
Signs of Sun City's Past by Ed Allen

Visit the 1960s in Sun City's first model home

In another month, it will be 60 years since the opening of Sun City – America's first, active adult community. The records of those early days would have been lost except for the efforts of dumpster-diving Jane Freeman. She discovered that DEVCO – the Webb/Boswell joint venture that built Sun City – was closing its Sun City office in order to oversee development of Sun City West. Photos, sales brochures, newsletters, and other Sun City files were being cleaned out and thrown in a dumpster behind the offices. Jane knew the discarded material would be invaluable in writing the history of Sun City's first 25 years, and into the dumpster she went!

The records she and her associate, Glenn Sanberg, gathered in the writing of JUBILEE filled spare bedrooms and took up space in their garages. They formed a non-profit Historical Society in 1986, but it wasn't until 1989 that the perfect solution appeared – Sun City's first model home came up for sale. It was a perfect home to house the history of the community. Donations raised \$11,500 and Jim Boswell provided \$30,000 to seal the deal.



Originally the Kentworth model, it had 860 sq. ft. and sold for \$8600. A golf course lot was \$1250 additional, and A/C a \$600 option. The MacDonalds, who lived there for nearly 24 years, added a bedroom, second bathroom and Arizona Room across the back. In 1990, the

Webb Corp. offered to add a 10' x 10' building that had been a sales office back in 1959 when construction began, and later served as a refreshment stand among model homes and as a dressing room for the Sun City Saints – a women's fast-pitch softball team. That room now serves as "Sundome Jr." – Arizona's smallest theater, seating 6! But the seats came from the Sundome.

The house became today's "Del Webb Sun Cities Museum" in time for Sun City's 50th anniversary! 1960-style furniture was found for the living room, a former bedroom was devoted to the life and career of Del Webb, and new exhibits were added about Marinette, Sun City West, sports in the Sun Cities, and the many performing arts organizations. The kitchen and bathroom remain in their original pink with many accessories from a bygone era.



The Del E. Webb Foundation provided a grant this year, which enabled a 700 sq. ft. addition to the rear of the building. This not only provides additional exhibit space, but meeting space as well. In preparation for the 2019-2020 season, new displays have been added on the Boswell Connection, How Sun City was Sold to America, and the History of Healthcare in Sun City and Sun City West. Spring will bring a new exhibit on baseball.

In a return to its original glory, the house has been repainted its original color: bright pink!

Visit the Museum in Sun City's first model home, 1-4 Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. Admission is free. Located next to Oakmont Rec Center, a block west of Fry's.

