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50¢

# SC man admits shooting sick wife

**SHERIFF'S SAY:**  
Confession follows self-inflicted gunshot wound

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

A small scrap of yellow crime tape in a neighbor's yard this morning was the only evidence left after a double shooting Thursday afternoon that left a Sun City woman dead and her husband hospitalized in fair condition.

Ronald Hartsock, 67, called 911 just after noon Thursday and said there were two shootings at his home near 103rd and Alabama avenues, said Sgt. Dave Trombi, public information officer for the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department.

When deputies arrived at the home, 12002 N. Hacienda Drive, they found his wife, Maxine Hartsock, also 67, dead on the bed, he said.

Ronald Hartsock told deputies he had shot his wife and attempted to commit suicide afterward, Trombi said.

He was taken to John C. Lincoln Hospital, where he was in fair condition this morning. Authorities planned to talk to Hartsock this afternoon.

Police are calling the incident a murder-suicide attempt. Ronald Hartsock could face murder charges, Trombi said.

"It appears that she's been pretty ill, judging from all of the medical equipment in the house. And there was a walker," said Sgt. Darrell Smith of the Sheriff's Office District 3, which serves the Sun Cities.

Sheriff's detectives were not able to enter the home until they obtained a search warrant late Thursday afternoon. Authorities have sealed off the Hartsock's home and are treating it as a crime scene.

Neighbors said they were shocked as they watched police cars and emergency vehicles surround the Hartsock's home Thursday.

"They were very nice people," said Mariann Greenlee, who lives next door to the Hartsocks. "They were not a violent couple or anything. I never heard them argue."

Greenlee said she hadn't seen Maxine in a while and had heard she had been ill.

Bruce Ketola and his father, Charles, were also neighbors to the Hartsocks and

said they rarely saw the couple outside.

"They were rather quiet," Bruce Ketola said.

Don and Mary Lund live just a few houses away from the Hartsocks and said they were surprised to hear about the shooting.

Mary Lund said she and her husband have lived in the neighborhood for about a year and didn't know the Hartsocks personally. However, she said that everyone in the neighborhood was pretty friendly with one another, often having parties or yard sales.

"It was pretty surprising," she said. "Things like this don't happen here often."

Ray Craig lives one street over from the Hartsocks and said he became concerned when he saw a medical helicopter land on the North Golf Course.

"I thought maybe a golfer had a heart attack," Craig said.

The Hartsocks, who moved to Sun City from Memphis, Mich., have lived at the home for about four years.

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Daily News-Sun • Thursday, June 29, 2000

## Vandals joy ride in golf cars along south Sun City



E.B. McGOVERN / DAILY NEWS-SUN

A golf car sits vandalized in the parking lot of the Sun 'City Country Club Wednesday.

**NO ARRESTS:** Golf courses ripped and cars damaged in overnight spree

**PATRICK O'GRADY**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Some residents in Sun City near 107th and Olive avenues were searching for their golf cars Wednesday morning, only to find them lined up on 105th Avenue near a golf course.

Although Maricopa County Sheriff's Department officials at District 3 had no reports available on the thefts, residents and golfers at the South Golf Course along 103rd Avenue said several carts were lined up

along 105th where the road divides the golf course.

Sun City resident Andy Jones said signs that someone was joy-riding in the cars were in his own yard as tire tracks made impressions in his landscaping. He said he noticed several other houses in his neighborhood near 110th and Peoria Avenues with similar tire marks.

"They must have been in my yard because I saw the imprints," he said. "It looked like they cut through."

Jones said he was the victim of a golf car theft in April, when someone unscrewed his sensor lights and took his golf car from his carport. It was found days later at another Sun City house.

"They left mine," Jones said. "They parked it an empty house. I had a putter in the back, but they took that.

It was some kids. They spilled Coke all over it."

South and North golf course officials said none of their cars was missing this morning.

The Sun City Country Club, where one damaged car sat in the parking lot, didn't report any stolen cars, but there was damage to the course's ninth hole green and cuts on fairways where golf-car tires had slashed the terrain, said Steve Brown, the club's golf pro.

Although the club rarely sees vandals, Brown said they have noticed an upswing in activity that usually comes in summer months.

Part of the problem, most notably with older golf cars, is a key that will operate one car often will operate another. Armed with one key, thieves can take any car, course officials said.

7/2000

# Vandals' spree targets Sun City residents

## EASY PREY:

Ignition-key similarities make golf cars vulnerable to thieves, vandals

**PATRICK O'GRADY**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

James Nolan knew something was missing when he headed to his carport Wednesday morning.

His golf car was not where he normally parks it at his house in the 10600 block of Salem Drive. Instead it was half in and half out of someone else's yard, where whoever had stolen it left it in a hurry.

"It makes this beeping noise when you go to back it up, but I think that scared them and they jumped out of it," said Nolan, whose car was returned with slight damage.

Nolan's car was one of the five golf cars stolen from carports in Sun City. Three were returned to their owners, while another sat damaged in a parking lot near its owner's house.

The cars were stolen from two areas — one in southern Sun City in neighborhoods around 107th Avenue and south of Peoria Avenue, the other from streets near the Lakes Golf Course — and only from carports. The cars of varying value and model year all were stolen between 11 p.m. Tuesday and 5:30 a.m. Wednesday, according to police reports filed with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3 headquarters in Surprise.

Carlton and Ruth Ulrich, whose car was stolen from their home in the 10500 block of Bright Angel Circle, said the keys were not in the car when it was removed from their carport. The car was found a few blocks away with a dead battery and some minor damage, they said.

The same was true for Nolan's car after thieves abandoned it after hitting a cactus at a house a

few blocks from where it had been taken. The only damage was a slight bump in the front bumper and a crack in the car's nameplate, Nolan said.

"If it had (hit) something more stable than a cactus, they might have done some more damage," he said.

Nolan, who has lived in Sun City for eight years, said this was the first incident he has had with his golf car.

The thefts also may be related to damages at the Sun City Country Club and the Lakes West Golf Course in Sun City.

Officials at Lakes West said the green on the first hole had been damaged when someone attempted to slide a golf car across it between 5 p.m. Wednesday and 5 a.m. Thursday. Course officials estimated the resulting 30-foot scar on the green would cost about \$500 to repair, police said.

Course officials also found a golf car had been driven into one of the first hole's sand traps. Course officials removed the car before authorities arrived, police said.

The Sun City Country Club golf course was also damaged with several tire marks across fairways and some damage to the ninth green, course officials said, although they didn't report the damage to police.

Golf cars of similar makes share the same keys, allowing each car to be started by one key. Therefore, the only way to protect a car is to have another ignition switch similar to those used in automobiles installed, said Harry Thomas, a representative of Sun City Golf Cars.

"If they want that car, they are going to get it if they have a key," he said.

For now, Nolan plans to look at ways to keep his golf car from leaving his premises.

"We've been contemplating putting on a garage door, but right now I'm just going to park the car behind it so they can't get access to it," he said.

# Sun Cities help fight scam artists with list

By Jim Gintonio  
The Arizona Republic

Door-to-door solicitation is prohibited in most retirement communities, but that doesn't stop scam artists from making the rounds.

Sun City and Sun City West organizations are trying to stop that. They provide literature about potential scams and lists of hundreds of approved contractors and workers. In addition, the state has an office for consumer information and complaints.

But officials advise that residents still have to be wary.

Marguerite Bidwell, a director for Sun City West's Property Owners and Residents Association, said that widows continue to remain prime targets.

"Roofing and landscaping remain big problem areas," she said, adding that swindlers often pose as reputable dealers to gain access to the home. "We encourage people not to let anyone in their homes. Just close the door on them, that's a way to get rid of them."

She also said the Sheriff's Posse is willing to come out if trespassers refuse to leave.

Bidwell said some common fraud methods include the pigeon drop, where victims are asked to hand over money; telemarketing fraud; and locating new widows through obituary columns.

In Sun City, the home owners association has created a consumer protection committee for its residents. Blaine Donaldson, president of Sun City Home Owners Association, said the goal of the committee is to prevent companies or individuals from running a scam operation in the community.

One way to avoid fraud, he said, is to obtain references from the HOA office before having any work done on the home.

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# Thieves sack golf shirts

**PATRICK O'GRADY**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Workers at the North Golf Course pro shop in Sun City spent Tuesday cleaning up after someone broke into the store and stole several racks of golf shirts.

An alarm summoned Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies to the pro shop at 12650 N. 107th Ave. about 3:30 a.m. Tuesday to discover that someone had thrown a rock through the shop's window and made off with golf shirts. Recreation Centers of Sun City officials did not know how many

shirts were taken or the value of the shirts.

While the response was quick, officials said thieves were able to escape, said Steve Ravenkamp, golf-operations manager with the centers.

The incident is the second time in the past month a pro shop window has been broken. About two weeks ago, only a window was broken and no merchandise stolen, Ravenkamp said.

Golf courses in Sun City were vandalized earlier in the summer.

At the end of June, five golf cars were stolen from carpools throughout southern and central Sun City and some of those cars were used to damage courses, including the North course.

Ravenkamp said despite easy access to the courses from roads throughout the community, the Sun Cities fare better than most when it comes to acts of vandalism.

"We really have very little vandalism compared to some of the courses that I've worked at," he said.

# Landscaping scam surfaces in Sun City

## ARIZONA REGISTRAR OF CONTRACTORS:

Homeowners should always check credentials of anyone they intend to hire

**PATRICK O'GRADY**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Bob Goodman thought he was getting a good deal on his yard work when two men came knocking on the door of his Sun City home.

At first he was leery, so he asked a neighbor who had some work done by the landscapers about them and they checked out. But when they were scheduled to return to his house last week to do yard work, they failed to show up, Goodman said.

"All in all, I've got about \$550 tied up, and they were supposed to be there Wednesday, but they didn't show up," he said.

The scam, and variations of it, have been around for quite a while. Men come knocking on a house door and offer to do some yard work or home repairs with extra supplies they have from another job, and while the story changes, the results end up the same, said Pati Urias, spokeswoman for the Arizona Attorney General's Office.

"The thing is, (when contractors come unsolicited) you don't know if they are reputable or not," she said.

In Goodman's case, he went with a neighbor's reference about the work the two men had done on his property. While the estimate for his neighbor's work had started at \$1,000, the price quickly escalated to nearly three times that amount — but still, the work was done, Goodman said.

Based on the fact they had completed the job, Goodman said he hired them to do some yard work as well as maintaining the landscaping every week. The men, who were driving a brand-new green compact truck, accepted the job as well as \$100 in cash. They followed up with some additional work, but began asking for money to cover impending costs. That's when they disappeared.

"They wanted \$100 up front, and I

gave them that," he said. "Then they came back one week and said they were a little bit short of money and could they have an advance on that week's landscaping."

The scenario — including the new truck — fit a pattern of scams that have victims shelling out their money and either getting incomplete services or no services at all. The most basic piece of advice to deal with such schemes is, when someone comes knocking at a door with an offer that is unbelievably low, don't believe it, Urias said.

Also helpful in dealing with contractors is asking if they are licensed through the Arizona Registrar of Contractors. Had either of the two men who bilked Goodman out of his money been licensed, there would have been remedies he could have sought through the agency, Urias said.

The new truck also is a calling card for groups known as the "Travelers," seasoned con artists who travel the country in search of victims. They often cook up scams with scenarios similar to what Goodman described. They charge excessive amounts, do shoddy work and use intimidation to convince seniors their houses are falling apart to separate them from their money, said Jim Carroll, chief of investigators for the Registrar of Contractors.

"A lot of these people will go out in cooler weather — usually in our fall is when they start arriving here," he said.

Many people also are unaware that much of the work they may hire done on landscaping or around the house requires permits and licensed contractors to perform. State law allows anything below \$750 to fall under a "handyman" classification that exempts the work from being done by licensed contractors, Carroll said.

Those exemptions, however, are removed if the work is part of a larger project or the local jurisdiction requires the work to have licensed contractor.

Regardless of how a contractor is hired, Carroll said he recommends residents call the registrar to find out the status of the contractor's license.

"It's always good for the person to call and check on their license," he said.

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# SC man charged with stalking

STAFF REPORT

Maricopa County sheriff's detectives this morning arrested a Sun City man and charged him with felony stalking in connection with a threatening letter sent to Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

The Sheriff's Office said Stephen Hancock was taken into custody earlier today at his home at 11055 Florida Ave., just off 111th Avenue near Sun City Boulevard.

In the home, deputies said, they found more than 20 weapons, some 10,000 rounds of ammunition and 50 high-capacity magazines.

Hancock was booked in the Madison Street Jail on a count of felony stalking.

The sheriff's public information officer said Hancock was located after the company where he worked, an aircraft parts firm, checked its files to compare the handwriting on the threatening note to Arpaio with the writing on employment applications.

In the letter received by Arpaio, the writer said, "I need to smack some sense into that freak head of yours."

That letter was signed, but the person who sent it was not the person whose signature purported to be on it, detectives said.

But that led them over several months to locate Hancock, they added.

# Attorney General's satellite office reopens in Sun City

## More than 300 people helped during first year

By **MIKE RUSSO**  
Independent Newspapers

The highly successful Sun City Arizona Attorney General's satellite office reopened Oct. 24 with Attorney General Janet Napolitano praising the community's dedicated volunteers for the offices' success.

"We have found in Sun City and Sun City West the ability to form valuable partnerships," Ms. Napolitano said.

She said the Sun City office, which was closed for the summer, has been staffed by a dedicated cadre of eight volunteers.

Since opening the Sun City office a year ago, "over 300 residents have been served and 158 consumer affairs complaints have been generated," according to the attorney general.

"Eighty percent of the consumer complaints were resolved to the consumer's satisfaction," Ms. Napolitano explained. She mentioned that consumer's had received more than \$4,000 in refunds as a result of her office's intervention.

The response to and the success of the Sun City office, locat-

ed at the Fairway Recreation Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave., led to the establishment last week of two similar satellite offices in cen-

tral and east Mesa, on the Apache Junction border.

See ■ OFFICE, Page



Photos by MIKE RUSSO/Independent Newspapers  
Arizona Attorney General Janet Napolitano visits with Bob Briscoe, president of the Recreation Centers of Sun City board of directors, prior to Oct. 24 ceremony.

Ms. Napolitano thanked the Sun City volunteers for all their hard work. "Between October and May, the volunteers donated more than 400 hours of valuable service," she said. "Without them, we could not have provided the service.

"Without these people, these 158 consumer complaints would not have been resolved," Ms. Napolitano added.

Although the complaints are taken by the volunteers, the cases are actually handled by the Attorney General's Office. The volunteers also dispense information and refer people to other agencies, such as the Better Business Bureau, for assistance.

The top 10 consumer complaints the office receives involve:

- Prize notification by mail.
- Motor vehicles (used autos).
- Motor vehicle repairs.

• Credit/lower interest/various offers.

- Mail-order products.
- Credit billing disputes.
- Collection services.
- Advertising.
- Travel agencies/brokers.
- Travel vacation certificates.

"We have increased our enforcement efforts," Ms. Napolitano said. "We started out by suing the mail order houses. We sued Time, Inc., U.S. Purchasing Exchange and, our personal favorite, Publishers Clearing House."

The actions taken by the Attorney General's Office have caused the mail-order firms to change their offerings, making them less deceptive, according to the attorney general.

"We are going to continue having an active presence in Sun City and Sun City West," Ms. Napolitano

said. "We will continue to use the talents of the volunteers here. We hope residents will continue to use the satellite office."

The satellite office is open from 9 a.m. to noon Wednesdays and Thursdays. Appointments are not required. If a senior has an urgent matter they can call the Elder Affairs Office directly at 602-542-2124.



# SC residents bilked of cash, jewelry

## SUN CITY: Couple warns others of scam

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

1/2/01

There is an old Arabian proverb instructing people to trust their neighbors — but tie their camels tight. The saying rings especially true to a Sun City couple whose home was burglarized a week ago.

Sherry and John Matulis, who live in the 11000 block of Charnwood Court in Sun City, said \$5,300 in cash, as well as jewelry and sentimental gifts, were taken from their home during a burglary Dec. 16.

"The two well-groomed, Hispanic men who did this were very professional and I'm sure this was not their first robbery," Sherry Matulis said. "I just wanted to get the word out so nobody else would have this happen to them."

The Matulises said they were taken in by the two men, who knocked on their door seeking information about a motor home that was for sale in their front yard.

"They seemed very interested in buying it and kept insisting that I take a \$25 deposit for it," Matulis said. "One of the men wanted me to give him change for a \$100 bill he had in his hand, but I didn't want to go to my purse in front of a stranger."

When her husband came home, however, the same man asked him for change. The husband gave it, not knowing his wife already declined such a gesture, she said.

"He didn't know that I already refused," Matulis said. "So he went in the back room where we kept our money, and made change for him."

After the change was made, the two men asked to see the motor home in more detail, according to Matulis, and showered the couple with questions about it.

"Before we even had a chance to answer one question, they

were already asking another," she said. "And while we were trying to answer all the questions, our neighbor saw the other man sneak into our house. That's when he robbed it."

The two men worked so well together, Mrs. Matulis said, that the couple didn't even know they were burglarized until later in the day when they were putting away their cash box, which was left out after the husband made change.

"We called the police and they fingerprinted the area, but it's probably the last time that we will ever see our stuff," Matulis said. "The thing that sickened me is that our anniversary watches were taken too. They are not worth so much in value, but they are very sentimental to me."

The Maricopa County Sheriff's District III office in Surprise is handling the investigation, but so far there are no leads.

"The best advice I can give to people who are selling things from their home is to be cautious," MCSO Detective Mary Ward said. "Don't let the people into the home and don't show them any money."

Because of the incident, the Matulises moved the motor home to a car dealership because they didn't want to leave themselves open to another potential burglary.

"It's truly a shame that we can't trust our fellow beings, and must be constantly on our guard," Mrs. Matulis said. "But realistically, albeit unfortunately, that's the way it is as we head into the 21st century."

The two men are described as clean cut. One man is approximately 40 years old, 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighs about 170 to 180 pounds with dark, medium-length hair. The other man is in his early 20s, 5 feet 5 inches tall, about 150 pounds, with short, dark hair.

Anyone with information about the burglary or any other thefts in the Sun Cities is asked to contact the Sheriff's District III office at 602-256-1011.

John Sokolich can be reached at [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com) or at 876-2526.

# Burglaries in Sun City keep deputies busy

## HOMES, BUSINESSES HIT: Sheriff's Office tells residents to keep lights on to deter criminals

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Leads were followed, suspects were questioned and arrests were made, but burglaries in Sun City continue to plague residences and businesses alike.

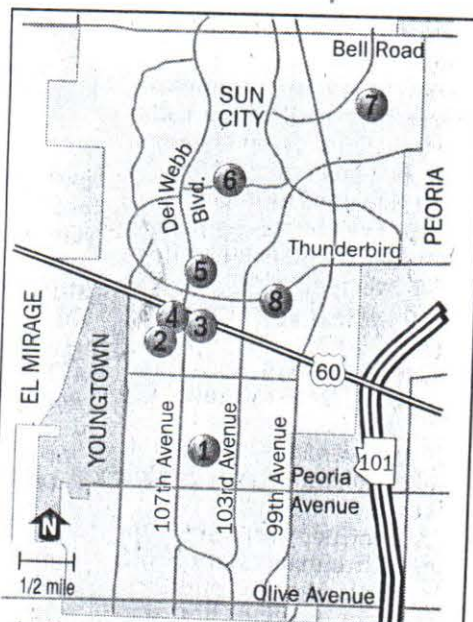
Five burglaries and two thefts were reported to the Maricopa County Sheriff's District III Office this week, all happening within Sun City but evenly split between homes and businesses. Also reported was one attempted theft from vending machines at Sun City Cleaners on North 107th Avenue.

"We've contacted groups of people and made some arrests on other charges besides burglaries, and that seemed to slow down the burglaries on the commercial end," MCSO Detective Joe Dietrick said. "But as for the residential side, we still seem to be having a few in Sun City."

This week, burglars broke into homes on El Rancho Drive, Kingswood Circle and Glen Oak Circle. The most popular items taken were televisions, but the Sheriff's Office also received reports of stolen jewelry and photography equipment. In each case, forced entry was made through broken windows.

"At this point it's hard to say if the burglaries are connected," Dietrick said, "but this is something we are working hard to put a stop to."

**See Burglars continue, A5**



1. Burglary — 10300 block of El Rancho Drive, Sun City
2. Burglary — Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 13000 block of North 108th Avenue, Sun City
3. Burglary — HTGT discount store, 10600 block of Northwest Grand Avenue, Sun City
4. Attempted Theft — 13000 block of North 107th Avenue, Sun City
5. Theft — 10800 block of Buccaneer Drive, Sun City
6. Burglary — 10400 block of Kingswood Circle, Sun City
7. Burglary — 9300 block of Glen Oak Circle, Sun City
8. Theft — 10200 block of West Thunderbird Blvd., Sun City

### From A1

Detectives at District III in Surprise said most burglaries are crimes of opportunity, and dim street lighting increases the opportunities. At a minimum, they said, residents should keep their outside lights on at night to deter any type of criminal activity.

"There is a lot of poor lighting in Sun City, and besides lights, residents should participate in block watches," Dietrick said.

Although block watches have had some marked success for residential neighborhoods in the area, such programs don't exist for community businesses such as HTGT, a discount store in the 10600 block Northwest Grand Avenue. In the last three weeks, the business has been broken into twice.

"I think the reason why we were targeted twice is because nothing happened to the burglars the first time," store co-owner Gene Wells said. "We are putting in an alarm system this week, because so far, the police

haven't been able to do a thing about it."

Wells, who owns two similar stores in Glendale and Peoria, said of all the places he operates, Sun City has caused the most headaches for him.

"We have nothing like this at our other stores," he said. "We once had a window broken, but nothing was taken. And I think it's because the cops in those cities are on the lookout for trouble. They aren't in Sun City."

Records obtained from the Sheriff's Office show five full-time deputies patrolling the Sun City areas throughout the night; the patrol area also extends to Wickenburg.

When the HTGT store was burglarized this week, perpetrators broke in through a heat duct on the roof of the building, crashed through the ceiling and proceeded to use tools from the store to break into the cash register and ATM.

"The ATM is right in the front window too," Wells said. "They pried it open, took the money and then walked right out the front door. Nobody saw or heard anything."

In total, police estimate upwards of \$1,200 in cash was taken.

Even churches aren't held sacred when it comes to burglaries, as a break-in in the 13000 block of North 108th Avenue shows. There, perpetrators entered the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and broke into a locked safe. Less than \$50 in cash was taken, but an outside door was broken during the entry.

Attempts to contact church officials were unsuccessful Wednesday.

Sheriff's investigators are asking anyone with information about the burglaries to contact their office at 602-256-1000. Residents can call the same number to report any suspicious activity in their neighborhoods.

"We would rather respond to a call that turns out to be nothing than to come to a burglary when it's already too late to do something about it," Dietrick said. "When people call us, it helps out a lot, and they can remain anonymous if they want to."

Sun City Posse Cmdr. Wylie Haukland said another

way residents can protect themselves is by installing and updating locks on their doors.

"A lot of the older houses in the community do not have dead-bolts," he said. "It's a good idea to install those types of locks because they are nearly impenetrable by burglars."

Haukland also suggested putting up security screen doors on main entrances in the houses to cut the chances of home invasions.

"But I think the easiest thing for people to do is to participate in block watches," he said. "Neighbors looking out for neighbors is just an overall good idea. This way, there are a lot more eyes and ears out to spot potential crime."

For information about how to protect personal property from burglaries, the Sun City Sheriff's Posse, 10861 Sunland Drive, has numerous brochures in its building about home protection and security.

John Sokolich can be reached at [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com) or at 876-2526.

Daily News-Sun • Friday, Feb. 16, 2001

# Burglary bug comes back

## ROBBERY RASH: Sun City gets brunt of recent crime wave

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Following brief reprieve from recent burglaries plaguing Sun City residents, the crimes made a resurgence this week, including a \$20,000 theft from a Grand Avenue restaurant.

Six burglaries and five thefts, with most of them happening in Sun City, were reported to the Maricopa County Sheriff's District III Office in Surprise this week. Although the crimes do not appear to be connected, sheriff's officials said, deputies are making an all-out push to crack the cases.

Investigators were not available for comment Thursday, but the community posse said the public needs to be aware of the crimes.

"A couple of years ago we had a whole presentation on what people could do to protect themselves," Sun City West Posse spokesman Jack Lewis said. "Some people took it pretty seriously, but others were rather relaxed in their approach to it."

