
Signs of Sun City's Past by Ed Allen

The Boswell Connection

"You're thinking too small," was Jim Boswell's response to the early plans for a 60-bed hospital for Sun City in 1966. Boswell was Webb's partner in DEVCO, which developed and built the community. To spur thinking on a larger scale, Boswell offered an attractive incentive:

He would contribute \$1,200,000 to build a hospital under 4 conditions:

- 1) It would have at least 100 beds.
- 2) It would have to serve the surrounding area, not just Sun City.
- 3) It would be the finest medical facility of its time.
- 4) It would be named for Walter O. Boswell, the "original Arizona Boswell."



So, who was Walter Boswell?

Walter was the oldest of three brothers who had grown up on the family cotton plantation in Georgia. Walter chose the military as a career, and enrolled at West Point. He had a streak of wildness that resulted in his leaving in 1900. The official explanation was that Walter flunked mathematics. Family lore had it that he hoisted a cannon onto the roof of the cadet barracks as a prank, and it took the Army Post Engineer a week to get it down.

That could have ended his military career, except for the fact that he married the best friend of the wife of General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing. The general took a liking to Walter and made him his aide-de-camp in 1909 when they sailed for the Philippines to battle Moro tribesmen. Six years later, Walter was with Pershing on the Mexican border facing the revolutionary Pancho Villa. World War I found him in Europe crossing the Rhine with Pershing. Four years later, he moved into the upper ranks of the War Department in Washington. He retired from the War Department in 1930 and went to work for the agricultural company his brothers had built in California.

The driving force behind the Boswell Company's growth was brother James Griffin Boswell, known as "the Colonel." A third brother, William, managed the California cotton operations and was father of James Griffin Boswell II, who would eventually run the company.

The Boswell Company had expanded into Arizona, acquiring several cotton operations from Goodyear in the 1930s. Walter was sent to Arizona to manage those operations. After graduation from Stanford, his young nephew Jim Boswell II was sent to work for him. Jim gradually took over the management and soon the Arizona operations were outperforming those in California.

His uncle, the Colonel, was so impressed with the young Jim, that he named him as the next president of the Boswell Company. And upon the Colonel's death in 1952, the 29-year-old Jim took over the reins of the company. He continued to expand it and according to his biographers, became the "largest farmer in America."

By the late 1950's, Jim knew the days for cotton were limited in Arizona due to the dropping water table. He learned that the Webb Corp. was planning a major new community in the Phoenix area. His 10,000-acre Marinette Ranch, plus another large tract to the west led to a unique joint venture between with Webb – DEVCO – which would develop the Sun Cities. Jim played an active role in shaping the new community, including planning for our nationally recognized Boswell Hospital.

