



Richard Dugan
Mayor of Chandler: 1988 – 1990
Interviewed: November 21, 2005
By: Jean Reynolds
Public History Coordinator

- JR: What is the name of your father and where was he from?
- RD: My father's name is Mike Dugan, he was born in Wisconsin. In 1962 we had to move to Arizona because his one lung started to collapse and we moved out here in 1962 [due to his reoccurring pneumonia].
- JR: What was he doing back in Wisconsin?
- RD: We were dairy farmers as was his father and his grandfather. When we moved out here we started working for a dairy farmer on Germann Road.
- JR: What town in Wisconsin were you from?
- RD: A little village of Clarks Mills, Wisconsin which is 29 miles straight south of Packer Stadium. Nobody knows Clarks Mills, Wisconsin like everybody knows Green Bay, Wisconsin.
- JR: So he was a dairy farmer and he came to Chandler in 1962. When he started working here in Chandler who was he working for?
- RD: He was working for Cliff Norton. His dairy was on Germann Road near the airport now. My father and my brother and I, the three of us worked there and we worked for about two years and then started our own dairy.
- JR: What's the name of your mother?
- RD: Delores Mancoske Dugan. She was full German. [Her grandparents were] from the [part of] Poland that was taken over by Germany or the part of Germany that was taken over by Poland [in the 19th Century]. She also did a lot of farm work with us, from milking the cows to doing the bookwork.
- JR: Was she born in Wisconsin?
- RD: Yes, in Maribel, Wisconsin in 1923.
- JR: Do you know when your dad was born?
- RD: In 1919.
- JR: And they are still alive.
- RD: Correct.
- JR: Once you moved here to Chandler, did she stay more in the home taking care of you boys or was she out working as much as you were?
- RD: The first two years before we got the farm, she mainly did housework. We had a two-bedroom house with us six boys, my five brothers and I. Once we got the farm going, on weekdays she would milk from 4:00am – 6:00am and then my brother Tom and I would get up at 6:00am and work until 7:30am then get the bus. Then on weekends my Mom could sleep in and us boys had to get up at 4:00am. So I did not like weekends that much. After the third or fourth year we got better at it and mother wasn't able to do so much work.
- JR: At the time that you were a kid here in Chandler, you came when you were 14, so you were a teenager while you were here in Chandler, did your family always have a family operated farm or did you have other workers?
- RD: Not until about the fifth year, the first two years we worked for other farmers, then the next three years we did all the work ourselves, then finally when we started making money we had one hired man.

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JR: Were your mother or father involved in Chandler in any way besides just working?

RD: They played bowling [in a league] and played cards. They were pretty busy working and they started going to the Kof C and did a lot of dancing. Once in awhile they would ask the band to play polka music because my mother's first cousin was a polka king back in 1948 or something.

JR: So your mom, when she was working, she did the same types of chores that you guys did on the farm and some bookkeeping as well?

RD: She took care of all the bookkeeping, she was pretty sharp. She didn't have much time for anything else.

JR: How many cows did you start out with?

RD: 43 Jerseys that we bought from a farmer in Idaho. The Jerseys were cheaper than Holsteins.

JR: When were you born?

RD: December 29, 1947, in Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

JR: So you have five brothers?

RD: Correct.

JR: What are their names?

RD: Tom, he is the oldest born in 1945; I was born in '47, my brother, Mike, was born in 1948; brother Dennis was born in 1950; brother Pat in 1953 and brother Danny in 1958.

JR: Describe a little bit of the area where you grew up back in Wisconsin.

RD: It was basically a farming community. We lived right off Irish Road and the McCulleys and the McGuires, the McCarthys, all lived there. Across the road and then the German people lived there, the Goehrings, Gintners, and the Pritzl's. It was basically a farming community. It's changed now, it's been over 40 years, the little village has gone from 300 people down to about 100 people now. I bought the farm next to the farm I grew up on and I'm planning on semi-retiring there one of these days.

JR: Are you going to stay there in the winter also?

RD: No. I'll be here in Chandler for all the winters until I pass away I hope.

JR: I know your father had health problems and that's what brought him to Arizona. but why did he choose Chandler to settle?

RD: Because of the farming community here. I know we looked over in Scottsdale but at that time Scottsdale started to go through a growth and some of the dairy farmers were moving out. We looked at Phoenix, Buckeye, that area, but Chandler just seemed to be better farm-orientated thing and that's why we picked Chandler, I believe.

