

A Taste of Sun City History *presented by the Sun Cities Historical Society*
Sun City Baseball's Early Innings

With spring just around the corner and baseball players arriving for spring training, it seems appropriate to continue on with the history of baseball in Sun City. Last month we referred to the Men's League, which continues to play at the Sun Bowl and at Liberty Field in Kuentz Recreation Center in Sun City West on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The impetus for developing a new ball park in Sun City in 1965 came indirectly from a women's softball team called the Phoenix Ramblers. When the team disbanded in 1965, many women players were left with no place to go. Still eager to play baseball, they prevailed upon a small contingent of Sun City enthusiasts to urge the

Grand Avenue Merchants Association and DEVCO to provide a park. The total cost of the field was \$11,000 and Del Webb considered it one of the best (goodwill) investments he'd ever made.

Come visit the Sun Cities Historical Society Museum, located at 10801 Oakmont Drive, to follow the Girls Team's move in 1970 to the magnificent Sun City Stadium and learn how the team added international flavor to Sun City in 1970. Museum hours are 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and other hours by appointment. Speakers are available for groups desiring a program. Call 974-2568 for more information.



Photo by TYSON KUHRT/Sun Cities Independent

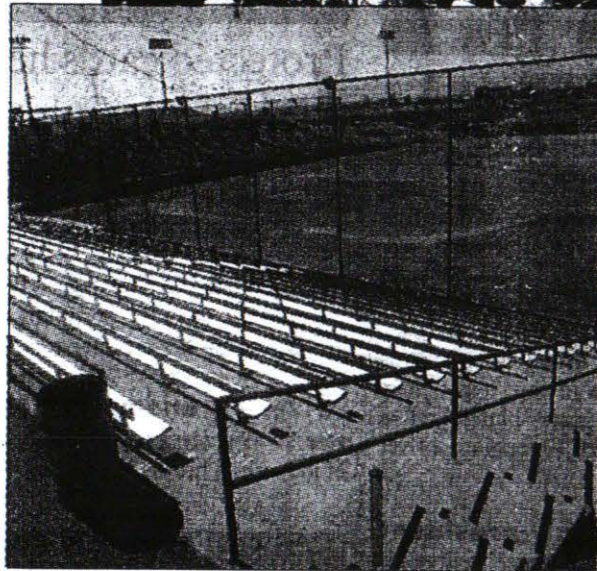
End of an era

Sun City resident Bob Hartman, who lives near the Sun Cities Stadium at 111th and Grand avenues, last week stopped to watch as construction crews razed the site to make way for an apartment complex. The stadium was at one time the spring home of the Milwaukee Brewers. The apartment complex, to be called Estadio del Sol, will feature 180 units and its own recreational facilities. The cost of building the complex is estimated at \$8 million.

Stadium's final innings 'a sad day for baseball people'



The Arizona Republic



John Samora/The Arizona Republic

In 1984 (top photo) people crowded the stands of Sun City Stadium, spring-training home of the Milwaukee Brewers. A year later, the Brewers moved to Chandler, and the stadium (above) has stood empty most of the time since then. Its fate was sealed with last spring's opening of the Peoria Sports Complex six miles away.

Sun City landmark gives way to complex

By David Schwartz
The Arizona Republic

The two men worked meticulously in the late afternoon sun, giving the venerable ballpark a fresh cut, a new mound and a chance to sparkle again, if just for one more time.

"It kind of gives you chills when you think of the people who played in this place," Corky Summers said as he gazed at the field from the well-worn first-base bleachers.

"It's a sad day for baseball people. I'm sorry something like this has to happen. This

is the last of the old ballparks."

The last of the Valley's old ballparks, anyway.

They are tearing down Sun City Stadium.

By early next year, the former spring-training home of the Milwaukee Brewers will be knocked down and cleared away to help make room for a 180-unit, upscale senior-citizen apartment complex, which was approved by the county Board of Supervisors earlier this week.

— See SUN CITY, page A21

Sun City Stadium had enough glory, not enough support

— SUN CITY, from page A1

The thousands of retirees who once flocked to the 5,500-seat stadium to see their favorite big-league ballplayers — stars such as Robin Yount, Paul Molitor and Gorman Thomas — will be able to take up permanent residence there.

The fate of the 23-year-old ballpark was sealed with last spring's opening of the \$32 million Peoria Sports Complex, home to the San Diego Padres and Seattle Mariners. It is just six miles from Sun City Stadium, near 83rd Avenue and Bell Road.

Sun City failed at least three times in trying to woo another big-league team to the stadium to replace the Brewers, who left for Chandler in 1985.

In the team's place, the stadium since has hosted a variety of events. The old Sun City Saints played there before that team went out of business, and a senior men's league played hardball there. There even was a concert or two.

But with two major-league teams now on the west side, New York attorney Charles Dorego and his partners, who own the stadium, decided it was time to turn to Plan B.

"We tried to make it go, but we just couldn't do it," Dorego said, adding that it would take too much money to bring the stadium up to today's standards and that no one was willing to pay for it.

"It just wasn't there for us," Dorego said. "We gave it our best for a long time. Now, I guess it's time to move on."

Sun City Stadium has had a storied history since it was built in 1971 by the Del E. Webb Corp. on a roughly 12-acre site near 111th and Grand avenues. It was built specifically to lure the Brewers to the retirement community west of Phoenix.

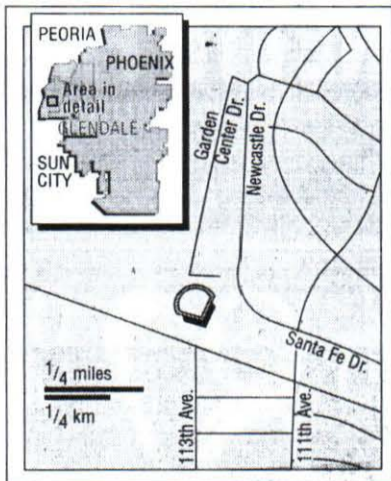
Brewers broadcaster Bob Uecker said the park had its share of quirks.

"It was a low-key type of stadium," said Uecker, a Valley resident and Brewers broadcaster for 25 years.

"You used to have to walk through the stands to get to the clubhouse. Pitchers used to hate it because the ball really used to jump out of there. You can't tell me it was 415 to center."

Uecker, baseball's famous funny man, said the concrete that surrounded the outfield was a hazard, and he remembers more than a few guys running into those solid walls.

"And the clubhouse was so small that if you moved around in there and you were naked, you had to be very careful," he said.



The Arizona Republic

Uecker said the stadium proved adequate, but it was too far away and wasn't exactly state of the art even when it was new.

"If there was any charm to it, it was the fans," he said, adding that he figured that the stadium would be torn down someday.

But before that happens, there's at least two more tournaments to be played in Sun City. One of those is the National Adult Baseball Association tournament, which begins Monday in Sun City.

And that's how Summers, the baseball coach at Central Arizona College, and team pitcher Jim Monday, came to be sprucing up the place earlier this week in hopes of making it come alive again.

"Too bad they let this place go to shame," Monday said, rake in hand, as he smoothed new dirt around home plate. "It really isn't that bad of a place to play."

Sure, the grass had to grow out in a few places.

Some new seating needed to be installed.

And some major rebuilding had to be performed.

But as a coolish breeze whipped through the dilapidated stadium, it seemed possible that someone would again shout, "Play ball!"



File photo

Sun Cities Stadium, located at 111th and Grand avenues, has played host to numerous professional ball teams, women's softball teams and other events during its history. A proposal to tear down the stadium to make way for apartments has received both praise and criticism from local officials.

Path of Progress ^I 9-21-99

Reactions mixed over plan to build apartments where stadium now exists

By KATHLEEN WINSTEAD
Sun Cities Independent

Nothing is set in stone regarding whether an apartment complex will be built on land currently occupied by the Sun Cities Stadium, but members of local civic organizations already are divided when it comes to the project.

County officials last week approved rezoning the stadium site which means the structure will likely be razed to make way for a 180-unit apartment complex tentatively called Estadia del Sol. Final approval must be granted by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors.

The Sun City Home Owners Association Board of Directors and the Recreation Centers of Sun City, Inc. Board of Directors both support construction of

an apartment complex on the site.

"People are coming in here looking at the plans and trying to determine which apartment they want to live in," says HOA President A. Lynn Arend.

Recreation Centers Director Dick Austin says he prefers an apartment complex over certain types of businesses.

"Would you rather see a used car dealer go there than an apartment complex?" Local organizations, he says, have greater control over an apartment complex than a business.

Members of the Recreation Centers Board of Directors agreed in June to permit renters of an apartment complex to use the recreational facilities. Directors agreed to charge the developer a one-time

See ■ STADIUM, Page 3

access fee of at least \$1,570 per unit. In addition, each renter would pay \$100 annually for a non-owner privilege card and the complex's owner would pay \$200 in annual assessment fees for each renter.

Developers hope to begin tearing down the stadium in late fall and complete construction of the complex by "this time next year," Mr. Arend said in June.

While many support the project, those who don't include two members of the Sun City Taxpayers Association Board of Directors and members of a group of former Rec Centers directors who initiated a recall drive this past summer ousting two Rec Centers directors from their seats.

They feel an apartment complex will only add to the overcrowded situation at area recreational facilities.

SCTA directors Ray Danford and Ruby Rasmussen were chosen to serve on a committee to gather more specific information on the proposed apartment project.

Ms. Rasmussen says an increase in Sun City's population would likely be accompanied by long lines at local businesses and recreation centers.

Mr. Danford is ambivalent when it comes to such a complex being built at the site but does oppose renters at the complex joining the Rec Centers.

"The group of the eight of us who started the recall are against it," he says. "We don't need to put more people into the rec centers, especially when the board says we don't have enough space (at the present time).

"I'm sure the hospitals will be overwhelmed in the winter," says Mr. Danford.

Space has been a source of consternation among Rec Centers directors for several years. The number of clubs has been growing along with the retirement community, resulting in a need for additional meeting space.

Rec Centers officials say the

number of residents joining local clubs and using the recreation facilities increases each year. In fact, the increased demand for added space was one of many reasons the Rec Centers board earlier this year considered building a new administrative building and enlarging rooms at Lakeview Center. The board backed off its proposal after an outcry from angry members.

Mr. Danford says the group of former Rec Centers directors would like to bring about changes in the articles of incorporation to prevent renters in the proposed complex from joining the corporation and using the facilities.

"If we have no more space, then we can't afford to open (the apartment complex) up to the membership."

Mr. Danford and other past Rec Centers directors feel the current Rec Centers board should allow the membership to vote on the matter.

Like Mr. Danford, Sun City resident Erwin Simon is also opposed to renters using recreation facilities.

Mr. Simon lived in Sun City West prior to moving to Sun City and says renters from Sun City West's Vacation Apartments descended in droves on the community in order to take advantage of the recreational amenities.

"That winter we couldn't get on our golf courses. We couldn't get on our tennis courts. People were standing in line not being able to get into the golf courses and tennis courts."

Since 1979, visitors to the Vacation Apartments in Sun City West, built by Del Webb Corp., have enjoyed access to Sun City West recreation centers and golf courses.

Visitors are provided with a pass good for one complimentary round of golf on one of five rec center courses and access to the recreation centers during their stay.

Mr. Simon says he would not oppose renters using the facilities if space were not a problem and the centers were operating in the red.

"If we had the room for them, I'd say, 'fine,' (or) if we needed the money," he says. "(But) the recreational facilities can't handle it."

Allowing renters of the proposed apartments to use the amenities now could set a precedent which would allow renters in other complexes to join the centers in the future, Mr. Simon says.

"North of Bell on Boswell there's room for apartments on that (land). This could set a precedent. The rec board could accept others," Mr. Simon says.

Daily News-Sun

Friday, Sept. 16, 1994

SC stadium out; apartments on deck

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

Take out the ballpark, the Maricopa County Planning and Zoning Commission voted Thursday.

The commission unanimously supported a rezoning request that would allow Sun Cities Stadium to be replaced by an apartment complex.

The vote is the next-to-last step in the rezoning process: The Board of Supervisors, which has the final decision, is slated to hear the case Oct. 19, said Charles Colledge, county planner.

If the supervisors agree, the 5,500-seat stadium at 111th Avenue and Newcastle Drive, can be replaced with Estadio del Sol, a 180-unit devel-

opment of one-, two- and three-story buildings.

"When I bought a baseball stadium, I never expected I was going to be doing this," said Charles Dorego, one of the principals of Sun City Stadium Associates, the limited partnership which owns the 12½-acre property.

Since the Milwaukee Brewers pulled up stakes and moved to Chandler in 1985, various owners of Sun Cities Stadium have been unable to attract a major-league team for the ballpark.

Dorego has said the construction of the Peoria Sports Complex was probably the last straw for professional baseball in Sun City. Plans for Estadio del Sol were announced in June.

Dorego said the concrete-tiled rental complex will fit into the surrounding community and fulfill a need.

Several Sun Citians who no longer want the maintenance concerns of homeownership have asked about relocating, he said.

"We're hoping to break ground by the end of this year and be ready to rent by next fall," Dorego said. Financing for the project has been secured, he said.

The apartments will be subject to Sun City's senior overlay zoning, which requires that every unit would have at least one resident 55 or older and no one under 18.

Landmark tagged for demolition

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

They never came to Sun City's field of dreams.

Unable to lure a major-league team to train at Sun Cities Stadium, the ballpark's owners are seeking permission to demolish the stadium and build an apartment complex on the 13½-acre site at 111th and Grand avenues.

Sun City Stadium Associates, the limited partnership which owns the stadium, has applied to Maricopa County to alter part of the property's zoning and modify the site plan to permit construction of 180 rental apartments in two- and three-story units.

The complex would be named "Estadio del Sol," which means "Stadium of the Sun" in Spanish.

Charles Dorego, co-owner of the stadium, said in a telephone interview from New York that he would like to begin construction this winter and complete the work by mid- to late-1995.

'We're very excited about the project. It evolved from a baseball stadium into an ideal residential community that fits in beautifully.'

**Steven Swarzman
stadium co-owner**

Dorego said he and developer Steven Swarzman are the sole owners of the stadium through the limited partnership; Swarzman purchased the interests of Field of Dreams Inc. and other limited partners in April, Dorego said.

Speaking on a conference call with Dorego, Swarzman said the planned apartment complex would be compatible with Sun City.

"We're very excited about the project," Swarzman said. "It evolved from a baseball stadium into an ideal residential community that fits in beautifully."

Field of Dreams Inc., which manages the stadium and had been one of the limited partners in the ownership group, is now leasing the stadium, Dorego said.

"They're operating it now through the summer with the idea that sometime in the fall they'd probably be finished," he said.

The Sun Cities Storm Sunbirds, a women's softball team, is the only team presently using the stadium.

Craig Kimmell, president of Field of Dreams, could not be reached for comment. Bill Dugan, vice president of Field of Dreams, was philosophical about the stadium's demise.

"You play the hand that you're dealt," he said.

For about four years, Kimmell and Dugan tried unsuccessfully to convince a major-league team to select Sun City as a spring-training home.

Sun Cities Stadium, which seats about 5,000 people, was the spring-training home of the Milwaukee Brewers from

See Stadium owners, A5

Stadium owners plan to begin project by winter

—From A1

1973 until 1985, when the Brewers moved to Chandler.

Dugan criticized the Maricopa County Stadium District board's decision to fund the nearby Peoria Sports Complex as politically motivated and senseless.

"They spent 30-some million dollars to build that complex up the road and they already had one here," he said.

Dorego, a New York attorney, said the construction of the Peoria complex sounded the death knell for dreams of professional baseball in Sun City.

"If you had to point to one major event, that'd be it. We couldn't compete any more when that state-of-the-art facility was going to be put in up the road," he said.

"Once that occurred ... it really became quite evident that we'd have to look at a number of possibilities."

Demolishing the stadium, built in 1971, and using the land for apartments was an idea "we'd always had in the back of our minds," Dorego said.

The ballpark was home field for the Sun City Saints, a women's professional softball

team that last played in Sun City in 1990 and disbanded a year later, and the Sun City Rays of the Senior Professional Baseball Association, a league which dissolved in 1990.

Teams from the Men's Senior Baseball League played in the stadium until last year.

The Sun Cities Solar Sox, an Arizona Fall League team, played in the stadium in 1992 and 1993, but last week representatives of the league said they intend to move the Sun Cities team from the retirement community's stadium to the Peoria complex.

The leaders of two Sun City organizations said Wednesday that they have known about the Estadio del Sol apartment plan for several months but have kept the concept confidential.

Lynn Arend, president of the Sun City Home Owners Association, said if there could be no stadium, the apartment proposal is the best use for the property.

"Of everything that's been talked about, why, this here is the finest," said Arend, gesturing at a set of plans for the Estadio del Sol project.

"It gives us a nice devel-

opment on that side of town," Arend said.

The concrete-tiled apartment complex would include two swimming pools and a recreation building. The property would be subject to Sun City's age-restrictive zoning overlay.

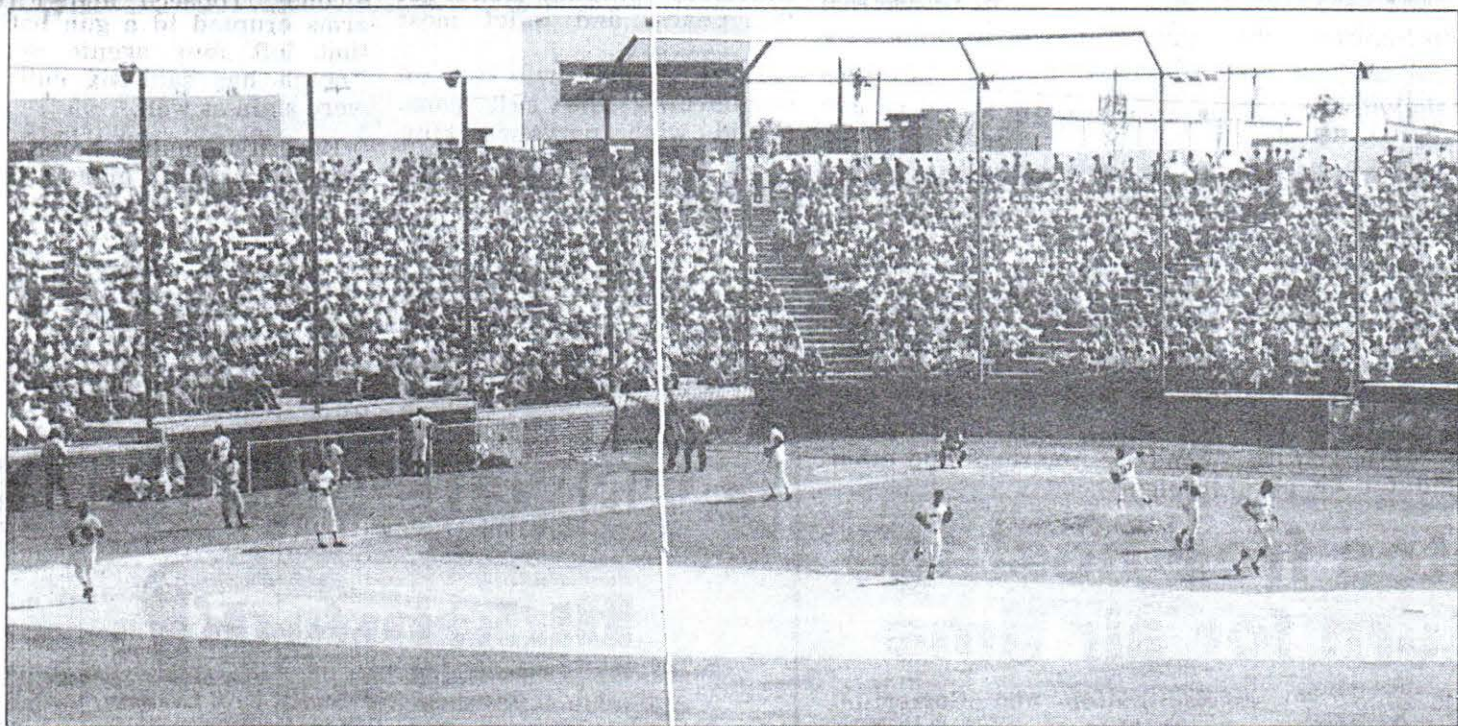
Art Williams, president of the Recreation Centers of Sun City, said the developer of the rental apartments must pay an access fee of at least \$1,570 plus membership fees for the estimated-400 residents to use centers facilities.

"I think we can absorb them," Williams said.

Adding the apartment property renters would require a vote of the board of directors to reverse a 1985 moratorium on admitting newly constructed units to the recreation centers.

The centers board could vote on the proposal as early as June 30, Williams said.

The zoning-change application for the development, submitted to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure Development June 14, is scheduled to be discussed July 5 by the county department's Technical Advisory Committee.



Sun Cities Area Historical Society photo

This photo, circa 1976, recalls the days when spring training games at Sun Cities Stadium drew large crowds. The Milwaukee Brewers trained there for 13 years.

SC built it, they came

Field of Dreams attracts state collegiate league

By JONATHAN DALTON
Daily News-Sun staff
Last of three parts

Something happens at Sun Cities Stadium most months of the year.

The exceptions are the months of February and March — not coincidentally the same time major-league baseball teams conduct spring training in Florida and Arizona.

Phoenix Christian High School used the stadium for two of its home baseball games last season. A circus will be staged next week and a July 4 fireworks show is in the works. In June, the Arizona Summer Collegiate League will expand into Sun City.

The Men's Senior Baseball League may also use the stadium for the third consecutive summer. But Craig Kimmell, president of Field of Dreams Inc. — the stadium's owner, said the MSBL is no longer a priority. That statement shows the facility's change in purpose; Kimmell, along with partners Terry Van Gundy and Bill Dugan, took control of the stadium in order to give the MSBL a place to play its schedule.

Van Gundy has since left the partnership.

"Surely we would like to have them there and have them play



some games," Kimmell said. "But the Arizona Collegiate League is obviously a much bigger, broader organization than the MSBL is."

The Arizona Collegiate League features the top college players from the Valley competing in a two-month season. The MSBL, meanwhile, is an amateur league composed of players over 30.

