

Robert Ray Nicholson Interview
Interviewed by Loren Webb

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Participants: Loren Webb (Interviewer)
Robert Ray Nicholson (Interviewee)

Location of Interview: St. George, Utah

Transcribed by: Susan Mower

Webb: Welcome, everyone. My name is Loren Webb. I am the oral history coordinator with the Washington County Historical Society. Today we are interviewing Bob Nicholson, who is a retired St. George Community Development Director. Today's date is Wednesday, May 14, 2025, and we are in the Community Education Channel studios on the campus of Utah Tech University. So let's begin the interview. What is your full name?

Nicholson: Robert Ray Nicholson. I go by Bob. I have always gone by Bob.

Webb: When did you become interested in city government?

Nicholson: Probably about the time I graduated from Utah State. I actually went to Weber State for three years and then finished a year up at Logan at Utah State. And the job market when I graduated from there, it was 1975, but it was pretty soft. And so I started thinking, well, do I want further education, and the job market was soft. And I had a chance, I applied for scholarships and assistance at University of Texas at Austin. They had what they called the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs which was basically a public policy study place. And I got a scholarship there, and I went there for two years.

Webb: For two years, doing what?

Nicholson: It was similar to public administration but had a little different orientation. It was public policy—how do you evaluate and create public policy.

Webb: And that was in Austin, did you say?

Nicholson: Yes, Austin, Texas.

Webb: When and why did you decide to apply to work at the St. George City Community Development Office?

Nicholson: I applied in 1985. At the time, I was working for Vernal City. I had been working for Vernal City, it was actually Vernal City and Uintah County. They created in

1981 a joint City/County Planning Office, and I was the first director. Vernal City had had a Planner, but the County had not. So I took the job in Uintah County back when the oil shale was booming, and they had that resource development, and it was quite a booming little town.

Webb: Let's backtrack, then. So after you left Austin, where did you go?

Nicholson: My first job was with Ogden City/Weber County, my hometown.

Webb: What year was this?

Nicholson: That was 1978.

Webb: That was your hometown?

Nicholson: Yes, I grew up in Ogden. And at that time Ogden City and Weber County had a joint planning office, and that was my first job. I worked there for three years. I was kind of the County side. They had one director. But then they split it into Ogden City side and Weber County side. And the County had some of the smaller towns, Riverdale, Roy, North Ogden, Pleasant View; and I helped some of the smaller cities in my three-year tenure. Then I took the job in Vernal City/Weber County in 1981 as they were entering quite a boom with oil shale, and they had resource development, a lot of oil wells. Oil was booming.

Webb: And they probably had a lot of money available, right, at that time?

Nicholson: Yes, pretty much. It was a going economy with oil. Oil prices were up, their economy was up. So I started in 1981 in Vernal.

Webb: Doing what?

Nicholson: City and County planning. Each had their own planning commission, like Vernal City had a planning commission, and, of course, City Council. The County had a County Planning Commission and the County Commission, so we were the staff to both groups, and it was enjoyable. But then the oil shale boom died when the federal government, Jimmy Carter was president, they withdrew these what they called synthetic fuels subsidies that they had given out for development of synthetic fuels, oil shale being one. And when they retracted those subsidies, the industry just ended.

Webb: So how long did you work there?

Nicholson: I worked there about four years.

Webb: Four years. And during that time what were some of your accomplishments that you feel like stood out in Uintah County?

Nicholson: I think there's ordinance development, planning. We spent a lot of time developing what we called the Ashley Valley Master Plan, and because the scenario was it was going to be a major boom area nobody saw the end of the oil shale development, and even oil and gas when the price of a barrel of oil dropped, then the oil fields kind of slowed down. So, anyway, we did traditional development of plans for both the City and the County and tried to update their development regulations.

Webb: So when it died, was that when you looked to apply in St. George?

Nicholson: Yes. My wife was a pharmacist at the Smiths Food Store that had just recently opened in Vernal, and I think she was on target to be the manager, but anyway, Vernal winters were pretty cold, it's one of those cold sinks. And we'd been through St. George a few times. And we kind of liked what we saw in the City, in southern Utah, and the climate, and everything. So when I saw the job opening, I jumped at it.

