parcels. Remnant parcels, I would consider next to Unisys [Corporation], where Target is now, that was a large remnant parcel, but it was a piece of property that already sold and was available for sale, the same with the Super K-Mart site, where it was already sold.

BRETON: Before we move to residential, let's talk about some of the major companies that were brought in. First of all, we've heard, or we've studied, that the National Cash Register

[Company] was given a very generous offer that was too good to be true, too good to believe, for the area that eventually was sold for the college district [Saddleback College]. Were you involved at all in the offer to NCR to establish a major—

BUNYAN: I was not involved in the offer, was involved in all the commercial property adjoining that, though.

BRETON: Burroughs [Corporation]. Were you involved with attracting Burroughs?

BUNYAN: Was not involved with Burroughs. It was there when I got there.

BRETON: Unisys?

BUNYAN: I was not involved in Unisys either. Those were early sales. I was involved in the business park that is adjacent, which is now called High Park. I did a lot of work there, and also in what we call Via Fabricante Park, a lot of work there.

BRETON: That is still zoned light industrial. Any other possible side stories in the Via Fabricante area that we're unaware of, what it could have become?

BUNYAN: Well, Via Fabricante is interesting because it was originally set up, as you said, as a light industrial business park.

BRETON: Next to the railroad tracks.

BUNYAN: Correct. When we first subdivided it, most of the interest, a good portion of the interest, was from retail. They did not want to pay retail land prices, and they were uses that needed to have some type of a warehouse door or they could use a warehouse door. So we got a number of those types of uses. The Weber's bakery store is probably a good example, right on the corner. They have a product they brought in, but they had a retail store there.

So it was somewhat of a disappointment, because we were attempting to create job centers and services. And when I say services, the lower-value-added services such as

automobile repair or window coverings and those types of things. But in hindsight, it actually worked out well. When it developed out, we got a good combination of tire stores from retail, and so today I think it functions very well for the community.

High Park was much different. High Park was a project that we thought should be offices, professional offices, medical, and some other lighter industrial, but not predominantly.

One of the interesting things about these types of parcels is that they started to attract faith-based organizations, religious organizations, which has been somewhat not without its challenges parking-wise. It's mainly parking.

BRETON: When you were first recruited by the company, were you involved in establishing marketing criteria and data to price residential areas to provide pricing structures for the homes?

BUNYAN: Initially, yes. I got involved probably in the first year doing residential market research. Fortunately, there were services out there that did all of the raw data-gathering, and we used those. But I transitioned out of that after about a year. We brought in some additional people. Business planning grew, and we separated into two sections. One section was primarily residential. The other section was everything else, including commercial industrial, and basically mergers and acquisitions and feasibility studies, avocado groves, rock-crushing operations, skating rinks, office buildings, retail centers. Pretty much just about anything you can put on property we did.

Some very interesting stories about doing some of those studies. I'll just touch briefly on one, which is a rock-crushing operation. I did a study for management to determine whether we should start rock-crushing operations on one of our properties, had a lot of rock. I requested to be able to take a look at a rock-crushing operation on Ortega Highway, so met the person, took me on the tour, and became aware that this is a business that is kind of tantamount to walking

into a motorcycle bar. If you ever saw the movie the *Wild Hogs*, that's—well, six months after I completed the study, the management turned it down. The gentleman who owned the company that set up the tour, he owned this grading company. He passed away from mysterious circumstances, and I remember telling my boss, "Gee, I'm glad we never got in that business." [laughs] So there were some interesting stories.

BRETON: Going back to the pricing for residences, I'd like to look at the weighing of demand and supply, supply and demand. You have a very wonderful high-quality product that you're offering. You've got a huge demand. You have people camping out over the weekends, long lines, even lotteries in order to get into the crush to buy the homes here, but at the same time, you tried to price it in such a way as to be below what Irvine was charging for their homes. So did you do any studies on competition with Irvine?

BUNYAN: Oh, absolutely. Product to product, we would not necessarily price below Irvine. When we were in the meetings to price product, it was difficult to judge how quickly we would absorb. We knew there was a strong demand, but we were cognizant that you can't set a price so high that you really drive or invite your potential buyers to go to competition. We had to evaluate what they were offering not just in their house, in terms of rooms and finishes and features and design, but also the location.

We had to evaluate how much above or how much below we might have to price in order to be competitive and get our market share. When you get down to it, we were very focused on market share. It was a statistic that had meaning to our parent company, Philip Morris. So when the houses were announced, were put up for sale, and the demand was so intense that we had to go to a lottery as the only fair system, we gauged how quickly the homes sold and how many cancellations we would get. We had speculators as well as real buyers.

