



MICHAEL J. FOX
1945-

Honored as 2019 Historymaker
Art & Heritage Preservationist



The following is an oral history interview with Michael J. Fox (**MF**) conducted by Norma Jean Coulter (**NJC**) for the Historical League, and video-graphed by John Blake (**JB**) on September 17, 2018 at the Arizona Heritage Center in Tempe, Arizona.

Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Historical Society Museum Library at Papago Park, Tempe, Arizona.

NJC My name is Norma Jean Coulter and it's September 17, 2018, and I am interviewing Michael Fox. Mike, you're the director of the Museum of the West in Scottsdale, the last of many institutions in which you've made a significant impact, so let's explore what led you to this stage in your life. You were born in Madison, Wisconsin, I believe?

MF Yes.

NJC Into a sports-oriented family? What was that like with seven siblings?

MF It was a very active household, I will say. I am the second to the youngest of seven—there are four boys and three girls. It was really a very active community of siblings. We were always doing things, often together, whether it was ice skating, swimming (for which we have four wonderful lakes in Madison,) boating, or water skiing; just a whole variety of outdoor activities. We were always involved. Indoors it was a very interesting environment because my parents were very strict. It was a highly disciplined family in such things as the fact that every night, no matter if we were playing a sport or had any other extra-curricular activity, there was a time established that we all would have to be home to be sitting around the table and having dinner together. That was just a routine that was expected of all of us as members of this wonderful family. And we also had all assigned chores from knee high. We were always busy doing things to be responsible for some dimension of the household. And that was fine. We all learned from that and supported one another certainly through the years. So, it was really a very fun, supportive family. Oftentimes, my parents would rent a cottage on one of the other lakes close by to

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Madison or on the river, the Wisconsin River. So sometimes we would spend two or three weeks of the summer in that kind of environment and, again, that was very special and very memorable. There are great memories that I continue to have about those kinds of outdoor experiences.

NJC What kind of neighborhood did you live in?

MF Well, we lived immediately above the Camp Randall Stadium where my father coached for many years. It was a lovely residential neighborhood and walking distance to the stadium. It was even walking distance to much of the campus of the university, when we didn't have three feet of snow and all that in the wintertime. But all our neighbors were with families and so it was a very collegial environment. We were always ones to bike everywhere; bike to the park and bike to school and so forth. It was just a very safe and wonderful, wonderful environment.

One of my sisters and I, each summer would plan and host circuses in the garages of this neighborhood and we came up with all different ways for others of the kids to be involved themselves. And then, of course, we charged for people to come and experience the circus. It was fun; many years that we did that. And I was the best at being a puppeteer. I just loved puppets and I had a number of them at the time and so I created the sets and did the scripting and so forth. It was just a fun way to grow up.

I also followed one of my other brothers who had a newsstand. After he was ready to end his high school I took over. So, for seven years, every Sunday, from 4:30 in the morning until 1:00 in the afternoon, I had a newsstand in front of one of the major Catholic churches in Madison. And we sold about a couple hundred to up to four hundred newspapers of all different types of the Midwest. We used to be there at 4:30 in the morning stuffing them, and then no matter if there was the sleet or rain, whatever it was, we were always out there. It was expected of us to be there and to keep the papers dry and to do our job.

NJC That's an incredible and impressive family life.

MF Yeah, it really was. And it continues to be a wonderful part of my life. There are two who are not, sadly, with us today. But the internet permits us to communicate, and we communicate with one another every single day. My mother was far ahead of the game before any kind of computers were even thought of. She started what she called the round robin. So, one time seven of us were at seven different universities and she would start the round robin and write what she wanted, and then each of us would add to it. By the time it got back to my mother, she was ready to start another one. It was her way of wanting always to keep us close and to see that we communicate with one another and have interest in each other's development and interest in

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whatever it might be. We have continued that round robin in the sense through the computer today. And it is really meaningful in our lives and our children's lives and now our grandchildren's lives because they see what we're communicating with one another and they learn from that also.

NJC Have you ever had a family reunion?

MF Oh many. We've had many family reunions Now, when our children get married, everyone comes together. So yes, we have had several of them and again, they've been fun and loud. Our family is a loud family in terms of voice.

NJC That's a wonderful life lesson that your mother imparted about being in touch and keeping the family close.

MF My mother was so unique. With a large family she assigned each of us some real responsibilities. Why? Because she had her life, too. She wanted to experience things and do things. She was public relations director for the YWCA in Madison. She saw that she had a balance in her life also. And of course, my father's life during those many coaching years was so dedicated to sports, that my mother had to do so much more to manage the household. He was so often not with us because of his greater responsibilities with the university at the time. She was just dynamite. She was just so energized, so creative and so loving. But she had a finger that I swear was as long a finger that anyone in humanity had. She certainly let us know when either we weren't doing what we should be doing, or what she wanted to have done. She was fun.

NJC So she was a great communicator?

MF Oh, she was a communicator personified. Yeah.

NJC Now, your father coached football?

MF Yes.

NJC And you also played football, did you not?

MF I played football as did others of my siblings. We were all athletic, I guess you might say, and loved sports. In high school, I played football and had the opportunity to go onto college with a football scholarship and was All City and all that foolishness. Sports was very important in all

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our lives. And it certainly got me opportunities that otherwise I would not have experienced. Because why? Because my father made it clear with all of us, that he wanted to see that we all made our choice as to where we wanted to go to school post high school; but that we also had to take responsibility to see that it was funded. He expected all of us to excel in school so that we would get scholarships to college in whatever fashion they might be. In my case, it started earlier than college. I went to a parochial grade school and a parochial high school. I was the only one of the seven kids that went all 12 years to a Dominican high school and grade school. So, I was taught predominantly by Dominican nuns and priests. And the high school, of course, had tuition, and we couldn't afford it. I was afforded the opportunity to be given a scholarship to the high school and it really translated in this way. I ended up becoming the dishwasher for the cafeteria for the two periods of the day during which the kids were served their meals. For four years I washed dishes from 11:00 till 1:00 each day of the school year for that to pay for my "scholarship."

NJC Was it your choice to go to this Dominican high school?

MF Oh very much. Because of my work at the parish church with the newsstand, I became very close with both the nuns and the priests each of whom had their parish houses there. I definitely would want to have continued in this special parochial environment if I was fortunate to be able to go there. I loved it and was very involved in the high school. I was the president of both the freshman and senior high school classes there. I had leadership skills that rose to the occasion at a young age. I loved doing what I did through high school in different ways, both in athletics and in other ways to show my leadership. I loved seeing other people follow and do some good things together. That's how I see sports and that's how I see other responsibilities of mine: to encourage other people to follow the kind of things which I believe are best, and to hopefully see that they excel and ultimately meet the goals.

NJC So early on you were preparing for this life even though you didn't know it at the time.

MF I guess you would say so, I loved my childhood and high school period and it gave me confidence in my leadership skills. In fact, the Rotary Organization recognized those leadership skills of mine nationally, so it gave me both a challenge as well as opportunity for in my adult life to take those skills and hopefully present them in ways that will be beneficial to those different institutions and organizations which I have been affiliated.

NJC. What were your favorite subjects in school?

MF Well, English, communications, and anything about business. Communications and business is

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what I pursued in my undergraduate program. And then subsequently, in my graduate program, management.

NJC You said you had a scholarship to a university?

MF I had several scholarships offered when I was finishing high school. But I chose a unique way to take my next step. And that was to go to a preparatory school for one year. I wanted to get some experience in a residential program.