This week's largest burglary score was from a business on Grand Avenue, where burglars made off with a safe from the Royal Cafe containing more than \$20,000 in cash. According to a police report, the safe contained the week's deposits. Perpetrators in that burglary gained entry through the cafe's ceiling.

Lewis said the biggest target for burglars is the rear of homes, which cannot be seen from the streets. He said people need to be conscious of the potential for danger there, taking time to lock — and double lock — their rear entry ways.

Save for one case where

perpetrators gained entrance to a home by pretending to be interested in purchasing a vehicle, the other residential burglaries were committed by forced entry through house windows. In the past two months, the majority of burglaries were committed in similar fashion, according to police reports.

Two weeks ago, MCSO Detective Joe Dietrick said several unrelated arrests were made, and that appeared to curb some of the burglaries. But with the rash continuing, sheriff's deputies are on the lookout again for suspects.

As for the residential burglaries this week, the main items taken were electronic items such as televisions and VCRs.

At one burglary, in the 9100 block of Hidden Valley Lane in Sun City, thousands of dollars in computer equipment were taken.

Several thefts, primarily involving items such as vacuum cleaners and golf bags taken from garages, also hit the area this week.

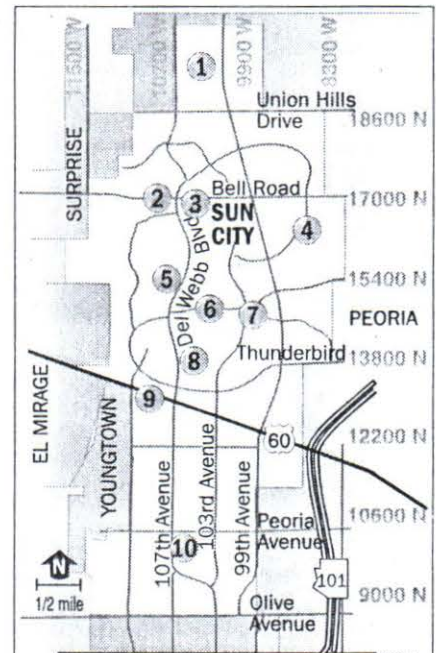
But unlike those thefts, in which opportunities were easy because of open and unlocked entry ways, most of the burglaries involved some sort of forced entry — usually through windows or glass doors.

Following the arrests that led to a lull in the crimes previously, detectives at the Sheriff's District III office in Surprise said most burglaries are crimes of opportunity, and dim street lighting increases the opportunities. At a minimum, they said, residents should keep their outside lights on at night to deter any type of criminal activity.

"There is a lot of poor lighting in Sun City, and besides lights, residents should participate in block watches," Dietrick said.

In the Sun Cities, many residents are involved in block watches, which have worked with marked success.

"I think the easiest way for people to protect themselves from burglaries is to participate in those block watches," Sun City Posse Cmdr.



1. Theft — 10100 West Concho Circle, Sun City Road, Sun City
2. Theft — 10900 block of West Bell Road, Sun City
3. Theft — Safeway Shopping Plaza parking lot on Bell Road, Sun City
4. Burglary — 9100 block of Hidden Valley Lane, Sun City
5. Burglary — 10400 block of White Mountain Road, Sun City
6. Burglary — 10400 block of Kingswood Circle, Sun City
7. Theft — 14800 block of North 103rd Avenue, Sun City
8. Burglary — 10200 block of Bolivar, Sun City
9. Burglary — 10700 block of Grand Avenue, Sun City
10. Theft — 10100 block of Audrey Drive, Sun City

Wylie Haukland said. "Just as the posse is an extension of the eyes and ears of the sheriff's department, neighbors looking out for neighbors is just an overall good idea. This way, there are a lot more eyes and ears out there to spot potential crime."

## ID Theft

To protect against the potential for identity theft, the Federal Trade Commission gives the following precautions.

- Before revealing personal identifying information, find out how it will be used and if it will be shared with others.
- Pay attention to billing cycles. Follow up with creditors if bills do not arrive on time.
- Give your Social Security number only when absolutely necessary. Ask to use other types of identifiers when possible.
- Minimize the identification information and the number of cards you carry to what you actually need. If I.D. or credit cards are lost or stolen, notify the creditors by phone immediately, and call the credit bureaus to ask that a "fraud alert" be placed in your file.
- Order a copy of your credit report from the three credit reporting agencies every year. Make sure it's accurate and includes only those activities you've authorized.
- Keep items with personal information in a safe place; tear them up when you don't need them anymore.
- Make sure charge receipts, copies of credit applications, insurance forms, bank checks and statements, expired charge cards and credit offers you get in the mail are disposed of appropriately.

DAILY NEWS-SUN

# Identity theft common locally

## SUN CITIES: Seniors especially hard hit in fraud schemes

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

In most crimes, physical evidence marks the scene, but with identity theft, a tarnished good name testifies to the wrongdoing.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District III in Surprise is working identity theft cases in the Sun Cities. Those thefts could potentially cost residents thousands of dollars, sheriff's officials said.

"There seems to be a person or group of people who are dumpster diving," Detective Sgt. Hank Brandimarte

said. "They are getting personal information about residents in Sun City and opening up credit cards in their names."

Some of the credit cards are being opened through Juniper Bank, an East Coast company cooperating with MCSO to stop the fraud, Brandimarte said. The suspects are using information gathered in people's trash to open the accounts, detectives report.

To combat the potential for fraud, Brandimarte suggests people make a conscious effort to completely destroy all personal documents before throwing them away.

"This includes all bills, bank statements and anything else that might have personal information on it,"

he said. "A good investment would be a shredder."

The Federal Trade Commission, which has worked extensively on matters of identity theft, reports that in most cases, the victims are seniors — meaning the Sun Cities is a target-rich environment for these crimes.

"Identity thieves usually target senior citizens," Michelle Martyne of the FTC said. "There have been many cases of other age groups falling victim to the scams, but for the most part, seniors tend to be the main target."

There are a number of ways and means of obtaining enough information to steal — and tarnish — a person's identity, she said, but the most common is through

**See Phone scams, A5**

### From A1

telephone scams or by rooting through people's trash.

A thief steals an identity by co-opting a name, Social Security number, credit card number or some other piece of personal identification.

"In other words, identity theft is when someone appropriates your personal information without your knowledge to commit fraud or

theft," Martyne said.

Local MCSO detectives are seeking information about the possible identity theft ring in the area and are asking anyone with information to call the District III office at 602-256-1600.

Though the identity thefts in the Sun Cities area are being investigated by MCSO, the laws governing the cases are federal.

In October 1998, Congress

passed the Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act to address the problem.

The act made it a federal crime when anyone "knowingly transfers or uses, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person with the intent to commit, or to aid or abet, any unlawful activity that constitutes a violation of federal law, or that constitutes a felony under any applicable

state or local law."

Violations of the act are investigated by federal investigative agencies such as the U.S. Secret Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The cases are prosecuted by the Department of Justice.

For information about how to protect personal information, call the Federal Trade Commission toll-free at 1-877-ID-THEFT.

# Phoenix steals first place in auto thefts

**SUN CITIES:**  
Safest area in  
Valley for car  
owners

**JOHN SOKOLICH**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Northwest Valley remains a safe place for people to park their cars, and the Sun Cities are the safest of all.

Neighbors in Phoenix, however, might want to lock their doors and arm their alarms as the city took the top spot for per capita auto thefts in the nation, according to a 2000 study by the National Insurance Crime Bureau. Northwest Valley communities didn't even make the list of more than 325 cities.

Based on a database of crime reports from the insurance bureau, Northwest Valley communities rank considerably lower than the Phoenix-Mesa area for crimes such as stolen vehicles and other property thefts. In fact, the Sun Cities had the lowest possible ranking for those incidents, according to the database.

"We have seen an increase in car thefts, but no more a ratio than what the area's population growth has been," said Lt. Mark Schott of the Surprise Police Department. "But we definitely haven't seen an abundance of vehicle thefts."

Schott said the number of vehicle thefts tends to

increase the closer one goes to the heart of downtown Phoenix.

"Car thefts are more occasional out here," he said. "A lot of our recovered stolen vehicles in the area also tend to originate elsewhere, such as Phoenix or Glendale or even from out of state."

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, the lone policing agency for the Sun Cities, did not have specific numbers available Thursday of auto thefts for the communities.

MCSO Detective Bill Knight said car thefts in the Sun Cities, though rare, do occur.

Phoenix, Miami and Detroit were the top three cities in the study's ranking. According to the study, cities near the borders of Mexico and Canada, along with port cities, tend to rank higher in auto thefts. About two-thirds of the 25 metropolitan areas with the highest rates of vehicle theft last year were at or near U.S. borders, reflecting a thriving international trade for pilfered autos, the report stated.

Mike Erwin of the National Insurance Crime Bureau said the number of car thefts reported for Phoenix doesn't necessarily include surrounding cities and towns, such as those in the Northwest Valley.

"We base the study on a collection of data from the Census Bureau," he said. "The data says the Phoenix-Mesa area, but does not specify if smaller towns are included."

Citing FBI statistics, the



**MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN**

The Honda Civic is the fifth most-stolen vehicle in the U.S., according to an insurance company-sponsored report. Anti-theft devices such as "The Club" can help thwart would-be car thieves.

nonprofit insurance bureau said the Phoenix area had 979 reported auto thefts in 2000 for every 100,000 residents.

Arizona Department of Public Safety Lt. Ron Hollar said his department in Youngtown doesn't originate stolen-car investigations. Rather, stolen vehicles are investigated by local police departments. But DPS does make its share of suspected stolen-vehicle stops, although they are usually from out of state, he said.

"But from my experience,

I'm not aware of an unusual number of car thefts in the area," he said. "Like I said, the ones we do get aren't even from around here."

Local police agencies report cars are broken into in a variety of ways, but owners can practice a little precaution to alleviate some of the most common break-ins and thefts.

"People should watch out for leaving their keys in the car," said Matt Brown of the Glendale Police Department. "They should also lock their doors and never leave their

vehicles running when going into a store. Even if it's just for a few seconds, cars can be stolen really quickly."

Schott said there is a lot of debate about the effectiveness of some anti-theft devices. But protecting a vehicle with some form of deterrent just might make a would-be thief look elsewhere to commit a crime.

"A lot of vehicle thefts are thefts of opportunity," he said. "What people have to do is limit those opportunities."

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Daily News-Sun • Saturday, April 7, and Sunday, April 8, 2001

# Crime touches more Sun Citians

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

With an 82-year-old Sun City woman severely beaten in the car port of her residence the night of March 29 during a violent robbery, residents are expressing their fear.

The robbery occurred at about 10 p.m. in the 13600 block of North 111th Avenue. The woman was returning from bingo when a man pushed her from behind, tied her up with a phone chord and beat her repeatedly on the upper part of her body, said Detective Bill Knight of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. The perpetrator then stole the woman's car and purse.

With such a brutal crime within the boundaries of Sun City, many residents expressed fear that the incident could happen to anyone.

"I feel very vulnerable," Billie Greene of Sun City said. "I'm actually kind of sick about it. When I come home, I drive up and down the alley first to make sure nobody is around."

Neighbors of the victim were reluctant Friday to comment about the incident, but one woman who lives in a nearby apartment said she is now staying home at night in fear of being attacked.

"It's really a bad way to live," said the

**See Brutal attack, A4**

## From A1

woman, "but I'm scared. I live alone and I wouldn't know what to do if someone came up to me at night. I always thought Sun City was such a safe place to live. Now, I'm not so sure."

Her comments echoed Greene's who said it is not uncommon now to have police helicopters hover over the community at night.

"Crime is coming to Sun City and it scares people. It scares me," she said. "I have a car port outside my house as well, and what's to say something like that won't happen to me?"

James Coughlin, who said he hadn't heard about the recent crime, said other problems are making their way into the community, such as burglaries and vandalism.

"I read in the newspaper all the burglaries that have happened around here, and it was just a matter of time (until) someone got hurt," he said. "It really doesn't surprise me. We have the posse doing all they can, but heaven knows what will happen if you actually need a

real police officer around here."

Sheriff's Office records show five full-time deputies on duty in a coverage area ranging from the Sun Cities to Wickenburg each night. Because of the expansive coverage range, some nightly community patrols can be canceled if other incidents occur elsewhere in the coverage area.

The assault is still being investigated by MCSO, but so far leads have been slim, Knight reported.

The woman's car was recovered in El Mirage the same night as the robbery, and credit cards in the woman's purse have not been used, authorities said.

The victim remains hospitalized from her injuries.

The perpetrator is described as a 30-year-old male, 5 feet, 9 inches tall, 180 pounds with short, clean-cut hair. A composite drawing of him has been made, but not released to the public.

John Sokolich can be reached at [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com) or at 876-2526.

# Victim speaks out

**ATTACKED  
OUTSIDE  
HOME:** Woman,  
82, remains in  
hospital

**JOHN SOKOLICH**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The 82-year-old woman who was brutally attacked a week ago Thursday remembers everything about the incident — except why she was singled out.

The Sun City resident, who asked not to be named, was jumped and hogtied by a man outside her home in the 13600 block of North 111th Avenue. He left her with extensive bruises on her arms, face and back. Friday afternoon, she talked about what happened.

"I was a weak woman," she said. "He probably thought I had money. He took my purse, but he got nothing."

In addition to her purse,



**MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN**

This 82-year-old Sun City woman is recovering from her injuries after being assaulted last week outside her home.

the perpetrator also stole her car, which was recovered later that same night in El Mirage. The woman was discovered by neighbors who heard the car speed away.

"He tied my legs in the back," the woman said. "He straddled my back and beat me in the face. It's really something that you can't believe."

With her face bruised, a

bandage on her arm where her skin was scrapped off and large bruises on her neck, the woman said she still doesn't understand what the perpetrator was trying to do.

"If he was trying to steal from me, why did he work on me for so long?" she asked. "I'm not sure what the reason was."

**See Assault victim, A4**

## From A1

Perhaps what disturbs the woman the most is how vulnerable all Sun City residents are to these types of crimes.

"Why didn't the police let everyone know about this?" she asked. "It's because they wanted to keep this quiet. I was never afraid before, but I am afraid now."

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, which has not released the police report from the incident, is in charge of the investigation. The woman said the lack of

sheriff's office patrols in Sun City contribute to this type of crime.

"There is nobody on the streets. You never see the police," she said. "Of course it scares me. And is it money? They make damn sure there is enough money to water the greens. Why don't they have the police?"

The woman is recovering in the hospital, and said she is not sure how she feels about returning home — the place of her attack.

"But time heals," she said. "It will take a little while, but it will heal."

# Sun Citians take bite

## out of crime

The National Crime Prevention Council gives the following tips to prevent personal-safety crimes:

- Avoid walking or running alone at night.

- Avoid using headphones while walking, driving or jogging.

- Always walk in well-lit areas.

- After dark, keep away from obstructions that someone could hide behind, and always be aware of your surroundings.

- Always stay near the curb.

- If someone in a vehicle stops and asks for directions, answer from a distance. Do not approach the vehicle.

- Do not display cash openly, especially when leaving an ATM machine.

**BLOCK WATCH:** Sheriff's office counts on observant neighbors, but some areas without program

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Burglaries are common here in the Sun Cities.

And thefts run so rampant that even an unlocked car in a residential driveway tempts fate.

Purse snatchings occur, sometimes monthly, according to police reports.

But those crimes are almost nothing compared to the case of an 82-year-old woman who was brutally attacked — and almost killed — in the car port of her home two weeks ago.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office has not yet responded to requests by the Daily News-Sun to release that police report. The woman, meanwhile, is upset authorities have not made the crime public. Keeping silent on it, she said, gives residents a false sense of security.

"Why didn't the police let everyone know about this?" she asked during an interview Friday. "It's because they wanted to keep this quiet. We're all so vulnerable and people have to know how to protect themselves."

The woman asked that her name not be used.

A similar crime occurred in Sun City West five years ago, and the perpetrator in that attack has yet to be found.

One way to protect oneself in the Sun Cities is through a block watch program. But participation in one takes the initiative of more than one person, as Billie Greene found out.

Greene, a condominium owner in the heart of Sun City, said she is scared about the recent attack on the neighboring Sun City woman. But some of her neighbors turn a blind eye toward the issue, she said.

"The people around here don't seem to know about, or don't want to know about the crime here," Greene said. "I've approached people about a neighborhood watch, but I've gotten a bad reception from a lot of the people."

Greene said she is surprised more people aren't interested in the program because many of her neighbors are confined to wheelchairs and have no other

**See Neighbors keep, A5**

From A1

help than from their neighbors.

"So many of the people say, 'Oh poo. It can't happen here,'" she said. "But it can and it did. I think a block watch would help to make me feel safer, but I don't think people are interested in it for some reason."

Nevertheless, Greene has spoken with the chairwoman of her condominium association and is in the process of forming a block watch with interested residents in her complex.

Where block watches are present, such as in the 13600 block of North 111th Avenue in Sun City — the location of the violent attack against the 82-year-old woman that sparked Greene's fear — the program has been

ranging from the Sun Cities to Wickenburg. Because of the expansive coverage range, some nightly community patrols can be canceled if other incidents occur elsewhere in the coverage area.

"You have to recognize that the sheriff is limited in his coverage in Sun City," said Bill Ellsworth, director of the Sun City block watch program. "The work of crime prevention is dependant on the residents."

There are 665 active block watches in Sun City, and 117 in Sun City West, but there is always a push to get more homeowners interested in the program.

"They work really well, and people become quite active in them," said Mike Senka, director of the block watch program at the Sun City West Posse. "And the program is a

partially successful.

Although sheriff's office reports for the past four months show no burglaries have been reported in the neighborhood, save for a bag of golf clubs that was stolen from an unlocked car, the vicious attack still played out in the night's darkness. A neighbor who heard something suspicious, however, did come to the aid of the woman after the perpetrator sped away.

But with limited community patrols by the sheriff's District III office in Surprise resident-based programs like block watch keep more eyes and ears on the lookout than local authorities can muster.

Facing severe personnel shortages, the sheriff's office reports that five full-time deputies are on duty each night in a coverage area

good idea anyway. It allows people to look after neighbors and gives people the opportunity to get to know what's going on in their community."

Rosemary Lynch, who is active in her neighborhood's block watch program in the 10200 block of Andover Avenue, said the program has done a great deal in curbing crime there.

"We all look out for each other and we are all really interested in what's going on with everyone," she said. "I guess you could call us nousey neighbors, but it's been a really long time since we've ever had a break in."

Once a month, Lynch's block watch group meets at a local restaurant for breakfast.

"We talk about everything there," she said. "We have a good time and get to know what everyone is doing. The program has let everyone in (our neighborhood) get to know each other while we keep an eye out for suspicious activity."

OVER





Sgt. Eileen and Lt. Mike Senka are block watch officers for the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City West and would like to see more block watch signs in the retirement community's windows.

STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

# Block watches deter crime

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Participating in a block watch is like having an on-duty police officer in every home.

Block watches are programs involving the joint efforts of the police or sheriff's department and the community, designed to enhance neighborhood security, heighten the community's powers of observation, and encourage mutual assistance and concern among neighbors. The groups have been gaining in popularity locally and have had marked success in deterring crime. Participating in one takes little effort, but the payback is priceless.

"Block watches in the community are successful," said Bill Ellsworth, director of the Sun City Posse's block watch program. "There is no doubt about it. I would always like to see it expand because each has done a good job of deterring crime. It's because of the block watches that the Sun Cities remain so safe."

The Sun City and Sun City West posesses have extensive literature about block watch programs, but the first step for interested residents is organizing a group with neighbors. Area block watches come under the authority of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, the only policing agency in Sun City and

Sun City West. But for residents who organize such a program, the main contacts would be with the posse organizations.

"One of the first things someone should do to start a block watch is contact the posse," Ellsworth said. "But something that they should do also is get together 10 to 20 residences that would participate in the program."

Every block watch must have a coordinator who does the majority of the organizing. The coordinator's responsibilities vary depending on his or her motivation, but at a minimum should include keeping all participant information current, organizing meetings and notifying participants when a burglary occurs.

The National Crime Prevention Council, which serves as the foundation for block watches, advises participants to get to know their neighbors and maintain a cooperative system of surveillance over one another's property.

When something suspicious occurs, participants should contact the sheriff's office at 602-256-1011 or call 911 immediately.

Mike Senka, director of the Sun City West block watch program, said safety is always a concern for participants. A resident's role in a block watch is to be on the lookout.

"We only ask them to be alert," Senka said. "Just like the posse, we are not here to apprehend, but rather to just make a presence."

One potential drawback to block watches in the Sun Cities, though, is the number of part-time residents. Because a large percentage of the population lives elsewhere during the summer months, vacant houses within the community are common, and rather difficult to monitor.

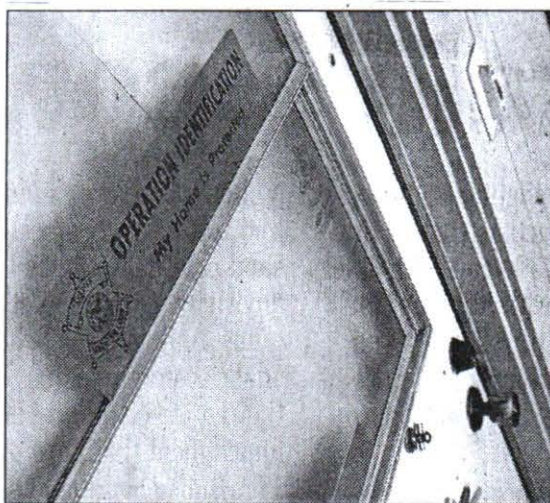
"Even with the snowbirds here, there is no reason for people not to organize," Ellsworth said. "It shouldn't be a problem to have someone look after a house during the summer, and if it is, it is something I can do."

But the hardest part of the block watch, according to Ellsworth, is keeping the program going when little or no crime is reported for an extended period of time.

"People get into block watches with enthusiasm, but it sometimes fades when not a lot goes on," he said. "But it's important to keep the enthusiasm high and for people to stick with the program."

To organize a block watch within Sun City, call Ellsworth at the posse at 972-2555. In Sun City West, call Senka at the posse at 584-5808.

John Sokolich can be reached at [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com) or at 876-2526.



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Security stickers mark the door of a Sun City home. Sheriff's officials encourage neighbors to organize block watches in their neighborhoods.

Daily News-Sun • Thursday, May 3, 2001

# Suspect held in brutal attack on Sun Citian

**KATY BORNHOFEN**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

A 36-year-old El Mirage man with an extensive police record has been arrested in connection with the brutal beating of a Sun City woman.

Maricopa County Sheriff's detectives arrested Andres Gutierrez Cano at a home on Alto Street in El Mirage at about 2 p.m. April 24. He was arrested on an outstanding warrant issued on charges of shoplifting and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

But a kidnapping charge related to the beating of the 82-year-old Sun City woman — who spent about three weeks in the hospital recovering — was tacked on after police connected Cano to that crime.

The kidnapping charge relates to the suspect allegedly restraining the victim "with intent to inflict death, physical injury or a sexual offense on her."

Cano's bond was set at \$150,450.

At a preliminary hearing Wednesday, Peoria Justice of the Peace Lex Anderson forwarded the kidnapping charge against Cano to a grand jury. Cano is being held in Madison Street Jail.

On the day of his arrest, while Cano was in a police holding room he allegedly tried to hang himself, according to court documents. He was treated at a hospital and then interviewed, where he denied any knowledge of the crime.

The Sun City woman had returned from a game of bingo at about 10 p.m. March 29 when she was attacked outside her home in the 13600 block of North 111th Avenue. She was struck in the face and chest six to seven times, her glasses were yanked off and her head was banged against the floor several times, according to reports. The

necklace she was wearing, her purse and her car were stolen. The car was later found near First Avenue and Ventura Street in El Mirage.

"He tied my legs in the back," the woman told the Daily News-Sun a few days after the attack. "He straddled my back and beat me in the face. It's really something that you can't believe."

According to reports, the woman told police she "played dead."

Sheriff's detectives said they matched a fingerprint from an envelope inside the woman's home to Cano. They also served a search warrant April 26 at the El Mirage house, where they took six pairs of Cano's shoes to cross-check with shoe-prints found at the Sun City victim's home.

According to the search-warrant affidavit, other charges considered in the case aside from kidnapping were attempted homicide, robbery and theft of a vehicle.

