



## JERRY COLANGELO

Date of Birth - 1939

Honored as a Historymaker 2001  
Community Leader and Sports Entrepreneur



The following is an oral history interview with Jerry Colangelo (**JC**) conducted by Pam Stevenson (**PS**) and video-graphed by Bill Leverton for Historical League, Inc. on May 31, 2000 at Mr. Colangelo's office at America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona.

*Transcripts for website edited by members of Historical League, Inc.*

*Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Heritage Center Archives, an Historical Society Museum, Tempe, Arizona*

**PS:** The first thing I'd like to do is get your name.

**JC:** The name is Jerry Colangelo, the formal name is Gerald John Colangelo, but I was referred to as Jerry early on and more or less have changed it to Jerry because Gerald just never set well with me for some reason.

**PS:** Sounds very formal.

**JC:** It did.

**PS:** Why don't you tell me about when you were born and where you were born?

**JC:** I was born in a suburb of Chicago. A working class community called Chicago Heights, Illinois. It was made up of Italian immigrants, Polish immigrants, and others, but primarily a city that whose industry was steel mills and textile factories, etc. I was born in Chicago Heights on November 20, 1939. And when I say that it's still hard for me to believe that so many years have passed, but it was a wonderful place, in my opinion, to grow up and if I had to choose a time in which to live, I'm grateful that I came along when I did.

**PS:** Why don't you tell me a little about your place in the family; were you the oldest, youngest?



**JC:** My mother, Sue Drancik, was her maiden name was from Joliet, Illinois. She came from Russian and Czechoslovakian ancestry. My dad was full Italian. And we lived in a home that my grandfather built with the remnants of a couple of railroad boxcars and some additional lumber. At 156 East 22nd Street in Chicago Heights. That's the only home I ever had and lived in from the time I was born until I left for college. There are only two children in my family. My mother had a number of miscarriages because back in those days families were larger. And so had she been able to carry the child we'd probably would have had six or seven children in the family. I have a younger sister, Rosemary, named after her two grandmothers. She was born in 1947. And it's kinda interesting when I think of that, because certain memories stay with you for a lifetime and I can recall the day that my parents brought her home, I was disappointed. I wanted a brother, but along came Rosemary and she's turned out to be a great gal. She happens to live in Phoenix with her husband, because many of the family members moved this way after I did.

**PS:** So you were kind of an only child for the first eight years or so.

**JC:** And probably was a handful, to make up for the lack of other children. I was a pretty active young guy and enjoyed playing sports early on and spent most of my time either at the park or in a field or in the alley playing ball whenever I could, which was most of the time.

**PS:** Tell me a little bit more about the family growing up, who else lived in your household?

**JC:** My grandfather and grandmother, my grandfather's name was Giovanni Colangelo. My grandmother's name was Rosina. They lived downstairs with an aunt and an uncle, and that aunt eventually had one child, the same age as my sister. And then my mom and dad, sister and myself lived upstairs, second flat. And my grandmother passed away in 1945, I remember that as a very significant year. I remember the end of World War II, the death of my grandmother, which was a big blow to me. She was a terrific lady. She served in different capacities in our neighborhood. She was like a doctor from the old country who had her own remedies that could take care of people who were ill, and she used to take care of me. One of the pet things I remember is that whenever I had a sore throat she put something on a little dish towel along with sugar and vinegar and did a little rubbing, which was rough around the edges, but it worked every time.

**PS:** What about your grandfather; what do you remember about him?

**JC:** He was a good man. I remember he passed away when I was 15 years of age. He was a hard working guy. Every Friday, which was payday, he never failed to give me a quarter. Twenty-five cents, that was his gift to me every Friday from probably a very meager paycheck. He had a number of jobs. I remember two or three jobs that he had in those years. He passed away when I was fifteen and I remember the day that he passed on. It was another traumatic day for me and I had a baseball game; an important baseball game that night. And I wondered whether or not I should even play. I chose to do it, committed the game to him and went out and pitched a no-hitter in his honor. And so I felt close to the grandparents. I've always been a very close family oriented individual and years later, in about 1980, I went to Italy and went back to my



roots, to my grandparents' villages; which were East of Naples in the hill areas of Fiato and Monte Leone. While we were in Monte Leone, at the Catholic church there, we went into the rectory and while I was waiting for a priest, I found some old records and found my great grandfather's baptismal record, which was kind of a moving experience for me. Among others things that took place and transpired that day, later in the day, I went to my grandmother's village and we met a couple who must have been ninety who remembered Rosina when she was a young girl because they were friends. That turned out to be a very emotional part of the trip. It was interesting, in our families things are carried on traditionally. Like recipes that stay within a family and it was amazing to me that in my grandmother's village, some of the flavors and tastes we had that day, it was just like being at home. So it was pretty obvious where they came from.

**PS:** Tell me a little bit more about your parents. What did your father do for a living?

**JC:** Early on my father was a fellow who worked in one of the mills that I mentioned earlier. And during the war he was drafted, but when he reported, the war came to an end. He went into the painting and decorating business after the war. And that's basically what he did. But we ended up with a split family, later on when I was twenty and about to be married myself, there was a big change in our family as he went on to create a different family somewhere else and subsequently my mother was remarried after a number of years and moved to Arizona. She spent some wonderful years here before she passed away uh in 1997.

**PS:** And your mother stayed home and took care of the family?

**JC:** My mother was not an educated woman. She had to go to work as a young girl. I was the first member of our entire family to have an opportunity to go to college. And I was very fortunate to do that and it was sports that gave me that opportunity...an opportunity or interest I probably would not have had in attending college, nor would I have been able to afford to go to a major university. But I was blessed with some athletic ability and had 66 college basketball offers and some major league baseball offers as a pitcher. I chose to go to college and continue playing two sports and threw my arm out in baseball which ended that possibility. But I was very grateful for the opportunity to get an education and that's what that's what opened the door for me.

**PS:** And did that desire to get an education; you started to talk about your mother didn't have an education; did that come from her?

**JC:** I'm not sure. I do know that she was a wonderful lady and a mother who did a great job under very meager circumstances of making ends meet whenever possible. And there were some difficult times too. I tell the story that I knew about Roots before Roots became popular; because one thing I remember most about our family living in that neighborhood, is that in the neighborhood everyone's home was open to one another. People shared. Whatever they had; as meager as it might be, people were willing to share it. And you felt protected. You felt comfortable. And of course those are things you don't find in today's world. In any type of neighborhood regardless of what the economics circumstances might be.



**PS:** Even in that neighborhood today, it's changed?

**JC:** Very much so. The old neighborhood isn't what it used to be. A couple of years ago I went back for a few events that the city fathers had planned around me. One was they named the high school gymnasium there in my honor. And my mother had a chance to see that before she passed away and they renamed Twenty-Second Street, my street, Jerry Colangelo Way. It's still mindboggling to me to think of that. Then thirdly, they put a big marker in front of the old house that's still standing. That my grandfather built and it's kind of a marker that this is the home that I was raised in, and it's a little bit surreal to me to think about those things taking place regarding my life. Because I still kind of picture myself as Jerry, you know the boy from Hungry Hill, doing whatever he was doing. But not Jerry, who presently is 60 years of age, looking back.

**PS:** Going back to your growing up, did you have a lot of extended family then in the neighborhood?

**JC:** Yes. I think we had some aunts and uncles and cousins that lived in the immediate neighborhood. And people were pretty close; but the extended family I refer to are godparents, and just a gang of kids that all grew up together. And it's interesting, in my early years, I always had a paper route or two or three. And to this day I might still have a dream thinking that I'm still delivering papers in the old neighborhood; and I still remember the names of all the people who lived in the various homes. So I can, through a dream, kind of walk the old neighborhood from the time to time. I can't just click in when I wish to; but it's kind of neat when it happens.

**PS:** Why don't you tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up there? You had paper routes; how old were you when you started getting these jobs? ·

**JC:** I had two major jobs during the early years. And I can't remember when I started with the paper route. Let's assume it was when I was ten, I also caddied at one of two country clubs that were reasonably close by. But the only way of transportation was to hitch hike, at a time when hitch hiking was a lot more safe than it is today. So there were times when I had morning routes, the Chicago papers at that time, we were loaded with papers. There were two morning papers; two afternoon papers: The Chicago Tribune and Sun Times in the morning; The Herald American and the Daily News in the afternoon, and then The Chicago Heights Star which was a bi-weekly paper. And I delivered all of them. And it was kind of funny because there were two dogs in the neighborhood named Spot and Tippy, believe it or not. Really out of a book, story book more or less, but they knew when it was time to deliver papers and they would show up at my house ready to accompany me throughout the neighborhood. So those dogs for years were with me as I delivered papers through rain and shine and snow and rain, whatever it may have been. That was a great memory and still is.

**PS:** You delivered papers early in the morning then?

**JC:** Either early in the morning or late afternoon or early evening. And, I do have a lot of remembrances of



my grandfather, early in the morning, hitting the exposed water pipes downstairs with a spoon which was my wakeup call because he was up so early and it might have been five, five thirty in the morning and it was time to come down and have a little sip of coffee to warm me up and out the door I went to deliver the papers.

**PS:** Are there any other special memories you have as a boy?

**JC:** Yeah, I used to play the accordion, primarily for him, he was an immigrant, there were a lot of immigrants who were in the neighborhood when I was a young boy. Of course many of them passed on in my early years, but it was important to him to have some reminders. So I, through someone in the neighborhood who taught accordion lessons, learned to play a number of the old Italian favorites for my grandfather and his friends. Songs like "Santa Lucia" and "Whey Marie" and "Come Back to Sorrento" were just some of those and I knew it pleased him a great deal.

And one memory I had that was kind of scary for me is that from time to time we had tornado warnings and of course that was pre-television time and so we didn't have much warning. Somehow we knew that there was a bad storm and of course I couldn't wait to go from upstairs to the basement to, be safe and everyone was kind of gathered down there and my grandfather said go back up and get the accordion because he wanted me to (laughs) entertain everyone. And I didn't really want to go. But one thing I learned a long time ago is that you mind your elders; and you mind your parents and your grandparents, and so when he said that, I was on my way. It was a scary, scary move up the stairwell, not knowing what might happen, or if I would ever get back. But I did and I played the accordion and he enjoyed that.

**PS:** Did you have other chores that you did around the house as a boy?

**JC:** There weren't that many chores. We lived in a small home were expected to clean up after ourselves, obviously. There was a very small garden. I helped in the garden a little bit and they grew tomatoes and carrots and whatever was seasonal. I helped my grandfather make wine. He had a little wine press in the basement. And, then I helped the ladies when they wanted to bottle tomatoes and some of the other things that used to be a big thing. I don't know if people even do that anymore. But the bottling thing was in our neighborhood pretty important, so there were always a lot of tomatoes and a lot of grapes that were around, and I had chores regarding that.

**PS:** You talked a little bit about your neighbors and the neighborhood, were there any special neighbors that you can think of?

**JC:** Right next door to my home was the Sabiano (sp?) family. And one of the members of the family was a shoe repairman. So people brought shoes there to be repaired and his name was Libro Sabiano. And he was a terrific guy. Almost paralyzed entirely from the waist down, but personality coming right through the wood work so to speak. And he took a real liking to me and all the kids in the neighborhood. And I just have great memories of visiting with Libro on the porch, or the steps in front of his shoe repair shop next



door, talking baseball or talking about whatever might have been. Even into the wee hours, especially during the summertime as you're getting a little bit older and even when I was asleep, without air conditioning help of course back then, but to hear Libro and his brothers and some of the others just talking throughout the night it seemed. I'm not quite sure what the time it was.

Again there were relationships, many relationships in that kind of a neighborhood where you can't help but think that you learned a great deal about values. A value system. I believe I got that coming from that kind of a background, and I wouldn't trade that for all the money in the world. You learned not only, as I said earlier, about roots and loyalty and sharing, but what really is important in life: family and friends. And what I've attempted to do during my lifetime is translate those values to my kids. And now to my grandchildren. And we have a large family. We had four children and now ten grandchildren. And they all live in Phoenix and so we are very involved in their lives and I guess that's kind of an old school philosophy, but something I believe in.

**PS:** What about going to school then. Did you go to a neighborhood school, talk a little bit about your school.

**JC:** There was a school just a block away, Garfield Grade School. It was a public school. I remember my mother wanting me to go the Catholic grade school at the church, San Rocco Church was a few blocks up the street. And, in fact, I was enrolled there; at least I thought I was. I had kind of the last seat in the last row on the first day, and by the end of the day I wasn't sitting there anymore. And as it turned out somehow a little girl was given that seat and that upset my mother a little bit so the next thing I knew I was at Garfield School the next day. So I went to the public school route rather than the private Catholic school route.

And it's really funny. I had a lot of memories again from those years, and one particular teacher, by the name of Mrs. Ginther, who I had in the fourth grade. And you know how we develop stories for our kids as they're growing up, just to give them something to cling to. I came up with some stories about Mrs. Ginther and my fourth grade experiences which have now been passed on to all of my grandkids, those who can understand it. So, here I am 60 years old, and I have grandkids walking around Phoenix who can tell me Mrs. Ginther stories about Garfield school. They know the whole story. And it's kinda funny; our family gets a kick out of that.

**PS:** What is the story that was so good that you told it to them.

**JC:** Well, she was just unusual, I tell about the times that we were treated a little bit poorly for misbehaving. Back in those days teachers were able to get away with some things that you would never dream possible today. Like slapping our wrists with a ruler. And one particular situation where, if you were caught with gum, you were asked to remove the gum and it was placed in your hair and then literally pulled out. And, then to have to carry kids on your back, on your hands and knees up and down the hallway if you were being a bad guy. And we did all those things, you know, little boys are little boys and



so I kinda shared some of those experiences. But I really emphasized the positive things, the school trip to the forest preserve where we had a cookout. And I would embellish the story about Jerry falling asleep and awakening and everyone was gone; and running into a bear that never existed and something like that. So, the kids all know the stories and enjoy hearing them from time to time.

**PS:** Sounds like you're a good story teller.

**JC:** I picked that up along the way somewhere.

**PS:** What were your favorite subjects in school? Did you like school?

**JC:** I guess I never cared that much about school. I think I almost flunked first grade, cause that was a very bad report card. But from that time on my grades were pretty good in all subjects. I always liked history, I liked to read about politics. I wasn't good in chemistry and the sciences necessarily. Math, I enjoyed math. In fact, I guess over the years I've always prided on myself on being able to out-quick the computer to some degree because I've had a series of people, accounting majors, who have worked for me with that kind of a background and whenever we've had meetings over the years, where numbers were involved, they have a computer and I have my brain and most often I've been able to come up with the right answer before they did. And they had the technology in front of them. So, I was always attracted to dealing with numbers.

**PS:** Where did you go to high school. Did you continue in public school?

**JC:** The school that I went to, Bloom Township High School, was kind of a consolidated school. It fed a number of communities around Chicago Heights. But it was big school, about 4,000 kids attended. It was a tremendously competitive school from the standpoint of sports, and during the mid 1950s it was a most unusual period of time for that school because the teams did extremely well. Football teams were outstanding and won the conference championships. Same with baseball and our basketball team. I played basketball and baseball in high school. Track team won the state tournaments and so it was a wonderful place, in my opinion, to go to school. And in my case, because I was very competitive and wanted to participate in sports, it was a great sounding board for me to find out more about who I was and how I could compete. And so that was a great experience.

I thought I was going to be a baseball player. I thought I was going to be a pitcher. And I grew up as a great Chicago Cubs fan. In the Chicago area and pre-television days, I remember spending so much time listening to baseball games via radio. The old Brooklyn Dodgers who played in Ebbetts Field in Brooklyn and the New York Giants who played at the Polo Ground. I tried to picture the Cubs playing in these different cities in those venues, as a kid with my ear next to the radio and going to sleep listening to baseball games.

In seventh grade I got the bug for basketball. And I became a two-sport guy. I was actually cut from the



junior high team in seventh grade, and kind of embarrassed by the fact that I was cut and committed myself that I'd be back the next year in eighth grade. I made the team and by the end of the year I was starting, and then the basketball career took off when I went into high school. So, I loved both sports. And it's ironic that I ended up doing what I'm doing. I feel very blessed that it turned out the way it did.