Webb: So what year did you apply?

Nicholson: I applied in 1985, and I started in '85.

Webb: Is that when you became the Community Development Director?

Nicholson: Right.

Webb: What did you see were your duties as Community Development Director for St. George?

Nicholson: There were probably four functions. The planning and zoning was probably the main one. I also had economic development as a responsibility because at that time the County had not created their economic development effort that came years later. So when I started in '85 there were planning and zoning, economic development, supervise the Building Inspection Department, and supervise code enforcement.

Webb: I looked at it today, and it says "Business licensing, planning and zoning, code enforcement, and special event permits. So that's changed?"

Nicholson: That's changed.

Webb: Let's talk about some of those areas that you were involved with during that time, anything that stands out as far as the jobs, the overview or overseeing of those divisions, those four divisions that you talked about—economic development, code enforcement and planning and zoning. So were there three?

Nicholson: And building inspection.

Webb: And building inspection.

Nicholson: The building inspection, it was within the department, and I was the department head. But they were pretty self-sufficient. That was Joe Empey. Many people know and remember Joe who worked for the City. He was the chief building official so he ran the building inspection. It didn't take much involvement on my part. Code enforcement, we had a code enforcement supervisor, who he kind of, I oversaw that and got involved in some of the issues. The main efforts were the economic development and the planning and zoning.

Webb: Those were the two main areas that you were really focused on?

Nicholson: The two main areas. And the planning and zoning was the elephant in the room, you might say. That was the one that took all the time and effort, really.

Webb: What did you see were challenges within your purview as Community Development Director? Where there any major challenges?

Nicholson: There were a lot of challenges. St. George, when I came, started working in October of '86, population was about 17,000. But it had been growing pretty rapidly for a few years, and that growth was coming at us hot and heavy. And so getting the development regulations in order, we had a lot of hillside challenges at that time. We tried to get the development in place to protect the hillside as much as we could, and just development regulations in general, update the City General Plan. We call it the Master plan; it was technically called the General Plan. And so those were the main things. The economic development took some time. We had some successes. We brought in a company that was in the Bay area called Everex. This was probably in the late '80s, '88 or '89. And they were one of the leading microchip companies in the country. They were part of the, *Ink Magazine* at the time had 500 or maybe it was the 50 fastest growing companies, and they were part of that list. They were headquartered in the Bay area, and we made a trip, back then it was the Mayor and Gary Esplin (City Manager), and we visited in their facility. They opened a facility in MillCreek Industrial Park, and they made chips, microchips, for years. But that business was changing, so dynamic, that one product the top of the heap one year, the next year it had been replaced by new technology. So Everex, I don't know how many years it lasted. I don't know if it was 8 or 10 or what it was, but at some point new technology sort of surpassed or pushed.

Webb: Surpassed or pushed them out.

Nicholson: Exactly.

Webb: What do you feel like were your major accomplishments that occurred while you were serving there as St. George City Community Development Director?

Nicholson: Well, I think the main accomplishments were, the City was really trying to decide how to rejuvenate the downtown space. If you can think back to the late '80s in St. George, that block between Main Street and First East on the south side of the Boulevard was basically two-thirds empty. The City had acquired a lot of it through the Redevelopment Agency. The Liberty Hotel was still standing closer to First East. For a couple of years we had hoped that somebody would take the Liberty Hotel and rejuvenate it, but it was just too many structural issues, too many utility issues, and that. So the Liberty Hotel came down. And we tried marketing. We had quite a marketing effort to get somebody to come in to that property. But there was kind of an agreement, and it was good that Karl Brooks was the Mayor at the time, Gary Esplin City manager, that historical preservation would be a great emphasis, in a way it was kind of our vision to maintain it as a unique and special place. So many cities, you get development franchise, architecture, cities all become, they look the same. They've all got the same stores and shops, whatever. So the great thing about St. George, it still had its core of wonderful historic buildings—the Pioneer Courthouse, the Tabernacle, what became the Opera House and Social Hall, and the businesses on Main Street, Greene Gate Village. There was a number of them—Brigham Young Winter Home, just a lot of neat, attractive, historic buildings that the City said could be the emphasis. So in 1989 the City created a Historic District for the six blocks in that core downtown area. Also it was the time we created the Historic Preservation Commission, the same time as the District came in. And then we began to build around the idea of the downtown as a historic district, and it seemed to be a winning formula, I think, and the City Council and everybody was on board. We sort of shared a common vision. And the City bought what was the old Sugar Beet property across from the Post Office, and the community rallied around refurbishing, restoration of the Opera House, and then what we now call the Social Hall and the Art Museum were sugar beet warehouses.