Cano has a history of encounters with Arizona police agencies — including El Mirage, Glendale and MCSO — going back to the mid-1980s, including charges of possession of peyote and marijuana, possession of drugs for sale, assault, aggravated assault, resisting arrest, criminal damage, criminal trespassing and use of a deadly weapon.

According to the Arizona Department of Corrections, Cano spent time in jail from 1988 to 1995, including periods in medium and maximum security. His record there was marred by conduct including disobeying orders, rioting, possession of drugs, tampering with equipment, possession of devices and stealing. In April 1991, he escaped from custody, part of the reason he was considered a flight risk when bail was set following his recent arrest.

# MCSO: Sun Cities remain safe

**COMMISSION:** Report says state crime increase still behind population growth

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Every 24 hours, somewhere in Arizona, there is a murder, four rapes, 20 robberies and 133 burglaries — a far cry from the relative calm of the Sun Cities.

But even the Sun Cities saw more than 100 burglaries through April 14 of this year.

According to the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, crimes in the state have climbed for the past 10 years, but the increase hasn't outpaced the state's population growth.

"When it comes down to it, Sun City is a safe place to live," said Detective Sgt. Hank Brandimarte of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District III in Surprise.

MCSO is the lone policing agency for the Sun Cities, and officials there report that crime in the area is relatively low.

"Crime in (the Sun Cities), I would say is a lot less than other parts we patrol," said Capt. Ron Stoner, District III commander.

Deputies in District III have a coverage area that encompasses approximately 1,600 square miles in an area bordered by Interstate 17 on the east, the La Paz County line on the west, Northern Avenue on the south, and the Yavapai County line on the north. Because such a large area is covered, narrowing down specific crimes within the Sun Cities is difficult, MCSO officials said. But from the data

compiled by the Sun City Posse, Brandimarte said Sun City has had 112 burglaries from Jan. 1 until April 14.

"That averages about one per day," he said. "But the statistics also don't reflect two arrests we made recently."

In mid-April, MCSO arrested two suspected burglars, and since that time, the number of burglaries has dropped considerably, Brandimarte said.

One burglary investigation is still open. A suspect has been identified, but Brandimarte said deputies are trying to catch the person red-handed because he is covering his tracks well now.

"He uses stolen vehicles when he goes to burglarize a house and wears gloves so he doesn't leave fingerprints," he said.

As for other offenses, Brandimarte said violent crime is low in the Sun Cities. An incident this March involving an elderly Sun City woman brutally attacked outside her home was the first incident of that kind in more than five years, he said. A man suspected of being the woman's attacker has been arrested and is awaiting trial.

The number of assaults in the area were not available Tuesday, but Brandimarte said most of those cases involve either family members fighting with each other or neighbors fighting with each other.

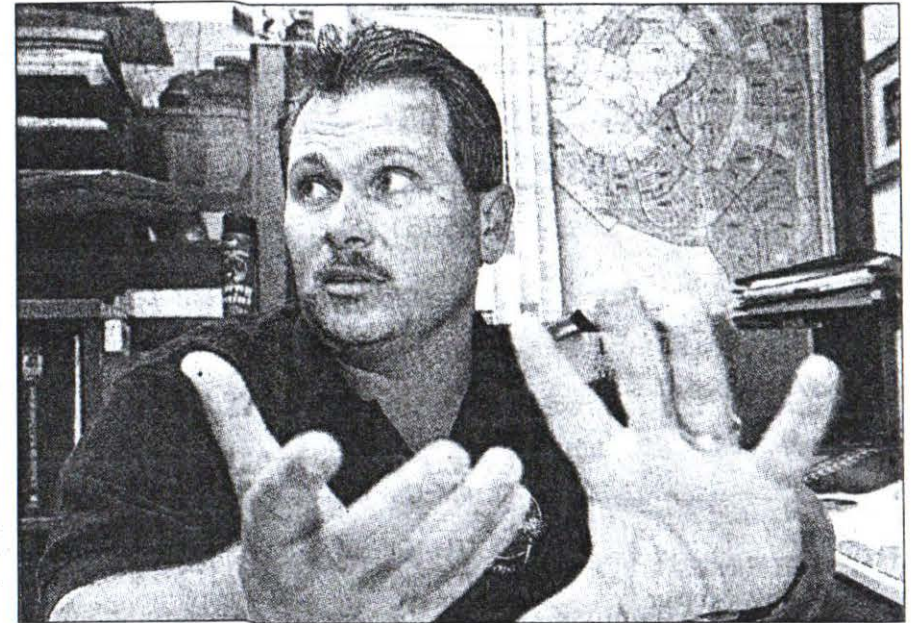
"It is very rare to have something like that, but it does occur," he said. "They will fight over a parking space, and it is usually nothing more than a shoving match."

In the past decade, Arizona grew three times as fast as the rest of the nation,

whereas Sun City's population remained fairly constant because it was built out. Sun City West saw a 64 percent increase, but is now stabilized after also having been built out.

According to the National Crime Database on the Internet, Sun City and Sun City West have a safety rating of 10 — the highest possible score — meaning the two communities are very safe to live in. Peoria received a nine, Glendale received an eight and El Mirage and Surprise received a combined score of seven. Phoenix, on the other hand, received a score of four.

But Arizona as a whole is getting safer, according to the Justice Commission. In 1999, its overall crime index fell 10.3 percent from 1998 and 25.3 percent from 1990. Arizona still has a way to go to be considered safe, however, as it nationally ranked



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sgt. Hank Brandimarte of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office discusses a report by the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission Tuesday. MCSO is the sole policing agency for the Sun Cities.

fourth-highest for crime in 1999, preceded by the District of Columbia, Florida and New Mexico.

Maricopa County saw an even more significant decrease in its crime index, which dropped almost 30 percent for the past 10 years, even though its population grew by almost 40 percent.

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# Burglars hit south of Grand

**SUN CITY:** Sheriff's deputy characterizes recent rash of break-ins as crimes of opportunity

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

A string of burglaries and attempted burglaries in Sun City this past week are being classified as "crimes of opportunity" by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

The crimes have been centered primarily south of Grand Avenue in the community, and losses have been relatively low, save for one residential burglary reported

Jan. 12 in which close to \$8,000 in personal property was taken.

That burglary occurred in the 10200 block of Desert Rock.

"I wish I could narrow down who the suspect or suspects might be," said Detective Chris Osborn of MCSO's District III office in Surprise. "But actually, there are no suspects at this time and we are not sure of any leads at this point."

Osborn said for the number of break-ins happening lately in Sun City, the success rate of the burglars has been rather low.

Of the MCSO police reports made available Thursday morning at the District III office, there were six reported attempted burglaries within the community.

**See Burglars target, A5**

## From A1

but just three successful ones. Most of the buildings entered by perpetrators were broken into by prying open doors or windows.

The other burglaries during the week were centered along Coggins Drive, Augusta Drive and 105th Ave.

"The real way people can protect themselves from these crimes is with lighting," Osborn said. "Lots and lots of lighting. These are crimes of opportunity for the burglars, and what people should do is make it as difficult as possible for them to have an opportunity."

Osborn said lighting is one of the best deterrents against burglars. Neighborhood watches are another successful tool. But he said many residents choose not to keep outside lights on at night in order to save money on their electric bills.

"But if you look at the cost of what it would cost the people if they were burglarized, the lighting is a small price to pay," he said.

Although burglars successfully entered three homes this past week, Osborn said the ratio of burglaries to attempted burglaries can be good news to other residents.

The following burglaries and attempted burglaries were reported to MCSO this week:

● An attempted burglary at Sun Valley Lodge Thrift Shop in the 12400 block of North 103rd Avenue, Sun City, occurred sometime between Jan. 10 and 11. Access was gained through a pried-open front door, but no property was taken.

● An attempted burglary at Adam's Tax Service in the 10100 block of Northwest Grand Avenue, Sun City, occurred sometime between Jan. 10 and 11. Access was gained through a pried-open door, but no property was taken.

● An attempted burglary at Monarch Dental in the 10200 block of Coggins Drive, Sun City, occurred at about 5:19 A.M. Jan. 14. Access was gained through a pried-open door, but no property was taken.

● An attempted burglary at Phillip Merkatz Accounting Office in the 10100 block of Coggins Drive, Sun City, occurred sometime between Jan. 10 and 11. Access was gained through a pried-open front door, but no property was taken.

● An attempted burglary at a

residence in the 10000 block of Augusta Drive, Sun City, occurred at about 9 p.m. Jan. 13. Access was gained through a kicked-in back door, but no property was taken.

● An attempted burglary at a residence in the 10200 block of 105th Drive, Sun City, occurred at about 8:22 p.m. Jan. 13. Access was gained through a pried-open rear window, but no property was taken.

● A burglary at a residence in the 10200 block of West Riviera Drive, Sun City, occurred sometime between 4:15 p.m. and 9:10 p.m. Jan. 13. Access was gained through a forced-open front door. Four golf shirts and a pair of golf shoes were taken.

● A burglary at a residence in the 15400 block of Lake Forest Drive, Sun City, occurred sometime Jan. 13. Access was gained through a pried-open window. A television, VCR and camera were taken.

● A burglary at a residence in the 10200 block of Desert Rock, Sun City, occurred sometime Jan. 11. Access was gained through a pried-open back door. A television, VCR, camcorder and jewelry were taken. Estimated cost of the stolen items was in excess of \$7,900.

Sun City Posse Commander Wylie Haukland said another way residents can protect themselves is by installing and updating locks on their doors.

"A lot of the older houses in the community do not have deadbolts," he said. "It's a good idea to install those types of locks because they are nearly impenetrable by burglars."

Haukland also suggested putting up security screen doors on main entrances in the houses to cut the chances of home invasion.

"But I think the easiest thing for people to do is to participate in block watches," he said. "Neighbors looking out for neighbors is just an overall good idea. This way, there are a lot more eyes and ears out to spot potential crime."

For more information about how to protect personal property from burglaries, the Sun City Sheriff's Posse, 10861 Sunland Drive, has numerous brochures in its building about home protection and security.

John Sokolich can be reached at [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com) or at 876-2526.

# Crime rate low in Sun Cities

## POSSE ON PATROL: Presence of volunteers helps curb incidents

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

There aren't many places Georgia Douglas is afraid to go to at night. She checks over her shoulder at times, but feels comfortable walking alone on dimly lighted community sidewalks.

The 76-year-old Sun City West woman said she's heard about crime in the area, but believes police are doing their job well enough that she and other residents don't have to live in fear.

Local officials agree, saying the Sun Cities are a safe place to live, especially when considering other communities.

"I lived in White Plains (N.Y.) for 40 years," she said. "Toward the end, I wouldn't leave home without one of my sons or my husband at night. It was too dangerous. Here, I feel safe."

It's not that way for everyone, though.

Five months ago, an 86-year-old Sun City woman was brutally attacked and robbed as she came home from a bingo game after dark. A suspect has since been caught and charged.

While such attacks are rare, every week stolen purses, burglaries and criminal damage cases appear in Maricopa County Sheriff's Office reports.

MCSO is the sole policing agency for the Sun Cities, save for volunteer posse members who make regular patrols through the communities.

In addition to services such as vacation watch and traffic control, the posses are effective in reducing crime simply through their presence, said Sun City Posse Duty Officer Ron Smith.

"We are out on patrol a lot," he said. "People see our

cars and they can't tell the difference between them and the sheriff's cars. Plus, we are the eyes and ears of the sheriff, so these areas are patrolled pretty well."

Other Northwest Valley cities have their own police forces, and their share of crime, but officials report that overall, the West Valley is a safe place to live.

According to 2000 FBI statistics, Glendale and Peoria saw increases in their crime indexes from 1999 to 2000, but Sun Cities statistics remained nearly the same. Glendale had an increase of 9 percent in its crime index, while Peoria saw the biggest jump in the state, with a 32 percent increase in its crime index. Sun City had a .1 percent decrease and Sun City West rose just .2 percent.

"The Sun Cities remain a relatively safe place to live," said MCSO Detective Sgt. Hank Brandimarte. "Most of the crimes here are burglary related, but that has calmed down in recent months as well."

The Sun Cities had no reports of violent crime in 2000, according to the FBI report, whereas Glendale and Peoria saw an increase in violent crime of about 12 percent across the board. That increase is attributed to a population boom, where the two cities saw a roughly 15 percent rise in numbers.

Smith said he remembers a time when Sun City had less crime than it does now, but that was before surrounding communities grew so big.

"I attribute the increase in crime over the last few years to other communities crowding us," he said. "With more people comes more crime, but I think in the Sun Cities there still is a lot less crime than other places."

Mike Evans of Sun City, who called the Daily-News-Sun when he saw his neighbor's house was burglarized in the weekly police blotter,

### From A1

said he doesn't consider the Northwest Valley a Utopian community, but believes it's a lot better than anywhere else he's lived.

"I look in the paper every day," he said. "I see a lot of stories about water and medical procedures. I even see the occasional burglary making headlines. Then I turn on the TV and look at what's happening in Phoenix: a shooting, a murder, armed robberies. I'd say Sun City is still a good place to live."

The 86-year-old woman who was attacked in Sun City this March, and whose name is being withheld at her request, said she thinks there is a lot more crime in

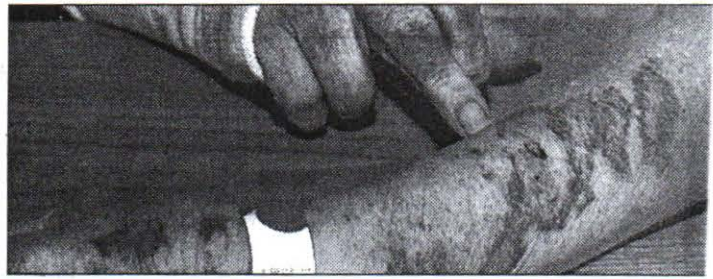
the area than what residents are told about.

In an interview two weeks after she was attacked, she said MCSO officials didn't inform the public nor the local media about the attack because they wanted to give the illusion that crime is not a problem in the Sun Cities.

It wasn't until the woman's daughter informed media outlets of the crime that the attack was publicized.

Brandimarte said the attack was a fluke for the Sun Cities, and people should not live in fear just because of one incident.

"That was a rare case out here," he said. "Something like that is not what is expected in the Sun Cities, and is not a common



DAILY NEWS-SUN FILE PHOTO

A woman who was hogtied and beaten near her Sun City condo five months ago shows the bruises from the attack. Sheriff's officials say the incident was unusual for the Sun Cities.

crime at all."

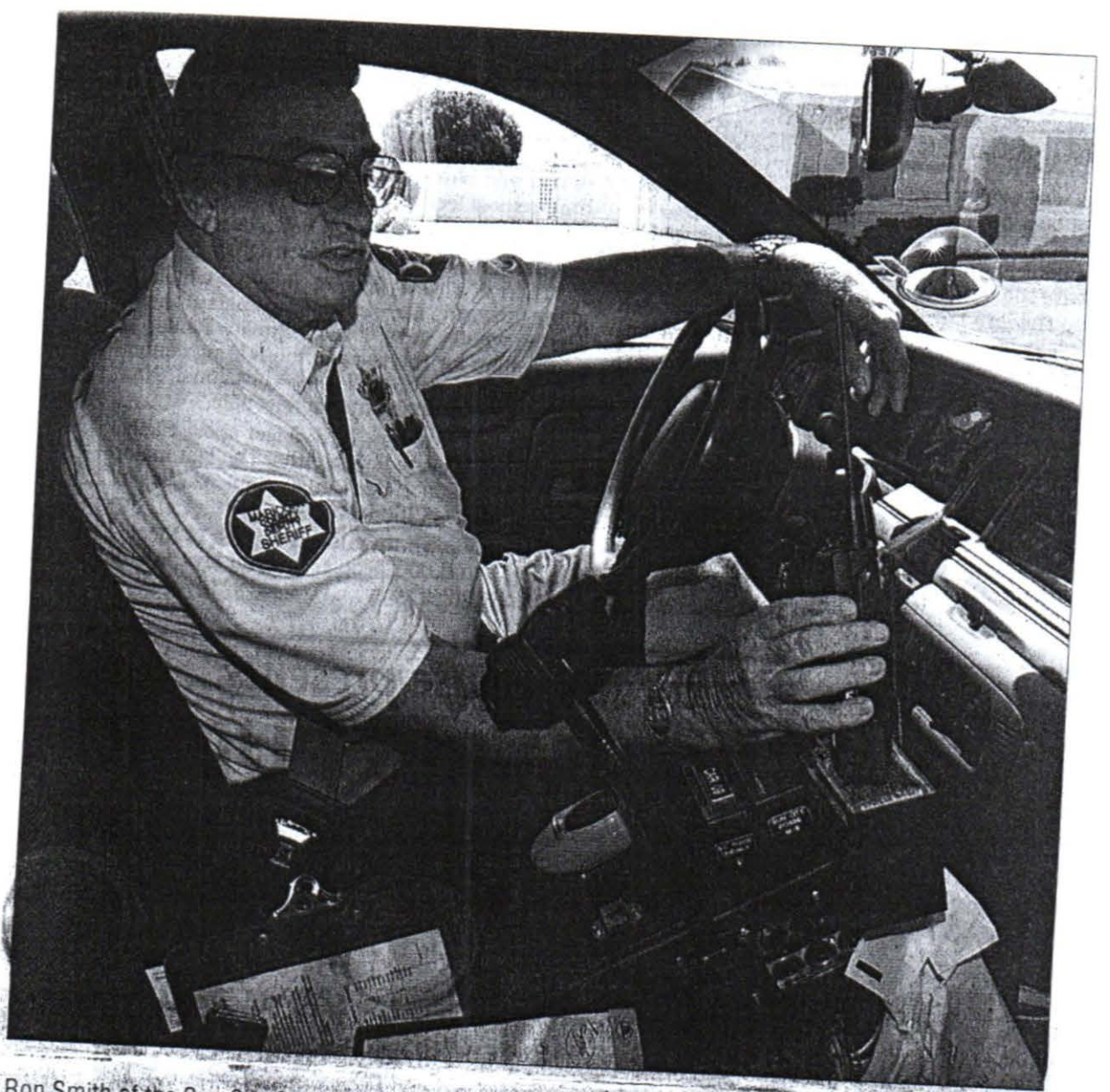
In fact, Brandimarte said, the No. 1 type of crime in the Sun Cities involves scam artists preying on seniors. Burglaries have been curbed since MCSO made a series of arrests, and criminal damage reports have been

attributed to a group of neighboring town teenagers who have since calmed down their activities since deputies brought them in for questioning.

John Sokolich can be reached at [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com) or 876-2526.

*John*

See Posse helps, A5



Ron Smith of the Sun City Sheriff's Posse monitors the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office radio. STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN



Open garage doors are tempting for would-be thieves and contribute to crimes of opportunity. STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Daily News-Sun • Friday, Aug. 17, 2001

# FRIENDS IN DEED

**HIT AND RUN:** With victim's limited memory and a single witness, the sheriff's office needs public's help to identify driver

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Clara St. Sauver still doesn't know who put her in the hospital, but she wants to thank those who helped get her there safely.

St. Sauver, 77, was struck by a hit-and-run driver Aug. 5 outside St. Clement of Rome Catholic Parish. She said she was the only one crossing the street when she was hit, and there were no cars on the road other than the one that hit her.

"I know that I looked both ways before I went into the road, and there was no one there," she said. "The only thing that I can think is that they came from the church parking lot."

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, which is investigating the incident, reports there are few leads in the case, other than that they believe someone driving a gray sedan struck St. Sauver as she was crossing Del Webb Boulevard in front of the church.

"There's very little to update at this point," MCSO Detective Sgt. Hank Brandimarte said Thursday. "The woman was hit from behind and didn't have a strong recollection of what kind of car it was, and the only witness to it said he recalled a gray car driving away at a high rate of speed."

St. Sauver was released from the hospital Tuesday afternoon, and is being cared for by her daughters and neighbors. St. Sauver suffered a large hematoma on one leg, bruising on the other and a cut to her head. She said she can walk around with the aid of a walker, but still has a hard time standing up from a sitting position.

"I've crossed the intersection about a thousand times, and knew something like that could have happened one day," she said from the comfort of her couch Thursday. "But I just never thought it would happen to me."

St. Sauver said she doesn't care about charges against the driver that hit her, but would like him or her to come forward so no one else is hit. St. Sauver said she believes whoever hit her doesn't know it because of diminished faculties.

"I know it's difficult to give up your license, but if you can't handle your car anymore, it's time to give it up so you don't hurt other people," she said.

The accident occurred when St. Sauver was leaving church after attending the 7 a.m. celebration of

Mass. She said Sun City Posse members used to direct traffic in the area following church services, but they haven't done so for the past several months. She said if they were present two weeks ago, the accident probably never would have happened.

Jack Daly of the Sun City Posse said posse members do not direct traffic for churches on Sundays unless there is a special event planned. He said if a church needs traffic controllers, it has to pay sheriff's deputies for the service.

"We go by the church often, though, because it's right by the road that leads to the posse building," Daly said. "There is no traffic control out there at the services, though."

Church members have extended their support to St. Sauver, sending her get well cards and offering their help.

A secretary at St. Clement's said church officials are asking for people who have information about the accident to come forward, and St. Sauver has been on the parish daily-prayer list.

"I want to thank everyone for all that they've done," St. Sauver said. "There is no way I can write out all

the thank you cards for them, so I wanted to make it a point to thank them."

St. Sauver said she doesn't remember who helped her after she was hit, but wanted to give an extra thank you to those who did.

According to MCSO Detective Bill Knight, investigators found no evidence of anything breaking off the car that hit St. Sauver, and he doubts the car would have any visible damage. A car just leaving the parking lot wouldn't have gained too much speed by the time it reached the middle of the crosswalk, he said, but even so, St. Sauver "flew, apparently, a good distance."

And because of the lack of witnesses, investigators said it will be difficult to pin down the culprit.

For now, though, St. Sauver is resting at her home two blocks from the church, and is a bit sad she cannot be with her husband, who entered hospice care earlier in the week for an unrelated illness.

Anyone with information about the accident should call Detective Forrest Wright of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, District III, at 602-256-1780.

John Sokolich can be reached at [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com) or at 876-2526.



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Clara St. Sauver is recovering at home after a motorist hit her while she was walking across the street in front of St. Clement of Rome Catholic Church. The driver did not stop after hitting her. Sheriff's officials are seeking the driver of the gray car that may have been involved.



FRIDAY

October 19, 2001

# Sun City fraud office reopens

By Brent Whiting  
The Arizona Republic

It's back to work for northwest Valley volunteers who guard against scam artists who prey upon the elderly.

The Sun City office of the Arizona Attorney General's Office reopens Tuesday after a five-month summer closure in time for what state Attorney General Janet Napolitano says is a seasonal crime increase.

During the past three years, the office has processed more than 200 complaints, Napolitano said.

The Sun City office, one of several such bureaus in Arizona, is closed during summer due to a lack of activity, but the fall marks a "high time for fraud," Napolitano said.

The office is in the Arizona Room at the Fairway Recreation Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave. It reopens at 10 a.m. Tuesday, but the usual business hours will be 9 a.m. to noon Wednesday and Thursday.

Eight volunteers staff the bureau, said Dana Browning, an elder-affairs coordinator for Napolitano's office.

They handle complaints ranging from telemarketing and mail scams to ones about home, car and air-conditioning repairs, she said.

"These are the biggest problems out here," Browning said.

People can drop by to file complaints, ask questions or obtain documents on legal, health, financial and other important issues that affect the elderly, she said.

Browning said that complaints aren't taken over the telephone but that questions can be asked by calling (602) 542-2124.

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Reach the reporter at  
brent.whiting@arizonarepublic.com or (602) 444-6925.

# Sun Citians lost millions in scam

By Brent Whiting  
The Arizona Republic

The pair stole more than \$2.6 million from elderly and enfeebled people in Sun City.

One of the thieves, now serving a seven-year prison term, reportedly has vowed he'll do a better job next time.

Arizona Attorney General Janet Napolitano, whose office prosecuted the case, said it serves as a sad reminder that some senior citizens are vulnerable to financial scams.

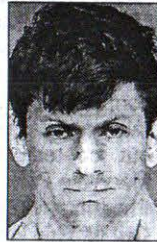
There are too many unscrupulous people who prey upon at-risk seniors, Napolitano said. That's why senior issues are among her top priorities.

"We're taking a very aggressive approach in terms of protecting seniors," she said.