Such a drastic philosophical change can be attributed to the fact that Field of Dreams now owns the facility and is no longer subject to the directives of the Resolution Trust Corp., which assumed control of the stadium when the Sun City Rays folded in December 1990. Kimmell's group has the ability to offer the collegiate league and other entities a long-term contract.

"Frankly, we're now at the point

where we don't have to worry about whether we're going to be there in the next month," Kimmell said. "Nobody can tell us now that we're not going to be there."

The group's funds appeared to be thinning a year ago. But the arrival of the ASCL and the Arizona Fall League has ensured Kimmell and company's presence.

By taking ownership of the stadium, Kimmell said his group has made a "significant commitment" to the Northwest Valley. And the communities have reciprocated. Surprise and Youngtown, as well as the Property Owners and Residents Association of Sun City West, have passed resolutions in support of Field of Dreams' efforts to bring spring training back to Sun City.

PORA President Bill Fry said a letter expressing the board of director's support was sent last month to Maggie Reese, mayor of El Mirage.

"We had talked about it before meeting and had no problem with it," Fry said. "We felt it would be very helpful to both Sun City and El Mirage."

Debbie Wilden, executive director of the Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce, said a letter of support was issued last year and a similar letter would be issued if requested

over



Stephen Cherneck/Daily News-Sun

Craig Kimmell, left, president of Field of Dreams Inc., and Bill Dugan, a partner, are constantly seeking attractions for Sun Cities Stadium.

by Kimmell.

"We certainly would be in support of it, there's no question about it," Wilden said.

While the resolutions are little more than written pledges of support, they do help provide a united community front for prospective teams to see.

"It all seems to be falling into line," Kimmell said.

In the interim, Kimmell said he hopes the ASCL will draw crowds better than the 10 to 50 people a night who attended the MSBL contests. And he said the Sun Cities Solar Sox, and the Fall League as a whole, should see a better gate this autumn.

The Arizona Fall League made its debut last October and while it was a success on the field — more than

100 players are on major-league 40-man rosters — attendance throughout the league was poor. The league featured the top prospects from each of the major-league teams.

"I think the Arizona Fall League has a great chance of being a great thing for the state of Arizona," Kimmell said. "Obviously the first year is never what you want it to be, especially when everything was put together in such a tight span of time. But I feel with advance marketing and extensive promotion, the AFL can and will be the second spring training."

But, Kimmell said, the goal remains to become home to a team for the "first" spring training, the Cactus League.

"Our goal is still being a spring-training home for some major-league team."

Owners dream of major steal

By JONATHAN DALTON
Daily News-Sun staff
Second of three parts

Maricopa County Supervisor Jim Bruner issued the challenge. Now the race for communities to find teams willing to relocate for spring training is on.

Field of Dreams Inc., owner of Sun Cities Stadium, is trying to maneuver to the front of the pack, which includes cities such as Fountain Hills, Gilbert and Scottsdale.

"There is an open challenge from the county stadium district for any of these cities to come forward with a plan whereby they have a team that has expressed an interest in coming and the package saying this is the financial commitment it would take by the community and the county to build a facility for the team," Bruner said.

"We need to have a commitment for a team for a particular location. The first community that comes forward in that will be ahead of the parade."

Enter Field of Dreams. Partners Craig Kimmell, Charlie Durago and Bill Dugan have been trying to lure a major-league team to Sun City for spring training since the summer of 1991. For them, the county money supply has been out

of reach — only an incorporated area can petition the stadium district for funds.

That money is within Field of Dreams' grasp, with the help of El Mirage. There have been discussions about having the city annex the stadium, then approach the stadium district when a team has been secured.

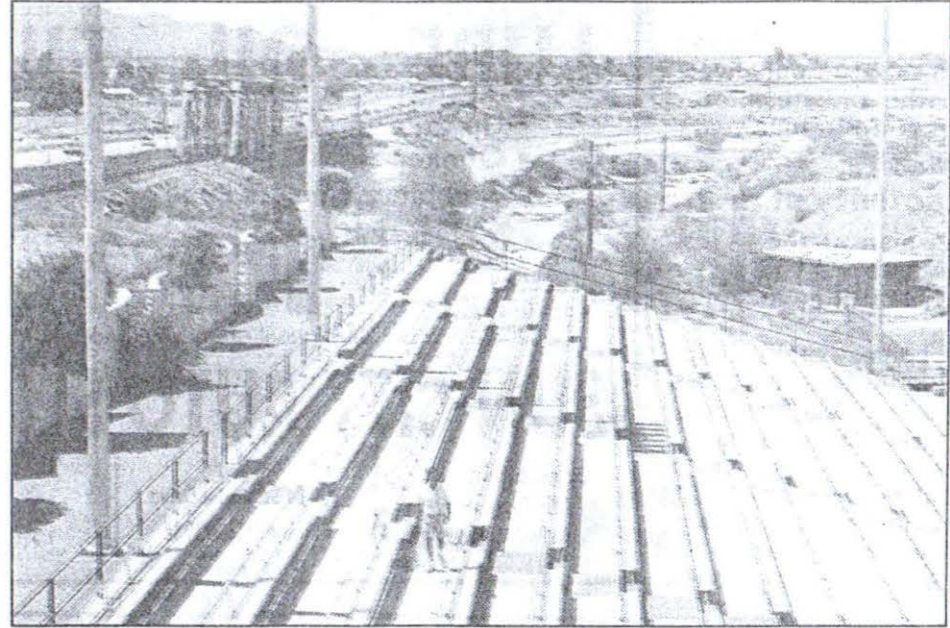
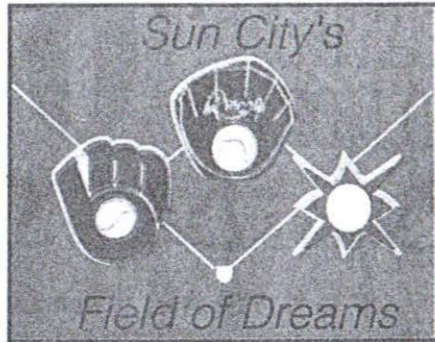
"I can't think of any drawbacks (to annexation)," said Jose Solarez, El Mirage city manager. "It would be another area of

development with the potential that if the city takes ownership it would be a major growth. ... It would bring some much needed revenues to the city — not major monies — but where we are, every penny counts."

Field of Dreams has not yet requested to be annexed, and Field of Dreams President Kimmell said such a move is not imminent.

El Mirage also would need to annex adjacent state lands in order to acquire the stadium, but Rick Hildebrandt, staff assistant for the League of Arizona Cities and Towns, said that is usually just a formality. The approval of the state land commission and state lands selection board would be needed.

Among the teams reportedly looking for new homes are the Baltimore Orioles, Chicago White Sox,



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Operations Director John Wilson surveys the field at Sun Cities Stadium.

Minnesota Twins and New York Yankees. The White Sox nearly moved to Arizona in 1991, but deals with both Glendale and Peoria fell through. The Yankees have expressed an interest to remain in Florida.

If any of the above teams moved to Sun Cities Stadium, it would be the first Cactus League acquisition of a team based in Florida. Thus far, stadium-district funds have been used exclusively to secure the stability of the eight-team Cactus League.

Funds have been raised through a \$2.50 surcharge on cars rented in Maricopa County, with these monies then available to communities either to upgrade or build spring-training facilities. Cities applying to the stadium district are required to provide one-third of the funds for a particular project.

Since the stadium district was created in 1991, funds have been allocated to renovate Phoenix Municipal Stadium and Tempe Diablo Stadium, as well as to build

See District to, A3

over

District to consider creative financing plan

—From A1

Peoria's new two-team stadium and practice complex. Requests to aid Chandler's Compadre Stadium and Mesa's Dwight Patterson Field have also been made.

The immediate flood of requests left members of the district wondering just how much money they would have to disperse. But Bruner said those worries are starting to subside.

"Part of the problem in what we've been handling is all the requests from the teams came at the same time," Bruner said. "They were all at the county ATM at the same time. But over a period of time, I think the county will have sufficient funds to meet the needs of the teams already here and to attract new teams to the area.

"We have money set aside from income projections. Once we get things finalized this spring, then we'll be in a position to see what

funds we have available to look for additional teams to come to the Cactus League."

To accomplish his goal of bringing a couple of teams to the Cactus League, Bruner said the stadium district would consider some creative financing plans.

"What several communities have talked about is the local community issuing the bonds, and then the county would, over a period of time, make the city whole by paying off the bonds until the county reaches the two-thirds responsibility," Bruner said. "There also is the possibility of a team providing some of the money up front, and then being reimbursed for their part on the back end."

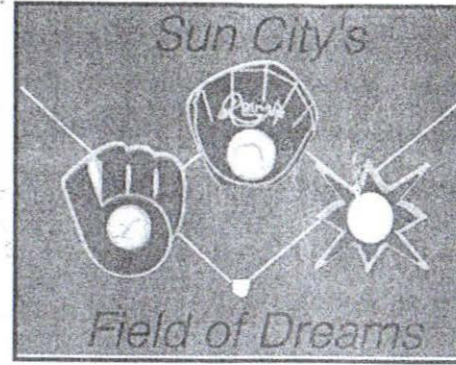
Such financing methods would be attractive to a financially strapped community such as El Mirage.

Friday: Even without spring ball, the stadium's schedule is full.

"Our goal is to be the spring-training home for some major-league team."

Craig Kimmell

Partners pitch for major league



By JONATHAN DALTON
Daily News-Sun staff
First of three parts

A few years ago, spring training would have just ended at Sun City Stadium. The Milwaukee Brewers would be packing their bats and balls and heading back to the Badger State for the regular season.

Sun City was the home of the Brewers for 13 years, and Sun City Stadium was filled to capacity anytime the Brewers had a home date.

Related story, A3

But all that changed in 1986, when Milwaukee left Sun City Stadium's cozy confines for a then-state-of-the-art baseball complex in south Chandler. The sounds of springtime at the stadium have been silent ever since.

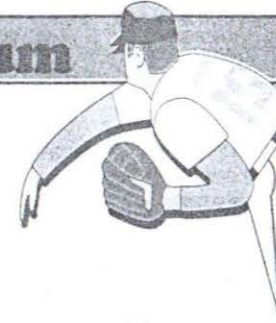
In recent years, the stadium has been the home of several transient sports entities. The Sun City Saints and Sons played their home softball and baseball games there, as did the Sun City Rays of the Senior Professional Baseball Association before the league's demise in December 1990.

The Men's Senior Baseball League, a nationwide amateur league for players over 30, has played most of its schedule under the stadium's lights during the past two summers. The Sun City Solar Sox of the Arizona Fall League were among the top draws during last autumn's inaugural season.

Yet the month of March has remained as

See Renovation set, A6

Sun Cities Stadium



- 1962 Del Webb builds softball diamond at 107th and Grand avenues
- 1966 Sun City Saints begin play at park at 108th and Grand avenues
- 1971 Stadium is built for \$300,000
- 1972 San Francisco Giants play part of spring season at stadium
- 1973 Milwaukee Brewers hold first spring training at stadium
- 1982 Webb sells stadium to Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale
- 1984 Sun City Saints disband and move to Phoenix
- 1985 Brewers announce plans to move to Chandler
- 1989 Glendale businessmen plan to buy stadium for \$2 million
- 1990 April - Senior baseball league establishes Sun City Rays
December - Senior Professional Baseball Association folds
- 1991 January - Resolution Trust Corp. takes control of stadium
May - Field of Dreams Inc. takes over operations
Men's Senior Baseball League starts season
- 1992 Sun Cities Solar Sox of Arizona Fall League begin play
- 1993 February - Field of Dreams Inc. gains ownership of stadium
June - Summer Collegiate League will play at stadium

Jonathan Dalton/Daily News-Sun graphic

over

Renovation set at \$2 million

—From A1

quiet as it was the day the Brewers left.

Recently, there have been concerted efforts to change this scenario.

Field of Dreams Inc., owned by Craig Kimmell, Bill Dugan and Charlie Durago, have pursued several prospective teams. The group spoke with the San Diego Padres before the team settled on Peoria as its new spring-training home. Similar talks were conducted with the Seattle Mariners before they, too, went to Peoria.

The trio is directing its efforts toward Florida, trying to convince a team to come to Sun City, just as Chandler enticed the Brewers to move to the East Valley.

Bringing spring training back to the renamed Sun Cities Stadium will be a difficult task. The 5,000-seat facility would require extensive renovation to match the facilities offered at Scottsdale Stadium and newly renovated Tempe Diablo Stadium. And Peoria, with the help of the Maricopa County Stadium District, is constructing a \$32 million complex which should surpass both of them.

Sun City also can receive funding assistance from the stadium district, but only if the stadium is owned by a neighboring community — only an incorporated area can petition the district for funds.

That community would probably be El Mirage, which has in recent months made spring training a priority.

"It's the same priority that I think Peoria and the other communities have taken," said Jose Solarez, city manager. "I think anything that's going to be an economic development opportunity for the city of El Mirage to have is automatically made a priority."

Solarez said El Mirage would need to annex the stadium in order to apply for funds.

No matter from which direction the aid comes, there is considerable work to be done

'It's the same priority that I think Peoria and the other communities have taken. I think anything that's going to be an economic development opportunity for the city of El Mirage to have is automatically made a priority.'

Jose Solarez
El Mirage city manager

at the stadium. Current spring-training sites, in addition to the stadium, have clubhouse facilities for both major- and minor-league camps and include five or six practice fields. Teams also want considerable administrative space. Only the clubhouses are in place at Sun Cities Stadium.

The practice fields would require the assistance of Calmat of Arizona, a construction company which owns the river-bed land west of the stadium where the fields would be located.

"I would say that our stadium pretty much parallels Tempe Diablo. Both of the stadiums are pretty much laid out the same and both were built around the same time," Kimmell said. "I would say it would take about the same

amount of work and maybe a few less dollars."

Kimmell estimated renovation costs at \$2 million.

If Sun Cities Stadium can be improved there are several teams in Florida unhappy with their current locations and are ready to be lured to another city. The Baltimore Orioles, Minnesota Twins, Chicago White Sox and New York Yankees are among those reportedly looking for new spring-training bases.

Some feel that Sun Cities Stadium is a viable contender in the scramble to support a major-league team through the season's first paces.

"I think the Sun City area in general would be an excellent area," said Jim Bruner, Maricopa County Stadium District chairman.

"Without a doubt, it's definitely a great place for spring training," said Jerry Royster, manager of the Solar Sox last fall and a coach with the Colorado Rockies. "I just think it's a matter of time especially with the number of teams out there looking. They're in a location where somebody's going to snatch it up."

Kimmell and company share Royster's optimism.

"We're still in the pack, hunting away," Kimmell said. "We're talking to several Florida teams. Our goal is to be the spring-training home for some major-league team."

Thursday: The race is on to acquire teams for spring training.

Face lift

Workers prepare stadium for baseball

By JONATHAN DALTON
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Early one morning a few weeks ago, Tommy Zoulek stepped onto the field at Sun Cities Stadium.

Zoulek, the head groundskeeper for the Oakland Athletics at Phoenix Municipal Stadium since 1986, brought a notebook in which he could write the changes needed in the stadium's field.

Within a few minutes, Zoulek had filled the first sheet.

"I wrote up a full page of things that had to be done," Zoulek said. "Then I went with (stadium co-operator) Craig (Kimmell) for lunch to discuss it and he told me to do what had to be done."

That was three weeks ago. Now, with the beginning of the Arizona Fall League just more than two weeks away, Zoulek's mission is nearly complete.

What started with a soil analysis

Arizona Fall League

has developed into a \$15,000 project to remove burned patches in the outfield grass, rebuild the pitcher's mound and home-plate area and level the infield and warning track.

Among the items on Zoulek's shopping list were five tons of sand, six tons of stabilizer, and five tons of crushed red gravel.

"We're kinda going with the minimums because of our budget," Zoulek said. "But I've done a lot of volunteer work for high schools, so I'm used to working on a budget."

Zoulek said the field was in much better shape than the first time he worked on it. The Sun City Rays of the now-defunct Senior Professional Baseball Association had Zoulek renovate the facility in 1990.

This time, Zoulek's work is not a reclamation project. Instead, he said, it was more of a face lift, despite the

fact the stadium had been the site of nearly 200 Men's Senior Baseball League games this summer.

"I was happily surprised," Zoulek said.

"Even though there have been as many games played here as there were, the field stayed in good shape," Kimmell said. "What we're doing here is dressing it up. I would say that with the expertise Tommy has brought us, this is coming along extremely well."

Zoulek's first touch-up came in the week prior to last month's MSBL tournament when he edged the infield lines.

"I think the infield edging is the most important thing in a ballpark," Zoulek said.

The day after the tournament ended, the real work began. Zoulek and groundskeeper John Wilson replaced several sprinkler heads and

See 5 tons, B4

5 tons of sand used to fix field

From B1

repaired the numerous patches of dying grass in the outfield.

"We went out there and soaked them, using 200 feet of hose," Zoulek said. "John and I kinda ganged up on it and got it saturated."

The twosome then moved on to the infield and warning track, which were both leveled.

The work has not always been easy — Zoulek said he has once spent the night at the stadium trying to fix the equipment.

While Zoulek's work is the

first Sun Cities Solar Sox fans will see, his efforts do not constitute the only renovation the stadium is undergoing.

Kimmell said the roof of the press box, damaged during a summer thunderstorm, has been

repaired, the stairs and concession stands have been replaced and the warning track has been replaced.

"This might not be the best field in the Valley," Kimmell said, "But it's right up there."

Baseball in the Northwest Valley

- 1962 - Del Webb builds softball diamond at 107th and Grand avenues.
- 1966 - Sun City Saints begin play at park at 108th and Grand avenues.
- 1971 - Sun City Stadium is built for \$300,000.
- 1972 - San Francisco Giants play part of spring season at SC Stadium.
- 1973 - Milwaukee Brewers hold first spring training at SC Stadium.
- 1982 - Webb sells SC Stadium to Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale.
- 1984 - Sun City Saints disband and move to Phoenix.
- 1985 - Brewers announce plans to move to Chandler.
- 1989 - Glendale businessmen plan to buy SC Stadium for \$2 million.
- 1990 - Senior baseball league establishes Sun City Rays.
- 1990 - Senior Professional Baseball Association folds. Rays disband.
- 1991 - Resolution Trust Corp. takes control of SC Stadium.
- 1991 - Field of Dreams Inc. takes over operations at SC Stadium.

Field holds dream in Northwest Valley

By JACQUE PAPPAS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Baseball was Delbert Eugene Webb's lifelong passion.

The Sun City developer was co-owner of the New York Yankees for 20 years and president of the American League.

Through Del E. Webb Corp., Webb shared his love of America's pastime with residents in the first retirement community he built.

In 1962, Webb built a softball diamond in what is now the parking lot of the Grand Center in Sun City.

Seniors who came from cities where softball leagues were regular summer fare began playing on the field, which featured a backstop of lumber covered with poultry netting.

Senior men's teams were grateful for the ball park, but gravel and low-growing weeds with sand burrs often made fielding tough.

The impetus for a new ball park in Sun City developed early in 1965 when a professional women's softball team called the Phoenix Ramblers disbanded and many players were left without a team.

Still eager to play, they encouraged a small contingent of Sun City enthusiasts to urge the Grand Avenue Merchants Association and Webb to build a park.

By February 1965 Webb began to build an \$11,000 ball park in an alfalfa

field off 108th and Grand avenues where JB's Restaurant now stands.

Webb supplied a high chain-link fence and backstop extending from first to third bases, snack bar, restrooms, drink-

ing fountains and other amenities for day games.

Christened "The Saints," the women's fast-pitch softball team began

playing in 1966 in Sun City. The great popularity of the team got Webb thinking about building a more substantial ball park and trying to attract a Major League Baseball team.

But plans for a major league stadium came to an abrupt halt in June 1968 when the expansion Kansas City Royals picked Florida over Arizona for their 1969 spring training site.

Fearing the Saints would leave Sun City for a better park, the Booster Club petitioned Webb to build a stadium instead of another shopping center as had been rumored.

The old park was dismantled in 1970 and Webb built Sun City Stadium on 12.5 acres north of the railroad tracks at 111th and Grand Avenues for about \$300,000.

The 3,449-seat stadium opened July 4, 1971 with dugouts, fountains, a press box, restrooms, aluminum bleachers with backrests, an electric scoreboard and much more.

By 1972 the San Francisco Giants were playing some of their spring training games in the stadium. Stars such as Willie Mays, Willie McCovey and Juan Marichal drew big crowds.

Encouraged by the 50 percent or better attendance the Giants were attracting to the stadium the Milwaukee Brewers decided to make Sun City their spring home in 1973.

Meanwhile the Saints played softball worldwide and drew thousands of fans at local games.

In 1980 the Women's Professional Softball League disbanded when only three of the teams could muster support, but the Saints remained in Sun City.

"Everyone was just crazy about the Saints. There was nothing else like it. People in the stands brought cow bells and honked horns at the games," said John Poja. Poja, known as "Uncle John," sold baseball souvenirs at Saints and Brewers games.

In 1982, seven years after Webb's death, the company sold Sun City Stadium to Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale.

Two years later, the Sun City Saints disbanded and moved to Phoenix.

Joe Davisson, who was then president of the Saints Booster Club, said Bade Boyes priced themselves out of the market.

"Before we had an agreement

with Del Webb and paid them \$1 every year for use of stadium. The new owners had to secure certain income that we as a booster club could not obligate ourselves to," Davisson said, adding that \$6,000 a month for rent may have been the fee requested. "It was an economic reality that a volunteer group could not pay. Meanwhile Bade was losing \$200,000 a year."

Another blow came to Sun City Stadium when the Brewers in 1985 announced they would move to Chandler.

"The Brewers never had the attendance they thought they'd have. Parking was a problem and they didn't have enough practice fields for the team," Poja said.

The stadium was on the market in fall 1987. In June 1989, Glendale businessmen Bob Atkinson, Bill Bolick and Marv Harper entered into an agreement to buy the stadium for \$2 million from Bade Boyes Partnership.

Baseball fan breathes life into SC Stadium

By JONATHAN DALTON
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Here is Craig Kimmell, leaning on outstretched arms against a railing at Sun Cities Stadium.

