

## **TIAS 515 Oral History**

### **Dawn Lucien Second Interview:**

May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 – 10:00am

Andrew: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me again. I wanted to concentrate on these three decisions over the course of your civic activity that involved large building projects. The Tacoma Mall, the Pantages and the University of Washington, Tacoma. Prior to that, you had mentioned your father taking you off to Eastern Washington. Could you tell me a little bit about your grandparents and your family lineage, going a little bit more into your family background?

Dawn: Because I was raised in the Yakima Valley from the time I was nine months old and because both my paternal and maternal grandparents lived in Utah, I didn't see very much of them when I was growing up. My family kept in close touch and a lot of aunts and uncles came to visit. My first recollection of my grandparents was when we traveled to Utah on the train when I was five years old. And I met twin cousins, and I met, my mother and my father both came from families of ten. Mother was the eldest of ten and my father was a twin who was sort of half way in between. My mother's family were all younger than she. As a matter of fact, my mother had children over a period of twenty years. I am the latest of those offspring. And so, her mother was having children at the same time. Four of my older sisters had aunts who were the same age as they were. Those were the ways things happened back in those days.

My grandfather had pioneered. He was a settler in Promontory [Utah] and the family farm was still going strong when I went to visit. He was very active in the community. I guess it runs in the family. Almost all of their offspring settled in the Ogden area. My grandfather had gone to Utah with Brigham Young and left the church because he became disillusioned with the way they actually wanted them to live with multiple wives, etc, when he got there. He organized a group. If you left the church you were

sometimes hunted down. So he organized sixteen of them to leave the church at the same time. There was such a large number that they were safe in leaving the church. They moved to and founded the little city of Plain City, Utah, where my grandfather, who was a stone mason, built the Episcopal Church which stands there today.

Andrew: That is amazing. Do you have any recollection of your grandparent's parents?

Dawn: That goes way beyond my recollection. My father never spoke of his grandparents for instance because they had been left in the East Coast, or the Mid West actually which is where Brigham Young came from. So he didn't have an association with them in those days. As a matter of fact, the golden spike, which was being driven from the railroad where they joined, what was it called, the transcontinental railroad. What was being built from the East and what was being built from the West is right there in Promontory, right where my grandfather's farm. Of course they had all been present at the time that happened as I recollect. I will have to go back in history to verify.

Andrew: It's funny, you say that he built this brick church, and again we are back to this idea of building things and creating community. It is a great theme through all of this.

Dawn: Yes

Andrew: So, let's move to this next piece which is the Tacoma Mall. In trying to look up information, I was having a little difficulty finding information. Could tell me a little bit about the council's decision to go forward with the Tacoma Mall, what that might have entailed and then tell me what was the best thing about the Tacoma Mall and what you think was the worst thing? How it changed Tacoma.

Dawn: I told Erik Anderson, our new city manager, when he came to Tacoma and called on all city council members ever since to have a meeting with him because he wanted to get a history of the city

through their recollections. I told him I had a guilty conscience ever since 1960 because of the Tacoma Mall.

Seattle had the Northgate Mall. I think it was on 70<sup>th</sup>, 72<sup>nd</sup>, 74<sup>th</sup> street. University of Washington, to give a comparison, is about 46<sup>th</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup>, or 48<sup>th</sup> street there. So Northgate was quite a distance away from downtown Seattle and never posed any kind of a threat to the merchants downtown. And yet it was very well frequented. I remember going out there and shopping when it was built, because we used to do a lot of going back and forth to Seattle in those days. So it never had any negative effect on downtown Seattle. I think that was part of our thinking when we started talking to the developers of the Tacoma Mall. Of course the freeway opened in 1960, I believe, which was the year of the Seattle World's Fair. [The Bureau of Expositions declared Century 21 as the "World's Fair" in 1960 to be held in 1962 *Wikipedia quoting a Seattle Times article*]. So there was no freeway through Tacoma up until that time. You would just come down highway 99 which went out South Tacoma Way and winded its way down to Olympia on a two lane road. That is the way you went all the way to Portland. It used to take us six hours to drive to Portland back in those days because you had a two lane highway all the way. When the freeway opened this was a huge change in the way people would get from here to there.

So of course this property would have been zoned residential because - - the freeway came through the residential part of Tacoma. Of course none of those strip enterprises were out there at that time, so this zoning had to be changed. This was a large decision to make.

So these people, and I can't even tell you who they were or where they came from, they say if you concentrate on a period of time the details would emerge but so far hasn't happed to me yet in connection with the mall. It was controversial but it was also something that people basically wanted to see happen in Tacoma.