Napolitano said last week that her office, among other things, maintains a bureau in Sun City where volunteers



Cara Dyan  
Powell



Jonathan  
Paul Williams

field complaints and inquiries from residents on a number of elder-affairs issues, including telemarketing and mail scams.

More than 200 complaints have been processed in the past three years, she said.

In this case, Jonathan Paul Williams and his girlfriend, Cara Dyan Powell, both of Phoenix, were indicted by a state grand jury in late 1999.

They were charged with 15 counts of theft, six counts of fraud and two counts of possession of dangerous drugs.

Jeffrey Rueter, an assistant attorney general who prosecuted the pair, told the court that Williams and Powell cooked up a scheme that allowed them to steal "a staggering amount of money."

The indictment says that from February 1996 to December 1999, the pair made friends with a dozen Sun City residents and gained their confidence.

Williams, a former salesman and stockbroker, and Powell, a former nightclub dancer, then fleeced the seniors of amounts ranging from \$30,000 for one victim to \$700,000 for another, according to the indictment.

Prosecutors said the pair persuaded the victims, mostly widows, to convert investments into tax-free annuities. Then they had the money sent to post-office boxes set up in the victims' names and cashed

in the proceeds. The pair used the money to open online trading accounts and to support an opulent lifestyle that included a luxury home, dining and vacations.

Documents in Maricopa County Superior Court show that two victims, a husband and wife both more than 80 years old, lost nearly \$680,000.

Williams and Powell spent \$160,000 for two Mercedes-Benz automobiles.

The wife told the authorities that she believes her husband died due to the emotional strain of losing their savings.

Another victim, a 90-year-old woman with Alzheimer's disease, lost more than \$80,000.

Williams, 34, was sentenced Feb. 16 to seven years in prison after pleading guilty to charges of fraud and theft.

Before sentencing, a fellow jail inmate stepped forward saying Williams had vowed that the thefts were merely a trial run and that he would do a better job when he gets out of prison.

The inmate said Williams also related during a jail discussion that he had learned from his mistakes and that he would focus in the future on

people with Alzheimer's disease.

Tom Thinner, a Phoenix defense lawyer for Williams, told the court that the informer's statements lacked credibility.

Powell, 31, also known as Krystan Beaumont, was sentenced May 24 to five years' probation after pleading guilty to forgery charges. In addition, she received an 18-month jail term.

Powell struck an agreement with prosecutors that required her to testify against Williams, described by authorities as the more culpable of the pair.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Frances Irvine said she survived being attacked because she played dead after her assailant hog-tied her.

# Battered but unbowed

## ASSAILANT SENTENCED: El Mirage man draws prison time for kidnapping

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

A brutal attacker couldn't keep Frances Irvine down and now nothing can keep her from talking about her experience.

"I would go on stage and tell everyone," she said. "I told everyone, because this is something that people should be aware of so they can protect themselves. I am still uneasy at times, but I am not scared."

The 82-year-old was battered, beaten, torn and left for dead after she was attacked in the driveway and entryway to her home while returning from bingo last April.

But she survived to see her assailant sentenced to prison

Thursday morning.

Although Irvine was not present in court to watch the sentencing, she said she is happy her attacker will be behind bars for the next 9½ years.

Andres Gutierrez Cano, 36, of El Mirage, pleaded guilty to a Class 2 felony kidnapping charge in Maricopa County Superior Court Nov. 1 and was sentenced to his term Thursday morning, according to Maricopa County Attorney's Office

spokesman Bill FitzGerald.

Under the plea agreement, Cano was given the prison term and faces restitution of up to \$15,000.

"(Cano) said he was sorry to the court, and admitted he had a heroin problem," FitzGerald said. "He said this even though the victim was not in court."

Irvine said she had every intention of going to court but was discouraged by her

**See Sun City, A5**

### From A1

daughter, who lives in Glendale.

"He doesn't scare me," Irvine said at her home Thursday. "I've never been scared in my life of people. He beat me, but I wasn't scared. He thought I was dead, but he didn't kill me. I wouldn't let him."

During her attack, Irvine was beaten, hog tied with a phone chord, jumped on and choked, police said. She was in the hospital for a month with severe injuries to her chest, face and arms.

Although she's since added some safety measures to her home, she didn't change her routine at all. Irvine added some security doors, extra locks and

motion-sensor lights, but still goes to bingo a couple of times a week, and returns at night like she did before her attack.

"I guess the difference now is that all my neighbors keep an eye out for me," she said. "I've even had the posse follow me home from time to time making sure I got in all right."

Irvine said almost everywhere she goes in the community, whether it be to a bingo hall or a recreation center, people recognize who she is and ask how she is doing.

"I tell them that I'm doing fine," she said.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office lists Irvine's incident as one of the few such assaults to occur in

Sun City. Irvine, however, said she believes that's just because people want it that way.

"You see, they don't want police around here," she said. "I've heard a lot of people talking about how they know women who have been attacked, but they just don't report it because they don't want the extra police here."

The community would have more police protection if it was incorporated, but that's something many residents do not want, she said.

But Irvine wasn't one to remain quiet about what happened to her.

Cano was arrested at his home on Alto Street in El Mirage at about 2 p.m. April 24. He was arrested on an outstanding warrant on

charges of shoplifting and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. But the charges related to Irvine's beating were tacked on after police connected Cano to that crime.

As for Irvine, she said she loves the support she has received from people throughout the community and considers Sun City a beautiful place to live.

"I'm 82 years old, and it's hard to change a person," she said. "I still do everything I did from before I was attacked. People have to move ahead, and that's what I am doing. I look a lot different than I did in the hospital, but I am doing fine."

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Daily News-Sun • Monday, Jan. 21, 2002

# Burglary reports tumble

**CASE CLOSED:**  
Nearly 300 reports taken in 2001

**JOHN SOKOLICH**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Crime in the Sun Cities peaks and wanes, but burglaries are at a lull for the time being.

There were about 300 burglaries reported in the Sun Cities last year, according to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. Exact numbers for the various months weren't available, but tracking shows burglaries dropped significantly throughout 2001.

"Burglaries come in spurts," said MCSO Detective Sgt. Hank Brandimarte of the District III substation in Surprise. "There were about 300 throughout the year, which is pretty good. It's less than one a day."

Burglaries were running rampant for a while at the beginning of 2001, said Brandimarte, but they slowed after a handful of arrests were made and detectives questioned area youths in connection to the crimes.

With their low burglary rate and overall lack of violent crime, the Sun Cities regularly fall well below crime statistics for the rest of Arizona and the nation. But that's not enough for some Sun Cities residents, who said they don't feel as safe as they used to in the area.

"There are a lot of dark streets here in Sun City,"

said Annabelle Barker of Sun City. "After dark, I won't walk down any of them. I'm scared even to walk out to my carport at night sometimes."

In Sun City West, Ken Switzer said it had been rare to see younger people driving through the community, but he sees that more often now.

"I see it at night," he said. "Unless they are visiting their parents or grandparents, I don't see why there should be the younger crowd coming through here. They are probably up to no good, but trying to call the police isn't any help."

MCSO is the sole policing agency in the Sun Cities and was strapped for manpower for most of the year. Additional officers were added in September, said Sheriff Joe Arpaio, and several more deputies are expected to start work in the district this year.

With the thought of personal safety high on the priority list for many community residents, statistics show the Sun Cities are actually getting safer.

FBI statistics show that although burglaries nationally dropped a bit from 1997 through 2001, Arizona's rate increased. The national average for violent crimes, after dropping three years in a row, started to climb again, according to FBI records. Final numbers for 2001 have not been compiled, but preliminary reports indicate that Arizona — particularly Phoenix — had a burglary increase of nearly 3 percent, while national averages

Traditionally, burglary reports in the Sun Cities spike at the end of the summer when winter residents return and find their homes were broken into, but 2001 proved otherwise for the sheriff's office. The bulk of burglaries came in the early months of the year with both residential units and businesses targeted.

In mid-April, sheriff's officials arrested two suspected burglars, and since that time, the number of burglaries has dropped considerably, Brandimarte said.

One burglary investigation is still open. A suspect has been identified, but Brandimarte said deputies are trying to catch the person red-handed because he is covering his tracks well now.

"He uses stolen vehicles when he goes to burglarize a house and wears gloves so he doesn't leave fingerprints," he said.

The relative lull in burglaries throughout much of the rest of 2001 and into 2002, however, dealt the sheriff's office another problem — a new method of operations for burglars.

"There was the usual break-ins through garage doors, back doors and windows near locked doors," said Brandimarte. "Now the burglars are getting into homes by being nice to people."

In such cases, the burglars are either asking residents if they can use their bathrooms or offering their assistance with groceries. From there, the burglars go through the home and grab anything of value they can.

"Nobody wants to watch

people like a hawk, but they should," Brandimarte said. "Sun City is a safe place to live, but residents need to realize that they are not living in the same time as when they grew up. People cannot be trusted as much as they used to."

Reports of violent crime were nearly non-existent in the Sun Cities throughout 2001. There was a brutal attack in Sun City at the end of March, and there have been a handful of bank robberies, but perpetrators are leaning more toward non-violent crimes in the Sun Cities, Brandimarte said.

"Criminals find it easier to break into people's houses to get what they want rather than mugging them," he said.

John Sokolich can be reached at [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com) or at 876-2526.

## Sun City scam artists are right on schedule

**OCTOBER:** Preparing for the seasonal crime increase of scam artists who prey on the elderly, the Arizona Attorney General's Office reopened its Sun City bureau. The office closes during summer due to a lack of activity, but the fall marks a "high time for fraud," according to state Attorney General Janet Napolitano.

The bureau handles complaints ranging from telemarketing and mail scams to ones about home, car and air-conditioning repairs. During the past three years, the office has processed more than 200 complaints, she said.

**NOW:** The scams began right on time this year, with the Sun Cities being hit especially hard. Sgt. Hank Brandimarte of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office says 20 to 30 cases have been reported in the Sun City area in the past 45 days.

But this year, the flimflam takes on a new twist, featuring a "stranded relative" needing help, meaning money. This latest fraud goes something like this:

A supposed relative is stranded in Flagstaff or Yuma or some such place and they need money wired to them via Western Union. They pretend to be a grandchild or some relative.

In reality they are a criminal family organization of scam artists who travel around the country, according to the Sheriff's Office.

One Sun City man in his 80s was defrauded of more than \$15,000 in December. His case was unusual in that after the phone calls he was approached and befriended by a woman pretending to be a relative, Brandimarte said. She

was able to persuade the man to make several money transfers and withdrawals, he said.

Deputies arrested Lisa Sirvano — she also has used the name Christine Wheat — in that incident.

Brandimarte says the family members use multiple identities and interchange names and dates of birth. The group has just moved out of Fresno, Calif., where they were involved in roofing- and driveway-repair scams, he said.

"It's tough to keep track of their activities," he said.

"There have been a lot of similar scams with the same names showing up in California, Kansas and New Mexico," Brandimarte said. "We're trying to enlist the help of the FBI, since this is a nationwide scam."

Those who receive such phone calls, suspicious offers or come-ons should report them to their local law enforcement agency, or to the Attorney General's Office. The Sun City office is at the Fairway Recreation Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave. and is open 9 a.m. to noon Wednesday and Thursday.

People can drop by to file complaints. Complaints aren't taken over the telephone but questions can be asked by calling (602) 542-2124.

Daily News-Sun THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2002

# Crime dips in Sun Cities

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Despite increasing populations adding crime to surrounding communities, some local officials and residents say the Sun Cities continue to be safe places to live.

Peoria, which borders Sun City, reported a 7 percent increase in its crime index in 2001 in a U.S. Department of Justice Survey. Peoria police attribute the crime increase to the city's population growth.

Sun City and Sun City West, which have been built out, were not included in the survey, but local authorities report crime has actually decreased.

"I don't think there are

many places I wouldn't walk alone in (the Sun Cities)," said Charlie Avery of Sun City West. "I don't think there are many people coming here wanting to make trouble. I've never had a problem."

Avery said he feels even safer in the Sun Cities because of the number of caring people in the area. "There are a lot of people who look after one another," he said. "If something were to happen, I'd think there would be a lot of people coming out to help."

While relatively free of violent crime, the Sun Cities aren't immune. In April 2001, an elderly Sun City woman came home from a bingo game and was brutally

attacked before the assailant stole her car. The victim spent several weeks in the hospital after her attack, but made a full recovery.

Her attacker was arrested on an unrelated charge about a month later and pleaded guilty in November to the assault. Andres Gutierrez Cano, 36, of El Mirage, pleaded guilty Nov. 1 to a Class 2 felony kidnapping charge in Maricopa County Superior Court and was sentenced to nine years in prison for the attack. Under his plea agreement, Cano also must pay restitution of up to \$15,000.

Detective Sgt. Hank Brandimarte of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office in

Surprise said although there have been a handful of violent crimes in the Sun Cities in the last few years, there is no trend in such crimes.

"It happens sometimes, but it is definitely not common," he said.

In Sun City West, Henrietta Winters said she is sometimes worried about crime, but said she doesn't think it is necessarily a local problem.

"It seems like every time I turn on the news there is a shooting, a kidnapping or armed robbery," she said. "But it's usually in Phoenix or California or something. I hope it stays that way."

John Sokolich can be reached at 876-2526 or [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com).

# RCSC suspects kids painted swastikas at Bell center

**VANDALISM:** Crackdown on skateboarders could be reason behind damage

KATY O'GRADY  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

A Sun City rabbi hopes several red swastikas spray-painted on walls and bathroom doors at Bell Recreation Center last week are an isolated incident.

"This is the first type of anti-Semitic activity, overt activity, that I've heard about in Sun City, and I've been here six years," said Rabbi Arthur Abrams, spiritual leader of Temple Beth Shalom.

"At this point, I don't think it's any systematic plan to defame the Jewish people," he said.

Dorothy Hirtzel, Recreation Centers of Sun City president, said centers officials believe the graffiti was done by youths upset at the centers' crackdown on skateboarding.

"We think it's kids coming in," she said, noting the youths are old enough to drive. "We sort of put a stop to their skateboarding, so we think this is how

they're getting back at us.

"We know it's no one from Sun City," she said.

The criminal damage occurred sometime between 9 p.m. May 22 and 6:30 a.m. May 23 at Bell Recreation Center, 16820 N. 99th Ave., according to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office records.

Along with the swastikas, red faces and the letters "CCP" were painted on walls and a cactus, lines were painted on handrails, and two "odd-shaped faces" were painted on a staircase leading from the putt-putt course to a maintenance garage, according

to a Maricopa County Sheriff's Office report. The vandals cut locks and fences at the center to access some of the areas.

Sheriff's detectives were unavailable for comment. Earl Feierabend, RCSC's operations director, did not return a phone call as of this morning.

Matt Brown, spokesman for the Glendale Police Department, said Glendale officers have seen the "CCP" tag, but aren't sure what it means.

"It's hard to say what it stands for unless — if you arrest one of these guys, usually they'll

**See VANDALISM, A5**



**RABBI ARTHUR ABRAMS** of Temple Beth Shalom: This is the first type of anti-Semitic activity, overt activity, that I've heard about in Sun City, and I've been here six years.

## From A1

admit to it because they're proud of it," he said. "To different people it means different things."

Hirtzel said the centers has been locking the tennis courts, which skateboarders used to frequent, and putting devices on handrails to prevent the boarders from sliding down them.

Hirtzel said she also doesn't believe the criminal damage is meant to target Jews.

"I think (it's) just to be stupid," she said. "Can you imagine — if they did start doing that, all these walls around here?"

The symbols have been painted over, she said.

Abrams said in his 40 years as a rabbi, he experienced swastikas painted on synagogue doors twice: in Evansville, Ill., and in Berkeley, Calif.

"That's about the worst symbol that can be painted on a building as far as we're concerned," he said.

Sun City has been mostly free of overt anti-Semitism, he said.

In addition to the painted graffiti, the suspects apparently tried unsuccessfully to knock over a tree on the centers' property. Acceleration tire marks were found on parking lot landscaping, and bark on the tree was damaged, probably by the vehicle, according to MCSO.

Damage was estimated at \$400.

Hirtzel said she is asking all residents to report any criminal activity they see. If residents see skateboarders or people spraying graffiti, they should call 911, she said. Residents should not try to intervene on their own, she added.

"They were up at Greenway skateboarding there and the lady said, 'You shouldn't be here,' so they just loaded up their stuff. But for our residents, that's dangerous," Hirtzel said.

The centers also has asked the sheriff's office and the Sun City Posse to beef up patrols around the area in an attempt to crack down on the problem.

Skateboarding has been an ongoing issue in Sun City, particularly around Sundial,

Lakeview and Bell recreation centers, as well as the Sun Bowl, the former Lakes Club, Greenway Plaza and various church parking lots.

"They should have a place for skateboarding," Abrams said.

Peoria and Glendale are preparing to open skate parks to give Northwest Valley youths a place to enjoy their hobby. Glendale's park was supposed to open by the end of April at Foothills Park at 57th Avenue and Union Hills Drive, but has been delayed. Peoria's is scheduled to open in December 2003 or January 2004 at Thunderbird Road and Loop 101.

Katy O'Grady can be reached at 876-2514 or kogrady@aztrib.com.

## CLOSE UP



Photo by Matt Loeschman/Independent Newspapers

Friends and Sun City Grand residents Kathy Lindberg, left, and Joan Barry mark their bingo cards last week at the Riverboat Village in Surprise. The two said they enjoy playing the game and helping provide funding for PREHAB of Arizona, a non-profit organization providing shelter and services to adults and youth in crisis situations.

## ELDERLY ABUSE

### Domestic violence cases unreported

By Matt Loeschman  
Independent Newspapers

Elder abuse is a growing problem in Maricopa County and the nation.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to gauge the scope of the problem.

"The sad truth is that most elder abuse, no matter what the type, goes unreported," said Wally Sjolander, vice president of program development at Phoenix's Region 1 Area Agency on Aging. "More people are coming forward to report abuse but we know there are many more who continue to be victims."

The problem has been around for centuries, but it was not until about 20 years ago that elder abuse came into the national spotlight. In 2003, it is estimated 1.5 to 1.8 million Americans annually are victims of elder abuse.

"It really knows no bounds geographically or financially," Mr. Sjolander explained. "Any senior citi-

zen can be a target for abuse."

Greta Mang, Maricopa Elder Abuse Prevention Alliance coordinator, said the issue deserves attention.

"It is a huge problem both locally and nationally. It's time for people to take notice," Ms. Mang said.

Many cases go unreported due to fear, self-blame, denial or the inability to report because of mental or physical impairments.

"There's no telling just how many cases there really are," Ms. Mang said.

In Maricopa County, Arizona Adult Protective Services handles approximately 10,000 elder abuse cases each year. Many more cases in the northwest Valley likely go unreported, according to Surprise Police Department Detective Scott Bailey.

"The tough part about it is you don't really know where it's going to happen," Detective Bailey explained. "In Surprise, we have adult care facilities and we have a large number of people in

Sun City Grand. No specific area is more prone to elder abuse than another."

Although SPD has had few reports (one in the past six months) regarding elder abuse, the department recognizes the potential problem.

In the next few months, Chief Daniel Hughes will create a position for a senior services officer in the city.

"This officer will be targeting elder abuse," Detective Bailey said. "He will not be on patrol but instead assist other officers when they need it. The officer will also attend meetings and stay up on the latest laws regarding abuse."

The detective said Surprise is planning for the future.

"As our city grows, the probability for elder abuse grows," Detective Bailey said. "We've had a minimal number of case, but it's not a minimal problem."

Capt. Ron Stoner of the

See Abuse — Page 8

OVER



# Abuse

Continued From Page 1  
Maricopa County Sheriff's Office in District 3 said elder abuse calls are rare.

"From my knowledge, in the past four years, we have had very few incidents," Capt. Stoner explained. "Most of the area we cover involves extremely active retirement communities. They stay on top of things."

The captain said senior centers in his jurisdiction are staffed with diligent, caring workers who look out for senior citizens.

"It seems to be a good situation," Capt. Stoner said.

The captain realizes some abuse goes unreported.

"I'm not saying it does not happen — we just haven't had many calls on it," he said.

Denise Wardel works at Riverboat Village, a Surprise bingo hall located at 18300 W. Bell Road that donates its proceeds to PREHAB of Arizona, a non-profit organization providing shelter and services to adults and youth in crisis situations.

"It is tough for the victims of elder abuse to come forward," Ms. Wardel said. "And it takes a despicable person to do this to someone who is basically defenseless."

Ms. Wardel believes an abuse shelter in the west Valley is sorely needed.

"The need is there, no

doubt about it," she said. "Unfortunately, there have been problems in the past getting this established. Hopefully, someone will step up and take the lead on the project."

Joan Barry of Sun City Grand said the opportunity to assist those in need regularly brings her to the bingo hall.

"That's the main reason we come here. Of course we like to have fun, but in a small way we know we are helping PREHAB," Ms. Barry said.

Elder abuse is usually broken down into five different types, Ms. Mang explained:

- **Financial Abuse/Exploitation:** Illegal or improper use of funds, property or assets. Includes scams such as home repair or false lottery payments perpetrated by criminals looking to prey on senior citizens. Identity theft is also common.

- **Physical Abuse:** Infliction of physical pain or injury, and/or use of physical restraints that result in physical pain or impairment.

- **Sexual Abuse:** Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind with an elderly person.

- **Psychological Abuse:** Infliction of mental pain, anguish or distress through verbal or non-verbal acts.

- **Neglect:** Failure or refusal to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an elderly person.

Each of the types of abuse have specific warning signs,

Mr. Sjolander said.

Physical abuse is signaled by bruises, lacerations, burns or other injuries or an unexplained deterioration in health. A victim of sexual abuse may have unexplained sexually transmitted diseases and may become withdrawn, shameful or anxious.

Depression, anger, low self-esteem and eating disorders are common signs of psychological or emotional abuse.

Financial abuse, most common among elder abuses, is signaled by unexplained changes in money from accounts or a sudden inability to pay bills.

Dehydration, malnutrition and poor hygiene are signs of neglect.

The majority of victims are more than 75 years old and 2/3 are female. A victim may have one or more physical or mental impairments and is often widowed or socially isolated.

About 90 percent of abusers are known to the victim, according to the AAA. About 2/3 are relatives of the victim and may be substance abusers or forced to provide care to the elderly person.

The state legislature has been active in legislating elder abuse, as seven Arizona Revised Statutes are now in place to protect elder abuse victims and prosecute their abusers.

Most importantly, victims

need to know there are places they can go to deal with the problem. PREHAB, [www.prehab.org](http://www.prehab.org), offers shelter to domestic and elder abuse victims. Other services are available if victims are willing to come forward.

"Seniors need to know they can't let their guard down, not for one day," Ms. Mang said. "But there is help available if victims step forward."

Mr. Sjolander said the AAA can provide valuable assistance.

"We offer an emergency housing program if victims need to be removed and put in a safe place," he explained. "We also offer transitional housing for victims of late life domestic violence."

The 24-hour AAA senior helpline can be reached at (602) 264-4357.

Suspected elder abuse can be reported to the Arizona Adult Protective Services Adult Abuse Hotline at 1-877-SOS-ADULT.

The Maricopa Elder Abuse Prevention Alliance plans to educate the public on elder abuse during an Oct. 24 conference. The conference will be held 9 a.m.-noon at North Phoenix Baptist Church at Bethany Home Road and Central Avenue. For more information, call or e-mail Greta Mang at (602) 264-2255 or [meapa@aaaphx.org](mailto:meapa@aaaphx.org).

For more information on AAA programs and services, visit [www.aaaphx.org](http://www.aaaphx.org).

# Judge fines SC man for threatening board



**DOROTHY HIRTZEL**, RCSC board president: "I think it was really clear to me that if we didn't watch out, the same thing was going to happen to us as happened there (in Ventana Lakes).