**PS:** You say you were cut in 7th grade. For what reason, too short, or what kind of kid were you?

**JC:** Well, I was left handed and I couldn't use my right hand very well at that time. And the coach embarrassed me, his name was Jim Bogan and Jim is still alive and here we are in the year 2000, and we kid about that when I see him from time to time. He's an elderly man, but I give him credit for kind of giving me an incentive. Not necessarily encouragement, but an incentive to come back and prove him wrong. He said in front of the entire group, "Hey kid, you better learn how to shoot a lay-up with your right hand before you try out for my team." So, I went out and made sure I could shoot a lay-up with the right hand, among other things, and was fortunate enough to be picked on the team the following year. I think I started as sixth man and worked my way into the starting lineup, and once I got there, I wasn't going to let anyone take it away.

**PS:** So, in high school you continued on both sports?

**JC:** I played both sports in high school. It was interesting, we had a track coach who was a great track coach, by the name of, Ralph Stebbon. And he won three state championships while I was there, and he wanted me to be a hurdler on his team. And he was trying to convince me to drop baseball and run for him on the track team and he guaranteed me I'd be a state hurdle champion if I would commit to dropping baseball. I didn't want to do that because I loved the game and I wanted to play. And I couldn't do both: I couldn't run track and play baseball. Not at our school. I mean it was just too competitive. And the coaches would not have allowed that.

But we had some interesting times in high school. Our basketball team my junior year had one of the outstanding teams in the state. We were eliminated in the state tournament. I think we finished 22 and 6 that year; but we had a young team. We had a freshman, sophomore and three juniors who were playing. We did have a senior player by the name of Grady McCullum, who was a player who transferred to our high school a year earlier from the South. And Grady was a jumping jack, pogo stick, who turned 19 before the state tournament and was ineligible to play. That was a state ruling. And so we lost our best player and we were eliminated, but we felt convinced that our senior year we would be one of the best teams in the state and my whole motivation in life-the only goal I had was to win the high school basketball state championship. Truly and honestly that's all I was focused on.

And so we started our senior year and in the fourth game we were upset by Lockport, Illinois, who had a pretty good team. But that was an eye opener for us. And then we proceeded to win 24 straight and we were 27 and 1 in the state tournament. Early in the year I looked around to see who our major competition might be in the state tournament and there was a team from Elgin that looked loaded. And as it so happens





in the first round of the state tournament we played Elgin. I had seen them play a couple of times during the year and was convinced we could beat them. They were 27 and 0; we were 27 and 1. And in that game, which was a terrific game, we led the entire way and got beat in the last second by Elgin, and quite honestly that night I thought my life had ended. Cause that's all I wanted was a state championship and I was denied that opportunity by Elgin. But it was a great experience for me because I didn't get what I wanted. And, although I was as disappointed as one might be, that next day the sun rose. I went back to school and life went on and there was another experience. And that's one of the things I've learned throughout my lifetime. I've learned a great deal more from my failures and losses than I have from my successes. And I think that's been a real building block for me throughout my life.

**PS:** I've heard the other people say that, too. So that was your senior year? It doesn't sound like you were academically oriented in high school.

**JC:** No. I went to class and did what I had to do, but no, I was not necessarily motivated. I wanted to play quite honestly and I could get Bs and Cs just by going to class and doing a little bit of studying. So I wasn't really motivated that much, baseball was still a big part of it.

There was a player by the name of Jim Boughton, who pitched later on for the New York Yankees who transferred to our high school from a school in New Jersey during our junior year. Now, just to give you a comparison, Jim came to our school from a school where he was the first string quarterback. He was the number one pitcher on the baseball team; and he was first string on the basketball team. Our school, as I said earlier, was very, very competitive and we were loaded with athletes. Jim pitched behind me on the baseball team. He was the number two pitcher; he got cut on the basketball team and was a fourth string quarterback on the football team. That's just to show you the difference in competition.

And yet, two years after he left high school, he signed a contract with the Yankees and a year and a half later, he was up in the major leagues. And Jim became quite an athlete and a pitcher with the Yankees. It was a short career. He won a couple of World Series games, back in the '60s. Later he became an author; he wrote a very controversial book called, *Ball Four*, which opened the door on what happens in the locker room on a major league team, which major league baseball didn't appreciate. But Jim went on to become an author and he invented some products that have done very well for him. He became a television guy and I still see him from time to time.

**PS:** As you were getting out of high school, then, you were focused on going to college not for the academics, but for sports?

**JC:** I have to admit it's true. When I looked at all the offers that I had to get an education. And I did understand that that was worthy of something. I limited my interest to a handful of schools. Notre Dame, which was big in the Chicago area; Michigan, Illinois, Kansas. I chose Kansas because there was a big center there by the name of Wilt Chamberlain. And since I was denied that high school basketball championship, I said my next goal is, I want to win an NCAA championship and I'm going where Wilt is.



Because I felt confident that I could play on that team with him. You should know that summer before getting to Kansas, was the summer I threw my arm out. I was 17 years old and being overly competitive as I was, I ended up pitching five games in one week. Which for a young 17 year old could do an awful lot of damage. And it did. I pitched nine innings on a Sunday; nine innings on a Wednesday in the county tournament to get down state in the American Legion tournament. Then pitched on Friday, Saturday and Sunday in Metune, [pretty sure "Metune" is "Mattoon"] Illinois. Started on Friday, relieved on Saturday and Sunday, and ironically on Sunday hit a three-run home run to win the game. And we won the state championship on that day and three days later, we opened up the national tournament in Cincinnati at Crossley Field and my arm felt like a rag before I pitched that day. But I got through it and beat a team from Michigan in Crossley Field, the old home of the Cincinnati Reds.

And the next day we lost, I played the outfield when I didn't pitch. We lost on an interference ruling at the plate. The next day, very controversial call by the home base umpire and so in the consolation game, the next day in the last inning, with two outs and I'm the last batter, I literally had my hand broken on the same pitching arm, with a foul ball. The umpire called foul ball, but actually hit me on the wrist and out of my competitive nature or stupidity as I went down, I punched the ground with that hand and literally shattered everything in my hand.

So, as I was put into a cast later that day, and I was in that cast for eight weeks, when that cast came off of that left arm of mine, between my shoulder, rotator cuff and my hand, I couldn't throw anymore. I mean I could throw, but I couldn't throw like I could previously. And back then, there just wasn't much history about how to deal with injuries. In fact, we did everything wrong as I look at what is done today to help athletes recuperate and rehabilitate. We didn't have a clue back then. And so, although I pitched in college, I really didn't have a future as a pitcher and my concentration was on basketball.

Ironically, at Kansas I wasn't sure what to take in the form of a major. I thought about teaching and coaching, but something in the back of my mind said, business, business, business. And so I was at Kansas for a semester when Wilt advised me that he was leaving school to sign with the Globe Trotters; this was in 1957. And he signed for \$75,000 which is a lot of money today and you can imagine what \$75,000 was back in 1957. And I just didn't want to be out in Kansas. Because I had gone there to play with him. Freshman were ineligible in those days, so I was playing on the freshman team, but our lockers were next to one another. And got to know him reasonably well. And, so I made the decision to leave.

There was a young coach by the name of Dick Harp, who passed away this past year. He really was a good man, under a great deal of pressure and stress as the head coach at Kansas, because he replaced a legend. There was a guy named Fog Allen, who was one of the almost inventors of the game basketball, that's how legendary Fog Allen is in the annals of basketball. He's like Adolph Rupp, who was the legendary coach at Kentucky. Whoever would come in after someone like that was almost certain to fail because of the comparisons made. Dick Harp, when advised by me that I was going to transfer schools, gave me another little push or incentive because he basically said, he was disappointed and that I was a quitter and that I was not ever going to amount to very much. So he was upset about me transferring schools. And I guess I



would have to admit that, certain things happen in our lifetimes that serve as an incentive. Or a reminder or encouragement. In this particular case I was hurt by what he said. I wanted to make sure I proved him wrong.

**PS:** So tell me then about your college career after you left Kansas.

**JC:** I transferred to the University of Illinois, met a young lady that I was smitten by. She happens to be my wife today. Joan, who had transferred also from Michigan State University to Illinois. And she was also an Illinois girl. She was actually from a farm community in Southern Illinois, Collinsville, Illinois, which had a great basketball tradition. Collinsville had a coach that coached the high school team there for almost 40 years. And any boy who was born near that town, he had examined by some doctor almost immediately to find out whether this kid had a chance to be a basketball player in terms of size. And they all became players. And Collinsville had great high school teams for many, many years.

But Joan's family moved to the Chicago area. When she was a young girl, she grew up in Park Ridge, Illinois, near what turned out to be O'Hare Airport. And we met at the University of Illinois. I was captain of the freshman basketball team.

I also had 15 hours of credit that I brought with me from Kansas. And I decided I was going to start to take some business courses. That was still in the back of my mind. So, during the course of the next few years, I took some courses like Business Law and Basic Accounting and Economics because something was telling me, why don't you take some of these courses because it may pay off down the road.

I pitched baseball for a couple of years: my sophomore and junior year. My sophomore year in basketball, I was the only sophomore that played with a junior-senior laden team. An interesting thing happened at the end of my sophomore year. We had one sophomore and a couple of juniors who were on that team. The rest were seniors. Well at the conclusion of that season, the players would nominate and elect a captain for the next year's team. And, I was picked captain by that group. And our coach at the time, Harry Combs, took it away from me. He said, in the history of the University of Illinois, there'd never been an underclassman as captain and he didn't want to break that tradition. And so my junior year, we didn't have a captain. Officially. But invariably I was the one who was asked to go out to mid-court, shake hands with the officials, as the honorary captain. At the end of that season, I was elected captain by the group and served in that capacity in my senior year.

I had a reasonably good career. I was all Big Ten, received a number of honors like that, in a league that had a lot of great players at the time. Don Nelson, who's now with the Dallas Mavericks was playing at Iowa at the time. John Havlicek and Mel Knoll and Larry Sigfried and Jerry Lucas were playing at Ohio State at the time. Walt Bellamy was playing at Indiana. The Big 10 was a loaded league and so I was in some pretty fast company. But I wasn't quite good enough to be one of maybe ten players who would be drafted and would make the NBA. There was one league, there were nine teams and about ten players a year made it. So the handwriting was on the wall that I was going to have to get a life and get on with my



life and it was going to exclude being a professional player at least as far as the NBA was concerned.

**PS:** You talked about being a leader and a captain of your team. Had you ever been a leader in the student body president or class president anything like that in high school.

**JC:** No, but in college I think I made some of the honorary organizations that the University had. I think my junior and senior year for academics and for activities on the campus and received a lot of recognition because of all those things. But I didn't serve in any capacities in student government.

**PS:** Sports was the thing

**JC:** Right.

**PS:** But it sounds like you didn't neglect your academics.

**JC:** No, no. I was more on the honor roll than not. Which by the way, I developed some pretty strong opinions on over the years, as I see what has taken place on the collegiate level regarding athletes and the demands on them. It's almost impossible for an athlete to carry a full load and be an athlete with the time that is required of them in one sport, let alone two sports; if you're a two-sport guy and because I happen to believe that at least in a division one concept, big time programs, as it relates to football and basketball, these players are really revenue producers for those colleges and universities and need to be treated differently. In my book that I wrote about a year ago, I dedicate a whole chapter to some of those ideas and concepts about how to deal with the modern athlete. When we hear about schools being put on probation, and some of the things that have happened in terms of cheating to help athletes get through whatever, the system needs to change. And, in that book I talk about a number of those things.

**PS:** You mention that you had all these scholarship offers, so you were able to go to college because of the athletic scholarships?

**JC:** Yes.

**PS:** Did you have to work at the same time?

**JC:** When I transferred to the University of Illinois, I had to work because there was a Big 10 conference ruling at the time that did not allow scholarships to transfer. So I was actually given three different jobs: waiting on tables at the Moose Club in downtown Champaign-Urbana, passing out ice skates at the Armory on the campus, and a job over at Huff Gym, which was not so easy. When you're playing two sports and you're also doing what else, and the other else for me is, I got married when I was 21 years old to my wife Joan, and in my senior year, we had a child. So, I had a full load, without question, and when I went on scholarship after that first semester, that helped lighten the load obviously. But I think I got an early education about responsibility and accountability and priorities.



**PS:** You did have a pretty full life there. As you were going through school concentrating on sports and you told us you realized you probably were not going to be a pro player. What did you think about doing when you got out of college?

**JC:** I was prepared in terms of a degree to coach and teach. I had some business courses along for the ride so to speak. But yet when I was about to graduate, I had a few opportunities. One was I wanted to interview some major companies to talk about what opportunities were there. Knowing that it would probably be in sales, and so I was interesting in marketing positions and interviewed with a number of major corporations who were on campus. I had some wonderful opportunities. I was also offered some high school coaching, teaching opportunities and I think the name and exposure being the athlete in the state and having some notoriety in that kind of a situation, afforded me some of those opportunities.

Yet what I chose to do, the third option was going back to my home town and getting in business with someone from my old neighborhood who was a good friend, brother, uncle, father type guy, who was about eight years my elder. We got involved in the tuxedo rental and sales business. So upon graduation, I opted to do that and spent the next three years, building a business, living back in my own old home town and playing basketball as much as I could. Including playing in the North American League which was a league of professional players for \$50 a game. And we got paid whenever there was enough ticket revenue to afford to pay the players. It was great experience for me.

And I did that until the time that the Chicago Bulls were born and I was a part of that franchise. I graduated from Illinois in 1962. And in January of 1966, Chicago was granted an NBA franchise. I had met and gone to work six months earlier for a fellow named Dick Kline, who was in the incentive merchandising business. At that time he informed me he had a dream about getting an NBA franchise and he wanted me to be a part of that. So I was playing basketball, marketing programs for him, in his particular business and then we were out there trying to sell and create interest in the city getting an NBA franchise. And six months later, we did and that's how I ended up in the NBA. That was the beginning.

**PS:** Why don't we back up a little bit about when you left college and went into the tuxedo business. That seems like kind of an odd choice to me. When you had other opportunities from major corporations and you had a wife and child to support. Why did you choose to go into the tuxedo business?

**JC:** Well, I've come to believe in my own heart, that God has a plan for everyone's life. And it was his plan for me to do just that at that particular time. So often we think we're making choices, I think we're led to make the choices that we do make. Good, bad or indifferent. At the time I was a little bit tired of travel and doing all the things I had been doing. There some appeal to me about going back to the old neighborhood, back to the old home town, kind of a comfort zone if you will. Playing ball and being back with my old friends. It wasn't very kind or thoughtful to my wife. Because that was like foreign territory to her. Anyway, those first few years, they were difficult years in that I spent most of time working and playing



ball and we very quickly had two other children. So we had three children, one in 1961, '63 and '65 that is. And, I had a lot of growing up to do at that point. And so at the end of three years of blood, sweat and tears trying to build a business, I came to the reality that I had wasted a lot of time. And it was coincidental that in going through a wallet with some old business cards, I came across a card for D. O. Kline, who was in the incentive merchandising business, that had been given to me by my father-in-law, a couple of years earlier. He said, if you ever have a chance to meet Dick Kline, he's an interesting guy I met along the way and you two would really hit it off.

And so on the very special evening when I had quit this partnership and found myself sitting at the kitchen table not knowing what the next day would bring, with three little children sleeping in one room around the corner. In cleaning out that wallet I came across that card. And the next morning made a call and Dick Kline remembered me from basketball and baseball and so on and so forth from that Midwestern notoriety at least. And he invited me in. And later that day offered me a position with him and six months later, after helping him sell product and helping him try to develop this idea and dream of his, the time came when he asked me to be part of this new start-up NBA franchise.

And I used to think that it was the right place, right time, and being lucky. As I said earlier I believe God has a plan for our lives and I think in this particular case, I needed to go through all of those experiences and grow individually and be ready for that opportunity. But that's where he wanted me to be.

**PS:** You mentioned you had three kids by then. How old were you then? Let's back up and just talk a little bit about your personal life. You met your wife at college, how did you first meet?