Tonight, the Athletics are facing the Reds in a Men's Senior Baseball League game. Kimmell is kibitzing with the league's regular patrons, occasionally pouring a soft drink at the refreshment stand. He is one of Sun Cities Stadium's tri-owners. Kimmell's appearance would guarantee victory on "To Tell The Truth" — a chain smoker in an untucked royal blue button-down shirt and jeans, his flowing brown hair pulled taut into a ponytail.

This is one of the three men longing to bring spring training back to the Northwest Valley?

"I don't think it's the appearance that counts," Kimmell said. "It's the knowledge. People's first impression is here's this hippie from the '60s. Hell, I'm

proud of that. But I'm also knowledgeable about the facts behind the situation."

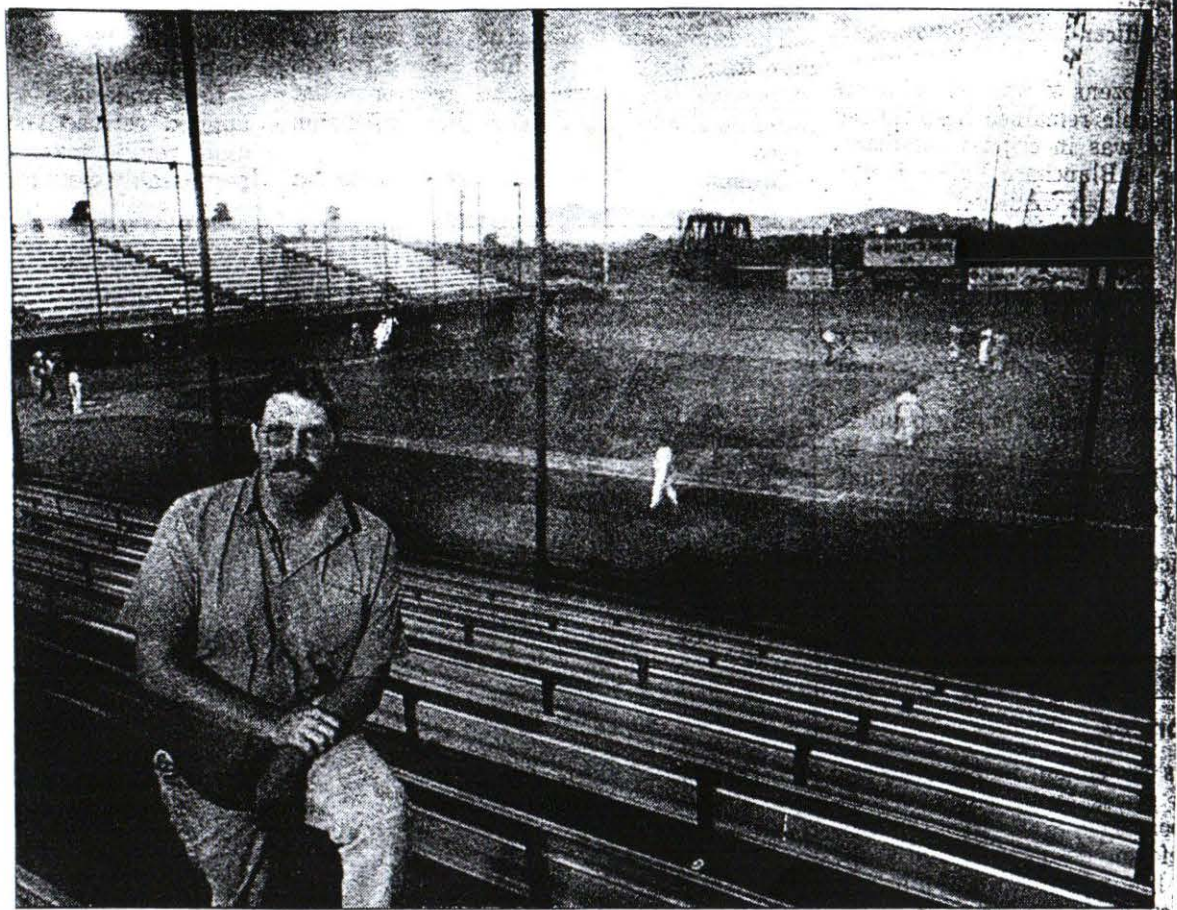
In January 1991, Kimmell and his two partners, Terry Van Gundy and Bill Dugan, purchased the lease to Sun Cities Stadium. The field had been used by the Sun City Rays of the Senior Professional Baseball Association until the league's demise in December of 1990.

After several months of renovations, Sun Cities Stadium reopened for the MSBL, a 16-team nationally-affiliated amateur league.

A couple hundred people floated through the stadium through the opening evening, many wondering why the lights of the once-dormant facility were now on.

"I guess the only word you could put on it is relief," Kimmell said. "We took early possession in late February, and up until the night of May 10 (open-

See Stadium operator, A5



Rick D'Elia/Daily News-Sun

Craig Kimmell, president of Field of Dreams, Inc., operators of Sun Cities Stadium, wonders what he and his supporters have to do to get a Major League Baseball team to train at the stadium.

OVER

Stadium operator lives out baseball fantasy

—From A1

ing night) we were still painting this place.

"We had problems with the landlord, and we didn't actually have legal possession of this place until two hours before the grand opening.

"It was overwhelming. It was probably, next to meeting my better half (Babette) and the birth of my son, the most exciting thing that's ever happened to me."

Attendance waned after that first night, peaking once again with a July 4 fireworks extravaganza.

But Kimmell and his partners had plans beyond creating a home for the MSBL.

■ ■ ■

Here is Craig Kimmell, baseball fan, watching the MSBL action from an office window. Even engrossed in conversation, his gaze is transfixed upon the tiny figurines running across the green velvet carpet outside.

"I think it takes a group like us to bring the game back into perspective," Kimmell said. "Didn't you ever see 'Field of Dreams'? We don't need any corn, we have a green field."

Like Ray Kinsella, the fictional architect of the corn-born baseball diamond, Kimmell is a farm boy. Kimmell was born and raised in Boise, Idaho and was a fair baseball player. At one point, he was playing both Connie Mack and Babe Ruth baseball simultaneously.

Then the real world inter-

vened, ending Kimmell's playing days.

"I had to give up all of my extracurricular activities to help support my family," said Kimmell. "I grew up milking cows."

He also spent time following the New York Yankees. In the 1960s, the "Game of the Week" was dominated by the Yankees, a perennial powerhouse. Kimmell left home when he was 14, and spent several years living throughout the Pacific Northwest.

In 1979, following a divorce, Kimmell moved to Parker to be closer to his family.

Since that time, he met Babette, and fathered two sons Nathan, 11, and Chad, 7.

At 38, Kimmell is living a Walter Mitty fantasy with the Padres in the MSBL.

"Call it stupidity," Kimmell said of his current career as a first baseman. "I'd say it's still an abiding love for the game and childness at heart."

It was through the MSBL that Kimmell met his current partners.

The MSBL, headed by Van Gundy and Dugan, was having an organizational meeting at the Westcourt in 1988. Kimmell was the manager of the Astros team. But his involvement with the league soon grew.

"I got to be the squeaky wheel," Kimmell said. "I wanted to know who, what, when, where and why. Eventually, I was placed on the board of the league."

■ ■ ■

Here is Craig Kimmell, salesman, espousing the virtues of having a major-league team hold spring training in Sun Cities Stadium.

At one point, Kimmell was working the graveyard shift in a pancake house. He went into sales, first as a food and drink distributor, then in the ornamental-iron business.

Kimmell has worked his way up to general manager in his latter field, and has brought his sales experience with him to the trio's baseball ventures.

"You've got to be able to sell yourself, sell the facility and sell the public on the idea," Kimmell said. "I don't know if the people out here don't care, don't read the newspapers or what, but we've still got people telling us they didn't know the stadium was open."

It is open, and it's calendar of events is growing. In addition to the MSBL, Kimmell and partners landed a franchise in the

Arizona Fall League, which will begin play this October.

"We knew that in order to make this thing work, we would have to have more than the MSBL," Kimmell said. "We started negotiating with those people (the Fall League's organizers) over a year ago, and there was a lot of back-and-forth."

Apparently, it at no point occurred to the trio that what they were doing — crashing baseball's exclusive party — couldn't be done.

"These people, so far, have been real good to work with," Kimmell said. "People have told us that they admire what we're doing, and that we've got a lot of guts. They appreciate what we're doing."

The trio is now trying to land a team for spring training. So far, the Mariners and Padres have listened to the group's sales pitch.

"We feel we could do just as good a job as any county or municipality," Kimmell said.

Crowd of 3,000 enjoys the Sun City Stadium Fireworks

Nature's fireworks commanded attention about midway into the big Fourth of July show at Sun City Stadium.

Estimates were that more than 3,000 people attended the festivities, although Craig Kimmell, stadium owner, reports that a lightning strike put a small damper on the evening events.

While the bolt hit north of the stadium toward Surprise, there was some concern among those seated on the aluminum benches in the stands and a number of people left when it started to rain.

The program was completed, and people had a good time, says Tom McCanna, executive director, Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Youngtown Police Chief Michael Branham made presentations of bullet-proof vests for the police departments of the city of El Mirage and Surprise. The vests were donated by the Women's Auxiliary of Vencor Hospital-Phoenix, Mr. McCanna says.

The stadium fireworks started at 9 p.m., giving those present a chance to see earlier aerial displays in Surprise and Sun City West.

A number of people were not present for prize drawings (there was no need to be present to win). For information on winning numbers, Mr. Kimmell asks that they call the stadium (evenings), at 977-2279.



Photo by TYSON KUHRT/Sun Cities Independent

Sun Cities Stadium reopens

The new owners of the Sun City Stadium — renamed Sun Cities Stadium — held an open house May 9. The festivities included a performance by the Sun City Poms, above, the Christopher Girls and the Coconino High School Band. In addition to serving as home to the Valley Senior Baseball League, the stadium will host a Fourth of July fireworks program and various concerts throughout the year.

3 Valley men set to buy Sun City Stadium

By Lori Baker
Staff writer

SUN CITY — Sun City Stadium likely will have new owners this week, and an open house is planned Thursday to celebrate the facility's reopening.

Using the corporate name Field of Dreams, three Valley men have signed a letter of intent with the U.S. Resolution Trust Corp. to purchase the stadium, 111th and Grand avenues, which has not

been used since December.

A lease agreement with an option to buy was expected to be signed this week, said Gary Kotin, president of Kay-Kay Realty Corp. in Scottsdale, an asset manager for the RTC. Terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

"It's every man's fantasy to own a ball field," said Bill Dugan, a Phoenix computer specialist and one of the prospective owners.

Dugan, Craig Kimmell and Terry Van Gundy said they are buying the stadium primarily to provide a place for the 4-year-old Men's Senior Baseball League to play.

Dugan is the league's president; Kimmell, a Phoenix salesman, is vice president; and Van Gundy, a self-employed Mesa auto auctioneer, is the commissioner.

"There is a lack of playing fields in the

Valley and competition is fierce," Dugan said. "We wanted to get a place going for our own league."

The league — for players age 30-plus from throughout the Valley — has been staging games in Chandler, Mesa and Phoenix.

If the agreement is approved with the RTC, the Northwest Chamber of Commerce will present an open house at 7 p.m. Thursday at the stadium. A 90-piece high

school concert band from Flagstaff and the Sun City-based Christopher Girls are to perform, said Tom McCanna, the chamber's executive director.

About 170 Men's Senior Baseball League games are scheduled from Friday through October. Many community events are planned for the stadium, including a Fourth of July fireworks display, recreational vehicle and car shows, and con-

See STADIUM, Page 3

OVER



If a purchase agreement is approved this week, Sun City Stadium will be home for the Men's Senior Baseball League. Community

STADIUM

From Page 1

certs, Dugan said.

The stadium has been used sporadically in recent years, under different owners.

In 1985, the Milwaukee Brewers were lured to Chandler and left Sun City, where the team had held spring training for 12 years. The same year, the Sun City Saints women's fast-pitch softball team, which also used the stadium, folded.

Del Webb Corp. had built the 12½-acre stadium to attract the Brewers. But after the training camp was moved, Webb sold the facility to B&B Construction and Development of Glendale.

B&B arranged a \$2 million lease-purchase agreement in 1989 with three area residents who were involved in senior (non-professional) baseball. The men wanted to use the stadium for their games, but also as a playing field for their sons in Little League.

But the partners' dream died about a year later and the stadium became the property of Southwest Savings, which then fell into receivership of the RTC.

Stadium volunteers sought

SUN CITY — Volunteers to help with the operation of Sun City Stadium are being recruited by the Northwest Chamber of Commerce.

Help is needed for concessions, general cleanup and preparing the field at the stadium, 111th and Grand avenues, which is expected to have new owners this week. An open house is scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday.

The stadium will be used for Men's Senior Baseball League

games and community events, such as concerts and car shows.

Bill Dugan, who plans to buy the stadium with two other Valley businessmen, said he is impressed with the willingness of Sun Cities residents to lend support.

"The chamber has bent over backwards to get this going and the community has been very cooperative," he said.

People interested in volunteering should call the chamber office at 583-0692.

The stadium sat empty until November 1990, when it became the home of the Sun City Rays. But the stadium closed in December when the Senior Professional Baseball Association of Florida folded.

The stadium's reopening is important to northwest Valley businesses and residents, McCanna said.

"We want to bring people out to our area, whether it's for baseball games or concerts," he said.

The 16 teams in the Men's

Senior Baseball League have rosters of up to 18 players per team.

Each team will play a 25-game schedule and most games will be played in Sun City. Games will be scheduled every weeknight starting at 7:30, and there will be three games on Saturdays and Sundays.

If the sale goes through, Dugan said, the stadium will be renamed Sun Cities Stadium to reflect both communities — Sun City and Sun City West.

Rays take over Sun City Stadium lease

By MIKE GARRETT
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Between the last pitch of Sunday's Sun City Rays game and 5 a.m. Monday, Sun City Stadium was in limbo.

Stadium landlord Bob Atkinson of Glendale informed the Rays Sunday afternoon he was pulling out as stadium manager.

Effective Monday morning, the Rays' ownership assumed the stadium's month-to-month lease with the Resolution Trust Corp. and will manage and operate the stadium for the duration of the Rays' home schedule through Jan. 29, according to Marc Kaplan, Rays' owner/chief executive officer, and Alan Lipp, executive vice president/general manager.

Calls to Atkinson's home Monday afternoon went unanswered.

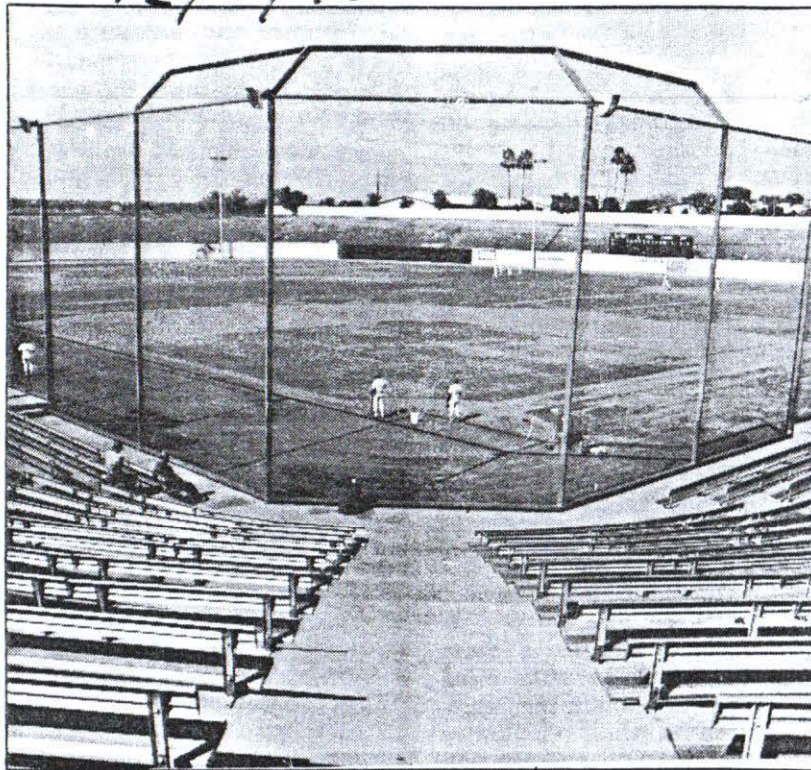
RTC officials involved in the negotiations also couldn't be reached for comment Monday afternoon or this morning.

The Rays are exploring the possibility of eventually purchasing the stadium outright from the RTC. The reported RTC asking price is \$1.8 million.

The first order of business early Monday was a stadium cleanup, involving almost everyone connected with the team.

Even Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Tom McCanna pitched in to ready the stadium for Monday afternoon's game.

It was no secret that Atkinson



Daily News-Sun

SUN CITY DIAMOND — The Sun City Rays' ownership took over the lease for the Sun City Stadium Monday morning.

eye-to-eye on the stadium's operation in trying to make it a first-class attraction for baseball fans.

Inadequate parking, concession operations, overall cleanup and a malfunctioning scoreboard were all sore spots that Rays' officials say they will do everything they can to correct.

"It made sense for us to do it," said Lipp, noting the Rays will be making a number of immediate stadium improve-

their fan base that opened the home season Friday with 3,036 people in the stands.

"We will continue to invest all of our energies ensuring that we operate the Rays to the best of our abilities," Kaplan said. "Now that we operate the stadium, we will do so in the best interests of the community.

"We're going to run a first-class operation for the rest of the season and I hope we're

it will take to do that," Kaplan said.

Whether Sun City Stadium remains the summer home of the Sun City Saints and Sons is still uncertain because Atkinson was heavily involved in getting those two teams as stadium tenants.

Kaplan said that issue hasn't been discussed with Atkinson but he could see no reason not to keep the Saints and Sons at this stage of operation.

"We will continue to upgrade the stadium and follow through on some of the improvements that we had hoped would be done, but which Bob did not have an opportunity to complete," Kaplan said.

He and Lipp said the stadium facelift will continue with fresh paint for the concession stands and restrooms. Of more immediate concern is what to do about increasing parking space.

Kaplan and Lipp said the Rays will look into purchasing additional land for parking near the stadium. They will continue to maintain the weekend shuttle bus from the NAPA Auto Parts parking lot in El Mirage, about a mile northwest of the stadium on Grand Avenue.

"We will also bring in a professional landscaping crew to continue to upgrade the field," Kaplan said. "We plan to hire an electrician to see what can be done with the scoreboard," which doesn't keep track of hits or errors. Lipp said the Rays

board.

He said the Rays will install suggestion boxes on the course level to determine what improvements fans would like to see.

Financing the needed improvements is still dependent on the Rays' profits and whatever Kaplan can spare from his other company operations. No bank loans will be pursued at this point, he said.

"There is no guarantee I'll ever get a return on investment because we're leasing right now," he said. "I think the Rays would prefer to see it kept as a stadium. They have given me that impression."

Kaplan said the Rays would also research the possibility of acquiring additional land to build practice fields to make the stadium attractive as a major league spring training base.

McCanna said he will continue to use chamber resources to help the Rays wherever possible.

"There was marked improvement in the conditions of the stadium today (Monday)," McCanna said. "It was very clean and people have already seen the quality of baseball and the amount of activity the Rays are giving to the community."

"The name of the game is teamwork," McCanna said. "We're all in this together to make the Rays a viable part of our community."

Not your typical millionaire

By MICHAEL McCANN
Daily News-Sun staff

Wherever self-made young millionaires go, secretive questions are whispered in their wake.

"How did he make all that money so fast?" people mutter.

"What's he got that I don't?"

Early wealth inevitably inspires a certain awe. It also arouses envy and suspicion.

But Marc Kaplan, the owner of Sun City's new senior pro baseball team, is not your typical young millionaire.

Granted, he owns a vitamin business, a real estate firm, and several other

companies in Phoenix.

And yes, he's only 33.

But there's something else that sets him apart. Something besides money.

And that's a genuine love for baseball — and a nostalgic passion for watching it in Sun City Stadium.

Kaplan faithfully watched the Milwaukee Brewers play in Sun City as a boy and those memories are still special to him.

He understands this area's need for a sports identity. The residents of the Northwest Valley have long wanted a team of their own.

Now, Kaplan has given it to them.

Insider's notebook

"We could have taken the team to the East Valley, to Phoenix, or to Tucson," he said. "But there was only one place I wanted the team to play — Sun City."

"The Northwest Valley deserves a quality professional baseball team."

Some will call Kaplan's words shallow marketing rhetoric.

After all, the University of Cincinnati graduate made his fortune marketing everything from real estate to vitamins.

But those who listened to Kaplan introduce his team to the press and local business people Tuesday know it's more than that.

Kaplan speaks with a Kennedy-like clarity, a polished crispness. But when he said that bringing baseball to Sun City was a dream come true, his voice nearly cracked.

He meant it.

This *is* his dream. And he wants you to share in it.

"This team belongs to the Northwest Valley," he said. "We're going to kick back, relax, and share the memories together."

But the ultimate success of the Sun City Rays will depend on marketing, and Kaplan clearly has a knack for that.

Kaplan launched Health and Nutrition Laboratories with one product — a fish oil vitamin supplement — and built it into a multi-product, highly successful mail-order marketing firm.

"I was involved in a venture with a group of physicians and stumbled across some research I found exciting," he said. "So I decided to go out on my own."

The rest, as they say . . .

But Kaplan has a lighter side as well.

To prepare for Tuesday's unveiling, he recently met with the management team he has assembled to run the Rays.

In the room was Jim Marshall, the team's manager; Alan Lipp, the Rays' executive vice president; Shelly Weiner, Kaplan's business partner; player-coach Dave Hilton and consultant Tom Kayser.

The topic of discussion was the roles each would officially be assigned to carry out.

"Maybe Jim (Marshall) will let me pitch batting practice," Kaplan said.

There was a moment of silence in which everyone looked at the Rays' manager.

Marshall smiled, and the others broke into laughter.

"Marc," Marshall said. "You can do anything you want."

Stadium gets new sign

10-26-89 NEWS-SUN

Couple donate money for sign

By RICH BOLAS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — For nearly five years, Sun City motorists drove past a lie.

Harry and Mary Ellen Lindsey of Sun City changed all that.

Sun City Stadium, 13440 N. 111th Ave., hasn't been used as the Milwaukee Brewers' spring training baseball home since March 1985.

Yet a sign promoting the complex as the American League team's spring training site adorned the facility as recently as last month.

