



Spring 2005

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SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Did You Know . . .

. . . the Sun Cities Area Historical Society is funded only by membership fees, donations, and sales of Sun City history-related items? Although the Board of Directors and our hosts and hostesses volunteer their time, your Society has ongoing expenses that must be met.

Responding to written requests requires stationery, envelopes, and postage, as well as the necessary office equipment to prepare those responses. Janitorial and trash services, landscaping maintenance, lighting, and fixtures to display Sun Cities memorabilia must be purchased.

Archived items are copied onto special paper that won't yellow or crumble, but it is much more expensive than regular photocopy paper. To protect those archived items, a constant building temperature must be maintained, regardless of hot summer days or cool winter temperatures.

So if you're a member of SCAHS and you haven't paid your 2005 dues, please do so today. If you're a resident of the Sun Cities and are not yet a member, consider joining the Society. Call us at (623) 974-2568, and we will send membership information to you promptly.

The Society depends on YOU if it is to remain a steadfast and vibrant part of YOUR community!

Which Came First . . .

. . . the chicken or the egg? Nobody seems to know for sure. But we do know that the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, housed at 10801 Oakmont Drive in the first model home built in Sun City, is a great place to spend some quality time. Come on in, and bring some friends!

Learn about the beginning of Sun City, from a twinkle in Del Webb's eye to the magnificent crowds on Opening Day. Learn about Del Webb's love of and involvement in the great sport of baseball! Learn about the man, Del Webb, and his accomplishments in other projects you've heard about. Learn about Marinette, Arizona, and how it became Sun City. Learn how Lizard Acres became Sun City West.

Learn about early residents who worked tirelessly to make the Sun Cities you know and love today a reality.

You'll be amazed at all there is to learn about your community at the Sun Cities Area Historical Society!



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Open Hours—1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday—Wednesday—Thursday—Friday

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The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is certified by the Arizona Historical Society

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Message from the President

Our April 6 meeting featuring the founder of Phoenix, Jack Swilling, drew more than 120 people — a record for us. My apologies to those of you who arrived too late to get a seat. Almost all the seats were full by 12:15, making it impossible to get to the refreshments. By 12:40, The Madison had brought in all the chairs that the room would hold, and people were standing along the outside wall. As a result, we started the program 15 minutes early.

Sam Ferguson, as Jack Swilling, did an excellent job of entertaining and informing us about life in Arizona in the 1870s. Many people stayed afterwards to ask questions, or to have their photos taken with him. He certainly looked the part.

Prior to the program, we took the opportunity to salute the many volunteers that do the work of the Society. As you know, we have no paid staff. We count on volunteers to produce this newsletter, make meeting arrangements, pay our bills and keep the financial records, serve on the Board of Trustees, welcome visitors to the Society's home, maintain our collections, archives, displays, Web site, and more.

The Board selected a person who exemplifies the volunteer spirit that the Society needs to remain healthy and viable — Phyllis Street. Phyllis joined the Society in 1992 and stepped into the kitchen to help with refreshments. Over the years, she held every Board position except Treasurer, and while now retired from the Board, still serves as coordinator for the hosts and hostesses that greet visitors to our home on Oakmont.

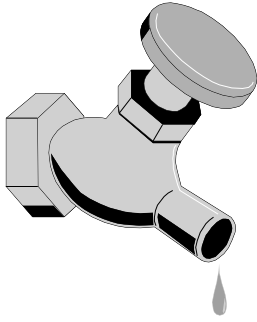
Your Historical Society needs more Phyllis Streets! Won't you think of how you can serve, and what skills you can bring to the healthy growth of the organization? We have an immediate need for a person to handle publicity, sending out news releases regarding the Society's activities, like the April 6 meeting. Only a few hours are needed from time-to-time, and you will have the satisfaction of seeing your efforts in print when they appear in the newspaper.

We can use volunteers in many other capacities, and I invite you to call the Society to offer your time and your talent. You'll meet other interesting people, all of whom have one thing in common — a desire to both preserve our local history and to interest more people in history by making it come alive.