**JC:** There was a football player on the team by the name of Ed O'Bradovich who eventually went on to play in the pros and played with the Bears and was on a championship in 1964, if I remember. He had a brother by the name of Mylon who mentioned that there was a girl who had just transferred to the campus and he talked me into taking her out. It was the one and only blind date I've ever had in my life, but it turned out to be her first and only blind date of her life. Although it was on again, off again, for about six months, I think we both knew something was special right from the beginning. And so, that's how that came about.

**PS:** You decided to get married while you were still in school?

**JC:** Yes.

**PS:** Were there people who didn't think it was a good idea?

**JC:** My coach didn't like it at all. He thought that my plate was too full, and my attitude was that's my business and I had kind of been on my own in many ways and I always felt I was a little bit older and more mature than most guys my age. I think that was all part of the way I grew up and maybe the combination of competing and having to struggle a little bit along the way and so I felt I knew what I was doing and was



ready to do exactly what I was doing. I remember he called the basketball practice at the same time of day as my wedding so that the players couldn't be there. And that kind of bothered me. But you know, you kinda ride through those kind of things. Let's put it this way; there aren't too many people I know that have been married for 4Q years to the same person. I'm one of those people, and I knew then, and I know now, they'll never be a second. And so, there must have been something planned for the right reason.

**PS:** How did her family feel about you getting married - her getting married so young?

**JC:** Wonderful, wonderful people, Burneil and Hilda Helmick. My father-in-law's family was from near Collinsville, a little town named Troy, Illinois and his dad was the barber in town. Downtown probably consisted of about three streets and the population must have been a handful, but he was quite a guy. I got to know him a little bit. Joanie's grandfather, in fact, we brought him to Phoenix on his first flight ever. Back in 1969 or '70, I can't recall. He was really not in very good shape physically at that time of his life. And we brought him out on a wheelchair and we said, "Oh, boy this is going to be a tough deal while he's here for a few weeks." He had the greatest time of his life. He became like a young guy all over again. He kind of jumped up on the plane. He didn't need a wheelchair to get anywhere and it was a great, great time. Burnie Helmick, my father-in-law, was one of the pioneers in the executive management business.

Executive search, today that's big business; where companies go out to look for CEOs and executives and pay a lot of money to consulting firms to perform that function. He was with a couple of firms who were pioneers in that business and I just remember him as always being immaculate. Always wearing a dark blue suit and a fedora, a hat that men used to wear back in those days; back in the Midwest and East at least.

Joanie's mother, Hilda, was a kind of a farm gal, in the sense that she was home taking care of the kids and she always had the meals on the table and was a very strong woman and we had a very unique relationship almost from day one. I think we hit it off and it was a very special relationship with her and she was a great lady, who really cared about her family and she passed away a few years ago also. It was interesting she really wanted to be able to make opening day for the Arizona Diamondbacks when we played our first game, but she was kind of running out of juice. You know, she was running out of time with her illnesses and she told me, she says, "I'm going to be there no matter how I have to get there, I'm going to be there for opening day. But if the Lord says I won't be able to make it, I'll be sitting up on that flagpole down the left field line."

**PS:** That's a nice story. In college was your wife planning on a career?

**JC:** Her interests were interior decorating. That has been her lifelong interest and she's known to have impeccable tastes and a great feel for the fine things of life, in terms of furniture and homes. I think she was Martha Stewart before Martha Stewart came along, that's the way I would describe her. Some very unique talents, but she didn't finish school because of our marriage and having a child, she worked for a little bit and then never quite finished. My attitude in that sense was I told her she'd never have to worry



about working, that was my responsibility. And that hopefully, God willing, she wouldn't need it. So far that's been the case.

**PS:** You had three little kids early on, how involved were you in raising those kids. It sounds like you were awfully busy and not home very much.

**JC:** In retrospect, probably not as much as I should have been. Just because of the time constraints, but I probably fell into the trap of saying, it's not quantity, it's quality time and I think people make excuses when they use terminology or phrases like that. If I had to do it all over again, I would of spent twenty times as much time as I did. But one thing I would say is that one of the great things that happened, not only professionally but from the standpoint of creating a real family . was when my kids were two, four and six when we came to Arizona. We just packed up and left and when we came here, we started our lives all over again. We didn't have any family here; we didn't have any friends here. There was just our little family and so from that point on, I was much more involved with the family because that's all we had. Of course over time you create a lot of friends and associations, and family started visiting and then some family moved here. But the one thing I have learned since having grandchildren now, who are between five months and 12 years of age, ten of them; is how quickly time goes by. I have a daughter who's about to be 40, another daughter who's about to be 38 and a son who'll be 36. life goes by quickly.

**PS:** As a child what did you think you wanted to be when you grew up?

**JC:** I thought I wanted be a left-handed pitcher in the major leagues and I'd pitch forever. But again, life has its twists and turns and I think young boys, back then and even today, many aspire to be an athlete. To do things as a child, you'd love to do as an adult. So, I didn't have any broad concepts at all. It was focused on being a major league pitcher and then winning the high school basketball championship and then if not that, now I want an NCAA championship and that's just the path that I had gone down. But as life played it's cards on me, or my hand was being played out, I talked about the marriage; the responsibilities that go along with that. The decisions you make good, bad or indifferent regarding, career path, as I did in my case.

And obviously upon meeting Dick Kline, that opened up a whole new world for me. For example as we went out and talked with potential investors into the Chicago franchise, which at the time we were soliciting. We thought the franchise was \$7.50,000, which was what we were told by then Commissioner Walter Kennedy of NBA, what it would be. But I met people like Lamar Hunt, who became an investor, Dan Serrill of Serrill Pharmaceuticals, Greg Barker of ARCO Business Forms, Harold Mayer of Oscar Mayer Company, and others who I never would have had an opportunity to have met. So, given that opportunity, it exposed me to a whole different realm, economically, business wise, etc. And I felt very comfortable in that kind of a setting, and in bank settings talking about financing. So it was a great education. I was 26 years old, meeting people of that ilk, being involved in the kind of big business. So it was a great, great learning experience. Kinda learning in the trenches if you will. And so during that process, we found out that the price had increased from \$750,000 to a million two-fifty, which was a real





hurdle, and something we had to overcome. But it was accomplished. A fellow named Elmo Rich, whose family owned Simonize Wax was the individual who put up the additional financial backing which closed the deal. And the Chicago Bulls were born.

There is a story that I've told often that on the day that the Bulls were awarded- Chicago was awarded the franchise, we had already picked the name. We knew exactly what we were prepared to do. And it so happened that that night, I had a game in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I was playing in the North American League and I'd just been traded by the Chicago team to the team in Grand Rapids. And so I was awaiting, Dick Kline's word, he was attending the meeting in New York. I had a telegram that was prepared to go out to the media. And I had news releases that I had prepared. I was a novice at all of that, but I did it.

And I was getting nervous because I had to leave to drive about three hours and a half up to Grand Rapids around the lake and it was starting to snow. And I was anxious to play in the game because I had a chance to play against the team that had just traded me. Finally, the word came from Kline, that we had gotten the franchise. No one in Chicago was expecting it. No one knew anything about it. It was really quiet. So I sent a telegram out to the media and to this day I remember what it said. It said, "An important sports announcement of both local and national interest will be made tomorrow morning at 9 AM at the Water Tower Inn, signed the Chicago Bulls." Sent that out immediately. Took the releases with me, jumped in my car, went to Grand Rapids and played in this game against the Chicago team that had traded me. And we beat them in overtime; and I hit the game winner and had 37 points and I was kinda excited about doing that.

But more excited about telling the guys in the locker room afterwards that the news that the next morning, the Chicago Bulls were going to be announced. And of course everybody wanted to try out, you know, these were like guys just below NBA quality. And meanwhile, a good friend of mine, who now owns the Harlem Globe Trotters, and a former team mate of mine at the University of Illinois, who now lives in Phoenix, Manny Jackson, who I played with that night. Inadvertently he had taken my valuables, including my keys to my car and he had left in the blizzard. And he was driving back to Detroit When I finally got out and realized that I didn't have my keys, wallet or anything, I didn't know what to do. I couldn't even get someone to come out and help me, like a locksmith to try to get in the car. So I broke into my own car. I had no idea what I was doing, but I got in, and in my glove compartment, somehow, someway was an ignition key. To this day, I don't know how it got there. I don't ever remember putting it there, but it was there. I trudged home, it took me all night to get home, so I had no sleep. All I did was change clothes in Chicago Heights and continue on into the city to pass out those releases at the 9 o'clock press conference. And that's how the Bulls were born. And that was the beginning of a wonderful experience.

That first year with the Bulls was a very exciting time. I immediately had to quit playing and went out scouting. So I had two responsibilities. I had to scout to get ready for the pro draft and also for the college draft. And I was going to be responsible for all the marketing. Bear in mind, that the organization ended up with about seven people that year in our organization. We did whatever had to be done.



**PS:** Did you know anything about marketing and public relations or scouting?

**JC:** Well, I had played. I had reputation. I knew who could play and who couldn't play, cause I was pretty close to being one of them myself at that time. And I had experience against a lot of the guys playing in the league and I felt I had a pretty good handle on the scouting part.

As far as marketing is concerned, I've always been able to sell. And even in the short six-month period that I was with Dick Kline, working on trying to get a franchise, I was also selling and I'd had a lot of success in helping others sell their product. And so if you have a love for something and you believe in a product and if you could sell, you're pretty much of a leg up on marketing. And it comes second nature so to speak. So I was not intimidated in terms of being out there, looking at talent or marketing the way I had to. In fact, there's a picture on my credenza in the office here of one of the promotions we did in Chicago to help sell tickets. I rented a flatcar with a live bull and Dick Kline and our coach. Johnny Kerr had been named our coach. He was a local from Tilden Tech in Chicago who played at the University of Illinois, and who had a great career in the NBA. And the three of us, with cowboy hats, went down Michigan Avenue in Chicago at lunch time throwing out pamphlets trying to sell season tickets. With a live bull on a flatcar.

**PS:** That should get some attention.

**JC:** We got attention. And as I told you, you learn from the mistakes you make. Because I never repeated that one again. But it was fun.

And Dick Kline, who I thought was one of the great salesmen that I've ever run across in my lifetime, who by the way is still around. He scouts for the Suns today. He lives in South Carolina; is a very elderly guy, but that keeps him going. That was my opportunity to do something for him. Because he gave me a wonderful opportunity back in 1966.

**PS:** Tell me a little bit more about that first year with the Bulls. How long did you have from the time you announced, before they played their first game? And how did you build the organization?

**JC:** We were awarded the franchise in January and we had to be ready for draft in May. We had to play our first game, go to training camp in September. So we didn't have a great deal of time. I did all the things you might think one might do. I called other teams in the league; I introduced myself. I tried to get as much information as I could pick up. What do you do in season ticket sales? How do you do this? How do you do that? I was never afraid to ask questions and then be a good listener.

In fact, I learned a good lesson from a guy who went into the Hall of the Fame, Red Holtzman, who coached the New York Knicks during the '70s to their wonderful championship years. On one of my first trips scouting for the Bulls, I showed up in Kansas City at the small college tournament, the NAI tournament. I went to get my credentials, was told where to sit in Press Row and I met four people who



were representing the other nine teams in the NBA who were there scouting. And each night, after watching eight games a day, during this tournament, right around the corner from the old Muleback Hotel in Kansas City was a restaurant called The Italian Gardens, which was open into the wee hours. And each night, that's where that group went for dinner, like at midnight. And on three consecutive nights I sat there and listened. And on the third night, Red Holtzman, who was one of the group, turned to me and said, "Hey kid, you're going to be okay in this League." And I guess I quizzically said, "what you do mean, Red?" He said, "Because you keep your mouth shut. You don't know anything." Now that's something I've tried to pass on to a lot of young people along the way and that is: You get an opportunity, you get out there, you meet people. You can ask questions. But be a listener, cause that's how you learn. You learn from people who have been there, who have done it and are willing to share with you. And so, I learned a great lesson and I'm thankful that lesson early on, in terms of scouting and talent and that type of thing.

And I did ask a lot of questions on the marketing side. I believed I could get the job done and we went out and did it. And that first year was a terrific year. We made the playoffs that first year. We only won 33 games but it was fun - every day was a new experience and I couldn't have been happier. You think about a young kid, 26 years of age, doing something like that. I had fun that summer before we played our first game. As we brought players in, we tried players out. We wanted to see where they stood. We thought it was kinda funny because Johnny Kerr, who I mentioned was going to be our coach, and I would play two on two against whoever we brought in, we never lost a game all summer. And here we were interviewing players, prospects to be play for us. And so, it was kind of a neat summer and I had a lot of fun. One of the things it did, it encouraged me to believe that I was pretty close to being able to play. But, my path had gone another route. So that first year was a great experience. What I didn't recognize, at that time, was how fortunate I really was.

Chicago was the first expansion team of the modern era. There hadn't been a new team for years in the NBA. What was about to happen was an explosion of expansion. And so even during that first year, as I met people, I was offered an opportunity to go with Seattle, who was going to be brought into the league the following year. Seattle and San Diego were brought in 1967; the Bulls in 1966. I chose not to go. I was a Chicago guy, I was happy to be when I was. All our families were there. It was a perfect setting for me. And Seattle, quite honestly back then, in my mind still had Conestoga wagons and dirt streets. Of course, it wasn't that way, but I'd never been to Seattle, but that was what I thought it might be like. And I'm stretching when I say that.

But during the course of the beginning of the second season, I was sitting in Los Angeles, watching the Holiday Tournament and a few NBA people were there talking about further expansion and the discussion was Milwaukee would be one of the two cities and Phoenix might be the other city. And I said, "Phoenix, how can we give a franchise to Phoenix, there's nothing there" And within a month, I had an offer. This is the second year of the Bulls. This is 1967-68 season, the Milwaukee group had offered me the general manager's job. Here I was 27, going on 28, and so I had that kind of sitting there. Right after the award of the two franchises, I took a trip to Denver to scout a player. And I spoke to someone who represented, he would be leading the Phoenix group, in terms of ownership and I had been recommended. And I guess



what I would say to you today is that, I didn't realize when we started the Bulls that the expansion explosion would take place. I was a young man in this growth industry and as new teams were coming on, they were looking for people. And so I found myself kind of a prime candidate.

Very quickly I had Milwaukee and I had Phoenix to go to as GM. Or I could have stayed in Chicago. I remember coming to Phoenix. And you know, certain stories you tell over and over again over the years because they were the important stories. At least you believed they were. And the story I tell about my first trip to Phoenix is that, it was 20 below zero when I left O'Hare and I arrived in Phoenix and it was 75 and the palm trees were swaying at Terminal One, which a lot of people can't even relate to because it was torn down many years ago. It was a beautiful day. I smelled orange blossoms in the air. I went to someone's office, during the course of the day I saw the town, which wasn't much. It was very small. Saw a brand new Veteran's Memorial Coliseum that was only one year old at the time. Looked small but was new. I noticed one thing real quick that the locker rooms were not locker rooms, they were dressing rooms. For the circus and whatever other talent would come in.

And by the end of the day, I'm being pressured to take the job. And I guess I had a little bit of cool in me at the time because I think I said the right things by telling the three individuals who were going to be partners, "Gentlemen I can't make that kind of a decision. I need to speak to my wife about that. I need to look at my opportunities and I'll get back to you tomorrow. But I do need to make a phone call." I said. And I called my wife and I said pack your bags, Babe, it's Phoenix. And two weeks later, three kids, eight suitcases and a couple hundred bucks in our pocket we got on a plane and we showed up in Phoenix. March 1, 1968.

**PS:** That is a great story. I read in your book that one of those people you met with was Karl Eller. And he's one of the History Makers this year so I interviewed him also for the oral history and asked him about that first meeting, and he said you really impressed them on that first meeting. That must have been a great first meeting.