"My wife and I decided that since the Brewers aren't there, the sign shouldn't be there either," Harry Lindsey said. "We've offered our assistance at the stadium since it re-opened (July 4, 1989) and this just gave us a chance to help out."

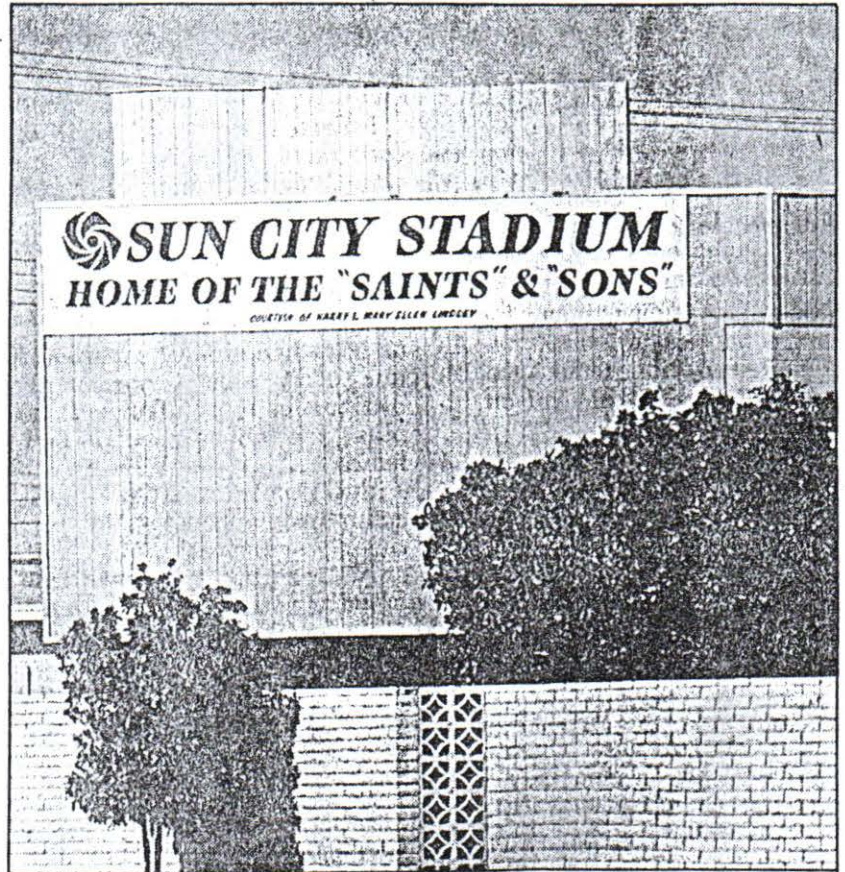
Since last summer, Sun City Stadium has been the site of the Phoenix chapter of the Men's Senior Baseball League, part of a nationwide group of amateur baseball players aged 30 and over.

Added to the lineup next season will be the Sun City Sons, a Connie Mack League boys' baseball team, and the Sun City Saints, a fast-pitch amateur girls softball team. Both teams will play at the facility.

After talking with Bob Atkinson, stadium co-owner, the Lindseys presented a \$425 check to management in order to replace the outdated sign.

The updated version, which is visible from Grand Avenue, proclaims the stadium as the "Home of the 'Saints' & 'Sons,'" and also pays tribute to the Lindseys.

"I had always wanted to



Daily News-Sun photo by Stephen Cherek

NEW SIGN UP — A new sign adorns Sun City Stadium, 13440 N. 111th Ave., Paid for by Harry and Mary Ellen Lindsey of Sun City, the sign promotes the stadium's two residents, the Sun City Saints girls softball team, and the Sun City Sons boys Connie Mack League baseball squad.

me about it, I told them that \$425 was the only thing standing in the way of doing it," Atkinson said. "The next day, they presented me with the check."

The new sign was hung up about three weeks ago.

Lindsey, who moved to Sun City from Elyria, Ohio, in 1982, said he has always been a sports fan and also been a vocal supporter of the stadium since the park reopened in July.

"My wife and I always try to do a lot of volunteer work at the stadium and we've been disappointed when it's been empty," he said. "I've even tried

games."

New patrons such as the Sun City Sons should be an added stadium attraction, Atkinson said.

The team, composed of players 18 years or younger, will compete against teams tentatively scheduled to come from Dysart, Tolleson, Glendale, Peoria and Wickenburg.

"We'll conduct open tryouts during the winter and practice should begin in early spring," Atkinson said. "It should be a very high-caliber baseball league."

With a new sign out front, fans shouldn't have trouble

Economic Rays of hope

Sun City franchise may be financial home run for Valley

By MIKE GARRETT
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Northwest Valley business leaders are already going to bat for the Sun City Rays, the first senior professional baseball team in Arizona.

On the heels of Tuesday's announcement that the Rays would occupy Sun City Stadium come November, business leaders were examining ways they could support the team through promotion and advertising.

The business executives see the Rays as a boon to the Northwest Valley economy, both with the attraction from throughout the greater Phoenix area and with the national exposure the Rays will receive.

The Northwest Valley could reap considerable economic benefits from the national exposure the Sun City Rays will get playing right in their own back yard, business leaders say.

But they also acknowledge they in turn will have to support the team through various promotions and advertising to

get those benefits.

The Rays will have to average 1,700 fans for 28 home dates from Nov. 23 to Feb. 1 to beat the best attendance figure of any Florida team during the Senior Professional Baseball Association's inaugural season last winter.

Some of the local business leaders who attended Tuesday's announcement of the Sun City franchise said it's reasonable to expect an average of 2,000 fans a game in Sun City Stadium.

And if the team also can draw fans from the rest of the Valley and state, they say it will mean great exposure for the Northwest Valley's lifestyle and amenities.

Sun City Stadium owner Bob Atkinson said strong fan and community support could lead to attracting a Cactus League team to train in Sun City Stadium and fill a five-year void left when the Milwaukee Brewers moved to Chandler.

"If the Rays receive the support that I have every confi-

dence the Northwest Valley will give them, then you have something strong and viable to present to major league baseball to bring back a spring training team here," Atkinson said. "But if we're sitting there with an empty stadium in front of major league baseball owners watching us in New York City, we're not selling the product and there's little chance of us getting another team."

Atkinson said he watched some sparsely attended Senior Association games on ESPN last winter.

"I really cannot imagine why we can't draw better than the Florida crowds," Atkinson said. "The setup in the Florida communities is different. You don't have such a huge area of retired people to draw from."

Tom Darmody of the Western Maricopa Coalition said: "We have the population to support a team. With 750,000 people living west of I-17, the West Valley deserves something like this. Now all we need to do is get

behind this team and support it."

Stephen Frahm, director of advertising and community promotion for the Arizona Office of Tourism, said his office will do what it can to promote the team statewide. "We'll help out wherever we can with getting schedules and information out."

"Our office is committed to helping promote intrastate activities as best we can," he said. "I think this is the kind of thing the whole state can adopt."

"This is the type of program that brings new people out to the area," said Tom McCanna, executive director of the Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce. "We will be doing several things to promote the team around the Valley."

McCanna said one of the first chamber efforts will focus on distributing Rays literature and ticket information at the chamber's Phoenix Expo booth Sept. 15 and 16 in Civic Plaza.

McCanna said he also hopes See Rays, A5

the Sun Cities national reputation for voluntarism will spread to Sun City Stadium to ensure it remains a great place to watch a game and for top-caliber players to play.

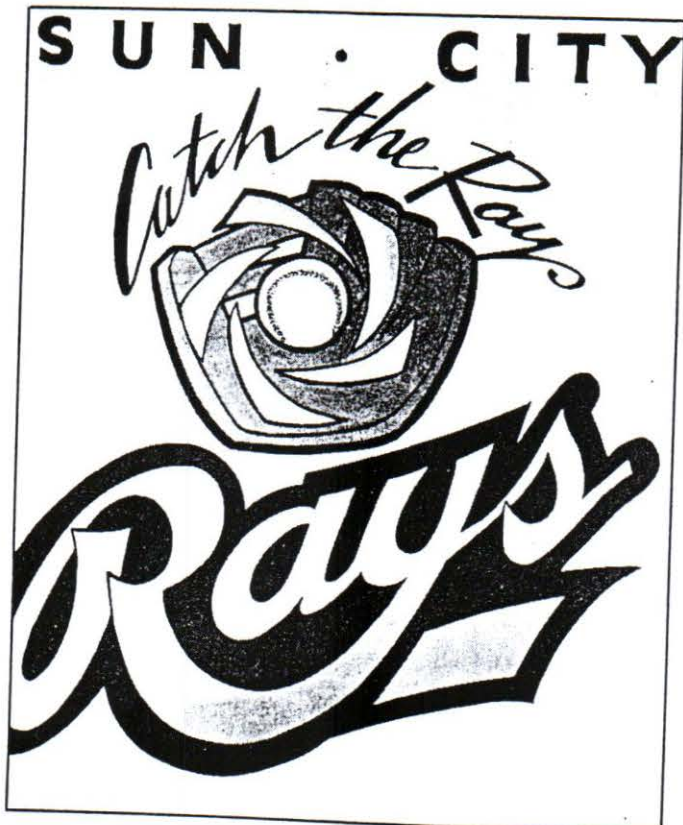
Chamber President Dave McConachie said the timing of playing baseball in the winter when no other baseball is available to Valley fans is especially important.

"I think the team will have good drawing power outside the Sun City area and it will give us (the Northwest Valley) better exposure in the rest of the Valley. We should at least be able to draw 2,000 fans a game."

"This will be great for all of our winter visitors," said Anna Krzywiec, marketing director of the Windmill Inn in Surprise.

Jim Bailey, executive director of the Sun City Ambassadors, said having the Rays in Sun City will help the Ambassadors' local and national marketing efforts.

"Having a team here is great news and we welcome the opportunity to help promote them inside and outside Sun City. We have a lot of sports enthusiasts living here who will be happy to see a professional team here again."



BRIGHT FUTURE — The Sun City Rays could be a financial boon in the Valley.

10/16/89

Future dim for stadium in Sun City

By JIM WALSH

Northwest Valley Bureau

Sun City Stadium may become useless if El Mirage pulls off plans to build a \$2.2 million, 10,000-seat stadium less than a mile away.

El Mirage City Manager Gil Olguin said an architect has designed the stadium and a consultant has completed a study that supports the facility's construction in 1987.

"There's not going to be a reason for anyone to buy (Sun City) stadium," Olguin said Monday, arguing there is not enough demand to support two stadiums in the northwest Valley.

Sun City Stadium, spring home of the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team and summer home of the Sun City Saints softball team, seats 4,200.

"I would say that he's probably right," said Jerry Bade of Bade Boyes Partnership, owners of Sun City Stadium, when asked to comment on Olguin's remarks about the need for stadiums in the area.

Bade said he offered to sell the stadium to El Mirage last spring after he heard of El Mirage's plans to build a new ballpark on Grand Avenue, north of the Agua Fria River, on a site less than a mile from the Sun City facility at Grand and 111th avenues.

El Mirage was close to buying Sun City Stadium from Bade when some Sun City residents objected to

the smaller, poorer community gaining control of the ballpark.

El Mirage dropped plans in July to buy the Sun City structure, saying, "We'd like to get along with our neighbors," Olguin said.

El Mirage then discovered it could build a new stadium twice as large, with more parking and two adjacent practice fields, for less than the cost of buying and renovating Sun City Stadium, he said.

In addition to Bade's \$2 million asking price, the city would have had to pay for increased seating,

construction of practice fields and extra parking space to satisfy the Brewers, Olguin said.

El Mirage will pay for its new ballpark from interest on a \$4.6 million loan of federal money from the city to the private developers of the Sierra Grande resort complex, Olguin said.

Because Sun City Stadium has lost money since its opening, Bade said, his company will consider other options for the land after 1987, when it no longer will be required to maintain the land as a ballpark.

When it sold the land to Bade Boyes in 1983, the Del E. Webb Development Co. required the

property to remain a stadium at least until Jan. 1, 1988.

During the Sun City Homeowners Association's annual meeting on Monday, several residents advocated asking El Mirage to reconsider its plans and buy Sun City Stadium.

But Olguin said later in the day that he already had rejected requests to buy the stadium.

The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission decided last week to recommend that the county Board of Supervisors not buy the ballpark because it would continue to lose money.

Stolen seats

Stadium thefts worry owners

By DAN BURNETTE
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The new owners of the Sun City Stadium wouldn't like anything better than to have the bleachers filled at every game.

Except, maybe, to keep the bleachers.

Thieves have been making off with the aluminum bleachers at the stadium, 107th and Grand avenues.

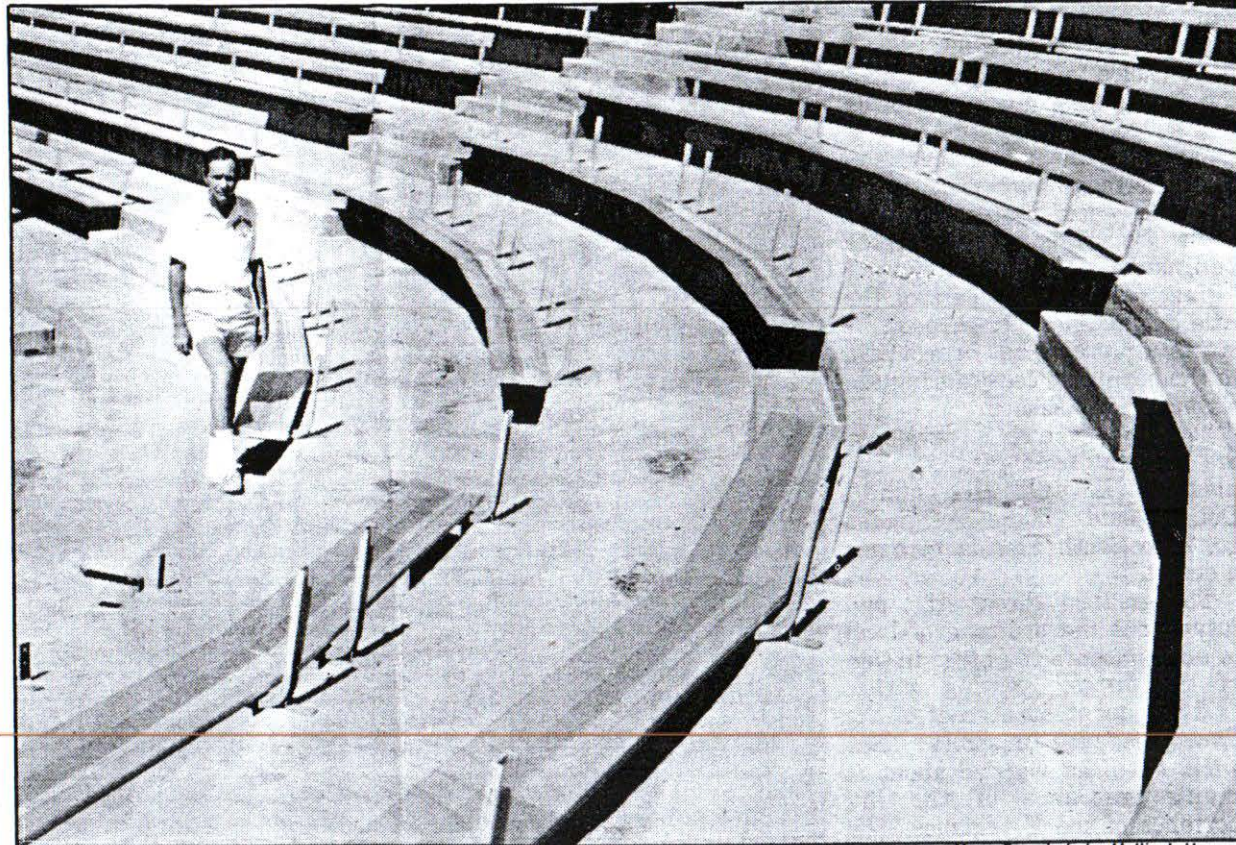
Maricopa County sheriff's spokesman Sgt. Gary Gregory said the stadium has been hit three times since before the stadium re-opened July 4. The loss totals about \$3,000.

The last incident was July 17, said Marvin Harper, one of the three businessmen who bought the stadium earlier this summer to bring back baseball and softball to the retirement community.

"It will cost us about three grand to replace what they've taken," Harper said.

Harper and partner Bob Atkinson speculate the five- to six-foot sections of bleachers are being stolen to sell as scrap aluminum, which currently sells for around 60 cents a pound.

The stadium owners figure the thieves are taking the curved section of bleachers, behind home plate, because they're



News-Sun photo by Mollie J. Hoppes

BLEACHERS STOLEN — Sun City stadium owner Bob Atkinson stands behind home plate where seven rows of bleachers are missing. Atkinson speculates that the al-

uminum seats are being traded for cash at Valley metal recycling companies. The bleachers began disappearing after the stadium opened July 4.

shorter, thus easier to carry and load into a car or truck.

Atkinson said Friday evening that the sheriff's department apparently has no leads in the case. The detective investigating the case couldn't be reached for comment.

Atkinson, Harper and the other owner, Bill Bolick, aren't the only people upset about the thefts. Sun Citian Kay Kimball has written a poem:

*There is no use denying
that the owners are really
trying.*

*To bring back the Sun city
ballpark. For Bill, and Bob
and Marvin, it's no lark.*

*So have you heard of their
latest plight, some thieves
came in during the night.*

*And like some sneaky
creeps,
they stole several bleacher
seats.*

*What a shock and disgrace,
the seats are gone behind
home base.*

*Who could be so mean, so
low, to strike this new ad-
venture such a blow.*

*But we Sun Citians have
the clout, to really help the
owners out.*

*If we want to give the guys
our trust,
to attend the games is a
must.*

*We have control of their
fate,
so pay a dollar at the gate.*

*Let's keep the memory of
the Saints alive,
and help the stadium to sur-
vive.*

*See you there one and all,
as the cry goes out, 'Play
ball!'*

Stadium reopening a hit

By VERONICA GREENWELL
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — More than 1,000 people withstood temperatures close to 120 degrees Tuesday night to see the first baseball game in four years played at Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues.

Bob Atkinson, one of three Glendale businessmen who recently bought the stadium and organized its reopening Tuesday, estimated the crowd size at about 1,200.

Tuesday's Fourth of July game featured the 2nd Annual All-Star Game of the Men's Senior Baseball League of Phoenix. The American League All-Stars defeated the National League All-Stars 19-11.

Atkinson, who along with Marvin Harper and Bill Bolick bought the stadium June 1, said he was surprised at the large turnout.

"I thought the crowd was really a great crowd for as hot as it was," Atkinson said. "I didn't expect anyone to turn out."

The unofficial high Tuesday in the Sun Cities area was 119 degrees at 2:30 p.m.

"My thought was, when I looked out over the crowd before the game, was we have brought baseball back to Sun City," Atkinson said after the game.

One of the first people to enter the park when the gates opened at 6 p.m. was Alice Messick of Sun City.

Messick, who's lived in Sun City since 1970, has long ties to the stadium. Messick once served on the board of directors of the Sun City Saints women's fast-pitch softball team, which played at the stadium in the 1970s and 1980s.

Messick last month donated about 40 trophies won by the Saints to the new owners when she learned that Sun City Stadium was going to be reopened. She had kept the trophies when the team disbanded.

The trophies were on display



News-Sun photo by Patrick Knight

BASEBALL FAN — Fred Rosenquist of Sun City was one of 1,200 people who turned out for the reopening of Sun City Stadium Tuesday night.

again Tuesday night in the same display case where they had been shown in the Saints' heyday.

"They make a beautiful display here," said Messick, who waved an old yellow and red Saints booster fan throughout the game. "We've been saving the trophies for the people in Sun City. The Saints are part of Sun City history."

Messick said she thinks the stadium's reopening will revitalize Sun City and the surrounding communities.

"The people I've talked to are so thrilled because now they'll have someplace to come," Messick said.

John Cummings was another Sun Citian who recalled the stadium's past as he admired the Saints trophies Tuesday night.

Cummings said he used to see the Saints and the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team play at the stadium. The Brewers used the park as their spring training site until 1985, when they moved to Compadre Stadium in Chandler.

Cummings said he was surprised to see the trophies on display.

Baseball fans unfazed by heat

— From B1

prised at how good the stadium looked Tuesday night.

"It looks much better than I expected," Cummings said. "They've done a good job of cleaning it up."

Cummings said he would go to the stadium again if more games are held there.

Tom and Marilyn Shields of Sun City said they remember driving by the park in recent years and thinking how sad it was that it wasn't being used.

"It was good to hear that it was open again," Marilyn Shields said.

The Shieldses said that they also would go out to the park if more games are played there.

Fred and Jeanne Rosenquist of

Sun City said they used to attend everything they could at the stadium when it was open.

"We used to watch the Saints and the Brewers all the time," Fred Rosenquist said. "We're real baseball fans. You have to be to come out in this heat."

"We sure hope it goes," Rosenquist said of the stadium's re-opening. "It looks fine and I think the owners are doing a tremendous job."

Gene Mozena of Sun City had never been to the stadium before Tuesday night, but the self-described baseball fan liked what he saw.

"I like the whole layout of the place," said Mozena, who's lived in Sun City for 14 years. "I'm more than pleased that some-

body is opening it. I intend to support what ever comes out here, unless it's a rock concert."

Tuesday's pre-game ceremonies started promptly at 7 p.m. with Dot Gard of Sun City being driven out to the field to throw out the ceremonial first pitch. Gard is Atkinson's mother-in-law.

Gard, who suffers from a chronic lung disorder, stepped out of a car on the first-base side of the field and quickly threw the ball to all-star catcher Bill Raney.

After she delivered the first pitch, Gard was then driven to the right field for a special flag-raising ceremony. Gard watched as Jack Falerni and Jason Bolick raised the American flag

given to Gard when her husband died. Bill Gard, a World War II veteran, died in 1982.

Jim Lugo, who pitched in Tuesday's game, sang the national anthem as the flag was raised.

The flag was flown Tuesday night only and then lowered and given to Gard's grandson, Bobby Atkinson.

Also at Tuesday's game, the Men's Senior Baseball League and St. Mary's Food Bank organized a food drive. Spectators to the game were asked to donate a can of food for the needy and homeless.

