

Signs of Sun City's Past

Ed Allen

Construction of Sun City began in mid-1959, but as of December first, it still had no official name. The Ruben H. Donnelly Company had been hired to run a national contest to name the community, and offered three attractive prizes:



First – a home on a golf course lot

Second – a golf course lot

Third – a 2-week vacation at a Del Webb Hiway House Hotel in Phoenix.

A meeting was held December 8 so Donnelly execs could make their recommendations. The names were pinned to the wall and the attributes of each were presented. Well into the meeting, the door opened, and in came Del Webb. Looking at the various names, Webb pointed to the one that read “Sun City,” and said “I like that one.” With that, he left.

The Webb personnel began putting papers into briefcases only to have a Donnelly exec exclaim,

“Wait, we still have more names – and you haven’t heard our recommendation.” He was politely told that he didn’t understand, Mr. Webb had made the decision!

So, who won the house and where was it?

Winners were the E. A. Brittons from Eugene, Oregon. Repeated calls to them to give them the good news went unanswered. Checking with neighbors, it was learned they were RVers and spent the winter months in warmer climes. One suggestion was “Palm Springs,” as neighbors had heard them talk about it on numerous occasions.

A call was made to the sheriff in Palm Springs, offering \$1000 to the Benevolent Fund if his men could locate the Brittons. Sure enough, they were at a local RV park, and finally told of their good luck.

The Brittons came to Sun City for formal presentation of the title, and we have this photo of them lounging by the Town Center (now Oakmont) pool.



Their house was built that summer at 12801 Augusta Drive, and they moved in in September 1960. Preferring the RV life, the Brittons moved back to Eugene in March 1961 and put the house up for sale.

The ad's promise of a “2 bedroom, top quality home with 1600 sq.ft. under roof” seems a bit misleading. There were no homes with that much living space in early Sun City! The “Meadowgrove” model selected by the Brittons was one of the largest – but had just 900 sq. ft. of interior. Evidently the carport, storage room and overhang accounted for the other 700!