**JC:** Well, Karl at that time was in the outdoor sign business in fact, the business establishment, I was told to go to was Eller Outdoor Company. It was on the Black Canyon Freeway at the time and so I met Karl for the first time. Donald Pitt, an attorney from Tucson and Richard Block, also from Tucson, who eventually moved to Beverly Hills, were going to be the principals. I guess it turned out to be a pretty positive meeting from every standpoint. But something in my heart and my gut told me that day, that this was the place for us. And as I said earlier, it was kind of a traumatic experience within our family because this was the time, we just kind of picked up and left. And we had to be dependent, on one another and it was starting all over again. Which I think it was wonderful.

**PS:** You said you called your wife and told her to pack her bags. What did she say?

**JC:** She was excited. She was going to go along with what I thought was appropriate. And she came out a week a later, just to take a look. And we moved two or three weeks later. But it was March 1 of '68 when



we arrived. And I remember the day because it rained so hard when we got off the plane at Sky Harbor and then it didn't rain for 90 days. And we got our first experience in what Phoenix weather was all about. But those were wonderful times and experiences.

**PS:** There must have been more than just the weather, to uproot your whole family and your whole lifestyle from a great opportunity. You were in a great position in Chicago. And to leave there and come here had to be a big decision.

**JC:** Obviously it was more than weather. Number one, in Chicago I was number two guy. Although I was being told that at some time in the future it was going to be mine, no time table was set. Milwaukee, where I could have done the same thing, was almost like Chicago to me in terms of the little neighbor next door. And the appeal Phoenix had to me was it was going away and starting all over again. I saw virgin territory. I saw a city that I felt had a future and I was impressed with what I saw. And I thought, you know this is a great opportunity to take a family start all over again. Start from scratch and everything that's done would be done by me. In other words, having the opportunity to start something from ground zero is a great opportunity. Not many people have that. I liked the challenge; I liked the setting and it had much more to do with that than just weather.

**PS:** You had just done that, starting from ground zero two years earlier. Some people would say it's time to rest on your laurels a little bit, and not go start all over again (laughs).

**JC:** When you're 27 or 28, young, dumb and naive, you don't think that way. You know, you're ready for the next challenge and I guess that's where I was at that time.

**PS:** And you were the youngest general manager...

**JC:** Youngest GM in sports. At that time, at 28. I had just turned 28 and again, it was a wonderful opportunity and I go back to that fact, why me? I do think that was part of God's plan also.

**PS:** Have there been any other young GMs since then?

**JC:** I think there have been in professional sports. Sports have expanded so much. There's so many more teams in each league and so many more leagues that, I believe there have been on a few occasions. But not many. Not many are named to that capacity in their twenties, let alone thirties.

**PS:** You really impressed people although you were young, according to Karl Eller, you were quite impressive.

**JC:** Well, I think it was a short field. They didn't have many candidates. So maybe that helped me.

**PS:** And you mentioned in your book, I thought it was really interesting, about the salaries. You want



to talk a little bit about 1960s pay scale because it's really changed.

**JC:** Everything's relative: The payroll for the Chicago Bulls in 1966, for that first team was \$180,000 for 12 players. Ticket prices were two-three-four and five dollars. National television money was \$100,000 per team. Per diem was six or seven dollars per day. The next year in Phoenix, our first year in Phoenix in 1968, I think we had a payroll of \$230,000, again for twelve players. Ticket prices were about the same. But it's all relative, when you think about pricing then, and salaries then and where we are today. It's become big business and if we want to compare a dollar then and a dollar today, I'm not quite sure what that change might be, but it doesn't go very far today, let's put it that way.

**PS:** And your salary as General Manager, that wasn't very much either. They didn't lure you here with the big bucks. (laughs).

**JC:** Well, no, it's really interesting though. You know, Karl Eller has had a tremendous career. You know as a businessman, as an entrepreneur, and in terms of what he's accomplished in his career, it's just amazing to me. And yet when I met him that first time, I think I got him the first time in a negotiation because Eller, Pitt and Block asked me that day, they said, "well, what do you want in a way of a contract?" In my due diligence, knowing what was being paid OMs in the NBA at that time, it was in the \$12 to \$15,000 range. And, again, having I guess confidence in my own ability or circumstances at the time I said, "three years at twenty-five a year". And they countered with two years at twenty-two five. So, I figured that one out quickly and I haven't let the three of them forget that over the years. Because they've all been good friends and business partners over the years and you learn from all those experiences. But I was very impressed with Karl. Then and still am.

**PS:** The feeling is mutual. So when you made your decision to leave Chicago, did they try to keep you in Chicago. Or did your family try to keep you there. ·

**JC:** Family didn't. They probably were happy to see me leave. No, I'm just kidding. The family certainly wasn't to interfere. I think they were concerned, like why would I be going way out to Phoenix, Arizona. Again none of them had ever been to Arizona. But Dick Kline did not want me to leave. You know, my boss with the Bulls, he wanted me to stay and I remember one of the writers for the Chicago Sun Times, a fellow by the name of Bill Gleason, who's still alive and kicking and writing for a suburban newspaper today. But he was a big timer back then; carried a lot of weight. And, he liked me a great deal and he said to me "Jerry, you can't leave Chicago. You're a Chicago guy. You can't go out to Arizona. You belong right here. I don't want you to go." I said, "Bill, when you're called you need to go." And so Kline was the one who tried to coerce me into staying. In terms of, why don't you stay here and I'll only continue to do this for a couple of years and then you could take over. But my instincts told me it was time to go.

**PS:** So you came to Phoenix. You had to start from scratch, you had to find a place to live and get acclimated to the community. Where did you start?



**JC:** Well, I remember we checked into a motel on Van Buren street when we got off the plane (laughs) and, again without any help or advice, you know, you look for a place to stay. And then started looking for a place to live. And certainly that only meant renting somewhere, because we didn't have any money to buy anything. We rented a car at the airport. it was a little Ford convertible, I remember that. And my wife found a place at 40th Street and Campbell, Williamsburg Square which still exists today and actually the units are in pretty good shape. Little townhouses that were well constructed, but they looked more Midwestern than they did Arizona style architecture. And we were there a little about a year and a half.

And during that first year, meeting people in town, I met Jim Simmons, who was president of United Bank at the time. I went to talk to him about how I'd like to do something about buying a house. And he asked me what I had in the way of collateral. And I told him I didn't have any. And he said, "now that's a problem." But as we spoke a little further, he said, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to help you." And he did and I got a ten thousand dollar loan and he said if you believe in a person and he doesn't have any collateral, it's called a character loan. And so he got me off and started and running and we took that and ended up building a house in a new project. Moon Valley Country Club was just under construction. There were just a handful of homes out there. And we got the biggest lot on the course at the time. It was so inexpensive and we proceeded to build a house for \$15 a square foot. And so for a total of about \$55,000 we had this big lot and a neat house right on the golf course. What I didn't realize was, we also had rattlesnakes and coyotes and all kinds of things, cause it was pretty rustic out there in Moon Valley.

The other thing, just to show how spoiled you could be, it seemed like it was so far out that it was kind of burden to go from there to the Fairgrounds where I had my first office underneath the Fairground grandstand, until I could find a space and I was there for a few months. And literally sitting on some boxes with the telephone just to get started. The first office space we found was on Central and Encanto. I thought that was the main street of town, be a great space, a little exposure, you know, in terms of signage, etc. And we stayed there for close to twenty years. We expanded our space and it was adequate until we out grew it. Then we moved to Thomas and Central, again with the same Central Avenue exposure. And we were there until we came downtown and opened the Arena in 1992. I've always believed in being in the middle of things. Central Avenue was the middle of things. That was the place for our office to be. I have great memories about those beginnings in terms of offices of hiring people and the people we had. It was nice to come downtown and help revitalize what we've been able to do.

**PS:** Let's back up again a little bit about what all you had to get the Suns started here. There had never been a basketball team here, I don't think, had there?

**JC:** No, the only history in professional sports was the Western Hockey League, Phoenix Roadrunners, who had been here one year. There was also triple A baseball, the Phoenix Giants who were a triple A team, affiliate team of the San Francisco Giants. And so there were some questions as to whether or not Phoenix would be able to support a major league franchise. In fact, many skeptics back East and in the Midwest said, they doubted it. And those people were telling me, why go? It's not going to make it. So to



me it was a challenge. I love the challenges in life and that was another big challenge for me to disprove that.

So there was a lot of very basic things to do. Hire people, name a team. We had a name-the-team contest through the newspaper. We picked the Phoenix Suns. Hire a coach. Select your players, go through the same routine I had gone through in Chicago. With very little time to get ready. Our first pre-season was in Globe-Miami and I think that first pre-season we played in some places like Fort Huachuca, Globe-Miami, Mesa, Flagstaff, and Tucson, but the theory being we were trying to take the team out to the state. In fact, the first year of the Suns, we actually played some regular season games in a high school gym. Catalina High School in Tucson to expose the product. And when you think about those humble beginnings and you see what has transpired over thirty years, we've come a long way.

**PS:** What did the town think about this. Was the town excited about having basketball, welcoming it. Or were they just ignoring you or what was going on?

**JC:** Well the town woke up one day and had a team. They didn't solicit the team. They didn't have any real interest in the team. There were a handful of people and obviously there were some diehards who were excited about it, after the fact. And that first year was a tough year. We averaged about 5,000 people a game. We sold 800 season tickets that first year, and it was one of these, you pick up the phone, you make a call, you introduce yourself and they would say: Who? What? No! (laughs) So it was again a pretty good experience. But we had a great turnaround.

In our second year of the Suns we went from 16 wins and the loss of a coin flip for Kareem Abdul Jabbar, to 39 wins and in the playoffs. And I actually coached the team that second year from mid season on. And that second year we had great interest beginning with the additions of some pretty good players like Connie Hawkins who came in from the ABA, we pushed the Lakers, seven games in a series, were up three games to one and we lost it and I refer back to that, said "if we had any coaching that year," since I was a coach, I can say this, "if we had any coaching at all we might have done better."

**PS:** Tell me, how did you end up being the coach. You were already the General Manager.

**JC:** Well, I was disappointed at the time. What our team was doing or the lack of progress in year two. I had higher expectations and again, I was young and impatient. As a 29 year old, and in not seeing the progress that I had anticipated, I decided to make a coaching change and I wasn't afraid to put myself in that position. And I did it, and had a certain degree of success. We turned things around. We had a good run the second half of the year. We made the play-offs and had a good run in the play-offs and it was a fun experience. But I didn't get it out of my system because I came back one more time to coach a few years later. After that experience, I got it out of my system.

**PS:** What was different that made you get it out of your system the second time?





**JC:** We lost the second time. We didn't win. And it wasn't as much fun. And I came to the conclusion, you can't do everything yourself. You need people and the game had progressed, the business. had progressed where I concluded that my job was to run the business. Being involved in all the decision making process, but I needed to hire a coach. And we proceeded to do that. And we've had some pretty good coaches along the way.

**PS:** Tell me a little bit about what do you look for in a coach. How do you hire a coach. What do you look for. In your book you mention looking more for college coaches than pro.

**JC:** Well, I think times dictate what you're looking for, and situations will determine what your needs might, might be. To start a new franchise you might say you wanted to start with someone who could help sell the product. Someone who would be recognizable; someone who would be respected. You might have a whole different set of criteria in a start up situation. If you have a veteran team, and you feel your team can compete, then you want someone who's experienced, who's been there, who could maximize whatever opportunity is there. And then there's everyone else in between. You know those two circumstances are extremes.

I hired Johnny Kerr to help sell the product in a market place that awakened one day and had a franchise. Cause Johnny had the personality; he was recognizable. He would do those things. The second year the circumstances changed because we needed more coaching and I didn't feel that the response was there. And so I made the change. That's why changes take place at times.

I also saw early on in the NBA, there was a lack of discipline and a lack of coaching. And I was one of the early believers that college coaches could make a big impact in the NBA. Cotton Fitzsimmons was hired. A young coach from Kansas State. I subsequently hired John McCleod, who had a 13 year run as coach of the Phoenix Suns. A number of other college coaches came into the NBA, and had great impact on the NBA, like Jack Ramsey, and Hubie Brown and Bill Fitch. And so we went through a cycle. Life is a series of cycles in every business and so the NBA became more sophisticated. You saw great influence on the part of college coaches. And they affected the game tremendously.

And then there was another cycle. You saw more retired players who paid their dues as assistant coaches who became outstanding head coaches in the NBA. Like Don Nelson, by way of example. So I think we're going to continue to go through cycles: I think college coaches have played a big role, an important role, in the development of the game. And they will probably continue to do so.

**PS:** What about players? When you're looking for players, what do you look for? Obviously talent, but do you look for more than just that?

**JC:** I guess all teams or people associated with teams pride themselves in how they do their due diligence. I think all the things that we do are just additional tools because I think you hit the nail on the head. You start with talent, then you look for things that are important to you, like character. When you see



someone who has the whole package, they have the character, they have the right attitude, they have the talent. You have something very, very special. And yet, there are those who are strong in one area and don't have the other. I've always said that if you could make two incisions one in the forehead and one over the heart, you'd really know what you had. So we do everything short of that. We do psychological testing, we go back and do a lot of investigation, to find out more about the character of an individual. How he conducted himself on campus in school, back in his hometown. And the bottom line is this: When you see red flags, regarding an athlete- and I mean serious things, serious flaws- pass. Because we're not in the rehabilitation business. By the time a young man is 20 or 21 or 22, whatever, he's pretty well set as to who he is. Now, I do agree people can change. But athletes are unusual individuals. And they're usually pretty well set. So depending on how serious those offenses are or how serious the flag is, my history would tell me be selective in that process And take good people. And, we've stressed that; or attempted to. We've taken some chances along the way, and most times usually we get burned.

**PS:** How have you seen the players' change, as the game has changed a lot. Have you seen some changes just in the general attitude of players coming in?

**JC:** I think what we see in our players is just a microcosm of what we see in society today. The attitudes of people today are quite different than they were ten, twenty, thirty years ago. Why is that? I have a very strong opinion on that. I think the family unit, which was such an important part of my growth as a young person, and that I believed in so much, became passé. We became a society of people who moved at a whim and a fancy. And so the family unit broke up. When people move to Phoenix, or move to wherever they moved, they left behind aunts and uncles and cousins and grandparents and so that bonding wasn't there. And that caused a lot of stress in marriages. And so the divorce rate went up, and then juvenile delinquency and on and on. And the bottom line is this: There's been a moral decay in society that has taken place over a period of time. And we've become a permissive society.

And so when you talk about the ills of society, why would athletes be removed from that. Whatever exists out there in the real world, exists with the people we're dealing with. Only probably magnified. Because they're unique individuals, in terms of being very talented, and in many cases being pampered along the way. And so, in those cases, there are some real challenges. That's why I get back to being selective in the process. If you take good people and you minimize your risk, you're going to be that much further along. Today's society has a real problem in raising children. So do we.

**PS:** Why don't we talk about the news media. In your book you mention the news media in Chicago. Why don't you talk a little bit about your relationship over the years with the news media that started in Chicago and then when you came to Phoenix.

**JC:** I'd say in Chicago, I was like Chicago's boy more or less. You know, someone who had created a reputation in a career in my own home town, my own home state. I was treated accordingly, in a very, very positive manner and had great relationships. I came to Arizona as a young, young guy, getting started from scratch. But I was kind of an outsider coming in to the community and had to earn my



spurs and be accepted by the community. And, the same was true of the media. Overall I've had a great experience and I think relations with the news media. I've had my moments, not many, but I think one of my strengths has been my ability to deal with the media because I've always had a very open policy with the media.

I think just as society has changed in so many ways, media has changed considerably. Since I can relate back to pre-television time, and therefore, pre-cable and CNN and ESPN, etc. We live in an information age and everything is available. Anything you're looking for you can have access to in the way of information. And it's become very, very competitive in terms of the media as it relates to coverage. Everyone's looking for the scoop; everyone's looking for the dirt, everyone is looking for targets.

