

## Sun City Posse Celebrates 50 Years of Service

When Commander Sarah Davis called the February open meeting of the Sun City Posse to order on February 7, 2023, she noted that three guests from the museum were on hand who would play a major role in the agenda for the day. Office Manager Linda Borton brought along portable displays of Sun City history to share. Board V.P. Paul Herrmann brought a 3' x 4' display board with pictures and comments on highlights of posse history as a gift from the museum along with a donation check for over thirty years of night patrol security checks at the museum. Ben Roloff from the Museum's Speakers Bureau was introduced as the Keynote Speaker and shared the story of the creation of the Sun City Posse in 1973 because of efforts of the Sun City Home Owners Association's attempt to form a four "Disaster Plan" for the community at the request of Maricopa County officials.

Posse members learned that the seeds for forming a posse, the first of its kind, began with the U.S. Census in early April, 1950 that reported there were no permanent residents in what was to become the City of Youngtown or what is now Sun City. The census of 1960 showed Youngtown with a permanent population which enabled their residents to vote on whether to incorporate, elect a mayor and council members and to establish services like a police department. That is exactly what Youngtown residents did with an overwhelmingly favorable vote to incorporate.

When the Census Report of 1960 was released in April of 1960, Sun City still showed a population of zero but that changed rapidly. By the end of 1960, over 1,500 of Sun City's "pioneers" had the keys for their brand new houses, and that number tripled by December 1, 1964, when those first residents went to the polls to vote on whether to follow Youngtown's example and actually become a city with an elected local government. As expected, residents flocked to the polls to cast their votes in an election supervised by officials from Maricopa County. When the polls closed, and the votes were counted, only 28% voted in favor of Sun City becoming a city with 72% vehemently against. There were many reasons given for opposing, but the major reason was cities in Arizona in 1964 acquired a large percentage of their budget revenue from both state and federal shared tax receipts, and that share was determined by the city's population enumerated in the latest census. Sun City's share of those shared tax revenues would have been \$0.00 until 1970 when a new census number was reported. Taxes on homes would have been needed to support 100% of the proposed city's budget for the five years had Sun City incorporated.

The idea of incorporating did not disappear by any means, and the question again was presented to residents in 1971 after the new census numbers were known. Sun City had Phase #1 totally developed and Phase #2 was off to a great start. Sun City's population now numbered close to 15,000. The Sun City Home Owners Association created a pamphlet listing both the "pros" and "cons" of incorporating as a city and distributed the information to all residents. Next they conducted an "informal" election to gauge interest in formalizing Sun City becoming one in actuality. Only members of the association were allowed to cast their votes in the advisory poll. When the ballot boxes were opened and votes tallied, that 70% vote in opposition to incorporating increased to a startling 95%. "Incorporation is dead. Bury it!" Those were the words of the Sun City Home Owners Association President.

That second vote in 1971 triggered Maricopa County to appeal to Sun City residents to form a community "Disaster Plan" with one of the results being creation of a "sheriff's auxiliary" that began training its first twenty volunteers at the office of the Sun City Home Owners Association shortly after Labor Day in 1973. The 50 year history of the Sun City Posse began.

Your museum and its representatives were pleased with the invitation to attend the posse meeting and for the opportunity to both thank the Sun City Posse for their service to the museum and to present them with the cash donation and the large display board depicted in photo supplied by the media representative of the posse. Readers are invited to review a companion article in this issue written about a visit to the posse by President Ronald Reagan in 1983 to honor the posse for their exemplary unpaid volunteer service to their community.

For those interested in more of the details about rejection of incorporation in Sun City and the creation of the posse as an unexpected outcome of that decision, you can go to the museum's website at <https://delwebbsuncitiesmuseum.org> and scroll to the bottom of the opening page. Open one of the video

links and look to the right side for "Recent Posts." A video recording of the entire 25 minutes of the creation of the Sun City Posse can be viewed.