Liz Caplan, a spokesman for St. Mary's, said today about 600 pounds of food was collected at the game.

Sun City Stadium set to open with July 4 game

By VERONICA GREENWELL
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The grass has been planted, the lights and the scoreboard have been fixed, and the teams have been chosen.

Now all Sun City Stadium needs is fans, says Bob Atkinson.

Atkinson said everything is in place for Tuesday's reopening of the stadium, at 111th and Grand avenues. The stadium hasn't been used since 1985.

"When we open on the Fourth,

it will be, I'm sure, a good show," Atkinson said Sunday. "This is the biggest party I've ever put on. We see so many endless possibilities with the stadium."

Tuesday's Fourth of July game will feature the 2nd Annual All-Star Game of the Men's Senior Baseball League of Phoenix.

Atkinson, Marv Harper and Bill Bolick bought the stadium June 1.

The park was once the spring training home of the Milwaukee

Brewers baseball club. In 1985, the Brewers left Sun City and moved to Compadre Stadium in Chandler.

The Sun City Saints, a women's fast-pitch softball team, also used the park in the 1970s and 1980s.

Throwing out the ceremonial first pitch Tuesday night will be Dot Gard of Sun City, Atkinson's mother-in-law.

Gard, who suffers from a chronic lung disorder, will be driven to the field from the air-

conditioned club offices, throw the first pitch, and then be driven back to the offices, where she will sit and watch the game.

Gard said she remembers going to the stadium with her husband, Bill, when she was healthier. The two saw the Brewers and Saints play many games at the park, Gard said.

"We would eat hot dogs, drink Cokes and watch the Sun City Poms. We loved it," Gard said. "It was a nice, friendly crowd. It was a real nice social affair to go

out there."

Tuesday's plans also call for the American flag given to Gard when her husband died to be raised at the stadium. Bill Gard, a World War II veteran, died in 1982.

Atkinson said the burial flag will be raised Tuesday night only and then lowered and given to his 15-year-old son, Bobby.

Jim Lugo, one of the All-Star players chosen to play in Tuesday's game, will sing the national anthem.

Atkinson said there is no fireworks display planned Tuesday night.

Game time Tuesday is 7 p.m. Gates open at 6 p.m.

Admission is \$1 for adults; those 16 and under will get in free.

Spectators are asked to bring a can of food for the needy and homeless. The Men's Senior Baseball League and St. Mary's Food Bank are organizing the food drive.

Sun Citians welcome stadium venture

By MIKE GARRETT
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Sun Citians gave a clear signal Saturday morning to the three Glendale businessmen who are buying Sun City Stadium that they want baseball back.

They're going to get their wish.

All three of the Glendale businessmen, Bob Atkinson, Marv Harper and Bill Bolick, said they were impressed with the enthusiasm generated from about 150 Sun Citians, the Sun City Prides and the Sun City Poms who came by with offers of help to get the stadium ready for baseball this summer. That may happen as early as this weekend with some Deer Valley League youth games.

The first game is expected to feature the Atkinson-coached, undefeated Deer Valley Cardinals, a team of 14- and 15-year-olds.

The Prides showed up unexpectedly in full force at 6 a.m. Saturday, three hours before the scheduled open house.

"At our meeting this week, we just decided to forget everything else to come here," Pride Waldo Smith said. "We got together to do our usual Saturday morning work and one of our members suggested there was a need here to clean up before this open house. We did a lot of trimming and picking up weeds and leaves, stuff that hasn't been done for five years."

Other Sun Citians showed up to help with the concession stands or to just let their feelings be known that they miss baseball and softball in Sun City.

"We didn't know what to expect," said Atkinson, whose group has entered into a lease-purchase agreement to buy the stadium for \$2 million from Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale. "I pulled up here this morning and there were a few dozen Sun City Prides trimming bushes and cleaning up the parking lot.

"I never envisioned that they would support us that strongly for an open house to see the stadium and make whatever suggestions they wanted."

Atkinson said people came up to him and said they used to take care of the grounds or kept the shrubs trimmed or were in charge of the concessions when the Sun City Saints and Milwaukee Brewers played there for about seven seasons between 1978 and 1985.

"They've all offered to pretty much pick up where they left off," Atkinson said. "They wanted an opportunity to do something and we're going to give them that opportunity."

"My only concern is that because somebody is volunteering to do something I don't want to take advantage of them," he said.

"We got into this because it just felt right and was the right

thing to do," Atkinson said. "Now I know it was right."

Added Bolick: "I think it's totally amazing that they cleaned up the parking lot this morning and helped with the concession stands."

After five years of seeing their "Field of Dreams" die and collect weeds, Sun Citians say they have been deprived long enough.

Longtime Sun City baseball booster and former Saints announcer L.Q. Yowell said, "I'm glad to see that somebody has decided to quit talking and put some action out there."

Yowell said he would like to see a major league baseball team return to train at the stadium, or at least play a couple of exhibition games there.

"I just hope the fans get out and support them in an effort to bring them back," Yowell said. "I think it's a good boost for Sun City and it has been a black mark that we lost both a major league club and a softball club that boosted Sun City. I think this is one step back toward that status."

Other Sun Citians who voiced support for the return of baseball or a women's fast-pitch softball team like the Saints were Steve Bassford, Tony Tomlon, Esther Burke and Corinne Leslie, founder and director of the Sun City Poms.

They said they were avid boosters of the Saints and Brewers when they played in Sun City. Tomlon said not

enough was done five years ago by community leaders to save the stadium and now that it's in the hands of baseball people, maybe something will be done.

"There's a good future here for the right people. I would like to volunteer in some way to help out," Tomlon said. "We don't

know what they're looking for but I would imagine they will have meetings to try and work out something. A lot of us retirees here are interested in supporting them."

Leslie said the Poms (now 18 members) first got their start at the stadium 10 years ago as

boosters of the Saints and became nationally known. Pom Alberta Hettinger said the new owners have asked them to appear for the senior men's tournament in October.

Senior Men's Baseball League director Craig Kimmell said his league is planning on playing several games Fourth of July weekend. Plans then call for a 68-game schedule for the men's 30-plus fastpitch baseball league from July 9 through Oct. 15.

He already has a tentative first week's schedule of games and will soon have printed schedules available for the rest of the season. Schedules can be picked up at the Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce office at Sun Ridge Retirement Community, 12221 W. Bell Road, at the stadium, 111th and Grand avenues, or by calling Kimmell at 864-6089.

Kimmell said he is working with the chamber to try to promote a fireworks display at the stadium July 4.

He said games will be scheduled at 7 p.m. Monday through Friday with morning and evening games on Sunday.

Atkinson said his group hopes to make it a multi-use stadium for other events besides baseball. That's why a suggestion box was set up at the stadium Saturday.

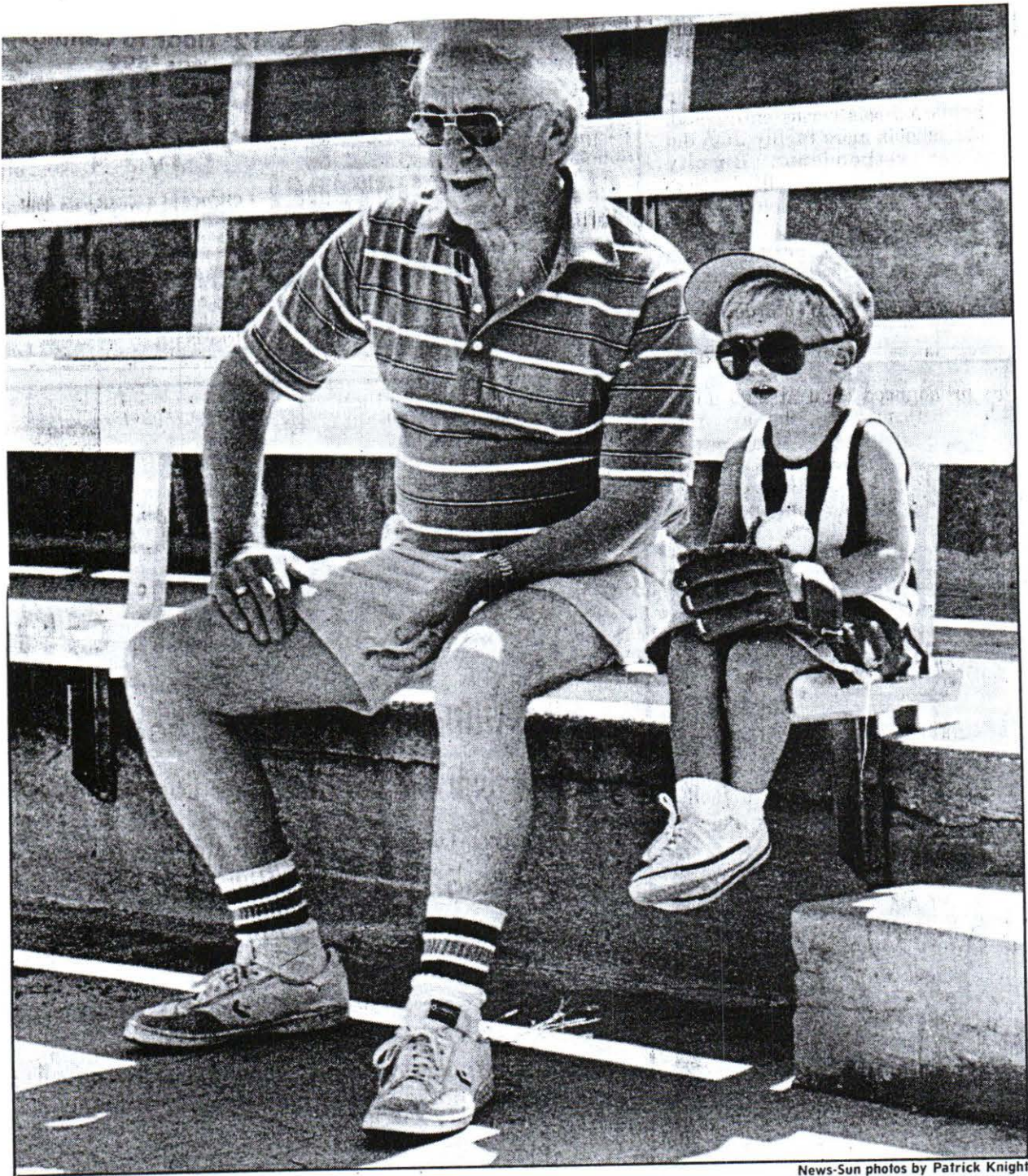
Former Sun City Ambassadors and Northwest Chamber President Dick King said he thinks the stadium will generate considerable interest from the whole Northwest Valley and would be supported in many ways.

He informed Glendale Mayor George Renner of the stadium revival last week at a Sun City service club meeting and Renner said the West Valley was really short of baseball fields for its youth leagues and would like to see it used for that purpose.

"It was so great when we first came to Sun City to sit out here in the evenings and have a beer and watch the Saints play and this place was practically full," King said.

"Then in spring training when the Cubs came out to play (the Brewers) it was jammed full," he said. "I think it's a rebirth for the Northwest Valley for athletics and it's an arena that can be used for many things that can't go anyplace else in the Sun Cities."

OVER



News-Sun photos by Patrick Knight

READY TO PLAY — Cody Radliff, 3, of Peoria, sits next to his grandfather, Dick King, of Sun City, above, as they listen to

speakers at the open house at the Sun City Stadium, Saturday morning. Above left, Cody is ready to get out of the heat.



News-Sun photo by Patrick Knight

ENDING A HAND — Sun City Prides, Percy Mahan (left) and Waldo Smith take a

break after a morning of collecting trash in the parking lot of Sun City Stadium.

Businessmen save SC stadium

By JACQUE PAPPAS
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Inspired by a love for baseball, three Northwest Valley businessmen have entered into a lease-purchase agreement to buy the Sun City Stadium for \$2 million.

The stadium, former home of the Sun City Saints women's fastpitch softball team and spring training field of the Milwaukee Brewers, has remained empty and unused for more than four years.

Bob Atkinson, one of three Glendale businessmen involved in the purchase agreement, said the group acquired the property June 1.

Atkinson said the property, just north of 111th and Grand avenues, will be leased for one year with the purchase price locked into the final sale.

Del Webb Corp. sold the property about five years ago to Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale.

David H. Engman, vice president of B & B Construction and Development Inc., a development company of the partnership, said the firm has received several offers for the stadium.

Related story, B1

"We had some interest by potential buyers, but they were deals that never really made sense. Some were for big apartment complexes and hotels that were just not feasible in today's market," Engman said. "We feel great about keeping it as a stadium and strongly support their activity. In today's market, there's not much economic use for the property otherwise."

Atkinson, who remembers watching the Saints play on the field, said he and his partners will use the stadium as a multi-purpose facility that will house baseball games, special events and concerts similar to those at the Sun Bowl.

The partners are holding an open house on the field at 9 a.m. Saturday to introduce themselves to community residents, hear suggestions and answer questions.

"We're gambling that we get the support and get the terms (money) needed to close the escrow and keep the stadium a

stadium," Atkinson said. "I'm not rich and we're not out to get rich off this. We just want to save the stadium."

Atkinson said arrangements have been made for 14 Men's Senior Baseball League teams to use the stadium this year.

The over-30 league, which has 800 teams throughout the nation, will also hold its world series at the Sun City Stadium in October, he said.

Atkinson, a former team member, said he and officials from the league are finalizing negotiations.

"We have entered into an agreement. If we are not able to raise the funds, then 90 days prior to the end of the lease we'll have to make other plans," Atkinson said. "But I feel we can make it work and I feel Sun City is going to support it. It's a lot easier to get support for an idea that is happening and not just a dream that no one can visualize."

Atkinson said revenues will be generated through user fees and a \$1 admission charge for all games. Children 16 and younger will get in free.

A concession stand will also be open during games.

The stadium lot has seven acres of paved parking, more than five acres of ball park and is considered a prime location, with three accesses.

Four accessory buildings are on the property.

"It's really disheartening to watch a facility like this being wasted. We do not want the stadium to stay here as it is and continue to deteriorate," Atkinson said. "We don't want others to buy it and turn the land into a shopping center or hotel."

A restriction that originally limited the property's use as a baseball park expired in May 1987.

In December 1987, three area real estate brokers listed the 12.5-acre parcel of land for Bade Boyes Partnership. The property was then appraised at \$2.5 million.

The Milwaukee Brewers started training in Sun City in 1973 and moved to Chandler in 1985. The Saints team dissolved
See Stadium, A3

Stadium will be used for baseball, again

— From A1

in the early 1980s after playing in Sun City since 1966.

All three partners involved in the lease-purchase agreement used to watch the Saints team play at the stadium and possess a colossal passion for baseball.

Marvin Harper, a partner who works for the City of Glendale, was drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1968 but played in only one spring training season.

Harper now serves as an observer for the Arizona Inter-collegiate Association, which helps rate high school coaches and umpires.

Bill Bolick, the third partner, who is a Glendale independent businessman working in construction, has several children who play on league teams.

Atkinson has been involved with youth baseball for several years. When he graduated from college he was drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals, but never played professional baseball.

Atkinson said he decided to make a bid for the stadium in April, when a boys' baseball team he and Harper coached faced the prospect of having its games canceled because of poor playing conditions in area ball fields.

Other coaches were running into the same problem, Atkinson said.

He contacted the property owners, who agreed to let the teams use Sun City Stadium for a rental fee.

While negotiating a rental fee, Atkinson said he decided to

make an offer to buy the stadium.

"If I could rent it and make a go of it, why not offer to buy it," Atkinson said. "I've seen a lot of baseball organizations struggle, and I felt if somebody had some imagination, this thing could be put together so it would benefit a lot of people."

He contacted Harper and Bolick, who agreed to help Atkinson finance the project. The three then met with Bade and drew up a lease-purchase agreement.

"I'm very involved in youth activities and am very close to what's happening in Sun City," Atkinson said. "My father recently died and the support he gave me when I played ball really helped me decide to save the stadium."

Group seeking a field of dreams

Love of baseball led group to buy Sun City Stadium

By VERONICA GREENWELL
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — In the hit summer movie, "Field of Dreams," actor Kevin Costner stars as an Iowa farmer who constructs a ball field where baseball fantasies come true.

The film could easily have featured Bob Atkinson, Bill Bolick and Marv Harper, who are seeing their own field of dreams take shape at Sun City Stadium.

The three Glendale businessmen have entered into a lease-purchase agreement to buy the stadium for \$2 million from owner Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale. The three men acquired the property June 1.

The trio say it was a lifelong passion for baseball that led them to buy the famed stadium at 111th and Grand avenues.

"This is like a fantasy come true for me," Bolick said of the deal to buy the stadium.

The men will hold an open house on the field at 9 a.m. Saturday to introduce themselves to community residents, hear suggestions and answer



News-Sun photo by Stephen Cherneck

BUY STADIUM — Bill Bolick, left, and Bob Atkinson of Glendale take a break from cleaning and repairing Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues. The two men, along with Marv Harper, have agreed to buy the stadium.

questions.

They plan to clean and repair the stadium and use it for baseball and softball games and special events.

Atkinson said arrangements

have been made for 14 Men's Senior Baseball League teams to use the stadium this year.

The over-30 league, which has 800 teams throughout the nation, will also hold its world

series at the Sun City stadium in October, he said.

Atkinson said he and officials from the league are finalizing negotiations.

The ballpark has been aban-

doned since April 1985 when the Milwaukee Brewers left their Sun City spring training site and moved to Compadre Stadium in Chandler. The Brewers had trained in Sun City since 1973.

Bolick said he remembers driving by the stadium after the Brewers left and wishing baseball would return to the West Valley.

Bolick, who hasn't been to a spring training game since the Brewers left four years ago, said he remembers seeing such baseball stars as Rich "Goose" Gosage and Tony Gwynn play at Sun City Stadium.

Atkinson said he, too, remembers going to the stadium to see the Brewers play as well as the Sun City Saints, a women's softball team that used the stadium in the '70s and '80s.

Atkinson and Harper work for the City of Glendale and Bolick owns and operates Western Excavation Inc. of Glendale.

Atkinson, who is originally from Springfield, Ill., was drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals in 1969 as a third baseman. But Atkinson, who had just completed college, decided not to go to the Cardinals spring training site in Florida. He chose a business career instead.

See Trio, B2

OVER

Trio buys stadium

—From B1

"That was the only time in my life I felt like something happened to me that shouldn't have happened to me," Atkinson said of his draft selection. "Besides, I took a look at everybody else and they were all pretty big."

Atkinson kept up with the sport, though, playing in men's leagues and coaching in youth leagues.

Today Atkinson and Harper coach a team in the Deer Valley Senior Boys Baseball League. The ballclub's name is the Cardinals.

Harper was drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers as a catcher in 1968 and did go to spring training in Florida. But he was then drafted by the Army and his brief professional baseball career ended.

Nonetheless, Harper's love for the game has remained strong.

"Baseball is my life," he said. "I love it more than just about anything else. This stadium is like a dream come true for me. I couldn't play professionally but it's great that I can still get as close to the game as this."

Like his partners, Bolick never played professional baseball but he, too, has kept close ties to the game.

"I think every boy has a fantasy about playing baseball," said Bolick, who played organized baseball for 17 years.

Recalling the park's heyday in the 1970s and early 1980s, Atkinson said he thought the stadium was "super" when it was open.

Atkinson said he could understand the Brewers wanting to move to a larger facility, but he couldn't understand why the stadium was shut down completely.

Now that he and his partners have bought the ballpark, and are busy making plans for its future, Atkinson said the group should have planned to buy the stadium earlier.

"I can't imagine why we didn't do this before now," Atkinson said. "I think it's (the purchase) one of the best things I've ever done in my life. There's not one hour I spend out there working that I think I'm wasting it."

Businessmen save SC stadium

By JACQUE PAPPAS
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Inspired by a love for baseball, three Northwest Valley businessmen have entered into a lease-purchase agreement to buy the Sun City Stadium for \$2 million.

The stadium, former home of the Sun City Saints women's fastpitch softball team and spring training field of the Milwaukee Brewers, has remained empty and unused for more than four years.

Bob Atkinson, one of three Glendale businessmen involved in the purchase agreement, said the group acquired the property June 1.

Atkinson said the property, just north of 111th and Grand avenues, will be leased for one year with the purchase price locked into the final sale.

Del Webb Corp. sold the property about five years ago to Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale.

David H. Engman, vice president of B & B Construction and Development Inc., a development company of the partnership, said the firm has received several offers for the stadium.

"We had some interest by potential buyers, but they were deals that never really made sense. Some were for big apartment complexes and hotels that were just not feasible in today's market," Engman said. "We feel great about keeping it as a stadium and strongly support their activity. In today's market, there's not much economic use for the property otherwise."

Atkinson, who remembers watching the Saints play on the field, said he and his partners will use the stadium as a multi-purpose facility that will house baseball games, special events and concerts similar to those at the Sun Bowl.

The partners are holding an open house on the field at 9 a.m. Saturday to introduce themselves to community residents, hear suggestions and answer questions.

"We're gambling that we get the support and get the terms (money) needed to close the escrow and keep the stadium a

stadium," Atkinson said. "I'm not rich and we're not out to get rich off this. We just want to save the stadium."

Atkinson said arrangements have been made for 14 Men's Senior Baseball League teams to use the stadium this year.

The over-30 league, which has 800 teams throughout the nation, will also hold its world series at the Sun City Stadium in October, he said.

Atkinson, a former team member, said he and officials from the league are finalizing negotiations.

"We have entered into an agreement. If we are not able to raise the funds, then 90 days prior to the end of the lease we'll have to make other plans," Atkinson said. "But I feel we can make it work and I feel Sun City is going to support it. It's a lot easier to get support for an idea that is happening and not just a dream that no one can visualize."

Atkinson said revenues will be generated through user fees and a \$1 admission charge for all games. Children 16 and younger will get in free.

A concession stand will also be open during games.

The stadium lot has seven acres of paved parking, more than five acres of ball park and is considered a prime location, with three accesses.

Four accessory buildings are on the property.

"It's really disheartening to watch a facility like this being wasted. We do not want the stadium to stay here as it is and continue to deteriorate," Atkinson said. "We don't want others to buy it and turn the land into a shopping center or hotel."

A restriction that originally limited the property's use as a baseball park expired in May 1987.

