

Station will boost police protection

By MICHAEL MURPHY
Staff Writer

Sun City and Sun City West will receive an increase in police protection when workers complete construction of a Maricopa County Sheriff's Department substation near Sun City West, sheriff's officials said.

Capt. David Lofgren, commander of field operations, said the substation on Bell and Dysart roads will house about 35 uniformed officers, six detectives and several administrative and clerical staffers now stationed in the Glendale substation.

The 13,072-square-foot building is scheduled to open in January.

"IT WILL provide more protection for Sun City," said Ray Blanchette, sheriff's department public information officer. "If the crooks see the additional cars in the area, then they'll think twice about committing a crime."

The station also may cut down officers' response times because of its proximity to patrol areas, Lofgren said. Many officers now spend about 20 minutes reaching their beats from the Glendale station.

In addition, since officers will change shifts three times per day from the station, more deputies will be on hand to serve the area, Blanchette said. About eight deputies currently serve Sun City, as well as other northwest communities, on a 24-hour basis.

"There will be more saturated coverage during certain hours, especially during beat changes," he added.

SEVERAL DETENTION officers will supervise prisoners in the station's temporary holding tank.

Prisoners in the tanks, including some arrested by the Department of Public

Safety, will be transferred to the Maricopa County Jail in Phoenix.

Minimum security prisoners, who would provide maintenance services, may work as trustees at the substation after operations get underway, Blanchette said.

Glendale city staff and police will occupy Glendale substation offices when the sheriff's staff moves to the building, Lofgren said.

SEVEN TO EIGHT deputies currently patrol an area extending from Camelback Road to Wittman and New River. Another sheriff's substation in Wickenburg will remain open, Lofgren said.

Designed with Spanish architecture, the building will occupy nine of 18 acres the county purchased from the Del E. Webb Development Co., which retained rights to review the building's design. Construction began in December 1980.

The county awarded the original contract for the building to H.R.S. Inc. of Goodyear in November 1980 for about \$1,374,000. That figure, however, was later raised to \$1,377,848 when Devco requested changes in outdoor lighting plans.

Most of the funds for the station are from a federal revenue sharing fund.

Sun City woman killed

Sheriff's investigators release few details

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

A 62-year-old Sun City woman was found dead in her home Monday, an apparent homicide victim.

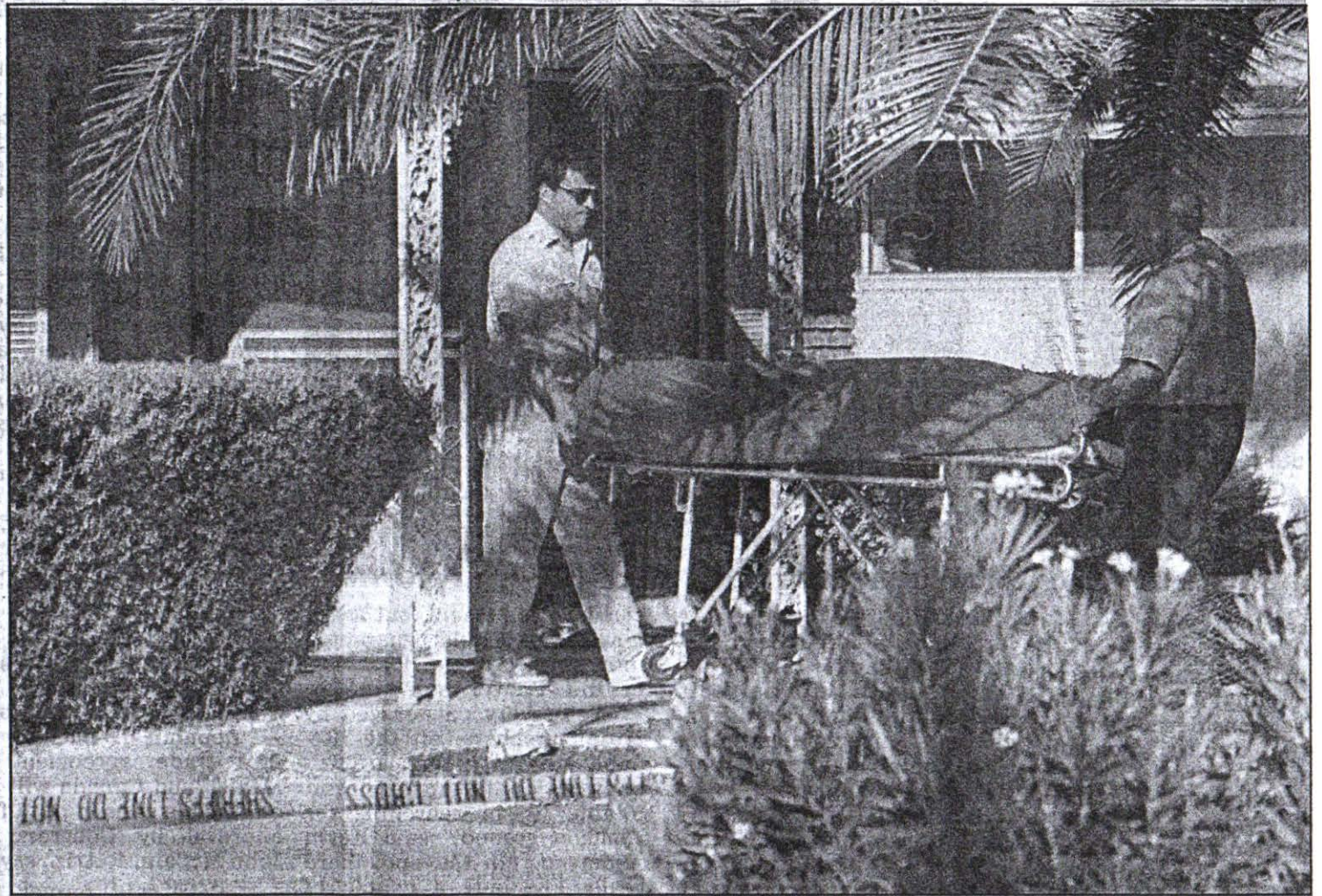
Morris Snyder discovered the body of his wife Charlotte inside their home at 9948 W. Clair Drive just before noon, said Lisa Allen, sheriff's office spokeswoman.

Sheriff's office homicide investigators have not released how Mrs. Snyder was killed or where in the house her body was found.

"That's something that only the killer knows," Allen said. "Unless they (investigators) really think that they're coming close, they're not going to release that kind of information."

The county medical examiner's office had not completed an autopsy as of this morning.

See Killing stuns, A5



The body of Charlotte Snyder is removed from her home at 9948 W. Clair Drive. Mrs. Snyder's body was discovered by her husband late Monday morn-

ing. Sheriff's investigators are terming her death a homicide. The county medical examiner's office will conduct an autopsy.

Frances Guarino/Daily News-Sun

OVER

Sun Citians express disbelief, mourn slain friend, neighbor

By J.J. McCORMACK
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — It's not uncommon for retirees here to leave their doors open to let in the cool morning and night air.

They go walking after dark.

They feel a sense of security.

People watch out for each other here. They notice when something is amiss.

That's why Charlotte Snyder's slaying Monday is so difficult for many Sun Citians to comprehend.

"I just don't know what to think about it," said friend and neighbor Millie Burdo.

Burdo was standing in her doorway Monday afternoon watching the media converge on the ranch-style house across the street where Mrs. Snyder lived with her husband, Morris, for about 2½ years.

"I just talked to her yesterday. It makes me sick, sick. I can't believe this."

"You read this in the books but it doesn't happen to you," Burdo said.

"No, not here. It's not supposed to hap-

pen here. This is Sun City. It's not supposed to happen in Sun City," said a visibly shaken Alice Miller, also a friend and neighbor of the Snyders.

Miller drove to the Snyder home Monday afternoon immediately after learning of her friend's death. There, she was told that Mrs. Snyder had been slain.

"I thought it was her heart," a grief-stricken Miller said.

Miller's assertion that violent crime doesn't happen in Sun City is correct, said Maricopa County Sheriff's Detective Sgt. Rick Falls.

"As far as I'm concerned, homicides don't happen in Sun City," said the 15-year veteran of the sheriff's office.

Falls said the majority of homicides in Sun City over the years have been homicide-suicides involving elderly couples.

Miller, Burdo and other neighbors and friends described Mrs. Snyder as a giving woman who was quick to lend a hand to

See Neighbors participate, A5

Killing stuns neighbors

—From A1

Investigators are looking for the victim's car — a blue 4-door Plymouth Acclaim with Arizona license plate HHL-416 — but will not say whether anything is missing from the house.

Mrs. Snyder, who was recovering from heart surgery, left her home between 6:30 and 7 a.m. to go to a cardiac rehabilitation class at Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital, Allen said. A hospital spokeswoman said Mrs. Snyder did attend the class.

The victim's husband left the house in his car shortly after his wife's departure, Allen said.

When he returned home between 11:30 and 11:45 a.m., he found his wife's body inside and contacted the sheriff's office at 11:51 a.m., Allen said.

Mrs. Snyder was declared dead at the scene.

Units from the sheriff's office, a van from the county

medical examiner and several television vehicles were parked along both sides of the small street late Monday.

Neighbors living on either side of the victim's house said they were shocked by the murder.

"It's just horrible. It's just unbelievable," said Audrey Rasmussen, who lives to the east of the Snyders.

"I was hanging clothes out in the (back) yard this morning," she said, adding that she had been putting laundry out to dry from 7 a.m. until about 9:30 a.m. "I didn't hear anything or see anything."

W. Earl Miller, who lives to the west of the Snyder home, said he was home until almost noon and also noticed nothing out-of-the-ordinary.

"I went to the library about 11:30 a.m. and did some shopping and so forth," he said, "and when I came back, it (the Snyder house) was roped off."

Yellow crime scene tape partially encircled the front yard as sheriff's office investigators worked inside.

The doors of the white ranch-style home were blacked with investigators' fingerprint dust.

Miller stood with a neighbor and gazed toward the Snyders' home.

He said he didn't know the couple well; they were "just neighbors, that's all."

Both worked a few days a week; Mrs. Snyder had been bookkeeping for Meals on Wheels and Mr. Snyder is a night superintendent for a Phoenix aluminum company, he said.

The couple moved to Sun City from Mishawaka, Ind., a little more than two years ago.

"They seem to be very nice people, both of them very considerate and loving," Miller said.

"It's quite a shock."

Crime in the Sun Cities

Peaceful retirement community stunned by brutal murder of 62-year-old resident

By ANNE RYMAN
Sun Cities Independent

Sun City residents were shocked last week following the murder of a 62-year-old Sun City woman in her Phase One home.

Charlotte Snyder, 62, was stabbed to death the morning of Aug. 30 inside her home at 9948 Clair Drive.

Details of the murder remained sketchy last week. Sheriff's officials refused to say what room she was killed in or whether any items were missing from the home. At press time, authorities had no suspects and would not comment upon a possible motive for the killing.

Mrs. Snyder apparently left the home early Aug. 30 for separate engagements and was last seen attending an exercise class at Boswell Hospital. Her husband, Morris, discovered her body when he returned to the home and called the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office shortly before noon, says Lisa Allen, sheriff's office spokeswoman.

Answers to the case may lie with the recovery of the woman's 1991 four-door, blue Plymouth Acclaim, which was reported missing following the murder. Deputies have searched Sun City streets, surrounding desert areas and entered the number with a national computer system used by all law-enforcement agencies.

The car, with a license number of HHL-416, had not been recovered as of late last week.

"The car is a very important part of the investigation and we're searching everywhere it's likely to be," Ms. Allen says.

Murders are a rare occurrence in the retirement community.

See ■ MURDER, Page 17



According to sheriff's office records, the last murder took place two years ago. This is one of the reasons neighbors say they are so shocked by the tragedy.

"It's a beautiful place here and the closest thing to heaven on earth. But even here you have to be careful because there's a lot of nuts running around (in today's society.)" says Millie Burdo, a

neighbor of the slain woman.

Neighbor H.N. Michelson echoed Mrs. Burdo's feelings.

"We've lived here for 20 years and never had any trouble," says Mr. Mickelson, a retired pharmacist from North Dakota.

He says the murder in his neighborhood has not made him fear for his safety because he takes precautions such as locking his

doors, even when at home.

"I don't feel (afraid), but you never know."