So it was a continuing evaluation effort through the entire process, so that when we got to the next pricing, meaning the next phase of homes was available, all that data was brought in, and typically we had multiple people from our departments, from the other departments, accounting and sales, reporting on their experiences to make the decisions. For the most part, I remember Jim Gilleran, that was one area that he was very good at, and he was the primary decision-maker for most of those.

BRETON: So it was a delicate balance to set prices that would be high enough to meet the demand and bring in a profit, but it wasn't a price war with Irvine, because that would bring diminishing returns.

BUNYAN: No, really it wasn't a price war. Irvine as a location was closer to many of the spots such as the [John Wayne] Airport and South Coast Plaza and so on. However, in the seventies and in the eighties—and this is pretty much pre- the era when the [James Irvine] Foundation was running it—Irvine developed in multiple locations that were separate, and each village area, like University Park, had its own unique characteristics. We didn't do that. What we did is we focused on a central initial location and then moved outward, such that you felt like a community. Irvine, at the time, didn't feel like it feels today. The Irvine name certainly didn't have the cachet that it has today, particularly for certain types of businesses. So we picked up on that pretty quickly and really sold hometown and community and somewhat not the best word, perhaps, togetherness, that you're here and you're in a new town, but it's a cohesive new town with all amenities and services available for you. You don't have to drive a long way for a service station. It was hard to find a service station in Irvine.

BRETON: It still is.

BUNYAN: It still is. [laughs]

BRETON: Entering into that total calculus of the absorption rate were a series of recessions, which made the process even more unpredictable.

BUNYAN: Yes, recessions were interesting. They actually worked to our advantage, at least in my opinion, because what happened is we had perhaps the ultimate bank. The funds were there. They obviously weren't unlimited, and there were limits, but large dollars to do things like lakes. Well, when the economy turned down, we were still able to go to Philip Morris and get money and continue building infrastructure, and [building] pads, and entitlements so that we were ready to come out of the blocks very quickly when we sensed the market is turning. It's interesting, today the Irvine Company can do that, and they have done that. They're doing it now. Don Bren, I think, knows that he has the capability to build when others can't.

BRETON: Did the company foresee in its marketing that it was providing a product for entry-level housing, but that it was also anticipating that as these families matured and their income level rose, that they would move up, but at the same time, stay in Mission Viejo?

BUNYAN: Absolutely. It was the business strategy that GM [General Motors] has used so successfully over the years. Buy your Chevrolet, and by the end of your career, you're in a Cadillac. So they started by building pretty much entry-level housing initially, a low cost, 125,000. Sixteen, I think, was the first for the condominiums that are off of Los Alisos, and then some single-families. Cordovas, I think, were one of the entry-levels. El Dorados.

Then, again, data comes in and we sift and evaluate the data, and then make strategic recommendations to management which said, "Hmm. The plan was to establish a community, and we got 10,000 acres, and we have a master plan, but yet in those planning areas—they're all yellow areas right now, yellow and brown, high density, medium density—how we make the product and where we price them is still a question mark." So as data comes in and we're

finding out, you know, more and more people that have higher and higher wages and salaries and incomes are being attracted. So we started moving into the La Paz and the Deanes.

The Mission Ridges were really the first executive program. I personally think that that program was put in there to house some of our executives, but it was before my time. They were existing when I got there. It was no mystery to me why some of our executives lived in them, and they really only made a few of those houses, and they were around the golf course, so I could justify that.

Madrids and the Madrid del Lagos, which were the major housing programs for the Lake, were a signal that we were moving up very rapidly. I remember the marketing and sales meetings that we had with Jim Gilleran and Harvey Stearn and the Sales Department, and it was clear we were getting data that Mission Viejo had created an image in the community, and a lot of people liked that image and they were willing to come past Irvine and the other projects, and they were wanting, however, certain amenities in their products. Andalusia was a high-end product, and Tres Vistas, Mallorcas and the condos on the Lake there, different densities for different people, but basically move-up housing.

BRETON: So the company was delivering on its promise to build a well-balanced community full of wonderful amenities, and people were sticking around. They were moving up, staying here, and their children were moving into some of the entry-level or into some of the high-density housing.

BUNYAN: Yes.

BRETON: Did you conduct census[es] for the company that revealed some interesting trends?