In December 1987, three area real estate brokers listed the 12.5-acre parcel of land for Bade Boyes Partnership. The property was then appraised at \$2.5 million.

The Milwaukee Brewers started training in Sun City in 1973 and moved to Chandler in 1985. The Saints team dissolved

in the early 1980s after playing in Sun City since 1966.

All three partners involved in the lease-purchase agreement used to watch the Saints team play at the stadium and possess a colossal passion for baseball.

Marvin Harper, a partner who works for the City of Glendale, was drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1968 but played in only one spring training season.

Harper now serves as an observer for the Arizona Intercollegiate Association, which helps rate high school coaches and umpires.

Bill Bolick, the third partner, who is a Glendale independent businessman working in construction, has several children who play on league teams.

Atkinson has been involved with youth baseball for several years. When he graduated from college he was drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals, but never played professional baseball.

Atkinson said he decided to make a bid for the stadium in April, when a boys' baseball team he and Harper coached faced the prospect of having its games canceled because of poor playing conditions in area ball fields.

Other coaches were running into the same problem, Atkinson said.

He contacted the property owners, who agreed to let the teams use Sun City Stadium for a rental fee.

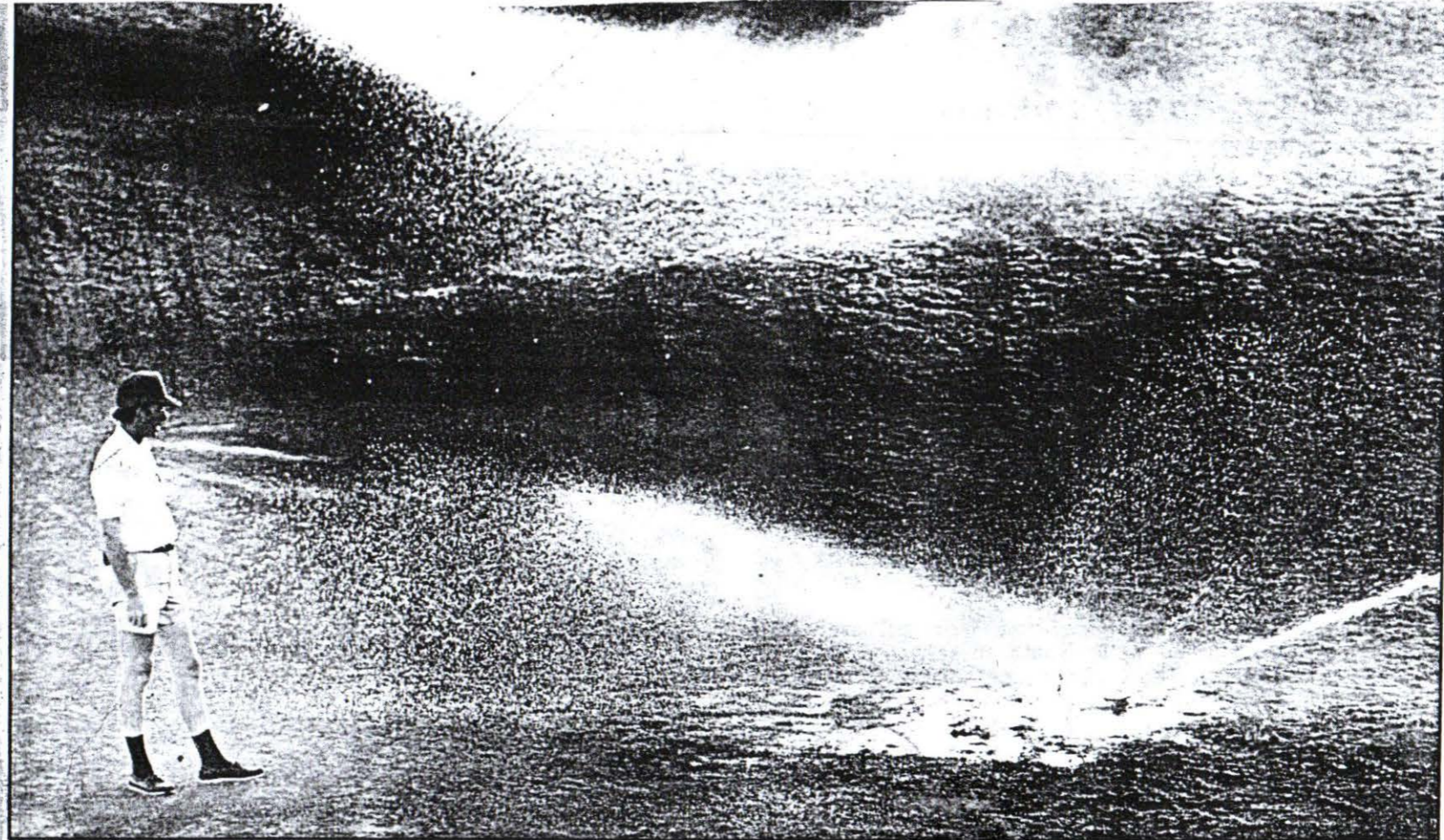
While negotiating a rental fee, Atkinson said he decided to

make an offer to buy the stadium.

"If I could rent it and make a go of it, why not offer to buy it," Atkinson said. "I've seen a lot of baseball organizations struggle, and I felt if somebody had some imagination, this thing could be put together so it would benefit a lot of people."

He contacted Harper and Bolick, who agreed to help Atkinson finance the project. The three then met with Bade and drew up a lease-purchase agreement.

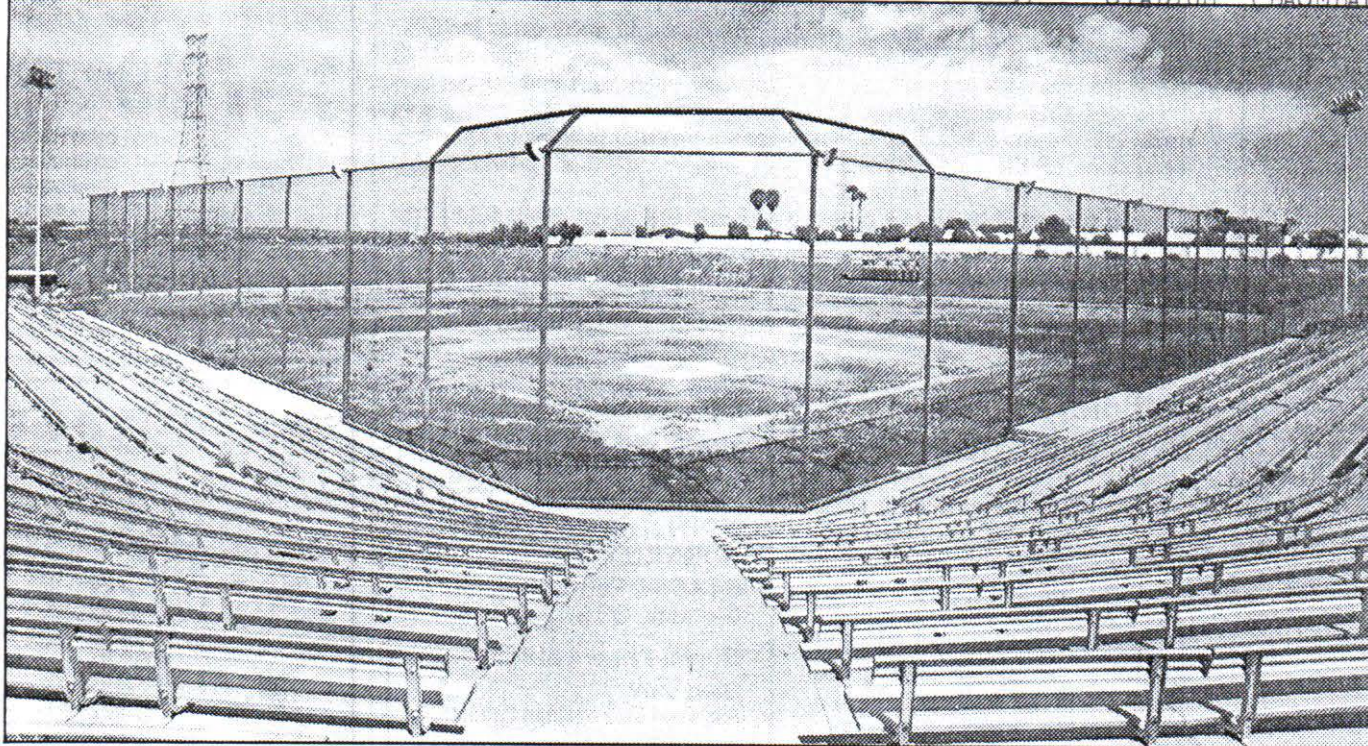
"I'm very involved in youth activities and am very close to what's happening in Sun City," Atkinson said. "My father recently died and the support he gave me when I played ball really helped me decide to save the stadium."



News-Sun photo by Stephen Cherek

WATER WATCH — Glendale businessman Bob Atkinson keeps an eye on sprinklers watering the playing field at Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues, Tuesday evening.

Atkinson and others have signed an agreement to buy the stadium, which has been closed for several years, for \$2 million.



Michael Meister/The Arizona Republic

Sun City Stadium used to be busy this time of year. Now it is empty, the outfield is brown and the baselines are overgrown with weeds.

Sun City Stadium 'just sitting there'

Glory days gone for 12.5 acres; no deals in sight

By Holly D. Remy
The Arizona Republic

Peek over the cement-block wall at 111th and Grand avenues, and there is Sun City Stadium in all its faded glory — the brown outfield, the baselines overgrown with weeds, and the sun-baked sign that reads, "Winter home of the Milwaukee Brewers."

Sun City Stadium is for sale apparently with no prospective buyers in sight.

When the Brewers left for Chandler in 1985, the stadium closed.

"When I see that thing sitting there, it makes me feel bad," said Harold Henry, an information officer for the Sun City Home Owners Association. "It was always busy this time of year. Now, it's just sitting there, waiting for a developer to come by."

Once, the aroma of hot dogs and popcorn floated over the stadium's wall, and so did the shouts of baseball fans.

Today, the smell is of dust and the sound is wind rattling through brittle leaves of citrus trees outside

the stadium wall.

There has been talk about a future for the 12.5 acres, but so far there has been no action.

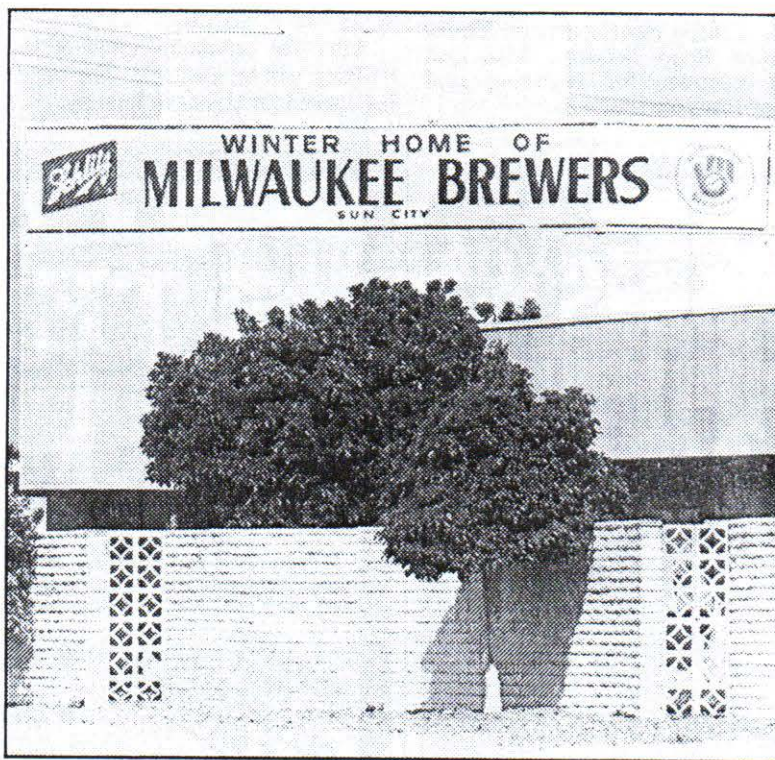
"We have nothing we'd take to the bank," said Randy Leonard, a sales agent for B&B Construction & Development Inc., the Glendale firm that bought the property from Del Webb Communities Inc. in 1983.

"Some people have talked about bringing in a minor-league team, but that's a thing of the past. It would cost too much to get the stadium ready, and then the team needs a practice field."

A buyer would get one lighted field with bleachers, three buildings and a large parking lot for \$2.5 million, Leonard said.

Sun City Stadium has no practice field. During the Brewers' last two spring-training camps there, the team practiced four miles away at the Greenway Sports Complex on 83rd Avenue in Peoria. Brewers broadcaster Bob Uecker nicknamed the practice fields "Iwo Jima" because they were so far from the stadium.

The stadium's prospects had been expected to brighten last year, when a provision of the sale to B&B expired. The provision had mandated that the property remain a baseball stadium until Jan. 1, 1988.



The Milwaukee Brewers left Sun City in 1985. They now practice at Compadre Stadium in Chandler.

"It's not a building that just anyone would want," said Kay Slanta, an agent for O'Keefe Real Estate, which is handling the property.

Under Maricopa County's zoning, the property could be used for apartments or condominiums, or for small businesses, including shops or restaurants, a bank, offices, an auto dealership, a hotel or motel, or an

overnight park for recreational vehicles.

The stadium may go. Memories will remain.

"They used to pack 'em in, especially when the Cubbies played, because there are so many people here from the Chicago area," Henry said. "It was an attractive piece of property. Now, it's a white elephant."

Arab nights in SC

Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY STADIUM — The only thing missing at Sun City Stadium this Saturday will be a circus big top.

The "Sun City Spectacular" will feature everything from softball, celebrities and an Arabian Horse show as Sun City Stadium begins its summer season of action.

Festivities begin at 5 p.m. when Sun City's own Amazing '60's softball team challenges a team comprised of Valley celebrities.

That will be followed by a 7 p.m. show billed as an "Arabian Knights" horse extravaganza. The event will feature costumed riders in native Arabian dress.

Synchronized riders and trick horses will perform everything from a dance rendition of "New York, New York" to their own version of baseball.

Another feature will be "Playboy," billed as the world's smartest horse.

Sun City Spectacular

When — 5 p.m. Saturday.

Where — Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues.

Tickets — Adults: \$7.50; Senior citizens: \$5; Children under 12 years old: \$2.50. Available at all Dillard's locations and Sun City Stadium.

Features — Softball between the Amazing '60's and Valley celebrities begins at 5 p.m. The "Arabian Knights" horse extravaganza starts at 7 p.m.

Fans also will have a chance to meet the Sun City Sons baseball team and the Sun City Saints girls softball team, which will be introduced in between festivities.

The teams will begin play at Sun City Stadium in June.

Tickets are \$7.50 for adults, \$5 for senior citizens and \$2.50 for children under 12 years of age. They are available at all Dillard's as well as Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues. For more information, phone 972-2247 or 867-8275.



Daily News-Sun photo by Stephen Cherek

BY A NOSE — Ray Fortune of Sun City West pets the snout of Tasha, a 14-year-old Arabian mare, ridden by D.J. Harksell, at Sundome Plaza in Sun City West Thursday. Harksell and Tasha were attracting business for the Arabian Knights stage show, at 7 tonight, at Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand Avenues.

Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz. Wednesday, July 5, 1989

Stadium reopening a hit

By VERONICA GREENWELL
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — More than 1,000 people withstood temperatures close to 120 degrees Tuesday night to see the first baseball game in four years played at Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues.

Bob Atkinson, one of three Glendale businessmen who recently bought the stadium and organized its reopening Tuesday, estimated the crowd size at about 1,200.

Tuesday's Fourth of July game featured the 2nd Annual All-Star Game of the Men's Senior Baseball League of Phoenix. The American League All-Stars defeated the National League All-Stars 19-11.

Atkinson, who along with Marvin Harper and Bill Bolick bought the stadium June 1, said he was surprised at the large turnout.

"I thought the crowd was really a great crowd for as hot as it was," Atkinson said. "I didn't expect anyone to turn out."

The unofficial high Tuesday in the Sun Cities area was 119 degrees at 2:30 p.m.

"My thought was, when I looked out over the crowd before the game, was we have brought baseball back to Sun City," Atkinson said after the game.

One of the first people to enter the park when the gates opened at 6 p.m. was Alice Messick of Sun City.

Messick, who's lived in Sun City since 1970, has long ties to the stadium. Messick once served on the board of directors of the Sun City Saints women's fast-pitch softball team, which played at the stadium in the 1970s and 1980s.

Messick last month donated about 40 trophies won by the Saints to the new owners when she learned that Sun City Stadium was going to be reopened. She had kept the trophies when the team disbanded.

The trophies were on display



News-Sun photo by Patrick Knight

BASEBALL FAN — Fred Rosenquist of Sun City was one of 1,200 people who turned out for the reopening of Sun City Stadium Tuesday night.

again Tuesday night in the same display case where they had been shown in the Saints' heyday.

"They make a beautiful display here," said Messick, who waved an old yellow and red Saints booster fan throughout the game. "We've been saving the trophies for the people in Sun City. The Saints are part of Sun City history."

Messick said she thinks the stadium's reopening will revitalize Sun City and the surrounding communities.

"The people I've talked to are so thrilled because now they'll have someplace to come," Messick said.

John Cummings was another Sun Citian who recalled the stadium's past as he admired the Saints trophies Tuesday night.

Cummings said he used to see the Saints and the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team play at the stadium. The Brewers used the park as their spring training site until 1985, when they moved to Compadre Stadium in Chandler.

Cummings said he was sur-
See Baseball, B2

— From B1

prised at how good the stadium looked Tuesday night.

"It looks much better than I expected," Cummings said. "They've done a good job of cleaning it up."

Cummings said he would go to the stadium again if more games are held there.

Tom and Marilyn Shields of Sun City said they remember driving by the park in recent years and thinking how sad it was that it wasn't being used.

"It was good to hear that it was open again," Marilyn Shields said.

The Shieldses said that they also would go out to the park if more games are played there.

Fred and Jeanne Rosenquist of

Sun City said they used to attend everything they could at the stadium when it was open.

"We used to watch the Saints and the Brewers all the time," Fred Rosenquist said. "We're real baseball fans. You have to be to come out in this heat."

"We sure hope it goes," Rosenquist said of the stadium's reopening. "It looks fine and I think the owners are doing a tremendous job."

Gene Mozena of Sun City had never been to the stadium before Tuesday night, but the self-described baseball fan liked what he saw.

"I like the whole layout of the place," said Mozena, who's lived in Sun City for 14 years. "I'm more than pleased that some-

body is opening it. I intend to support what ever comes out here, unless it's a rock concert."

Tuesday's pre-game ceremonies started promptly at 7 p.m. with Dot Gard of Sun City being driven out to the field to throw out the ceremonial first pitch. Gard is Atkinson's mother-in-law.

Gard, who suffers from a chronic lung disorder, stepped out of a car on the first-base side of the field and quickly threw the ball to all-star catcher Bill Raney.

After she delivered the first pitch, Gard was then driven to the right field for a special flag-raising ceremony. Gard watched as Jack Falerni and Jason Bolick raised the American flag

given to Gard when her husband died. Bill Gard, a World War II veteran, died in 1982.

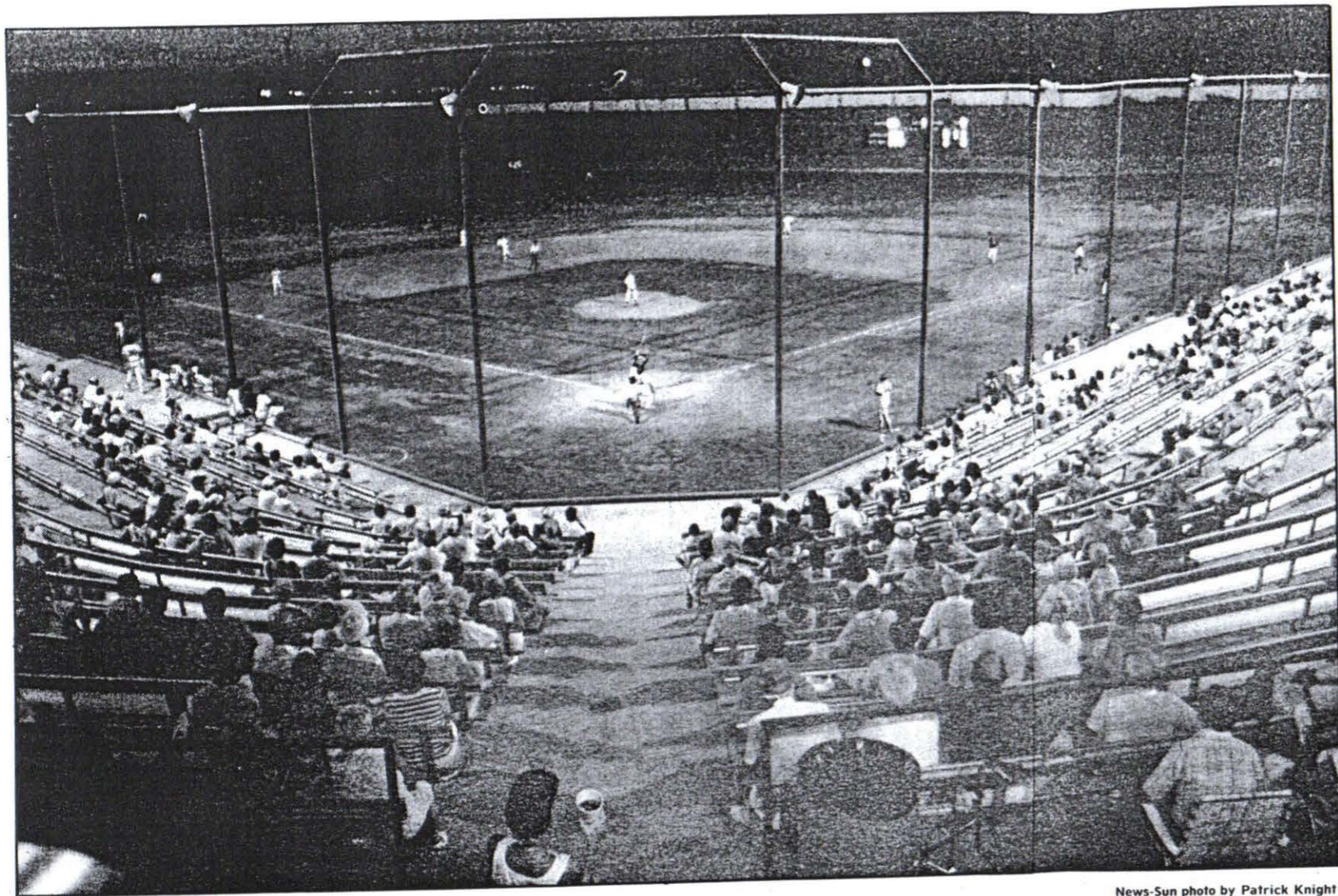
Jim Lugo, who pitched in Tuesday's game, sang the national anthem as the flag was raised.