NJC Is that a boarding school?

MF It's a boarding school, the Cheshire Academy in Connecticut. I co-captained the football team that year which was number one in the country. And it was a wonderful experience. It introduced me to things for which Madison, Wisconsin didn't expose me to in terms such as meeting students who came from nearly every state in the union. In fact, many of them were raised in that school. Many of them were sons of actors and other people of repute in their particular fields around the country, very respected households themselves. It was a very good orientation to what ultimately then became my college decision. That decision was to accept a scholarship to Villanova University for football. I went there and then something happened that caused me to transfer and continue to do well in football, but also have a beautiful woman in my life. It caused me to give up my football scholarship at Villanova to go back to Wisconsin and play there.

During the summertime leading up to going to Villanova, I was working for Madison, classy new hotel around the Capitol Square. I was working behind the front desk. And one day I saw this most beautiful young lady, who was a summer employee there as well, come up from the bookkeeping office downstairs. She came over behind the desk and we got to meet one another and had a nice visit, I thought. Oh my gosh, she was so beautiful. She lived about 40 miles from Madison. I had gotten her phone number and about three days later I called her and wanted to have our first date. And of course, I assumed she knew who I was, but she didn't. Subsequently, we did have that date and several others over the summertime and, at age 19, we knew we were in love. It was really difficult to go to Villanova in Philadelphia while she was at the university in Wisconsin. We conversed every day telephonically. After 10 o'clock at night, I would call the Philadelphia phone operator and by a few months down the pike, they were able to recognize my voice and knew exactly who I was going to call at this dormitory in Wisconsin. Every Monday, a red rose from me was delivered to her through the whole school year. I didn't want her to forget me in any way. Our friendship grew into a relationship. When we were 21, both sets of parents said we could make such decisions. We were still in school, so I transferred to the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater where we both lived. We married in 1967 and we just had our 51st wedding anniversary. We worked and played until we finished school.

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NJC Did you play football there, too?

MJF Oh yes, very much so. Yeah, we were a championship team.

NJC Which position did you play?

MF I was wide receiver, so I was always out there to catch the quarterback's good throws-hopefully, or to throw some good downfield blocks at times as well.

NJC You speak lovingly of your wife, Jeannie, and you have children?

MF Yes, we have three children, Amy, Matthew and Nicholas. And of course, they are no longer kids. They are indeed adults, each of whom we're most proud. And we have three grandchildren also.

NJC Very exciting. Your first job outside of college was in law enforcement?

MF It was in law enforcement during the Vietnam War.

NJC How did you get that job?

MF Well, it was during the Vietnam war. The university was very volatile, with dissention about the war. The fact was I had played and had been a leader on that football team, had the privilege to work with others of my classmates as well as team members, of whom many were of different cultures, plus the fact that I had one of my brothers in Vietnam at the time and another in the service not yet to Vietnam, I felt there was a need. I did not get drafted. I think I was 12 numbers away from those that were drafted, so it was the time for me to have the opportunity it afforded to work during this difficult period when there was such challenge occurring on most university campuses. I felt that my experiences as an athlete and as someone who had the leadership skills, that I might be able to offer that to law enforcement. And, lo and behold, I was afforded the opportunity to join that profession immediately the day after graduation. And I'm sworn to secrecy to this hour as to all of what I was involved in during that period. But I can tell you that it was an extraordinary time for me to do what I was afforded the opportunity to do.

NJC Who did you work for ? The city...

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MF Yes, I worked for the city, but not really because I had other responsibilities. It was just an extraordinary time.

NJC How long did you do that?

MF A little bit over a year. I had to move aside from what I was doing for reasons that, again, I shan't discuss, but I went into the state police academy and taught there. It was then I made the decision that I wanted to find a career direction that still would be public service in a sense, community service most certainly, so I chose non-profit work - specifically, the American Cancer Society. I thought at my young age if I could have selected as a place to work beyond what I was doing in law enforcement, that there would be this opportunity to lead, to actually manage something. And not to just be selling insurance or doing these other things that most graduates were afforded at that given time. So, I got into the non-profit business by becoming area executive director of the American Cancer Society in Wisconsin. I was responsible for numerous counties and all the organizations within each county for the Cancer Society. Each county had its own unit, its own structure, its own leadership and its own volunteer group. I was responsible in each of those different counties for the everyday management of the work that was necessary to be done to support the mission of the Cancer Society.

And then after a year and a half or so from those 12 different counties, I then was transferred to the most populated part of Wisconsin and likewise had a similar responsibility to manage, you know, all that region and all those different counties within that region. And again, a person as young as I was to be able to do what I was doing, it allowed me to see that my strengths were utilized in ways that hopefully benefitted these different organizations. And of course, whether it be with my first position within the Cancer Society or the second, each afforded me the opportunity to work with boards of directors. If I were to count the number of boards that I have had the privilege to work with over my life, it would be a goodly number. And I learned at an early age how to relate with people that gave their time and gave in all other different ways to support a very important cause. It really was so helpful to me and hopefully to the organization for which I was affiliated. I had one sister who was living out here in Arizona. I think it was Thanksgiving one year, that my wife Jean and I and our two children came out here to visit my sister and her family. It was the first time we had been exposed to Arizona, and of course, we just loved every bit of what we experienced in that short time that we were here. We said to each other, "Someday it would be fun to come back here, wouldn't it?" Well then, lo and behold, I had the opportunity to transfer with the American Cancer Society and become state director of all programs here in this state. That's what really propelled us to move here.

NJC To Arizona?

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MF Yeah.

NJC So you also decided to study management, and to also learn how to interact with volunteers.

MF Oh, volunteers are my life. I just have been so fortunate to have had just endless numbers of people who have given so much to the causes or the missions or the organizations for which I have been associated. Nothing of the order that we accomplished at any institution could have been without volunteerism.

NJC I can imagine. I read something about an International Cancer Conference that you attended. What was that about?

MF We established here in Arizona the International Cancer Conference and I was its executive director for several years. It was biennial, every other year. And we always hosted it at Pointe Tapatio. Again, it was part of the whole Cancer Society program that I ultimately was responsible for. With all the wonderful oncologists and chemotherapists and all other professionals of Arizona, we formed this International Conference. It called for the very best researchers and practitioners in all these different disciplines within the cancer field to come together once a year, or once every other year here, to have this multiple day conference. And it was just dynamite. It was so important at the time for this kind of collaboration and sharing of what was happening in all parts of the world about the disease, what they were learning, what challenges they were having. All these presenters whether they spoke English or not, we accommodated them in such a fashion that everyone was able to really get something. We'd have about 800 professionals in attendance at each of these conferences.

NJC That's very impressive. And I can see where that experience translated into other things you did later in your career which we'll be talking about.

MF Yes.

NJC And then you moved to the Diabetes Association??

MF Well, not really. After the American Cancer Society opportunities that were afforded me here over the course of those years that I was with ACS, some of the leaders of the organization for this state, were themselves very involved in the arts. They encouraged me to go into the arts and, contribute what I could in that field coming from the business side of the ledger. The opportunity

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presented itself with the Phoenix Art Museum, and so I became assistant director for development with the Phoenix Art Museum. I was there just shy of four years and of course I was responsible for its fundraising, its volunteer cultivation, and all the community outreach.

