



Spring 2009

Volume 18 No. 2

## SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



### Odyssey of books almost complete

*Bookmobile, 'clothes closet,' Lakeview, Bell ; Fairway, again*

by P. Atwood Fenner

The Maricopa County Library District loaned the first 2,500 books to the fledgling Sun City Library in 1962, and has now come to its rescue again by taking over the struggling organization at the private library's request.

Dependent on private funding from fees, gifts, memorials, and donations, the library has almost always struggled financially and reluctantly had raised library card fees from \$15 to \$20 annually. They operated at a loss of \$133,000 in 2008, according to a published report. And although the Bell Library and the Fairway Branch were firmly established, it has not always been so

In the beginning, the reading materials for the active retirees were delivered weekly by the Maricopa County Library District Bookmobile. This did not satisfy many residents, however, and in 1962, Ruth Mildner became the first volunteer librarian in charge of an 820 square foot space in Town Hall Center (now Fairway).

"It was like trying to serve the public out of a clothes closet," she said.

Access to the 2,500 books on loan from the county was three days a week, and records were kept in shoeboxes. Ruth furnished the 3" x 5" cards herself. She promoted reading in her column in the Daily News-Sun, assisted by

publisher Burt Freireich's editorials, resulting in the donation of hundreds of books. In her first year she had eight volunteer helpers, and library hours were soon increased.

Former Chicago Public Library librarian Dorothy Weber answered the call to retired librarians for help. A Friends of the Library was organized and also a Library Operating Board. In 1971 a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation was formed. Free library service was provided to Sun City residents. Dorothy succeeded to the unpaid librarian post after Ruth retired in 1969; she had 30 volunteers to assist her.

By 1972, with the donation of 1,500 books by residents, the library had outgrown the shoebox-quarters at Fairway, and the Rec Centers provided 2,500 square feet of space in the new Lakeview Rec Center. Phyllis Wood served as the first paid librarian.

But the books' odyssey continued...

In April of 1976 the Bell Rec Center opened and so did the library, located in a separate building on the northeast corner of the complex. There were 10,250 square feet with room for a 6,400 square foot expansion. The facility could accommodate 100 seated readers, staffers, and 285 volunteers.

See books page 6

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



Message from President David Verble

## Where do we go from here?

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With compass in hand and the GPS poised for a destination, the question begs to be asked: Where are we and where do we want to go? Our geographic location is well defined, and the history of our travel to get to this point is also pretty well documented.

But as we reflect on this, are we really headed in the right direction to continue the journey? Thus, the big question is what the future holds for us and those who follow. More specifically, what lies ahead for this Historical Society as it collects and preserves the past, and how do we select the course for our path into the future?

As we survey our situation, there are some areas of our history that have yet to be revealed, and we want to share the excitement of that discovery with the community. Certainly, we have our work cut out for us in preparation for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Sun City. That effort in itself will unveil some new facts about the past and make our story more complete.

However, sharing all that we have to offer is one of the issues that concern me as well as others. We need to find better ways of presentation and improve the publicity about our efforts. This upcoming yearlong event may reveal how much community interest there really is in continuing our work and provide a basis for where our future efforts might be applied. However, today we continue to note a lack of awareness that this organization exists or offers a significant resource to the community.

Are we vital to the surrounding community? Does our history develop interest in a growing and active retirement living style of life? How can we better do our job? These and other questions we ask ourselves as we decide on the important issues we need to address. This article is an appeal to our readers – members, as well as other interested parties, seeking ideas of what might provide added interest in our displays, programs, or other events that would make our purpose more attractive.

We have recently made some improvements in our landscape, thanks to the interest and help of your newly elected Board, support of the Sun City Rose and Garden Club, and C & S Plant Specialists. Drive by and note the roses and other plantings for added effect to the premises.

Better still drop in during our opening hours and check out the baseball exhibit returned to coincide with the spring training season here in the valley. I would be pleased to hear from any and all who would offer suggestions for increasing our prominence in the area. Call me at 623-214-0053 or e-mail at [zswede@cox.net](mailto:zswede@cox.net) to convey your interest.