Although she describes the murder as a "terrible shock," neighbor Marie Miller says she feels safe living in the retirement community. A Chicago native, she tends to be cautious but isn't afraid to walk outside after dark.

Show re-enacts slaying

By J.J. McCORMACK
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The chief investigator in the Charlotte Snyder homicide returned to the scene of the crime Tuesday in an attempt to shed light on the unsolved case.

Maricopa County sheriff's Detective Doug Beatty went to the Snyder home in Sun City for a re-enactment of the Aug. 30 slaying. The re-enactment will be featured in a Silent Witness "Crime of the Week" installment on a Valley television station.

Beatty requested the re-enactment on the chance that key information about the crime will be offered anonymously through Silent Witness — a non-profit organization that solicits tips about crime with the help of the media.

"We're hoping Silent Witness can narrow the focus of our investigation," Beatty said in an on-camera interview with Phoenix police Sgt. Mike Townsend.

Beatty told Townsend investigators believe Charlotte Snyder knew her attacker because of physical evidence found at the scene.

The detective declined to give specifics about that evidence.

Three of seven homicide

'We're hoping Silent Witness can narrow the focus of our investigation.'

Doug Beatty

Maricopa County Sheriff's Detective

detectives in the sheriff's office are working the Snyder case full time, Beatty said.

The sheriff's investigator confirmed a handgun, jewelry, cash, credit cards and personal checks were missing from the Snyder home, as well as other "small items." As of Tuesday afternoon, no one had attempted to use the credit cards or the checks, he said.

A volunteer actress portrayed Charlotte Snyder for Tuesday's filming. The slaying victim's husband, Morris, played himself. He was filmed retracing his steps through the house the day he found his wife dead.

With the cameras rolling, Snyder told Townsend he returned from a shopping trip shortly before noon Aug. 30 and found the house in disarray.

He said he called 911 immediately after spotting his wife lying in a pool of blood on the floor of a room she used as an office.

Snyder sobbed as the interview with Townsend continued at the kitchen table. When filming wrapped up, he cried

for several minutes, shaking his head in his hands.

"I knew it was going to be hard," he said, rubbing the tears from his eyes. "I relive this every day."

Asked if he had any theories about the slaying, Snyder said only two kinds of people can walk around Sun City neighborhoods unnoticed — elderly people and groundskeepers.

"Anybody else comes into Sun City — they're noticed," he said.

Snyder appealed during the interview for his wife's killer to surrender.

"He's done wrong. If he's done this here to her, he's going to do it again."

The Silent Witness re-enactment of the Snyder slaying is scheduled to air four times next week during newscasts on KPNX, Channel 12. It may be seen during the 10 p.m. news Tuesday, the noon news Wednesday (Nov. 10), the morning news on Thursday and on the evening news Saturday.

Arrests are made in 20 percent to 30 percent of the crime re-enactments featured on television, Townsend said.

House holds memories of Sun City slaying victim

By J.J. McCORMACK
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Morris Snyder would rather not stay in the house where his wife, Charlotte, was stabbed to death.

The widower wants to move, perhaps rent an apartment, and sell his house.

A Realtor told Snyder publicity surrounding his wife's Aug. 30 slaying has rendered couple's Sun City home unsalable — at least for a while.

So instead of renting an apartment while continuing mortgage payments, Snyder said he will keep his house and help finance a \$10,000 reward for information leading to an arrest and conviction of his wife's killer.

"I'd rather put up the money for the \$10,000 reward and suffer out here than let this (crime) go by the way-side," he said.

Morris Snyder announced Tuesday that family members are offering the reward.

"We hope that will get somebody to talk," said the aluminum company supervisor.

It has been two months and two days since Snyder returned home from a shopping trip and found his wife laying in a pool of blood on the floor of a room she used as an office.

No one has been arrested in

connection with the case. Maricopa County Sheriff's Detective Doug Beatty said evidence found in the Snyder home indicates Charlotte knew her assailant.

Both Beatty and Morris Snyder are featured in a Silent Witness television re-enactment of the homicide.

Beatty said he requested the Snyder case be broadcast on the weekly TV segment to help investigators narrow down leads.

Morris Snyder said he agreed to allow filming at his home believing the re-enactment may produce information or evidence that might help solve the case.

Charlotte Snyder was last seen alive at about 8:30 a.m. Aug. 30 when she left a physical therapy session at Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital in Sun City. Morris Snyder found his wife dead shortly before noon. After his wife left for the hospital that morning, he went shopping for materials for a bathroom remodeling project.

In an interview before the Silent Witness filming, Snyder said he has been working long hours since his wife was killed.

"I have good days and bad days," he said.

Snyder's face was drawn,

his eyes weary and masked with dark circles.

"I don't stay at home too much. If I'm not at work, I go for a drive, go window shopping or do something to occupy me."

His tall frame resting in an easy chair, Snyder talked of how he recently rearranged some household furniture to help erase the homicide scene from his mind.

He said he likely will stay in the Valley, at least until his retirement in 18 months.

"I like Arizona. Maybe I'll be a snowbird. I don't know."

Snyder said he and Charlotte moved to Sun City from Indiana three years ago believing the retirement community was free of crime.

He said he now knows Sun City isn't immune to crime. "I just can't understand why it happened to me."

Snyder said he feared being a repeat victim of crime so intensely after his wife's death he purposely would leave personal items around the house. That way, he could tell immediately upon entering the house if something was amiss.

"I guess I'm pretty much over that now."

However, Snyder said he is careful to keep his house and car doors locked,

Coverage of curfew raises safety concerns

By MIKE GARRETT

Daily News-Sun staff

Del Webb Corp. officials are hoping heavy media coverage of a youth curfew for the Sun Cities won't have a negative impact on the communities.

CBS News Los Angeles correspondents visited the Daily News-Sun to report on the curfew passed by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors.

Paul Harvey reported the curfew during his syndicated radio show's "now hear this" segment.

ABC's national radio network has broadcast the story of the curfew, to be imposed Jan. 7, across the country.

The curfew was reported in "USA Today."

"It has been blown clear out of proportion," said Martha Moyer, Del Webb manager of public and community relations. "We had all kinds of calls yesterday (Thursday) coming into our sales pavilion from people all over the country concerned about our crime here.

"We had a gal call from the state of Washington who had

'We had all kinds of calls yesterday coming into our sales pavilion from people all over the country concerned about our crime here.

**Martha Moyer
Del Webb manager
of community relations**

heard it on the ABC radio network and wanted to cancel her vacation plans because of the gangs we have in this community," Moyer said.

"I called her back and talked to her for 10 minutes to share with her the real story — that the Sun Cities have one of the lowest crime rates per capita in the country.

"I will attest to the fact that there is no crime wave in the Sun Cities," Sheriff Joe Arpaio said. "This curfew is being pro-active and preventive medicine so crime doesn't happen there like in Phoenix

and other places.

"We're going to stop them before they get there," Arpaio said.

"The way it's being portrayed is that we are just crime-ridden here," Moyer said. "It was a very innocent move to have the curfew in this community but it has resulted in a real marketing challenge because people are assuming the worst."

Moyer said it may be a problem not only for Del Webb to think about but for anybody associated with national marketing of the Sun Cities.

So far, Webb is apparently the only one to get the national calls of concern.

"We haven't had any calls here," said Nancy Grey, executive officer of the Sun Cities Association of Realtors.

"Nobody has been calling us," said Michele O'Hair, member services manager of the Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce.

"I checked with all our staff volunteers and they say they haven't gotten any calls," said

See Burglaries dominate, A5

Burglaries dominate SC crimes, sheriff says

—From A1

Norma Pitcairn, office manager of the Sun City Visitors Center.

Even without the calls, Moyer said people nearing retirement age who may be thinking about locating in the Sun Cities may be having second thoughts because of the media coverage.

Arpaio said he has been interviewed by CBS News about the curfew and has had several national media inquiries on the sheriff's posse patrolling the Valley's major shopping centers.

A posse segment is scheduled next week on ABC's evening news with Peter Jennings, Arpaio said.

CBS planned to broadcast a curfew story during the Friday evening news but killed the story Friday afternoon.

Arpaio said that besides the unsolved isolated murder of Sun City resident Charlotte Snyder last summer, the majority of Sun Cities' crimes are residential burglaries and golf

club thefts from open garages.

But Pitcairn said she and a number of friends are concerned that national stories portray Sun Cities' residents as weak and frail.

"I thought maybe we were going to get some bad vibes on this because these stories may be doing more to encourage crime instead of discourage it," Pitcairn said.

"My 96-year-old housebound mother said she had read about the curfew and didn't think that was good publicity for Sun City because it will make them (criminal element) feel we are helpless.

"But when I polled my staff, they all think this will blow over," Pitcairn said. "They said people will soon forget about it and the stories won't have an adverse affect on the community.

"We're a safe community although I think a lot less serious crimes like stolen golf clubs have been committed than have been reported."

Sun Citians hold sense of safety, study says

By JULIE LARSON
Daily News-Sun staff

One thing's for sure, Sun Citians aren't wringing their hands fearing for their safety or worrying about crime.

That is one of the preliminary findings of a study being conducted by an Arizona State University West class on "Criminal Justice Research Methods."

The class of 45 students chose to do its semester project on a study of Sun City residents attempting to find out their feelings about crime and their sheriff's posse.

"In law enforcement they (senior citizens) are traditionally overlooked and that's why the class chose to do the study," said James Lasley, associate professor of justice studies in the Human Services Programs at ASU West. "We wanted to explore some of the main crime concerns that are typical of the elderly and see if Sun City has those concerns or if they're a special community.

"They (the students) were fully

expecting to find them (Sun City residents) afraid and reclusive — typical stereotypes of the elderly," Lasley said. "They were shocked to find it was totally the opposite. These people are not afraid of crime."

Lasley said less than 1 percent of an estimated 450 Sun City residents interviewed said they are afraid of crime.

"The rest are confident and have a tremendous sense of safety," Lasley said. "They seem to be resistant to the typical elder fear of crime. They seem to feel very safe — that goes for women, men and those living alone. They're doing something right."

When the students conducted the personal interviews with the residents in various areas of Sun City, they also found "overwhelmingly that they strongly support the posse," Lasley said.

"They are very confident and feel very comfortable having the posse out to serve and protect them," said

See Researchers to, A5



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

A.S.U. West student John Wistuber, left and associate professor James Lasley are surveying area residents on their feelings about sheriff's posse's.

Researchers to share results with AARP

—From A1

John Wistuber, student spokesman for the project.

Wistuber added that the residents "would like to see police work more closely with people. They want more involvement with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. They want to be able to voice their concerns to the sheriff's office and what they think could be done better to protect them."

The class started the study in mid-January and will complete it by the end of

April. The students will record the results of the study and offer them to interested Sun Citians.

The class also wants to give the findings to the research branch of AARP "to show that Sun City has some benefits that other communities could model themselves after," Lasley said.

Lasley, who worked for several years as an adviser to the Los Angeles Police Department on developing community policing projects,

said that department also is "very interested in Sun City and its posse because they want to create a citizens police force modeled after the posse."

The study also is a pilot for an institute in ASU West Human Services that will specialize in community outreach programs like the one being done in Sun City, Lasley said.

"The mission of this campus is to develop programs that will benefit the community,"

Lasley said. "The students thought Sun City would be one of the best places to focus their talents and use their knowledge to benefit the community."

"The class decided to adopt Sun City so that they could do them some good. We wanted to bridge the gap between our students and Sun City, and the study is just a small piece of what we can offer them. We really want to contribute to the community."

The year in crime

1994 saw its share of oddities, some even too crazy to believe

By **TERI CARNICELLI**
Sun Cities Independent

It has become somewhat of a tradition at the close of every year for the *Independent* to recaps some of the more dramatic, astounding or just plain unusual crimes which have occurred in the Sun Cities during the past 365 days.

And this year, as in years past, there were no shortage of crime oddities.

■ Whether it was meant to be a crime or a practical joke, someone stuck small tree branches in the locks of a car Feb. 18 while it was parked in the lot of the Sundial Recreation Center, 14801 103rd Ave., Sun City.

If the perpetrators were trying to pick the locks, they were obviously barking up the wrong tree.

■ In one of the stranger thefts of the year, a lawn bowl bag containing four lawn bowl balls and a pair of binoculars was stolen April 17 from a car parked in the 10800 block of Roundelay Circle in Sun City.

The bag was later recovered in the street near Waikiki Drive and Roundelay Circle, but the contents were not entirely intact.