During that same period, several endocrinologists had come to me and had shared their concern about the fact that we were one of the few states in the nation that hadn't yet established an Arizona Diabetes Association chapter. Every day, of course, they were managing so many diabetic patients, many of whom were Native Americans. A very large percentage of Native Americans are challenged with that disease. They queried me as to whether I would be interested in helping them establish such a chapter and I said absolutely. I got permission from the museum director for me to also be the executive director of the Arizona Diabetes Association. As we started it, I had an office over at St. Joseph's Hospital. I would leave the Phoenix Art Museum late in the afternoon and then I would go over there until 9:00 or 10:00 at night. I would work on establishing the organization from border to border in our state and set up units and chapters in each of the counties and so forth. On weekends I would travel to these different counties and meet with different doctors and nurses that were trained in this particular field. We would present public programs or training for other professionals in the field. So again this was an opportunity that I thought was right for me at the time to help this particular cause that was critically important and to establish such an organization that has prospered subsequently and continues to service residents from border to border in the state in the way that we hoped when we started the organization.

NJC How long did you do both of those jobs?

MF With the Diabetes Association along with the Phoenix Art Museum, about four years, and then I selected a person full time to manage the executive directorial position at the Diabetes Association.

NJC So next you moved to the Heard. Did you come to the Heard in the same capacity as the Phoenix Art Museum?

MF No, I came as a business administrator. I was responsible for the day to day operations of the institution. We had a wonderful director who was an anthropologist very much involved in the science and a very creative human being he was. He afforded me the opportunity to see to the day to day operations and working with volunteers. Few other institutions had, at the time, the extraordinary number of volunteers we had at the Heard. They were involved in all parts of the operation, whether it was doing special events, doing the Indian Fair, working in the library or working with the visitor service. They were involved in all facets, as you know because you

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were one for a long time, and in that organization. Hundreds and hundreds of women gave so much to that institution. (note: Mike is speaking of the interviewer.) And we would never had become what we became without it; nor could its institution thrive today without the level of volunteers. I was business administrator for just shy of three years.

NJC Had the Heard had a business administrator before that?

MF No. It was because Dr. Houlihan, it's director, felt that he didn't have the strengths needed to manage the financials, development and ongoing operational factors of the institution. He looked to me to take responsibility in that regard and to work closely with the volunteer organizations and community outreach as well. Those three years plus were very important for me in terms of getting to know the organization and to understand its real strength and its real purpose. Then the opportunity presented itself for me to apply for the directorial position when the director resigned to go take another position.

NJC Dr. Houlihan was quite forward thinking because I imagine today most every museum has a business manager...

MF Well, I was the first, I guess you might say, almost in the industry. I was coming from a different angle, from a different background, from a different experience to help an organization strengthen what otherwise maybe would not have been done at that given time. Yes, he was very forward thinking and to this hour, both he and I are wonderful friends. He's so proud of what we've been able to accomplish in the different decisions that we've made in our profession.

NJC Once you were in this position, did you feel you needed more education for it?

MF Well, certainly, and I think that way to this hour. I'm one who wants to be a lifelong learner and to gain as much as I can from people of scholarship or artists or people who present themselves in any fashion and come with any kind of experience.

To answer your question, Sandra Day O'Connor was the chairwoman at the time that I was selected to be director. I had just completed my master's program and had begun to be an adjunct professor at ASU. So, what I felt needed to happen to balance the science and the arts with my strength was to establish a new position. I hired a woman from the University of Wisconsin with her doctorate degree in anthropology. She came in and spent a couple of years helping to serve in that sort of bridge capacity to always make certain that the knowledge about the science was woven into the whole mission and program of the institution. And over that course, I learned a lot from her. I learned a lot from the other colleagues, and as the museum kept taking on new

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responsibilities, particularly with Native Americans, I had by then the confidence and convictions necessary to be the leader on behalf of our institution on many of these Native American opportunities that were presented us. I never felt as though I was not up to speed to that level necessary to be effective at helping lead this institution.

NJC Besides your work at the museum during that time, I know you were active with other activities in the City of Phoenix that were important to the City of Phoenix. Could you talk about some of those activities?

MF Certainly. The now retired director of the Phoenix Art Museum, who at the time I was at the Phoenix Art Museum was a colleague of mine (I think we joined the museum just a few weeks apart) Jim Bellinger, and I established the Downtown Arts District. We really worked with the mayor at the time, Terry Goddard, in identifying the region that was the arts district. Who should it be representing and what it really meant in terms of developing a district that would give opportunity for its growth? It has over these years become a major arts community in itself. So, I was proud of that. I was co-chairman of the downtown redevelopment and so with Bud Jacobson, who was the other chair, we worked hand in glove together for two years on that whole initiative to improve the whole aesthetic and functional dimensions of Central Avenue going all the way down to downtown.

And then I was chairman of the Terminal 3 interior aesthetics for that wonderful new building when it was constructed. I was responsible for the choice of all the artwork and all of the establishment of relationships with the different institutions that I got to loan us works. We, of course, took responsibility for the exhibition of them throughout Terminal 3. We purchased all the wonderful textiles that at the time were hanging down the escalators and so forth. I literally hung those with scaffolding. So that was a point of pride at that time. Also, I think the last that comes to mind is when The Phoenician was built. We took the responsibility for that property as well as for another property that was being built at the same time by the same developer. We took responsibility for all the interior aesthetics of the building. So my wonderful exhibit designers and other artistic professionals who were my colleagues worked in tandem with the development firm and went all over the globe selecting the artwork and creating the kind of extraordinary presentation that became what anyone experienced when they walked into The Phoenician, or when they went into their rooms if they were guests. So that was a wonderful opportunity to extend the museum's resourcefulness in the community in this fashion.

NJC And so in your spare time, you were also active in professional organizations, especially in the Western Museum Association. Can you tell us what you did with the Western Museum Association?

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MF Well, the Western Museum Association consisted of 19 western states and is the branch of the national organization, at the time called the American Association of Museums. Today it's called the American Alliance of Museums. It is the single most respected professional association that pertains to our profession of museology. In the western region, I was president for two different terms and was selected as the first recipient of the top award that the Museum Association gave at that given time. We caused the states to have a very different relationship with one another and a greater collaboration and a resourcefulness sharing what needed to happen at that period in the history of our institutions of the West. I really took as my responsibility, our board's responsibility on behalf of the western region, to really create that kind of fostering of a true professional relationship with each of the institutions within each of the states. So, it was a wonderful period of my life professionally. It was an opportunity for me to meet many other peers of mine in the profession. And, of course, I became a member of the national board and served for six years as a member of the American Association of Museum Boards. That responsibility again caused for me to have opportunity to work closely with extraordinary peers of mine from all over the country at any other institution that they were affiliated with. So, it was a growth opportunity for me.

NJC And all of this work with the Heard, the western museums, and so forth, led you toward the end of your time at the Heard, into one of your signature achievements - your work with the Native American Grave Repatriation Act, NAGRA. Could you give us some background about that - how you got involved, how that got started and how you involved the Heard in that?

MF Well, the biggest challenge that the Honorable Sandra Day O'Connor presented to me when I was hired, was to see that the museum became, she always said, much more than a club - a community driven and community-based institution. She, and all others of us, and you as volunteers, and so forth, all felt that we had immense opportunity and responsibility to have a unique relationship with the Native American community. We have 22 tribes, for instance, in Arizona. What could we do with those tribes to have them become much more a part of our institution? We were truly nationally, and even internationally, exemplary in how we had such a relationship with tribal representatives from each of these 22 tribes over the course of my whole tenure there. I felt this was really going to distinguish the institution and cause us to do the kind of programming, which we ultimately did, that was of such national and international interest.

