

#5: “Show Me The Money”... Not This Time

We know Del’s business started in 1928 and we know he died in July of 1974. His career as an owner spanned forty-six years. In our Del Webb room there are amazing displays of his projects. When we take visitors through, they are often left breathless over the scope of his work. It is that spectacular.

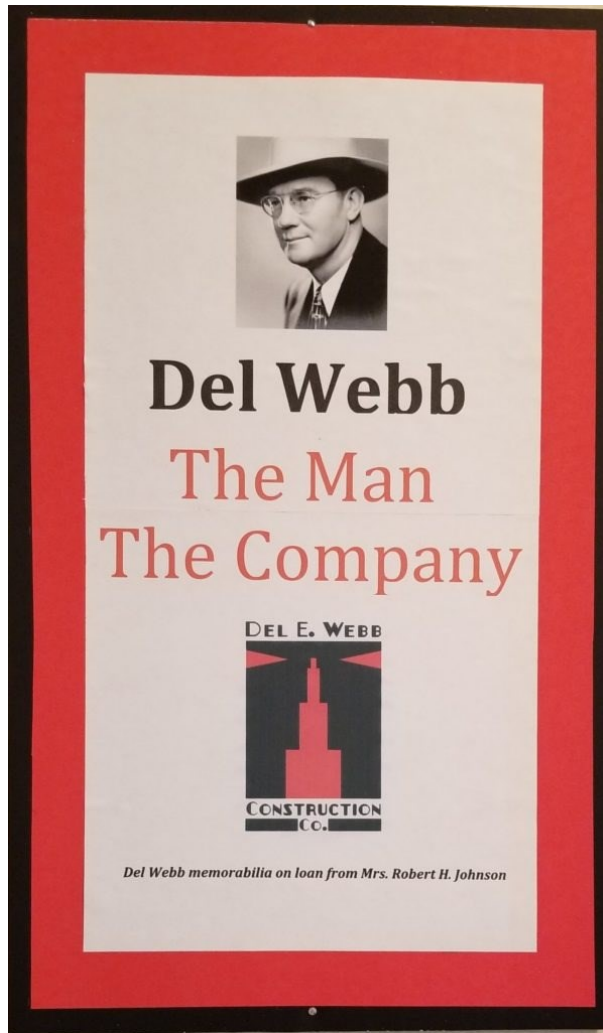
Before we go down that road, I am taking literary license and injecting a perspective some may not agree with. That’s fine, because it is simply my opinion. The more I read about Mr. Webb, the more insight I find in understanding the man.

No question, in the beginning, he was all about making payroll and providing for Hazel and his employees. There are stories of his bookkeeper Amy Jo Hafford as she drove an old car, sans front seat, with a small bag of money paying bills. She recounts the mad scramble on Fridays, payday for the crew.

Life was like that in the lean years of the 30’s. Del was fearless and driven, taking jobs that were borderline breakeven. As he added staff like Bob Johnson and L. C. Jacobson, he became more aggressive. He trusted them implicitly.

That’s where the header and this story takes a turn. We know by the late 30’s he was doing better. The Arizona state jobs increased and he started making a decent profit. The quality of his work was always exceptional and he still clung to the mantra of on time and on budget.

As I began crafting my words about the 1940’s, I found myself struggling to translate his persona, style and success to someone who currently was like him. Bill Gates? Warren Buffet? Steve Jobs? Jeff Bezos?



Originally published by the Webb Corporation in 2001, the book “Del Webb, The Man, The Company” is the source for much of the material being used. Also, special acknowledgement to the Robert H. Johnson family where so many pieces of memorabilia in the Webb room have come from.

All very wealthy businessmen who have done well over the last twenty or thirty years. But in reality, they are different. Sure, they built successful companies or invested well, but Del was in a league of his own. Once he got on a roll, my suspicion is, it was never really about the money.

The more I research Mr. Webb, the more I see the man in a wholly different light. Sure, he wanted to be financially comfortable, but it appears secondary to impacting the nation, society and the mark he left on it. His role, his goal was to leave something sustainable.

That’s why the 40’s, from my perspective, are so important to the Webb story. My intent was to blow through those years and move towards the ultimate Sun City story. That would be a disservice to why and how Sun City came to be; and more importantly, why we succeeded. How we got here is about where he came from. It is all connected, as you will see.



Forever the dapper gentleman, Del Webb was often seen in coat and tie. Even on the construction site he seldom failed to look his best. He was rumored to have 150 suits, most more conservative than the one seen here.

In next week’s edition, we will look closely at the 40’s and early 50’s. We will take the proper allocation of both time and space to show you Del Webb, The Man and The Company that changed a nation. Those war years and beyond are truly insightful.

The evolution of Del Webb and his vision is something very special. Unlike the movie Jerry McGuire, it was never about “showing me the money.” In my humble opinion, he wanted to make a difference, to leave us more than he ever came close to taking. By the time we are finished, you will see what he and his employees did and why the story should never be lost.

Del left us an imprint, a footprint we would all do well to try and follow.

See you all next week.

Bill Pearson