No, it wasn't the binoculars which were missing; all was recovered by the owner save one lone lawn bowl ball.

■ In one of the craftiest thefts ever reported, a pay phone was stolen from the phone booth in the Safeway Shopping Center, 13505 Camino del Sol Blvd., Sun City West, between May 17 and May

Zany, but true

Amongst the most unusual items taken from homes or businesses in the Sun Cities over the past year:

√ A barrel cactus — dug up during the night from the front yard of a Sun City home.

√ A set of false teeth. The teeth were sitting on top of a tool box in the garage. A thief made off with everything — the tool box and the teeth.

√ A set of lawn bowls.

√ A pay phone from a phone booth.



19.

After receiving a disconnected signal for several hours, the company which owns the booth, Communication Vending Corp. of Arizona, put in a work order.

When the service technician arrived two days later, he discovered the reason for the busy signal — the phone was missing. He could find no evidence of how it was removed, indicating that whoever took it knew what he or she was doing.

Total value of the loss was estimated at \$1,500 — and some change.

■ When four suites at the Lakeview Medical Arts Center,

See ■ CRIME, Page 5

■ CRIME

13000 N. 103rd Ave., Sun City, were broken into during the early morning hours of May 22, only eight things were stolen — eight boxes of Vicodin, that is.

Vicodin is a narcotic/analgesic combination prescribed as a mild to moderate pain killer, similar in strength and effect as Percodan.

"It's (Vicodin) a pretty hot drug on the street right now," says Jerry Ritt, owner of the Lakeview Pharmacies. He says a single pill can sell for as much as \$5 on the black market, and that a Vicodin prescription, unlike one for Percodan, can be refilled several times.

■ While most damage to vehicles usually occurs from attempted thefts of just plain maliciousness, such as scratching the paint with a key or a sharp object, one woman experienced vandalism above and beyond the norm.

The victim parked her 1989 Pontiac Coupe around 3 p.m. May 27 in the Safeway parking lot located at 107th and Peoria avenues in Sun City. When she returned to the car an hour later, she found an unknown substance had been poured on her hood. The acidic liquid had literally peeled several sections of paint off of the hood, causing an estimated \$500 in damage.

■ Although both Sun Cities experienced a rash of thefts from residents' yards over the summer, one of the more peculiar thefts occurred in the 16000 block of

Sun City

■ A resident in the 9600 block of North 111th Avenue received a threatening phone call around 11:50 a.m. Dec. 22. Although the resident had received several crank calls in the past, this was the first time the caller spoke to the resident.

■ Two tires of a car belonging to a resident in the 11800 block of North Mission Drive were damaged by an unknown tool while the car was parked in the resident's carport.

The 1993 Chrysler LeBaron had been parked around 5:30 p.m. Dec. 21. The resident noticed the damage around 7 a.m. Dec. 22. The tires, which have since been repaired, were found to each have a small puncture hole, possibly made by an ice pick or similar device.

Sept. 11, 1995

Shooter targets Sun City

BBs shatter windows

By PAUL DAGOSTINO
Staff writer

SUN CITY — The windows of more than five vehicles parked on driveways and streets in northern Sun City were shattered by BB shots between late Saturday night and early Sunday.

One woman, who lives in the 19000 block of Willow Creek Circle and asked that her name not be used, said she was awakened about 6:30 a.m. Sunday by several loud pops.

The woman said she didn't think anything of it until she went outside and saw that the rear window of her car had been shattered.

"My God, look at that," she remembered thinking. The window was apparently shattered by at least two shots from an air rifle. An imprint of what looked like a BB was in the trunk of the car and one of the projectiles penetrated the wood of the garage door.

The resident said her husband saw a silver-colored BB stuck in the garage door. The husband added that he and his wife moved from Scottsdale to their Sun City home to get away from crime. He said he was shocked that his house had become a target.

"We moved here because of the safety factor," the man said.

The man added that many of his neighbors told him they were concerned that if the shooting had happened any other morning, they might have been out walking to beat the heat and could have been hit by the BB shots. But Sundays they don't walk because they go to church, the man said.

Reports from the Maricopa County Sheriff's office showed five residents on Palo Verde Drive and Pine Springs Drive had their vehicles' windows damaged by shots.

The crimes didn't leave a good taste in mouths of a couple visiting from Cleveland. Their car was parked in front of a home in the 19000 block of Pine Springs Drive. The passenger-side front and rear windows were destroyed.

The couple, who are planning to move to Glendale, had spoken with some of the neighbors on the block. They tried to assure them that this type of crime was rare in Sun City.

Sheriff's Sgt. Ray Jones said the damage was probably caused by a CO2 air rifle; some kinds of air rifles can launch BBs or pellets at a fairly high velocity, he said.

So far, though, authorities have no strong leads to investigate. Jones said a description of the vehicle used to commit the crimes would be a good start.

Anyone who has any information on the crimes may call the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office at 256-1011.

Bucking the burglary trend

Sun Cities' break-in rate among Valley's lowest

By Chris Sundheim
Staff writer

Sun Cities

If you live here, your odds of being burglarized are exceptionally slim.

Last year, there was only one report of a residential burglary for every 400 or so homes in the Sun Cities.

Compare that to the Valley's overall rate of about 1 burglary for every 30 homes.

Authorities and residents credit the unusually low burglary rate in the Sun Cities to a combination of Block Watches, sheriff's posses and the design of the area.

The Sun Cities, along with Fountain Hills, Scottsdale



last year for every 1,000 homes.

Sun City West followed with no more than 2.52 per thousand.

Valleywide, about 30 of every 1,000 homes were burglarized last year.

The Sun Cities are patrolled regularly by posse

and Buckeye, had among the lowest burglary rates in the Valley last year, according to a computer-assisted analysis by *The Arizona Republic* and *The Phoenix Gazette*.

Sun City had the lowest rate in the Valley, with no more than 2.38 residential burglary reports

volunteers who check the homes of vacationing residents for suspicious activity and call homeowners who have left their garages open in the evening.

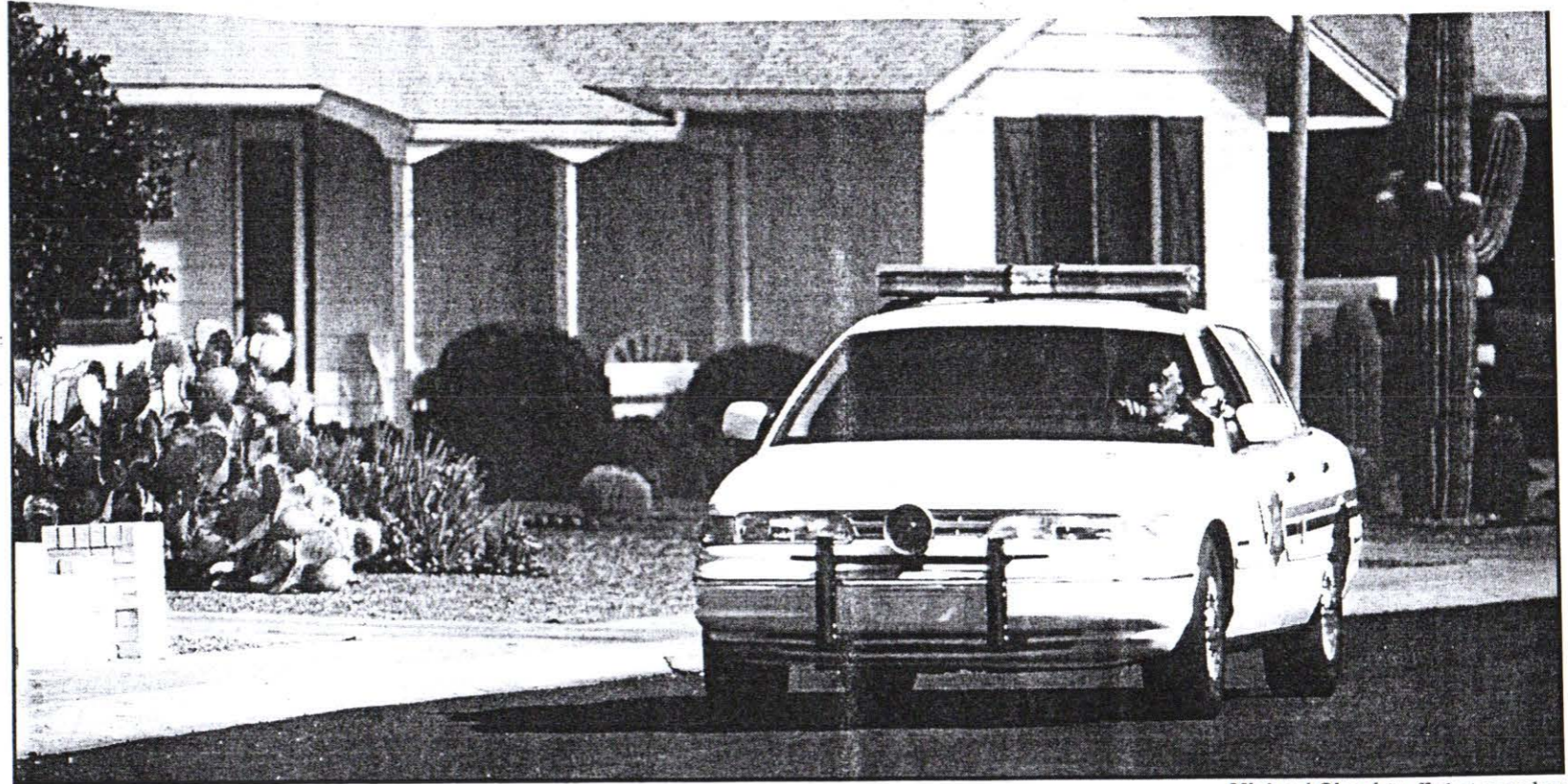
"Most of the crimes we see are crimes of opportunity," said Lt. Jack Lewis, a spokesman for the Sun City West Sheriff's Posse.

"Someone leaves a garage door open with a set of golf clubs lying out, and they get taken."

The posse maintains a high profile by driving squad cars throughout the day and much of the night. Posses also respond to medical emergencies and help with special events. The volunteer posses provide roughly \$1 million worth of services each year.

But posses aren't the only ones looking out for bad

See SUN CITIES, Page 5



Michael Ging/ Staff photographer

The Sun City Sheriff's Posse is a familiar sight on the streets of the community. Posse member Lane Hooker makes his rounds.

SUN CITIES

From Page 1

guys.

There are organized Block Watches in more than 100 neighborhoods in both communities. And, residents say, most neighbors know one another.

"Everyone looks out for everyone else here," said Eleanor Derge, a five-year resident of Sun City West.

Anyone who wants to case a Sun Cities home stands out, too. In an age-restricted community, nonresidents typically are rather easy to spot.

The posses frequently receive phone calls from residents who report suspicious-looking activity.

"We get calls from people all the time who say they see someone who doesn't look right, whether it's by their age or the length of their hair," said Bob Sysum, executive officer of the Sun City West Posse.

"If there's a beat-up, junky-looking car driving around slowly, checking out houses, you're going to get a call on that every time."

The design of the community's streets also thwarts potential thieves.

In both retirement communities, the streets often run in concentric circles. That means there are only a few routes in or out, making a getaway difficult. In addition, the walls that surround many neighborhoods block them off from busy streets.

Both communities enacted curfews last year to keep teenagers from loitering at night in the retirement areas. While crime had

not become a problem, homeowners were concerned that curfews in nearby Peoria and Glendale might push teens into the Sun Cities.

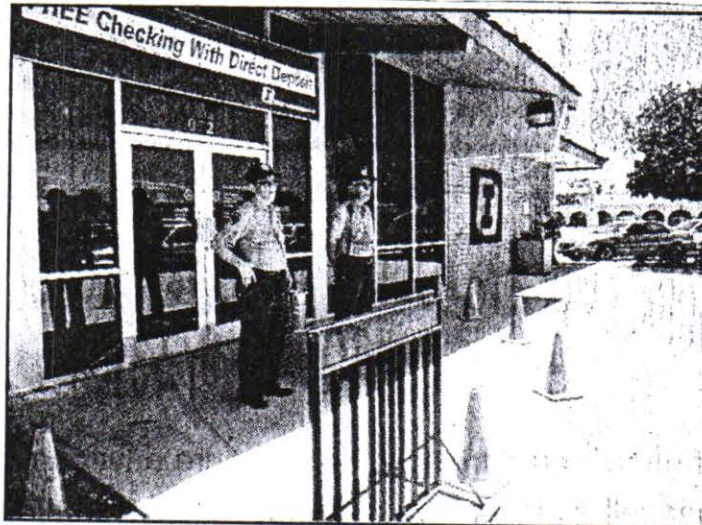
Sgt. Robert Weeden, who works in the Sheriff's Office that patrols the Sun Cities, said the low burglary rate can't be attributed to any single program.

