

Saints come 'marching' back to Sun City

That might have been an early cheer led by the newly formed Sun City Poms at two fast-pitch softball games played between squads representing the best women's teams in the USA. The Sun City Saints were hosting their rivals the Buena Vista, California Dusters at Sun City Stadium in a double-header before a large and raucous crowd June 21, 1979.

On hand were several camera crews from NBC TV's popular network program Real People. Of all the film shot that day for use in September, the game performance of the Sun City Poms was described by the program's director as stunning. The Sun City Independent's reporter described the Pom Poms performance as characterized by "high kicking and low dipping" moves unexpected from women ranging in age from 55-80 something. Real People's director said, "I've never seen anything like it. I tried to keep up with them. I need to go back to California to rest. They're too much!"

In early 1979, Ray and Corinne Leslie were well-known show-business dancers/choreographers who had retired to Sun City. It was their idea of training a group of high stepping cheerleaders. Stories of forming the Sun City Pom Poms had been reported by an assortment of newspapers and even Sports Illustrated magazine. But "Real People" catapulted the new group into the national spotlight.

The Saints already had national acclaim — even representing the U.S. State Department on tours to foreign countries as goodwill ambassadors. Three months after that special night in June 1979, the Saints returned to Sun City with the National Women's Softball Championship trophy in hand. It was an exceptionally good year for the two groups and for Sun City.

Fast forward to Nov. 4. The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, 10801 W. Oakmont Drive, hosted a reunion for Saints players who circled the bases in Sun City between 1966 and 1984. They were able to share stories from their playing days with a large number of visitors who went to the museum for the special event. What made the day more special for the gathered Saints was a surprise visit from 18 members of the Sun City Poms performance squad for 2022. Both groups played a major role in the community's history and both have significant displays at the museum to commemorate their importance.

Museum officials hope to host the Saints again someday for a reunion, but in the interim continues its long-standing relationship with the Poms. The group will perform at the museum's second Christmas at the Museum celebration Wednesday, Nov. 30.