

## "Sun City Resident, Ronald Reagan, Elected 40th President of the United States?"

The headline above paraphrases a story appearing in a local newspaper in November 1980, shortly after Reagan defeated Jimmy Carter to become the nation's 40th President. Of course, there is a back story explaining the headline. Read on!

Governor Reagan finished his second four-year term as Governor of California in 1975 and began testing voter interest in him as a primary challenger to President Gerald Ford--an "accidental President." Before the G.O.P. convention in 1976, Sun City Republicans invited Reagan to speak at the Sun Bowl, and a large crowd turned out to lend cheers to his effort. After his address that afternoon, the former Governor was given a certificate proclaiming him an "Honorary Resident of Sun City, Arizona."

Fast forward four years. Reagan didn't win his party's nomination in '76 but did in 1980 and went on to defeat President Jimmy Carter in the fall election. The headline above followed that success. Now jump ahead to May 1983. President Reagan's advance team and the Secret Service came to the Valley to prep for the President's address to the National Rifle Association at their annual convention in Phoenix on May 6, 1983. Additionally, President Reagan's staff had a proclamation ready for his signature noting the beginning of "The Month of Volunteerism." Arrangements were made to have the signing in front of a group of volunteers who were nationally famous--the Sun City Posse.

What a day!. After his major address in Phoenix on the topic of protecting the 2nd Amendment, President Reagan was helicoptered out to Sun City and landed in a church parking lot, and then was convoyed to the Posse Headquarters which was packed with members of both the Sun City and Sun City West Posses. The proclamation was signed. President Reagan heaped praise on posse volunteers, and the President received the customary gifts of hats and shirts from posse leaders. A team of volunteers from the two posse squads then entertained the President with a short demonstration of proper "handcuffing" techniques.

Local press noted that the Secret Service had spent an entire day in Sun City thoroughly checking for possible hiding spots where an ill-willed foe of the President might hide including the ventilation shafts in the Posse Headquarters. Additionally, emergency evacuation routes were planned--just in case. All of that for a short Presidential visit. The entire event took twenty minutes, and President Reagan was on his way via a Marine helicopter awaiting him in for a flight to Sky Harbor. Air Force One was refueled and ready for the President's return to Washington D.C. Posse members had "their 20 minutes of fame" and our most famous resident was soon airborne and winging his way east to tend to the world's affairs.

Looking back at seminal events in the 50 year history of the Sun City Posse, it would be hard to find an event to top a visit from a sitting President of the United States, who made a special trip to honor our posse members for the example they set and at the same time signing a National Proclamation Encouraging Volunteerism. How does it get any better?