JR: Once you got into Chandler, you started attending Chandler High School?

RD: Yes, I graduated from Chandler High School in 1966. It was interesting. Most of the farmers were, this used to be a pretty Mormon community, and I was in agriculture in FFA and I'm Catholic and I was the only non-Mormon member of the FFA. But we were all farmers and had a good time. Some were friends that I

still have now. A lot of my hay I buy from the Kempton family, anyway it goes way back.

JR: Since you are from the era of when the Vietnam War was just starting, do you remember back in high school, I know you graduated in '66, kind of how people felt about the conflict at that time?

RD: It first started out where everybody supported the war, that was in '64 or '65, then when I graduated in '66, I had a friend in my history class, her brother had just got back and he was telling me how they would take a village and the village would go over. Then they'd pull out and in two weeks would go back in, and he had questions on it. Which that was a start of when I started taking an interest in it. Plus when I graduated I turned 18, I got my draft notice. That summer I kept on talking to him, and he went back [to Vietnam] and I talked to his sister, and then it started hitting the newspapers and all that and that's when I decided to go to college. I got a letter from a friend and he said go to Canada or go to college because this is really bad. By the time I got the letter, I was at the UofA at that time, and in '69, he passed away [killed in combat].

Finally I did get drafted and the former Mayor, Mayor Navarette, got me in the National Guard. You could not hardly get in the National Guard. In '72 they took the farming [deferment] away from me and my number was 16; then I got into the National Guard. They were still doing demos at the University of Arizona and one day my unit was down there so I was on both sides of it. I have to say, the long hairs, as I still call them, were polite, they weren't as bad as they were in the mid-west or California. I have the greatest respect for the Army and the National Guard, and I still have respect for some of the long hairs at the U of A; they did it [demonstrated] properly.

JR: When you actually finished high school was it your plan that you were just going to continue dairying? Did you want to go to college besides the military conflict [issue]?

RD: I had thoughts about becoming a veterinarian but my grades weren't anything to be proud of. The Lord did not give me the talent of excellent grades, I would study and never could do it. I tried to get into vet school but was unable to do it. Then I was thinking about quitting college after I couldn't get into vet school but then I went on and got a degree in agriculture. I'm a darn good farmer, I love farming. I love cows and you can tell.

JR: Speaking of farming and how you enjoy that, think back to when you were a teenager and your parents had just started the dairy, do you have a memory that stands out in your mind from being on the dairy? Something you did or happened?

RD: Yes, I can remember one time they kept me after school for not doing my homework and I'd get off the bus at 3:30 and have to do chores. Well, my Dad wasn't too happy about that, he said, "well, where's Richard?" "Well, he didn't come home from school, he's in detention."

I'm a junior in high school at this time, all of a sudden coming down the hall I hear my Dad, "You've got that boy from 7:30 until the bus drops him off at 3:30, if you teachers can't pound that into his head, get different teachers and don't you send homework home with him, he's got work to do at home." In comes my Dad with bib overalls, it was sort of embarrassing but they never sent homework home with me anymore. The other thing I can remember, walking out to my AG class and we got the notice that President Kennedy was shot. Those are two memories I have.

JR: How did you feel about that?

RD: Sad. It was sad.

JR: Describe what you remember about Chandler as you were growing up, what it looked like around where you lived and the downtown area.

RD: Cotton fields, irrigation pumps, alfalfa in the spring and fall, farmland, I love farmland. The water coming out of the big pumps into the canals. I'd help my neighbor once in awhile to irrigate and I'd lie down in the field once in awhile to take a nap at the end of the field, when the water got down that far, it would start to come onto my body, then I had to change the water. I love farming and cows.

JR: Did you like cows because you were always around cows as a little kid or was there some kind of thing that you were interested in the cows?

RD: I loved cows. Like my Dad, he likes cows, but he loves horses. I love cows, I showed them at the state fair and in 1965 when I was a junior I got the showmanship award and that was my highlight. That was the highest honor I ever received and I remember it was a jersey and I used to brush his hair and all that. I always liked cows and on my dairy farm when I first started out in '76, I had this one cow and it died in 1984 or 1985. We used to get \$40 for tallow works for the cow; but that one I buried on my dairy farm because it was number 161. It didn't even have a name, [but] it was such a good cow. I could not have the indignity of letting it go to the tallow works. I'm a little crazy, but.....