Webb: That's right. It was all U & I Sugar Beet Company.

Nicholson: Exactly. And those were metal buildings. The City bought that and then restored the Opera House which has been a great asset. They called it Pioneer Center for the Arts. You know, we had great community fundraising led a lot by Doug and Elaine Alder, you know, they kind of chaired a lot of that fundraising.

Webb: It's very beautiful, and it attracts a lot of people there.

Nicholson: It's attractive.

Webb: Let me ask you about the south side of St. George Boulevard between Main and 100 East. So the City created what they called the Zion Square Gardens, next to that plaza.

Nicholson: Yes, that plaza.

Webb: And there's Zion's Bank, and after that there's really not much over there.

Nicholson: [Unclear] parking lot for Zion's Bank. And then of course there's the parking structure behind Zion's Bank, to the south. And then if you remember, on the corner of Main and Tabernacle was Williamsburg Bank that was pretty nondescript, and the Jennings family came forward with their proposal to build that Main Street office complex which added a lot of vitality to that. And then the City sponsored a façade renovation program where we matched dollar for dollar, up to about \$7,000, to restore their facades, and we had about two dozen businesses that took advantage of that and restored their facades along Main Street and Tabernacle, and some on the Boulevard.

Webb: Right. And they did some really nice work on the Electric Theater.

Nicholson: Right. So it created a lot of momentum which the City kept up with because then obviously they purchased the Electric Theater, restored that to community use, and that's great. And now we've got other owners and developers and investors that came in and started restoring some of the other businesses. So you know, it's kept downtown St. George pretty vibrant and active. Back in the late '80s, the City motto was kind of "A healthy city needs a healthy heart." And people bought in to that. So they made a lot of investment in the downtown.

Webb: Were there some things that you felt still needed to be pursued that you weren't able to accomplish during your tenure as Community Development Director?

Nicholson: The planning and zoning effort is an ongoing effort. The planning is always ongoing. Every number of years you get new challenges, new things, trends, change, you know. You get like the pandemic and suddenly there's a lot of work-from-home, and home-based businesses explode, just the number of people working out of their homes. So things change, and you have to adapt. So that happens today. Every city is faced with new challenges. And so the planning thing is an ongoing effort, and the same with updating the regulations.

Webb: I think one of the challenges that St. George City has had that's kind of unique is the fact that we have all of these hills and these valleys, and not a lot of routes for placing highways. And that figures in to the overall planning and zoning. So how do you find adequate roads to get to the subdivisions to get to wherever they need to go? How did the City meet those challenges as far as planning and zoning?

Nicholson: That's probably one of the biggest challenges that St. George City has faced forever is negotiating these mesas and hills and putting the roads where you can actually put them at a reasonable cost. And the City has had an active Transportation and Traffic Engineering Department for 40, 50 years, going back, Larry Bulloch and Dave Demas and that group. And looking at traffic demand and trying to stay ahead of it. That's a huge challenge.

Webb: Right. How do you feel about the high density, five-story apartment buildings that are going in practically everywhere in the City today?

Nicholson: They've had some nice ones downtown that's right across from the new Federal Courthouse, called Joule Plaza; it's four stories. But when I was still there we worked with a developer, and we had regulations that said they could go four stories, provided it's mixed use where the ground floor is commercial and the upper floor is residential. So that was one of the first successes, I think, of mixed use.

