
Signs of Sun City's Past by Ed Allen

"YOUR INVITATION TO SEE A \$2,800,00 SUNDIAL – Sun City's new Sundial Recreation Center"

That was the heading on the announcement of the April 1973 opening of Sun City's newest recreation center. Here's how it was described:

"Incomparable is the only word to describe Sun City's mammoth new Sundial Recreation Center. The Del E. Webb Development Co. spent over \$2,800,000 to give residents of Sun City this palatial facility dedicated to recreation, relaxation, entertainment, arts and crafts. Nowhere else in the world is there anything like it!

You are invited to tour the lavishly landscaped grounds where you'll see the tallest sundial in Arizona (right), a masterfully designed 18-hole miniature golf course, and the first man-made turf bowling greens in the world.



In the center of this glorious playground you'll see one of Arizona's architectural masterpieces, a pair of structures each 437-feet long and over 200-feet wide connected by a great covered mall.

Opening onto the mall is a foyer leading to an auditorium designed to accommodate everything from Beethoven to Bingo – or from a card party to a convention. It is flanked by four large social halls that can be opened into the auditorium to make a room two-thirds as long and half as wide as a football field. Two kitchens are included. Another feature of the auditorium building is a complete suite of photographic labs.

In case you're not impressed yet, just venture to the other side of the mall where you'll find yourself on a promenade deck 15-feet above the largest indoor swimming pool in Arizona. At poolside, majestic palm trees tower to a height of 30 feet. Swimmers lounge in a lush green garden where the temperature remains constant the year round. As you stroll along the balcony, you will discover that there's also a billiard room with a dozen tables and a 7,000 square foot glass enclosure housing ten regulation shuffleboard courts.

When you descend to the pool level you'll find yourself in a recreational dream world where the 'indoor lake' is bordered by a pair of baroque therapy pools with a connecting exercise room. You'll marvel at the opulence of the swimmers' locker rooms, and the vastness of the poolside men's club that even has its own kitchen."

The announcement went on to point out that all it costs to use this grand facility was \$20 per person per year!



Oddly, little was said about the center's most distinguishing feature – the nation's largest sundial! John Meeker was known for thinking BIG, and he decided that if Sun City was going to build a sundial, it was going to be the largest one in the nation!

At the time, the largest sundial was across the Valley in Carefree. (Left) It had been built in 1959 and still serves as a distinguishing landmark for that community. Its 62-ft long gnomon (the sloping needle) is 35-ft tall at the tip. The Sun City version was designed to be one foot taller...36-ft tall, with a 67'8" gnomon.

The center was dedicated on April 14, 1973, and marked Del Webb's last visit to Sun City before his death in 1974.