# Docents enjoy their museum 'jobs'

Compiled by P. Atwood Fenner

The public face of any museum is usually its docents. And it is so with the 12 women and men who meet and give tours to the public at the model home that houses the archives of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society at 10801 Oakmont Drive.

They all agree that conducting the tours, especially for foreign visitors, is the most interesting part of volunteering.

Docent Belva McIntosh, a six-year veteran, recalls when a busload of Koreans showed up asking, "Did the government make you move here?" and "Would the government let you sell your house here?" "Why are there so many homes with flags flying?" was another question.

And the highlight of her duties here was the opportunity to be a tour guide on the Korean tour bus after they left the museum. She also doesn't mind the mundane clipping and filing duties.

Mary Ellen Danley, three-year volunteer, enjoys filing the most and loves doing research to answer questions as well as reading the interviews with original homeowners in the 1960s.

Rosemary Scully, two years, likes people and learning the unique history of Sun City. She admits that compared to other volunteer jobs, "this is a little more intellectual ... a little bit of a challenge to learn the facts." She also enjoys meeting relatives of early residents and the grad students that use the SCAHS archived materials.

Jane Wise, three years, also enjoys helping the "enthusiastic" grad students and learns something new every day she is here. "It is a constant learning process for the history of the area," she says.

Bette Linwood, two years, agrees that one must be people-oriented to be a docent here, and that the SCAHS museum is a "totally different environment" from other places.

Dorothy Rucker, four years, enjoys meeting the people and sharing the history of Del

Webb's dream and the beginning of the Arizona Sun Cities. Her high point was helping to decorate the house as a 1960 Model Home. Seasonal decorations are also put in place by docents.

"The time goes fast. It is fun even with the reading and research to do," says Karen Bunsness, a new docent.

"The volunteering is 99 percent fun," says Judy Sciola, three years, who with Belva, is serving on the Society's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee.

Recently all the docents helped with the first ever custom golf car show held in Sun City and the SCAHS rummage sale.

"It's something different each day," says Marcia Case, one year. She enjoys getting to know the other docents and the trustees and learning from them. "All volunteer jobs demand a commitment," she added.

Those interested in joining the ranks of the Historical Society Docents, who usually work only from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, may phone 623- 974-2568.



**DOCENT BELVA McIntosh shows visitors the displays in the living room during the February Custom Golf Car Show. Several years ago, following a visit of a busload of Koreans to the Museum, Belva was asked to serve as their bus tour guide of Sun City. It was one of the highlights of her career as a Model Home docent.**

## *Six roses and more now blooming here*

*Spring has sprung,  
and the grass has riz\*...  
And so have six rose bushes  
west of where the house is.*



New trustee Arlene Macy enlisted the help of the Rose and Garden Club of Sun City. And in time for spring, the SCAHS now has beautiful tea rose bushes--red, pink, orange, lavender, and gold--blooming away on the west side of the Model Home. In addition, at either side of the driveway in front are a Red Valentine and a Gopher plant. And there are three Bottlebrush plants now in the backyard.

The Society employed the services of Charlotte and Suzanne, owners of C&S Plant Specialists, to design our planting layout. As well, they have donated and placed a variety of cacti within a diamond shape with the Museum sign in the center. And Ed and Regina Cirillo have donated and planted some succulents in the back to complete the improvements.

A total of \$334.40 was spent on the project, which was completed in time for the plants to get established properly before summer. Board members offset some of the cost with \$110 toward the expenditure. Edson and Loretta Allen helped to lay out the rose plantings, which straddle the existing irrigation piping. The Rose and Garden Club planted the roses and will continue to take care of them.

\*Arizona pebble landscaping is used at the Model Home, not grass.



A CARNIVAL ATMOSPHERE, providing a cacophony of sounds and the splash of brightly enameled colors, attracted 250 visitors to the SCAHS Custom Golf Car Show Feb. 7 in the parking lot of the Oakmont Center next door. As clouds scudded overhead, folks chatted with the owners of 16 golf cars while others also enjoyed refreshments and tours of the Model Home.