Webb: Well, the restaurant there—

Nicholson: The Farmstead.

Webb: The Farmstead is very popular. It's become kind of a nice centerpiece for a lot of people to eat lunch there across the street from the Courthouse.

Nicholson: Okay. But those other high rise, that's kind of, either you're going to go vertical or horizontal, and sometimes going vertical is the best solution, especially when you're in an urban, downtown area.

Webb: Were there any other aspects of either planning and zoning or economic development that you were involved with while you were with St. George City that you would like to mention?

Nicholson: Well, we tried to recruit, under the economic development effort, we tried to recruit businesses that would demand skilled workers, which would bring the wage levels up. And we were moderately successful. The City developed the Millcreek Industrial Park out on the east side near the border with Washington City. But that took a while to fill up. It's been filled for a number of years.

Webb: And they did the Fort Pierce Industrial Park, as well.

Nicholson: Yeah, we've gone to Fort Pierce.

Webb: You were involved in that planning, right?

Nicholson: We were, and went out to the gypsum, white dome area, and we were there. We tried to protect the white dome; the Nature Conservancy came in and helped out. They bought quite a bit of acreage; I don't remember the exact amount. So we started the planning on that, and that's started to fill up.

Webb: So we have St. George Industrial Park, Millcreek Industrial Park, Fort Pierce Industrial Park. Did I miss any?

Nicholson: No. I think that's it. And then Tech Ridge, the old airport, is going to be kind of a clean office park, you might say.

Webb: And that reminds me, also, you have the tech area that's over off of South Dixie Drive, what they call the Dixie Commons area. What do you know about that? I understand they've brought in the backup cell phone, what do they call it—cellular cable?

Nicholson: Yeah, it's data storage, or whatever. I think Kay Traveller was the developer for that. Yes, so that—

Webb: Were you involved with any of the planning or zoning on that?

Nicholson: Yes, we were. At the start of that, we did the approval of the plans and buildings.

Webb: So they call it the Dixie Commons area, right?

Nicholson: I don't know exactly what the formal name is. They have that commercial area right nearby that has grown into a lot of commercial shops. There's a couple of restaurants and some other things. Yeah, I know the office park that you're talking about. I'm not sure what the name of it is. But that's become a nice office park.

Webb: What other municipalities did you work for or contract with after retiring from St. George City? And by the way, what year did you retire?

Nicholson: December 2014. So that was somewhere between 28 and 29 years. I started in '85.

Webb: Also, tell us what accomplishments you feel like you made during your tenure with these other municipalities.

Nicholson: I worked with Santa Clara City part time for about six years, and probably seven years with Kanab City. I spent considerably more time with Santa Clara.

Webb: Was this consecutive? You worked six years for Santa Clara, and after you finished there you—

Nicholson: No, no. They were concurrent. And Kanab, it was fewer hours per month, but still I would go out to their meetings. Kanab was a great town for those who've been out to see Kanab. I learned a lot going to Kanab. I didn't realize how many incredible natural wonders there are within an hour of Kanab. I learned to visit a lot of places.

Webb: Tell me just a little about some of the things you feel like you accomplished while you were with Santa Clara and with Kanab.

Nicholson: Well, it was mostly ordinance development and plans, planned development. We updated what they called their South Hills Plan that's out on the southwest areas of Santa Clara. But mostly it was project review, processing, rezoning requests, trying to update standards, and somewhat similar for Kanab—update their development

regulations and also their general plan. They had gone through a major update in around 2010 or something, and then, you know, you try and update the plans at least every five years, so we got involved in that.

Webb: What other civic or religious organizations have you participated in, if any?

Nicholson: Well, I was with a committee called Dixie Scholarship Associates for about four years. We were a committee that had operated for a number of years. I was asked to replace a retiring, one of the members. That was a group that raised money for a needs-based scholarship for students. And one of the things the committee did was sponsor Dixie's Got Talent that went on for years. And then about two or three years ago the Dixie Scholarship Associates, most of us were older people, kind of disbanded. We turned the Dixie's Got Talent thing over to the Alumni, Dixie College, now Utah Tech Alumni Board. So the Alumni continues to run that as a money-making thing. It was a pretty neat event. So we would interview students who had needs, financial needs, so they would probably get four times the number of applicants. They would try and support about ten students a year with their tuition costs. And that was, you know, interesting. And now for about ten years I've been on the Switchpoint Board.

