

PARK CITY MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY NEWS INTERVIEW



# RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

BEFORE HE SETS SAIL ON HIS JOURNEY AROUND THE WORLD, DICK PEEK LOOKS BACK ON HIS LIFE, IN AND OUT POLITICS, IN PARK CITY

**Park City Municipal Corporation:** *You moved to Park City in 1981. What did you do when you first arrived?*

**Dick Peek:** When I first got to town, I walked up and down Main Street, then down Park Avenue, looking for a job. I landed one at The Yarrow and started the next morning as a busboy. I worked there for two weeks, then went over to Deer Valley's Silver Lake Lodge, which had just opened for its first season. After opening Peek-a-Boo's restaurant at the then Park City Ski Area with my brother, I went to California to learn the construction industry with my brother-in-law. While there, I also took and passed the CPA exam, and although I've never practiced as an accountant, the knowledge has certainly come in handy in running my own business.

**PCMC:** *Your construction company has long been a fixture in Park City. How did you get your start?*

**DP:** I came back to Park City in 1989 and was a painting contractor. I then started remodeling historic houses. The historical society, (which operates the museum), took notice and asked me to serve on their board. The Historic District Commission (now called the Historic Preservation Board) was next. I was appointed in 1998 and served until 2002. I was appointed to the Planning Commission in 2007. Serving on the HPB was very illuminating: I learned how the nuances of the code apply to each case. When Candy Erickson, one of our great City Council

members, tragically passed away in 2011, I was appointed to complete her term. A few months later, I started knocking on doors and ran and won my own term that November.

**PCMC:** *With your perspective as both builder and regulator, how do you think the city is doing with historic preservation?*

**DP:** We're doing pretty well. There will always be competing interests: people are generally into new, modern, and fresh, so selling the historic can be a challenge. Each project is different, but my personal experience has been that the owners can generally get what they want while still preserving the integrity and historic character of their home.

**PCMC:** *Do you have faith in our system of local governance?*

**DP:** Yes, I do. There will always be skeptics, so we just need motivated citizens to step up and serve. Fresh attitudes are always appreciated. And the naysayers play their part: they keep everyone on their toes, and their viewpoints can even enhance the discourse.

**PCMC:** *The buzzword right now in Park City is "change." How do you think the community is doing in managing all the pressures that come with growth?*

**DP:** Change is inevitable, and it's not always a bad thing. When I first moved to town, I had to go to Salt Lake City every two weeks, just to get out of the town—to go to a place with some energy. Having the amenities that we do now—along with



the critical mass of people, stores, and general liveliness—isn't all bad. On the flip side, change and growth need to be managed to maintain livability. Contiguous sprawl is probably our biggest challenge—as it is for rural communities across the country. Developments in surrounding counties can serve as a cautionary tale, and we need to work together—cross-regionally—to limit this. Thirty years from now, what will the area look like? Smart planning—including smart density—is the only way we are going to design ourselves out of this problem.

**PCMC:** *Looking back on your tenure—from HPB through City Council—what stands out in your mind?*

**DP:** Strengthening and clarifying the city's historic guidelines for preservation has been very important, and I'm glad to have played a role in it. The current pending ordinance may take this even further: it would protect homes that have been lightly remodeled from being gutted or demolished even though they are ineligible for historic-preservation designation under the current land-management code.

**PCMC:** *The city experienced a minor building boom while you were on Council. Do you consider this a significant part of your legacy?*

**DP:** Overseeing capital projects is an important part of any Council, but we did have some big projects. The MARC was already underway when I was appointed, but we made key decisions during its construction. We also oversaw the library renovation from start-to-finish. This building holds a special place in the city's heart, so we needed to do it right. There was initially some talk of building on a new site, but I felt very strongly that adaptively reusing the old high school was more in line with our community's values, much like the reuse of the current City Hall.

**PCMC:** *Any issues or events you wish had gone differently, perhaps Treasure Hill?*

**DP:** I don't view the outcome of Treasure Hill

as a failure. If the project doesn't pencil for the owner, it doesn't bother me that the hillside stays empty for now. Otherwise, as I mentioned before, we just need to be more assertive about smart planning—and not be so afraid of smartly integrating density into the appropriate neighborhoods.

**PCMC:** So what's next?

**DP:** My wife Laura and I sold our house, and we plan to sail around the world, starting in January.

**PCMC:** Where will you begin your journey?

**DP:** It depends on where we find our future boat: we'll launch from the port where we buy our ship. We're looking in San Diego-area marinas, and if we leave from there, we'll sail south to avoid the brunt of winter.

**PCMC:** I imagine you have a lot to do before then.

**DP:** Right now we are sorting through all of our things and figuring out how to get rid of most of it. You don't need multiple sets—or even one set—of skis on a sailboat.

**PCMC:** Speaking of skiing, will you miss it terribly?

**DP:** I'm sure we'll visit some mountains during our travels. We're planning to see the sights in the various ports which we visit.

**PCMC:** But you won't have your skis.

**DP:** What does it matter that you have rental skis if they are better than the ones you own?

**PCMC:** Too true! Will you ever come back to Park City?

**DP:** We aren't sure yet; our plans are pretty open-ended. We joke that we'll come back when we have grandkids to come back to, but that isn't imminent. After living in town for 35 years, on and off, I know I'll get a little homesick, especially if I see a photograph of a beautiful powder day.

**PCMC:** Well, bon voyage from everyone in Park City. We will miss you and your service to our community. You may be a seafaring man now, but remember to keep a little bit of the mountains in your heart.