The bad thing was, that no one at city hall, no one, from the city manager to the city council asked to see their lease. What happened, after we voted to rezone the property so that the mall could be built, the lease said that if you located in the mall, that you could not have another business within two and one half miles, which included downtown Tacoma. That is what killed downtown Tacoma. That is what I have had on my conscience all these years. But Erik Anderson said that you must forgive yourself because if they had not located within the city limits they would have located outside the city limits and therefore all the tax revenue that we have enjoyed from the mall all these years would have gone to the county instead of to the city. So I can forgive myself for not asking to see that lease, but I also wonder why someone else from the city manager on down never thought to ask them about how their lease would read. That is a huge omission.

Andrew: The Mall has grown and it has attracted people. And the downtown core may have suffered but there was still this activity. .... I never realized that when I was in high school it was so new.

Dawn: Up until then of course everybody shopped downtown. And back in those days we would put on our hats and our gloves and our high heeled shoes to go shopping in downtown Tacoma just like going shopping in New York city or Seattle or any place else. All the stores were within walking distance and they were major stores. Four or five stories, four stories high, three stories high. So that mall made a huge, huge difference in Tacoma and now we are finally, finally coming back.

Andrew: Let's talk about the Pantages a little bit. From the stand point of the Pantages, it actually had been around a very long time. It was built in nineteen-o something. It was agreed to be built 1890 something and was built in 1900 something. Tell me about the decision to do the restoration and the four and one half million dollars that was raised from different places. What do you think was the impact of that?

Dawn: I think it was a huge impact at a time that it was important to have that kind of impact on downtown Tacoma. I was on the board of the Opera Society and we were not being very successful because we were having to have our performances in high school auditoriums. So people couldn't get excited about going to the opera when they were just going to a high school. When I heard that people were talking about the restoration of the Pantages Theater I got involved. There were about a half a dozen of them who began to think about it as a possibility including Virginia Shakelford, whose father had sawed her in half on the stage of the Pantages when he was a magician back in the 30's.

Alexander Pantages built beautiful theaters all over America but this was one of his jewels. It was designed by an architect in Seattle, Purtica I believe was his name. When we began the process of seeing what we could do to restore the Pantages his son was still practicing in Seattle and we had the original blueprints for the Pantages that were still in storage in that office. The Jones building is the building which houses the Pantages and it housed some city offices as well at that time. They were leased from the owner of the Jones building. A man from Seattle, this is my recollection but ... we can check it out for sure... a man from California came to Tacoma and had grand ideas about not only restoring that Jones building but several older buildings that existed on that block which is now a park, which is the Broadway Mall. He was featured in the newspaper about all these wonderful things that he was going to do. He was indicted for fraud or some lawbreaking activity in California and put in jail. All those grandiose ideas disappeared and the city was able to purchase the Jones building for 110,000 dollars. Then we were able to move forward with the idea of actually restoring it.

Of course there was no backstage because it had been vaudeville so we had to build a building next door and so we came up with a figure of four and one half million dollars to restore the Pantages.

We asked Archie McLane if he would be the fund raising leader if Bob King would help him. Bob King later committed suicide during the market crash back in the 80's when he had been in that business when he had encouraged a lot of people to buy on the margin and he, in despair, shot himself in the head. But at the time, he and Archie agreed to raise one million and one half locally which was lot of money. I asked Warren Magnuson for a million and one half and asked Slim Rasmussen who was the legislator for a million and one half from the state. Over time, that is a bit of a story in itself, but over time, all of that money came together. I remember when Norm Dicks came to see my husband and me in early 1976 to support him in his bid for congress. He was an aid to Senator Warren Magnuson then. We said we would and I said, the first question I asked him was, "How do you feel about the Pantages?" and he said "What is that?" I told him and he was a strong supporter of the Pantages and actually helped keep the pressure on Warren Magnuson until the one and one half million actually appeared. We opened our doors in 1982. One of the things that you will find of interest is our first major donor was Weyerhaeuser. They gave a hundred thousand dollars. And then they had second thoughts. So they said to our fund raising people spend eight thousand of that money doing a market survey to see if this is going to be successful. A firm from Seattle was hired because we wanted it to be totally objective and they gave such a glowing report of the community and the excitement about the restoration of this theater that that is what caused the Weyerhaeuser company's building arm to build that office building in downtown Tacoma at, what is it, 17<sup>th</sup> and Market. And the Sheraton Hotel and the refurbishing of Court C all came about as a result of that survey that Weyerhaeuser wanted us to do about the Pantages. So not only did the Pantages itself excite people in the community, of course it is a gorgeous restoration but it also started the revitalization of downtown Tacoma. Of course it was the Weyerhaeuser company that came over here to develop the Sheraton and the twenty one story office tower. Howie MetaKroft who is married to a Weyerhaeuser still has offices on the twenty first floor of that building.

(Several minutes of discussion of the Bicentennial Pavilion and the Hotel Murano and vaudeville theater not pertinent to the topic)

Dawn: It was interesting back in those days to, famous people, people who became famous performed on the stage of the Pantages Theater. The saying back in those days was, "If you can make them laugh in Tacoma, you can make them laugh anywhere."