Webb: I'll bet that's interesting. Tell us about Switchpoint.

Nicholson: Well, Switchpoint is a community, it started out mostly as an emergency shelter. They've just opened up the next series of rooms, went from 66 to over 100. I think there's 110 rooms now, the emergency shelter. But at the same time, Switchpoint, trying to be more self-sufficient, has opened up a number of micro businesses. They have a doggy daycare. We have a child daycare that runs 24/7 because our director of Switchpoint, the CEO, Carol Hallowell, she's very dynamic and visionary, and she saw a need for child daycare that was open in the evenings or on weekends where a lot of other child daycares were not, so [she] created the child daycare. There's two thrift stores that make money, and I'm sure I'm leaving some things out. But anyway, Switchpoint has had a great model. It's also done a number of what we call transitional housing. They developed a 55-unit apartment complex called Riverside Village out near the Virgin River on the east side of St. George, not too far from the new Smiths, the Smiths Food Store that's out there on Riverside. Anyway, so there's, that's a low/moderate income apartment complex. People pay a portion of their income towards their rent. Switchpoint has also developed what was a hotel on the corner of Tenth East and Red Cliffs Drive into housing, and now it's being expanded for additional units because there was some vacant land that came with that hotel. They've expanded in to Tooele with a thrift store, shelter, in Salt Lake. Switchpoint manages the wintertime overflow, and we've got some transitional housing projects out near the Salt Lake Airport. And it's expanded into Davis County. People keep coming to Switchpoint, coming to Carol, saying, "Tell us how you did it, come show us." So that's a pretty aggressive organization, and just trying to meet people's needs.

Webb: What year did you start there as a Board member?

Nicholson: I think I've been there about ten years, roughly. I think it was about—

Webb: 2015?

Nicholson: Yeah. I'd shortly retired from St. George City, and I think that's about the year.

Webb: Any other organizations, or does that pretty well cover it?

Nicholson: I was in the Navy Reserve for six years, during my college era, kind of.

Webb: What experiences stand out from your participation in those organizations? Anything else?

Nicholson: Just that there's a lot of people that have some amazingly difficult challenges and problems that make life difficult if they don't get a little assistance. We saw that when I was on the committee with Dixie Scholarship Associates. A lot of the students, it was a lot of health issues in their family, and it was usually their parents. Some kinds had to bail out of high school early to help the family, go to work to raise money. And Switchpoint, same thing. A lot of the people just had all sorts of challenges thrown in their path. And so the motto there at Switchpoint is "A hand up," not "A hand out." It's self-help. Those are, I guess, the main things.

Webb: Where and when were you born?

Nicholson: 1950, in Ogden.

Webb: Who else was in your family?

Nicholson: My current family?

Webb: When you were born. How many siblings did you have?

Nicholson: I was one of five—two sisters and two brothers.

Webb: What did your community look like outside of your family? What did your neighborhood look like?

Nicholson: Pretty traditional—just a single family, suburban neighborhood in Ogden.

Webb: Did you have a lot of bungalow-style homes?

Nicholson: Just, yeah, I don't know, a mix of styles. I grew up not too far from Weber State University. Back then it was Weber College, and not too far from that. But I had a lot of friends in the neighborhood, and we'd run around. I was totally involved in

sports. I loved all the sports, all of them. And then loved outdoors, camping and fishing and hiking and stuff like that.

Webb: Where did your ancestors come from?

Nicholson: On my mother's side they were from Sweden. They came to the U. S., settled in northern Utah, went to southern Idaho for a short period when there were homesteading opportunities. That turned out to be a failure. It was just not the right conditions, and they moved back to northern Utah. On my dad's side, my dad grew up in West Virginia, but his ancestors came out of Scotland.