## Spring Meeting in Sun City West features golf history

### Bob Lucas shares collections, experiences along with clubs, niblicks, mashies, leather balls

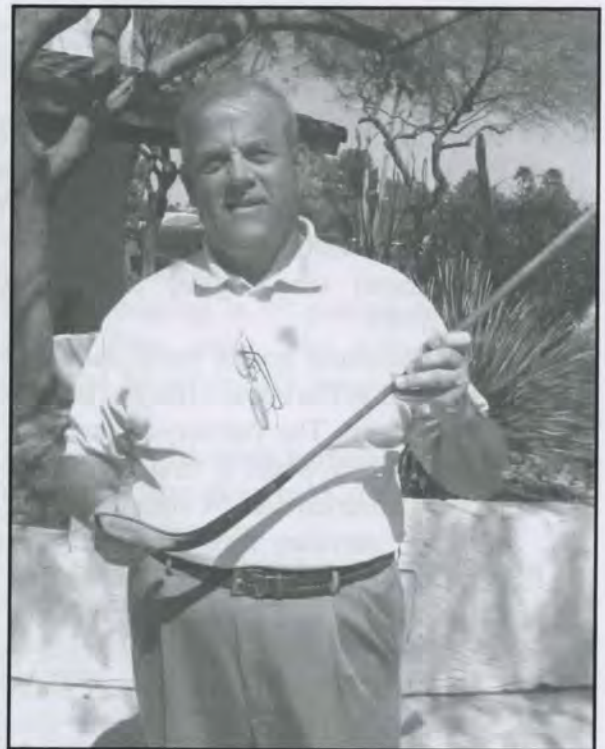
Story and photos by Edson Allen

It was a beautiful April 1 afternoon at the Hillcrest Golf Club in Sun City West. At the Spring Meeting Society members and guests learned some of the history of golf and the tools with which it has been played, from collector Bob Lucas, a resident of Sun City Grand.

Bob started collecting antique clubs in the late 1970s when he bought a wood-shaft putter for \$1.50 at a flea market. At one time, his collection consisted of more than 9,000 clubs, balls, and other golfing memorabilia.

The club at right is a "long nose" all wood club. The head is beech, the shaft hickory. The two woods are spliced together, glued, and a filament winding secures the two parts.

The first metal clubs did not appear until about 1875 and carried names instead of numbers. There were the "Mid Iron" (comparable to a #2 iron), "Mashie" (#5), and "Niblick" (#8). It wasn't until about 1925 that clubs began to carry the numbers as we now know them.



Bob Lucas displays a long nose wooden putter at the April 1 Spring Meeting in Sun City West.



The first balls were wood. Next came leather balls stuffed with goose feathers. A wet leather pouch was sewn and filled with wet feathers. As the ball dried, the leather shrank and the feathers expanded making a tight, round sphere.



The first "tee" was probably a small pile of sand. This led to a small "press" that could be filled with moist sand and yield a uniform height "tee" with a shallow depression on top for the ball. Over the years, golfers have experimented with all shapes and sizes of tees, balls, and clubs in the pursuit of a lower score.



In the 1850s, a doctor in England experimented with Gutapercha—sap from an Indonesian tree. The hard balls could be driven further but they often went crooked. As they became nicked by club contact, they flew straighter—leading to the dimples on today's balls.

# Maricopa County to end book odyssey soon

From page 1

The Rec Center continued to furnish only the physical plant; the library paid all other expenses.

Sun City Wester Alice Gardner took over in 1984, and the library instituted the library team concept of part-time librarians. There were now 275 volunteers (Sun City is the city of volunteers) who logged almost 50,000 hours in 1983.

Four thousand books were transferred in June of 1986 to the branch library, back where it had all begun. The Fairway Branch (50 percent larger than when it first opened) now had a paid librarian and 24 volunteers.

Library services now included puzzles, large print books, and Books-on-Wheels. Polaroid cameras, audio cassettes, videos, and DVDs were on loan. Computers for public use were added. At Bell, a small children's section and an annual Christmas program were provided for grandchildren who visit in Sun City.

In 1991, there were 14 employees, 250 volunteers, and it cost \$210,000 annually to operate the libraries. The annual library membership fee was \$10.

Through the years, the Friends organized fund raising events; the Sun City Community Fund donated generously as did the Sundial Men's Club and other organizations. An annual fund raising campaign was conducted by mail. People were encouraged to make donations and set up memorials.