Native American relationship fostering and sense of responsibility that I felt on behalf of the Heard, led to my going before the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs in 1988. Senator John McCain of Arizona, a youngster at the time, and Senator Dan Inouye of Hawaii were the co-chairs of this commission. They had just reported bill 187 to the Senate which was about how the Native Americans of this country would relate differently with the museum community. The

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American Association of Museums was hugely against a lot of what this proposed piece of legislation would become if it were to be passed.

NJC Well that's interesting.

MJ Yes

NJC They were opposed to it?

MF Oh, yes. They were opposed to it for various reasons. I went before the two senators and their commission and I delivered a talk about why there was concern as to what they had prepared in terms of a piece of legislation. At the tail end of my communication to them, I said that I proposed something, and I would see it was accomplished if this commission supported it, not financially, but in all other ways that would reflect their commitment, to allow for what I was proposing. It was to be an 18-month period under the auspices of the Heard Museum, as its director, that we would be responsible for a national dialogue on museums and Native American communities. It was all about relationships and they were flabbergasted. The commissioners felt who's this guy from Arizona thinking that he can resolve something that's been a problem for decades? And so, I challenged them, and I said, "All I'm asking of you is a thumbs up. You support it, I will make it happen." And two weeks later, I got a call from both senators. They both said they are stopping bill 187 until we completed our work, which had to be done by the end of February of 1990.

So, I began to put together all the strategy necessary to make this national dialogue be as important as it needed to be and as respected as it needed to be. I raised, probably in a month's time, a half million dollars to see that we had the funds in place to make it happen. We also had, as you may remember, Senator Barry Goldwater Center for Communications and I put this all under the aegis of the Barry Goldwater Center for Communications. With his spirit in mind, we proceeded to put together this national dialogue. What it ultimately represented was that there were six representatives each selected by three different factions: Of the 400 and some tribes of our nation at the time, the Native American community had to agree on six representatives who would fulfill that responsibility for all the others. Likewise, with the scientific community of anthropology, and archaeology, and biology, they all had to agree on six, two from each of those different disciplines, so six scientists who would represent the entire scientific community nationally. And likewise, with the museum community, we had to agree to six leaders. And I wasn't one of those six. I was the administrator of the whole process, so I was not one of the 18 in the sense. I was directing the whole...

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NJC That was like an impossible task.

MF It was the most exasperating period of my life and I'm sure my color hair today is because of what I went through then. But I will say that it resulted in the most revolutionary movement and change in our industry of anything that has happened in the past century. And it caused for a relationship to be understood, fostered and to respected which would never have come without the work of so many people who made the kinds of advances that resulted. I delivered our report and our recommendations to the commission on February 28th of 1990, and lo and behold, it then translated into the eventual, still in the same year, 1990, NAGPRA, the Native American Graves and Protection Act. This Act applied to all institutions, universities, museums, any entity that hosts objects of the living culture.

We have today a whole different responsibility, and rightfully so, in how we manage and respect the ownership of these objects in terms of whose property they really are if they are of a human remains, burial goods, sacred ceremonial objects, or cultural patrimony. We all know how to manage things very differently today. Part of the Act applies to all the museums in this country that have any Native American collections whose origins of the collections they do not know. With the help of the federal government that paid for a lot of that, every museum in this country was required to establish a database that so noted exactly what they had of living culture. And then, of course, on the basis of what they had, if there were funerary objects, if there were burial goods, if there were human remains, etc., they then had a very clear responsibility as to how they would relate with a living culture and who might be responsible for that particular collection.

Some, because they are of a human remains matter, were returned if the tribe wanted them to be returned, and appropriately blessed and cared for in the fashion that they chose; and likewise, with other ceremonial objects and sacred objects. We have very specific responsibilities when such objects come to our institutions to inform the tribes and to call for them to have a very clear relationship with the rightful owners. So, it truly established a whole different sense of responsibility for the scientists, for the museum professional and for members of the living culture.

And of course, what it has done subsequently was exemplary. Now numerous other countries have followed suit and have mirrored this legislation as it relates to their cultural groups. I've spoken all over the globe on the Act, and the processes that have led to that have helped other countries think of their responsibility to honor and respect living cultures. At the end of the day, it's not only about Native Americans, it's about all cultures. For instance, here in Phoenix I helped chair the relocation of Vietnamese families into our community. To think today we have so many Vietnamese living in our community and so if there were to be an institution that took

responsibility for the collections of representing those peoples, likewise they would be treated similarly to how we are treating the Native American culture.

NJC It's an amazing accomplishment. And I realize it took a lot of people to make it happen.

MF It did.

NJC And it did require the leadership skills, as I've said, that you've acquired all the way along in your career.

MF Well, you gotta be someone who dares. You do things that other people think can be done and I've always been that way and continue to want to be that way. I wanna push the envelope and believe that we all have responsibilities and opportunities greater than what we think we have. And so yes, it was really tough. It was so difficult. Three years I went, with none of my peers talking to me because they thought I was giving away the farm. When, in fact, it was not that at all, and they recognize that today. But at the time, they thought I just wanted to repatriate everything which had nothing to do with that.

NJC Empty the museums.

MF That had nothing to do with repatriation in that sense. It had to do with one word that does start with an R and that is respect. And we had gone decades and decades with disrespect shown our living culture. When you think at that time, there were over 32 museums in our country which were displaying human remains behind glass collections.

NJC I remember that.

MF And that kind of occurrence was happening. Our institutions, including the Heard, had in our collections sacred and ceremonial objects that truly needed to be provided to the tribes for them to be able to continue to do their own ceremonies, and to carry out their own cultural responsibilities to their generations forward, as well as out of respect for their generations of the past. And here we were, institutions that were hosting this stuff that they needed to be able to bless and to be able to do other things that were important in their culture. So yes, it was really tough. It was a time where people didn't fully understand the real ultimate intention and the ultimate goal in the whole effort. Certainly, the government probably didn't know fully what its responsibilities would be with this passed legislation from a financial standpoint alone; but thankfully they have supported the processes through this whole elongated period since 1990.

All of us are in a position today that we would otherwise have not been in.

The first person I reached out to when I came home after the proposal to do this, and before I had gotten the thumbs up from the commission, was the dean of the law school here at the time, Dean Paul Bender. I met with him and I shared with him what I had presented to the commission. And I needed his help. He had been the Solicitor General in the past and he knew of my commitment to improving the relationship with Native Americans across the country. He agreed to help, and he served as the facilitator. He was the professional facilitator at the front of the table, if you will, when we went through such a difficult time. The first multiple day, three sessions that we had with these 18 people, in breaks even, they wouldn't talk to each other. You could cut the air with a knife it was so thick. There were such feelings that were strong; each had its own camp. Each felt they were right. And each felt this national dialogue was not going to result in anything. That was really troubling to me seeing that attitude and that demeanor.