And, so, one of the philosophies I have come up with over the years is that the climb up the ladder's is a lot more enjoyable than the perceived arrival. Because once you're perceived as having arrived, you're now a target And so in my case, that kinda goes along with the territory. I used to take things personally, still do. I can't help that. I guess, that's the sensitivity that I have in my being; in my soul. Uh, but I've gotten better with it. You know what I'm tempted to say to an individual who doesn't know me, is I wish I had the time to tell him who I really was. But they almost expect you to be something you're not. Because if you have achieved you're probably not a good person. Or you probably did something to get there that you shouldn't have. And, I guess that's just the way it is. It goes with the territory. And I've come to understand it.

**PS:** It sounds like in the early years you were able to have a more personal relationship with a lot of the sports reporters. Did that change too as reporters changed, are they're more reluctant to have personal relationships?

**JC:** Well, it's more the other way. I think it's more knowing, how the characters have changed. My attitude is, until somebody proves that they can't be trusted, I'll trust them. And that pertains to the media And it's an unfortunate thing for me to have to tell you that there's only a handful I can trust and it's been consistent for the last thirty years. Cause there always comes a time when they've broken the trust. And once that happens with me, then that relationship is over because there's not much to me that's as important as trust.

**PS:** Why don't you talk about some of the more memorable events with the Suns. There have been a lot of memorable years and you know them better than I do.

**JC:** I hope so. I've lived them (laughs)

**PS:** So why don't you tell me which ones stand out for you, you know from starting in '68 I guess when the Phoenix Suns was born.

**JC:** I guess the first game at the Memorial Coliseum when Henry Mancini, who was a limited partner in the original Suns Ownership group. We had people, like Ed Ames, Tony Curtis, Henry Mancini, Bobby Gentry. These are old names now of people that some of us can relate to but they were partners. And



Henry Mancini performed and Andy Williams sang at opening night. I think we had like 7,000 people or something. We won, we beat Seattle. See I remember that.

We were four and three after seven games. And we had delusions of grandeur that we were going to have an unbelievable year. Then we went into a slump and won only 16 of our next 78 games. Cause we finished 16 and 66 that first year. But that first game was memorable.

I guess the next one was signing Connie Hawkins who I felt could help turn around a franchise at the end of that first year. Coaching my first game during that second year. Standing in front of a, a sell-out crowd when we played the first game of the play-offs. And I thought at that moment, boy how fast we'd come. It was the quickest turn around in the history of the NBA back in 1969. And we've had a few of those in my career, both with the Suns and with the Diamondbacks later on in baseball in terms of turnaround landmarks.

Going to the finals of the NBA in '75-76. Participating in the triple overtime game in Boston. That's considered the greatest game ever played in the history of the NBA. So you take a little bit of pride in something like that. And I remember it happening like it was yesterday. You knew it was something special. As it was unfolding. You just didn't know the conclusion. You didn't know how it was going to turnout. .

**PS:** Where were you in the stands?

**JC:** I was sitting almost at mid-court, I was ten feet from Red Auerbach, who was my counterpart, the general manager of the Celtics. Not sitting with him- that's the last place I would have been at that moment. But there was an aisle between us. But he was on the other side and I'm right here and unfortunately Havlicek's shot off the board with a couple of seconds to play was the end of it in triple overtime. But that was a big moment for the franchise.

I'll jump, the next thing that was of real consequence, I mean although we had a terrific of run of wins in our history in terms of winning performance. In the history of the NBA we have the fourth best record in the history of the NBA of all teams we've ever played. We've done everything except win a championship and that's still out there. Now, think about the consistency. I wasn't able to get the high school championship, I didn't get the NCAA championship. Close but no cigar in each of those cases. And we've been there at the door in terms of the NBA and we got to the door pretty early in baseball. And so that's part of the drive. That's part of what pushes me to keep going forward it's getting to that last rung on the ladder, in getting the ring or getting the cigar or whatever.

I think being able to put a group together to buy the team in 1987 was very significant not only to me personally, but to the future of the franchise. There was the potential that the franchise would be moved, yet in putting together an ownership group and committing to staying here and building an arena led to a lot of things. The arena in partnership with the City of Phoenix, began a whole evolution of transforming



downtown Phoenix into a, a new downtown with a future. The success of the Suns in the arena and the other teams in bringing hockey to Phoenix from Winnipeg and going after major league baseball and creating a new ballpark. We now have one of the most vibrant downtowns anywhere in the country. And what you've seen so far, I guess the best solution or answer is, you haven't seen anything yet. Because over the next decade downtown Phoenix is going to explode. And it's going to be as exciting a place as you'll ever see. And, so I think the significance of buying the team in '87, committing the team to be here, building an arena, started a whole series of dominoes in a very positive way.

**PS:** Why don't we go back and talk some of those things. What made you decide that you wanted to buy the team?

**JC:** Well, one is I put my heart, soul and, career into the Phoenix Suns, and I had passed on some wonderful opportunities to do other things. For example, I was approached and offered the opportunity to run Madison Square Garden and the Knicks and the Rangers and offered a limousine and a place to live in Manhattan, along with a place outside of town and an open checkbook. That's a pretty appealing offer. I was offered 25 percent of a franchise if I were to go to another city, just for going to that city. And my heart and my gut told me I belonged here. And I was yet just an employee. And so when the opportunity presented itself to buy, I was granted that option, that opportunity and I had six weeks to do it. And so to me I had a lot at stake. I had a career at stake, I had invested a lot of time and effort, and my life into the franchise, so there wasn't any choice.

**PS:** Sounds like you had a lot of choices, but how did you go about raising the money to buy?

**JC:** The person who really got me off and running was John Teets who at the time was chairman of the board of the Dial Corporation. John and I had become friends and John and I had a lot of things in common. John was from Illinois, from Elgin, Illinois, had come from a difficult, tough background and was an entrepreneur. Someone who had worked his way up himself and we related to one another. He encouraged me to pursue, trying to end up in a ownership role and when the time came, he stepped to the plate with a corporate involvement and that gave me the beginning of being able to go out to the marketplace with an equity pledge on the part of the Dial Corporation to be my first investor. And so once that happened, I was able to bring some other investors into it. Although, as the deadline was approaching in terms of being able to close the deal, I had two limited partners pull out at the last minute. Circle K Corporation and America West Airlines who had committed two million dollars each to the proposition. And when they walked, I remember sitting in my lawyer's office in downtown Phoenix, late at night, close to midnight, and he thought it was over with. And said, it was a great try, you know there may be another opportunity, and I said, Jay (Jay Ruffner), it's not over". And I went home and my wife said, how did it go and I said, not very well and I didn't sleep. I just kind of laid there thinking. And, eight o'clock in the morning, I had a deal, because I was able to put two or three things together despite losing four million dollars in equity the night before.

I basically went to the owners who were the sellers and suggested to them that if they wanted it to close



they had to do A, B and C. They agreed to do A, B and C, we closed the deal on a Friday. The following Monday was Black Monday on the stock market. Had we not closed the deal on Friday, the whole deal would have fallen apart on Monday. So you tell me if somebody else is in the control of this rather than me. And I would tell you He is. So we were able to close the deal and go from there.

**PS:** What's the difference between being a General Manager and being the owner?

**JC:** Well, I guess, I'm not a big thing on titles. It was interesting, we had absentee ownership with the Suns all those years. I treated the Suns like they were my team. Like I owned them, which is what any owner would like an employee to do. My title was General Manager and then it was Vice President and General Manager and then President and General Manager. What did it really mean? I was the point man. And even today as you look at titles, the responsibilities that go with that title, vary from circumstance and situation to situation. An owner, obviously by definition owns and would, either benefit from the rewards or suffer from the consequences. An employee, by definition, is paid. And doesn't, usually share one way or the other. Of course there are hybrids and there are different opportunities where people participate, but that's the best definition there, that I could give you.

**PS:** Maybe very quickly, want to ask about a couple of negative things that you mentioned in your book, the 1986 drug scandal. That was right before you decided to buy it. You could have walked away from it at that point, but tell me about how that affected you and the team.

**JC:** It was like a black cloud that settled over the city and over the franchise. We had an overzealous, police commissioner and County Attorney at the time, who some people have characterized *as* a witch hunt that took place regarding an investigation regarding certain Phoenix Suns players and former players. Bear in mind that the ultimate result was that no one was brought to justice, no one was convicted. And it turned out that's exactly what it was- as I described it.

But at the time it was like the worst thing that could ever happened. I took so much pride in what we had accomplished in building a relationship with the community, and when you have your heart and soul into something and to have it attacked the way it was, it just doesn't get any worst. I remember meeting with the national media where they wanted blood. The day after the announcement. And I said something to the effect that, we live in America and if I'm not mistaken, people ate innocent until proven guilty. And I'll stand by them. So I put myself right on the line.

I remember being interviewed by one of the top television people in the business on national TV during that time, and he said to me, "you think you can survive this?" And I said, "only time will tell what will take place. I don't think I was accused of doing anything, but let's see what takes place here". I was livid with the statement. Legitimate question I guess, but at the time, I felt it was inappropriate. Certainly because since I knew the individual, and he didn't tell me in advance. He just sprung it on me. See I think there's a time and place for everything. I don't mind being wide open, just tell me it's coming.



And, so, the bottom line is, out of adversity came opportunity. The ownership at the time, didn't want any part of it. And that's when the franchise was in jeopardy of being moved. Sold and moved. And that's when I said, give me the shot to put a deal together. The players were cleared, the franchise was sold and the rest is history.

**PS:** Those two are really related.

**JC:** Absolutely.

**PS:** I think that's probably all we have time for today.

**JC:** Okay. Well, you covered a lot.

*Jerry Colangelo interview conducted June 9, 2000 at Colangelo conference room, America West Arena, Phoenix, Arizona*

**PS:** I was trying to figure out where we left off and I think we were talking about you buying the Phoenix Suns team in 87. And maybe we could go back a little bit, with some of the details of there. First, I guess why did you want to purchase the team?

**JC:** I had spent my entire professional career in sports, other than the start up years with the Bulls, with this franchise and I had invested my blood, sweat and tears into this community and felt that in order to protect the community from potentially losing that franchise, and also getting a return on the investment I had made with my life into the franchise that it was the right thing to do. And so the challenge was how would I be able to accomplish that especially with limited means on a personal basis. But through banking relationships and personal relationships here in the community and one individual in particular, John Teets, who was at that time the CEO of the Dial Corporation. He became my lead investor, gave credibility to my package that I was attempting to sell over a six-week period and fortunately, I was able to put together a group of investors to save the franchise and purchase the franchise and that was in the fall of 1987.

**PS:** Why did the franchise need saving? Why did the owners suddenly want to sell? It had been a pretty successful franchise, hadn't it?

**JC:** It had been, because of some recent accusations about conduct of, of players, bearing in mind that it was absentee ownership, people from California and Tucson who actually had ownership of the team. The negative publicity surrounding a drug investigation kinda put them over the hump so to speak in terms of they didn't need it, they didn't want to put up with that kind of nonsense and although that investigation which later became known as a witch hunt, and resulted in zero, other than individuals being accused of being involved, it was enough where the ownership group said, "I don't need this aggravation". And, "Jerry if you could put a group together, we would be willing to sell." But there was discussion about the



potential sale and move of the franchise. And ironically right after I closed the transaction and had in fact purchased the Suns, two other cities came forward. Columbus, Ohio and San Diego, who wanted to buy the franchise from me or entice me to move the franchise to either one of those cities. I didn't hesitate. I told them in no uncertain terms that I purchased the franchise to keep this team here in Arizona because that's where it belonged.

**PS:** Why don't you talk a little bit about the dollars and you know what was the franchise when in 68 when it started what was it worth, what was it worth when you purchased it.

**JC:** Franchise sales or values, came a long way in a very short period of time. The price of the Chicago Bulls franchise was \$1,250,000; the franchise fee for the Phoenix Suns was \$2,000,000. There was expansion that transpired between 1968, when the Suns came in, and when the Suns were purchased by my group in '87 and the highest price ever paid for a franchise leading up to our purchase was \$32 million. And so the forty-four-five, \$44,500,000 that I paid for the team was the highest price ever paid for a franchise. To that point. Now that was 1987. So there was a big increase from the two million to the forty-four, but suffice it to say in the last ten to twelve years, values have increased dramatically. Franchises are now valued at somewhere between three and four hundred million dollars. And so, in retrospect, one might say that despite the fact that I was criticized for potentially overpaying at \$44 million, in retrospect it was a very wise investment.

**PS:** Did you have a commitment in your contract or anything that you had the right to be the first purchaser?

**JC:** You know it's interesting. Even as a young, young guy back in 1968 at 28, I talked about that in my first interview with the prospective owners who were interviewing me about the GM job. And, I did throw that out on the table. I said, at some point down the line if you ever get to the point where you are interested in selling, I would like first opportunity to put a deal together. And so it wasn't in writing, but it was kind of a verbal commitment, in my opinion, because they agreed to do that. And I'll fast forward to 1987, when a real discussion was taking place about sale, I reminded them of the verbal commitment. And they honored that verbal commitment. Put a timeline on it and said we'll give you six weeks to do it and so I was, to the say the least, I didn't a lot of time leaping during those six weeks. I was busy trying to put a package together and was able to meet the deadline.

**PS:** Six weeks isn't much time

**JC:** No it's not. No it's not

**PS:** So when you purchased the Suns, you talk about you purchasing it, but it was really you and a group of investors. How much did you personally own?

**JC:** The way the package was structured, I was the lead in the limited partnership structure. There was the





general partner and then limited partner investors. At that time the general partner had one percent of the ownership. And, I, through my borrowings and ability to raise some money on a personal basis, I had a couple of million dollars into the deal, but over the years, a number of transactions have taken place where we have bought back some of the interests from partners after they had been paid out. The general partner today owns 36 percent of the franchise and I own 50 percent of the general partnership. So, my personal stake has increased dramatically during these, these last 12 - 13 years also.

**PS:** Let's talk about some of the other things that were happening around that time period. How soon after that did the America West Arena come into being and how did that all come about.

**JC:** When the franchise was purchased I announced immediately that we needed a new arena. The Veterans Memorial Coliseum was one of the oldest buildings in the NBA. There was the beginning of a whole wave of new venues coming on line. Modern construction with new amenities, like suites and club seats and restaurants and so on and so forth. And a Veteran's Memorial Coliseum was designed as anything but a professional sports facility. In those conversations after the announcement that I made regarding our interest, the City of Phoenix contacted me and wanted to know what my interest was in putting a facility in downtown Phoenix.

I also heard from some of the other communities around Phoenix who were interested in trying to lure the Suns to another site potentially. And, I made it very clear, it belonged in Phoenix. I would not have any discussion with them about those possibilities until I had a decision from the City of Phoenix. It was as simple as that. But never, ever did I say, I was going to use leverage of one community against another to try, to improve a deal or use the threat of moving the franchise to another city. Although I got accused of that later on because it was, I guess, in vogue to assume that was taking place.

The City was very responsive. Downtown Phoenix needed some revitalization, we put together a unique private-public partnership, the arena actually opened in 1992, although the discussions began in 1987, by the time all of that comes to fruition, and in fact start construction, which took just about two years to complete, we actually opened in 1992 and it was a wonderful opening night. We had a country western concert and my dreams came true as I saw people walking the streets of downtown Phoenix for the first time in many, many years as they approached uh America West Arena. And obviously since that time, downtown has exploded and will continue to do so. Here we are in the year 2000, looking at one of the more vibrant downtowns in the country, with a tremendously bright future ahead of it.

**PS:** But back in 1987, I worked at Channel 10 then, so I know what down town looked like, and there wasn't much here after five. Women were advised not to walk alone after five pizza couldn't be delivered south of Van Buren. What was your first response when somebody suggested you put the arena downtown?

**JC:** I've always been an urban person regarding choice. And so, as I looked at downtown Phoenix, I, I saw the potential of what might happen to be part of a revitalization. Bringing people back downtown. If we



could improve a lot of the things that needed to be addressed. Parking and lighting and security. But a venue like the arena could start to attract millions of people into downtown Phoenix. So it was a jump-start in terms of what might happen. The Arizona Center, in fact, came on line one year before the arena opened. So we had a couple of major projects and then the City was very responsive in addressing streetscape and landscape and all of the issues I mentioned previously. And the experience that our consumers had as they came to our building, to the America West Arena for games, for family shows, for concerts, etc. is that they found it to be safe. They found it to be secure. They enjoyed coming back downtown. And so it changed the perception of downtown. There was an organization formed called the Downtown Phoenix Partnership, of which I was a founding member, and that organization took the lead in all of those areas in working with the city and getting funding from the city and from the people who work and live downtown and operate businesses and therefore, major headway was made, and again, I get excited when I think about what it was, what it is and what it's going to be.