Webb: Interesting. Where did they first settle when they came to the United States?

Nicholson: On my mother's side, they went directly from Sweden to Ogden. And then on my dad's side they settled into West Virginia in the rural hill country, and my grandpa on my dad's side was involved in the coal mines for a little while. And he also operated a traditional rural farm, had all kinds of farm animals, and so raised a lot of farm animals, but had some affiliation with the mines.

Webb: Describe your grammar school and your high school years.

Nicholson: In Ogden at Wasatch Elementary, I guess pretty normal. I don't think anything particular stands out.

Webb: And your middle school and junior high?

Nicholson: Mount Ogden Junior High.

Webb: And high school?

Nicholson: Ogden High School, three years. At Ogden High I was into sports quite a bit—mostly baseball. And I ended up getting a scholarship to Weber State in baseball.

Webb: What position?

Nicholson: Pitcher.

Webb: Pitcher. Did you have curve balls, fast balls, both?

Nicholson: Both.

Webb: And did you compete quite a bit? And were you fairly successful there?

Nicholson: Yeah, we had a good team. One of my goals growing up, because Ogden was the host city for a high school all-star game that was played at their main facility called John Affleck Park, and I always hoped I could play in that. And then I was able to

do that. It was a thrill. As a high school senior you had the North seniors against the South, and the division was somewhere around Davis County. So Davis County north you were with the North, and below that you were with the South. But that was a 1969 game. That was a thrill. So I played a lot of baseball when I was growing up, and loved basketball, played one year of high school football. But anyway, I just liked them all.

Webb: Were there any influential teachers that stood out that you had?

Nicholson: In high school there was a guy, Dale Warner, who taught Russian. I didn't take Russian, but he was also, I think, an English teacher and something else. But he was a real jolly, good-humored guy that everybody liked because of his great personality. And then one of the coaches that I really liked a lot was the baseball coach, Lee Bybee. He was a really nice guy, a good guy.

Webb: A mentor, possibly, as well?

Nicholson: Yes, he was just so even-keeled, never got too excited, you know, or down, didn't yell at us. He was a good coach, a good guy to play for.

Webb: Did you have any hobbies or interests as a child?

Nicholson: Mostly just sports and running around, sports.

Webb: Not coin collecting?

Nicholson: Not coin collecting. I never coin collected or stamp collected or anything like that. There was a number of guys my age that we grew up together, and we all played sports, Little League baseball, and we played basketball together.

Webb: Education-wise, did you attend college or university, and what was your major and minor?

Nicholson: I went to Weber State for three years. The first two I was on a baseball scholarship.

Webb: And your major and minor?

Nicholson: I don't know that I declared, I think it was business. When I went to Utah State for the last year, it was Environmental Science and Business minor. And I was pretty anxious just to exit college at that point. But then when I finally did exit, as I mentioned, the job market wasn't very good when I graduated in '75 from Utah State. Then I decided, I went down to University of Texas for two years.

Webb: How did you decide to choose Weber State, and how did you decide to choose Utah State? How did that happen?

Nicholson: Weber State was baseball; I had a baseball scholarship.

Webb: What about Utah State? Why did you choose to go there?

Nicholson: Utah State, I kind of liked the campus. I was originally going to go up there and do Environmental Engineering, and they had a program that I decided I wanted to get through college a little quicker than the Environmental Engineering, and I ended up doing this Environmental Science and was able to graduate quicker. So just, the only real reason was Logan, I kind of liked their campus.

Webb: Did you have any influential mentors or teachers at either Weber State or Utah State, any one that stood out?

Nicholson: Not particularly. There were actually good professors at both. At Weber State, I don't even remember their names. The teacher that taught biology and genetics was a very popular teacher on campus, and everybody wanted to get into his classes because he made the topic so interesting. And at Utah State, you know, kind of similar, good professors, but nothing that I remember too well.

Webb: None that stood out. So after graduating from college or university, then, you chose to go to Austin, right?

Nicholson: Right.

Webb: Anything that stood out about that two years that you were down with Austin? Did that help kind of set the tone for where you were headed in your life career?