The first three sessions of multiple days we didn't get anywhere: it was all factionist. So, I reached out to a medicine man, the elder of elders out at Salt River Pima/Maricopa tribe and met with him. I explained the whole process that we were going through, the difficulty we were having and the likelihood that it was not going to go anywhere. I asked him if he would do me the immense favor of only receiving these 18 people, (I wouldn't be there nor Dr. Bender, and no one else of all of the senate members who were represented on the commission and their staff that were sitting around the room at each of these meetings). I had to pay for all that staff. Anyhow, I asked this special favor of the medicine man and he embraced it. I was given a bus from the Catholic Diocese and I drove the bus with those 18 people out to the Res to his home and I dropped them off. I was to get a phone call when it was time to pick them up and it was like about 10 o'clock at night. They spent the whole day with him, and it was magical. It was so spiritual. It was so critically important. We wouldn't be where we are today if that medicine man didn't cause for the fusion of thought and respect.

NJC That was a brilliant idea.

MF It was the last straw. I mean, I didn't know what else I could do. It was wonderful. And then the fourth session which we had was wholly different, and everyone had their sleeves rolled up and literally or figuratively they were all wanting to work together. And, you know, it really resulted in the kind of document that the commission members of the Senate never imagined we would achieve. What resulted with the NAGPRA legislation was terribly important for our country because we all need to understand what our responsibilities are to each other. The types of institutions that museums are, and the kinds of disciplines that study living cultures such as archeologists, anthropologists, and biologists, needed to know more than they did as to their

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responsibilities to a living culture. It was worth every bit of the hard work and the loss of friendships and other such things to make something as important as that come to reality.

NJC Because you knew it was right.

MF I knew it was right. That's why I went before the Senate. The members of the board of the American Association of Museums, when I represented all of them, didn't know that at the tail end of my presentation, I was going to say what I said about proposing this national dialogue. It was almost what I would call a spontaneous movement in my little noggin at the time to try to do something different, because otherwise we would've been led by legislation that was just pathetic.

NJC So after that, you were probably ready for a different kind of a challenge, so can you tell us what took you to the University of California at Berkeley?

MF Well, several things occurred around that time of 1990. I was very concerned about my wife and her health. She had yet to be diagnosed but was very ill and so we were trying to manage that. Then the chancellor from the University of California at Berkeley reached out to me and asked me if I would dare to help him. He had the opportunity, because of two benefactors, to do something that the university had never done before. And that was to go outside its own boundary of its campus and do something of significance within the East Bay. That opportunity was to develop a new educational institute that would take responsibility for the development of two new museums as well as the management of some other properties that the University had off campus. His problem was that he couldn't get his faculty to support him, particularly his faculty of scholars of the different sciences, as well as the head of the library and other people of real distinction within his leadership corps. He couldn't get them to support the opportunity to establish a major development off the campus of the university. So, his need was to have someone like myself to work on them and see that they understand the bigger picture of being able to share the resources of the university in a different way than the university had ever tried to do. And of course, as you would imagine, it being the top paleontology study anywhere in the world, they had the best of scholars and the best of collections in geology, biology and anthropology. The collections were so immense and important that the University of California at Berkeley as host, had not had the sense of liberty to share the way that the opportunity presented itself by these two benefactors that wanted to build these two museums in the East Bay.

I remember I was on the tarmac at midnight at our airport, meeting in a private plane with the leadership of the university. They were trying to convince me that this was the time and place for

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me to come and help them do something. So, I brought the idea back to my bride and as I said, she was not a well person then. I thought that the Bay Area had wonderful medical communities and that maybe I could find some support for her to diagnose what was indeed a very serious condition for her. I accepted the position and Jean and I and our children moved there and developed the two new museums. You know, it took me probably a year to cultivate the kind of support that I needed from each of these different disciplines and the leadership. But they came around ultimately and it resulted in a 40-million-dollar wonderful East Bay series of institutions that thrives to this day.

NJC Did you have a hand in designing the buildings for it?

MF One of the two I did. The other was designed pretty much before I came. It's really a beautiful setting and is part of a whole mixed-use campus. Saks Fifth Avenue and other wonderful retail and restaurants and waterways made it a real gathering area, and certainly the two museums became the centerpiece of them. One of the museums was dedicated to art, science and culture, so it allowed for me to be able to show the strength of the university's collections. It wasn't just to show the collections, but to educate people about them and about the bigger pictures of their ongoing learning.

During the same time, many of these scholars that I had to relate with were themselves probably the age that I am today and were retired. When I did have to meet, I would do so at the faculty club because every day, hundreds of these internationally renowned people of all different disciplines would take the advantage of going to the faculty club and relating with one another there, playing cards and having a smorgasbord lunch given by the university. It was just a wealth of talent that I was so amazed with and concerned about. So, I went to the chancellor one day and I said, "What are we doing with this phenomenal strength of intellect that are just coming to be fed food? What can we do differently and take advantage of them still?" And he said, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "I want to create a mentorship program." So that's what I did. I created a whole Bay Area mentorship program where we identified all these different scholars that are in retirement, where they could be invited to participate in different other organizations. Whether it was the Boy Scouts or a different museum we lined them up with all these different other groups. They began to again be out with people and share their wealth of knowledge. It was so inspiring and touching and really was meaningful. And it resulted in an idea I ultimately created elsewhere that we can talk about, I'm sure.

NJC Besides the actual fundraising, what were some of the other challenges of this project at Berkeley?

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MF From the fundraising it wasn't a problem at all. The money was there. We had two benefactors, so I didn't have to raise a dime. They gave me 40 million dollars to do what was needed to operate the place and to build the buildings and make it happen. The biggest challenge was to make it happen and to get the support of the university from the faculty standpoint because the chancellor didn't. And without that, it would never have happened. I worked for a full year in the halls of each of these different disciplines quartered on campus, meeting with the chair of the department and all his or her people that were of such importance, including the heads of the library and so forth. And I had to convince each of them, that we were worthy of this kind of extension of the university. You know the university, particularly Berkeley, has this attitude that they're the best. I had to be that crazy and wild person that came in to convince them that a little bit of an extension of what they do could reach even that many more people and cause for that many more good things to be known about their work.

NJC When you left Berkeley, did you feel like you had accomplished what you set out to do there?

MF Absolutely. It happened. We created the institutions. We created an extraordinary staff of my colleagues, many of whom are still there carrying the mission forward and doing other good things with it. You know, we definitely caused for some goals to be met. You know, I never think really that a goal or a potential can fully be me. So I'm never satisfied with what is accomplished; but I can tell you that for the time and the particular place that it became, it was really very well received and, of course, having private support as we did with these two benefactors, one of whom just died very recently, the support continues. I'm very proud of what we've accomplished, but it is a WE. I leaned on a lot of people to help make it happen.

NJC It's important though that you were a facilitator to get all these people on board. That's an important thing also.

MF Yeah.

NJC So now we're off to the Museum of Northern Arizona where there were definitely different types of challenges.

MF Yes,

NJC What were the immediate needs when you arrived?

MF When I first received the phone call to even consider the position, from the governor at the time,

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the concern was that that museum was about to go under.

NJC The governor of the state?

MF Yeah.

NJC And why was he involved?

MF Because it was in the place where he was born and raised, Governor Babbitt, and an institution in which the Babbitt family was very involved. They loved it and were very concerned about it. It continues to be one of the most important historical institutions we have in the state, and the properties are extraordinary - several which are on the Historic Register. It is a jewel of an institution that has had problems over many, many years on how to keep it funded at the level that it deserves. I was forewarned that they needed someone, hopefully like myself, to take the challenge of trying to get it on a financial solid base of support, and to do other things for the institution to better meet its potential. So, Jean and I and the kids moved there and were there seven years. As I said in terms of what I learned from Berkeley, I was so touched, so inspired, so moved by seeing people of a senior age that want to continue to give and want to continue to learn. We had 400 acres at the Museum in Northern Arizona that had yet to be master planned. I conceptualized an intergenerational museum campus, the first of its kind anywhere in this country. And, of course, everyone thought I was nuts.