Edson Allen
President, Board of Trustees

Water for Sun City — Part 2

By Eugene T. Jensen



The Arizona Constitution provided a system of “water rights” for surface water, but had no equivalent system of “rights” for water from wells. In the absence of Constitutional guidance, the right to use water from wells reverted to the ancient “Common Law,” which recognized the right of the landowner to use resources (such as stone, coal, or other minerals), below the land surface. The 1980 Groundwater Code sidestepped this Constitutional shortcoming by focusing on mandatory “Conservation Measures” to force farmers, homeowners, and industry (including golf courses), to reduce water use. To avoid

new demands, the Code required all new users to have an assured 100-year water supply.

The adoption of the 1980 Arizona Groundwater Code was a “wake up call” for those Sun City residents with an understanding of Water Law, and the nature of the available water resource. Two avenues of approach to compliance were evident: defend the “landowner right” to use well water, and/or find a renewable source. The initial community response was the formation of **The Sun Cities Water Users Association**, with membership limited to the major water user organizations. It soon became apparent that this was not a satisfactory arrangement, and the Sun City Home Owners Association agreed to form a Water Resources Committee to serve as a focal point for resolution of water issues. It was a decision which would consume many thousands of hours of volunteer time, much of it donated by a small group of retired professional engineers and geologists with many years of experience.

The first challenges to the Sun City groundwater supply came when the water supplier proposed to (1) transfer water from Sun City wells to part of Peoria, and (2) provide water for a new Del Webb community, eventually named Anthem. Both efforts were challenged by Sun City organizations, but prevailed only on the Anthem issue. It was the first of many such actions!

We define the extent of our groundwater resource. Dr. Edward Dapples, a retired professional geologist, undertook a detailed examination of all data descriptive of the aquifer which underlies the West Valley. The results of his studies were published by the Home Owners Association, and made available without charge to other interested organizations. His pioneer effort provided the new committee with a three-dimensional “picture” of the aquifer, the direction of underground flow, and the degree to which the aquifer was being depleted. The study was subsequently duplicated by the Arizona Department of Water Resources and by Citizens Utilities, using computer modeling techniques.

We file for a right to use groundwater. On January 15, 1987, Sun City property owners were advised by the Maricopa Superior Court of their opportunity to file a claim for a right to use groundwater. (The action followed a U.S. Supreme Court decision on an Indian Water Use issue.) The Sun City Home Owners Association, acting on behalf of property owners, filed for water rights for municipal use and for irrigation of the golf courses operated by the Recreation Centers. After years of litigation, the courts determined the groundwater was not subject to “appropriation”!

Water for Sun City (Cont'd.)

We oppose the proposed tax on Sun City for use of groundwater. In 1991, the Arizona Legislature considered a bill to tax the use of groundwater! The bill was clearly aimed at forcing the Sun Cities to reduce the use of well water for municipal and golf course irrigation. Passage was eventually blocked by the efforts of the Sun City Home Owners Association.

Would a Water District Help? It was the belief of many of the “water volunteers” that a locally directed Water District (like the Fire District), would make it possible to develop a long-range plan for meeting Sun City water needs. A bill authorizing such a planning District was passed by the Arizona House, but passage in the Senate was doubtful. Instead, a contract was negotiated between the Home Owners Association and Citizens Utilities, the water supplier. The concept was not supported by other community organizations, and the “Contract” soon died for lack of cooperation between the interested parties.

Use less water or pay a fine! The State demanded, under the new Code, that Sun City reduce its per capita use of water. The Home Owners Association soon discovered that the State population estimate was based on the census returns (which understated the water-using population), and the assumption that water use dropped during the summer when Sun Citians retreat to milder climates. The issue was finally resolved, but only after many hours of volunteer work, and expenditure for consultants.

What should be done with the contract for water from the Central Arizona Project? The water utility had contracted for water from the Project for each of its three Service Areas, but had been able to defer making payments, a situation which could not be continued. With assistance from a State Legislator, and support from the Governor’s Office, an agreement was reached between the utility and the Recreation Centers for a division of the allocation.

How can the water from Central Arizona Project be used? At the urging of the Arizona Department of Water Resources, a study committee with membership from interested community organizations was formed, and a plan was developed whereby water could be used for irrigation of golf courses. The plan was opposed by various community groups, resulting in litigation which has blocked implementation of the plan. In the meantime, the water is being delivered to area farmers in return for water credits.