"I wouldn't begin to point to one thing and say that if everyone did it, they would have low rates, too," he said.

Daily News-Sun

7-19-96

Carey Pierce, left, and Wally Hoop, both members of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City, guard the First Interstate Bank at 107th and Grand avenues Thursday afternoon. The bank had been robbed about an hour earlier.



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Robber hits 1st Interstate

7-19-96

By P. SOLOMON BANDA
Staff writer

SUN CITY — Thursday's robbery of the First Interstate Bank at 107th and Grand avenues, in the Grand Center Shopping Center parking lot, marks the third bank robbery within the community in three months.

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Sgt. Trish Robinson said a man wearing a turquoise V-neck, hospital-type scrub shirt, denim shorts, white tennis shoes and a cream colored cowboy hat walked into the bank, which was full of cus-

tomers about 11:30 a.m.

"He told them he had a gun, laid the gun on the counter and told them he wanted the money," Robinson said. "He was very polite, quiet, soft-spoken."

No customers were injured.

Workers in businesses in the shopping center facing the bank across the parking lot did not notice anything amiss, in fact, several were surprised to learn that the bank was robbed.

The suspect, described as a 6-foot, 175-pound white male in his 30s, fled the scene on a green mountain/bike

with an undisclosed amount of cash.

The World Bank at 107th Avenue and Bell Road was robbed June 11 and the Bank of America at Boswell Boulevard and Bell Road was robbed April 27.

Robinson said this suspect looks similar to the one in the previous two bank robberies, and local authorities are checking with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"It's a similar description, but we can't say if it's the same suspect," Robinson said.

A picture of the suspect is due to be released soon.

Robbers

Sun City Rec Board Candidates

Issues set for next SC board



Cohen



Elton



James



McRea



Ormandy



Roach

By P. SOLOMON BANDA
Staff writer

SUN CITY — Aging recreation centers, higher fees to keep them in top condition, and a performing arts center are some of the issues facing the next Recreation Centers of Sun City board of directors.

Six candidates are running for the three volunteer board positions, which will be vacated by Nat Jampel, who resigned in August for health reasons, and Doris Gregory and Ed Anderson, whose terms expire this year.

Here's a quick look at each candidate:

■ **Alfred Cohen**, a board member of the Bell Woodworking Club, previously worked for the New York City Department of Sanitation of the city of New York, retiring as night district superintendent. He moved to California and worked with the Southern California Edison Co. as a senior warehouse clerk. Cohen is a Navy veteran of World War II and Korea.

"I have no preconceived notions about how the job is to be accomplished," he said. As to why he is running: "I feel it is incumbent on those of us who are able, to give a little back to the community."

■ **Richard Elton**, a resident since 1971, served on various Sun City Home Owner Associations and recreation centers committees. A president of the Condominium Owners Association for 15 years, Elton was one of the Sun City residents who helped open the Rio Salado Community College program in Sun City in the early 1980s. He is a World War II veteran and a retired lieutenant commander.

"I sincerely want to work with the members of the board as part of a team working for the good of the majority," Elton said. "I think I have something to offer the board in the way of ideas, desire, dedication and goals."

■ **Marion James**, a resident since 1987 and member of the Sun Cities Genealogical Society, worked for Slick Airways in Burbank, Calif., as supervisor of payroll and as office manager for Catalina Sportswear Contractor in San Fernando, Calif. A former volunteer for Henry Mayo Hospital in Newhall, Calif., she spent six years caring for her aunt.

"I am impressed with the Del Webb concept of retirement living and would like to do my part to continue these precepts," James said. "I feel that past work history serves as qualification."

■ **Edward McRea**, a resident since 1990, is president of the Pennsylvania Club and vice president of the Retirement Community Association. He worked as director of office administration and was vice president and member of the board of directors for the Firemen's Fund Insurance Co. in Honolulu, Hawaii. He was volunteer coordinator for the city and county of Honolulu.

"Expenses must be contained and contracts monitored for compliance," McRea said. "I believe that my experience in administration and insurance will enable me to fairly administer the activities of the recreation centers."

■ **Norma "Lynne" Ormandy**, a resident since 1993, served as project coordinator for the Sun City Foundation earlier this year. Ormandy was the owner of Lynne's

Interior Design Service in Florida and worked as bookkeeper, office manager and as an independent contractor for various firms during the '1980s. She served on the board of directors of two social service agencies and was a Bible teacher.

Ormandy has several goals, among them, "Bring to reality a modern auditorium/performing arts center designed for the comfort of all who use it."

■ **Phyllis Roach**, a resident since 1986, served as chair of the Oakmont Spring Festival and the Apple Dumplin' Festival and worked five years in the club office and on the Club Organization Committee. She worked for the Radio Corporation of America, first as a clerk, then as promotional and TV sales manager.

"The recreation centers should be and must be operated for the maximum benefit for all of the residents," she said.

Those interested in meeting the candidates in person may attend two meet the candidate forums that will feature entertainment and a chance to talk to each candidate.

The forum schedule is:

■ **Thursday** — from 10 to 11:30 a.m., Fairway Music Room in the Fairway Recreation Center, 107th and Peoria avenues.

■ **Nov. 14** — from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Marinette Social Hall in Marinette Recreation Center, 99th Avenue and Union Hills Road. Entertainment starts at 6:30 p.m.

The Dec. 3 election will have walk-in balloting from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Marinette Meeting Room, Sundial West Room, Lakeview Social Hall No. 2 and the Fairway Auditorium.

2 rob bank in Sun City, marking 8th heist in '96

By GREG ZEMEIDA
Staff writer

SUN CITY — Two men robbed a bank in Sun City at gunpoint Monday, the eighth bank robbery in the community in 1996.

The suspects made off with an undisclosed amount of cash from the Bank of America branch at Bell Road and Boswell Boulevard. One customer was slightly injured when the two men slammed a door into the person as they fled the bank.

The men entered the bank and approached a teller window at 4 p.m., according to a Maricopa County Sheriff's Office bulletin. One suspect walked up to a customer who was making a transaction at the window and put a large, semi-automatic gun up to his head and made him lie on the floor. The suspect then pointed the gun at the tellers and demanded money while the other suspect stood by. After getting some cash, the two men fled the bank and were last seen running north

on 99th Avenue. No getaway vehicle was observed.

Sheriff's deputies conducted an unsuccessful ground and helicopter search of the area.

The first suspect is described as black or Hispanic, in his 30s, 6 feet tall, medium build, pockmarked face, a day's growth of beard, dark hair and mustache. He was wearing mirrored sunglasses, an Army-type green field jacket, blue pants, white tennis shoes and a blue ball cap.

The second suspect is described as white, in his mid-30s, taller than 6 feet with a medium build, blond hair and wearing a blue shirt.

Monday's robbery not only was the eighth of 1996, but the third in the month of December. On Dec. 4, a man robbed Norwest Bank, 15249 N. 99th Ave. About two weeks later, on Dec. 16, a man described as "professional-looking" held up Matrix Capital Bank, 9899 W. Bell Road.

The suspects in Monday's robbery are probably not connected to the other seven robberies last year, said Dep-

uty Antone Jacobs with the MCSO District 3 substation in Surprise. The robbery was the first to involve two suspects and their descriptions don't match previous suspects, he said.

The number of robberies in Sun City last year was unusually high. None was reported in 1995, but two occurred in 1994.

Local Sheriff's Office officials and bank officials said the high rate may be attributed to the large number of banks in the community, the low number of customers normally in them and the slim chance that an elderly customer would interfere with a robbery.

Jacobs said the Sheriff's Office has increased patrols around local banks and is now deciding what further measures should be taken to help reduce the problem.

Anyone with information about any of the robberies is asked to call the Sheriff's Office at 256-1600 or 256-1011.

'Check washers' intercepting mail

"We tell people, 'You have to be a little paranoid.' (These) people do nothing else but steal mail."

By **JULIA DE SIMONE**
Independent Newspapers

Don't count on the check being in the mail.

Instead Phoenix Police and U.S. Postal officials say it could end up in unwanted hands.

Officials are warning Arizona residents and business owners about check washing and other related mail postal thefts occurring in the Valley.

"Arizona has the largest postal theft rate in the nation," says Detective P. Reardon of the Phoenix Police Department.

Check washing starts with mail theft from a resident's or business owner's mailbox. Once criminals obtain the mail, a chemical solution is applied to the stolen check. Criminals soak it with a solution or apply a cotton swab to delete the order line and amount on the check.

After the check has dried, Detective Reardon says, the criminal will write a given amount or signature on the check and cash it.

For example, she says a resident could write a \$30 check for a magazine subscription to later discover the check was stolen, washed and suddenly increased to \$1,000.

Detective Reardon estimates "billions of dollars" have been lost to checks cleverly disguised in solutions.

"We tell people, 'You have to be a little paranoid,'" she says. "(These) people do nothing else but steal mail."

Raul Vargas, Arizona supervisor for the U.S. Postal Inspector's Office, says although check washing has occurred in the state for more than seven years, less than a couple dozen residents in the Sun Cities area are effected by it.

Mr. Vargas says about 98 percent of check washing occurs in north Phoenix, Scottsdale, Peoria and Glendale by drug addicts who need money to support their habits.

Detective Reardon says check washing is usually targeted at residents' mailboxes, especially when a

series of eight to 12 mailboxes are lined up.

"Basically they clear out a whole block," she says.

Mr. Vargas says criminals will usually cash the forged checks at a bank other than the one listed on the check.

Detective Reardon says criminals usually fold a forged check several times and explain it was in their pocket, or use the checks to purchase items at yard sales. She says grocery stores are usually hit the most because of lack of proper identification.

Sometimes a forged check can be spotted by holding it up to the light and checking its back.

"Sometimes it's quite obvious it been washed because the ink is still running," she says.

Detective Reardon says business owners leery of a check can call the bank or account holder and make certain it is valid. She says business owners have the right to ask for cash, especially at garage sales.

"There's no reason a person can't go to the bank and cash their check," she says. "Banks are (now) open on Saturdays."

If residents still are suspicious, they shouldn't accept the check.

Detective Reardon says in Phoenix alone, police receive an average of 20-30 phone calls a day pertaining to forgery.

She says one-third of forgery cases they are informed about are directly associated with check washing. Forgery is considered a Class 4 felony.

Mr. Vargas says many criminals accused of check washing have been arrested three to five different times and then set free. In fact, he says one person was arrested nine times before finally sent to prison.

"Unfortunately, it's a white collar crime," he says.

But it doesn't mean residents have to fall for it.

"Never leave mail (in your mailbox) overnight," Detective Reardon

See ■ CHECKS, Page 3

OVER

warns. "Any time you have a check where someone could (steal it) ... this problem exists."

Mr. Vargas adds that residents shouldn't put any important outgoing mail in their mailbox with the flag in the up position.

"They'll spot the flag because

”

When you clear something from an estate, don't throw it in a trash because a loved one will be reincarnated and someone will assume their identity.

— **Detective P. Reardon**
Phoenix Police Department

they're looking for people paying their bills," he said.

Important mail such as bills containing checks should be dropped off at the post office or at work stations via a postal clerk.

Detective Reardon says residents using the local big, blue mailboxes located on street corners should drop mail off as close to the pick up time as possible.

"Don't leave it in any container overnight because the entire container might be gone," she says.

Mr. Vargas says a big no-no is sending money — any amount — in the mail.

He says residents could reason that \$5 stolen isn't much, but if a criminal has stolen the same amount from 10 people it begins to add up.

Residents and business owners in particular, also need to be aware of another possible mistake on their part — failing to properly dispose of receipts and valuable papers.

Detective Reardon says "dumpster divers" are targeting estate sales in the Sun Cities area and businesses, such as doctors' offices, in search of resurrecting another per-

son's identity.

"They will go through everything," she says. "When you clear something from an estate, don't throw it in a trash because a loved one will be reincarnated and someone will assume their identity."