Eventually, Bell Library space was expanded at two different times; first to include more bookshelves, then offices, restrooms, and the versatile Hoover Room, a source of income as a rental. They survived roof problems and a deluge which partially flooded the bookstacks.

But by 2009, with the huge deficit, drastic measures had to be taken. The Sun City's Friends of the Library merged with the Library Board of Directors as a necessary step

for the Maricopa County Library District to take over the operation of the two Sun City libraries.

Lease negotiations of the library facility at Bell were completed and signed by the Recreation Centers of Sun City. Because the Fairway Branch is under construction, the separate lease for it was negotiated later. Work began on the transition, which included conversion of the Hoover Room as a permanent bookstore for The Friends. Residents are being encouraged to join the Friends whose membership fee is \$2.

The County Library District will begin a massive wiring project; lighting will be updated, and the facility will be redecorated. Sun City Library, Inc.'s primary purpose now will be to support the library through the bookshop and a Community Outreach Program that will serve the homebound population.

In February the library discontinued charging for new cards (eventually, everyone will need a free Maricopa County Library card), and many new people began to apply for the familiar and now free, blue Sun City Library Card.

Bar codes are being added to all materials to be loaned, a process which includes entering information into the computerized records, which will be turned over to the county. There will be no friendly, great-to-set-books-upon card catalogue with pull-out shelves.

Volunteers will be trained to help residents use the computerized system to find books or order from other county libraries. Professional librarians will scan materials to be loaned and print due date slips. There will be additional computers available for patrons to use. The Friends will be selling books in a neat, efficient bookstore of their own.

And voila! Sometime soon in Sun City, the newest Maricopa County Branch Library will enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with all its bells

## SCAHS Museum hums with activity – in, out and about

Trustees and docents have been busy this spring manning tables at activity fairs in Youngtown, Sun City West, and Sun City, giving lectures and staging major events: the first ever Custom Golf Car Show and a Rummage Sale.

In addition, major colorful additions have been made to the grounds. And a special historical golf lecture was the program for the April 1 Spring Meeting in Sun City West.

And Ed Allen gave his new talk, "Fields of Dreams" at the West Valley Art Museum March 17.

Earlier, the Custom Golf Car Show was a colorful event bringing about 250 people out on a cloudy day. Music from some of the cars created a carnival atmosphere, and many visitors also toured the model home.

The Rummage Sale netted almost \$1,600 for the two days, and brought out more docents and trus-

tees to collect, tag, display, and sell items donated by members and friends of SCAHS.

Office staffers made time in March to assist a returning University of Michigan research student, Drew Meyers. And members of the Sun City Computer Club have begun the Herculean task of scanning all archives material. (Story in next issue).

Recently, a surprise appreciation party was held for newly retired Founder and Emeritus Trustee Jane Freeman by Judy Sciola, Beverly Brown, and Belva and Marsha McIntosh at the McIntosh residence. Many trustees and docents attended and shared memories with her.

Also, during April Volunteer Appreciation Month a special event will be held for those volunteers who continue to do the work that gives this organization life.

We are always on the lookout for new members. You can help SCAHS by passing this newsletter along to friends and invite them to join. NOTE: Membership is from January through December each year.

### Membership form for the Sun Cities Area Historical Society – 2009

New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Check level of membership - Make checks payable to SCAHS

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$10

\_\_\_\_\_ Patron \$50

\_\_\_\_\_ Family \$15

\_\_\_\_\_ Organization \$25

\_\_\_\_\_ Supporting \$25

\_\_\_\_\_ Business \$50

\_\_\_\_\_ Additional Gift \_\_\_\_\_ Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail or bring to: SCAHS, 10801 Oakmont Dr., Sun City, AZ, 85351  
Phone 623-974-2568**

**SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**SPRING CALENDAR**

**3 p.m. Mon. April 13 - Trustees monthly meeting**

**3 p.m. Sat. April 18 - Volunteer Appreciation Day**

**3 p.m. Mon. May 11 - Trustees monthly meeting**

**3 p.m. Mon. June 8 - Trustees monthly meeting**

***Enjoy the Memorial Day,  
Mother's Day and Father's Day Holidays!***

**Museum open Tuesday—Friday 1:30 to 3:30 p. m.  
or by appointment for special groups.**

SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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