The flag was flown Tuesday night only and then lowered and given to Gard's grandson, Bobby Atkinson.

Also at Tuesday's game, the Men's Senior Baseball League and St. Mary's Food Bank organized a food drive. Spectators to the game were asked to donate a can of food for the needy and homeless.

Liz Caplan, a spokesman for St. Mary's, said today about 600

OVER



News-Sun photo by Patrick Knight

ALL-STAR CROWD — An estimated 1,200 fans turned out for the 2nd Annual All-Star Game of the Men's Senior Baseball League of Phoenix at Sun City Stadium Tuesday

night. The game marked the reopening of the stadium, which was recently bought and renovated by three Glendale businessmen.

Sun City Stadium placed on market

STADIUM
VF
BASEBALL

By JACQUE PAPPAS
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — It's been called the Sun City Stadium. It is the former home of the Sun City Saints women's fastpitch softball team and spring training field for the Milwaukee Brewers.

But since the Sun City Saints team dissolved more than three years ago, the field they played on has remained empty and unused.

Three area real estate brokers have recently put the field on the market in hopes of keeping it in the hands of interested Sun Citians.

"We want to keep it as a Sun City property in honor of Del Webb for keeping this a beautiful place to live," said Nick Dudukovich, Realtor with O'Keefe Real Estate and one of the listers of the property. "If at

all possible it would be great if the public could realize that they can acquire the land. Perhaps they could keep and maintain it as a park."

But Dudukovich and two other brokers involved in selling the property know that it will take more than just local interest to sell the 12.5-acre parcel of land.

The land, 111th and Grand avenues, is appraised at \$2.5 million, Dudukovich said.

It has seven acres of paved parking, more than five acres of ball park and is considered a prime location with three accesses.

Three buildings that are 5,000, 2,000 and 1,000 square feet each are also on the property, said Jack Reddick, also a Realtor with O'Keefe.

"Down the road, if we ever
See Realtors, A4

— From A1
incorporate, they would have a place to build municipalities. The way I see it, it's inevitable," Dudukovich said. "This is about the only vacant land left for Sun City. But of course if there is not an interest to keep it as a Sun City property, we will sell it to whoever is interested."

Reddick has been contacting other outlets such as county

agencies and churches to see if they are interested in keeping the land in Sun City's hands.

"We're not saying we're pro-incorporation; we have Sun City's best interest at heart. If the people know that this property is available, perhaps it can be retained as Sun City property," Reddick said. "We've (the Realtors involved) all lived here for a couple of years. We're not newcomers. We're looking for

any response people may have."

Reddick said the Realtors have also discussed the purchase of the property with the Recreation Centers of Sun City Inc. Although the centers cannot buy the land, Reddick said board members encouraged the Realtors to go public with their ideas in getting area residents involved with a possible purchase.

"There isn't any place else

where such a complex can be built in Sun City. We're not saying it's tomorrow, but the concern has to be for the future. It's a shot in the dark," Reddick said. "Del Webb created a place for us senior citizens and in appreciation for that some people may abide and open their hearts up"

The property was bought about five years ago from Webb by Bade Boyes Partnership of

Glendale.

"I think the idea has merit. But it really depends on the preference of the Sun City people," said Gerald Bade, part owner of Bade Boyes Partnership.

And although the property was originally restricted for use as a baseball park, the restriction expired in May of this year, said Kay Slanta, also a lister of the property.

Stadium left in limbo after Brewers pull out

By Susan Martin
Gazette Northwest Bureau

SUN CITY — Owners of the Sun City Stadium want out of their agreement with the Del E. Webb Development Co. to retain the property as a ballpark through 1987.

"Without the (Milwaukee) Brewers coming back . . . we have a piece of property that apparently will be sitting there for two years," said Jerry Bade, a partner in B&B Construction of Glendale, which owns the ballfield.

B&B is obligated to operate the facility as a ballpark through 1987 because of the sales contract it signed with DevCo., the stadium's original owner.

Since the property was purchased, however, its two primary tenants, the Brewers and Sun City Saints, have left for greener fields.

Bade said he has contacted every major league baseball team, but none is interested in conducting spring training at the Sun City facility.

And there have been no requests to use the stadium by area organizations, he added.

Bade said his company would like to develop the property, zoned primarily residential, perhaps for apartments or a nursing home.

He has asked the Sun City Home Owners Association to support his request to DevCo. for early release on the sales contract stipulation.

DevCo. spokesman Ken Plonski said his company would be willing to release B&B from its agreement if Sun City residents supported the move.

"It all boils down to what the community wants," he said.

Directors at this month's HOA board meeting voiced general support for B&B's request, but with some reservations.

"What bothers me is he's implying he's going to keep the property and develop it, but I don't think that's the intent at all," Director Mildred Berg said. She added that it does not make sense to fight B&B's request. "What have we got to gain?"

HOA President Bill Forman said if the property is left to sit two years, it may hurt the neighborhood appearance.

The group voted to ask for suggestions from residents on whether B&B's request should be supported, and if so, what uses should be considered for the property.

HOA polled residents last year on the fate of the property, and

See • Stadium, NW-3

Stadium

results showed that 74 percent favored "letting events take their course." All other options — purchase by the Recreation Centers or

the city of El Mirage, a special tax district and other alternatives — were deemed unacceptable by the 8,090 who responded to the survey.

10/23/85

From NW-1

Denial of bid to add seating at stadium angers owner, team

County wants more parking at Brewer baseball contests

By JIM WALSH
Northwest Valley Bureau

3/19/85

SUN CITY — The owner of Sun City Stadium and the Milwaukee Brewers' general manager are upset because Maricopa County has refused to allow installation of temporary seats at the stadium.

Referring to a shortage of parking, county zoning officials rejected an attempt by one of the stadium's owners, Jerry Bade, to install 1,200 temporary seats to hold large crowds expected for three games with the Chicago Cubs.

The result was predictable when the Cubs played the Brewers on March 10 — more than 4,700 fans came to the stadium, but only 4,000 seats were available.

Although some fans sat on a hill covered with gravel down the right-field foul line — where the extra seats would have been — others were unable to get into the Cactus League game, Bade said.

"I would guess we turned down several hundred people, as well as people who didn't come because we advertised the game as a sell-out," Bade said.

The county's rejection also

upset Harry Dalton, the Brewers' general manager, who has been negotiating a possible move of the team to Chandler for future spring training camps, Bade said.

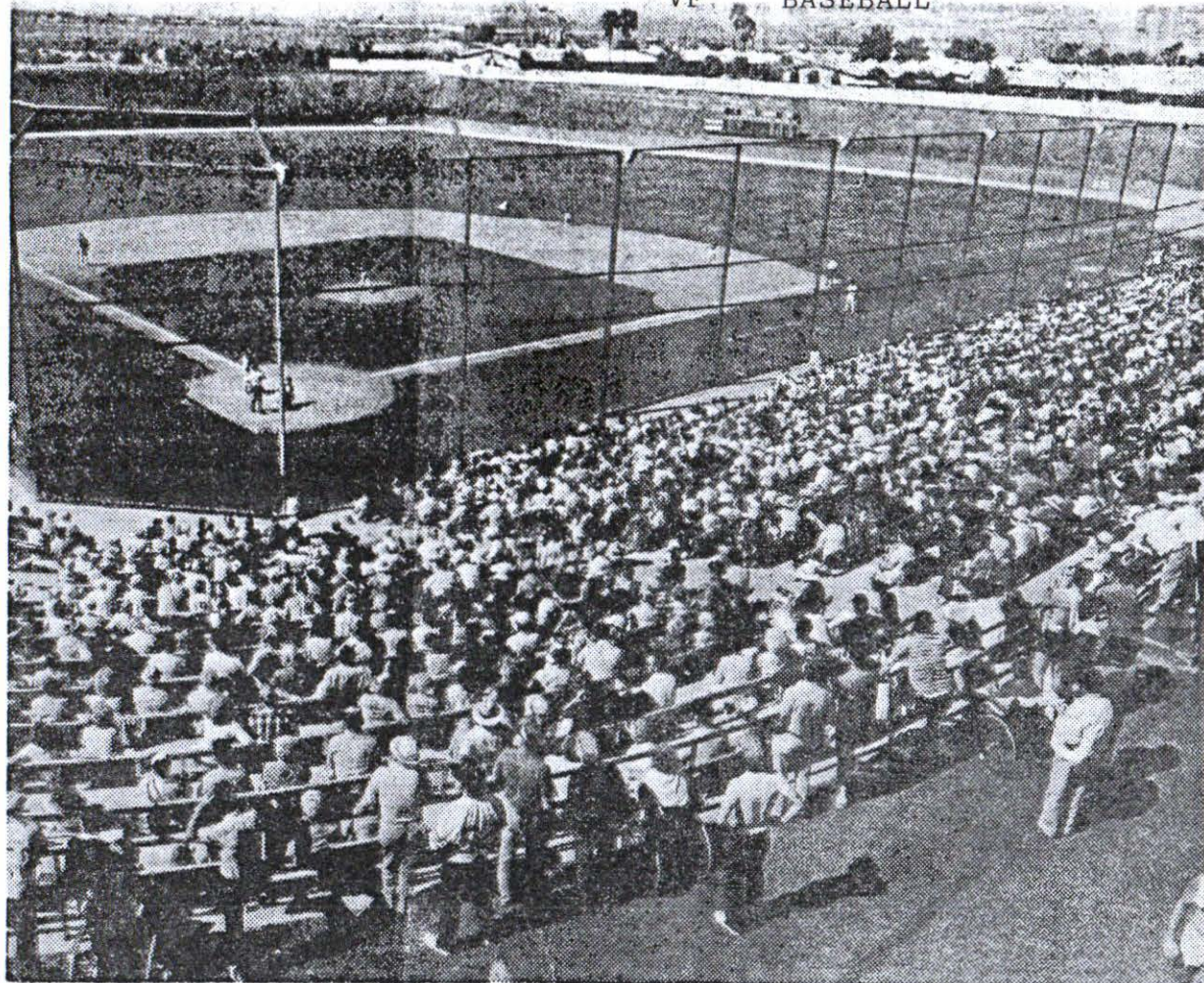
Dalton could not be reached for comment last week.

This is the 12th spring-training season the Brewers have played in Sun City, but Bade has said the stadium is likely to be used for some other purpose in 1988. He is required by a sale agreement with the Del E. Webb Development Co. to maintain the property as a ballpark through 1987.

"I think it's these kind of decisions that are going to result in the Brewers going to Chandler," Bade said.

The team has asked repeatedly for additional seating at the 4,000 capacity stadium.

But Murrel Crump, assistant director of the county's Department of Planning and Economic Development, said a county zoning regulation would require Bade to add one parking space for every five extra seats and obtain a variance from the Board of Adjustment for off-street parking.



Roy Cosway/Republic

Fans watch the Milwaukee Brewers take on the Oakland A's in a spring-training game at

Sun City Stadium. The owners of the ballpark say they need extra seating for some games.

Instead, the stadium owner sold land at Thunderbird Boulevard and 111th Avenue that has been used for stadium parking in the past and could have been listed in the variance application for the temporary seating, Crump said.

The Cactus League games have generated a "history of complaints about the parking situation out there," Crump added.

But Bade said the Thun-

derbird lot never has been considered part of the stadium's parking facilities because it is not adjacent to the ballpark.

The Cactus League season is only about 12 games long, and fans have always parked along nearby streets, even when the Thunderbird lot was available, he said.

"It's certainly a minimal disruption that it causes," Bade said, arguing that Phoenix residents are dis-

turbed more by the Veterans Memorial Coliseum parking problems.

However, Betty van Frendenberg, a Board of Adjustment member and Sun City resident, said she sympathizes with the concerns of stadium neighbors.

"They can't get in and out of their houses during the games. The fans park anywhere. They don't care if they block a driveway," van Frendenberg said.

Rec Centers drops stadium issue

By **ROBERTA LANDMAN**
Staff Writer

The Sun City Recreation Centers board of directors Thursday declined a bid to make the Sun City Stadium purchase a referendum issue in its December election of directors.

The vote, according to Rec Board President Herb Gardner, means "Rec Centers is not going to buy" the stadium.

"We're not going to recommend taking it over," he said at a question and answer session after the meeting.

DIRECTOR DORIS Timpano, who voted for the motion, later said the vote was not supposed to be on whether or not Rec Centers would buy the stadium.

"That's not what I was voting on." She said she voted on bringing the issue to the community to see what it wanted to do with the stadium matter.

Whatever the vote meant, it appeared the Rec Centers stadium purchase issue is dead.

AND WHATEVER the vote meant, it appeared to be based on:

—An economic projection of purchasing price.

—Cost of operating the facility.

—A history of yearly financial loss provided by one-time stadium owner Del E. Webb Development Co., which sold the property in 1983.

—AND APPARENT lack of community interest, according to Gardner.

Rec board's stadium referendum motion, offered by new board member and HOA chairman Julius Balick, was defeated in a 4-3 action which saw Balick abstaining.

HOA Tuesday approved inclusion of a stadium options referendum in its regular election balloting in November, with

one of those options being purchase by Rec Centers.

GARDNER OUTLINED approximate cost involved in buying the Sun City Stadium from B&B Construction.

He said a joint HOA-Rec Centers Committee investigating a possible Rec Centers stadium buy had learned a \$2,000,000 asking price appeared to be "a fixed non-negotiable price."

The addition of parking lot expansion would see the cost rise to \$2,200,000, Gardner said.

OVER AND ABOVE that cost would be a \$380,000 or \$8.44 per member annual cost for amortization, interest and operating loss, he said.

Devco, he said, has indicated an annual operating loss of between \$30,000 and \$75,000 from the stadium.

Director Len Haynes, who succeeded Josephine Escudier as vice president in

charge of bowling after her resignation Aug. 15, said he met with bowling league secretaries to discuss a decline in bowling alley and bowling alley snack shop revenues.

BELL LANES WAS a prime target of discussion, Haynes indicated. The group made recommendations for better maintenance of alleys and an investigation of service and quality of food, he said.

The board approved a motion by Haynes to allow children 12 years and older to bowl only during Bell Lanes open bowling hours when accompanied by a member from June 1-Sept. 1.

At present no one under 16 is allowed, said General Manager Steve Tritz.

THE BOWLING DIVISION reported income of \$571,413 for eight months

to date, as compared to 1983 income of \$574,224, or a .5 percent decrease.

In other action:

—The board defeated a motion to require management to solicit the advice of the club coordinator and club presidents before making major repair or replacement of equipment or material used by clubs.

MRS. TIMPANO, WHO cast the motion, said it was "only fair to consult with people who are most involved ... they may have beneficial ideas."

Directors Robert Sweigart and William Heckman voted with Mrs. Timpano.

—The board approved the Rec Centers chartering of a Hawaiian dance club called the Kealohas. The group has more than 100 members.

Form district to save stadium, Sun City told

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

October 10, 1984

Fund-raising project is recommended by county parks panel

By PAT SALLEN
Arizona Republic Staff

If Sun City residents want to keep Sun City Stadium as a sports facility, then their homeowners association should form a special recreation district to raise funds to buy it, the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission recommended Tuesday.

"It seems to me . . . the spirit of Sun City and their ideals, replete with their sense of independence as well as their capacity for volunteer work and cooperation, lends itself toward formation of a district," Commissioner Norman Miller said in making a motion for the recommendation.

No discussion other than Miller's comment accompanied the commission members' vote on the stadium.

The recommendation, made Tuesday, was the commission's choice of two offered by William Richwine, director of the county's Parks and Recreation Department, in a report he wrote at the commission's request last month.

Richwine said in his report that the stadium would be a liability, running an annual projected deficit of \$300,000.

Supervisor Hawley Atkinson, who had asked for the study of the possible purchase of the stadium, and Julius Balick, president of the Sun City Homeowners Association, said Tuesday they were not surprised by the commission's recommendation.

"I'm really not surprised, because the county has not been buying this kind of property," Balick said.

Atkinson called the commission's recommendation "excellent" and said he would not decide whether to have the Board of Supervisors consider the issue until he had talked to Sun City residents about it.

"I think we have adequate parks and recreation facilities," Atkinson said. "An undertaking like this would be so vast (that) the primary

community involved should take the lead."

The ballpark is the spring home of the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team and summer home of the Sun City Saints softball team.

Bade Boyes Partnership bought the stadium in 1983 from the Del E. Webb Development Co. and is required under the sales agreement to operate it as a stadium through 1987.

One of the owners, Jerry Bade, has said that the property probably will be redeveloped if it is not bought by a Sun City group or by Maricopa County.

El Mirage had considered buying the stadium but withdrew its offer during the summer. Last month, the board of directors of Recreation Centers of Sun City Inc. rejected a proposal to ask its members whether the organization should buy the stadium.

Balick's organization mailed out ballots Tuesday listing seven options regarding the stadium to allow members to determine what the organization should do.

The ballots were sent out with ballots for the group's board of directors election.

Balick said the ballots are to be returned by Nov. 9. However, the group may not decide on a policy until its December meeting, he said.

Richwine's first recommendation was that the Sun City homeowners group establish the special recreation district and that various Sun City organizations be in charge of marketing, operating and maintaining the facility.

This could be done, he wrote in the report, at a "reasonably low cost" if the organizations volunteered or charged little.

Richwine wrote in his report that to generate more revenue, the stadium could be expanded, promoted heavily and used for other purposes, even though it might compete with the Sundome or the Sun Bowl.

Richwine's second recommendation, which was not considered, was that the stadium's current owner be allowed to develop the stadium property as it sees fit and that Sun City residents join forces with either El Mirage or Peoria to develop other facilities.

VF

STADIUM

(Baseball)

County plans to study options to keep stadium in Sun City as a ballpark

By JIM WALSH
Northwest Valley Bureau

SUN CITY — The future of Sun City Stadium may be decided by county officials, who plan to study the cost of buying the facility or creating a tax district to purchase and maintain the ballpark.

A third option, which calls for the stadium to be purchased by the Recreation Centers of Sun City Inc., is under study by a committee of directors from the recreation board and the Sun City Homeowners Association.

The options are being considered to ensure that the ballpark, spring home of the Milwaukee Brewers and summer home of the Sun City Saints softball team, will not be developed for a commercial use.

The current owners, Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale, bought the property in 1983 from the Del E. Webb Development Co. under an agreement that the property be maintained as a stadium through 1987.

But because the partnership is affiliated with B&B Construction and Development, which has built shopping centers in Sun City and elsewhere, some Sun City residents are concerned that the stadium's days may be numbered.

Jerry Bade, one of the owners, could not be reached for comment Wednesday on the county's proposals but has said he has no plans for the stadium after 1987.

Supervisor Hawley Atkinson said he asked William Richwine, county parks director, to study the cost of acquiring the stadium.

Richwine said he will seek approval Tuesday from the county Parks and Recreation Commission

to study buying and maintaining the stadium, along with finding additional uses of the facility to offset the expense.

In an Aug. 27 opinion, Deputy County Attorney Rod MacMillan said the supervisors have authority to create a special recreation district, supported by taxes assessed to property owners in the northwest Valley retirement communities.

Dick Bryce, the supervisors' executive assistant, said a petition signed by 51 percent of property owners in the proposed district would be necessary for the supervisors to consider the matter.

Atkinson also proposed that an election be held in the retirement havens to see if property owners would be willing to pay more taxes to support the stadium. He estimated a tax increase of \$25 to \$45.

Residents debate Sun City gaining control of stadium

By Jim Walsh
Northwest Valley Bureau

SUN CITY — More than 75 residents applauded an El Mirage official when he told them the city had dropped plans to buy Sun City Stadium because "we don't want trouble" with the retirement community.

But the residents, who expressed a desire to have Sun City control the stadium's future, could not agree after more than an hour of discussion at a public hearing Friday on how their goal could be accomplished.

The spring-training home of the Milwaukee Brewers and summer home of the Sun City Saints, the stadium never has been controlled by Sun City residents. It formerly was owned by the Del E. Webb Development Co. and was bought last year by B&B Construction and Development of Glendale.

Even if El Mirage followed through on its plans to build a stadium of its own less than a mile from the Sun City facility in El Mirage, residents were worried that B&B might use the stadium property for an undesirable development in the future.

B&B is required to maintain the property, at 111th and Grand avenues, as a stadium through 1987 by the sales agreement with Webb.

Jerry Bade, one of the owners, has said he has no plans for the facility beyond 1987.

However, "our primary interest is to do what benefits Sun City," Bade said before the hearing, which he did not attend.

Resident Sidney Jacobs proposed at the hearing that it might be possible for a non-profit corporation to be set up as a tax shelter to buy the stadium and transfer ownership to Recreation Centers of Sun City Inc.

"The cost of the stadium cannot be so fantastically high for the residents to not be able to set up a corporation to collect money and buy it," Jacobs said.

William Heckman, another Sun City resident, said he would be willing to start the fund by contributing \$1,000. Other residents indicated they also would contribute.

Betty Van Fredenberg, vice chairman of the Maricopa County Board of Adjustment, proposed that the Sun City Homeowners Association

inquire about the feasibility of establishing a special district that would collect taxes to buy and maintain the stadium.

The stadium is an amenity that benefits all Sun City residents, Van Fredenberg said, so it would be fair to tax everyone to buy and support it.

But Doug Morris, another resident, said Sun City residents never have supported the stadium and might not be willing to contribute as much as \$2 million to buy it.

And another resident, who did not identify himself, described the 4,000-seat stadium as "a white elephant" that never could make money.

