

Exercise with Foofie – Signs of Sun City's Past

We enter a new year with many good intentions, and among them may be a resolution to exercise more. One source for inspiration might be this poster in the Fitness Center published in 1996 when Sun City resident Francis "Foofie" Harlan was 81. If she can do it, so can you – right? Here's the story of this amazing woman.

As a young girl, her mother called her "Foo Foo" after a character in her favorite detective magazine. She grew up on a dairy farm, and in her 20s was delivering milk door-to-door as the young route men were drafted for WW II.

Later, she worked for a Harley Davidson dealer and spent a lot of time on her motorcycle. She soon earned two 50,000-mile pins. After their daughter married, she and husband Cleon (Bud) decided to go touring and spent a year riding across American.

While her husband wanted to settle down, Foofie expressed interest in seeing Hawaii, and Bud suggested she go. For the next 8 years she commuted back and forth to Hawaii. There, she served as a volunteer at the leper colony on Molokai, often hiking the 3 miles down to the colony and back.

When she was home, she mastered the six-key Braille typewriter, translating school texts and novels for the blind for 25 years. This was exacting work, as there is no way to correct an error other than start over.

When her husband had retired, they sold their home and moved to Sun City. Foofie's only dancing had been in ballrooms with her husband, but once here she joined a tap dancing class run by the Leslies – and went on to become a founding member of the Sun City Poms. Cancer surgery slowed her activities in 1988, but it never changed her bright outlook on life. She was soon back as a Pom -- doing her trademark splits.

Foofie had quite a sense of humor and would sometimes surprise a person by coming up behind them and tapping them on the shoulder. They'd glance around to see a foot where they expected to see a face!

She drew national attention and was featured in the National Inquirer and National Geographic, as well as leading magazines in France, Germany, and Switzerland. The postcard at left was sent to Lory Vaichinger from her daughter in Denmark. The bus sign wording is in Danish.

The exercise poster was developed by Foofie with the help of Portal Publications. While it shows some 37 different stretching exercises, even more were shot – but not included for fear that someone -- not as limber as Foofie -- might be seriously injured trying them. Note, too, that Foofie is not in a Poms costume. Any money raised by women in their roles as Sun City Poms has to be turned over to the club.

OK – time to see how many of those exercises you can do!