JR: On your dairy, on your parent's dairy, where do they sell the milk?

RD: We sell it to our co-op, United Dairymen of Arizona, they broker it to three or four bottlers. After I got out of being Mayor I ran for board of directors of the UDA and I was elected as member of the board of directors for our dairy co-op. After I had my brain injury I resigned.

JR: When you were working on your parents' dairy did you get paid?

RD: Oh yes, we started out at 50 cents an hour and my dad had me up to \$1.00/hour, which wasn't that much, but when I got so old, my dad went to the bank and co-signed for me and helped me get started and he did that with my five brothers too. He would co-sign and after three years we would have enough equity that he didn't need to co-sign for us and he could start the next one.

JR: How old were you when you got your first dairy?

RD: 28.

JR: What did you do from the time you graduated to when you bought your first dairy?

RD: When I went to Community College at Mesa, I worked at home. When I went to the U of A, I worked at the dairy farm at the U of A, and lived in a bunkhouse for \$15 a month, that was quite an experience. Then I got married, and I lived on the farm and kept on going to college at U of A. Then I got drafted, went into the National Guard and kept working with my father. I'd drive to Tucson, go to school on Mondays and Wednesdays and drive back and work for my Dad, graduated in 75 and in 1976 I took the farm. I got my degree in Agriculture.

JR: When did you get married?

RD: 1971.

JR: Did you meet your wife at the U of A?

RD: Yes, it was a blind date.

JR: What's her name?

RD: Claudia.

JR: Do you have any children?

RD: Three, my daughter, Kerry, was born in 1973, one son, Ryan, in 1975 and then the last son, Darren, in 1984.

JR: Have any of them shown interest in dairy work or are they off doing other stuff?

RD: My daughter married a patent lawyer, and she wants to come back and do farm work as soon as she gets the kids grown up a little bit more. My son, I fired him twice and he quit once when he was in his 20's, now he's working on the one farm I have, and as soon as I get some money going I'm going to set him up like my dad set me up. My youngest son is in the Marines and I think some day he'll be a farmer, he just hasn't found himself yet.

JR: Once you started working on your dairy in 1976, how many cows did you start out with?

RD: The loan was for 200 but I think I got 207. My dad gave me seven for free.

JR: Where was your dairy located?

RD: Dobson Road, the same place it is now.

JR: Did you start out with a certain number of acreage and expand?

RD: I had 25 acres with 200 animals, now I have 600 animals and all the concrete and welding I did myself. It was tough the first couple of years but I've been very lucky and the market has been pretty good.

JR: How is it that you got involved in local politics?

RD: They annexed my farm into the city and I read about it in the newspaper. I thought they could have sent me a letter or something. I got a little upset that they didn't send me a letter. I was sort of a redneck and decided that I was going to run for politics and get involved. I was lucky when I got elected because a lot of coincidences came and my opponent got tied up anyway, I just barely won the election and after I was in office as a councilman the city clerk comes to me and tells me, "Mr. Dugan, I've had this letter in my dead mailbox and it's yours". And here it's the letter that they had sent me saying I was going to be annexed into the city. The county had given the city the incorrect address of my farm and my address. So if it wasn't for the county giving the city the incorrect address I would have never gotten into politics.

I was very lucky to get elected, I still know my opponent, Bill Ryan, in fact he had his [client appreciation] party out at my dairy and I used to buy hay from his father, and I went to grade school and high school with his brother. It was a very interesting campaign.

JR: What year did you run for office?

RD: I think it was 1984.

JR: So that was sort of your main issue, you felt there wasn't enough communication?

RD: Communications. A lot of things changed once I got into the City Council. Building projects, they used to put a 12 x 18 paper out there saying the zoning was going to be changed on this and all that, the first month or the first year that I was a City Councilman I can remember the Council changing that to put it up on a 4' x 8' orange sign. That way all the people know the zoning was going to be changed. I wished that was my idea but it wasn't, it was a different Council member's idea.

JR: While you were serving on the Council, what were some of the important issues at the time?

RD: Rapid growth. Things were changing so fast. In the 80's there was a big building boom in Chandler and Intel was coming, Motorola had expanded and early 80's was very much like it is today in year 2005.