Is there a fair price for water? The private utility is subject to sometime conflicting regulation by the State Corporation Commission and the Arizona Department of Water Resources. The utility, of course, wants to optimize profits while meeting their regulatory responsibilities. Consumers want to pay as little as possible. The consequences are costly, sometimes acrimonious, almost biennial collisions between these opposing forces.

Is Sun City sinking? As a result of pumping water faster than it is replaced, a 50-square mile saucer-shaped depression has been created between Youngtown and the White Tank Mountains. At the maximum point of subsidence the land surface has declined 20 feet in about 20 years, causing major damages to irrigation and drainage systems. Sun City and Sun City West are both on the periphery of the subsidence area, but no damages have yet been reported.

What about the future? This is a condensation of events which have taken place since the passage of the Arizona Groundwater Code in 1980. It would not be appropriate for the Historical Society to try to predict the course of future events!

A shopping center in a community with no residents? Whoever heard of such a thing? Yes, it's true! And where was this phenomena? On the southwest corner of 107th and Grand Avenues. Sun City debuted on January 1, 1960, and the Safeway grocery store was open for business. Actually, it opened on December 31, 1959. Were they crazy?

James Boswell, then a partner with Del Webb in building Sun City, was also on the Board of Directors for the Safeway stores, and he convinced the powers to be that it would be to their advantage to "take a gamble." An agreement was reached where their lease would give them first refusal on future grocery store sites. True to the promise, the second Safeway opened at 107th and Peoria in 1961, and Safeway was the first grocery store in Sun City West.

Going back to 1959-60 — in lieu of rent, the store would give the Del E. Webb Development Co. (DEVCO), a percentage of profits for "x" number of years. You can be sure the profits were slim the first few months, and DEVCO essentially subsidized the store.

Visitors were flocking to see this new community, and an enterprising entrepreneur sensed the need for a small social spot and opened a coffee shop on February 5.

On the southwest corner of 107th and Grand Avenues, a Union Oil Station opened to serve the increased flow of traffic. During their first year, the station pumped enough gas to put it with the top ten stations in volume of business in the greater Phoenix area.

It was on the 19th of February that the Hiway House (later known as King's Inn), opened for business. The motel was located on the southeast corner of 107th and Grand Avenues, now the location of Fry's Market.

Much of this, and more, took place before the first residents moved in on April 8, 1960!

History Time-Line

- January 1961** - Sun City Library organized
- January 1969** - Groundbreaking for Boswell Hospital
- January 1973** - Skeet shooting range debuts
- January 1976** - Liberty Bell molded from donated scrap metal
- January 2003** - Lakes Club closes its doors

- February 1972** - Bob Hope gala raises \$25,000 for new hospital
 - Lakes Club's last embers doused
- February 1981** - Interfaith Services comes into being

- March 1967** - Hospital plans unveiled by architect
- March 1979** - Brewers spring training comes to Sun City

- April 1968** - Hospital construction starts on top of artificial hill
- April 1984** - Briarwood Country Club construction set
- April 1986** - McDonald's Golden Arches opens in Sun City

Board Changes Membership Dates

“When are my dues due?” If you belong to more than one organization, this can be frustrating, and often overlooked.

To help our members, from now on, “dues shall be for the calendar year and delinquent if not paid for by March 1. Members joining after September 1 will be given credit for the following year.” *(Bylaws Article 3—Membership, adopted January 14, 2005.)*

Your membership now runs from January 1 to December 31 — easy to remember!

***Get a Friend Involved
Be a Volunteer***

Coming Event

Tuesday, May 10, 1:00 p.m.

Join us at the Society, located at 10801 Oakmont Drive, Sun City, for a special program with Nancy Brandt, former Director of NEWS for KWAO, FM 106.3, Sun City’s original radio station.

The radio station tower is still in use (behind the Grand Avenue Shopping Center), but the broadcasting studio is gone.

Nancy will “RECALL THE DAYS WHEN” Sun City was on the air with news each hour on the hour, and information on community events.

This promises to be an interesting and informative program. Mark your calendar, and plan to attend!