BUNYAN: Yes, we did. Our department did three, '76, '78, and '79. The first one that I did, I believe we had 20,000 or 25,000 people in the community, and the data that we were looking for

was who is the Mission Viejo resident and the demographic profile. It was not surprising that the residents were primarily families, they had children, and the income levels were, for the most part, pretty much low to middle income. This was in '76.

As we moved further into '78 and '79, interesting that the number of persons per household actually was growing, bigger families, and that the income levels had now moved past the midpoint, the median, and we started seeing some fairly high salary levels coming up. Another trend we saw was the commutation distance. In '76 most of the commutation was within twenty minutes. Twenty minutes at that time on the 5 Freeway gets you easily to South Coast Plaza or a little bit beyond, and in '79—

BRETON: On the 405?

BUNYAN: The 5/405, correct. You could get into Santa Ana in twenty minutes because the traffic wasn't anything like it is today. In '79 the commutation time had increased to about twenty-five minutes, but we had a large component of people that were working in the northerly reaches of Orange County, South L.A. [Los Angeles], but also primarily in the central business district, which was very surprising.

BRETON: Central business district—

BUNYAN: Of Los Angeles, CBD. But at the time, we were getting a lot of vanpools going. There was more of the shared ridership starting to happen.

BRETON: How did you get the residents to divulge their income levels and all this personal data? Who did you use to conduct the survey?

BUNYAN: We actually wrote the census in-house, the questions. We knew what we wanted. We actually funded this in-house ourselves. It was the high school students, primarily, that did the distributions. This was an era before all of the intensity of privacy of information. The

people didn't put their names on the form. They filled out the form, and we had envelopes for them. They would leave them on their doorstep, and the high school students would come by. We paid the high school students so much for every one they collected. It was kind of a community service type of project to get money for the Drama Club. Then they would deliver them to our office and we would go through those.

BRETON: It wasn't a random sample? You were trying to canvass the entire community?

BUNYAN: We tried to canvass the entire community at the time.

BRETON: To what extent, then, was flexibility in the original PC text and zoning map an important aspect in order to allow these subtle shifts in zoning as you did more marketing studies and could say that now we need higher density here as opposed to what we had originally planned, or we need to fill this niche that hadn't been anticipated before?

BUNYAN: Well, for the most part, pre-incorporation and working with the county, the relationship was very strong, was very cooperative, mutual respect. Our planning people, [Paul] Van Stevens' group, Jack Raub, and Jim Toepfer—Jim was here for a good part of the time, and then went to Colorado to start that project. I believe he started there in '78, something like that.

The county, as long as you provided the documentation, they tended to be a much faster process. For the most part, they didn't live here. One of the benefits of incorporation is bringing local control down to your community. So when you have local control, you have local residents, and they're going to be a bit more precise and picky about how things get changed. So some of the projects that we needed to change went through longer and more intense processes with Planning Commission, City Council, and some of them, the rezone or the change wasn't everything that was asked for, but in most cases, it got what it needed to get. So I'd have to say there was two eras, and that the second era is one in which the company was starting to move out

of real estate. It was primarily a land-sale program, and it was primarily the buyers that were looking for the changes.

BRETON: The PC text itself and map were flexible documents, weren't they?

BUNYAN: Yes, they were flexible documents. I have to say that they served their purposes. They were visioning documents. When you're developing a project over thirty years, a lot of things change, and they did, and they were changing particularly in the area of environment, in the area of just the techniques and the methods for grading and codes, code changes, fire protection. There's so many different areas that change. So when these planning areas come up for review and there's a change, a lot of homework needs to be done to show why they're necessary.

BRETON: We've covered the golf course and your marketing, the executive golf course, the Casta del Sol. Is that the one that you're referring to when you call it an executive golf course?

BUNYAN: Yes, that's a shorter course.

BRETON: Is there anything you want to add on the marketing study for that or the feasibility analysis that you did?

BUNYAN: Well, I have to tell you, because I did the study on that, I decided that I would want to play. I wasn't a golfer, but when I did the study, I said, "You know, it doesn't make sense to do the study and not know something about the game." So I ended up taking up golf at Casta del Sol—or, excuse me, on this program. I ended up playing golf the rest of my life. It was a great introduction to the game.

BRETON: We know that Mission Viejo created a unique identity here and went out of its way to make the residents feel that they belonged, as you have described, to a family-oriented community and one that had a sense of belongingness, a feeling of being in a home town. Could

you describe some of the things that the company did to build that community identity? I'm thinking of license plate frames or the Chain of Title.