Nicholson: Yeah, pretty much. It was public policy, public affairs, public administration.

Webb: You were enjoying that, right, started to enjoy that in Austin?

Nicholson: Yeah, pretty much, yeah. The noteworthy thing is two of the years were when Earl Campbell was having great years at the University of Texas, I think I was there during his sophomore and junior years.

Webb: Who was this again?

Nicholson: Earl Campbell was the All-American running back for Texas that went into the NFL.

Webb: This is University of Texas at Austin, right?

Nicholson: Yeah.

Webb: Well this is a big campus, right?

Nicholson: Yeah. Huge campus, yeah, 30, 40,000 students, a big state. They had I think they called it War Memorial Stadium, and Darrel Royal was the football coach, and Earl Campbell was the—but they had a, you know, a great program year in and year out. They were usually in the top ten.

Webb: So you're liking this. This is something you're wanting to do.

Nicholson: It was interesting to go to school. Austin was quite a music capital, you know, Austin City Limits [on PBS].

Webb: Yes, did you ever go to that?

Nicholson: I think I was there one time.

Webb: That was kind of a fun thing back there during '82.

Nicholson: Right.

Webb: Describe how you met and married your spouse, and what is her name.

Nicholson: Her name is Peggy, it was Peggy Baucky at the time. I did an internship up in Wisconsin between, in graduate school you had to do a summer internship. I ended up, never had been to Wisconsin, I ended up at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. They had an intern position in their Environment Review. You know, when they built highways, they—

Webb: What city is this?

Nicholson: Madison.

Webb: The state capitol.

Nicholson: Right, the state capitol. So I went up there, and it just so happens that Peggy was a college student, but she worked there in the summer as a kind of secretary/clerk helping out whatever. So we met there, and that started the romance.

Webb: So describe any important aspects of family life and raising your children—do you have children?

Nicholson: We have two daughters who are now both grown. They live in Phoenix. One daughter has three boys, got a 12-, 10-, and 8-year-old. They're all involved in sports.

Webb: So you have how many grandchildren?

Nicholson: Just three, three right now. So both daughters are married, and they live in Phoenix. But you know, St. George, it was a good environment to raise girls. They went to Snow Canyon Junior High and Snow Canyon High School. We trusted them to make good decisions, and for the most part they always did. They had good friends, which helped a lot, to get your kids involved with good friends.

Webb: That's true.

Nicholson: And they kind of do good things together.

Webb: Right. So as you look back over your life, what is it you would like to be remembered for?

Nicholson: I think being a good parent probably stands out as one of the things, that we do a good job. And I think we did a pretty good job of raising the girls, because they're doing a good job raising their kids. And you know, work with the City was good. There was a good camaraderie. You know, Gary Esplin was the captain of the team, and a lot of the department heads were long-tenured there. Kent Perkins had been there for a long time, Larry Bulloch, and there was Wayne McArthur and on and on. If you start mentioning, you leave somebody out. But most of them were there for quite a number of years, and so everybody, you kind of had a common vision to stay ahead of the problems.

Webb: And when you look at that, you feel like you really accomplished a lot, right, the direction the—

Nicholson: Yeah, I think as a team, you know, it's hard to point and say, "I did this," because everything's pretty much a team effort. But yeah, I think choosing historic preservation, the Historic District, that was the right choice. I think it served St. George well, and you know, we've got a great history to celebrate and I think carry forward into the future.

Webb: Is there anything else that you feel is important that I haven't asked you?

Nicholson: Loren, I can't think of anything particular.

Webb: Well, we really want to thank Bob Nicholson for being with us today, for taking the time to be here. We also would like to thank Lauren Golden and the staff, I think it's James Farnsworth, here at the Community Education Channel studios, for allowing us to use their studios and for their technical expertise. This is the Washington County Historical Society's, this is our, at least my 22nd interview since I began conducting oral history interviews in 2021. I did make a mistake in last week's interview with Ralph Lamoreaux by saying it was the 20th interview. It was, in fact, the 21st interview. So again, thank you so much for joining us. And until next time.