**ERIN REEP**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

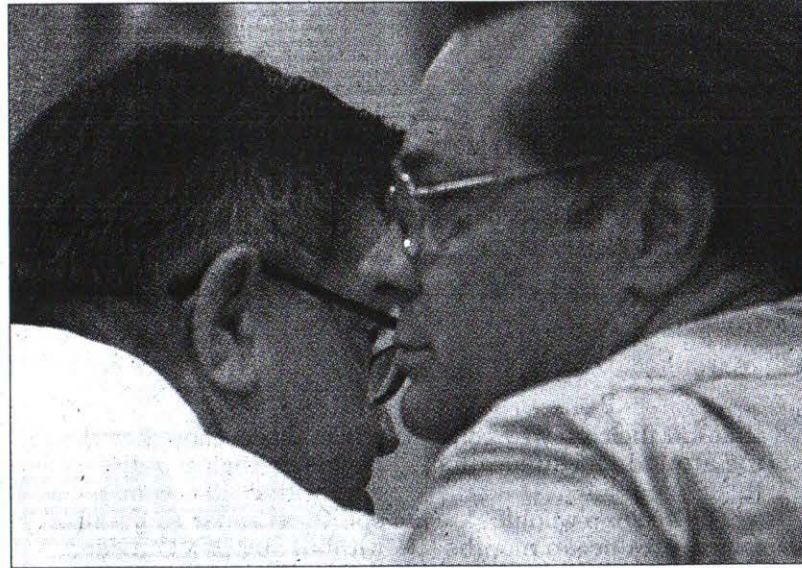
A Sun City man was fined Monday in Peoria Justice Court for threatening and intimidating members of the Recreation Center of Sun City board of directors.

Judge Lex Anderson also ordered Nicholas "Nick" Salamone not to contact members of the board in person or by phone.

Salamone was fined \$305 for the misdemeanor and was given one year of unsupervised probation.

James Fisher of Wolf & Associates of Phoenix represented Salamone; John Rhude of the Maricopa County Attorney's Office prosecuted the case for the state.

The case was based on a letter Salamone wrote and hand-delivered to the RCSC membership office Jan. 30. He addressed the letter to board President Dorothy Hirtzel. In a portion of the letter, Salamone questioned the board about the possibility of raising



**MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN**

Nick Salamone, left, confers with his attorney, James E. Fisher, during his trial in Judge Lex Anderson's Peoria Justice Court Monday.

membership assessments and adoption of a foreclosure measure, and made reference to a shooting that took place in Ventana Lakes in 2000.

When RCSC board members took the reference as a threat, Salamone said he was trying to express his frustration with the board and voice his concern for

elderly residents of Sun City.

"Did you ever intend to threaten these people?" Fisher asked Salamone on the witness stand.

"No. I haven't and I will not," Salamone said.

Salamone was the sole witness called by the defense. The prosecution called four witnesses, including three board members and RCSC employee Connie Inglis.

Salamone said he understood that on the day the letter was delivered, the board was to discuss changing payment of annual assessment fees and foreclosure on residents' properties.

Members of the board stressed that the board has never foreclosed on a resident's home. Additionally, it helps members in need through the Sun City Foundation, they said.

Salamone said in court he had wanted to be present at the meeting but couldn't, and decided to express his position in the letter.

See **JUDGE, A5**



**NORM DICKSON**, RCSC board vice president: "I took it very seriously. The only reference, in my mind, that it could mean is that he was contemplating violence against the board."

*OVER*

## From A1

According to the minutes of the January meeting, the board did not discuss foreclosure.

The letter was Salamone's attempt to represent RCSC members, Fisher said. In it, Salamone said, "Now I must speak out for our future residents. You want to change the way our fees are being paid."

"I think you board members are really going to make trouble for yourselves and others. Look at what happened in Ventura (sic) Lakes. You know if that happens to me, I may crack up and do something like that," Salamone wrote.

As witnesses for the State of Arizona, Hirtzel, board Vice President Norm Dickson and other board members said they perceived that as a threat.

"I think it was really clear to me that if we didn't watch out, the same thing was going to happen to us as

happened there (in Ventana Lakes)," Hirtzel said.

Richard Glassel was convicted of killing two women and injuring three after entering a property-owners association meeting at Ventana Lakes Yacht Club in Peoria April 19, 2000. The disgruntled homeowner was armed with an AR-15 assault rifle, two 9 mm Ruger handguns and a .22 caliber handgun when he opened fire. He was sentenced to death by lethal injection.

With the freshness of the shooting in the minds of board members, plus its proximity to Sun City, Rhude said the letter could only be perceived as a threat by board members.

"I took it very seriously," Dickson said from the witness stand.

"The only reference, in my mind, that it could mean is that he was contemplating violence against the board."

However, Salamone said he was expressing how upset a person could become if his

home was foreclosed on — not threatening the board.

"What happened at Ventana Lakes could happen, not from me, but from the person they are foreclosing on," he explained during examination.

In his questions of Salamone, Fisher pointed out the Sun Citian had no criminal history and no history of violent behavior. While examining the state's witness, RCSC board Treasurer Douglas "Bud" Hantke, Fisher asked Hantke about Salamone's demeanor in RCSC meetings.

"I have seen Nick to be very excitable," he said, adding that he believed Salamone to be sane.

Maricopa County Deputy Sheriff Edward Butler investigated the matter on the day of the letter's delivery. He testified he went to Salamone's house just after reading the letter at the membership office, and issued Salamone a citation for threatening and intimidation. Butler confiscated a .25 caliber handgun at Salamone's house; he took

the gun "because I felt there was a legitimate threat going on," he said.

Salamone's sentence of one-year unsupervised probation includes "no contact with victims in person or by phone."

The RCSC board filed a report in February in Maricopa County Superior Court for a restraining order against Salamone. It was denied on Feb. 20.

Rhude read the names of current board members at the end of the trial to clarify exactly who Salamone is prevented from contacting. They are Hirtzel, Dickson, Hantke, Jim Kuchler, Jim Frederick, Art Little, Gayle Schmidt, Jerry Swintek and Tom Whiston.

Salamone declined to comment following the trial, on the advice of his attorney.

"I think the judge was in the wrong on this decision," Fisher said just after the trial. Fisher recommended his client appeal the case, he said.

*Erin Reep can be reached at 876-2532 or at ereep@aztrib.com*

# Sun City board's critic convicted over threat

By Brent Whiting  
The Arizona Republic

**SUN CITY** — A man found guilty of sending a threatening letter to a Sun City board said Tuesday that, in hindsight, he should have skipped any reference to Ventana Lakes, where a gunman opened fire several years ago.

"I think that's what got me in trouble," said Nick Salamone, 71, a retired construction foreman from Chicago.

Prosecutors claimed the letter was threatening because it evoked the violence and gunfire that erupted in Peoria on April 19, 2000, during a meeting of the Ventana Lakes Homeowners Association.

An angry Richard Glassel, now on Arizona's death row, opened fire at the meeting, killing two people and wounding three.

On Monday, Salamone was slapped with a \$305 fine and placed on one year's probation after a judge found him guilty of making a threat to the nine-member board that oversees the Recreation Centers of Sun City.

In addition, Lex Anderson, the Peoria justice of the

peace, ordered Salamone, who ran unsuccessfully for the board in 2000 and 2001, not to have any contact with board members.

The misdemeanor verdict was handed down after a non-jury trial. Sun City residents nearly filled the courtroom as witnesses or spectators.

Prosecutors said that on Jan. 30 Salamone, a longtime critic of board policies, dropped off a one-page handwritten letter at the Recreation Centers office, 10626 W. Thunderbird Road.

The letter said, among other things, "Look at what happened at Ventura (sic) Lakes. You know if that happens to me, I may crack up and do something like that."

Salamone added, "Well, I hope you come to your senses and think before you act."

Board members contacted Maricopa County sheriff's deputies and requested prosecution.

Dorothy Hirtzel, the board president, told deputies that Salamone had attended board meetings for five years and was sometimes disruptive.

Salamone said Tuesday that he didn't intend to threaten anyone. He said he will appeal the conviction.

FRIDAY, DEC. 19, 2003

DAILY NEWS-SUN

## Arrest of 'Grandma Bandit' shocks neighbors

MITCHELL VANTREASE  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

To David and Phyllis Neff, Sally Ann Smith "seemed like your average neighbor," a quiet woman who they saw outside her home doing yard work.

To the FBI, Smith, 56, is known as the "Grandma Bandit" — a suspect in two bank robberies in Sun City.

"It's unbelievable," David said. "You never know who lives next door."

"We were in shock, because she seemed like your average neighbor," said Phyllis. "I've seen her out in the yard doing work."

Smith, a Peoria resident with a Sun City mailing address who lives on Pierson Road, is being held at the Madison Street Jail in Phoenix and faces an initial appearance in federal court. She is charged with assault with a dangerous weapon and armed bank robbery.

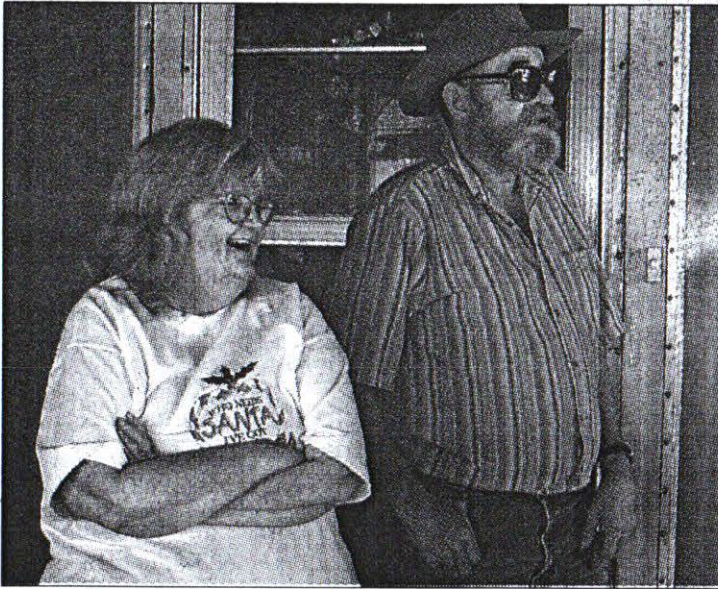
Authorities recovered a loaded handgun in her

car when they apprehended her at her home this week. Susan Herskovits, an FBI spokeswoman, said authorities found information linking the suspect to the robberies that occurred earlier this week and last month.

On Monday, FBI and sheriff's officials were called to Bank of America at 10099 W. Bell Road to investigate a robbery. Herskovits said Smith entered the bank with a silver revolver and approached a teller. Then Smith said she had a bomb in her purse and asked for cash, officials said. She left the handbag on the counter, and bank personnel feared it might contain the bomb she had mentioned. However, the MCSO bomb squad determined there was no explosive device inside.

In the other case, officials said at 11:30 a.m. Nov. 5, a woman walked into the Bank One at 103rd Avenue and Thunderbird Boulevard and demanded money. She approached a teller, pulled out a gun and demanded cash in a note.

**See BANDIT, A5**



JOY LAMBERT-SLAGOWSKI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Phyllis and David Neff of Sun City were surprised to learn a neighbor was arrested for two Sun City bank robberies.

### From A1

Herskovits said the robber put the cash in her blue leather purse.

The suspect in both robberies was described as a white female in her late 50s to early 60s with a heavy build, between 5 foot 6 inches and 5 foot 8 inches tall with strawberry-blonde hair.

Wanda Mooney, her daughter and grandchildren live two houses away from Smith. When officers and FBI agents appeared in their neighborhood, she had no idea they were looking for Smith.

"When we found out," she

said, "I was in total shock. ... I asked 'Is this a joke?'"

Mooney would watch Smith in her front yard doing lawn work or babysitting her first-grade grandson. They occasionally spoke. Smith lives with her husband and son in their trailer home, Mooney said.

"She's always been very well respected on this street for as long as I've known," she said.

The Neff's 20-year-old daughter Beckie said she only knows Smith as a caring, sweet lady.

"I never would've thought," said Beckie. "She'd stop me and say hi all of the time."

# Merchant halts hold-up, shoots suspect

## Sun City shop owner thought he was going to die

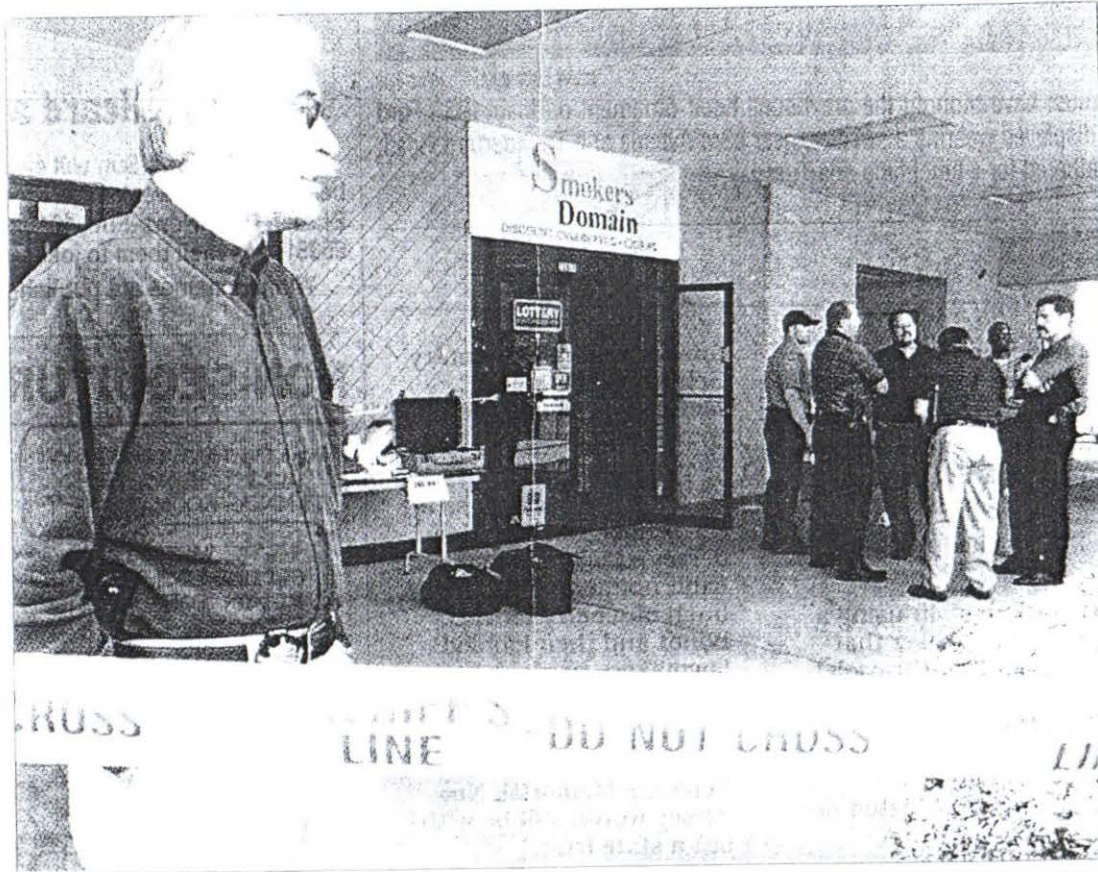
ANNIE KARSTENS  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Smokers Domain smoke shop opened promptly at 8 a.m. as usual today despite a dramatic robbery attempt that ended in gunfire Tuesday.

A suspected armed robber was shot twice while attempting to hold up Smokers Domain, a corner store in the Bell Camino Shopping Center at 10914 W. Bell Road, Sun City.

At approximately noon, store owner Robert Elmdanat shot the suspect, a Phoenix man whose name hasn't been released, in the left arm and in his left side after the suspect came into his store demanding cash and wielding what appeared to be a handgun, said Capt. Ron Stoner, District 3 commander of the Maricopa County's Sheriff's Office.

Authorities believe the suspect may be linked to the Christmas Eve robbery of Smokers Domain and possibly connected to a string of four robberies at The Promenade Shopping



MOLLIE J. HOPPE/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Capt. Ron Stoner of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office talks to reporters outside the Smokers Domain in Bell Camino Shopping Center at Bell Road and Del Webb Boulevard in Sun City after a robbery suspect was shot when he tried to hold up the shop's owner.

Center at 99th Avenue and Bell Road in Sun City this winter, Stoner said. The suspect fits previous descriptions given by victims at the Promenade, mid 30s, about 5 feet 8 inches tall, about 180 pounds. He wore a surgical

or painter's mask, Stoner said.

Investigators are waiting on photographs and surveillance videotapes from the victimized stores, including Smokers Domain, that may help to confirm a positive identity.

Sgt. Paul Chagolla, public information officer for the MCSO, said the suspect held up Smokers Domain with a gun that investigators discovered to be a replica of a Taurus semi-automatic pistol that shoots soft air plastic

## Eye witness



'I saw him (the suspect) walking toward the store and go in. Then the owner came running out after him yelling with his arm up in the air with what looked like a gun.'

**Dennis DeBolt of Peoria, who was within 40 feet of Smokers Domain in Sun City Tuesday.**

pellets.

Regardless, the suspect will be charged with attempted armed robbery, Chagolla said.

"If someone pointed that at me, I'd have capped them myself," Stoner said of the replica handgun.

Elmdanat told authorities on the scene that he was extremely shaken up. He and his wife, Kimberly, Peoria residents, declined to comment until the investigation is concluded, however, Kimberly said that the event scared her to death.

The police report states the suspect entered the smoke shop through the front door and attempted to rob the store owner at gun point. Elmdanat then retrieved a pistol from behind the counter and shot the suspect. Before the suspect was able to flee the store, he dropped his gun, which broke apart. The

suspect attempted to flee to his vehicle, which was parked in a rear parking lot, but didn't make it, possibly because of the nature of his injuries, Chagolla said.

Elmdanat chased the suspect out through a small breezeway, grabbed him, forced him back to the store, told him to lay on the floor, and held him by gun-point until authorities arrived, Stoner said.

Elmdanat was not injured, nor was Kimberly, who said she was in a back room when the incident occurred. Store clerk Tamara Smith was also uninjured and declined to comment.

The suspect was taken by helicopter to John C. Lincoln Hospital with wounds that are probably not life threatening, Stoner said.

See HOLD-UP, A5

OVER

CRIME

VF

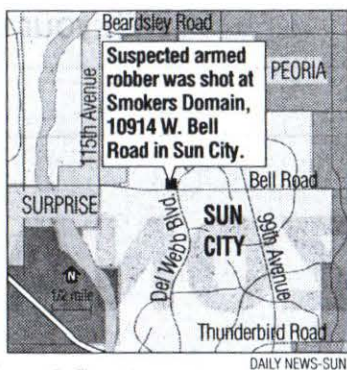
## From A1

Eyewitness Dennis DeBolt of Peoria was within 40 feet of the smoke shop when he said he heard and saw the shooting.

"I saw him (the suspect) walking toward the store and go in," DeBolt said. "Then the owner came running out after him yelling with his arm up in the air with what looked like a gun."

DeBolt said at that point he heard "two pops," and the next thing he saw was the owner walk back into the store with the suspect, who appeared to have been shot.

Eyewitness Mary Lowery of Phoenix said she heard a couple of gunshots after she saw Elmdanat walk out



of the store and call out, "hey, stop."

"He (Elmdanat) was definitely outside when I heard the shots," Lowery said.

Stoner said there will be an investigation into whether Elmdanat was justified in shooting the suspect — a case for the Maricopa County Attorney's Office to review.

State law says you can

use deadly force if you are in fear for your life or that of another or in fear of great bodily harm, Stoner said, noting that it wouldn't matter if shots were fired inside or outside the store.

"Investigators will have to look at all of the eyewitness who said shots were fired outside. That may put into question whether or not the store owner's life was in immediate danger," Stoner said. "But when the bad guy started using profanity and raising his gun, he (Elmdanat) said he thought he was going to die."

John Merkel, merchant at J & B's Pet Palace next door to Smokers Domain, heard the gunshots while inside his store. As soon as he heard the shots, he called 911 and told his

clerks to hit the floor. He said Elmdanat is a hero.

"When something like that happens, it's better to take action than to sit there," Merkel said. "I'm just glad he caught the guy."

Stores like Smokers Domain are often targets of armed robberies because they tend to have more cash on hand than even banks and Circle K stores usually do, Stoner said.

Stoner said he's not surprised that the store owner shot the suspect, considering he was also protecting his wife.

"Of course we don't encourage shoot-outs, but sometimes you have to do what you have to do," Stoner said.

# Women walk off with carts of stuff

## Eckerd Drug Store robbed by two

By **Geno Lawrenzi**  
Independent Newspapers

It was a smooth scam, Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies agreed. No question about it.

Two women believed to be Hispanics went to the Eckerd Drug Store at 9901 W. Thunderbird in Sun City on Friday Jan. 16.

Looking like ordinary shoppers, they went through the store with two carts, filling them up with all sorts of merchandise, from cigarettes to cameras and video games.

Once the carts were full, the women went to a check-out stand where cashier Abby Martens rang up the sale.

As each item was scanned, one of the women placed it into one of the shopping carts. When the cart was full, she left the store while the other woman remained behind, supposedly to pay for the merchandise.

It didn't quite work out that way, said assistant manager Philip Bandy.

The woman inside the

store told Ms. Martens her purse was in the other cart. She went to the parking lot and retrieved the purse made out of red cloth.

Then, apparently surprised, she told the clerk, "I can't find my credit card. It is not in my purse," Ms. Martens told investigators.

Apparently upset, she left the store, with Ms. Martens right behind her.

According to the clerk, the woman got into a Honda Civic with primer gray and duct tape around the rear window frame. The door on the passenger's side would not close properly, Ms. Martens observed. A man was sitting in the driver's seat, she said.

The two suspects left the parking lot heading east on Thunderbird and never returned.

Investigators said the total value of the stolen items was \$1,040.

The red cloth purse left behind contained a white and black spotted female shirt and a key ring with three keys. No further items

**See Robbery — Page 7**

## Robbery

Continued From Page 1  
that would help identify the owner were found.

Investigators retrieved some videos of the two

women which will be used as evidence, according to the sheriff's report. The car did not have a license plate.

Ms. Martens described one of the female suspects as about 5-5, 140 pounds, and wearing jeans and a

white sleeveless shirt. The other was about 5-3, weighed around 250 pounds and wore a gray shirt and black pants.

Anyone with information on the suspects can contact the Sheriff's office.



DAILY NEWS-SUN TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2004

# Sun City couple shot

## Suspect at large

MITCHELL VANTREASE  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

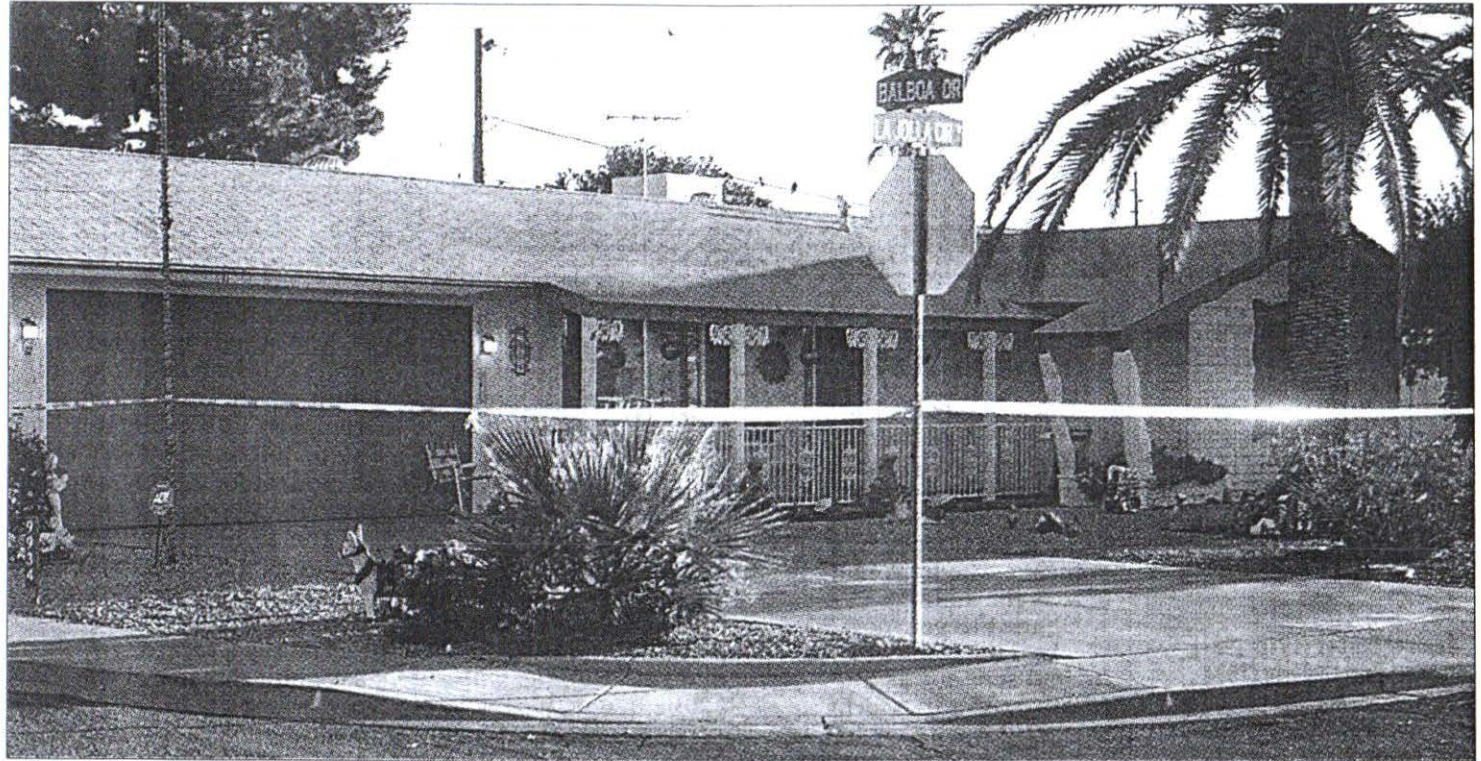
A gunman fired several shots into a Sun City home early this morning and injured a couple before fleeing the area, said Maricopa County Sheriff's officials.