NJC You seem to have that reputation a lot.

MF I do. I'm a nutty guy. But it was an idea to find other ways for this campus to be more part of community and therefore possibly supported greater than it was by community. Always I think of community; I'm thinking of all the west, not just Flagstaff. The board was interested in my ideas and we worked through them with wonderful other professionals. What we created hasn't been matched anywhere in the museum community. We were the first museum anywhere to establish its own high school. We had a charter public high school, called the Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy. During that time, it was one of three exemplary high schools which the federal government used as examples, publicly, all over our country.

It was because over a muffin on a Saturday morning, I met a woman, Dr. Karen Butterfield, who was an instructor at one of the three high schools in Flagstaff. She taught art and was one of the most recently selected, at the time, best teachers of Arizona. I'd never met her before. I called her up and introduced myself, which was within the first year of my being there and asked if I could visit with her. She came with an idea that was part of this whole intergenerational concept

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of developing this arts and leadership academy which we both worked together at then formulating. I was just so enamored with the idea of our having this kind of environment on the museum campus. We met again three hours later and drew out the whole concept. We had literally envisioned exactly how the new buildings would be positioned on our museum campus for it to be the kind of place that our right-brained students of Flagstaff weren't getting in the traditional high school. Many were not going to school any longer for that matter. We created the whole concept, made all the necessary advances with the state, and opened the school the following fall.

NJC Was it on the campus?

MF Right on the campus. We brought up buildings from Phoenix, big portable buildings, that served as the different classrooms, the different performing arts studios and science classrooms; it was phenomenal. Then I built a large addition to the museum building itself, the historic building, I called a discovery center. It was a performing arts center, a multi-purpose space, with theater seating that could go back and forth into the wall when you had a need for other use of the wonderful big space. And that's where all the performing arts activities would occur and where we had parents and family members come and experience what the students were creating themselves. It was art and leadership centered. We had to do all the curriculum that is required by the state, but we had over 400 plus applicants to teach. We selected 38 of them from all over the globe. We had them from Puerto Rico and Bolivia; they were just phenomenal. The wonderful thing about it was that it was totally integrated in the way of life of the museum environment. All my scientific staff, my biologists and pedagogues, they taught a class in the school. Every one of my staff knew every student by at least first name. It was a total integration.

And then literally simultaneous to building and opening that museum as part of this whole intergenerational campus, I went to two other entities to see if they would have interest in another idea I had. And that was to build a senior living center, a full continuum of care facility. I went first to the CEO of the hospital and over maybe a third margarita, he really got on it and loved the idea. And then I reached out to another very important person at the time and that was the president of the university, a lovely woman. I was thinking that the senior living center and their nursing school would have just a natural fusion. And she loved the idea. And then the CEO of the hospital and I went all over the country and looked at probably a dozen different senior centers at the time to be inspired by them; and to see what worked, or didn't work, and what kind of place we wanted to create. We knew we didn't ourselves have the experience to make it happen. We had to find another entity. So, we found a wonderful not for profit organization up at Minneapolis. I proposed that we start our own LLC, our own business entity non-profit to own and manage this operation, with the outfit from Minnesota being responsible for the day to day

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operation - staffing and so forth because it was their field of specialty. I had to raise 30 million dollars for which we found funding, and we created just an extraordinary facility.

NJC Sounds like an accomplishment for Flagstaff.

MF Yeah, it really was, and there was such a need. My idea, coming from Berkeley was to fill this place with seniors who wanted to continue to grow and give to our museum. I wanted retired scientists of different disciplines, and other people, artists and so forth, to become residents for the long haul. It was a continuum of care, so they could live in the 77 independent bungalows in the beautiful woods if they're well, or we had a beautiful lodge with indoor pool and the whole nine yards. As their circumstances changed in life, many others like this, they would move into that environment. It was never ownership. It was all rental. I didn't want to have people that couldn't always afford it and it's 100% full. That's what's meaningful to me. When I go up there infrequently as I do, I walk through the halls and I see an extension of the museum. We have exhibits, displays, and beautiful glass and wood construction in all these different areas of this multiple wing facility. They are allowed take collections of the museum out of the bowels of the institution and present them here.

NJC Get them out where people can...

MF Get them out so people can appreciate them, particularly seniors. We did so many things that were at the time, 1996, ahead of the curve a little bit compared to how senior living has evolved to become what it is today. There were many senior living centers, I don't want to say that, but it certainly was a unique approach that we took. And, of course, for it to be on the museum grounds, I assigned a full-time staff member to be the programmer for the senior center. She did all the programs continuously within the center in their lovely environment which offered a whole diversity of experiences for the seniors. It was so rich. Of course, the seniors were bused over to different programs at the museum and they would always come to our openings, those that were well enough to do that. They were just proud of being on the museum campus.

It's called The Peaks. And it looks right out onto the most sacred peak of the Hopi with a great deal of Native American meaning. Many of the nurses' aides and other professionals are themselves Native American. They didn't have the opportunity back then to be educated and to truly have a profession. They're working in this environment, having gone to school getting different levels of degrees, and now working in the very environment that was created to support the whole of Northern Arizona needs. What moves me often is that I see Native Americans themselves that are being cared for in the skilled nursing and other facets of care. So, it's really quite special. And then added to that intergenerational campus, we built a residential

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neighborhood of all independent family homes.

NJC Single family homes?

MF Yeah, it's called Coyote Springs. It's right on the museum campus. They were required, and I was the guy that had to make certain that they followed the architectural requirements, to use the indigenous materials of the region. The architect had to be inspired by the founder of the museum's home and outbuildings which were fully restored that are now on the Historic Register. All the homes in this Coyote Springs area, each of which is valued at greater than a million dollars today, are reflecting this kind of respect for the region and for the founder of our museum.

And as I just alluded to, we were fortunate to have one donor fund and be very involved daily, in the whole restoration of the historic buildings of the museum property. There are 57 buildings on the museum campus, 22 of which were either on the Historic Register or at that point of being able to be on the Historic Register. All of them needed to be restored. That was important to revitalize the campus.

Simultaneous to that and to the whole museum itself, I continued to do fundraising; it's particularly hard up north. So, I don't purport to say that we ended our tenure there with a hundred million endowment or anything of that sort. There is always a need to get new monies to support the operations of the museum. But it deserves it because, as I said at the outset, it is truly one of the most important historic facilities we have in our state. The Colton's established it and amassed the collection. Over time all these other scientists, researchers from the whole Colorado Plateau have been intricately involved in the museum at work studying about this part of the American West. It's just critically important and thankfully, so many good things have happened subsequent to my leadership there. I am proud of where it is and hopeful for what it yet can be.

NJC So you could say that during your tenure at Museum of Northern Arizona, you accomplished many things on a lot of different levels other than just build up the museum.

MF Yeah.

NJC And you had been active with the entire community to enhance and maintain this big institution?

MF That's well said. It was definitely needed. We had to get out of just being known as this museum as you head to the Grand Canyon. We had to be much more integrated into the community and

to be an important institution, whether it's in the classroom or whether it's at the university or elsewhere. We really wanted to be a part, and needed to be, in order to carry out our mission. That was the challenge and opportunity and responsibility. And I'm so thankful that I had a board at the time, none of whom are in leadership there today, every one of whom was in the right position to think along with me, and to advise and mentor and support and let themselves be daring, you know? This was something no other museum anywhere had tried to do. If we were going to do it, we wanted to do it right and we wanted it to be successful.