Social Security numbers also shouldn't be listed on one's driver's license. Residents can request a new number by calling or visiting their nearest Motor Vehicle Department.

Social Security checks should also be directly deposited into personal banking accounts to prevent them from entering another person's hands.

Detective Reardon says if residents or business owners have fallen prey to check washing and similar mail thefts, they should:

- Contact their bank and immediately put stop on check.
- Return all checks with forged signatures to bank officials.
- Request, complete and sign an affidavit of forgery.
- Have bank officials credit account.
- Request statement from bank officials stating you are free from any wrongdoing associated with the account. If not, it could affect your credit history in the future.
- Keep all copies of paperwork.

Detective Reardon suggests residents and business owners pull up a credit history on their accounts from a local agency at least once a year to update credit history.

If banks fail to cooperate with their clients in check washing and similar situations, residents can seek assistance from the Office of Comptroller of Currency in California at 1-800-613-6743, or write them at 40 Fremont Street No. 3900, San Francisco, Calif., 94105.

Detective Reardon says officials will contact the bank and work on resolving the matter.

FRIDAY

July 11, 1997

Daily News-Sun

Sheriff's office continues probe of bank heists

By RUTHANN HOGUE
Staff writer

Robbers may have given up looking for banks to rob in Sun City, at least for now, but detectives haven't given up looking for clues in the cases of 13 bank robberies in the community since last April.

"We never ... as far as serious crimes go ... we never put them to rest," said Detective Jim Kremer of Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3.

"We keep looking. Sometimes we get luckier than others. Sometimes we can develop a suspect in a couple of weeks, sometimes it might take six to eight weeks or more. We don't give up."

A string of robberies that began Dec. 4, 1996, with Norwest Bank in the 15200 block of north 99th Avenue ended early this year after two suspects were arrested in early April while robbing World Savings at 107th and Grand avenues.

One of the robbers arrested was believed to be connected to at least four other bank robberies in the Sun Cities.

Since then, alleged bank heist partners William Staskal and James Arnold have been linked to at least

two of the Sun City bank robberies.

"They were caught doing a Bank of America in the East Valley," Kremer said. "The robbery went down and they ended up taking the pronut (activation device). They got into a pursuit with the police and Arnold was caught and Staskal got away."

But Staskal's getaway was short-lived. The FBI tailed him over the next few days. When he robbed a bank in Glendale at 67th Avenue and Bell Road, he got into a shootout with police. He was shot and killed trying to escape.

The arrest of Arnold and the death of Staskal in April solved several East Valley bank robberies, Kremer said. The FBI felt the duo was also responsible for the Norwest Bank robbery in December 1996.

Another suspect, Antonio Dicocco, was arrested Feb. 7 in connection with a bank robbery at the Bank of America at Boswell Avenue and Bell Road. He was not charged with armed robbery, but a lesser charge of theft or robbery, Kremer recalled.

"He did not use a weapon or make any threats," Kremer said. "He just walked in and asked for money. At that time, the tension was so high

► See Detectives welcome, A5

Detectives welcome tips from public

■ From A1

with all the other robberies going on, because of safety reasons, the teller is not going to question that."

A team of four MSCO District 3 detectives is investigating about 10 other bank robberies that have not yet been solved.

"We have quite a few that we are investigating," Kremer said. "We have a lot of items that we're checking right now. Nothing, obviously, that we

want to put in the paper. But we do have a lot of leads we're still following up on."

The length of time required to solve each case varies. "It depends on what we can turn up as evidence," Kremer said.

"If you have photographs, you can link them up with photos from other banks. If you have fingerprints, you can use those. It all takes time."

Kremer invites anyone with information regarding any of the bank robberies in the Sun Cities to call it in, no matter

how insignificant it may seem.

"We've always got leads we follow up on," Kremer said. "People give us tips all the time, and we do follow up on the tips we get. A lot of times, people don't realize they saw something until a couple weeks later and they think about it.

"It's never too late to give us a call if you've got information. I've checked up on literally hundreds of things

people might think are silly. But it doesn't matter what the size of the information is. Anything helps."

In addition, sheriff's office detectives work with the FBI and other law enforcement agencies to look for possible links between local robberies and ones that happen in District 3.

"Hopefully, we can run into something and we can both take care of it," Kremer said. "It's a slow process."

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC+

Wednesday, September 17, 1997

13 arrested in Sun Cities thefts

Yard workers overcharged victims, swiped valuables, cash

By Brent Whiting
The Arizona Republic

They came bearing gardening tools, but they walked away with checks, jewelry and cash.

Thirteen people, some of them lawn and yard workers, have been arrested as part of an investigation into a theft ring that preyed on seniors in Sun City and Sun City West.

The victims, some of them in their late 80s or older, were solicited for yard work, then

charged outrageous amounts of money for work done, said Brian Wilkins, a detective for the Glendale Police Department, one of several local and federal agencies helping in the probe.

"For one lady, they charged \$3,000 for changing three valves on a sprinkler system," Wilkins said. "The work should have been done for \$100 or less."

He said the suspects also befriended their victims, thus allowing them to gain entrance to

the victims' homes so they could pilfer checks, jewelry, cash and other valuables.

Wilkins estimated the total loss at \$300,000. Some victims reported losses in excess of \$50,000.

Wilkins said fewer than a dozen victims have been identified, but investigators believe there are more to be found.

The theft scheme is believed to have begun four months ago, culminating in the arrests

Thursday of the 13 suspects, Wilkins said. Investigators are trying to track down four more people, he said.

The 13, mostly from Glendale, Peoria and Phoenix, were booked into a Maricopa County jail and accused of fraud. They include the suspected ringleader, Phillip James Simpson, 32, of Glendale, and his wife, Michelle, 32.

People with information about the case are asked to call Glendale police at 930-3300.

Brent Whiting can be reached at 444-7119 or at brent.whiting@pni.com via e-mail.

Friday, Sept. 12, 1997 Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz.

SC bank robbed

By RUTHANN HOGUE
Staff writer

A man robbed Norwest Bank at 107th and Peoria avenues at about 12:20 p.m. Thursday and escaped with an undisclosed amount of cash.

A surveillance camera captured images of a Hispanic man believed to be in his late 30s, about 5-foot-9 and 165 pounds, handing a demand note to a bank teller. The man had brown, curly hair, a short beard and mustache, and wore a red and white ball cap and a dark blue, long-sleeve pullover shirt. Printing on the left sleeve of the shirt appeared to be the Marlboro cigarette logo. He wore baggy tan or khaki shorts and white tennis shoes.

The teller quietly handed the man an undisclosed amount of cash, described as a small amount more than \$100.

No weapon was seen or displayed, said Sgt. Ray Jones of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3, who described the incident as low profile.

The man was last seen riding what appeared to be a white 18-speed bike south of the bank. Sheriff's deputies searched the area for about an hour after the robbery.

As of late Thursday, the robber had not been found.

The bank robbery is the seventh in the retirement community this year. The most recent previous bank robbery



Steve Chernek/Daily News-Sun

A customer, left, is turned away from the Norwest Bank branch at 10733 W. Peoria Ave. after the bank was robbed Thursday.

in Sun City was March 29 at World Savings Bank at 106th and Grand avenues.

Jones said the latest robbery is not connected with ones in Sun City earlier this year and a string of seven bank robberies last year.

"I viewed the video, and I can say it's not the same one that's been in Sun City," he said.

Police said they believe that the robber may have linked up with a vehicle somewhere near the bank shortly after the robbery. Anyone who may have seen a person matching the description who was riding a bike or getting into a vehicle may call detectives with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3 at 256-1600.

Fraud in Sun Cities results in 13 arrests

Suspects bilked elderly residents using yard-work scam, police say

by **JULIA DE SIMONE**
Independent Newspapers

Law enforcement officials charged several individuals last week with defrauding Sun Citizens of nearly \$300,000.

Glendale detectives, with assistance from the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, the United States Secret Service and the Treasury Department, had 13 people in custody as of press time.

The individuals had allegedly charged the Sun Citizens enormous fees for menial work. Officials believe there may be many additional victims who haven't yet come forward.

According to Matthew Brown, public information officer for the Glendale Police Department, all of the individuals have been charged with fraudulent schemes, and some have other charges pending.

"We're not dealing with the nicest people in society," he said. "Some had outstanding warrants."

Officer Brown said the investigation is ongoing while Glendale police officials search for up to five more suspects believed to be involved in this case.

He said the suspects tended to work in conjunction with one another, usually in groups of two to four, doing yard work for the residents.

Who to call

If you suspect you have been the victim of fraud, call:

■ Glendale Police Department, 930-3060

■ Sun City Home Owners Association, 974-4718

■ Property Owners and Resident's Association, 584-4288

■ Better Business Bureau, 264-1727

■ Arizona Attorney General's Office, 584-0040

■ Arizona Attorney General's Office, Elder's Affairs, 542-2124

The suspects usually performed the first job at a legitimate fee, Officer Brown said. However, they allegedly returned and gradually increased their prices.

Known victims ranged in age from 88 to 93. According to police, they have difficulties hearing, seeing or walking.

"They told one lady she had rat-

■ FRAUD

lesnakes in her attic and they needed \$750 to get them out," Officer Brown said.

According to Glendale Police officers, many of the victims also invited the suspects inside their homes where they stole blank checks, jewelry and cash.

Arrested on fraud charges were: Phillip James Simpson, 32, Glendale; Michelle Ann Simpson, 32, Glendale; Rosalinda Dominguez, 25, Glendale; William Elmer Lollis, 56, Phoenix; Glenn Garrett Simpson, 34, Peoria.

Also: Eugene Simpson, 29, Phoenix; Moises Valencia, 35,

Phoenix; Alvin Lynn Troub, 30, Peoria; Terry Lee Gillespie, 44, transient; Jeffrey Allen Troub, 32, Glendale; George Don Hartley, 36, Glendale; Robert Sydney Jarvis, 76, Glendale; Charles Dale, 34, Glendale.

Officer Brown said the individuals allegedly tried to steal items a little at a time so residents wouldn't notice.

He said one Sun City victim reported a \$50,000 loss. Victims may have the opportunity of suing in a civil suit, he added.

Officer Brown suggests residents take these steps to protect them-

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We hope more victims will come forward.

— **Officer Matthew Brown**
Glendale Police Department

selves from similar criminal situations:

1. Use a reputable, licensed company.
2. Don't ever let people inside your home.
3. Have a relative or friend stay with you when work is being done.

4. Call police immediately if you suspect anything suspicious or illegal.

Officer Brown said many residents who call about falling prey to these types of crimes are embarrassed. They are sometimes afraid their children will "put them away." He stressed it is important police department officials learn of these crimes to prosecute criminals.

"We hope more victims will come forward," he said.

Glendale Police are requesting residents call them at 930-3300 with any information on this case or any past fraudulent cases.

From Page 1

Caught in cross hairs of crime

West Valley gangs target Sun Cities

By GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Graffiti on a wall. A broken window of a house. A stolen vehicle or two.

They may not be labeled as gang activity, but even the quiet neighborhoods hidden behind the white walls of Sun City aren't completely immune to their crimes, police said.

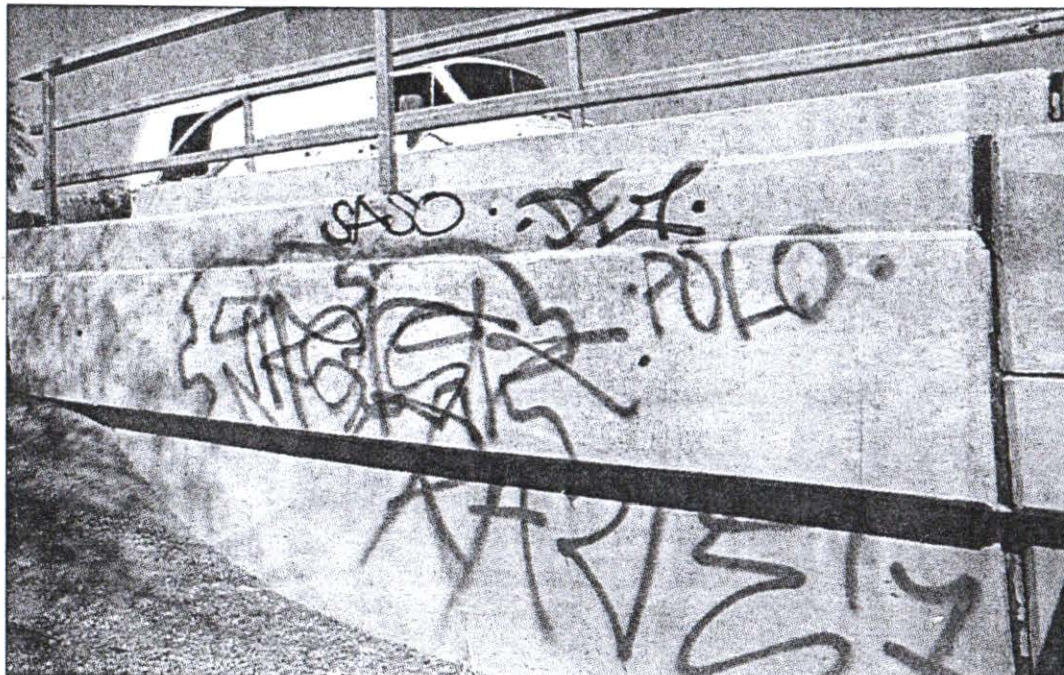
"Sun City has always been a target of criminal activity," said Sgt. Ray Jones of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office and the West Valley Gang and Narcotics Task Force.