Richard Rocca, around 50, and Evelyn Rocca, 46, were taken to John C. Lincoln Hospital-North Mountain in Phoenix, according to Lisa MacPherson, a Sheriff's Office spokeswoman.

She said one of the victims had injuries to the lower back, while the other was injured in the upper buttocks.

Each is expected to live but remain in critical condition after surgery.

MacPherson said deputies received a phone call around 1:30 a.m. from one of the victims, who said a person fired four to seven bullets from the



JOY LAMBERT-SLAGOWSKI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies say two people were shot in this house at the corner of Balboa Drive and La Jolla early this morning.

back yard into a bedroom window of the house.

The suspect fled the scene at Balboa Drive and La Jolla Circle by foot, MacPherson

said, and left a trail of blood.

A father of one of the two victims was in another room during the shooting, and a small dog was injured from

either the bullets or from broken glass, MacPherson said.

"We're still investigating and don't have a motive," she said.

Neighbors said the couple have been living in Sun City for one to two years with a

See SHOOTING, A5

OVER

## From A1

mother, who died recently.

Mark Fleitz, who lives across the street, said the gun shots awakened him.

"I heard someone groan when I walked out the front door to find out what happened," he said.

Fleitz then watched as police and ambulance workers rushed into the home. A helicopter airlifted Richard Rocca to the hospital minutes later, and Evelyn Rocca was transferred by ambulance.

Christine Harris, who lives down the street, said neighbors have been complaining about the Roccas for a while, and would often see several

people leave the residence at different times of the day.

"There would be these loud parties sometimes," Harris said. "It seemed like a lot of stuff might be coming from that house."

Graham Hubert couldn't believe the shooting happened in his neighborhood. It's always been a quiet place, he said.

Hubert would watch Richard and Evelyn Rocca in their backyard. He said they never bothered anyone and stayed to themselves.

"They seem really friendly," said Hubert. "I never would've expected for this to happen here."

*Mitchell Vantrease can be reached at 876-2526 or [mvantrease@aztrib.com](mailto:mvantrease@aztrib.com).*



JOY LAMBERT-SLAGOWSKI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Betty Welch, left, and Betty Brown talk to a television reporter this morning about a shooting at their neighbors' house at the corner of Balboa Drive and La Jolla in Sun City.

April 7, 2004

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

# Burglars take safe, tickets from travel firm

By **Geno Lawrenzi**  
Independent Newspapers

Three burglars with strong backs and weak minds broke into Bob Kenny's Worldwide Travel, 9885 W. Union Hills Road in Sun City, hauled away a 500-pound safe filled with airline tickets — and left behind the striking plates that might have made their efforts worthwhile.

Might have.

"All the tickets they stole are numbered by the federal government," said Marion Hager who, with her husband Carl owns and operates the agency.

"Even with the striking plates they probably couldn't have done anything."

Why assume three burglars when nobody has been arrested? Ms. Hager said she thinks at least three people were involved in the burglary — and one of them must be pretty big.

"One of the burglars sat on an office chair and the wheel broke off," she said.

Maricopa County Sheriff's Deputy L.D. Lee said the break-in happened over the weekend of March 19-20. Entry was gained by smashing

the front window with a two-pound rock used to keep the front door open.

Once inside, the culprits rifled through several filing cabinets, using a screwdriver to pry open one that was locked.

Then they spotted the safe.

"It weighs between 500 and 600 pounds and it would have taken at least three people to carry it off," said Ms. Hager. "We kept it in the break room. It looks like at least three people dragged the safe out the back door, down the street and loaded it into a vehicle, probably a truck, parked in a church yard."

While the safe did not contain any money or checks, it was packed with about 80 airline tickets, all numbered, and travel documents.

To be used, the blank tickets had to be filled out and stamped with a striking plate similar in size to a credit card, she said.

The plate imprints the airline and ID number for the travel agent's use. If the bur-

See **Theft** — Page 7

## Theft

Continued From Page 1  
glars had known about the striking plates and had possession of the plates, they could have completed the tick-

ets and tried to redeem them at any airline terminal, where each ticket could be worth thousands of dollars, Ms. Hager told the sheriff's office.

But she said the transactions could not be completed because of the federal government controls the numbered

tickets. She added, "They weren't very smart."

Investigators found smudged fingerprints on the filing cabinets, a broken screw driver and the rock used to gain entry, all of which they may use as evidence if any suspects are arrested.

The striking plates were left in plain sight in one of the filing cabinets, said Deputy Lee.

Anyone with information about the break-in is asked to call the sheriff's substation at 933-0153. All replies will be kept confidential.

# County adds 5 deputies to Sun Cities

Presence will deter crime, supervisor says

AMANDA MYERS  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun Cities area will soon see five additional sheriff's deputies patrolling their neighborhoods.

After a year and a half of negotiations, this month the

Maricopa County Board of Supervisors approved just more than a million dollars to recruit and hire deputies for Valley police departments, primarily for the far East Valley.

Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio said it was "the largest assignment in probably the history of the sheriff's office."

The funding will support 35 patrol deputies, three detectives, three sergeant,

and one lieutenant. It will also allow for the purchase of equipment and vehicles.

Maricopa County Supervisor Max Wilson said the five deputies for the Sun Cities have been hired and are in training.

"We need to expand because of the growth we're having. We're trying to reduce the call time," he said.

Wilson is confident the added presence will significantly help reduce the

amount of crime in the growing area.

"There's no question it'll help. We've got to make sure the bad guys don't win."

Arpaio agreed. "We feel there's a higher volume of activity in the Sun City area."

He said he expects the new deputies to be on the streets by mid-July. He said another full-time beat added to the Sun Cities area will deter criminals from regarding the area as an easy target.

"We want to reduce crime. I think a visible deputy car will do that."

Captain Ron Stoner of District 3 said while five new deputies are projected for the area, anything's subject to change.

"I have had no official word on the hiring and the number of officers I'm going to receive."

However, he said many deputies were currently going through training, and would

be dispersed to different districts once they completed the academy. He said getting at least five additional deputies would be an asset to the Sun Cities.

"I could use a whole lot more, I think every agency could. But it will assist greatly in the coverage and response times."

*Amanda Myers may be reached at 876-2513 or amyers@aztrib.com.*

# Grocer guards against purse thefts

## Security hired to patrol Fry's

ANNIE KARSTENS  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sheriff's deputies and a private security force are patrolling Fry's Food and Drug in Sun City to stem a string of purse snatchings at the store.

Lt. Ken Colbert of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said deputies have been paying special attention to Fry's since several summer purse snatchings. He couldn't say how many incidents occurred at the store, which is off Grand at 107th Avenue.

"If we have a high-activity area, we'll have the deputies do a patrol watch and drive-by's between their everyday duties," Colbert said.

"We had a rash of purse snatching out there, and in order to deter that and make sure no one is harmed, we requested for additional security at the store," said Jim Nigren, spokesman for Fry's. "It's definitely deterred and stopped the problem."

Shirley Kapral said she remains on guard.

"In this day and age, it's a

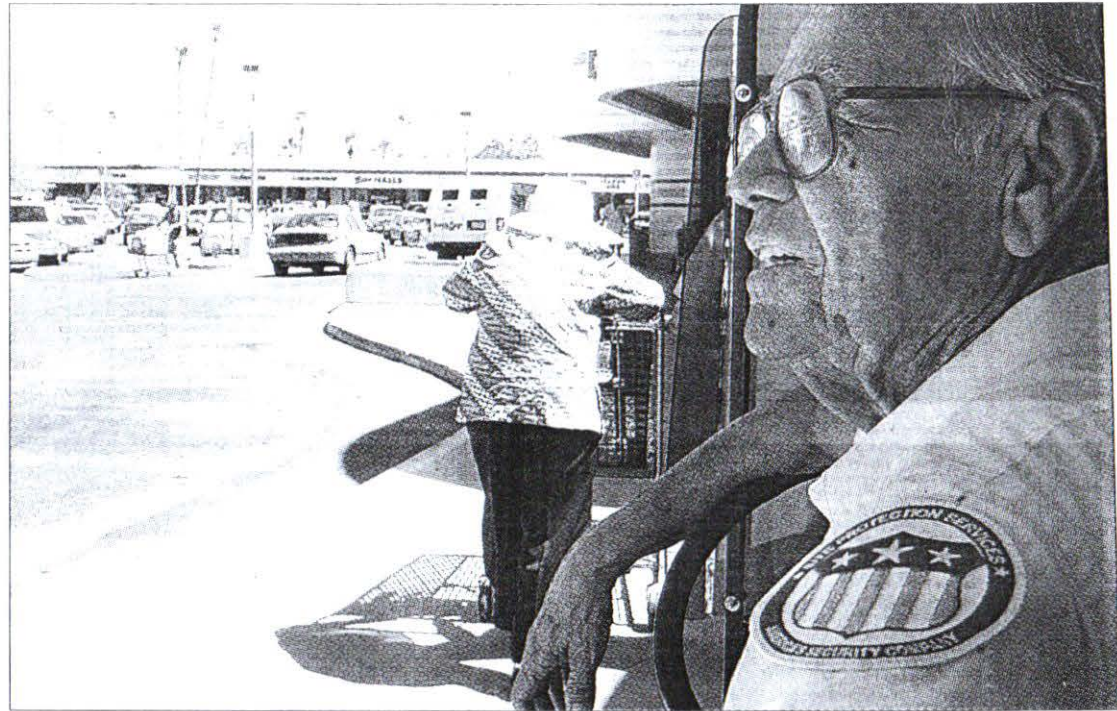
### IF YOU ARE VICTIMITIZED

- Don't try to fight for your belongings — it's not worth it.
- Be a good witness by memorizing details of the suspect — height, hair color, eye color, clothing, tatoos, car model and color, bumper stickers, voice and anything else that can help police identify the suspect.
- Don't panic, retain your composure, get a good description and notify police immediately.
- Be sure to cancel all of your credit cards and debit cards immediately, notifying your bank that your purse was stolen.

shame you have to have guards watching," Kapral said. "It's scary to see in this neighborhood, but I do feel safer with them there."

On June 21, someone stole a Surprise woman's purse while she was loading groceries into her car at the Fry's. Two unidentified men pulled into the parking spot next to her's and reached through their window to take her purse from her cart. The victim described the suspects' car as faded black, older-looking and foreign. There was \$50 cash and various credit cards in her purse.

Two suspects were recently arrested in the West Valley in connection with grocery store purse snatchings



JOY LAMBERT-SLAGOWSKI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Al Gaudreau of Surprise patrols Fry's Food and Drug at Grand and 107th avenues in Sun City. He works for Site Protection Services, which Fry's hired to deter purse snatchings.

in Sun City and Surprise, Colbert said, unsure if the arrests were in connection with the June 21 theft. The arrests don't mean people should stop being vigilant about personal protection, he said.

"It's always a good idea to be aware of your surroundings and not only the people around you, but locations that you're at," Colbert said.

"It's like anything else, they will go strong for a while, then something will scare them off. If you're going to do a purse snatch and you see an officer by the door or in the parking lot, chances are, you're not going to take the chance. If they do it, chances are we'll catch them quicker."

Al Gaudreau of Surprise has been patrolling Fry's on Grand Avenue as a security

guard for Site Protection Services, a private security company contracted with Fry's to provide regular security patrols. Gaudreau said he hasn't heard of any purse snatchings in two weeks — perhaps he or the MCSO scared thieves off.

"I watch for people walking around here who have no

**See PURSE SNATCHINGS, A5**

OVER

## From A1

business being here," he said. "Purse snatchers predominantly look for people to accost in the parking lot."

In Sun City, Gaudreau said he's noticed too many women being too relaxed when it comes to securing their purses.

"You see them not holding onto their purses," he said, adding that seniors may come off weak to potential attackers and must do what they can to protect themselves.

Colbert urges women to give their purses up if they're being attacked.

"If it's inevitable that you'll

lose it, the best thing you can do is give up the possessions rather than get into a fight with someone who's obviously going to win," he said. "At that point, try to be the best witness you can. Contain your composure, get every detail of that person, be mindful of everything that happened and tell officers."

Kapral regularly sees women being careless with their purses while shopping and hopes the public will be more aware of the threat that presents.

"I want to alert women to wake up and watch themselves," she said. "When I walk around the store, I see it all the time — women leaving their purse in the cart and

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## TIPS TO PREVENT PURSE SNATCHINGS

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- If possible, don't carry a purse while shopping. Keep items in a wallet, fanny-pack or concealed under clothing.
- Before you open your purse and display the contents, survey the area around you.
- Don't leave your purse unattended in your shopping cart.
- If you notice a suspicious looking person in the parking lot or in the store, notify a manager immediately.
- If you carry a purse, don't wrap the strap around your shoulder, neck or wrist. If your purse is grabbed, a strong strap will not yield easily and you may be injured.
- Never carry anything more valuable than you can afford to lose.
- Always leave all unnecessary credit cards at home.
- Lock your purse in the passenger compartment of your car before unloading groceries into the trunk.
- Shop with a friend.
- If shopping at night, stay in well-lighted areas.
- For personal protection carry a police whistle or a flashlight.

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walking away. Oh lady, you're just looking for someone to pick your purse."

Annie Karstens may be reached at 876-2532 or [akarstens@aztrib.com](mailto:akarstens@aztrib.com).

# 15 Sun City businesses burglarized

## Hard drives with personal data stolen

ANNIE BOON  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Fifteen tenants of Sun City Professional Building arrived at their offices Thursday morning to discover they'd been robbed sometime overnight, mainly of computer towers.

About 25 offices reside in the complex at 103rd Avenue and Coggins Drive, and those that were robbed reported the towers containing the hard-drives had been stolen, said Maricopa County Sheriff's Deputy Cody Morin. There was also some cash missing and a car reportedly stolen from the parking lot, he added.

Computer hard-drives can store personal information of a company's clients such as names, Social Security numbers, addresses, medical history and financial records.

Sgt. Paul Chagolla, MCSO spokesman, said

investigators are currently just treating the case as a robbery, and should identity theft occur as a result of the robbery, officials would handle it at that time.

"There's always concern about identity theft in every robbery or burglary," Chagolla said, adding that investigators don't know why the suspects chose to take computer hard-drives. "There is information stored on them that would be a concern, but (suspects) would need to know how to access that information."

Chagolla said business owners should decide for themselves whether to inform their clients of the break-in, as he isn't aware of any Arizona statute requiring businesses to inform clients of possible identity theft.

There was evidence of forced entry, and because many offices are connected through internal common hallways, it appeared the suspects made their way through several offices that way, Morin said. All of the phone lines were destroyed as well.

As of Thursday, there were no estimates on the extent of financial or structural damages, he added.

The call came into the MCSO just before 6:30 a.m. Thursday. Deputies responded, as did the Sun City Posse and MCSO identification technicians, who scoured the complex for fingerprints and evidence. No suspects have been identified, Morin said.

Locks have been changed on all the office doors and Qwest was repairing telephone wires that were ripped out of a shared power box on the lower level. There's no indication when telephone service will be restored.

Galaxy Credit, LLC, a collection agency, was robbed of nine computer towers. Fortunately, owner Ralph Belzer said, the company's policy is to never store Social Security numbers on the computers. Because the company relies on computer technology, new computer towers were being delivered as replacements this morning.

Belzer plans to contact his clients promptly to inform them of the theft.

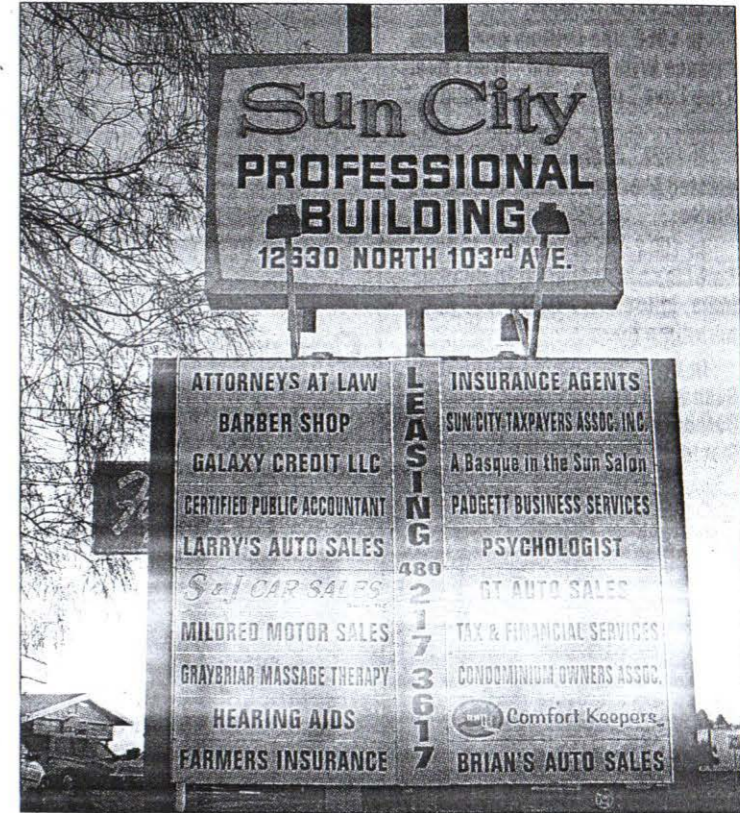
"It's my responsibility to clients to talk to them," he said. "We're doing what we need to do to be proactive."

The Sun City Taxpayers Association office was spared by the suspects, to the relief of the staff, however, telephone and e-mail access were down Thursday due to the damaged phone lines.

"It's scary to say the least," said Tracy Spoon, SCTA executive secretary. "Sun City is not the safe haven it once was ... this is an eye opener."

In October, Spoon's truck was parked at the complex while she worked inside. When she returned to her car, she noticed signs that someone had attempted to break in. The botched theft happened in broad daylight, she said. Now, Spoon has a high-tech alarm on her truck.

That same month, medical supplies and cash were taken when Dr. Thomas Chong's Dentistry in the complex was burglarized, Spoon said. While working at the SCTA office in April, Jackie Varner, assistant with the county



CHARLES WADE/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Computer towers were stolen from 15 businesses in the Sun City Professional Building at 103rd Avenue and Coggins Drive sometime overnight Wednesday. Maricopa County Sheriff's Office hadn't released the names of the businesses by 10 a.m. today.

See **BURGLARY, A5**

DVER

**From A1**

assessor's office, had her car stolen from the complex parking lot, Spoon added.

Spoon said some of the tenants were thinking about organizing a group meeting to discuss more security.

Milan Perisic, who owns

the building, said the incident was too isolated to begin thinking about hiring a security guard.

"This is a shock that this even happened, we're looking into what we can do," Perisic said. "I'm just looking at making the doors safe right now."

The Sun City Condominium Association's office is also located in the complex, but COA President Ben Roloff said nothing was stolen.

The Sheriff's Office had not released the names of the businesses burglarized as of 10 a.m. today, but this morning, Perisic said Loveland Tax

and Financial Services, Thomas Chong Dentistry, Comfort Keepers home services, Graybriar Massage and Statewide Insurance Co. hadn't been robbed.

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# Computer haul adds to burglary damages

**ANNIE BOON**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

A local computer expert believes whoever stole computer towers from the Sun City Professional Building Wednesday night probably wasn't looking to make a quick buck — but was after something far more valuable.

"They wouldn't be pawning them, that's not what they robbed them for. The towers don't bring in the money," said Ginny Yost, co-owner of Surprise-based Personal Computer Assistance Inc. and certified Quick Book pro-advisor. "The value is in what's on the hard drive — the personal information."

Police have not identified identity theft as a motive in the case, although some local officials said the possibility has occurred to them.

Yost said if personal information gets into the wrong hands, there can be dire consequences. Computer hard drives can obtain information about a business such as its clients' Social Security numbers, addresses, medical history and financial records.

"People can definitely hack into it," she said. "You need to password-protect everything. It's not sure fire, but it's the best you

can do."

On Friday, Jerry Creekmore, deputy sheriff with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, District III substation in Surprise, said there have been no leads or suspects identified in the case.

Creekmore said that when he was called to the scene Thursday morning and heard dozens of computer hard-drives had been stolen, identity theft was an immediate concern.

"That was one of the first things on my mind," he said. "Not taking any of the other computer hardware, like monitors or keyboards, and just taking the towers — you bet I thought of it."

Cases of identity theft can't be investigated until they are reported, Creekmore said, adding that many of the companies in the burglarized complex serve clients all over the state, which would make detection difficult if identity theft did occur.

"I imagine a whole lot of it happening, but I don't know if we'll hear about the majority of it," he said.

About 25 offices are housed in the complex at 103rd Avenue and Coggins Drive, and of the 15 that were burglarized, most reported computer towers containing hard drives had been stolen, said MCSO Deputy Cody

Morin. There was also some cash missing, possibly two cars stolen from the parking lot and other miscellaneous items taken.

Complex owner Milan Perisic said an air-conditioning compressor worth about \$6,000 was stolen. Two years ago, a similar compressor was stolen from the Sun City Medical Clinic Annex, a neighboring office building.

Richard Batten, a stylist at Becky's Barber Salon inside the Sun City Professional Building, said the salon lost its laptop computer, some cash, hundreds of dollars in hair-styling tools and products and important banking and tax documents.

Batten said salon owner Becky Weller-Parks keeps the most important computer data in her home computer, not the office laptop. Because banking and tax documents were stolen, however, Batten and Weller-Parks were forced to change all of their bank account information and go without the paperwork they were planning to use in filing the salon's taxes.

Batten said he isn't surprised the suspects were able to pull off the large-scale burglary Wednesday night.

"By 9 p.m., this place is

**See BURGLARY, A5**

OVER

## From A1

completely dark," he said.

Batten said he believes security would be improved by adding outdoor lights tied to a timer. "You have to get out of here before it gets dark. It's too scary."

There was evidence of forced entry on some of the doors at the Sun City Professional Building. It also appeared the suspects made their way into some of the offices by way of internal common hallways, Morin said.

In some instances, sheriff's officials believe the suspects used keys stolen from the landlord's office to enter businesses.