The school prospered and now within the last, I don't know, three years or so, they've purchased their own property adjacent to the museum's property for them to have more elbow room and opportunity to grow themselves. But it still is doing exceptionally well as a charter public high school. It's meeting a need. I will always remember that was the first reason for thinking there was a need in Flagstaff. Every day for the first year I'd drive by the one mall in Flagstaff and I kept on noticing more and more of the kids hanging out there at early hours in the morning wearing their black coats and their multi-colored hair at the time. This was the period in which they were very expressive. A few trips like that caused for me to stop and talk to them one day. And they were wonderful kids. They just weren't getting it in any one of the three high schools that were in the city. And that was such a statement to me.

I remember calling up the superintendent of the schools who had come to Flagstaff the very day that I moved to Flagstaff and I'd gotten to know him. I asked him, I said, "Hey doc, what are you doing about truancy in the city?" He said, "Nothing." And I said, "Well, hang on, we're gonna do something." All those kinds of kids were the right-brained kids, artistically expressive in all different ways, literally, visually, performing, just super kids. But they were just not challenged. There were 312 or so kids that we had in the school at the time, and it was just so wonderful. To this day I get communication from many of them who have now grown and made choices in their life that are hopefully very much to their liking. But I get Christmas cards from them just out of gratitude for the fact that we gave them choice. We gave them opportunity. And frankly, for many of them, they would never have even finished high school.

NJC Absolutely.

MF The other big thing on my heart is not just the kids, it's the families of the kids. You know, many of these families were having such problems with their kids because they weren't going to school. So, it was therapeutic and supportive for the family as much as it was to the kid himself or herself. And the parents were so appreciative to Dr. Butterfield and me, for what we made happen because it made a whole different environment in the living space of their family.

NJC Another example of pushing the envelope.

MF I guess so.

NJC And time for another challenge and this time a totally different challenge. Tell us about how you got involved with Mohammad Ali.

MF Oh, I'm glad that you reminded me. I need someone to remind me of my different trips here. I got a phone call one day from Lonnie Ali whom I had never met previously. She reached out to me and asked me if I would come and visit and meet with Mohammad and herself. They were interested in what could they do yet in their life to extend Mohammad's life and to do something different. They wanted something in which he wasn't going to be elevated to the mountaintop, but something that was going to be very meaningful to him and what he's known to be, a humanitarian. I accepted her phone call and said that I would happily visit with them both.

I went on a weekend to Bearing Springs, Michigan, which is right across from South Bend, from Notre Dame and met with them. It was just delightful to, of course, have the privilege to do so and to just begin to think with them what that something could be that would be different and yet an extension of Mohammad during his lifetime and post his lifetime. And so, of course, I came up with some ideas. And, I did so from one conversation which I had with Mohammad. He was sitting on the couch to my left and I was at the other end. And I asked him what he considers his most important values in life. He had Parkinson's but he didn't have yet the challenges of the disease that caused for him not to communicate. He was communicating very effectively at the time. And he shared a number of them with me such as conviction, dedication, spirituality and respect. I came up with the idea that anything that we do, whatever the it is that it becomes, (not we because I had yet to make any commitment), it could become this center which should evolve around his values, and be a learning way for the museum and for people.

To make a long story short, I was encouraged by them to apply for the position and I did so. I was the only non-African American that applied, and I was selected. So, we had the opportunity to build what ultimately became over a hundred-million-dollar project for which we had to raise the money. We had to build absolutely the premiere institution at that given time. It was just an extraordinary experience to work daily with Mohammad himself, and to appreciate the kind of humanitarian he is, to travel with him everywhere, and to really to get to know him well.

NJC What kind of roadblocks did you encounter once you were CEO, I mean.

MF I think the greatest roadblock was that I wasn't African American. And people found that to be

very much inappropriate to have the leader of this thing to be someone who was not of their culture or of Mohammad's. That was a continuous hurdle that I had to surpass through my whole seven year plus tenure there, because so many people found it was so strange for there not be an African American being the founding leader of this.

The other real challenge I felt that I had to address right from the get-go, was that I wanted as much African American engagement and involvement in the development of this institution as I could reasonably achieve. There had never been, by the university or other entity in the state of Kentucky, any effort to reach out and to have the kind of engagement that I envisioned I wanted for the development of this institution. I wanted a contractor who was African American, a company to lead this. I needed that. I wanted that to be an example of our respect. So, for nearly a year, every Friday, I would take a box of submarine sandwiches to an African American cultural center in the west part of Louisville to speak with any African American contractor, electrician, plumber, anyone who could possibly be a contributor to the development of this museum from a construction standpoint. I met, provided a submarine sandwich, and began to talk to them about what hurdles they would have to themselves surpass to be able to be part of this humongous undertaking, in terms of having the right kind of license and all those things that would legitimize their engagement.

To make a long story short, I formed an LLC and had four different construction companies, each of which was African American owned that was part of the organization that built this hundred-million-dollar project. I had a construction manager whom I hired, a West Point graduate, very successful in his discipline of management of construction projects. I hired him from outside the region and he, of course being African American, was top drawer. And so those are obstacles that we surpassed over time.

NJC And so now here you are in the desert, taking a job for a museum that has no land, no money, and no collection. Impossible. Talk to us about Scottsdale Museum of the West.

MF Well, it's interesting that when I learned about the opportunity, and others reached out to me to ask if I would be at all interested at returning to Arizona and take on this challenge, it reminded me of occurrences that happened when I was director of the Heard Museum. The then mayor of Scottsdale, Herb Drinkwater, on occasion would come down in his Jeep, pick me up and we would drive north looking at property that someday could become this museum that he wanted the Heard to manage. And anything north of Shea was out of town at the time, so we would drive around in the desert and look at possible sites. I knew 30 years ago what that vision was. To fast forward, when I was contacted about this opportunity, I felt pretty close to what I assumed were the goals that needed to be met. And so, you're right. It was nothing but a dream. It was a dream.

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I thought that this would be wonderful for my wife to have the support system of two of our kids who live here in the region.

And the opportunity was the kind of thing that is right up my alley; to try to make something happen. We moved here and wouldn't you know, two months getting into the business, we had the immensity of the recession. And so, for nearly four years, we had to whisper about this project because, of course, we didn't want the community to think that we were going to be out there raising money or raising excitement for a museum when everyone was struggling as they were. The climate wasn't right. The city was dealing with community issues and so forth. We tucked back and during that period I visited numerous collectors and looked at various sites, 23 different sites. I looked at that land the city owned, and then I got a contractor and architect who gave (because they knew we didn't have any money) their time, resources, and with me they designed three different museums on three different sites.

NJC And no money?

MF With no money. And during that same period, the site for which we did end up building on, was in a court case. The city didn't know if it was even going to be one of those 23 sites available someday. It was in February of 2013 that Jim Bruner, the board chairman of this newly formed 501(c)(3), and I went before the Scottsdale City Council and proposed a partnership whereby the city would give the land and would build the shell of the building; the not for profit would take all responsibility for the interior elements of it and we would be responsible for the day to day operation. And that we would, of course, be very intricately involved in the whole design of the building and to ensure that it met our mission and our goal. We had unanimous support from the city that night.