**PS:** Are there people, any names that you'd want mention that were key in helping you come to this whole thing with America West Arena and all the revitalization?

**JC:** There was someone in the city government in charge of economic development by the name of Denny Moss, who passed away prematurely to see all of these things come to fruition. But Denny was instrumental in being a liaison between the private and public groups that had to be involved and he deserves a lot of credit for what was put in place, at least the beginnings of revitalized downtown.

When we hired Margaret Mullen, who was a former city employee, to be the first director of the Downtown Partnership, she was extremely important and vital to all of the things that we were working on in the downtown area. So, that organization along with the Phoenix Community Alliance that was so active in actually developing the concept of a partnership, all of the CEOs, all of the people who were involved at that time were instrumental. I think of Dick Snell, who at the time, headed up Pinnacle West and Arizona Public Service. Bob Matthews, who's been with a couple of the banks, he was Bank America and then, of course, with Bank One Marty Schultz would be another individual who was very instrumental and helpful but there's a long list.

The mayors who were involved. I have to give a lot of credit to Terry Goddard who showed some real foresight. I remember meeting with him on a Thanksgiving morning in his offices looking out over downtown Phoenix in the old city hall. And we were talking about the future and he had some vision. He had some plans, but I reminded him, I said, "Terry, let me just suggest to you that what I represent is real. We're prepared, I'm willing and we can move forward. Some of these other things are pipe dreams. They may never happen. So, we better take something that makes sense." For example, there were some urban planners who thought they knew where this arena should go. America West Arena. It would have been absolutely in the wrong place. And so I really stood to my guns in terms of location, we put it where, we thought it should go. I think it was perfect as I look back on it, and should never go anywhere else. And, we started putting building blocks in place, but Terry Goddard was instrumental. He was very supportive.



Mayor Johnson when he came into office we had to turn him around a little bit as a city council member he was kind of against the project. And I kept a letter that he had sent to me that kind of indicated that was the case. And I used that with him, in kind of a funny way one day, when I said, "Here's where you were, but I'm sure glad to know where you are today." And it was very supportive of everything that was going on.

So, as I think about the timing and the history, I would say that we had very forward thinking leadership in the city as it relates to the mayors, to the city council members at the time who had some vision, who bought into my vision that this was good; this was productive and so I'm very pleased as I look back that we had that kind of participation.

**PS:** It wasn't as controversial as the Bank One Ballpark or the football stadium, now. I didn't hear as much about it politically. Seems like it happened more quietly.

**JC:** No, it was very public, but at the time, I would say, that the kind of a proposition that was presented was acceptable. I'm not quite sure if we've talked about this previously but the kind of a private-public partnership that was eventually agreed to, created a situation where the city would actually own the arena. They contributed the land, they owned part of the land, in terms of the site. They purchased some of the property from landowners at the time. But this was the old Deuce area. There was a lot of nothing here, people just had some land tied up. So you talk about an improvement, this was like an unbelievable (laughs) improvement to the area and created value for everyone else around it. The city's contribution was limited to \$35 million. And they were going to raise those monies by an increase in a hotel bed tax, a slight tax increase, and then a car rental tax increase, which in effect affected only the visitors. But at that time, the rates in Phoenix were considerably lower than most cities in the country, in terms of bed tax and car rental tax.

It was our obligation, as an organization, to come up with the additional funding bear in mind this was a \$110 million project. So there was a contribution on the part of the Suns, a contribution on the part of the city, the city would retain ownership of the building, the Suns would have a management contract to manage the building for forty years. It was a definitely described as a win-win. So I think the public take on that, because it was presented in such a manner, was favorable. There were some negatives obviously, because there always is. When you're dealing with the public, I don't think there's ever been an issue where a 100 percent of the people had been in favor of anything. And so by comparison I don't think there's any question that the arena politics were fairly well received.

**PS:** Could you talk a little bit about the design for the arena. At the time it certainly was a change from the Coliseum, but how did you get the ideas for the things that you wanted in there?

**JC:** As I mentioned earlier, there were a number of cities going through the same process but they were a little bit ahead of us. Milwaukee, Sacramento, Detroit, Charlotte, Orlando, to mention just some of the cities were in the process of design or construction or just completion of new arenas. So we went out to look at some of the new technology and came back with some wonderful ideas. Also wanted to build



something of a personal nature. We wanted something that would have great intimacy in terms of our facility. And so collectively we sat down with the architects and came up with a design that would fit aesthetically into a revitalized downtown and that refers to the skin of our building. And the look and perception and then on the interior, to build something that had the intimacy that we think sells to the public. And the building was very well received locally. It received all kinds of national recognition. And to this day, it's still considered one of the fine venues in the country.

**PS:** It's not that old (laughs) What about name. How did it get its name?

**JC:** Well early on there was kind of a new thing taking place. There were naming rights being attached to some of the buildings. Or there was discussion of the same. Yet there were only three existing deals in the country at that time. I had a discussion with a few local companies, like Circle K and America West and a couple of the banks and America West Airlines was interested. And so they became the third major company in the country to be involved with the naming rights situation. But it opened the door to a number of the other airlines. Delta put its name on the Delta Center up in Salt Lake City. United put its name on the United Center in Chicago. US Air at the time put its name on a building in Washington. And American Airlines eventually did the same thing, so we kinda paved the way. We were a pacesetter as it relates to naming rights in general and absolutely in the airline industry.

**PS:** How involved were you personally in the design in the building? Were you personally very involved?

**JC:** Absolutely. It's interesting I can have dreams, even now, thinking about walking this project from day one when we began to dig the hole that we had to. And, so, I'm familiar with every nook and cranny. I was personally very intimately involved with the every aspect of the design. And so I have a lot at stake here. When I look at the building I feel it's part of me and part of the family.

**PS:** And it's where your offices are?

**JC:** And I spend the majority of my time (laughs) here at America West Arena. And now at the ballpark also.

**PS:** But you didn't move your offices over there?

**JC:** I have an office at Bank One Ballpark, I'm there more during the season and late afternoons. My attitude is I should be where I have to be based on schedule. But there's much more of an attachment here at the America West.

**PS:** Let's talk a little bit about the team once you got into this arena, how did, did it, change the team, or the perception of the team?

**JC:** The biggest change that took place relative to the Phoenix Suns is that, I didn't have to negotiate with



owners regarding decision making that totally was now left to me. There was a one-man decision-making process, and I've always been one who reacted well and performed best when I could just react to my gut. And so immediately after the purchase of the team, a number of things took place. A major trade took place where we brought in some players from Cleveland, headed up by Kevin Johnson and Ty Corbin and Mark West and a first round pick that turned out to be Dan Majerle. I went out and signed Tom Chambers, the first free agent to sign a contract with another team. And we immediately had one of the big turnarounds in the history of the NBA. Which is something we had done previously, we went from a 29 win season to the Western Conference finals, in one year. So that began a 10-year run, actually a 12-year run of teams that won 50 plus games. We got to the finals in one of those years. We were in the Western Conference Finals three times. And so, a lot changed with the turnover of the ownership because I had free reign to make the decisions that I felt I wanted to make.

**PS:** Could you talk a little bit about some of the memorable players that you had in those years.

**JC:** We had great players throughout the history of the franchise when you go way back, you have to look at Connie Hawkins who came in early. You have to look at Paul Westphal and Alvin Adams and Dick VanArsdale. But beginning with the turnover of the franchise, the sale of the franchise and purchase, Tom Chambers and Kevin Johnson and Dan Majerle and Jeff Homecek became kind of the new Phoenix Suns groups along with others. But one thing that happens in this business is that players don't stay forever and so periodically there are times when teams turnover in general. And of course after that group left it was again time to rebuild and so you now have players like Penny Hardaway and Jason Kidd and Clifford Robinson, etc. who are now the new Phoenix Suns. And so, as time goes by, there will be new players replacing older players.

**PS:** Why don't you talk about some key players, Kevin Johnson just came back from retirement. He's been a long-term player; is he special to the Suns?

**JC:** I think Kevin was one of the most popular players that ever wore a Suns uniform. He kind of epitomized what we had done and, retooling or changing the image of this team. And so he had a great run with the Suns. He was a great contributor to the community. He had a great image in the community, and so he made a major contribution. He did come back for, I'd say for a cup of coffee, late in the season. I think emotionally it was a great touch to his career. I think it then finished on a positive note and we thank him for a job that he did for this franchise.

**PS:** Now he's getting involved in politics I see this week (laughs). How did you go from basketball to baseball?

**JC:** As Phoenix was growing as a metropolitan marketplace in terms of population base and businesses that were coming into Phoenix, Phoenix became more of a possibility for other sports. The Cardinals, the Arizona Cardinals, Phoenix Cardinals, moved from St. Louis, as an NFL team in the late '80s. And the only thing that surprised me is that it took them as long as it did for the NFL to recognize Phoenix was a



viable market place.

In 1993, I was approached about major league baseball. I wasn't sure that baseball, or Phoenix, was ready for it. One, we didn't have a place to play; we didn't have a venue, a ball park. The heat was a serious problem and I knew immediately that without some kind of a venue with a retractable roof it would be a very tough, difficult proposition. And baseball itself, major league baseball was going through some very difficult economic times. And so when I was approached, I was more negative than I was positive about the prospects. But I was being solicited as the person who would be able to make it happen. If in fact, I had shown an interest. I did commit to do one thing: due diligence come to some conclusions in my own mind whether or not it was viable.

And, so I embarked on this due diligence period and met with people in baseball; owners, managers, did as much reading and research as I could. One particular book called *Lords of the Realm* by an author named John Hellier, who did a lot of writing for the *Wall Street Journal*, gave me a great insight into the prior twenty-five years of collective bargaining and some of the issues between players and owners, and how the economics of the business had changed. Bottom line is, after this due diligence period, my conclusions were that the pendulum had swung so far over from where the players were held in bondage by the owners, under the old, collective bargaining agreement, to where the players had the leverage on owners, with the new collective bargaining agreements. And that somewhere, somehow the pendulum would have to swing back to the middle and if it swung back to the middle and I thought it was in the process of getting there, baseball would be more viable. There would be a brighter future than not

And so conclusion was: maybe our timing's just right. If we apply and if we put our group together and we do all these things, by the time we actually play our first game, maybe there would be much more stability to major league baseball. It turned out to be just right. In other words, the read was correct. I made a decision in 1994, that we would go forward and try to acquire a franchise.

I had great response from the community, in terms of public response and interest and from investors. The announcement was held outside in front of America West Arena with the mayor and the governor and a lot of political figures and business leaders. Within a few weeks a number of people had stepped forward representing corporate Arizona who wanted to invest in major league baseball. Not so much for the value of the investment, but because they felt that it would be a great addition to the quality of life for people in this community and the state, and they wanted to be a part of that. They also recognized the track record with the Suns and with the Arena and what I stood for and again, they were investing in me, just as the group originally invested in me as far as the Suns were concerned.

In 1995, the, the actual award of the franchise took place and, so we were then in a start-up mode and we went through another process as I did with the Arena. We went out to look at new ballparks and old ballparks. And met with architects to come up with a design that would be very unique and fit into downtown Phoenix in the old warehouse district. And I'm very happy with how that turned out also. Then of course we played our first game in 1998, so you think about the time. I was approached in 1993 and it



was not until 1998 that the first ball was thrown in Bank One Ballpark. Another naming rights situation in this particular case it was a bank, a local bank, actually a national bank, Bank One, which had one time been Valley Bank in Arizona and converted to Bank One. It became the naming rights sponsor for Bank One Ballpark.

**PS:** Did you ever have a long-term plan that you would expand into other sports?

**JC:** I can't say that I did. I was happy doing what I was doing. It's kind of interesting. I've been called the person of vision regarding everything that I've been involved in. I kind of look at myself as a person who recognizes opportunities. And once I'm committed to a situation, I try to make it happen. I have visions about a lot of things, like most people. But I'm not so sure it's as much as a visionary as one who is more focused in making things happen. That takes commitment. That takes focus. And so, when I was committed to baseball, I was sold on baseball. Not so much for the economics reasons, because I thought it would be a struggle and it has been a struggle. But I believed in what it would do for the quality of life for the people in Arizona and for all the future generations of people who would come. In particular, the impact on families. Kids, parents grandparents, because baseball is still the most affordable professional sports ticket. When we opened the doors at Bank One Ballpark we had one dollar tickets available. We had an average ticket price that first year of about \$12. There are all kinds of ticket discounts, and so you could attract families. You could attract them to see things and to me that's what it's all about. And so that was a selling point to me.

Number two, I believed in the synergy of what would continue to happen in downtown. That if the ballpark was placed in close proximity to America West Arena and in close proximity to the Convention Center and where future hotels would be built; and other development would take place. All of that synergy would develop into something very, very exciting. That's exactly what's happened. And, so in some ways, we have taken the lead in downtown. We did turn downtown from a desolate, dangerous kind of an area into one of the safest areas in the City of Phoenix within a decade. Much has been accomplished, but there's so much more that we can do.

I'm excited about a development we announced this year, in 1999. We broke ground on a new theater in downtown Phoenix. We already have a naming rights situation. It's called the Ford Theater and we're looking forward to a couple hundred events in that particular facility and it happens to be just to the East of where you one time used to work at Channel 10. I'm excited about the new project. I'm excited about the Rouse project across from the Arena. It's a two-million square foot project. New high rises, new retail. There's a lot of new exciting projects underway regarding housing in downtown Phoenix. And that's the key. The more housing we bring to downtown, that's what really makes this thing all work.

**PS:** You make it sound like it's been easy, but I know that's not the case.

**JC:** Nothing is easy. But if you believe in something and keep pursuing it, and maintain a positive attitude, and look for ways to make things happen, rather than looking for reasons why it can't happen, then you



have an opportunity to make things happen. Although there's been a lot of turnover in leadership in downtown Phoenix, you know, we have a different landscape here today as it relates to the business climate. The old banks that used to be leaders, don't exist anymore. A lot of decisions are made by people who run organizations in various cities, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, so I've seen a lot of turnover in terms of CEO leadership. And it takes leadership to make a community operate appropriately. It takes more than just political leadership. It takes the business community to see that the political types are doing what they need to be doing appropriately, Also the fact that the business leaders are those who make things happen in a lot of other ways. And, so I've been fortunate to be in a position and have longevity to make that kind of a contribution because I believe in it. I've been asked to serve in so many different ways. And hopefully, have left something positive behind me.

**PS:** I know that's one thing that's been pointed out to me about you is the longevity that so many of the leaders, especially recently it seems like the corporate business leaders come in for a few years, get a leadership position and then leave. Do you see yourself taking on a bigger leadership role because of that?

**JC:** I've been asked to do a lot of things. I've never sought out the positions that I've been asked to serve in. I look at myself as a servant. As much as I can handle I'm willing to do, Above and beyond my business situation. Certainly my family, which comes first. But I believe in putting back into the community and that means more than just making contributions to the community, financially. It's time. It's effort. It's leadership and so when I've been asked to serve, I've been willing to do so. .

Organizations like the Phoenix Community Alliance, the Downtown Phoenix Partnership, the Phoenix Thunderbirds, the Southwest Leadership Foundation, and on and on. I've been involved in so many boards and causes that it doesn't do any good just to list them. The important thing is, is what I believe in.

We need people who are more givers than takers. As people come into a transient community, just by nature, . Phoenix has been that. You see leadership turnover; you see people who are here for a while and leave. The statistics I see about the turnover of our population base is amazing. But how many people in our population base who weren't here just five years ago. We should never take for granted that everyone out there understands what's happening. It's almost like a continual re-education process to bring people up to speed on who we are and what we're doing. What the objectives are, regardless of what the subject might be. It's a challenge for leadership in this community, both from the private and public sectors, to understand the make-up of our community. I've been happy to be a part of that. I took over the old Phoenix Forty, which was an organization that I felt needed a real change-over, and saw to it that the name was changed to the Greater Phoenix Leadership. We opened up the membership. I felt that really needed to take place. And it took on a new direction.

