

HENDERSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY (HHS) NEWSLETTER, Fall 2020

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Catching Up – January 2020 to the present: January saw the HHS at the city Council with a presentation to keep the City up to date on the Society’s activities. Sean DeFrank reported on the HHS efforts to market a specialized license plate to fund the City’s efforts to preserve and teach the history of Henderson. Wherever the license plate travels people are reminded of Henderson. The plate is one of many recognizable brands that prompt people to think about the City, to tune in to its messages, to become interested in the City’s partners like the Henderson Historical Society. He reminded the Council that special license plates must sell 3,000 individual plates per year to be continued by the State. The Henderson plate hasn’t reached that level yet.

The Passing of a Founder - Monday, March 30, 2020 was a sad day for the friends of one of Henderson’s founders, Lou LaPorta. Newcomers to Henderson can learn some of the City’s history and the role Mr. LaPorta played in that history by reading HHS Director Sean DeFrank’s October 22nd post on Facebook. Here’s a copy for HHS members who don’t have access to Facebook:

As the days grow shorter and the temperatures grow cooler, the Henderson Historical Road Trip comes to its conclusion today with a special tribute. The license plate featured in many of the posts throughout the road trip belonged to Lou La Porta, founding president and CEO of the Henderson Historical Society, who died on March 30 at the age of 96.

Lou and his wife, Elayne, moved to Henderson in 1945 after his honorable discharge from the U.S. Air Force, where he served as a bombardier during World War II. The young couple decided to remain in the Henderson Townsite area after the war, and Lou quickly established himself as one of the pillars of the community of 3,500 people, which was comprised mostly of young families.

Lou, who worked as a commercial insurance agent, was instrumental in Henderson becoming incorporated as a city in April 1953, and was chosen to serve on the original Henderson City Council from 1953-59. After that, he served on the Clark County Commission from 1960-69, and was also president of the Henderson Chamber of Commerce and a board chairman with St. Rose De Lima Hospital.

Lou and Elayne, who died in 2010 at the age of 85, raised three children in Henderson, including Valerie, who joined her father as a founding member of the Henderson Historical Society in 2011.



The Corona Virus - In March 2020 the health risk posed by Covid19 led to canceling public gatherings. HHS also began to conduct Director's meetings via conference calls and to use Facebook as a vehicle for teaching Henderson History. While we aren't for the moment holding Henderson Speaks events, HHS has a collection of 22 recordings (on YouTube and in the Henderson Libraries Digital Collections) of past events dating back to 2012. We are working on a bibliography that will show titles, brief summaries and links to the events. While you are waiting to see this valuable document, have a look at a recording of the Society's first ever gathering. It was held on 4-21-12 at the Gibson Library around the time of Heritage Days that year. The Henderson Department of Public Libraries (HDPL) staff recorded the event, showing candid pictures of the crowd and a great display of the collected memorabilia of Henderson Historical Society members and community supporters. Tom Fay, Director of HDPL in 2012 introduced key people in the audience that evening including Mayor Andy Hafen. Mr. Fay spoke about the founding of the Henderson Historical Society and the partnership of HDPL and HHS. He recognized Lou LaPorta, Henderson pioneer and founder of HHS. Mr. LaPorta spoke to the gathering about the goals of the organization and the importance of collecting and preserving the history of Henderson and he introduced Rick Watson, HHS member, who spoke about how to become a member of HHS and told about upcoming events. Here is a link to the video: <http://hendersonlibraries.sobeklibrary.com/HL00010940/00001>



Bud Franklin, Andy Hafen, other guests



Tom Fay



Rick Watson, Lou LaPorta

HHS License Plate Promotion – On July 20, 2020 the HHS began a contest on the HHS Facebook page. The contest promoted the sale of the new Henderson License Plate and a replica of the new plate for display purposes. Go to the HHS Facebook page <https://bit.ly/3jnB0zz> to see the entire adventure that began on July 20, 2020 and at the same time learn about the history of Henderson and enjoy great photos of Henderson.