And the area is a close target for many of the Valley's gangs, officials said, 10 to 15 of which are in the West Valley.

"I can guarantee you that prior to school starting, around Christmas time and near the end of the school year you will see auto thefts go up in the Sun City area," said Detective Jim Reznik of the Surprise Police Department.

Those are common recruiting times for West Valley gangs said Reznik, who spent five years on the West Valley Gang and Narcotics Task Force. One type of gang initiation, he said, is for a new gang member to steal a vehicle, drive it a few miles and steal another vehicle.

"Really, everything gangs do affects all communities in one way or another," said Detective Pete Toomey of the El Mirage Police Department and the West Valley Gang and Narcotics Task Force.



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Graffiti is prevalent alongside and underneath the New River bridge on Grand Avenue just east of Sun City. Police say the area is used for gang activity.

The violent gang crimes in the Sun Cities are few and far between, Jones said. Most violence, he said, is directed towards other gang members.

The more obvious sign of gang activity is the scribbled marks of spray paint on walls or buildings.

Graffiti is used by gang members to mark territory or as a way to brag about invading another gang's turf, Jones said. For this reason, he said, gang graffiti is

rarely visible in the Sun Cities.

But tucked away, underneath the streets that thousands drive over during a day is a mural of multi-colored spray paint. It's plastered on the walls of the Grand Avenue bridge that passes over the New River and the one that crosses the Agua Fria River.

These are places where gang members cross, make drug deals or drink and

► See Police link, A5

◀ From A1

party, Toomey said. They're places where other gang members will see their message.

Many times, Reznik said, the graffiti is used to tell other gang members where to buy drugs or guns.

"Graffiti is the newspaper of the street gangs," he said.

Some of the effects on the Sun Cities are indirect, Toomey said.

Many thefts or burglaries are done to support drug habits, officials said.

"If you arrest someone on drug charges, that person could have been responsible for some of the other crimes in the area," Toomey said. "So, you could see a drop in criminal activity."

The Sun Cities are a popular target of these crimes because residents are often gone for the summer or on vacations, Jones said.

Some of the best ways to combat gang activity or any other types of criminal activity, police said, is by calling agencies and reporting

WARNING SIGNS

The following is a list of signs of gang activity in neighborhoods as provided by the West Valley Gang and Narcotics Task Force:

■ Gang graffiti.

■ Groups of youth wearing distinguishable gang clothing — all wearing the same color clothes, shirts with the same number or displaying tattoos, burns or scars.

■ Drive-by shootings at specific homes.

■ Excessive activity by youth at night on street corners, parks, or other locations, involving alcohol, drugs, fights or shooting guns.

■ Excessive vandalism.

crimes. Block watches are also a good way to keep neighborhood crime down.

"They're less likely to do this somewhere they know people are watching," Reznik said.

Tuesday, March 2, 1999 Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz.

How safe are we?

Neighboring drug crimes rarely endanger Sun Cities, police say

By **GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN**
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The El Mirage drug houses raided by police Friday are a mile from Sun City, a reminder of how close the crime and violence associated with narcotics can get to communities that think they are immune from dealers and users.

But the proximity of the small shacks on Poppy Street doesn't mean the Sun Cities are any more at risk than other areas, police said Monday.

People buying the drugs may steal a set of golf clubs and a car stereo here and there to support their habits, said Sgt. Dave Low of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3, which serves the Sun Cities. However, he said, the Sun Cities have no

more to fear than other communities.

"Our society is just permeated with drug activity," Low said. "It won't impact here anymore than other places."

The drug activity could spread to several nearby communities, said Joe Nunez of the El Mirage Police Department.

"Chances are, those aren't just our residents who come in here for drugs," Nunez said. "They could be residents from Surprise or Peoria."

Lisa Miranda-Lintz, director of Centro Adelante Campesino Inc., a human services agency in the Original Square Mile of Surprise, said everyone in the community was aware of the drug shacks in El Mirage.

"This is exactly what gives the Hispanic community a bad

name," she said. "This isn't far away. It's right across the street."

However, it's the families living in houses just down the street and a few blocks away that will see the most crime from a nearby drug hotspot, Low said.

"The immediate areas are going to be a nicer place to live as long as those drug houses are shut down," he said. "They bring in a lot of crime."

Neighborhoods are marred by the overdoses, prostitution and drive-by shootings associated with drug houses, officials said.

Cruz Celaya's family lives next door to the drug shacks that were raided Friday. She sat in the house Monday afternoon cradling her grandson.

"They didn't bother us, but we were afraid," Celaya said. "They would shoot their guns."

Celaya said she and her family would just "get inside rather than say anything" when they would hear gunfire or fights break out next door.

Amy Ochoa, who has lived on Poppy Street in El Mirage for 23 years, said she's gotten used to having strangers knock on her door and ask for money on their way to the drug house down the road.

People would pass through the alleys behind the house on their way to the drug house, Ochoa said. Most of the time, she said, she was too nervous to take her 11/2-year-old son out in the front yard to play.

"It was bad," she said.



"This is exactly what gives the Hispanic community a bad name. This isn't far away. It's right across the street."

Lisa Miranda-Lintz
director
Centro Adelante

- SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT— MARCH 17-23, 1999

SC woman accosted, robbed

Three men arrested at Glendale home

By CHRIS RASMUSSEN
Independent Newspapers

A vicious daylight attack and robbery last week hospitalized an 86-year-old Sun City woman.

The unidentified victim suffered a broken hip when three men ambushed her outside a Sun City jewelry store. The robbers wrestled the woman to the ground for her purse and fled the scene by car.

Employees inside John Wallick Jewelers, 99th Avenue and Bell Road, witnessed the robbery, which happened on the store's sidewalk, and provided police with a description of the assailants and their vehicle's license plate number.

Three west Valley men were arrested a short time later outside a Glendale residence.

Richard Smith, 22, Peoria, and Kirk Varra, 18, Glendale, were charged with aggravated robbery, a Class 3 felony, according to Lt. Ray Harkey, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, and were being held late last week without bond. Jeffrey Bradshaw, 21, Glendale, was released on a \$10,000 bond.

A search of Varra's and Bradshaw's Glendale residence resulted in the recovery of the victim's checkbook, credit cards and purse.

Lt. Harkey said one man was positively identified by an employee of the jewelry store and two others admitted to the crime.

"They went out cruising for a victim," Lt. Harkey said. "This was a crime of opportunity."

Lt. Harkey said one of the men grabbed the woman's purse, which she wore with a strap on the inside of her arm, and ripped it from her, causing her to fall to the ground.

"Be very suspicious of people," Lt. Harkey recommended. "We live in a dangerous society and we need to be aware of our surroundings."

"When you are at the ATM machine look around, make sure no one is watching you," he added.

"Compared to most areas, Sun City has a low crime rate, but there are people who come here to prey on the elderly," he said. "Don't think you live in a crime free area."

Lt. Harkey said three men of similar descriptions were seen driving through the La Rhonde shopping center parking lot.

Brian Franklin, manager of K&B Rocks and Jewelry in Sun City, said his grandmother suffered a similar attack a few years ago and has had trouble recovering.

"It changed her whole life," Mr. Franklin said. "It happened two years ago and to this day she is afraid to go out of her home. She went from driving, cooking and gardening to being very withdrawn."

"What do people think they are going to get out of a women's purse, most don't carry that much cash, they write checks?" he asked.

An employee of the jewelry store, who asked to not be identified, said the woman was a regular customer of the store. He said he spoke with her in the hospital and she is doing well.

JUNE 2-8, 1999 — SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT —

Two men rob Sun City Norwest branch

Robbers' effort may have been in vain

By MIKE RUSSO
Independent Newspapers

Two men brazenly walked into the Norwest Bank branch at Peoria and 107th avenues, Sun City, in the early afternoon May 24, robbed the bank, but apparently left the scene with nothing to show for their efforts.

The well-concealed men entered the bank at approximately 12:45 p.m., demanded cash and quickly

exited the bank with the purloined loot in a duffel bag.

A short distance from the bank, one of the suspects dropped the duffel bag after an ink pack detonated, staining the money.

Kent Porter, a security director for Wells Fargo Bank, confirmed that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had possession of the duffel bag, but he was not sure of the bag's contents.

The FBI also has video tape of the robbery.

Obtaining a description of the suspects was difficult because of their attire.

The perpetrators wore long-sleeve shirts, baggy blue jeans, athletic footwear and motorcycle hel-

met with tinted face masks to conceal their identities, according to Mr. Porter.

Mr. Porter said he believes the two men were youthful. "That was the consensus of the people with whom I spoke," he said.

Also their athletic and quick movements leads Mr. Porter to believe they are in their late teens to early 20s.

"They were in and out quickly," he continued. "They were very agile. They seemed to maneuver themselves very quickly.

"One of them was probably a little over six-feet tall and the other one was about five-feet seven or eight," Mr. Porter said.

No one was injured in the rob-

bery, Mr. Porter noted.

The suspects fled the scene in a 1988 Suzuki Samurai, that had been stolen the previous day in Peoria. A truck matching the description of the getaway vehicle was located about 2:10 p.m. in the Agua Fria river bottom, in the 11500 block of Olive Ave. by Youngtown Police Lt. Paul Parker.

Mr. Porter is urging anyone with information that could lead to the apprehension of the two men to contact Silent Witness at 602-948-6377.

"Wells Fargo has a standing reward program for anyone providing information leading to the apprehension of the pair. It is up to \$5,000," Mr. Porter said.

Senior shoplifters often raid pharmacies

By GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Every Tuesday, a couple of hundred citizens line up outside Judge Lex Anderson's justice court in Peoria, waiting for their scheduled appearance.

And it's usually a sure bet, Anderson said, that one or two of those waiting in line is there for shoplifting.

Sometimes the individuals will offer no explanation for their actions, instead they quickly admit to their guilt, pay the \$360 or more fine and are on their way. Others will cover their face in shame as they shrug their shoulders and tell Anderson they didn't know what they were doing.

When their fines have been paid and the paper work has been signed, the shoplifters get in their cars and go home.

Many times home isn't a teenager's bedroom in Glendale or Peoria, Anderson said. Most of the shoplifters he hears from are senior citizens in the Sun Cities. "We've had quite a few the last couple of weeks,"

Anderson said. "What we get is a lot of people who say they didn't realize they were shoplifting. I don't think any of them are really at a shortage of money."

The most common things stolen, Anderson said, are pharmaceutical products. And most senior shoplifters only take one or two items priced at \$3 or \$4, authorities said.

"It's a tube of this or a bottle of that," Anderson said. "And I'm not really sure why they do it. Maybe they look at this stuff and say 'this is a ridiculous price, and I'm not going to pay that.'"

The first fine for shoplifting is \$360 for an individual without any prior offenses. From there, the penalties keep stacking up and a frequent shoplifter will eventually end up with \$2,500 in fines for a class one misdemeanor and spend as long as six months in jail.

Most stores also request that a shoplifter no longer be allowed in their store, officials said.

"We seldom prosecute customers over the age of 65, and it (senior

shoplifting) seldom happens," said Anne Alenskis, spokeswoman for Albertson's Food and Drug Stores, which has a store near 91st Avenue and Bell Road. "We try to address the situation inside the store. We escort them off the sales floor in a non-confrontational manner and then we determine what has happened."