If anything I'm probably been responsible for pushing organizations, changing the boundaries, and trying to change the vision. I think what happens quite often in many of these organizations in a community, is that people end up looking at things through binoculars or blinders, without seeing the vision. So I've





attempted to open people's eyes to what we might be. What we might become. What the future could be if we're committed to that future. That's just who I am and what I've enjoyed doing. And hopefully, I've had some influence on enough people that they're going to continue to carry on with that.

**PS:** How did you learn to do that? Was that something that started with your family in Chicago? Or, how did you come to that?

**JC:** I don't think you plan your life. Your life kind of unfolds. I think we're all on a journey. And, what do we do with ourselves on that journey? Are we taking advantage of opportunities? Are we developing ourselves as people? What's our game plan? You've heard me say that I'm a person who believes that God has a plan for everyone's life. And this plan wasn't my plan, you know. I'm just here for the ride so to speak. One thing I did learn a long time ago is that you need to work hard, do the very best you can at whatever it is that you're doing. Not everyone is blessed with super intelligence, or super ability to do anything in particular physical skills, or what have you. But whatever it is, God given. Make the most of it. And that's all anyone could ever ask. So I just get up every morning happy to be here, I'm excited to go work. I'm excited to take on challenges. But I can't tell you I had this all mapped out. That this was kind of a scripted journey for me in terms of my life. I never knew I'd end up in Arizona. And here I've been here for the better part of my life. And I never knew that I would be asked to lead in so many different areas, that I have been asked to serve. And I found that I had the ability to do so, and have some impact on people and lead others, and encourage others to do the same.

That's the way it was meant to be for me, and I guess since I believe in maxing out whatever gifts that I have I'm thankful that I've had this opportunity.

**PS:** I know you've served on so many boards there's no point in even trying to list them all. I've seen the list (laughs). Are there any boards or areas that you feel have been most meaningful to you?

**JC:** I'm glad you put it that way, because most every board that I've served on, or been president of; all have been for good causes and good reasons. One organization that has been very close to me is Southwest Leadership Foundation. And it's because as I've gotten older, I'm much more in tune to the needs of the needy in our community. I look on the leadership in our state, politically, and find that we have not addressed some of these issues to the degree that I believe we should have. And should continue to do so in the future. I'm referring issues like the homeless situation that is a problem in every major city in the country.

Through Southwest Leadership Foundation we formed a ministry called, The Bridge. And it's very specifically for families to transition from homelessness to being productive families again. Unfortunately, there's usually only one head of the family that's left. There's all kinds of programs available to address homelessness, but most of which are a blanket and a meal and these people are back out on the street.. We're trying to develop people, help them help themselves and become constructive citizens again. And so that has been a very close, close thing to me.



There's another ministry we started, to deal with abused teenage girls. Kind of a group of people who have been left out there and nobody really wants to deal with them. They're too difficult to deal with and it breaks your heart. But this particular ministry has had tremendous results.

We're involved in revitalizing South Phoenix through a ministry called a Keys Community Center. Through that organization, it's specifically is getting down there, you know on your hands and knees and getting dirty and doing things for people that need help. And again my heart continues to be touched by the needs of our community in those areas where they need it most.

**PS:** Do you personally have the time to actually get out and do these things? Or do you mostly do it through your charity organizations?

**JC:** I think one of the gifts that I've been blessed with is the ability to raise money. And in many cases, the greatest contribution I could make is to find the funding to make sure that these organizations can go forward and do the job that they were meant to be. I try to get out there, and time is very valuable commodity to me, you can't be 23 places at one time, so it's a matter of scheduling your time as best you can. Get out there and see what's going on. Make your contributions where you can. But my primary function is to see that they have resources to address these needs.

**PS:** Do you do that through your personal giving, or just by calling on your friends, or through the Suns charities, Diamondback Charities.

**JC:** We have Diamondback Charities and Suns Charities, who have, on a per capita basis contributed more to the State of Arizona than any company, in the State of Arizona. And that says a lot because by comparison there are much larger companies than Phoenix Suns and the Arizona Diamondbacks. But part of our position is that we're going to put back into the community. We believe in it. On a personal basis, I believe in giving and do my share in that sense. But then through my years in Phoenix and my contacts in Phoenix and contacts around the country, I look to procure funds from whatever source we can find them to put back into this community as much as we can. One thing I will say that has been very gratifying to me is that the corporate community has been very responsive. I think this is a very giving community. I'd just like to see government do better job of meeting some of the needs that need to be met.

**PS:** I see you as a role model for some of the other corporate leaders. And maybe even for some of your players and people in your organization, too. How do you see yourself?

**JC:** I try to conduct myself in a fashion where people could look to me and hopefully say positive things and not negative things. If I conduct my life the way one should, then the end result might be to be looked upon as a role model. That's for others to determine. And the important thing, as far as I'm concerned, is I need to do my job as best as I can do it, in terms of who I'm with and what I say and what I do and what I stand for. That's kinda the end of the story. Other people will determine what they think about me in terms



of their own opinion.

**PS:** You've won a lot of awards over your life, and I know there's a few in your book you mention several times, the NBA Executive of the Year. But you also gotten a lot of community service awards. Are there any of those that stand out to you, that you're the most proud of?

**JC:** I kind of take awards with a grain of salt. If there's recognition because you've done a job well then that comes forward. The Executive of the Year Awards in the NBA I think were highlights in the sense that you're being voted in by your peers. And you're being recognized by your peers. Some of the others, national things, you know, there's two sides to it to me. When you're listed as the twentieth most powerful person in sports on a national basis. I don't know, is that good? Is that bad? It's recognition. I'm not looking for recognition. Again, that's how I'm perceived by people who are in contact with all those people in my particular industry or being recognized on a local basis as quote-unquote "the most powerful business leader in the state". Or most influential, or most recognizable, or leading citizen. Again, these are all perceptions people have of me. As I just go about my daily life conducting (laughs) my business; trying to be a good citizen. Trying to contribute to the community. And trying to have some impact in a positive way. I don't think one can seek leadership. I think one, if asked to serve, either takes the mantle or they don't. And I've never been one to turn something down because I look upon it as a challenge as an opportunity to do something for the community. And so many of these awards are recognition for doing ABC or D and that's not my motivation. I'm not doing these things because I'm looking for recognition or for rewards. It's because that's what I want to do.

**PS:** Let's go back and talk a little bit about the growth of your sports business. It seems like since you bought the Suns, and created the Diamondbacks that you're sort of a sports empire (laughs) if you call it that. It has gone from just basketball to really expanding into all sorts of other sports. Can you talk a little bit about how that happened?

**JC:** When the Suns were purchased and we built America West Arena, I didn't have any vision at that time of anything beyond that, except things began to unfold or take place before my eyes. We were asked whether or not we'd have an interest in an arena football team. I made a decision to do that. We went into world team tennis; we were committed for three years. We had a team here headed up by Jimmy Connors who was one of the greatest tennis players ever. That failed. That didn't work. We went into the indoor soccer franchise business. That too didn't work. But we gave that three years to see what would happen.

Of course major league baseball came along and that was another franchise. We picked up a WNBA women's professional basketball team. Which has been very successful. And so teams began to add on to what we had originally.

And other businesses that we got into, like our own in-house public relations and advertising company, SRO that became very, very successful. We went into the health club business. We went into the television editing production business. We went into the retail business in a big way with Phoenix Suns' Team Shops



which became Team Shops with the new teams that were added. We had to change the name of the company with the presence in many of the major malls around the Valley.

So, we continued to expand into other businesses and there wasn't a plan to do that, it just kinda happened. We saw a need and we decided to go that route. And that resulted in going from 20 or 30 employees to a couple thousand employees and again, no game plan. Just I guess being responsive, or aggressive in certain areas.

**PS:** You talk in your book you have a whole chapter I think called Synergy

**JC:** Synergy. Right.

**PS:** And that tends to be a word that applies to how these seemingly, maybe unrelated businesses relate.

**JC:** I guess the key is they really are related. From the outside looking in you might say, they don't seem to be related. But if you get into our business, the fact is, yes there is a relationship. If you have an event in your building, there's merchandise to sell. You have to advertise the event, there may be editing that needs to take place. So, rather than going outside, we went inside and developed a full one-stop shopping concept for our clients. And that's turned out to be very, very successful.

**PS:** Do you have sort of a general philosophy of running a business. For deciding what business to get into?

**JC:** I have a philosophy about running an organization which I think has served me well over a number . of years. Number One, I've always hired a lot of young people, who could be trained rather than those who came in with a lot of awards and a lot of experience, who are set in their ways and, so if you could develop your own people from within and then as they mature and grow within the organization, philosophically, I've given a lot of rope to those individuals to make decisions because I know that growth comes from being able to make decisions and make mistakes. Because that's where the greatest growth comes, while you make mistakes, not while you're winning, or your successes.

Philosophically it's a matter of giving rope to these people who are developing within your organization.-From time to time you jerk the rope back if it's necessary. But as they show they can handle more and more responsibility, you let out that rope. It's important to be kind of an overseer and have contact with your management people, but give them the ability to make decisions and I think many CEOs are afraid of that kind of a situation because they're concerned about their own position. That's never been, that's not how I am built. I don't think that way. I think the stronger the people around a CEO, the stronger the organization. And as a result I think we've developed a lot of very strong people.

**PS:** And a lot of very long-term employees. I've been impressed with that, I've seen how many people have worked for you for twenty, even thirty years.



**JC:** I guess if you believe in family, which I do, you build an organization where there is a lot of loyalty. By the way on that particular issue - you can't demand loyalty either. You earn respect, you earn loyalty by how you treat people. We've developed quite a family situation because we have very little turn over. Those (laughs) who have been with me as you pointed out, for twenty, twenty-five, thirty plus years, is indicative of people being very happy where they are. And, so it's been a very unique situation.

**PS:** We were talking about running your business, sort of as a family. And one of the things I wanted to ask about that is the family involvement. Your son Brian has become very involved.

**JC:** My son, Brian, grew up in the business. And at one point, I made a decision, that if he had interest it, I thought it would be kind of neat and unique to have him be part of it. Brian was a high school player at Central High School here in Phoenix and when it was time to think about college, my idea was send him as far as I could and let him kind of fend for himself and get his feet wet. And so he ended up about as far as he could go, Ithaca, New York, upstate New York, where he attended uh Cornell. Played basketball there, and upon graduation went into the real estate business in New York City. So, survival in the jungle was a real challenge, but along the way, he always kept on top of what I was doing. And of course, was a big basketball fan and loved the game.

I had him scouting for us part-time when he was back East. And then I approached him about the possibility of coming back to Arizona He was a little concerned about that. What the perception might be, as it relates to being involved in the organization with me, but he made a decision to do so. And he very rapidly earned his way, earned respect through the organization, and at a very young age I put him in the position of general manager of the Suns. Although, I was 28 when I had that position and he's done a remarkable job.

He's a bright young guy. And respected by his peers in the NBA. Which says a great deal about oneself and he's good at what he does. And I'm happy to have a son involved like that.

**PS:** Do you think that the Suns, the whole organization you've built will continue to be sort of a family run operation?

**JC:** You hear so often people talk about exit strategy. And just by nature of how big things have become, nothing ever stays the same. At some point you have to think about those things. My concept as we sit here and talk today is that I would much prefer to see the ownership stay as it is. We might bring in investors along the way to enhance the organization, but I don't have any plan to sell. I mean, bottom line is, I would much rather pass it on than I would sell a franchise because I'd hate to divorce myself from it. I'm not sure I could survive if that were to happen, it's become such a big part of my life.

**PS:** Why don't we talk about some of that, that's become a big part of your life, you know from going to the Suns to adding the Diamondbacks, that's a huge addition. You talked a little bit about getting the ball



park built, and that seemed like it was a much bigger deal than the America West Arena, politically at least. You took a lot more heat for that.

**JC:** I think it's important to tell a little story about baseball, and I'll just rattle on for a little bit, regarding some of the things that took place. Once the commitment was made on my part regarding going forward, I began to put equity in place. I put a partnership together, same kind of a structure, legally structure as the Phoenix Suns was originally. And eventually raised about \$145 million in equity. Most of the corporate entities were involved. The banks, the newspaper, the public utilities, corporate Arizona was represented in the partnership. Although there was a much bigger investment this time around. Things had changed and we went through the process of a design for a ball park, but the real key was, what about funding for a ball park, since we didn't have a ball park to play in.

There was someone in the state legislature, by the name of Chris Herstam, who had a vision. And that was to put a tax mechanism on the books for a baseball-only facility, while he was in the state legislature. And the state legislature passed it. And it was sitting there. I talked about being approached in the 1993 by Joe Garagiola, Jr. and Jim Bruner. Jim Bruner being one of the members of the County Board of Supervisors at the time. Who's just a great fan and saw baseball as something that would be fabulous for the state. And Joe came from a baseball family. He was practicing attorney here in town and very involved in spring training in terms of bringing teams here to train, and obviously a very big economic boost to our state during that time of the year.

They reminded me in 1993 that the tax mechanism was sitting there on the books for two years. I didn't know that. I didn't even remember that. Although I was blamed for it later on by those who wished to point fingers at someone. And so we had to pursue that particular mechanism. Find out more about it. And what took place was that the County Board of Supervisors was charged with the responsibility of negotiating a deal with us, our group, that would be fair and equitable and present a plan regarding building a facility and to use the tax mechanism as part of the funding.

I think somewhere along the line, people forgot that there was going to be a major contribution on the part of the ownership group also. And so in my mind, I looked upon it as a private-public partnership, because as it turned out the state tax that would be used was an increase in the sales tax for a period of time with a sunset provision that once the money was raised, it went away. It didn't go on and on like others do. So the contribution from the state was capped at \$235 million. The team contribution as it turned out was over a \$125 million. Now I believe that's somewhat of a partnership.

Again, the county ends up owning the facility. There has been a tremendous return. Some of the numbers that come to mind, because economists put these numbers together and that was just the construction of the Bank One Ballpark itself, created \$13 million in new sales tax dollars. On an annual basis, there's \$9 million a year generated in new sales tax. There were 3,000 jobs created because of Bank One Ballpark. The economic impact to build the Bank One Ballpark was over \$300 million and on an annual basis it's over \$250. And so when you start to look at the impact, let alone the synergy that we've been talking about,



in terms of what impact it's had on downtown and future development of businesses and so on and so forth, what it resulted in, is that in the City of Phoenix, this is the biggest tax producing portion of the city by far. And it's the area that has the biggest increase in sales tax dollars, which go into the kitty to pay for all the services that all the citizens need.

So there was never a question in my mind about it being a win-win situation. But the perception in some circles was that this was a tax deal that was created by me. You know, it kinda hurt me personally, because I knew what the facts were, and as much as we tried to explain really what had taken place, it was easier to put the blame on someone. And so I had to take it. It hurt deeply at the time and yet I decided to keep moving forward. As I said earlier, we were awarded the franchise in 1995, construction began on the ballpark after the design phase, and we kept moving forward. And, of course, our first season was in 1998 it was a very exciting time.

I remember on opening night, the first major league game in our history, walking out to the mound to meet a couple of young people we had throw out the first pitch. And all 50,000 people in the building standing up to give me a standing ovation. And in some ways, outside of bringing tears to my eyes, it was kind of a payback for all of the abuse I took along the way, the few prior years in trying to make that happen. I think those people appreciated it, very, very much. And as time has gone on, that has subsided tremendously. I think once the reality, once people saw it and felt and recognize what really had happened, I think the appreciation began to set in.