Andrew: Here is a big one. We didn't cover it very much but you have been on the board in one form or another for the UW Tacoma for 22 years. The actual University itself is, well 1990 was its founding, so it has been around 19 years. Previous to that there were years of trying to get it together. Tell me a little bit about the UW Tacoma.

Dawn: We formed an organization in about 1985 to get a branch campus into Tacoma for place bound students. The University of Washington was negative about having branches. They didn't see any blessing that would befall them as a result of that. We organized. Liz Heath and I were lobbyists. We went to Olympia all those years to the legislature and testified for committees and so forth. We had two counterparts who went with us so the four unpaid lobbyists who went and presented our case to the legislature. Of course there were people there at the same time wanting branch campuses for Washington State University. The wonderful thing that happened was that Sam Smith came over, President of Washington State University, he flew over Tacoma in a helicopter. He said to the newspaper that "I would like to have a branch campus in Tacoma." And that is what got the University of Washington interested. They were sparked to supporting us then, because there was going to be a branch campus in Tacoma. They decided it was going to be UW instead of WSU, so that was a great step forward for us.

Andrew: Was there any opposition within Tacoma to having a branch campus?

Dawn: There was sub-rosa, hidden opposition, because both UPS and PLU felt threatened by it. Probably Evergreen, which had a branch campus with us [Tacoma] at that time, felt threatened by it and didn't know what would happen to them as a result of a branch campus here. So while there was not overt negativism there was a sub-rosa effort to at least put forward a "well, what if?", you know, that kind of thing. Of course the legislature was skeptical, they had just put forth these branch campuses before, so is this really necessary.

And then of course the next thing was the siting of the campus. Fife wanted it. There was extra space out at TCC where it could well have been built, except fortunately, we found out those were wetlands. And so the movement started to locate it downtown in the old warehouse district. As was district manager for Norm Dicks, as you know, first his office manager and then his district manager. I spent 12 years in Norm Dicks office from 1976 to 1989.

Some historic people from Washington D.C. had done a study of the warehouse district, saying how strong those buildings were, how wonderful they were and that they really should be rehabbed and used for some purpose. That happened just about a little time before we were starting to look for a site for the branch campus and so there had been some publicity about that. The buildings were very cheap because they had sat vacant for all these years and so it just became a logical thing to do and the downtown people supported it. That's how it came to be located downtown. We rented some space in the Perkins building by the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge for the first five years. I think we moved into the UWT campus about 1996.

Andrew: I remember I went to the ten year anniversary of the campus and they just had the row of warehouses and I believe the library was there.

Dawn: We had three people in the first graduating class of the UWT. I think that half the people in Tacoma were not even aware we had a branch campus until it became visible on Pacific Avenue. Maybe more. Because we were hidden down there without any sign or any way of being advertised in a sense.

Andrew: I had read, or had heard, that if you looked across the nation, that if you looked at cities the size of Tacoma, there were only two that didn't have a four year public university and Tacoma was one of them.

Dawn: I think you are right about that, and it has always been our misfortune to have been so close to Seattle because we have been in their shadow for all these years. Back in the days when the freeway came in and made a commute to Seattle so simple until so many people got cars it became overpopulated. You could get to Seattle in thirty minutes.

Andrew: Do you remember how the UW Tacoma was originally envisioned?

Dawn: We envisioned it as a four year campus, ultimately. But we realized that we had to start small. We were very happy to have it as a two year campus just to have it. Those of us who were hoping, working to achieving it as a goal envisioned it as a four year institution by 2010 with a population of 20,000. We were able to get the four years sooner, but we are still only half way to our goal and it looks like the way the economy is going to be a while before we reach that magic mark.

Andrew: We have the footprint that we can build out on though. And now we have the Milgard School of Business and the Institute of Technology there. I had heard that it was originally conceived as a liberal arts campus.

Dawn: It probably was because that was the thinking in those days. But basically it was put there to serve the community and what the community needed is the way that it has worked itself out. And that has been wonderful.

Some of us are looking to establish, well, my dream is to make Tacoma the conflict resolution capital of the world. Of course we have our settlement with the Puyallup Tribe over the land disputes down by the tide flats of the Tacoma Port as a wonderful example of what can happen when serious people sit down and seriously talk about working together to make change. The tribe is very interested in working with us looking now to endow a chair for conflict resolution at the University of Washington, Tacoma.

Andrew: From the standpoint of downtown, ...what do you think of all the condominiums that have built up?

Dawn: Well that was a study by City Club that I chaired back in 1982. Herb Simon said, he is actually now a UW Regent, he came to a noon study group we had and said something about the need for people living downtown. We got a research project going at City Club and I chaired it and we did a lot of looking into what would happen if people started, if places were built for people to live downtown Tacoma and it came out so positive that the economic development department of the city of Tacoma at that time took it on as sort of a project. That is when the downtown construction of living spaces began.