And so that was the green light needed to proceed and we successfully got to where we needed to be by January of 2015. That's when we opened the museum. It is a building that absolutely is reflective of our commitment to the region. And it's a beautiful building. When we opened it, we didn't own, as you said, one work of art. We only had loaned collections. Now, a few years later, we've had a number of wonderful gifts given to us; but still we predominantly depend on loaned collections from both individuals and institutions to be a storyteller about the American West. Not to be a place of objects, but a place of ideas relative to the region. Historic to the contemporary, even to looking to its future. That's our mission.

NJC Do you feel like your name accomplishes that?

MF I think Western Spirit does accomplish that. I think that that opens up a whole new mindset for

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people to think that. We talk about spirit in so many different ways. We try to identify here in the American West, what that really means and how it can resonate with the visitor and hopefully impact them in a way that's meaningful.

NJC The museum itself has garnered a lot of publicity nationally. Do you feel like it's been accepted by the peer community, the museum community?

MF Very much so. Very much so. I met with the directors of all the major institutions far before we took on the challenge, particularly because I've directed so many of them. I didn't want them to feel as though we were ever going to compete with them or that we would ever be doing things that would be seen as damaging in any way their program or their need, even from a fundraising standpoint. I've never considered, nor have they, that we are competing with one another. In fact, we've had a number of loans from the Phoenix Art Museum and The Heard and so forth. It's a collaborative spirit and very positive. I think that it's positioned well and, of course the fact that we are the youngest Smithsonian affiliate ever selected, it gave us instant integrity and respect on a national level.

Our partnership with Arizona State University has resulted in just unbelievable opportunities and resources from which we have benefitted and vice versa, I might add. They have benefited from our place and our mission and our collections and exhibits. It's a two-way street. All of that suggests that, I think, we have a very bonified museum that has an immense responsibility and opportunity to help educate and entertain people about this American West. This is true for probably any institution in our state. Every institution that I've directed here in Arizona, has had to raise money. It is really challenging to achieve the level of support we need; but the city itself has been very generous, as have many people, to see that we have successfully operated the institution to this day.

NJC Because it's such a young museum, do you see challenges or problems this museum faces in the future, besides the ongoing money situation?

MF I don't know if I consider there to be problems in the future. What's happening right now is that we're part of a major development that is going to take off beginning in November 2019. Around us, there will be a whole new development of two hotels immediately contiguous to the museum, two new city parks and four residential complexes. All that is happening in the immediate area of the museum. It's being called the Museum Square and we are the centerpiece. We're the hub of it. We have positioned this museum to do things in the future that other museums haven't the opportunity to do. We're going to have residential area that is a stone's throw away, literally, across the street from us. We're going to have two multi-storied hotels, a

Marriott and a Hyatt, that are going to be right there. We will be able to service their guests in all these different ways. We're going to be able to do what we did at The Phoenician. We're going to be able to select the art for the interior of any of the public areas of any of these buildings. The museum is not going to ever be seen as only a four-walled place. The lovely outdoor spaces in these new complexes in these park environments, will be opportunities for this museum to do wonderful programming that should help people have fun, and be educated about this region. To think it's going to be a revitalization of this part of downtown Scottsdale that's so necessary. I think the future of the museum from the standpoint of its community outreach is just phenomenal.

NJC So your challenge is going to be to see that this all gets accomplished.

MF I'm very confident it all will be done and even as soon as the Super Bowl in 2023. That's our goal. So that's not too many years away for all of what I'm describing. Plus, we have a 30 plus thousand square foot addition planned for the museum that will happen simultaneous to the development of the Museum Square. All collectively, it's just going to be extraordinary in terms of it being an environment of living, an environment of learning and entertainment that few communities with a museum have the opportunity to achieve.

NJC I'm convinced it will happen, too.

MF Yep.

NJC To summarize our discussion, besides your parents, could you tell us one or two people that really were strong mentors for you in the long journey.

MF Well, probably it's not for me to say only one or two because every place that I've had the privilege to help lead, there have been wonderful people from whom I have learned so much. But I will, since you're asking to say two. Without question, Bud Jacobson, sort of during his era, was the man of the arts of this state. As unique a man he was, I learned so much from him and the kind of relationship I had with him. I learned so much about the collector he was, and the passion that he had for what he collected. I learned so much about how he represented the arts, how he supported the arts and how he led the arts in the state in all different ways that Bud did over his adult life. I've often said that there would not be the museums today if a number of people like himself and certainly himself, weren't there at the time to have helped The Heard, The Phoenix Art Museum, and all these other institutions become what they have subsequently become, even performing arts.

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We had just a phenomenal number of leaders of the community that really cared about this important dimension of the lifeway in this community and we sadly have lost many of them, but I hope they're never forgotten. I hope this honor to me is really an honor to all of them. The second person is Sam Kitchell. Sam was like a second father to me. He was so helpful in matters that were personal to me at the time, as well professional. I learned so much from him in how he managed his big company. How he knew all of his employees and knew the strength and weakness of each of them. How he continuously supported their personal development in all these different ways. How he hired psychologists and other professionals to build his team, his staff, to be as great as they could be. He was one I always leaned on whenever I wanted to make a good decision on something. He was the first one who I would call or meet with in person and share an idea I had or even a challenge that was before me. And he was always there for me. And he was always with astute responses that just helped me guide my thinking and help make the right decision hopefully. He just was the gentleman's gentleman. And I miss him dearly and I think of him often, as I do Bud.

NJC What would like your legacy to be? What would you like people to have said about your career?

MF I would like my legacy to be the other people with whom I've been privileged to work with, whether they be colleagues that have been part of these institutions that I have led during my era at each of these, or whether they've gone on to do other meaningful things in life. I would like to believe that the time for which I had the opportunity to support them and direct them and reward them and encourage them, has resulted in their successes. I really think that I've just been one person who has never wanted to be thought of in the single pronoun. I'd like to think that it's a We community, it's a We responsibility, it's a We organization that I have always been responsible for. And the volunteers at each of these institutions have likewise been a godsend to me. We would never have accomplished what did without them. I would like my legacy to be seen in other people and not buildings. Not just developing institutions, but creating environs that were conducive for learning, both for the staff as well as the visitor, the user and for volunteers. And that they were places where we had a real love and commitment to show great respect for living culture and in particular the Native Americans.

NJC And for a last question, what would be one thing that you would say to the next generation of leaders?

MF I would want a few things said to them. I think the first that comes to mind is that I would want for them, at whatever period of history it is that they are leading whatever they lead, to think of the most effective way at that given time for their leadership to reflect a cross cultural commitment and a cross cultural respect. And to be ones who teach that with the people whom

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they are leading. Whether it's next year, a decade or multiple decades from now, environments where they work will change and the multiplicity of cultures will continue to grow. I would love to believe that a leader would really feel his or her responsibility to find ways for those different cultures to relate effectively and respectfully and appropriately together. That's one message I would hope to leave. I would hope a leader, if he or she is that, has some similar characteristics that I have. That they want to push that envelope, they want to dare, and they are not satisfied with mediocrity. That they want to do things that at times are risk taking and that they want to do things at times that maybe even the majority think is not worthy of their support. That, in my opinion, is what leadership is. It's really going against the tide sometime in order to have your commitment and conviction realized. I would hope that a good leader has those values, has conviction, has confidence, and has respect. Those are really, with great dedication, important values that a good leader needs.

NJC Excellent. Thank you very much, Mike, it's been a pleasure.

End of Interview

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