BUNYAN: Well, the company probably funded more than one ad company. It was very, very marketing oriented. The "California Promise" is one of many themes, finding and monopolizing the right billboards on the 5 Freeway in Tustin, very, very focused and directed, certainly a lot of image-building in terms of printed materials, those types of things. It did good. It gave the residents a sense of pride to be able to have a license plate that said "Mission Viejo" on the frame.

BRETON: Beautiful.

BUNYAN: "Beautiful Mission Viejo." I remember first getting one of those license plate frames, and I couldn't wait to put it on the car. It's a sense of pride.

BRETON: What about the *Mission Viejo Reporter*?

BUNYAN: In terms of?

BRETON: Of creating a sense of unity and that we were all part of a large family that had events happening all the time.

BUNYAN: Yes, a wonderful communication device in the days before Internet. It was a very good device, and people seemed to enjoy the articles and actually learn what's going on in the community. There was a lot of word of mouth and a lot of organizations, the Boy Scouts [of America] and the Little Leagues and all those types of things that created an information network.

BRETON: What did the company do to subsidize this or to encourage the residents to become involved in the community?

BUNYAN: Well, a lot of the employees were directly involved in these activities, [Martin G.] Marty Russo and Harvey Stearn, [Mark] “Ziggy” Wilczynski, and on and on. There were many people who did it simply because they wanted to do it. I mean, Marty, it was part of his job. I used to ask him, “How do you get paid to do this job? This is great.” So, yes, there was a lot of involvement on the part of the company, and funding activities. There was a budget. They formed the committees.

BRETON: [Mission Viejo] Activities Committee.

BUNYAN: The Activities Committee. Wendy Wetzel Harder, at the time, she was involved in quite a few of those types of things. That was an area in which I was in corporate when I started, not in operations, and so I observed and participated periodically in those. I was sort of a recipient of the product, and I can tell you, I had a lot of friends and neighbors that thought very highly of it. They really liked what Mission Viejo Company was doing.

BRETON: What created the brand, the Mission Viejo brand, that put it on the map worldwide?

BUNYAN: Well, a couple of things. Worldwide, the '84 Olympics certainly were a major introduction to the world as to this community. That was in 1984, so the company was literally almost twenty years involved.

The brand itself was more regional and local. It was very well known in Southern California simply because it had 20,000, 30,000 people who worked all over and spread the word. That was probably the biggest impetus. The other impetus is that the company did its share of advertising, billboard advertising, media, television, and radio, so it got the word out. When you get right down to it, South Orange County was one of the areas that a lot of people wanted to move to. A lot of people came from Los Angeles and moved down through the central county area down into south.

BRETON: To what extent was the brand broadcast to the world through the Nadadores?

BUNYAN: The Nadadores and the Rose Parade floats were two of the probably strongest media avenues. Certainly the Nadadores and their participation in the Olympics really broadcast the name. So the '84 Olympics was one example, you're right.

I remember Brian [S.] Goodell was swimming. He was sixteen years old at the time, swimming in Cincinnati, and we happened to be doing our research in Kansas City on the skating rinks, and we stopped by to see Brian and cheer the team on. It hit me that their uniforms all had Mission Viejo Nadadores with the brand on it, and how that really provided a lot of people with the name recognition.

The Rose Parade floats were also a major opportunity, one that I still see the pictures and realize that millions of people from around the world watch that parade. So that's how a lot of them saw Mission Viejo.

BRETON: Do you recall any of the televised events such as [Celebrity] Challenge of the Sexes or Virginia Slims or Seventeen tournament?

BUNYAN: Sure, and we actually attended a lot of those because we only lived a block away from the rec center, so it was very easy for my wife and I to go down there. We attended a lot of those, tried to support the effort. They were very fun to watch, and you're right, they did provide a lot of exposure.

BRETON: National exposure.

BUNYAN: National exposure, yes.

BRETON: And the visit of President [Gerald R.] Ford and President [Ronald W.] Reagan.

Were you in attendance at either of those?

BUNYAN: I was at President Ford's visit. Actually, I do have that photo in the book I wrote about our sister kind of community, Aliso Viejo.

BRETON: I misspoke. I think it was Governor Reagan who came here to dedicate the college.

BUNYAN: Yes, it was Governor Reagan at the time.

BRETON: To what extent did the annual events build up community spirit within Mission Viejo, the parades?

BUNYAN: Those events were incredible, the amount of community pride that was generated. I remember the arrival of Santa Claus. Try to remember that we have many, many families in the community, and that the spirit of Christmas, the weather, the trees and the lights, the way that the company and its employees and volunteers put together these various events was really quite amazing. It's almost like if you're cheering for the [Los Angeles] Lakers or the [Los Angeles] Angels [of Anaheim]; a lot of pride.