Anderson said one Sun City man has been in his courtroom several times for shoplifting, and he always just pays his fine and leaves. Many others have been fined for shoplifting multiple times, he said.

The number of reports for shoplifting at the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3, which serves the Sun Cities, has increased over the last year, said Detective R. Shaw of District 3. "I think more people are getting caught as stores are stepping up security," Shaw said.

Daily News-Sun writer *Ginger Scott-Eiden* can be reached by e-mail at gscott@aztrib.com or by calling 876-2522.

West widow found slain

Officials mum on report victim had been scalped

By Brent Whiting

The Arizona Republic

A Sun City West widow has been found murdered and possibly scalped in the kind of neatly landscaped neighborhood that attracts retirees to the community.

On Friday, investigators refused to comment on preliminary reports from law enforcement officials that the victim, whose name is being withheld by *The Arizona Republic*, had been scalped.

"We cannot confirm or deny it at this time," said Deputy Deborah Moyer, a spokeswoman for the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

Moyer also declined to say how the woman, who is believed to be in her late 70s, had been killed; but Moyer confirmed she was a victim of homicide.

However, neighbors said that the slaying serves as a rude awakening that no part of the Valley, including an upscale retirement community, is immune to crime.

"This is really shocking," said Bob Koshar, who has lived in Sun City West for the past decade. "I've never heard of such a thing in Sun City West. It's rare, I'm sure."

Don Newhard, another neighbor, said crime is unusual in the neighborhood, except for the occasional theft of golf clubs from a garage that is carelessly left open.

"I'm just amazed at this, I really am," Newhard said.

The victim lived in a duplex in the 12600 block of West Prospect Drive. Her body was discovered Thursday evening after worried relatives called deputies and asked them to stop by for a welfare check.

Moyer said the victim has a mother in her late 90s who is in a nursing home. She said the identity would not be confirmed until relatives arrived in town, so they could be with the mother when the news was broken about her daughter's death.

In the meantime, investigators remained at the scene through the day Friday. A worker from the Arizona Humane Society made an afternoon stop and drove away with a small dog named Charlie, a Pomeranian mix, and two cats that belonged to the victim.

During the morning, sheriff's deputies scoured the surrounding area looking into garbage bins and trash dumpsters, neigh-

— **WIDOW**, from Page B1

bors said.

County records show that the victim purchased her home in December 1996 for \$104,000.

Anne Mahler, who lives in the adjoining home in the duplex, said the victim was a nice woman who watched over a mother and mother-in-law, both in nursing homes.

"I'm so upset about this that I can't even think," Mahler said.

Melba Weisskowitz, a neighbor who lives across the street, said the woman recently had become worried about a heart condition. But all the county cars in front of the house Friday were a sign that something more serious had happened to her.

"There has been too much activity around here for this to be a normal thing," Weisskowitz said.

Statistics on homicides in Sun City and Sun City West were not available Friday, but *Republic* news archives show them to be a rarity, except for occasional deaths of distraught elderly couples in a murder-suicide scenario.

In January 1989, an 81-year-old Sun City West man was ordered to stand trial in the stabbing death of his ailing 79-year-old wife in what sheriff's deputies described as a mercy killing. The charge later was dropped after a judge ruled the man was incapable of understanding the charge or in helping attorneys to prepare a defense.

In August 1988, sheriff's deputies reported that the death of a 72-year-old woman was being investigated as a homicide, the first in that retirement community in at least four years.

Brent Whiting can be reached at (602) 444-7119 or at brent.whiting@pni.com.

Man admits to slaying

Charged with fraud, theft from Sun City West woman

By GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

A former Sun City financial consultant charged with fraud and theft has admitted to killing a Sun City West woman, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office officials said Wednesday.

Walter Elze, 31, of Glendale is charged with one count of fraud and 40 counts of theft

Tips to find financial consultants:

- Find someone by referrals. Just because they're a financial planner doesn't mean you should invite them into your home.
 - Check for certifications. A financial planner can be a CFP (certified financial planner), a ChFC (chartered financial consultant), or CLU (chartered life underwriter).
 - Try to meet consultants at their office. If it's necessary to have someone come into your home, invite a friend or neighbor to the house so you're not alone.
 - The CFP website at www.cfp-board.org has a section to find whether someone is registered as a CFP.
 - Call the Arizona Securities Division at 542-4242 to see if there's been any disciplinary action on a particular financial planner.
- Source: Certified Financial Planners Sue Larkin and Kerry Tanner

from 72-year-old Shirley Noe.

"Elze has embezzled in the vicinity of \$200,000 from Mrs. Noe," said Lt. Ken Colbert of Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3, which serves the Sun Cities.

A large portion of the embezzled money had been spent by Elze in Las Vegas according to credit records, Colbert said.

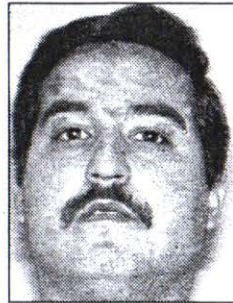
Authorities arrested Elze on Wednesday morning after interviewing him about the theft and fraud.

He admitted to killing Noe, who was found dead July 29 by members of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City West

inside her home in the 12600 block of West Prospect Drive, said Deputy Deborah Moyer,



Noe



Elze

public information officer for the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

Autopsy results indicate Noe died of blunt force trauma.

Elze has not been formally charged in connection with the slaying. He has been charged with one count of fraud and is being held on a \$1 million bond at the county's Madison Street Jail in Phoenix, Colbert said.

Elze had worked as Noe's financial consultant, Colbert said.

Authorities would not release details on the fraud charge.

Residents of Noe's neighborhood expressed cautious relief at the news of the suspect's arrest.

"I hope that they caught the guy," said neighbor Arnold Stringer.

"It's got so many of our widow ladies in tears. It's so sad," said Stringer, who works as a housesitter for widows.

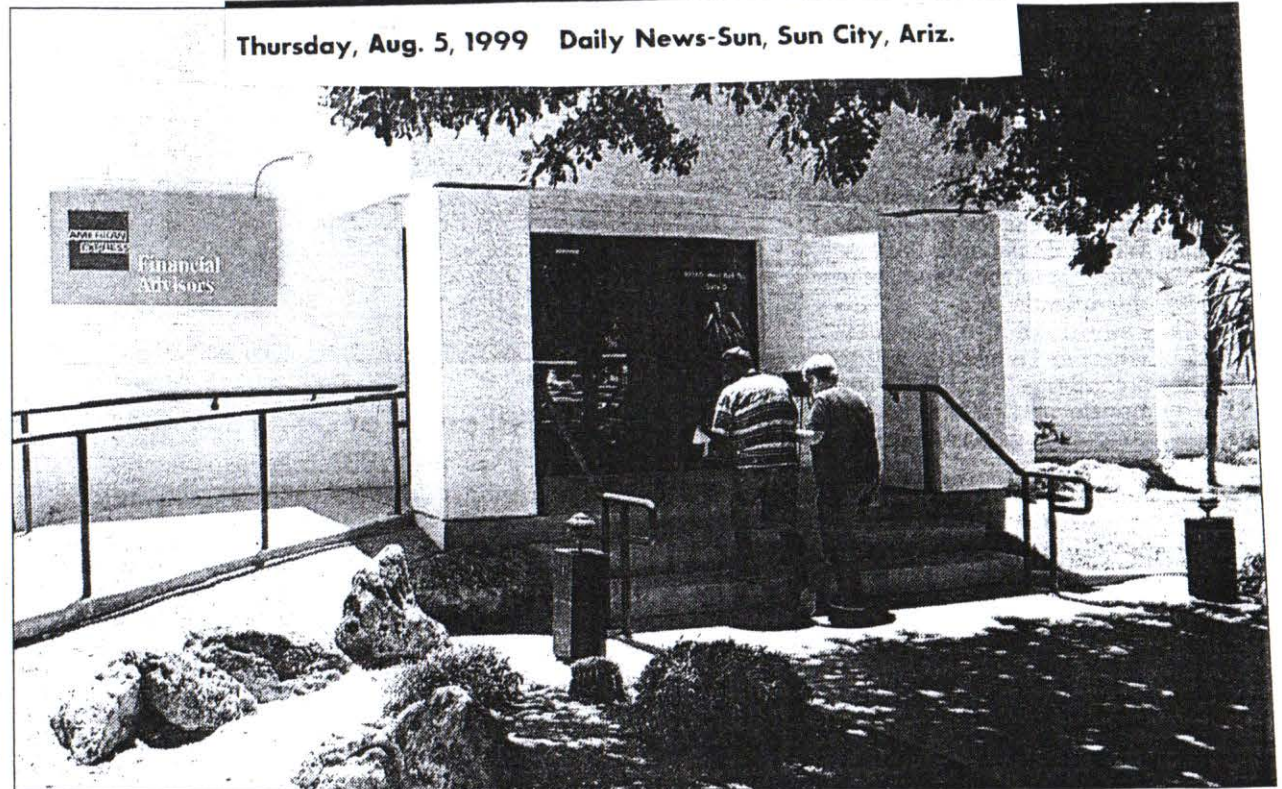
Ruth Baldwin, speaking from behind her chained door, said: "I'm glad they found him. I hope he's the right guy."

Authorities urge people to take precautions when allowing anyone unfamiliar inside their homes.

"This is one of those cases that I would like to see citizens of the Sun Cities take notice of and be aware of who they are letting into their house," Colbert said.

Elze was employed by American Express Financial Advisors at 10240 W. Bell Road in Sun

Thursday, Aug. 5, 1999 Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz.



Steve Cherner/Daily News-Sun

Walter Elze, a suspect in the killing of Shirley Noe, worked as a financial adviser at this office on Bell Road until July 27, two days before the slaying.

City and had worked there for more than two years, said Bill Scholz, group vice president.

Scholz said Elze resigned from the company July 27.

Elze's former associates would not comment on whether Noe was one of his clients while he worked at American Express.

"All I can tell you right now is that we are cooperating with

investigators," Scholz said.

A spokesman at the Arizona securities division confirmed that Elze was registered as a securities salesman with the division.

"It does not appear that any disciplinary incidents have appeared on his license with us," said Matthew Neubert, division spokesman.

Elze received his license from

the securities division on April 8, 1997, Neubert said.

Elze had his initial court appearance at 10 a.m. Wednesday inside the jail, said Karen Arra, spokeswoman for Maricopa County Superior Courts.

Ginger Scott-Eiden can be reached by e-mail at gscott@aztrib.com or by calling 876-2522.

Home invasion victim loses sense of security

By GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The bruises, cuts and scrapes on Erica Mankel's body will heal.

But the two thieves who followed the 87-year-old into her Sun City home Thursday night, bound her wrists and robbed her have left her with a vulnerable feeling that she says will be tough to forget.

"I've always felt safe here," she said. Although the Daily News-Sun does not publish the names of victims of crime, Mankel gave her permission for this story.

Mankel said she was sitting on her back patio at about 8 p.m. Thursday when she walked into her home on 110th Avenue south of Bell to get something from the kitchen.

"I didn't lock the door, because I was going right back out," Mankel said.

When she turned around, she was confronted by two men. She said she tried to scream for help but was in such a state of shock that the

words wouldn't come out.

"I thought to myself, 'I'm going to get to the door and scream,'" she said.

But before Mankel could reach the front door, the two suspects, described as two white men in their late 20s to early 30s, had tackled her. The men then bound her arms together with duct tape, covered her mouth and demanded money.

The suspects grabbed a purse, which was empty, and fled her house.

Mankel said she tore at the restraints on her arms and finally freed a finger, allowing her to peel the tape from her mouth so she could scream for help.

She said it seemed to be several minutes before a neighbor finally heard her.

Sheriff's deputies arrived at her house at about 8:30 p.m. Deputies searched the area but did not find the suspects, said Sgt. Darrell Smith of the

See Home invasion, A5

From A1

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3, which serves the Sun Cities.

Mankel said she has always felt safe in her neighborhood. The Sun City posse building is about a block away and posse members are constantly patrolling her street.

Authorities said she had all of the safety devices to deter criminals from her home. Neighbors said most of the residents in the area look out for one another.

But nothing is ever 100 percent, safety experts said.

John Hepburn, a professor at Arizona State University's criminal justice department, said a close-knit neighborhood with a well-exposed block watch program can even be the target of a crime.