Other options discussed included endorsing the stadium's purchase by El Mirage if the city agreed to an "ironclad promise" not to annex the land, an apparent sticking point with several residents, who said they didn't want other communities to encroach on Sun City.

Joseph "Pepe" Martinez, El Mirage's special-projects director, had told the residents that annexation would not be necessary and the city wanted to ally itself with Sun City residents to fight the Glendale airport.

Martinez previously had said that El Mirage would consider buying Sun City Stadium if the purchase were endorsed by residents, but he did not mention that option at the hearing.

Another option was to do nothing and let the property be used for whatever B&B deems appropriate in 1988, said Julius Balick, the association's president.

Attempting to avoid an acrimonious debate, Balick had refused to allow Les Merydith, president of the Charter Government Committee, to finish reading a statement that advocated the incorporation of Sun City so a city government could operate the stadium and negotiate with sports teams.

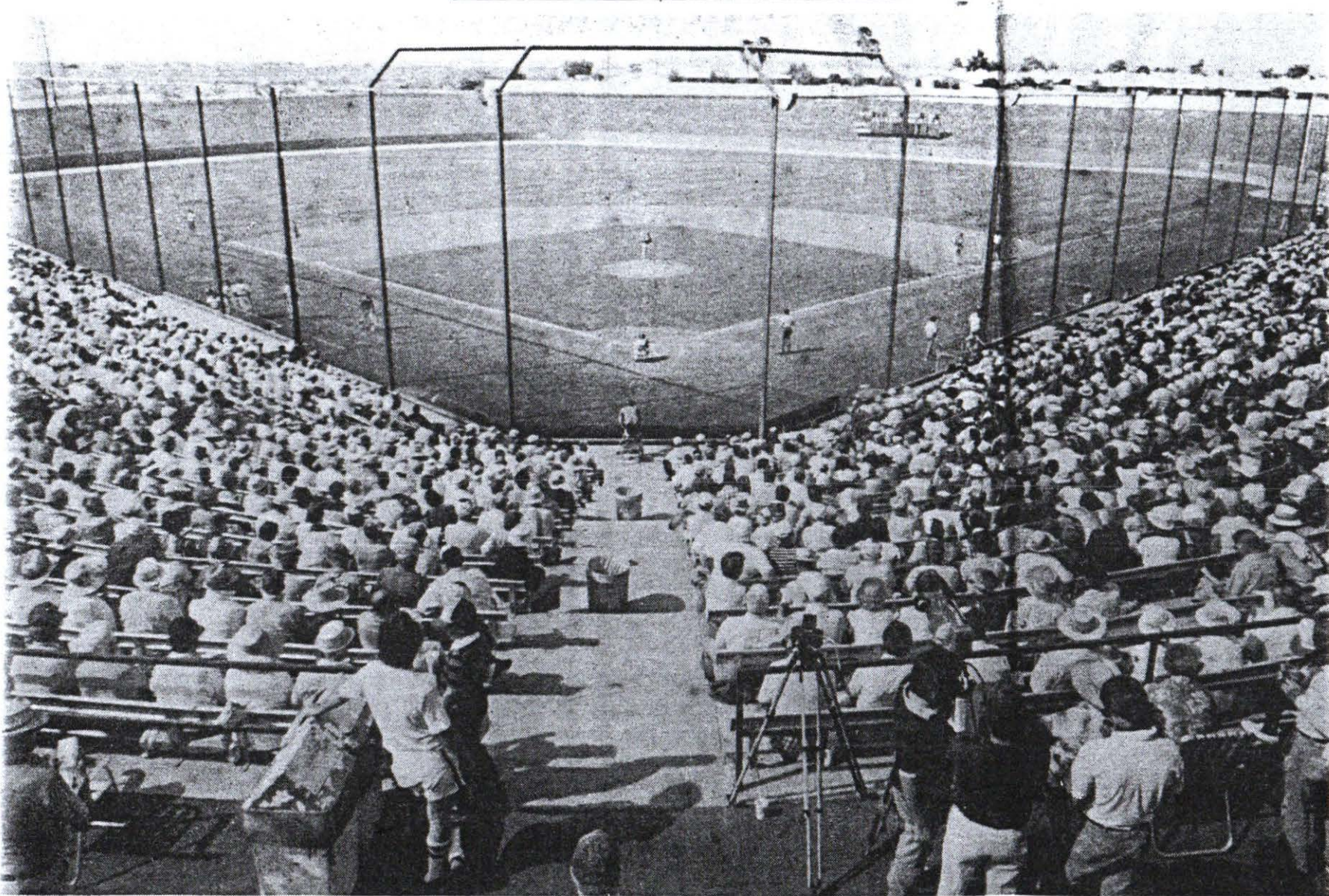
Balick said the issue will be studied by the association's Land Use, Planning and Building Review Committee and a report issued at a date not yet determined.

Additional study committees may be appointed "in a couple of months," he said, to pursue the option deemed appropriate by the association.

STADIUM
VF BASEBALL

The Arizona Republic
Wednesday, July 11, 1984 NW

NEWS-SUN THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1983



File photo shows Sun City Stadium packed with fans for Milwaukee Brewers exhibition game.

(News-Sun photo)

Brewers plan '85 move

(OVER)

By STEVE HAWLEY
Sports Editor

Milwaukee Brewers General Manager Harry Dalton has confirmed that he has talked with the new owner of Sun City Stadium, but said he still believes the team will be in Chandler for the 1985 spring training season.

"We're trying to tie up four or five loose ends," Dalton said of talks between Chandler representatives and the major league baseball organization.

"If they're put in place I'm sure we'll be going there."

WEBB SOLD THE stadium for an undisclosed price last week to Wade Boyes Partnership, which operates B & B Construction and Development Inc. of Glendale.

A condition of the sale agreement requires that the new owner maintain the property at 111th

and Grand avenues as a stadium until Jan. 1, 1988.

After that date Wade Boyes would be free to develop the property for another use.

UNDER TERMS of the agreement, Wade Boyes also will make available to the Brewers the practice field northwest of Sun City Stadium. Webb has agreed to lease that property to the new owner for \$1 a year through 1987, said Phil Brant, manager of commercial sales and leasing for the company.

Brant said Webb had been losing \$30,000 to \$75,000 annually on the stadium and "probably would have sold the property even if it had been making money.

"The stadium was a Devco-owned asset in Sun City and the plan was to get out," Brant said. "It's part of a much larger pic-

ture rather than (the) sale of any particular property. The stadium was not treated in any way apart from other sales," he added. "There are only three or four properties Webb now owns in Sun City."

BRANT CALLED the stadium a "unique property" and said it was not easy to sell. He said one of the major problems Webb faced in trying to sell the property was finding a buyer who would accept a five-year moratorium that prohibits use of the land for purposes other than operating a stadium.

The Saints also will be allowed to use the stadium through 1987, Brant said.

"We feel very fortunate in finding an investor who could live with a plan like that," Brant added. "We had to have it that way ..."

DALTON SAID the Brewers began an active search for a new spring training site after learning in 1981 of Webb's plans to sell the stadium.

The Brewers signed a one-year extension to their 10-year lease agreement with Webb last spring when it became clear that Chandler would not have a facility ready by 1984.

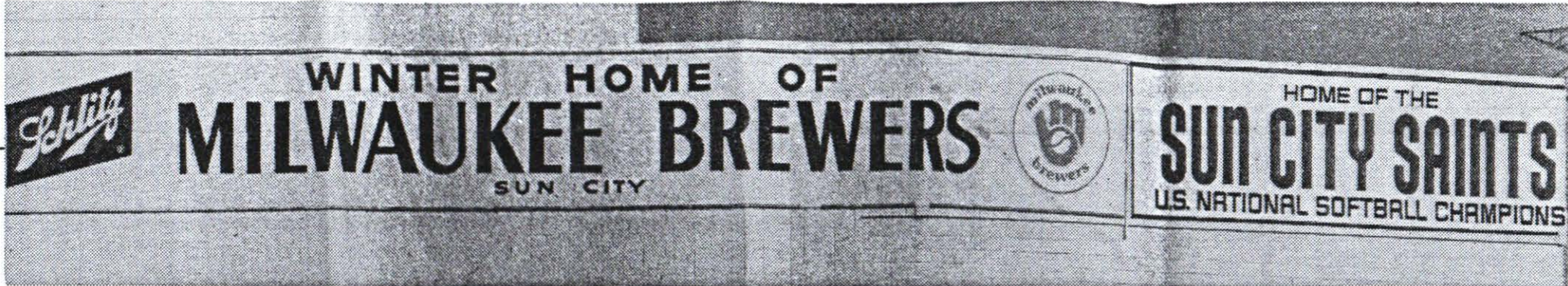
Although construction still has not begun on a facility, Chandler and the Brewers have an "agreement in principle."

CHANDLER MAYOR Jim Patterson, who has played a major role in negotiations with the Brewers, said he hopes a formal agreement can be signed by the middle of this month.

Before that can happen, the mayor said, Chandler must ac-

* Stadium, A2

10/5/83



Roy Cosway/Republic

The Brewers will return to Sun City Stadium at Grand and 111th avenues in March for their last spring-training session before moving on to a new stadium in Chandler in 1985.

Bases empty: Brewers move to Chandler leaves loyal fans stranded

By Jim Walsh
Northwest Valley Bureau

SUN CITY — Gene Downing, a 65-year old retiree, started playing baseball as a small child with his father.

An injury ended his brief professional career in 1936, but Downing has stayed close to the sport he loves by being an umpire for 37 years.

Despite his age, Downing again will step behind the plate in March when the Milwaukee Brewers return for spring training here.

But Downing's long association with baseball probably will end involuntarily in March 1985, when the Brewers move to Chandler.

Downing is disappointed that he won't be umpiring anymore, but what's worse is that he won't even be able to see his favorite team very much because Chandler is a 100-mile round trip from Sun City.

During his 10 years as a spring-training umpire, Downing developed friendships with many of the Brewers players and coaches. So the distance between Sun City and Chandler also will separate Downing from his friends.

"I guess I'll just have to find something else to do with my time," he said with resignation.

Although most Sun City residents are not as attached to the Brewers as Downing, he said there are probably about 200 rabid fans, many of whom never

miss a game.

Les Hafemeister, "Uncle" John Poja, Joe Davisson and Don Shupe said they and many other Sun City residents also are disappointed about the Brewers' decision to leave.

Hafemeister and Poja are former Milwaukee residents.

"It was like someone stuck a knife in our back," Hafemeister said of the Milwaukee Braves' move to Atlanta for the 1966 season.

The Brewers arrival in Milwaukee for the 1970 season helped satisfy the beer city's baseball cravings, but now that Hafemeister lives in Sun City, he finds a Milwaukee team is leaving him again.

He is not pleased. "We're all disappointed because we're loyal fans," Hafemeister said.

Poja goes to every Brewers spring-training game but does not get a chance to watch the action very frequently. He said he has more fun hawking souvenirs for the Sun Cities Lions Foundation.

"I don't need to work. I just enjoy the people. I love the people, and I meet lots of them," he said. "I don't like to see (the Brewers) go."

Davisson, manager of the United Bank branch in Sun City West, calls former Brewers manager Harvey Kuenn, a Sun City winter resident, "a long-time
—Brewers, Extra 6

(over)

Brewers

Continued from Extra 1

customer of mine and a long-time friend."

This will be the 11th year the Brewers will train in Sun City, and when the team moves to Chandler, it will break "the love affair between Sun City, Sun City West and the Brewers," he said. "They're part of our community."

Shupe, a former high school athletic director in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has managed Sun City Stadium for Del E. Webb Development Co. Midwesterners flock to the stadium each spring to spend their vacation with the Brewers, he said.

After it became known in March 1982 that the Brewers were talking with Chandler businessmen about a possible move, "about 50 people a day would ask me if the Brewers were coming back," Shupe said.

"They really look forward to it."

• •

Harry Dalton, the Brewers general manager who is considered among the sharpest executives in the game, said his team has not betrayed its fans.

But while their interests are important, he said, "The primary purpose of spring training is to prepare our team for a 162-game schedule."

Sun City Stadium at Grand and 111th avenues was offered for sale to the Brewers by Webb, but Dalton said it would have been foolish for the team to invest in a facility it would use for only one month each year.

Because Webb was committed to selling the stadium and the new owner might want to use the property for purposes other than baseball, the Brewers started looking for a new training site, Dalton said.

"When your landlord tells you

"When your landlord tells you he's going to sell your house, you look for another place to live."

— Harry Dalton

look for another place to live," he said.

Chandler aggressively recruited the team and offered a 5- or 10-year lease, an arrangement far preferable to the Brewers than buying the Sun City facility. With Sun City Stadium's future still uncertain, the Brewers signed a letter of agreement with the Chandler group in September.

The Brewers have a contract through 1989 for their minor-league players to train at Peoria's Greenway Sports Complex, less than a mile from Sun City.

Jim Walker, Peoria city manager, said he asked Dalton if the Brewers would be interested in moving major-league spring training to Peoria, but Dalton said he decided against negotiating with Peoria to avoid a bidding match between the two cities, with the Brewers sandwiched between.

Fred Kuentz, president of the Webb firm, said, "We feel very bad about them (the Brewers) leaving we really do."

Looking back on the events leading to the Brewers' intent to move, Kuentz said, "I had second thoughts" about the Webb deal with the team.

Kuentz said the decision to sell the stadium was made by the company before he became president in April 1982. Webb had spent money on the facility for years,

the company's only remi-

ing holding in Sun City. Webb wanted to use all its money to develop Sun City West.

George Reave, who preceded Kuentz as president from April 1982 to April 1983, said the Brewers could have stayed in the stadium under a new owner and did not have to leave Sun City.

"If you sell an office building, it doesn't mean that all the tenants have to move out," he said.

But Reave said the trouble began when the Brewers asked Joe Aubin, Webb's interim president from September 1981 to April 1982, about future lease arrangements and received no response.

Dalton began looking for another stadium "when he didn't get the answers he needed" from Webb, Reave said. "I told Harry that I didn't blame him at all."

Although the company was committed to selling the stadium, Kuentz said he told the Brewers that Webb wanted them to stay. He named Dalton a price for the stadium, but he said it was not Webb's final offer and in the interest of keeping the Brewers in Sun City, would sell the stadium to the team for less than to any other buyer.

Despite Webb's stated intention of making concessions on the purchase price, the Brewers chose Chandler, Kuentz said.



The No Bad-Hop Baseball Stadium

By Ernie Mehl

In a number of ways, this is a unique stadium which is host to major league baseball in the Spring, softball during the Summer, Fourth of July fireworks displays and, on at least one occasion, to the close harmony of Barbershoppers.

Opened July 10 in 1971, the stadium can accommodate 4,000. It was built on a wash near the Agua Fria river, which suggested an ideal condition for a bowl. As a result, the playing field is 23 feet below the 500-car parking lot. It boasts an excellent lighting system for night games.

The contoured aluminum seats provide enough leg room so that a famished fan can return to his seat carrying ten hot dogs, an equivalent supply of liquids, a few sacks of peanuts, and plenty of buttered popcorn, without stumbling and spilling the lot. A 30-foot screen extends in front of the stands from home plate to first and third bases, supplying ample protection from errant foul balls. Thus one can turn to his seatmate and discuss the aunt who lives in Dubuque in perfect safety.

The San Francisco Giants used Sun City Stadium in 1972 and the following year the Brewers came on the scene. Their trial season convinced the owners, and they signed a 10-year contract.

This Spring's schedule brought the world's champion Oakland Athletics, the Chicago Cubs, Cleveland Indians and San Diego Padres to Sun City. Programs and concessions were handled by local Lions Clubs, with profits going for charitable projects.

During the Summer the great affection of Sun Citians is lavished on the Sun City Saints, members of the Pacific Coast League of women's softball. They have placed as high as third in the National Softball Championships. This year the regional titular games will be played in the Sun City Stadium.

There is also a new addition to the stadium agenda. Page's Raiders, Arizona State fast pitch softball champions for three consecutive years, will play their "home" games at Sun City Stadium, and are certain to win many local fans. As Page's Sun City Raiders they will be host team in the International Softball Congress World Tournament which will bring teams from throughout the nation to play at Sun City.

The crack of the bat, an umpire's called strike, the crowd's roar of "kill the ump," and the concessionaire's "call" are familiar sounds at Sun City Stadium from early Spring through Autumn. Sun City's no-bad-hop stadium has scored a real "hit" with players and fans alike. □ □ □

SUN CITY STADIUM

Sun City Stadium ballpark, with a seating capacity of 3,500 on 12.518 acres of land, is located at 111th Avenue and the Santa Fe Railroad in Sun City, Arizona. This location also contains a parking lot, concession stands, and dressing rooms. A separate parking lot on 3.469 acres of land, to handle overflow parking, is located north of the Stadium on 111th Avenue.

The facility was built by Del E. Webb Development Company (DEVCO), at a cost of \$1,115,710. The current full cash valuation placed on the Stadium by the Maricopa County Assessors Office is \$1,368,675.

Current zoning is residence 3 (R-3), a low restrictive value.

DEVCO has owned and operated the Stadium since its opening in June, 1971.

The operations have not significantly changed since the opening. The Milwaukee Brewers Major League baseball team is in their tenth year of a ten year contract. The Sun City Saints are on a year-to-year contract basis.

Historical financials along with 1983 and 1984 projections have been provided. These financials indicate a near break even operation by 1984.

SUN CITY STADIUM

Original Construction Costs
1972-1980

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Original Cost</u>
Stadium	1/1/72	\$ 681,885
Stadium Expansion	7/1/74	\$ 157,159
Stadium Expansion	1/1/77	\$ 31,378
Stadium Additions	1/1/80	\$ 245,288
Total Costs		<u>\$1,115,710</u>

SUN CITY STADIUM

Estimated Property Taxes
1983

	<u>Total Valuation</u>	<u>Assessment Percentage</u>	<u>Total Assessment</u>	<u>Estimated Tax Rate/100 Assessment</u>	<u>Total 1983 Property Tax</u>
Limited Valuation	\$ 953,939	25%	\$238,480	\$3.00	\$ 7,154.40
Full Cash Valuation	\$1,368,675	25%	\$342,165	\$2.00	\$ 6,843.30
Total Estimated Taxes					<u>\$13,997.70</u>

SUN CITY STADIUM
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
1981 - 1984 (Projected)

Page 2

	<u>1981</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>1982</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>1983</u> <u>Forecast</u>	<u>1984</u> <u>Pro-Forma</u>
<u>Operating Expenses</u>				
Salaries & Wages	\$ 24,714	\$ 15,657	\$ 12,768	\$ 12,000
Utilities:				
Electric & Gas	8,414	8,376	9,500	9,000
Water	8,103	7,431	7,200	7,200
Waste Removal	972	1,278	1,600	1,500
Telephone	<u>1,102</u>	<u>1,005</u>	<u>1,200</u>	<u>-</u>
Total	<u>18,591</u>	<u>18,090</u>	<u>19,500</u>	<u>17,700</u>
Repairs & Maintenance:				
Building	4,674	4,621	4,600	2,000
Equipment	5,122	2,961	3,600	3,000
Grounds	73,105	39,830	47,582	35,000
Parking Lot	-	850	1,500	750
Rolling Stock	<u>891</u>	<u>590</u>	<u>2,300</u>	<u>750</u>
Total	<u>83,792</u>	<u>48,852</u>	<u>59,582</u>	<u>41,500</u>
Administrative Expenses:				
License & Fees	189	172	350	200
Depreciation	607	607	600	-
Insurance	889	126	-	-
Property Tax	10,261	11,711	10,800	9,000
Cleaning Contract	-	2,554	-	-
Overhead Allocation	6,675	4,005	-	-
Operating Supplies	<u>8,178</u>	<u>1,498</u>	<u>1,800</u>	<u>1,500</u>
Total	<u>26,799</u>	<u>20,673</u>	<u>13,550</u>	<u>10,700</u>
Total Operating Expenses	<u>\$153,896</u>	<u>\$103,272</u>	<u>\$105,400</u>	<u>\$ 81,900</u>

SUN CITY STADIUM
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
1981 - 1984 (Projected)

	<u>1981</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>1982</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>1983</u> <u>Forecast</u>	<u>1984</u> <u>Pro-Forma</u>
<u>Revenues</u>				
Brewers: Admissions	\$ 94,648	\$ 84,938	\$ 85,000	\$100,000
Concessions	48,551	42,891	43,000	51,600
Programs	6,182	10,582	10,600	12,720
Clubhouse Recupe	12,908	8,743	8,800	-
Saints: Admissions (Rental)	39,098	19,692	20,000	25,000
Concessions	16,911	-	-	-
Programs	-	-	-	-
Total Revenue	<u>218,296</u>	<u>166,846</u>	<u>167,400</u>	<u>189,320</u>
<u>Cost of Admission</u>				
Brewers: Tickets	4,037	365	300	300
Ticket Takers	1,555	1,391	1,350	1,300
28% Admissions	30,027	25,846	24,850	40,000
Visitors 40% Admissions	42,895	36,925	35,000	40,000
Security	3,586	2,510	2,550	2,500
Janitorial	2,814	-	1,000	1,000
All Other	862	772	1,950	750
Saints: Ticket Takers	2,144	-	-	-
40% Admissions	12,682	-	-	-
Security	3,557	1,455	500	500
Janitorial	3,163	-	-	-
All Other	1,693	620	500	500
Total Cost of Admission	<u>109,015</u>	<u>69,884</u>	<u>68,000</u>	<u>86,850</u>
<u>Cost of Concession</u>				
Brewers: Cost of Food	9,003	12,991	13,300	15,480
Cost of Beverage	10,531	8,241	7,900	10,320
Concession Help	2,868	2,608	2,800	2,800
Saints: Cost of Food	3,035	-	-	-
Cost of Beverage	3,158	-	-	-
Concession Help	3,150	38	-	-
Total Cost of Concession	<u>31,745</u>	<u>23,878</u>	<u>24,000</u>	<u>28,600</u>
Gross Margin	77,536	73,084	75,400	73,870
Operating Expenses	<u>153,896</u>	<u>103,272</u>	<u>105,400</u>	<u>81,900</u>
Net Profit (Loss)	<u>\$(76,360)</u>	<u>\$(30,188)</u>	<u>\$(30,000)</u>	<u>\$(8,030)</u>