**PS:** And somehow it seems like even a bigger landmark for the city than even the America West Arena.

**JC:** It is in size. It is in stature. It is in every respect. And the fact is, I was able to bring the hockey team in from Canada. All of a sudden we had four major league teams in the Valley. One of only 11 cities in the country, who could boast having a major league team in each sport. And, what's interesting is, as you talk to people involved in community development and trying to entice companies to move their offices and build headquarters here, etc., one of the big issues outside of the obvious - like education, transportation, living conditions, is quality of life. And when you have a marketplace that has venues and teams and so on and so forth, we're a big piece of that quality of life. So there is a real appeal. And we know without question that we've been responsible for a lot of people moving here. Good, bad or indifferent. And certainly for a lot of companies to have been influenced by their decision to move here and create jobs and create a lot of employment.

**PS:** The stadium itself, the design of the stadium- how did you come up with that design? Does that relate back to your experiences as a boy with Wrigley Field?

**JC:** If I could have designed the stadium as I really wanted to, we wouldn't have a retractable roof. We'd probably have ivy on the vines, because Wrigley Field had ivy on the vines. But that wasn't practical, that wasn't real. The fact is, if we wanted major league baseball here, we had to resign ourselves to the fact that we were going to have a retractable roof of some kind. And that was going to be very challenging to the



architects. And, so we ended up with a about \$80 million premium just in this very unique retractable roof. It's a wonder to me, that basic pulleys can open and close a roof of that size and magnitude in just four and a half minutes. So we have a real happening when we open the roof or close the roof. We have music to open; music to close. The fans really get into it, they enjoy it. But the design of the building, you had to start with the fact that you were going to have a retractable roof.

**PS:** It could have just been a dome.

**JC:** That never was a consideration. We wanted natural grass. Baseball was meant to be played on natural grass. So that was another prerequisite. So when you have a roof and natural grass, the building itself takes a particular form. It was going to be a massive building to support the weight of that roof. But I wanted it to fit into the warehouse district. I wanted it to look like something that had been here for a while, but yet had all the modern amenities. And so it took on a particular look with the red brick, because of the red brick buildings that are in the warehouse district. It had a lot of green steel which is something that you see in all the new parks - red bricks, green, green steel, etc. And we gave it, I think an old time look and a futuristic look. And that came from our design team.

We built some unique features into it. We put a swimming pool into the ballpark. First ever, no ballpark had ever done that. But it kind of signifies our lifestyle here in Arizona. And it's been a big hit. It's been a kind of an icon for Bank One Ballpark. There're probably three signature items that people think about when they think about Bank One. Retractable roof that opens and closes in four and a half minutes. The swimming pool. And then the nature of our outfield wall, that opens and closes depending on weather conditions, so when the roof is open and the panels are open, you feel you're outdoors in every way, shape or form. And, in my opinion, when the roof is closed for a night game, you feel you're really outdoors and it's just dark.

So I think we accomplished something. I think the feel, the perception, is very positive. People have been very responsive. They love the ballpark. They take pride in the ballpark. And, I think it's really one of the best parks that's ever been designed. Am I prejudiced? Probably so. But objectively I would say, we're right there.

**PS:** How has running baseball as a business been different from basketball?

**JC:** In some ways it's very similar. The sports industry is a sports industry. So much of it is repetitive to me. One of the major differences between basketball and baseball is that in effect, basketball has its own farm systems already in place. Which is colleges. Big time NCAA college basketball is your Triple A, so to speak. Yet in baseball, you have to spend an enormous amount of money in developing players. And so that minor league system where you sign young players and they move up through the ranks of the minor leagues before they're ready to come into the major leagues creates a lot of jobs, positions, and costs involved.





So player development is a big differential between the two sports. One is built in, the other is you have to build yourself. But many of the basic things, selling radio and television and signage and selling tickets and doing those things, it's very repetitive. And as result, what I've attempted to do is take advantage of synergy again and economies of scale by combining some of those efforts. And so we've done that very effectively.

One thing that happened with the building of Bank One Ballpark and the development of the Diamondback organization is that it created many opportunities, as I said for jobs. Many people who were with the Suns had opportunities to move over to baseball if they chose to. People were elevated through the system and given new responsibilities, so great opportunity for growth. Many people were hired from the outside and had an opportunity to break into the organization who might not otherwise have been able to. So, it created a lot of opportunity.

That reminds me, I'm not sure we discussed how the name of the team came into being. But it's kind of an interesting process. I have to go back to the Chicago Bulls first of all, and tell you what the mindset was regarding naming the team. At the time in the city of Chicago, you had the White Sox, they were called the Sox. The Cubs, these are very short names. Bears, the Blackhawks were called the Hawks. You know people always have a tendency to shorten names. So even at 26, I understood that a short name fits on a headline better than a long name. And in 1966, this new basketball team was going to play at the International Amphitheater which was the home of the stockyards. And, so, you know, we start thinking of names; bulls was a short name. Kinda fit, Cubs, Sox, Hawks, Bears, whatever. So it fit that criteria. It fit the location, since we were going to play at the Amphitheater. And it gave it a ferociousness. And so I went out and had the design done for this bull. The same artwork that you see today for the Chicago Bulls was the artwork that we designed back in 1966.

So, I brought that history with me when I came to Arizona and we went through a name-the-team contest for the Suns and it was a very similar thing. Think about Phoenix Suns - S-U-N-S. That's another short name. It certainly fit the climate; it fit everything as far as that was concerned. And so that's how the Suns came into being.

Now it was time for naming the baseball team. And so the newspaper ran a contest and we had 40 or 50,000 entries and we reduced it to top 100, top 50, to 25 and so the end of the story is, it was now time for the fans to vote for the final four. And so when we got to the final four, then it was going to be left up to our internal discretion. And so I had a committee of nine people. And we were sitting in my office and we eliminated two; and we were down to two names. And, so at that point, I said I'm going to distribute some ballots. I'm not voting, but I want each of you to vote. And the final two names were Scorpions and Diamondbacks. And so I passed out the ballots and everyone signed them. They came back to me, and I counted the ballots and the final count was 6-3 Scorpions. And then I announced that the name of the team was the Diamondbacks. I didn't say it was a democracy.

But I wanted to know what they thought. But the thought of having the name of our team represented by



this squishy little insect, which I don't have many good things to say about. I don't think most people do. As compared to Diamondbacks. Now I didn't think of it just as a snake. I thought of diamond as baseball diamond; the real diamonds in the rough. And I knew immediately we'd probably be shorten to D-Backs. You know, again because of the history. And, I would tell you that we made the right decision - or I made the right decision. And all those people who voted against Diamondbacks came to understand why it should've been Diamondbacks. And I think it's caught on extremely well with the fans and it's become synonymous with the franchise.

**PS:** I do think it's a better looking logo, than a scorpion. But you must really like snakes, because you already had a team called the Rattlers.

**JC:** You know what's interesting, I hate snakes. I don't like them at all. But they kind of signify, we have to admit there have been a lot of rattlesnakes around Arizona forever and will continue to be here and I guess what we liked about the rattlesnake thing was, basically, they represent something (laughs) ferocious. And this is not a game for timid people. And, so the Rattlers, just was a natural, you know we went through some artwork and people came up with something interesting and that caught on. As a matter of fact, the Rattlers was one of the highest vote-getters by people who were voting through the newspapers for a name for the baseball team. Now that would have caused a little confusion, or we could've changed the arena football name team, but I didn't want to do that. That was their identity, we had to move on to something else. It just so happened it turned out to be another snake.

**PS:** Did people in your staff think Diamondbacks was too similar to Rattlers?

**JC:** Yeah, I think that was used as an argument. I'm glad no one came up with Rats. That would have been terrible.

**PS:** One of your other teams, as long as we're talking about names; how did you come up with the Phoenix Mercury?

**JC:** Again, we looked at some ideas, some concepts, and that just took on a whole different thing so to speak. Looking at Suns, okay that's the sun in the sky. So someone started talking about planets, you know it could have been Jupiter or the Mars or whatever. I'm glad it wasn't Pluto. Mercury seemed to have some appeal and they did some artwork and that's how that came about.

**PS:** Venus would have been interesting too.

**JC:** Yeah, I guess it would have. Yes.

**PS:** How about Coyotes, were you involved in that name?

**JC:** A little bit, yes. As a matter of fact, the same people were involved with creating, the artwork and as



the names were being discussed, Coyote was another creature that was indigenous to the Valley, to the State of Arizona. And it had some appeal, it had some real positives as it related to colors and in scheme it worked out pretty well.

**PS:** I was going to ask just about the basketball business, but I guess the whole sports business over the last 30 some years you've been involved. How have you seen the business of sports change?

**JC:** In a nutshell, back in the mid '60s professional sports was kinda of a mom and pop business. Everything was relative as it related to prices and fees and rights, etc. But people operated franchises out of hip pocket or out of a shoe box. Obviously what's taken place is that, sports entertainment has become a multi-billion dollar industry in every sense of the word. And so it's become very sophisticated. And I feel very fortunate to have been involved during this entire period. And have attempted to be a leader and be on the crest of all the changes that are taking place. If someone had said to me back in 1966, Jerry someday, you're going to own franchises in different sports, in Phoenix, Arizona and you're going to be talking about technology over something called the Internet, which will bring games and opportunities to people around the world, I mean how could anyone think or have a vision of anything like that.

But being part of this is like the next step. I mean I've been involved for 34 years, so whatever lies ahead is what I'm expecting to take place. And have opinions about what form and shape that should take place. But it's become an integral part of the entertainment industry.

It goes well beyond just increases in values, teams and organizations have become synonymous with cities. They've been responsible for synergy. They've been responsible for revitalization of communities. They've brought more exposure to communities than anything else those communities could ever dream of putting together. Because when you look at the number of exposures teams bring, via radio and the Internet and television and newspaper headlines and magazines, it's absolutely incredible. So there's been tremendous value added, they've become a big player in the communities and, in fact, even owners of teams have become very significant leaders in communities. So when you look at the impact sports has had on our society, it's enormous. And it will continue to do so.

**PS:** Any predictions for the future of where does it go from here?

**JC:** I'm not going to predict exactly what's going to happen, except I see nothing but future growth, future participation on the part of those who are involved in sports. It will be significant. If you believe that there's going to be more and more leisure time for people as future generations figure out ways to cut down on work hours, you can look at participation, in sports and activities as people become healthier and live longer. But people will be looking for entertainment. They will be looking for means by which they can get out of the daily routine.

And sports entertainment, in my opinion, first and foremost, outside of those who just have a great interest in the game or sport that they follow, it's a respite from all the other activity. And people vicariously have



a chance to follow teams and support a team; and enjoy the ride. And a lot of people look at athletes, and those associated, as role models. Some people don't want to be considered role models but that kinda goes with the territory also.

There's been a lot of impact uh, as you think about an athlete who has had unbelievable impact on a world economy, I'll use the name Michael Jordan. A player who is considered the greatest basketball player who's ever played, became probably the most recognizable face on the Earth during the time that he was playing basketball for the Chicago Bulls and had an unbelievable impact on the shoe industry. When he was endorsing Nike shoes, he literally put Nike on the map worldwide. It went well beyond shoes, so if you take that microcosm of an impact of one player, in one sport on a world economy, it just blows me away. And you're going to see more and more situations like that as we move along.

**PS:** As an owner, how has it changed for you in dealing with these players that, used to be employees, they were still celebrities, but now, they're multi-million dollar millionaire stars.

**JC:** Well, it's more expensive to deal with them, that's number one. And it's more challenging to deal with some of them. But again, we've all been on this journey together, so a lot of things have changed and, it's not a matter of being intimidated by their circumstances changing, because my circumstances have changed also. And I've changed along with them. And so one thing I've always enjoyed is relationships with the athletes, my athletes and I think what has served me well is the fact that I played myself. I was an athlete, I was a prospect. I've coached and general managed have come up through the ranks and the athletes know that. They appreciate it, so there's always been a pretty good bonding that takes places with the players who play for me in the respective sports. And I think that's a big plus for me.

**PS:** What sort of advice do you have for young people today coming up in sports that want to be players or get into the business.

**JC:** The one thing I do with young people is let them know how difficult it is to make it to the pros. The percentages are so hard, so difficult. And the reason I do that is because I want to be realistic with them. If they put all their eggs in one basket about being a professional player, they're going to miss other opportunities. And so I encourage them to get their education; to be well-rounded; pursue like heck whatever it is they want to pursue: major league baseball, an NBA player, but understand along the way how tough and difficult it's going to be. And how dedicated they'll have to be. And they're either blessed with certain abilities or they're not. Whether they maximize is up to them, that comes from within. But let's be realistic about what opportunities are available. The small percentage of those who make it.

Now those who want to pursue other positions in sports, today it's become very sophisticated. You can get a masters degree in sports administration today. There wasn't a course you could take back in 1965 or '66 in this area. So many schools have curriculums, there are masters degrees that are available. So one can pursue that kind of an opportunity. Then it's difficult, of course, to break in. Once you get in, wherever you start, you start the process. And you start your own journey. Where that leads to depends on



circumstances; it depends on the individual and how productive he is and good he is. A little philosophy that I may have shared earlier, but I'll repeat: It's better to get on that star for one day than never get there at all. And if somebody has a goal and has an objective of wanting to be whatever it is they want to be, I'm going to try to help them get there in every way. And encourage them to do that, because that's all part of the joy. If you just sit back and wait for your train to come, it may never come in. So, I'd swim out to the ship if you have an opportunity.

**PS:** I think we're just about out of time, here. And we could go on forever but just to sort of wrap up a couple of things today. I think that you've mentioned it several times round about, but maybe just to clearly state, your guiding principle for living your life and what you would want people to know about how you live your life.

**JC:** I would start off by saying I've been very fortunate. I've been very blessed to have the life that I've had. I'm 60 years old as we speak today and these years have gone by quickly. It seems as though it was just a few years ago I was still playing high school basketball, or high school baseball and thinking I was going to be a professional athlete. I think about the years and what's transpired in my life and, I talked about earlier, the fact that my faith was very important to me. Which was the foundation and the fact that I learned so much from my early childhood about basic principles and loyalty and family and values as it relates to a value system.

And then meeting a young lady who turned out to be my wife, and still is as we speak. And that's forty years later. And the impact she had on my life and how these values came together with two people and we developed a family. And how we've tried to carry on that whole value system with our children and our grandchildren which now total four children and ten grandchildren. No more kids to us, but probably more grandchildren to come. But we've hung on to those old values. And I think that's a glue, which I think is very, very important and as I've gone through these last thirty-five years of a professional career, and starting a whole new life in Arizona when we came out here in 1968, and watching our children grow and see what's happened in their lives and how we've attempted to keep all of that together.

I can only look back and say, I've enjoyed the journey. I've enjoyed the trip. It's been exciting. It's been challenging. I've been rewarded, so many times over, more than I ever could have dreamed possible. I feel fortunate that I've been put in a position where I could have some influence and impact on people's lives in how I conduct my own personal life. On how I contribute to a community. How my dedication to the community, in wanting to make it a better place in which to live, is who I am and I would hope that that would be the legacy that I leave for future generations.

**PS:** And in the time you've been here, you've seen tremendous change and have been part of that change. That you've talked about particularly in the downtown area. How do you see the future of Phoenix and of Arizona?

**JC:** I recognize that there will be many, many challenges. You know, as one of the big growth markets in



the country, along with the growth and influx of people will come a myriad of problems; We'll have quality of air, we'll have water conservation problems. We're going to continue to have major transportation problems because we're way behind. So in meeting those needs and meeting some of the needs of the community, I worry about crime. I worry about homelessness; I worry about the people who can't really take care of themselves. We need to take care of those people.

And I would hope that the challenge to the leadership of the future, is that they don't lose sight that there's a responsibility that goes here; to take care of our fellow human beings. It's going to be challenging but I do have faith in human beings; I have faith in mankind that there will be people who step up to the plate and attack these problems and come up with solutions to meet them. It's been the history of the world, and why should it change now.

The excitement here is that Phoenix, Arizona will always be a tremendous opportunity for people to make it. To make a name for themselves. To make a contribution in this community and again, I'll just say that I'm happy that I came along when I did and landed where I did and hopefully will be remembered for making some contribution.

**PS:** Any particular contribution you want to be remembered for the most?

**JC:** No, I'd rather conclude where I finished just there. That was the final. I gave you a lead there. That was it.

**PS:** Anything else you want to mention. All right I'll let you go.

**JC:** I'm done. (Laughs)