BRETON: You grew up in Orange County. Had you seen anything like the parade, the St. Patrick's [Day] Parade, the participation by the—

BUNYAN: You mean outside of Mission Viejo?

BRETON: Right.

BUNYAN: No, not really. When I first came to work for the company, I got to understand these types of things that were being done. I could relate back to other areas of the county that I lived, and you lived there, but there really wasn't the kind of spirit and pride. It was always kind of unique. It was really nice.

BRETON: What was your overall marketing plan, if you had to capsulize into a sentence or two? What were you trying to portray Mission Viejo as in your marketing of Mission Viejo to

potential buyers, whether they be residential or commercial? To what extent were you depicting it to be utopia, in other words?

BUNYAN: The bottom line for the company was to make money. That's what it existed for. It did that by offering a product, and the formula for success of the product was based on a number of factors. One of the key factors that the company realized was that if you were able to offer the home-buying public a safe, well-designed community in the right location with the right array of products priced in a manner that would be acceptable, you would have the formula for a marketing success. They were able to do that, and I was privileged and honored to be one of the team members to help. They were able to do that with Mission Viejo. The extraneous variables cooperated, for instance, the demographics at the time, the baby boomers, the right location next to the I-5 Freeway. That helped. So you had to have those combined, but because those existed and you had a marketing plan that did what I just mentioned, that's why you got the lotteries, where maybe some of the other projects, competitive projects, didn't.

BRETON: To make it more like Camelot, it didn't hurt that we were halfway between the mountains and the ocean.

BUNYAN: Great location. It's an interesting location from the standpoint that pretty much the rest of Orange County, with some exceptions such as Brea and the Tustin area, is flat. South County is built on a series of hills and ridgelines. Some of them have views to the ocean, a lot of them have views to the mountains, and they tend to be wilderness areas or open-space areas with a lot of room for parks and open space. A lot of the buyers liked that. They were out in the country. To this day, Mission Viejo has developed out and the communities around it have developed, but you can go to numerous places in Mission Viejo and you're in the country. You

have the aura of being out in the country. So I think a lot of people still value that, and that's why they stay.

BRETON: And when you step outside your house, you're always within walking distance of a park and a good school.

BUNYAN: Yes, we didn't really spend a lot of time on schools, but it's one of the key factors that—

BRETON: You mean in our interview.

BUNYAN: Yes, in our dialogue. Schools and the provision of the infrastructure, primarily things such as water and wastewater treatment and those kind of things that are necessary.

Schools are right up there at the top of the list. Very early on it was realized that homebuyers want a safe environment. They want a school system that they know their children are going to learn, they're going to do well, and it's going to be safe and they're going to be provided the education that will make them successful. Fortunately, the company valued that and established a great relationship with Capistrano Unified School District and with Saddleback Unified [Saddleback Valley Unified School District].

BRETON: And lots of good parks, lots of neighborhood parks.

BUNYAN: Yes, a lot of parks.

BRETON: Adjacent to each elementary school.

BUNYAN: Yes, very clear that that adjacency was a good planning idea, and that open space and parks and trails were established throughout the community.

BRETON: And churches.

BUNYAN: And churches. We actually did church studies. [laughs]

BRETON: You did? Tell me about them.

BUNYAN: We did church studies. It was much later in the game. It was primarily when Philip Morris decided to get out of the business. We had, as I mentioned, land to sell, and one of the things that we attempted to do is to determine what remaining land could be made available to churches. We were getting a lot of demand for churches that were moving into business parks, and that's okay, except that there are issues dealing with noise and parking and congestion. So did research on communities and how many acres of churches or faith-based organizations you need. It was a study that was very, very interesting to do. It was at the time when some of the large mega-churches like Saddleback [Church] were looking for properties, so it was very timely.

BRETON: I would like to move into the topic of local government. You've alluded to this already, the importance of having local control. At what point did the company see the wisdom of having the residents participate in the review and decision-making process and encourage the formation of the first Municipal Advisory Council?

BUNYAN: Well, the community was growing, and it had reached—call it a critical mass, where it had the ability to form a Municipal Advisory Committee, enough people, enough interest, enough issues, so critical mass. But the company also did not see itself as the city government. It was becoming increasingly clear that residents were looking at Mission Viejo Company as the city government. The company was not set up to be a government, and so that was a motivation. The resistance to that is that you're giving up authority. You're transferring authority and responsibility for certain things to municipal government. So it's an evaluation of pros and cons, and at some point in time the community got to a point where the company felt that it was probably in its best long-term interest to start moving in that direction. So the MAC [Municipal Advisory Council] is the first step, a local advisory committee as opposed to a staff in Santa Ana.