JR: Were there any issues at that time in the mid 80's about was going to be happening with agriculture as opposed to urbanization?

RD: Yes and no. Some of the farmers thought being annexed into the city their property taxes would go up and all that kind of stuff, they were afraid. Most of it was solved by the communications.

JR: Were there some planning issues?

RD: It was hectic—the town was going from 30,000 to 60,000 or whatever. I think we did a lot of planning. As a council member I can remember getting people over from California to help us avoid the mistakes that they made and then MAG would help us a little bit, it was a lot of planning and a lot of thinking. A lot of thought processes.

JR: Now you served as Mayor from 1988 – 1990. What was it that made you want to be Mayor, to take that step from council member to Mayor?

RD: Quality growth. I wanted Chandler to continue what we had started. I wanted to be sure agriculture was blending in and the communication skills and the combination of a lot of things. Farmers have a different philosophy of government than city people have and I just wanted to see that philosophy still maintained in the community. I don't know how to explain that philosophy, but farmers think different than others. After having all the information and studies as a council member I knew Chandler was going to grow and have a build out of 300,000 and all that kind of stuff, I was sort of sucked into the whole thing.

JR: Did anyone encourage you to run for Mayor?

RD: Some of the council members did. John Huppenthal and I think Jay Tibshraeny did too, several of my friends and my wife too.

JR: Was it difficult trying to run a dairy operation and being Mayor at the same time?

RD: When I first started out I only had about 500 animals and then my dad got sick [and he retired] and I took over his farm in 1989. I had to get out in 1990 because I could not be a full time farmer with 900 animals and a full time Mayor when the town was 90,000 and I just had to get out and I had a good Vice Mayor then, he did a great job, Coy Payne, in fact the last six months I was Mayor he attended MAG for me and did a lot of stuff. A lot of things I would have done if I would have had more time if my father had not gotten sick, I would have ran again for another term because there were a couple projects I wanted to do.

JR: What projects were you looking at?

RD: The main project I thought was that the Mayor should be elected for two four-year terms like the President. In two years you are pretty well limited to what you can do. I figured if our ancestors with them establishing two four-year terms for President, you can't beat that. I always felt the Mayor thing should be that too. I never got it done. That's about it, I just wanted to budget, in 89 we had a turn down, I would not raise taxes and we had a layoff of 18 employees and that was tough. Our growth in 89 took a big dive, it was bad. We froze everybody's salary because we were growing, growing, growing and whammo, we took a big dive. I think some of the budget things we established in '89 are still being used today. It was tough.

JR: So some of the decisions that were made in relation to the budget when you had that economic downturn are still in place today?

RD: I believe so, but I haven't been that active in the government since 1990 because the farm just kept me busy. My father's health has gotten a lot better and I love farming.

JR: Tell me a little about your campaign slogans and ways you advertised.

RD: I had some very creative friends who gave me these ideas and gave me a couple signs. One of the signs said "Vote for Dugan, he'll milk the cows not the taxpayers". I'm pretty tight so I put it up and I got a lot of stuff on that. Another guy says, here's another one, "Vote for Dugan not the udder guy." I had to pay for that myself but it got a lot of attention. Then I put it on cotton trailers from Norman Knox, one of the old farmers in town, and move it from corner to corner so I could save money. It was a great adventure and I had fun at doing it and also got some free press.

JR: You have a photograph of yourself actually sitting on a tractor in front of the city hall, is that correct?

RD: When I decided to run for Mayor I drove my tractor down to city hall to get the message across that I'm a farmer, and I wanted to keep that farm spirit in Chandler, and not see all concrete, I wanted some open space. I wanted a farm park and we got a farm park.

JR: Now when you ran for Mayor in 1988, what was Chandler like, as far as population, the types of industries, just generally what was Chandler like?

RD: Intel had just come in the early 80's and Motorola in early 80's, the economy was starting to get support people to supply those two industries and the farming was sort of phasing out and we were about 80,000 in 1988 and in 1990 when I got out we were about 90,000. The growth was starting to come back in 1990. There were still a lot of fields around in 1990. Not like today in 2005.

JR: During your time as Mayor, what was your vision for Chandler?

RD: Just have as many open spaces as we could. Good jobs for all the people and just a perfect community if you could get a perfect community.

JR: What would a perfect community be for you?