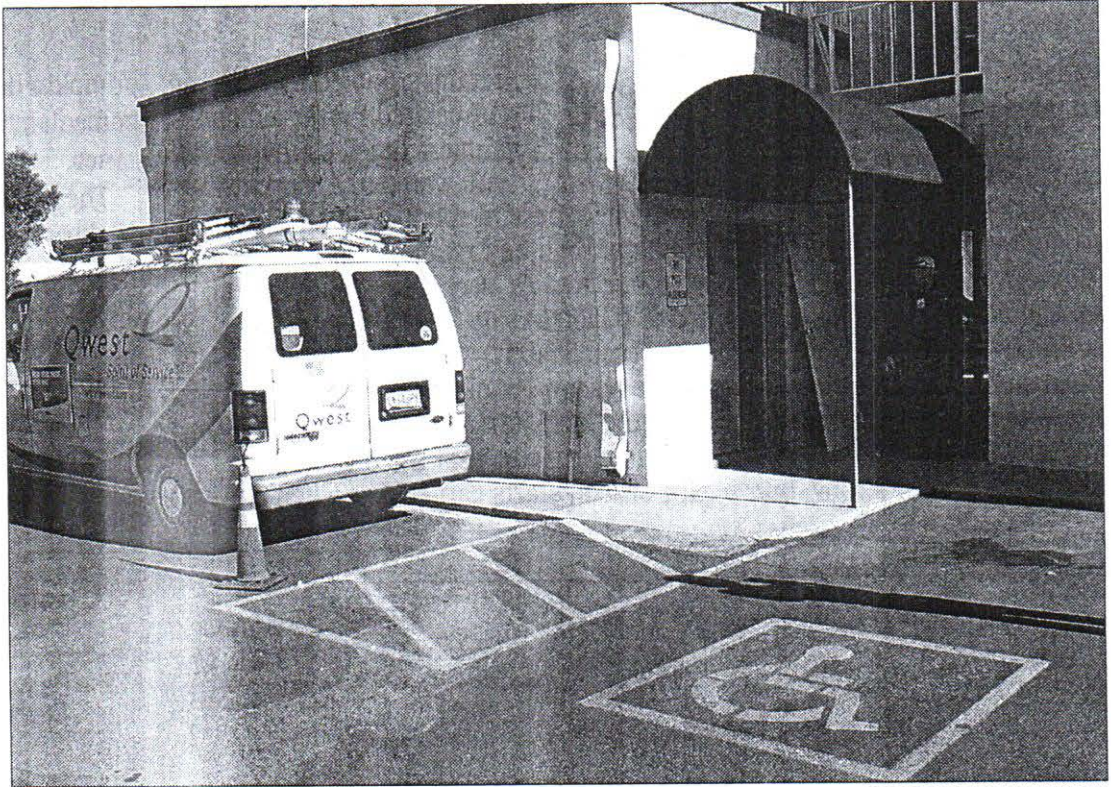
All of the telephone wires in a main power box were cut in several places, said a Qwest service representative repairing the wires Friday. Creekmore said that was done to destroy any burglar alarm systems that may have been monitored by phone.

The Qwest representative said it could be several days before phone service is restored.

As of Friday, there were no estimates on the extent of financial or structural damages and no leads on the suspects, Creekmore said.

Sgt. Polly White with the MCSO District III substation said she's treating the incident as a burglary. Should identity theft occur as a result of the burglaries, investigators will address the situation accordingly, she added.

Mary Rose Popovich of Sun City said she is frightened by the burglary happening in her community, but even more distraught because her lawyer's office is in the



CHARLES WADE/DAILY NEWS-SUN

A Qwest service representative repairs the wires in the Sun City Professional Building Friday after burglars cut the lines during a break-in Wednesday night.

burglarized complex. She fears someone might steal her identity.

"He's got a lot of personal information on me," Popovich said. "I'm alarmed because he's got my Social Security number and everything."

At press time, MCSO had not revealed if the lawyer's office was one of those burglarized. Lt. Paul Chagolla, MCSO spokesman, said business owners should decide for themselves whether to inform their clients of the break-in, as he isn't aware of any Arizona statute requiring businesses to inform clients of possible identity theft.

Annie Boon can be reached at 876-2532 or [aboone@aztrib.com](mailto:aboone@aztrib.com).

## Victims can limit ID theft damage

If you are or may be the victim of identity theft, the Federal Trade Commission recommends taking these steps:

- Contact the fraud departments of each of the three major credit bureaus.
- Contact the creditors for any accounts that have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.
- File a report with your local police.
- Order a copy of your credit report by contacting the Annual Credit Report Service at 877-322-8228.
- A five-page brochure that addresses identity theft issues is available at the Arizona Attorney General's Office Web site, [www.azag.gov](http://www.azag.gov).
- If the offense involves strictly financial loss or fraud, call the Phoenix Police Department Document Crimes Detail at 602-534-5958.
- If the offense involves the fraudulent use of your Social Security number for employment or Social Security benefits, contact the Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-269-0271.

DAILY NEWS-SUN

TUESDAY, FEB. 14, 2006

# Sun Citians outraged

## Residents upset over MCSO's failure to report crime news

**ANNIE BOON**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The failure of sheriff's deputies to warn Sun Citians of two recent home invasions involving up to three at-large armed robbers has some residents up in arms.

The first home invasion/armed robbery happened Feb. 4, and the suspects allegedly struck again Feb. 9, said Sgt. Travis Anglin, Maricopa County Sheriff's Department spokesman. He said the crimes are likely related and could involve the same suspects. The MCSO hadn't made any public statements

about the crimes until Monday when the Daily News-Sun called to verify reports of the robberies called in by readers.

Victims of one of the incidents called the Daily News-Sun to share their story. The victims came home at about 8:20 p.m. Feb. 9 and went about their evening as usual until they saw a black figure breeze through their hallway.

Moments later, three intruders were standing before them, two of them pointing guns at their heads. The intruders were dressed entirely in black with ski masks, hoods and gloves. The

victims believe the intruders entered through the garage, though they recall it being closed when they left the house.

The victims were led to a closet and told to face the wall and not to move. Nearly 20 minutes passed and finally, the intruders were gone and so were several items including jewelry, a computer and wallets.

Anglin said photos of one suspect were taken from a bank ATM security camera on the 10000 block of Thunderbird Boulevard at around 8:46 p.m. Feb. 9. The suspect allegedly used the victim's

ATM card and pin to take cash from the account.

Since the invasion and robbery, the MCSO has been "cooperative, helpful and polite," one of the victims said. One of the deputies told the victims that the invasion was not an isolated case.

"We've got some leads we're developing that we may release to the media," Anglin said. "Whether or not we're having a rash of robberies, people need to be on the lookout."

But Diane Worth of Sun

**See MCSO, A5**

# MCSO: Time lapse attributed to investigation

## From A1

City doesn't think that's enough. Worth called the Daily News-Sun after hitting dead ends with the MCSO District 3 substation in Surprise. She had called the MCSO last week after a neighbor alerted her to one of the home invasions. She said the Sheriff's Office told her that unless she knew the victim's home address, the information could not be looked up.

"If we've got a problem in our neighborhood, we need to know about it. And we should know what is the Sheriff's Office is doing about it and how are they going to handle it," Worth said. "I just need to know if I'm at risk."

Worth said that when she called the MCSO, she was told to try the Surprise Police Department. When she called Surprise, she was told that Surprise officers don't respond to calls in Sun City.

"What kind of run around is this? Does someone need to be dead to get the sheriff's office attention?" she asked. "I would like to know what the truth of the situation is and why can't we get it. Why can't they tell me there was a break-in and how they got in so you know how to protect yourself? That's what really frosts me."

Skip Tucker of Sun City shares the same frustration.



Robbery  
suspect

He also called the Daily News-Sun Monday after hearing talk of recent armed robberies.

"My God, when this happens, this scares the hell out of everybody. The sheriff's office should disclose the information promptly and people should be aware," Tucker said, suggesting that the MCSO at least post a description of the suspects or tips on how to avoid being a victim of a home invasion.

"If something happens the next day, they'll know they should have put something out. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

In response to questions of why more than a week passed since the first incident before information was released to the public, Anglin said that detectives are consumed with investigating the incidents and following leads. Monday, the MCSO was provided with photos from the bank and released them immediately, Anglin said.

"The time lapse from when this occurred and today has been due to detectives working on it and working with the physical evidence and building a suspect base," he said. "Now that we have something tangible (photos), we can put something out there for the public to assist on."

No further details were known as of press time Tuesday.

If you have any information on the whereabouts of the suspects, call MCSO Crime Stop at 602-876-1011.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or [aboone@aztrib.com](mailto:aboone@aztrib.com).



PETE PALLAGI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Jack Kroone points out a home security option available at Ace Hardware at Sun City.

# ALARMING RATE

## Crime wave prompts security system purchases

ANNIE BOON  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

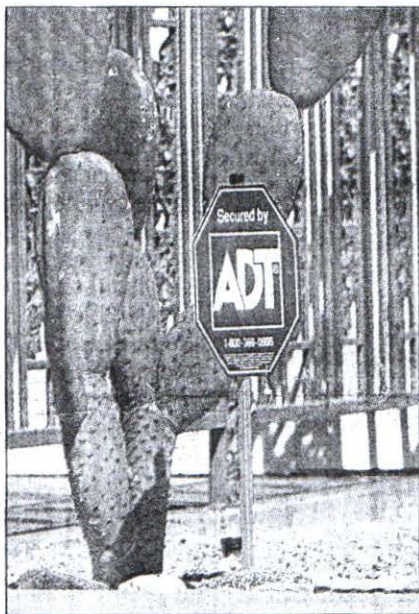
Droves of Sun Cities residents are seeking the security of house alarms, outdoor lighting and surveillance cameras in hopes of warding off home invaders or catching them in action.

Kevin Celestino with CF Security Systems, which serves the West Valley, said security systems sales have doubled in the Sun Cities area during the last month. His company also sells and installs home entertainment equipment, but since Lavern Jark, 51, of Aberdeen, S.D., was killed April 1 during an alleged home invasion in Sun City, residents have purchased alarm systems in record numbers.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office is still searching for two suspects.

"They're seeing that someone broke into a house and someone was murdered, and can see how easy it was for that to be done," Celestino said. "They're worried, thinking 'This could happen to me.'"

He said Sun City and Sun City West residents buying alarms are interested in protecting their homes while they're away, but are more concerned with protection while



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

A few Sun City homeowners have resorted to using automatic security systems to protect their homes and their belongings against home invaders.

they're home. There have been seven reported home invasions in the last six months — five in Sun City, one in Peoria and one in Sun City West. Two men were arrested

in February in connection with two of the incidents in Sun City and one in Peoria, and authorities are looking for additional suspects.

There has been an increase in installations of alarms, outdoor flood lights and surveillance systems, Celestino said. One alarm features a keypad that can be installed in a bedroom, rather than by a front or back door. That way, if the alarm sounds while the home owner is asleep they can immediately lock the bedroom door and check the keypad to learn where the invader entered, instead of running to another side of the house to check the keypad.

"One Sun City customer was most afraid when she was home alone, because she lived on a golf course with some dark areas," Celestino said. "So we made sure to secure the back of the house facing the golf course."

"In Sun City, people are interested when they're home alone or away or both, so we design a system that's perfect for them."

He said some panic alarms, generally used in case of a medical emergency, can be worn around the

See SECURITY, A5

# SECURITY: Residents keep stores busy

From A1

neck and will signal an emergency if touched.

At Ace Hardware on Bell Road and 99th Avenue in Sun City, customers can purchase door and window alarms, outdoor flood lights or motion sensors to boost home security.

Jack Kroone, electrician manager at Ace, said sales have jumped significantly since the recent home invasions/armed robberies. Most of Ace's equipment can be installed with or without the help of an electrician. Basic alarms that signal a door or window has been opened range in price from \$17 to \$50 and motion sensitive flood lights for outdoor areas cost between \$11 to \$50.

Kroone said he knows first-hand the threat of home invasions. He said three houses down from his home in the age-restricted community of Ventana Lakes in Peoria, a man recently slipped under a garage door and

allegedly snuck into the bedroom to steal jewelry and the contents of a wallet. One of the homeowners was in another room and had no idea he was being robbed, Kroone said. It wasn't until his wife came home and discovered the missing items that the residents knew they were robbed. To his knowledge, the suspected burglar was never apprehended.

He said he understands the recent rush to purchase security devices, whether they're the less expensive door alarms or the alarm systems connected to a security company that require an installation fee and monthly monitoring fee. When a security device is advertised with stickers or a sign on the house, burglars may even be deterred from preying on the property.

"They're buying everything — alarms, padlocks, motions sensors, lights that turn on at approach. They're worried about what's been going on," Kroone said, adding that his neighborhood, like several

other Sun Cities area neighborhoods, has reorganized their block watch program for improved surveillance.

Celestino recommends installing an alarm that also features an outdoor siren that is so loud, it can reach about 10 surrounding homes.

"When that alarm goes off, (the robber or burglar) isn't going to stick around," he said. "Alarms give you more of a peace about your home."

Cmdr. Harry Wells with the Sun City West Sheriff's Posse said the Posse doesn't recommend specific alarm systems.

"Check with neighbors to see what they've got and ask if they're happy with it," Wells said.

To schedule a Block Watch presentation with a Posse member, call 972-2555 for Sun City or 584-5808 for Sun City West.

*Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or [aboone@aztrib.com](mailto:aboone@aztrib.com).*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

## 2 men indicted in slaying in Sun City home invasion

**By Brent Whiting**

BRENT.WHITING@ARIZONAREPUBLIC.COM

Sheriff's deputies didn't have to search far for two men charged with first-degree murder in a Sun City slaying.

Both were already behind bars on other charges when the Maricopa County grand jury returned its indictment May 3.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio said he wants to put to rest any notion that the killers are free and roaming the retirement community.

"Sun City can relax," Arpaio said this week after deputies identified the second of two suspects in the murder case.

The slaying victim, Lavern Jark, 51, a visitor from Aberdeen, S.D., was shot dead March 31 during a home invasion by two masked intruders.

Other people in the Sun City home were tied up before the bandits made their escape.

During a visit to Sun City last month, Arpaio identified Gilbert Martinez Sr., 41, as one of two murder suspects.

Martinez and his son, Gilbert Martinez Jr., 19, were arrested April 5 on a host of charges involving a string of burglaries and robberies in Sun City and elsewhere.

On Monday, sheriff's deputies identified the other murder suspect as Robert

Sandoval Arbolida, 48, describing him as an accomplice in the Martinez robbery and burglary ring.

Arbolida, a convicted felon, was arrested April 5 for a parole violation on a burglary conviction, Arpaio said.

The younger Martinez is not a suspect in Jark's death, Arpaio said.

"He was never a suspect," he said. "It's always been his father and the other guy."

Both the elder Martinez and Arbolida are scheduled for arraignment today in Superior Court in the murder case.

They are charged with first-degree murder, burglary, theft and four counts each of kidnapping and aggravated assault.

Prosecutors have yet to announce whether they will seek the death penalty.

Arpaio said Monday that he's confident the right people are behind bars.

He credited excellent work by his detectives.

Arpaio said that within 10½ hours of the slaying, investigators got their first break when they tracked a call made on a cellphone stolen from the home.

That call, plus other evidence, led deputies to the elder Martinez, he said.

## Sheriff divulges arrests in deadly home invasion

ANNIE BOON  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Alvirta Hardin and more than 300 other Sun Citians learned firsthand Thursday that two suspects have been nabbed in an April 1 homicide/home invasion and then heard this warning from Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio: "I can't say you're all safe."

For now, though, Hardin said she's glad "one of the scariest times" of her 10 years in Sun City are behind her.

That relief came when Arpaio told the Sundial Recreation Center audience that Gilbert Martinez Sr. has been arrested in the shooting death of Lavern Jark during a home invasion/armed robbery in Sun City.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said that those and other arrests have helped bring down a major West Valley burglary ring. And one suspect's cell phone slip-up may have been the key to cracking the case.

Martinez, 41, and a second suspect implicated in Jark's murder are both in custody, Arpaio said.

In addition, an unknown number of the Martinez's relatives have been arrested on various burglary charges, Arpaio said. All of the suspects in the burglary ring are West Valley residents, he added.

Since the arrests, Arpaio said the crime rate has

decreased in the Sun City area.

"With crime, cities and towns have no borders. You never know what's going to happen anywhere," he said. "Criminals are coming into this area not only for burglary and home invasions, but murder. It's a heck of a way to bring crime down, a vicious murder. But I can't say you're all safe now."

Sheriff's deputies arrested Martinez on burglary charges April 5, five days after the homicide. Arpaio said the investigation was under way at the time and deputies were continuing to collect evidence that eventually connected Martinez to the slaying.

"I have to apologize to all of you if I couldn't say earlier that we thought we had these guys in jail," he said. "They are in jail and were in jail within five days (of the killing)."

The identity of the second suspect was not released in the interest of protecting the ongoing investigation, Arpaio said. The second suspect, who will face murder charges in the near future, was arrested shortly before Martinez was taken into custody. He said both have criminal histories, but only recently "graduated" from burglary to armed robberies and home invasions.

"The citizens of Sun City can rest a little easier,"

**See SUSPECTS A5**

# Sun Citians breathe sigh of relief

DAILY NEWS-SUN  
FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2006





THOMAS BOGGAN/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Residents pack the Sundial Recreation Center Thursday for a press conference by Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio on the suspects who have been arrested in connection with the deadly home invasion in Sun City April 1.

## SUSPECTS: Use of cell phone helps crack case

From A1

Arpaio said in a release. "The armed robbery and home invasion gang which terrorized them has been dismantled."

When two masked men invaded the Sun City home on Bolivar Drive around midnight April 1, the robbers made off with credit cards, cash, a camera and a cell phone after shooting Jark, 51, of Aberdeen, S.D. Arpaio said evidence indicated that Martinez was familiar with Sun City and had eased the neighborhood before targeting the Liedtke home. No other connections between the suspects and the victims have been determined.

Three couples were in the home when the invasion took place — home owners Betty and Laurel Liedtke, their daughter Colleen and her husband Lavern Jark, and their daughter Karen Bell and her husband Forrest of Monmouth, Ore. The Liedtkes and the Bells were bound in a back room. Jark hid his wife, Colleen, in a closet before he was shot in close range with a semi-automatic handgun, Arpaio said.



THOMAS BOGGAN/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio speaks about the armed robbery ring and home invasion gang at a press conference Thursday at Sundial Recreation Center in Sun City.

Within 10½ hours of the incident, one of the suspects made a call from the stolen cell phone. Detectives tracked the call, and along with other information, were led to Martinez, officials said.

"I'm not going to call them stupid, but they did make a call on that cell phone," Arpaio said.

Search warrants and other

evidence also has linked the unknown suspect, Martinez and his son, 19-year-old Gilbert Martinez Jr., with three home invasions/armed robberies and eight or more burglaries in Sun City, Peoria and Phoenix, but evidence has not linked Gilbert Martinez Jr. to the fatal home invasion/armed robbery. All three suspects are in jail.

Both Martinez men are

being held in the Fourth Avenue Jail on three counts each of armed robbery and burglary and one count theft. Thursday morning, Martinez Sr. was rearrested in his jail cell and booked on homicide charges, according to MCSO reports.

"It was certainly frightening," Hardin said. "I think they (sheriff's investigators) acted as quickly as they could. It was proper they waited to tell us."

Sun Citians Opal Hantke and Dorothy Green breathed a sigh of relief after hearing Arpaio announce the arrests.

"We're both relieved they've been apprehended," Hantke said.

"It's necessary to take care of the seniors in Sun City, where women and widows are alone and afraid," Green said. "We need protection and this shows we have it."

To report any suspicious activity in Sun City, call the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office at 602-876-1011

*Jared Hartung contributed to this story.*

*Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or [aboone@aztrib.com](mailto:aboone@aztrib.com).*

# Sheriff boosts response to crime

## Calls from Sun Cities rate high priority

ANNIE BOON  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun Cities residents can expect a closer watch from the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office now that "suspicious activity" in the area has been promoted from low to high priority in response to recent high-profile crimes.

At Tuesday's Sun City Home Owners Association meeting, Capt. Scott Penrose, new commander of MCSO District 3, and Lt. Henry Brandimarte said Sun City and Sun City West should feel the positive effects of some changes in the district.

"We're trying to correct a lot of problems we've

recognized," Brandimarte said.

In the past, when Sun Cities residents called the MCSO to report suspicious activity, the call was given a low "priority three" classification that deputies rarely rushed to investigate, Penrose said. But in the last six months, there have been seven home

invasions/armed robberies in Sun City, Sun City West and Peoria, one that resulted in a man being shot and killed in a Sun City home.

And while arrests have been made in connection to the killing and "hundreds" of other area robberies and burglaries, Penrose said it's important to ensure crime of that magnitude doesn't get a grip on the communities ever again.

Today, when someone calls in a report of suspicious activity, it's classified as "priority one," the highest alert that's given to emergency situations.

"Don't be worried that you're bothering us with those kinds of calls. We want to receive those calls," Penrose said, reminding residents to immediately call the MCSO, 9-1-1 or the Sun City Posse — not their neighbors

— if something or someone seems out of the ordinary.

"We want to get there before something bad happens."

Ben Davis, SCHOA director, asked Penrose what's being done about motorists who blaze through the Sun Cities at high speeds.

As the West Valley grows, so does the volume of calls

See SHERIFF, A5

## SHERIFF: Deputies on lookout for speeders

From A1

the MCSO receives from Sun Cities residents about speeding through their neighborhoods, Penrose said. Traffic complaints, he said, make up about 90 percent of the calls made to the District 3 substation, at Bell and Dysart roads in Surprise.

The number of complaints prompted the district to budget funds for an unmarked traffic enforcement car. Though all MCSO deputies can make traffic stops, there is one deputy whose sole duty is to patrol the streets for traffic violators, Penrose

said. This deputy will soon be driving a car that resembles any other car on the road, he said, giving him a stealthy advantage to pulling over speeders.

Penrose said the district also is asking residents to pinpoint traffic hot spots so patrols may be heightened in those areas. Streets around 93rd and 95th avenues and Greenway Road have already been targeted for frequent high-speed driving.

George Davis, SCHOA director, asked Penrose if the number of patrols dedicated to Sun City and Sun City West will be increased.

"I think it'd be advantageous for everyone," Davis said. "It would be a reassuring thought to have additional deputies."

Three patrols are assigned specifically to Sun City. Penrose said the district is now looking into the possibility of boosting patrols by checking calls for service and the population's needs, and may eventually make a recommendation to the sheriff to increase the MCSO's presence in the area.

Penrose stepped into his position of District 3 commander about four months ago after serving in MCSO

Enforcement Support. He worked as a deputy in Sun City from 1982 to 1987, and said he's glad to be back in the community where he started his career. Penrose replaced former District 3 commander, Capt. Tim Campbell who relocated to District 1 in Mesa.

# MCSO: Call priority upped

Officials explain new system

By Matt Loeschman  
Independent Newspapers

Sun City West residents filled PORA headquarters May 8 concerned about the recent crime spree in the West Valley.

At PORA's regular board meeting, Lt. Henry Brandimarte of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office reassured residents the MCSO is taking steps to mitigate their fears.

"We all know there has been an increase in violent crimes lately in the Sun Cities," Lt. Brandimarte said. "And we are taking steps to change some things that will hopefully cut down on these quality of life issues. As the sheriff said, you are his people. He is committed to the protection of Sun City and Sun

[www.vbmaz.com](http://www.vbmaz.com)  
[www.mcsso.org](http://www.mcsso.org)

City West."

Lt. Brandimarte told a crowd of about 30 the Sun City West Sheriff's Posse has beefed up patrols but it is still not adequate to cover the entire area.

"Right now, Sun City West has one deputy dedicated to patrol 24/7," the lieutenant explained. "We would like to have at least two. The problem is not the funding — it is finding the bodies. We are competing with other law enforcement agencies for manpower and it's tough. It's really a nationwide problem.

"We are playing around with the numbers but we have a limited pool," Lt. Brandimarte added. "It's a

See MCSO — Page 3

## MCSO

Continued From Page 1

constant battle to get more bodies out here. The frustrating part is the funding is there but we have to find qualified applicants who are willing to do the work. Overall, the MCSO is working shorthanded as far as deputies go."

One change made in the past month is the priority level of suspicious-person calls coming from the Sun Cities.

"These calls used to be categorized as priority three," the lieutenant explained. "Now, suspicious person calls from the Sun Cities are priority one, meaning it's the same as if a man was trying to break down your door. We will drop what we are doing and get dispatched to that call right away."

Lt. Brandimarte also said the MCSO is working closely with the Maricopa County Events Center to solve some lingering security and parking issues.

In addition, an unmarked car dedicated to traffic enforcement will be added to the MCSO fleet in the next month.

"The biggest complaint I get across my desk is speeders," Lt. Brandimarte said.

PORA President Chuck Ullman inquired about getting more dedicated patrols into Sun City West.

"Just how can we do this? They are badly needed," Mr. Ullman said.

Lt. Brandimarte did not have the answer — however, he said his group was speaking with the Sun City Home Owners Association about the possibility of contract law enforcement.

Residents on hand suggested deputizing the posse, thereby giving them much more enforcement power.

PORA Director Stephanie Elitz asked if firefighters and police officers could be cross-trained to perform both duties.

"That would be difficult," the lieutenant said. "It would be very challenging but I suppose it's something worth investigating."

MCSO deputies work both eight- and 12-hour shifts, Lt. Brandimarte explained.

Sun City West Posse Cmdr. Harry Wells asked for volunteers to join his group and also outlined some recent changes to the posse.

"We have 12 people now trained on radar instead of the previous two," Cmdr. Wells

noted. "We just sent our initial radar report to Capt. Penrose at District 3. The communication between the posse and the district is increasing."