So that then moved, as you know, to incorporation, and then as the period of working out the policies and procedures and the transfer of authority and responsibility. So that did take place.

BRETON: It served a vital function, didn't it, the Municipal Advisory Council? On the one hand, it made the company's work a little more cumbersome because not only did they make a presentation to the Planning Commission of Santa Ana, but now they made it to the MAC. But when they went to the Planning Commission, they now had the local stamp of approval.

BUNYAN: Very much so. That's a very good point. It gave more credibility. It also helped the company to better understand more of the concerns, issues, opportunities, that local residents could give. There was a lot of value recognized in that. I think a lot of the impetus from some of our people like Marty Russo and Ziggy that were involved with community was helpful in advising management that the residents really do have a grasp of what they want, what they would like, and that helped, I think, to move management forward to agreeing to form the MAC and certainly supporting incorporation.

BRETON: Didn't the company value this form of self-governance here because rather than have some people in Santa Ana making the decision who were so far removed from what reality was here, you had the local people who really could understand the impact and benefit of this proposal, this new project?

BUNYAN: Absolutely. What we learned from our census is that the average stay in the community was between five and seven years. So people were here for a longer period of time and they had local experience. They were in the trenches every day, so that was important, and the company recognized that.

BRETON: Then came the second stage of the metamorphosis, the Community Services District. At this point the company had decided to support this formation of a city in embryo and decided not to oppose it or to actively support it, correct?

BUNYAN: Yes.

BRETON: Was the company anxious to support the formation of a City of Mission Viejo in order to ward off the threat of a Saddleback City? Do you remember those days when there was a counterproposal to LAFCO [Orange County Local Agency Formation Commission] that the entire Saddleback Valley incorporate into one city?

BUNYAN: I wasn't directly involved in discussions with our internal management, but I do remember the company had a lot of discussions and gathered a lot of information about that Saddleback incorporation effort. I'm probably not the best person to give you a finding on that, but I can tell you definitely that the company was concerned about it and, I think, felt, rightly so, that it might not be the in the best interest for Mission Viejo.

BRETON: Now to conclude, the completion of the master plan. How do you measure the success of this master plan?

BUNYAN: Well, to me, the success is when you talk to people. I live in the community, have lived here for years. When you talk to the residents about Mission Viejo, they're the ones who know all the good things, but they also know all the warts. They are so happy about living here. That's really how I measure it. In the old days we used to have complaints about restaurants, don't have enough restaurants, or we don't have this or that, or it takes too long to get here and to get there. I don't hear that today. To me, the master plan, the real test, to me, is that the master plan developed out pretty much as it was originally laid out, which you have to remember was in the early sixties—it was a different world—and that it works.

There are post-mortem studies on planned communities, and this is no different. One of the criticisms leveled at these types of communities is that, well, they're nice, but they're sterile. They're nice, but they're better communities that are too far from the work centers and there's too much traffic that has to go back and forth. In hindsight, we might have put in more business centers here. That might have been something to help alleviate that.

BRETON: Sources of employment.

BUNYAN: Sources of employment to create for Mission Viejo a balance between the number of working people who are here and the number of jobs that are here so that we'd have more ability to live and work here. I do have to say, however, that the Irvine Spectrum, which is literally just a few miles up the road, is one of the largest employee bases in the county, and there are multiple access roads into that. So from a master-planned standpoint, yes, if I was to take the master plan apart, there are some things that could change, but when you look at the community as a whole, the balance between the amount of recreation, the amount of community facilities like churches and schools, the amount of parks, the types of houses that are here, their designs and how they've withstood basically the test of time, you don't see a lot of houses being torn down here. You don't see any. You do see some industrial buildings being renovated or reused, but the community and its master plan pretty much as stayed pretty intact. That makes me feel good.

BRETON: Aren't we still the envy of many of the surrounding communities when it comes to the lake, the rec centers, the mall, this library?

BUNYAN: They don't tell you that, but, yes, it certainly is something. I did work very briefly for Avco Community Developers, the developer of Laguna Niguel, and as I mentioned, I worked for Macco. We developed housing in Santa Ana. I'm familiar with Ross [W.] Cortese's Leisure

World. Part of the work that I did was competitive intelligence, so I looked at all these communities that surround us, kept track of all of their housing sales and what they were doing, including the Irvine Company, and they all have something to offer. They all are basically good communities in which to live, but they all have differences, and if you want the formula that Mission Viejo offers called the “California Promise,” it’s one of the few communities that can meet that promise, and that is something special.