Henderson Speaks Calendar 2121-22: Covid-19 brought a halt to HHS face to face events in 2020. Though the virus continues to be a threat, HHS looks to next year with optimism. The following is a rough draft of the calendar being developed. The plan is to continue holding the events at Nevada State College, in the Kasner Academic Building.

Tentative Calendar 2021- 22:

Wednesday March 24, 2021 Windom Kimsey will report on the plan for the redevelopment of The Water Street District.

Saturday, April 17, 2021 Pioneer Industrial Days-This year's celebration will honor the founders of the Black Mountain Golf Course and Country Club: Herschel Trumbo, Jack Miller, Joe McBeth, Dave Jamison and Lou LaPorta.

Wednesday, May 19, 2021 The Dream of Carlton Adair and the Vision of Ronald Boedekker: Learn how their dream became a reality 35 years later.

Wednesday, September 22, 2021 Gone But Not Forgotten- Whatever became of those wonderful childhood haunts. The speakers will tell stories about Carver Park, The Victory Theater, The Henderson Drag Strip, The Swanky Club, Old Las Vegas, Las Vegas Downs and the Grotto at St. Peters Church.

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 Paper Boys - Listen to the exploits of those who literally delivered the news to our doorsteps, presented by some of Henderson's aging paperboys.



Henderson Speaks

Henderson Historical Society Director Lynn Starr Reflects on Henderson History, Past and Present

For me, Henderson has always been home. My parents and Grandparents came here from Montana in 1942, just as Henderson was being established, leaving a farm that they homesteaded in the early 1900's for a more desirable climate and way of life. My Dad enlisted in the Army Air Force after graduation from high school in Montana, barely 17 years of age so his Mother (my Grandmother) had to sign for him. He and my Mom were married while he was in basic training in South Dakota and then in 1943 he was sent to Europe, traveling by the ship Normandy. Mom came to Henderson to join her parents, obtaining work at Basic Magnesium Hospital (which would later become Rose de Lima Hospital in 1947) and where she would continue to work for the next 40 years, off and on.

MY FIRST MEMORY OF HENDERSON

I will take you back to August of 1945. I was one year old at the time. It was a hot summer day. It was also the day of my first cognitive memory and while more of a feeling than a clear recollection. It was one of the most powerful things that has ever happened to me. I remember being out in the carport of my Grandmother's Townsite house on South Texas Avenue in Henderson, Nevada. There was a shaded area in the carport because of the virginia creeper vine that grew up the sides. There was apparently a party going on. Although the memory is hazy and kind of dream-like, the feeling is sharp and clear. From my highchair everyone still looked so big, but they were rejoicing and laughing and the feeling all around me was utter bliss and happiness. (I would later learn that the reason for the celebration was the end of World War II, my Dad would come home the next year from being assigned to a reconnaissance unit in Europe, having never seen me, nor his family for almost 3 years, certainly cause for such festivities). I will never forget that first impression of touching life, the totally unconditional blast of joy that occurs seldom in life, but if we are lucky, is frequently remembered.

LOU LAPORTA: REMEMBERED

While Interests and circumstances change as time passes, **history does not**. One of Henderson's original founders and first members of City Council, Lou LaPorta, recognized the need to preserve and relate its history and founded the Henderson Historical Society in 2009, recruiting an assortment of people who shared the desire to preserve Henderson's unique and significant beginnings to enable growth and progress for a successful future. Lou's passion and love for Henderson was inspiring and contagious and when he contacted me to join in this endeavor as a Board Director, I was truly honored and eagerly accepted. Sadly, we lost our beloved leader and mentor in March of this year, but we will continue our mission with an even stronger commitment and dedication in his honor.

TIMET

I read with great sadness about the possible closing of one of our oldest and most important businesses, TIMET. Not only was titanium and magnesium processing a huge factor in the United States' successful participation in and ending of World War II, but was one of the main reasons for Henderson's creation and continued to be a major contributor nationally and globally to our economy. This has prompted me to express my concern for the future of our community and our Country regarding the current trend of not only ignoring history, but attempting to erase any reminders of past perceived wrong-doing, as if ignoring them will make it not so.

Townsite homes, BMI Hospital in 1940s