"But the reality is, the more guardians, the better," he said.

Many times criminals will pass through neighborhoods looking for any sign of a quick and easy target, Hepburn said.

A house without lights, a dog or gates might look like an opportunity, he said, adding that criminals may also look for a person that is weaker and that they can overcome.

And no one can protect themselves all of the time, he said.

"She did a lot of things, but you can't do it all," he said.

Mankel said she's a little more cautious now, checking to make sure all doors are locked and leaving lights on inside.

But she said she feels more fortunate that afraid.

"I almost feel like I was lucky," she said. "They didn't kill me."

Ginger Scott-Eiden can be reached by e-mail at gscott@aztrib.com or by calling 876-2522.

Woman robbed in home invasion

By GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Two men followed an 87-year-old Sun City woman into her home Thursday night, bound her with duct tape and stole a purse before fleeing, authorities said.

A neighbor, who sheriff's officials did not identify, heard a woman screaming for help and released her from the tape, said Sgt. Darrell Smith of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3, which serves the Sun Cities. Sheriff's deputies arrived at the house in the 16000 block of 110th Avenue, south of Bell Road, at about 8:30 p.m., he said.

Deputies searched the area but did not find the suspects, Smith said.

As a precaution, the victim was taken to Boswell Hospital where she was treated and

released.

Authorities said she had all of the safety devices to deter criminals from her Sun City home.

Gates surround her front porch area, and security doors guard her door. A crime watch sign is displayed prominently in the 87-year-old's front window to give intruders one more warning.

The woman had been outside and just walked into her house Thursday night when she was followed inside by two white men in their late 20s to early 30s, Smith said.

She did not lock the door behind her, authorities said.

After restraining her with duct tape, the two suspects fled her house with a purse, which

police later determined was empty.

Jean and Richard Peterson live across the street from her and said they didn't see anything unusual Thursday night.

"Normally, we don't have any problems here because we live so close to the Sheriff's Posse," Richard Peterson said. The posse's building is about a block away from the neighborhood, and neighbors said patrol cars are constantly driving up and down their street.

The Petersons said they see a lot of unfamiliar cars stop in the neighborhood because two houses on their block are for sale.

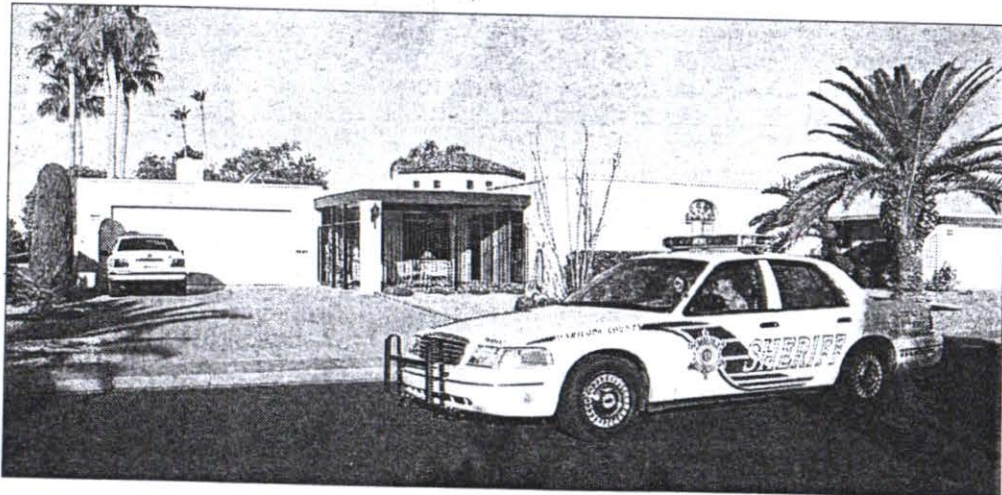
"Whenever I see someone park out here, I come out and look at them," Jean Peterson said.

The couple said they have always felt safe in their neighborhood but expect crime to increase as the population continues to explode in the West Valley.

Another neighboring couple, who wishes to remain anonymous, said they heard the woman's dog barking at about 6:30 p.m. and thought something might be wrong. "It was a tremendous surprise," the neighbor said. "We didn't see anything. Not until police arrived."

Everett Bigwood, a posse member who patrols the neighborhood, said the best thing people can do to protect themselves is keep their doors locked at all times.

"Keep those security doors locked," he said. "All it takes is a couple of seconds."



A patrol car checks out the home where robbers bound an elderly woman Thursday night.

Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

VF CRIME

11-3-99

Robberies illustrate risks to SC residents

By TOM BARRY
Independent Newspapers

A home invasion robbery last week and a foiled armed robbery a month ago, both occurring in Sun City, should serve as a cautionary tale for others faced with similar threats, authorities said.

At about 8:30 p.m. Oct. 28, an 87-year-old Sun City woman was followed into her home in the 16000 block of 110th Ave. by two white men, bound with duct tape and robbed of her purse.

In the other incident about a month ago, another Sun City woman foiled an attempted armed robbery but was shaken by the experience.

In both cases, the suspects fled the scene and are still being sought.

Although the two women escaped without serious injury, the incidents illustrate the increasing occurrences of strong-arm robberies in the Sun Cities and the need to take precautions to minimize the chances of becoming a victim, said Maricopa County Sheriff's Det. Antone Jacobs.

According to a report of the earlier incident, the woman returned late one evening to her home in the 11000 block of 107th Ave. and observed a young Hispanic male nearby. As she attempted to open the front door, he approached her from behind and grabbed her purse, which was slung over her shoulder. The man then pointed a revolver mere inches from her face and demanded her purse.

Screaming loudly, she fended off her attacker by spraying him with a can of pepper spray, which was

affixed to her key chain. The man immediately let go of her and fled into the night.

In the ensuing struggle, she dropped a mug of water and two jackets.

Suffering from the effects of the pepper spray herself, the woman required emergency room treatment. She also was left with minor bruises to her wrists and right forearm.

Though she managed to keep her purse, her peace of mind was no doubt shattered by the experience.

"Although the outcome was fortunate, the victim made several crucial errors in judgment," said Det. Jacobs, who described the incident as a crime of opportunity.

"With a few simple precautions she could have prevented the incident from ever occurring."

The assailant was clearly armed and capable of using deadly force. "Under the circumstances, it is not prudent to resist someone with a weapon," he explained.

"There's nothing in your purse that's worth your life."

Further, seniors are more prone to disabling injuries from which recovery may be difficult, he added.

The victim was not only readily accessible to the assailant but was burdened by jackets and other possessions that made it all the more difficult for evasive action, said Det. Jacobs.

"If you go to the store or on an errand, the least amount of possessions on your person is preferable. Why carry a purse when there's no reason to?" he said. Det. Jacobs suggests taking a wallet or a change purse that can be easily concealed in a pocket, or a money belt and

fanny pack worn in the front with only the amount of money necessary for whatever you want to purchase.

Most importantly, he said most victims of robbery, as in this case, fail to exercise diligence.

"Always, always be cognizant of your surroundings and especially strangers in the immediate vicinity. If you're driving up to your driveway, keep the doors locked and look around you before exiting the vehicle. Don't open the garage door until you're absolutely certain the coast is clear," he stressed.

"If you see a suspicious or unfamiliar person nearby, back out and drive around the block. If the person is still loitering in the vicinity, call 911 from a phone far removed from the area," he said.

"Leave it up to us to deal with the situation. That's our job."

Det. Jacobs also suggests avoiding late-night forays when visibility is reduced and it is difficult to discern someone's identity from a distance. When shopping at night, park in a highly visible, well-lit area, preferably near the main entrance, with many people around.

"Now that you're older, you have nobody to protect but yourself," he said. "You yourself should practice what you may have taught your children when they were young."

Town hall gives seniors tools to avoid scams

NAPOLITANO: Attorney General discusses several types of fraud with Sun Citians

GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Seniors in the Sun Cities are a common target for telemarketers and scam artists, Attorney General Janet Napolitano told an audience of more than 100 people at Thursday's Sun Cities area town hall.

Hopefully, armed with the knowledge of what to look for and who to call, Sun Citians can start fighting back, Napolitano said.

"We hope to give you the tools you'll need to protect yourself," Napolitano said.

Prosecutors from the Attorney General's Office and community officials touched on several areas of fraud and abuse with residents during the presentation.

New to this year's Town Hall forum was Internet fraud. And as seniors become more and more computer savvy, they're at a greater risk for the web's financial dangers, said Gail Thackerey, who works in the

technology crimes division of the Attorney General's Office.

"In my line of work, I never meet an innocent computer," Thackerey said. "They're all guilty."

She said the first thing someone should do when they think they've been had by a scam on the web, even before shutting off their computer, is to call the police. Authorities can usually retrieve evidence from a fraudulent transaction over the computer if it occurred recently, she said.

Common problems in cyberspace include consumer fraud, investment fraud, gambling, harassment and stalking, Thackerey said. And the number of fraud complaints is growing.

The National Consumer League reported a 600 percent increase in the number of consumer Internet fraud complaints filed during last year compared to 1997. Thackerey blamed a large portion of that increase on the increase of auction web sites available.

She said many of the sites only serve as a place where a buyer can meet a seller and don't ensure that the deal will be on the up and up.

Thackerey recommended people use escrow auction sites,

Helpful numbers:

- Call the Sun City Home Owners Association at 974-4718 or the Property Owners and Residents Association at 584-4288 for references of service people and contractors that work in the area. HOA and PORA also keeps a file of complaints against businesses.

- Report fraud to the Attorney General's Office at 602-542-5763.

- Contact the Attorney General's satellite office at the Fairway Recreation Center in Sun City from 9 a.m. to noon Wednesday and Thursday at 876-0174.

meaning that the company hosting the site receives a portion of the sale. This gives the company an incentive to avoid fraudulent sales, she said.

Officials also warned people about the continuing problems with telemarketing fraud.

Sydney Davis, an expert in consumer protection and fraud with the Attorney General's Office, said she encourages people to use a new federal law that requires telemarketers to keep a no-call list.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Attorney General Janet Napolitano addresses a crowd gathered for a town hall session in the Bell Recreation Center social hall Thursday.

If the same company calls back within a 10-year period, they should be reported to the Attorney General's Office, she said.

"You don't need to worry about being rude to these companies, because they're not worried about being rude to you," Davis said.

Daily News-Sun • Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 18 and 19, 1999

Pair indicted for scheme in Sun City

\$2 MILLION HIT:
Probe uncovers 8
Sun Citians who
were bilked

GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

A Phoenix couple has been indicted on 23 counts of theft and fraud for bilking eight Sun Citians out of more than \$2 million.

Jonathan Paul Williams, 32, and Cara Dyan Powell, 30, were indicted Wednesday by the state's grand jury after an investigation by the Arizona Attorney General's Office, U.S. Postal Inspector's Office, Corporation Commission's Security Division and the Arizona Department of Insurance, a spokeswoman for the Attorney General's Office said.

Powell has also used the name Krystan Beaumont.

The suspects first targeted seniors in the Sun Cities in May of 1994, said Pati Urias, public information officer for the Attorney General's Office.

"They were definitely targeting those people," Urias said. "One of the victims was even taken on four separate occasions."

The couple is accused of gaining the confidence of their victims and convincing them to convert existing investments into tax-free annuities, Urias said. The suspects then opened post office boxes in the victim's names, cashed in polices and sent the money to the P.O. boxes, she

said.

According to court officials, the couple used the money to open online trading accounts, purchase a luxury home and other expensive items.

Mildred Clonce of Sun City had lost more than \$200,000 before she realized something was suspicious with her investments.

"Exactly a year ago, a week before Christmas, I knew something was happening," she said. "I just kept thinking everything would be all right."

Clonce said she was first contacted about the investments by telephone and said she thought it sounded like a good deal, so she agreed.

"Had I known, I would have kept a log or something on everything that happened," she said.

Clonce hired her own attorney and was able to retrieve her losses. However, she said many people in her situation are not as lucky.

"I thought I would be the last person on earth to be taken," she said. "After I look around and see what else is happening, I feel very, very lucky that I got out how I did."

The amount of losses from the victims ranged from \$80,000 to more than \$700,000.

Williams and Powell are being held in the Maricopa County Jail and their arraignment is scheduled for Dec. 27. Bond was set at \$1 million for Williams and \$300,000 for Powell.

If Williams and Powell are convicted, they could face more than 12 years in prison, Urias said.