BRETON: So the company delivered on the promise.

BUNYAN: It delivered on the promise.

BRETON: Do you know any of the special awards that the company received over the years?

BUNYAN: Well, the International New Town [Conference] award was given. Jim Gilleran accepted that. I’ve forgotten the year.

BRETON: 1986?

BUNYAN: Yes, that sounds right. That was a big deal. That was a major big deal. We’ve had certainly a lot of other individual smaller awards, and for activities. We mentioned the Rose Parade floats and those types—the Nadadores, their recognition. So a lot of facets of the community and the company have gotten awards.

BRETON: Do you think that the company remained true to the legacy that was bestowed by the O’Neill family, the legacy of the California rancho, the original—

BUNYAN: I do think so. I think that the O’Neill family espoused the stewardship of their land, and stewardship, to me, means that the land is used for different things. We, as human beings, were put on this earth, and we have land that we use for farming, land that we use for living, and so on and so forth. They were wise people to see that you have a freeway [Interstate 5] coming in. It’s convenient. It opens up this piece of property, which just happened to be following El

Toro on the north and the Plano Trabuco and Trabuco Creek on the east. So it followed some natural boundaries. It just happened to end up being 10,000-some-odd acres. They were able to contribute that and turn it into this wonderful, and yet take the rest of their land and utilize it as open space and farming and grazing. So I think they were true to it.

BRETON: To the extent that stewardship implies a duty to respect, maintain, enhance that over which you have been given the responsibility of caring, how have you reacted over the years to the way that the City of Mission Viejo has taken what it received upon incorporation and improved upon it? To what extent do you think that city is doing a good job in preserving the quality of life here and the infrastructure and improving upon it?

BUNYAN: Well, you just have to look at what the city has done. Of course, there's been different administrations, different City Councils that have gone through, and different opinions, and I, living here, have seen what has been done. I only have to drive through the community to see that it really has been—they've maintained the character and the integrity in the community. I've seen improvements in making streets wider because they need to be wider, adding more landscaping, enhancing it. I kind of like the idea that certainly in the later stages we had a little bit more variety in our architecture. I certainly like and respect the early Spanish themes, and that's good, but I like architectural variety, and so that's been allowed. The Lake has been maintained well. The work that the city has done in the landscaping of this community is second to none. It's raved about by visitors from other countries and other areas. As I bring people in and I show them, they just marvel at how we've been able to keep a community that's this old looking so crisp and neat. They're really amazed. I say, well, the company established the community early on and built these things, but like anything, they can run down if you don't take care of it. The city has been very good at doing that, so very well known.

Now, on the developer's side, as I talk to developers and through some of my work getting involved with some of the projects, some of the developers see the wisdom in that and others look at simply the bottom line. I have to coach them that you're building value into your project, and it's going to be consistent with the rest of the community. I would have to say that even though there have been different administrations, they've done a very good job.

BRETON: Could you comment on a few examples, for instance, the promenade on the Lake [Lake Mission Viejo]? Do you see that as an improvement?

BUNYAN: Oh, absolutely.

BRETON: At Alicia [Parkway] overlooking the lake.

BUNYAN: Yes, that's one of the areas that gets a lot of oohs and aahs from visitors that I bring in. Brought some friends in from Wales and drove them by over the dam and the promenade, and they wanted to get out. They wanted me to stop on the side of the road, and they wanted to get out and take pictures. "Can't stop here." [laughs]

BRETON: How about the Florence Griffith Joyner park [Florence Joyner Olympiad Park]?

BUNYAN: I have to tell you that my wife had not been in there. Finally, we walked through there about a month ago when one of the concerts was playing. We walked through there, and she didn't realize it was there. She knew the park. She didn't realize what was done inside. She said to me, "Did the city do this?"

I said, "Yes."

She said, "Wow, I'd pay our taxes for this any day. This is wonderful."

So we go in there and we actually sit and relax. We live across the way, so we are able to walk over there.

BRETON: How about the Oso trail [Oso Creek Trail] next to the new expanded community center, senior center [Norman P. Murray Community and Senior Center]? Have you been there?

BUNYAN: Yes, I have. That's one of my favorites. My daughter and my son love that trail. We especially like what was done right off of Marguerite where there's some improvements where you can stop and you can rest and you can read about the trail. Those are the kinds of things that give the community character. Those were not the kinds of things that the company originally envisioned, but they're a great example of taking something that was built and improving on it. So it's a great example.