RD: Like it was here in 1975 with just Motorola coming in and farmers all the way around. Green fields and all that. I think that's why we've been successful in attracting people because we do have a lot of green fields and open spaces.

JR: You've emphasized a lot so far during this interview on how much farming is important to you, in the early 80's when Intel came in and then Motorola, in some ways that kind of was a sign of things to come as far as that type of industry coming in, how did you feel about that as Mayor and being on the council as far as having some of that new type of industry coming to an area that had primarily been farming before?

RD: I just figured out that Intel and Motorola got as smart as the farmers and were moving here because it's a beautiful climate and I felt like Intel and Motorola were like the farmers who sort of asked the Indians to leave and now the farmers were sort of like the Indians being moved out. You can't fight change, you have to work with it and Arizona with all the water we have, the best use for it is for people and the weather and the air conditioning and you can't fight change and growth. You can modify it and make sure it's first class and make it the best you can. That's the way I feel about it.

JR: Were there any significant events that affected Chandler during your political career, this could be local events or valley wide or state wide?

RD: Intel coming to the community and valley. Williams Air Force Base being phased out, Roosevelt Dam being enlarged so we could get more water, and people realizing that Arizona is the place to be.

JR: When there was that economic downturn in the late 80's, was that in reaction to a larger economic recession or was it more on a local level?

RD: I believe it was nation wide and Phoenix and Mesa and all the other cities hit it too, but I think we went from 300 building permits to like 60. We started in the 70's, I think about 40 and built up to 300 and we had geared everything for the community. I can remember as Councilman raising the salaries of the employees because we were losing a lot of employees to Phoenix and Mesa. We raised the salaries and got a better clientele and kept a lot of our employees instead leaving. It was a national thing.

JR: When the economy was down did you have to start thinking about raising the taxes, or how to get that revenue?

RD: Yes, we did and I did not raise taxes. We had a layoff of 18 people and we also put a freeze on salary increases. It was tough, I can remember getting a couple letters from some of the employees but I just couldn't raise taxes.

JR: Were there any important changes that happened in Chandler while you were involved politically?

RD: The performing arts center, Jerry Brooks had started it with the school board and that was excellent because of the funding. Jerry Brooks gets about 95 percent of the credit, I think I should get a little bit of the credit, he got the school board together and built that thing and it's a multi-purpose center, copied that from another city. That was a big highlight in 1989 about the same time as the budget crisis hit. Then we wanted to confirm our water for the city of Chandler we went with other east valley cities to get the Roosevelt Dam increased, the water was a main thing I would say. We wanted to expand our airport to get good jobs out by the airport, Williams Air Force opposed us because of the flight patterns, anyway, finally Williams Air Force Base was closed mainly because of the flight patterns of Mesa and Chandler. So those were about the major issues. We also started the Ostrich Festival. The Chamber of Commerce should get the credit for that, but it happened while I was Mayor.

JR: You mentioned you were interested in getting a park that had a farming or agricultural element to it, talk a little bit about that.

RD: I don't remember too much about it except we got the money for the future park where Tumbleweed is now.

JR: If you were to look ahead to 2012, which is our city centennial year, what do you think Chandler will be like?

RD: People, all kinds of people. I hope the farming park will be done and I hope the history of how Chandler got started by the farmers. Roosevelt Dam was built by the farmers, it wasn't built by the government. It was the only dam in the nation that was financed by the farmers. What will be gone? All the farms will be gone.

JR: Do you think all the farms will be gone?

RD: I believe so, it isn't cost affective to farm anymore in the Chandler area because of the feed we feed our animals. I have to import a lot of my feed in and I have to import the agricultural fragrances out.

JR: You still have your dairy farm and do tours with the kids, what kind of reaction do you have from residents in the area?

RD: I try to run a super clean dairy. I put agricultural fragrances [deodorizers] in the [recycling pond]. I run less cows per square foot and one time I actually put a toilet out there for my cows, but they wouldn't use it, and I'll be darn if I'm going to put diapers on those cows.

JR: Why do you think Chandler's history is important?

RD: It's where you came from. It's hard to explain; the Valley was all started by farmers, and water, and people need to remember that. The valley is good because of two things, water and air conditioning.

JR: How do you think we should preserve Chandler's history?

RD: I think we have a very good start on the farm park and the museum. Those are the only two ways I know.