BRETON: Lastly, the building that we're in, the library.

BUNYAN: I transferred this parcel. It was one of my duties at the time to transfer this. My recollection is we did some land swaps. I had this piece of property pegged for some office buildings, but I believe it was zoned for community facilities, and it was always slated to be something in the city's bailiwick. But if it wasn't going to be that, it was going to be some offices, but it was a little too high for a retail center. You couldn't see it that well. Such a wonderful facility. The citizens of this community only need to go to other parts of Southern California and see other library buildings. Some of them are new, like this one, but a lot of them aren't. This is a resource that is second to none, so it's great, very well done.

BRETON: Do you look with fondness on your years with the company?

BUNYAN: Well, it's hard to spend—let's see, from '71 to '97 would have been about twenty-six years, a lot of time to spend with one company. I wouldn't have stayed there that long if it wasn't a good feeling. Could have moved to other places, probably made even more money, possibly, I don't know. But it was sad when it was sold. It was sad because the family—well, the family had been going their separate ways, the Mission Viejo Company family. Yes, a lot of

fondness, and that's why a lot of us try to stay in communication together. We did have some reunions, but as we are growing older, people are moving away. So fondness, yes. I can think of a lot of words, appreciation.

I look back on that experience and today realize that I started in the company at an age when you wanted to make your mark in the world and you wanted to create and you wanted to be recognized. You wanted to be very successful, and you measured mainly success in money. Today, looking back, those things really weren't what turned out to be important. What turned out to be important right at the top of the list was the relationships that you made with the people, what you learned from them, what they gave to you, what you were able to give to them, and fortunate enough to be able to continue to know some of those people and that they're still with us.

The second was that you created something that was beneficial to other people—we tend to use the residents—based on the gifts that you were given, that you used them wisely most of the time, and that going through this experience, your character was shaped. Your character tended to become more patient, more generous, less self-centered and more outreaching, trying to help others. So those are the kinds of things that I relish mostly, fond memories of people that I worked with, the good and the bad times. The good times were great, the bad times I learned from, and so today I feel very honored to have been a part of this and very honored to be part of this interview.

BRETON: What did you learn through the mentoring by people such as Jim Gilleran or Van Stevens?

BUNYAN: Those two people in particular?

BRETON: Yes.

BUNYAN: Van Stevens was a person who I could go to and I felt very comfortable asking him delicate questions, and he would give me straight answers. I didn't feel that I was putting my career in jeopardy by asking a question about, "Well, should I go to so-and-so and say such-and-such? What do you think?" He was just a very talented planner and very talented person in working with other people and knowing how to move things and get things done, particularly in his area of expertise, still is to this day. When I sit with him, I relish the wisdom that he has to say.

Jim was a person who taught me, in my job and my skills, more than anybody else. He taught me about being organized, being accurate, caring about your work. He was very much big on you've got to care about the work that you do. Just don't be schlock. That emanated through the entire company when he became president. He really wanted to make sure that we delivered the right goods.

BRETON: How was your life affected by this overall experience?

BUNYAN: Well, that's a big one. Well, let me put it this way. It was a livelihood. It was a career. From a career standpoint, I took my formal education and, with the experience of the company, utilized it to basically form a second career, which is when I left, when Shea bought the company, I spent five years with them, finished up all the Mission Viejo Company disposition work, and then went out on my own. I had worked for corporations all my life. I was a corporate person. I felt very comfortable. For the first time in my life, ten years ago I was on my own, and I discovered that all the things that I had learned previously came in, and all of the network relationships, the people that I knew and things that I had done, allowed me to start a second career, which actually turned out to be a wonderful experience that I thoroughly enjoy. It's given me more time to do volunteer work that I've always wanted to do. Historical work has

been part of that, and working with other volunteer groups at the county level and personally has been good.

BRETON: The final question is if you could give any advice to future city planners, whether they be here in the United States or anywhere else in the world, what would it be?

BUNYAN: Learn from the experiences that others have had, examine what they did and how it worked, and use those moving forward on anything new that they're doing, keeping in mind that what was done in the past is going to change and will change. The world is not standing still. We wouldn't build another Mission Viejo. We probably couldn't build another Mission Viejo like we have here today in this location. There are just too many other extraneous factors that would prohibit us from doing that. So use what we learned to make better decisions going forward.

BRETON: Thank you for your time.

BUNYAN: Thank you, Bob.

BRETON: It's been a pleasure.

BUNYAN: My pleasure too.

[End of interview]



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