Fred Taylor, state director of the "Your Right To Vote" campaign, spoke to residents about the benefits of a statewide vote-by-mail system.

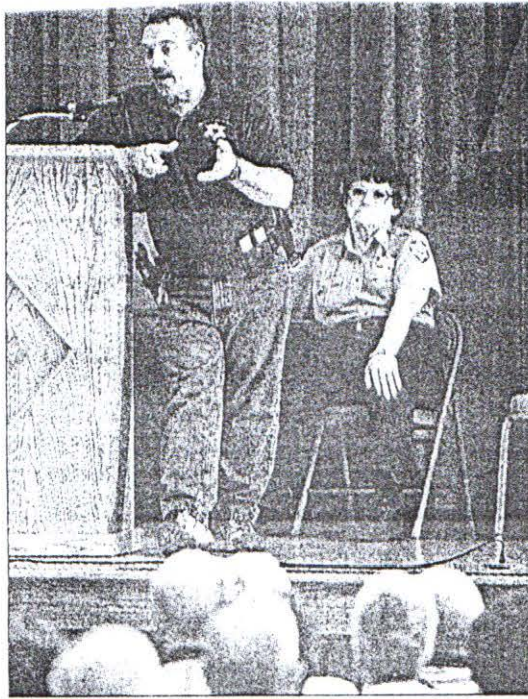
Mr. Taylor said the system would send a ballot to every registered voter in every election, making it more convenient to participate in future elections.

Approximately 122,000 signatures are necessary to get the initiative on this November's ballot, he explained. As of last week, supporters of the system had gathered about 60,000 signatures.

"We have to fix our voter turnout," Mr. Taylor said. "We need to raise Arizona's voter participation."

If passed, the vote-by-mail system would take effect in 2008. Mr. Taylor left petitions for interested residents to sign.

Post your comments on this issue at [www.newsapforums.com/forum29](http://www.newsapforums.com/forum29). Reach News Editor Matt Loeschman at 972-6101 or [mloeschman@newszap.com](mailto:mloeschman@newszap.com).



PETE PALLAGI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Det. Jeff Menka with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office spoke to Sun City residents at the Sundial Auditorium Wednesday.

## Program urges seniors to remain vigilant

ANNIE BOON  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

In April, the month Sun City was shocked by a murder in the community, the amount of calls to police about suspicious activity spiked to double that of any other month this year.

And that was a good thing, said Daryl Zimmerman, Sun City Sheriff's Posse member and head of the Block Watch program. It meant residents were more aware than ever of suspicious people, cars or activity in their neighborhoods, he said.

"I would like to see (the number of these calls) stay at the highest possible level," Zimmerman said.

Trouble is, those numbers began tapering off in May, possibly signaling that Sun Citians were becoming complacent in reporting their suspicions, he said.

To remind citizens to remain aware and alert at all times, several Sun City organizations conducted a personal safety and crime prevention seminar Wednesday at Sundial Auditorium.

About 170 residents attended and heard presentations by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, the Sun City Fire Department and the Posse about recent crime statistics, fire safety tools and tips for protecting their

See SEMINAR, A5

# SEMINAR: Deputy gives tips to deter car theft

From A1

identities, cars and properties from thieves.

"We want a nice, safe place for us to live out our golden years," said Posse member Gus Johnson. "Part of the responsibility has to come from each of us in Sun City."

Lil Scharenbroich of Sun City said she was interested to see if anyone would show up for the seminar and was impressed by the turnout. She left feeling more informed about personal and community safety.

"It brought out a lot of things to the front of my mind," she said.

She will look more skeptically at work trucks canvassing neighborhoods or pedestrians who look out of place.

"We're all concerned about the additional crime. I think this (seminar) is a good idea," she said.

Det. Jeff Menka with the sheriff's department said pickup trucks are probably the most frequently stolen vehicles, though any car can be a target. Consider using a club device to lock a steering

wheel or LoJack or OnStar tracking systems to protect your car, he said, adding that while the Club may seem primitive in today's technical world, it still works.

"If you have a Club in your car and a neighbor's car doesn't, which is a thief going to steal?" Menka asked.

Ken Rice, fire department spokesman, encouraged all residents to sign up for a home safety survey that will bring a trained inspector to evaluate the home for optimal fire and health safety. The department also sells and installs lock boxes, which hold a key that only fire crews can use if they need to enter a home. About 100 of the lock boxes are sold each month, he said.

Identity theft, one of the state's biggest threats, is a growing problem, said Warren Hoffman, Posse member and head of the crime prevention committee.

He advised the audience of several important ways to protect their identity:

- Never give out personal information or Social Security numbers unless you're absolutely certain where it's going.

- Protect your computer from hackers.

- Don't carry unnecessary credit cards or your Social Security card in your wallet.

- Shred any paperwork with your personal information on it and don't leave mail with personal information in your mailbox.

For information on identity theft protection, call 1-877-ID-THEFT.

Hoffman said the Phoenix Police Department reported 7,200 documented gang members in the state, belonging to gangs known nationwide for extreme violence. And with graffiti being an increasing problem in the West Valley, Hoffman warned residents not to try and stop someone doing graffiti if they see them because the person may be armed. Instead, report any graffiti to police. Blue and black graffiti are often gang affiliated, he said.

Below are some recent Sun Cities crime statistics provided by the Posse:

- In 2005, there were 15 burglaries reported in southern areas of Sun City and no car thefts. In central to northern Sun City, there were

17 burglaries and eight car thefts last year. In northern Sun City, 15 burglaries were reported and six cars were stolen.

- Thirty-nine security alarms have sounded so far this year. The most occurred in April, while February had the fewest alarms. There's no estimate of how many were actual emergencies.

- There were 72 calls reporting suspicious activity in April, nearly double the amount made during other months.

- There have been 229 missing person and welfare checks in Sun City this year. Thirteen missing persons were reported in April.

- The Posse responded to 2,151 medical emergencies this year.

- So far this year, there have been 305 vehicle accidents, or between 50 and 70 per month.

The seminar was sponsored by the Sun City Home Owners Association, the Sun City Visitors Center, the Posse, the Sun City PRIDES, the fire department, the Sun City Condominium Owners Association and the Recreation Centers of Sun City.

# Crime inspires group action

Agencies to host  
communitywide  
prevention meeting

By Jeremiah Stoddard  
Independent Newspapers

Rising burglary rates, a dead body found on a Sun City street, and a recent murder have prompted Sun City officials to hold a communitywide meeting to raise public awareness about crime prevention.

The Sun City Sheriff's Posse, the Sun City Fire Department, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, the Sun City Visitor's Center, Sun City PRIDE, the Sun City Recreation Centers and the Sun City Home Owners Association combined resources to develop the seminar.

The crime prevention seminar will be 6 p.m. June 14 at the Sundial Recreation Center, 14801 N. 103rd Ave.

"We expect 300 people, but Sundial can be opened up to accommodate 1,000 people if necessary," said Sun City Sheriff's Posse Cmdr. Jim Demel.

Capt. Scott Penrose of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Division III substation will lead a question-and-answer session after Sun City Sheriff's Posse Crime Prevention Officer Daryl Zimmerman delivers the keynote address.

Ken Rice, director of community relations for the Sun City Fire Department, will educate attendees about the value of installing a Fire Department lockbox for their home. The lockboxes allow the Fire Department access to the house in case of a medical emergency where the resident cannot come to the door.

Officials hope the seminar stimulates moribund Block Watch groups and teaches residents how to make their homes more secure.

## If you go:

What: Crime Prevention Seminar  
When: 6 p.m. Wednesday, June 14  
Where: Sundial Recreation Center,  
14801 N. 103rd Ave.  
Call (623) 876-3048.

"You have to make your house difficult to enter," Mr. Demel said. "Keep things locked up."

The biggest burglary targets are unlocked cars, unlocked homes and garage doors left open at night, Mr. Demel said. Golf clubs and golf carts are the most popular items stolen from garages, and auto theft is on the rise, according to Mr. Demel.

"It's easier to hotwire older cars," Mr. Demel said, adding that most car thefts occur because owners fail to lock the door.

This is the first time Sun City has held a crime prevention seminar for the entire community, organizers said. In the past, meetings were conducted in small Block Watch groups, but after a vicious home invasion and murder on March 31, residents prioritized the need for increased vigilance.

"That was the big one that woke everyone up," Sun City Visitors Center Executive Director Paul Herrmann said.

The victim, Lavern Jark, 51, a visitor from Aberdeen, S.D., was shot dead by masked intruders. According to police reports, other residents of the house were tied up during the robbery and murder.

Gilbert Martinez, Sr., 41, and Robert Sandoval, 48, were indicted for the murder on May 3. Mr. Martinez and his 21-year-old son, Gilbert Martinez, were arrested April 5 for a string of burglaries in Sun City. The two were already in Maricopa County jail on bur-

# Crime

Continued From Page 1

glary charges when the grand jury returned its indictment.

On May 30, a woman out for a walk at 5:30 a.m. found Isaac Rhodes, 28, lying dead on the sidewalk along 103rd Avenue. Mr. Rhodes' body showed signs of trauma, and according to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, his death is being investigated as a homicide. Mr. Demel said the evidence he has seen suggested the body was dumped on the street after the murder.

Purse-snatchings are also on the rise, according to both the Sun City Sheriff's Posse and the Peoria Police Department.

One incident occurred recently at 107th and Olive avenues.

"The lady was 75 years old. She was loading groceries. The thief jumped out of the car, grabbed her purse and took off," said Peoria Police public information officer Mike Tellef. The woman was unharmed.

Peoria police have increased patrols in the affected areas. Mr. Tellef said police know what the suspect's vehicle looks like.

"It's a darker color Pontiac Firebird. We have a license plate number. It is the lead vehicle in the investigation," Mr. Tellef said.

Mr. Tellef warned residents against walking through parking lots and sidewalks with a large purse hanging on an arm. "Tuck the purse under your arm," Mr. Tellef said, adding, "Thieves know seniors carry a lot of cash. Carry as little cash as possible or use a smaller purse or wallet."

Sun City once was an oasis in the desert, far removed from the metropolitan area. But now, the city is squeezed on all sides by expanding cities such as Peoria and Surprise. Evidence indicates an outside influence working the retirement community.

Mr. Tellef said crime is not limited to one specific city.

"It demonstrates that criminals know no boundaries. They don't pay attention to city signs.

"The most common question at meetings I get is, 'Where do I get a gun?'"

— Sun City Sheriff's Posse  
Crime Prevention Officer  
Daryl Zimmerman

They just see an opportunistic target area. It doesn't matter where it is," Mr. Tellef said.

Peoria is not exempt from the recent string of burglaries, Mr. Tellef said. "We've had more than our shares of burglaries and thefts in our neighborhoods as well."

He said Sun City may never again have a crime wave like the last six months, but warned that complacency breeds a target-rich environment.

"We do need the help of the community. Form the Block Watches. If you see suspicious activity call police," Mr. Tellef said.

Daryl Zimmerman is in charge of the Crime Prevention Unit of the Sun City Sheriff's Posse. He feels the recent crime wave is coming into Sun City.

"The growth is bringing in different elements," said Mr. Zimmerman.

After the murder in late March, many Sun City residents purchased guns in an effort to feel more secure.

"After the home invasion, it went temporarily up," said Len Lambert, manager of Guns Plus, a Surprise gun shop.

Mr. Lambert said he was careful to sell only what the customer could safely handle.

Firearm classes are offered and encouraged, but Mr. Lambert said the sign-up rate is mixed. "Some do and some don't," Mr. Lambert said.

Mr. Zimmerman's crime prevention unit conducts three or four community Block Watch meetings a week to raise awareness of issues faced by residents. There are 650 registered Block Watches, with 14,000 people registered to monitor their com-

munity streets, but not all are necessarily active, according to Mr. Zimmerman.

"The most common question at meetings I get is, 'Where do I get a gun?'" Mr. Zimmerman said.

There are many issues with gun ownership, not least, according to Mr. Zimmerman, is the complainant might shoot the responder while in a panicked state.

"You don't want to stand in front of the door and knock," Mr. Zimmerman said, adding people should not use guns unless they are properly trained.

Also, many guns are stored in night-stands and drawers, and thus are easy for a burglar to find and use against the owner. Mr. Zimmerman recommends residents instead utilize an air-horn.

"It startles the person at your door and alerts the neighbors to a problem," he said.

An Independent Newspapers analysis of crime statistics generated by the Sun City Sheriff's Posse indicates a sharp rise in suspicious person and suspicious vehicle complaints since January, and particularly since the murder in late March.

In February, the Crime Prevention Unit recorded a total of 27 complaints about suspicious persons, suspicious cars, or both. By April, after the murder, calls jumped to 73 overall. Last month, as fears subsided, the calls dropped to a sum of 42, still nearly double the number just three months earlier.

One key to proper crime prevention is generating more suspicious person reports through active neighborhood watches.

"We had one or two a month a few years ago, now we get 20 or more a month," Mr. Zimmerman said.

While reports from neighbors vigilantly watching the streets and surrounding areas are encouraged, not all turn out to be breaking news of criminal activity.

"Nine out of the ten are legit visitors," Mr. Zimmerman said. "But everyone needs to keep

their alertness where it needs to be."

The Sun City Visitors Center executive director has lived in Sun City for six years, but he has never seen or heard of a Block Watch on his street.

"I've never heard a thing about a Block Watch," Mr. Herrmann said.

Helping other people, he said, is the key.

"Get to know your neighbors. We've got to get back to that neighborhood feel," he said, adding, "We've got to get the Block Watches going again. But we need more emphasis on leadership."

Many residents and officials said as Sun City ages and changes its demographic makeup toward retiring baby boomers, the spirit of volunteerism and community involvement that once defined Sun City has decreased markedly.

Maxine Reineck has lived in Sun City with her husband for 16 years. Though her neighborhood is not organized for a block watch, she said she feels very safe walking at night but always keeps her car and home locked. She has never encountered a problem with burglary during vacations or while at home.

"The house has always been fine. We'd tell the neighbors, and they'd watch the house. I think neighbors should help each other," Mrs. Reinick said.

Her opinion of the newer, younger residents of Sun City is less sparkling.

"All these young people moving in, they're always entertaining their own friends from other towns, and not getting to know their neighbors. They entertain each other. They don't need neighbors. It's changed how people look out for each other," Mrs. Reinick said.

As for crime in the area, Mrs. Reinick, summed it up neatly.

"You can always tell who is a resident of Sun City, and who isn't."



# Man killed in Sun City home invasion while visiting in-laws

## Masked bandits tie 2 couples, shoot visitor, steal items

By Sarah Muench  
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Authorities began intensive patrols Saturday to find the killers of a man who was

shot to death earlier in the day in Sun City — the third home invasion in a week in the area.

Masked men broke into the home shortly after midnight

in the 15200 block of North Bolivar Drive in Sun City and shot and killed Lavern Jark, 51, of South Dakota, the son-in-law of an elderly couple he was visiting.

"Unfortunately, I gave a talk out here Tuesday night, and I said we are concerned about home invasion," Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio said Saturday morning at a press conference at the sheriff's substation in Sun City West. "We are mobilizing

our deputies and mobilizing our posse. We are going full force."

The invaders broke into the back of the house and bound the senior homeowners and another visiting couple from

See **INVASION** Page B2

# Man killed in Sun City home invasion on visit to in-laws

## INVASION

Continued from B1

Oregon while they dragged the victim into another room where he was shot. The suspects, who deputies said spoke Spanish to each other but English to the victims, got away with various items that deputies declined to detail.

The homeowners, Betty and Laurel Liedtke, Jark's wife, and the other couple, the Liedtkes' other daughter and son-in-law, were not injured.

"I just heard noises, a loud yell and a car taking off," said Donna Ferrara, 69, a neighbor who lives across the street from where the home invasion occurred. "I just thought it was someone fighting and then I saw police cars."

She said earlier the same

night, she and some of her neighbors were playing dominos and had just discussed safety precautions after hearing of other recent home invasions in the area.

Last Tuesday, a burglar struck a Sun City woman in the hand when she awoke and caught him trying to steal her jewelry.

The break-in occurred Tuesday night when the woman was roused from sleep and caught the intruder standing in her bedroom, deputies said.

When he saw the woman, he tossed a jewelry box and struck the woman, before fleeing from her home in the 10500 block of West Sun City Boulevard, deputies said.

The victim was treated for a minor injury, deputies said.

*"I was just shocked because this is a very quiet street and quiet neighbors. We are seniors and it's a scam.*

*As we get older, we lose our reaction skills and we start to panic. When I came out this morning, I didn't believe what I was seeing."*

### Kalli Chafoulias

Neighbor of home where killing took place

There was no description of the burglar.

And on Wednesday, two men robbed an 80-year-old Sun City West woman after sliding under her garage door as it was closing.

The victim, who had just returned home, was confronted about 9 p.m. inside the garage of the house in the 13400 block of West Countryside

Drive, said Lt. Paul Chagolla, a Maricopa County sheriff's spokesman.

The bandits, one of them armed with a gun, took her purse after rummaging through her car, and then fled without forcing entry into the house, Chagolla said.

He described both robbers as about 20 and said authorities are looking into whether

the crimes are related.

In the past two months, there have been five home invasions in the area, Chagolla said. Authorities have arrested three people in two of them.

"I was just shocked because this is a very quiet street and quiet neighbors," said Kalli Chafoulias, who lives down the street from the killing. "We are seniors and it's a scam. As we get older, we lose our reaction skills and we start to panic. When I came out this morning, I didn't believe what I was seeing."

Don Sherwood, 62, a Phoenix resident who visits his aunt often in the neighborhood said things like this don't usually happen in Sun City but believes area homes

could be an easy target for robbers.

Arpaio said he doesn't believe the suspects targeted Sun City.

"These bad guys don't know about Sun City or Sun City West," he said. "There is not a wall separating this community from Peoria. These criminals are coming through the community, and no one is safe. I don't know if they understand you have to be 55 to live in Sun City or Sun City West. They might see a nice house, handbags and money." He suggests homeowners take precautions such as using an alarm system and checking before opening their doors.

If you have information about the crime, call the Sheriff's Office, (602) 876-1011.

# Fatal invasion prompts more patrols

Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies take a closer look at a suspicious vehicle parked near the house where officers are investigating a home invasion and fatal shooting in Sun City Saturday.



THOMAS BOGGAN/DAILY NEWS-SUN

## Break-ins appear to be related

**JARED HARTUNG**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sheriff's deputies believe there is a connection between Saturday's fatal home invasion and others that have occurred in the Sun Cities recently.

"Until we get this resolved we are on a plan of increasing patrols," said Sun City Posse Cmdr. Jim Demel.

The Sun City Posse has

increased its patrols by three cars during the evening hours and Sun City West has added two patrols. There are now 14 cars patrolling the Sun Cities.

Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio said he will increase the sheriff officer's presence in the Sun Cities by 100 units.

Authorities are treating the recent string of home

invasions as though they are related.

"I'm speaking from experience, but this doesn't look to be isolated," said Lt. Paul Chagolla of the three invasions.

Lavern Jark, 51, was shot and killed early Saturday morning in a Sun City home at 15200 block of Bolivar

**See SLAYING, A5**

# SLAYING: Sun City neighbors called 911

## From A1

Drive. The suspects are still at large.

Jark was shot and later died at John C. Lincoln Hospital, said Arpaio. The victim is the son-in-law of the homeowners, Betty and Laurel Liedtke, and was visiting from South Dakota with his wife, Colleen. Also visiting were Colleen's sister and her husband, Karen and Forrest Bell of Monmouth, Ore.

The six people were staying in the home when two masked men forcibly entered the back of the house, said MCSO Deputy Kip Rustenberg.

Four victims were bound, including the Liedtkes.

Various items were stolen from the home before the suspects fled.

Because the suspects wore masks during the attack, no descriptions have been provided. Arpaio said the men were speaking to the victims in English, but spoke to one another in Spanish. He said from that information the detectives have determined they are looking for two Hispanic males.

A neighbor called 911 after seeing a suspicious vehicle at the scene around midnight, said Rustenberg.

This is the third home invasion in a week in the area. On Tuesday a woman in the 10500 block of Sun City Boulevard awoke to find a

suspected burglar in her home. The man threw a jewelry box at her before running away. On Wednesday an 80-year-old Sun City West woman was confronted by two armed men in her garage. According to Chagolla, the two men rolled under her garage door as it lowered. Brandishing a sawed-off shotgun at the woman, one of the suspects stole her handbag and went through her vehicle before both left the scene.

In February, there was a string of home invasions in Sun City and Peoria. Two men were arrested in that case, but authorities believe there may have been additional suspects and are still

searching for them.

Manuel Barrera Stevens, 35, and, Gilbert Anthony Martinez, 19, were arrested Feb. 13 on charges of armed robbery, auto theft, kidnapping and burglary in connection to the Feb. 4 and Feb. 9 home invasions/armed robberies in Sun City and a Feb. 13 home invasions/armed robbery in Peoria.

Sheriff's deputies were unavailable for updates at press time today.

Investigators are asking residents who may have seen anything suspicious in the area to call the MCSO office at 602-876-1000.

*Jared Hartung may be reached at 876-2513 or [jhartung@aztrib.com](mailto:jhartung@aztrib.com).*

# Arpaio mobilizes deputies

JARED HARTUNG  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

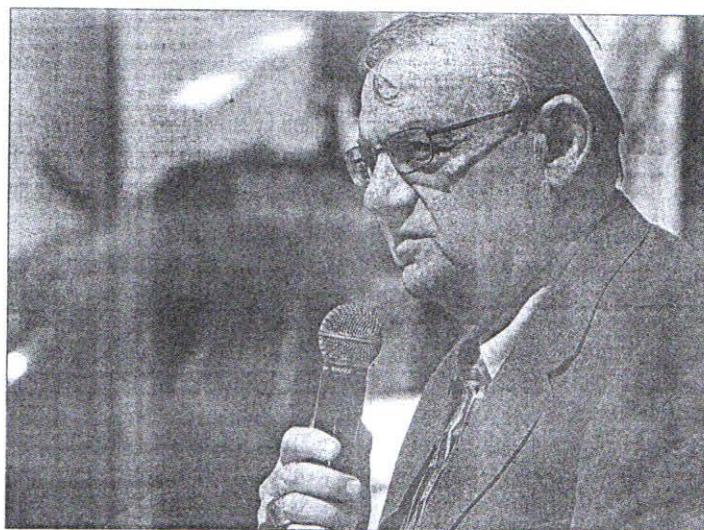
Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio vowed this weekend to put as many officers as needed on the streets of the Sun Cities following a string of home invasions, the latest of which led to the death of a 51-year-old man.

"If we have to bring 1,000 out here, we'll bring 1,000," the sheriff said. "My priority today is to take care of things here. I hope to keep this up until we find the killers."

Several neighbors stood outside the police barricades following the Saturday morning slaying in Sun City and said they were getting worried.

"I wasn't scared, but I am now," said one resident who did not want to be identified. "I think (the criminals) stayed away because the roads were unfamiliar, but we see a lot more traffic now."

Within the last week, a woman woke up Tuesday night to find a burglar in her home on Sun City Boulevard. The suspect escaped after throwing a jewelry box at the homeowner.



THOMAS BOGGAN/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio speaks at a press conference in Sun City Saturday in response to recent home invasions and a fatal shooting in a Sun City home earlier that day.

On Wednesday evening, two men snuck into a woman's garage on Countryside Drive in Sun City West while she was exiting her vehicle and stole her handbag at gunpoint. They left the woman physically unharmed.

Then, on Saturday morning, two masked men entered a home on Bolivar Drive in Sun City where they shot and killed one man at the home and bound four of the other residents before fleeing.

That third home invasion in a week spurred Arpaio to mobilize his deputies and step up their presence as well as that of the SWAT team and posse in the Sun City area.

He said the mobilization has been done before, and it will bring at least 100 more officers to the streets of the Sun Cities area.

"We're going full force," Arpaio said. "The message is for criminals to stay away from this community."

However, Arpaio said he does not think the Sun Cities are being targeted by criminals. The sheriff said the criminals will strike anywhere.

"These criminals are coming through these communities, and no one can say they are safe," he said. "They don't understand about this community. They'll go anywhere."

DAILY NEWS-SUN

MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2006

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

April 12, 2006

# Residents fear for own safety

Law enforcement deals with home invasions

By Matt Loeschman  
Independent Newspapers

A recent string of home invasions and violent crime in the Sun Cities have residents fearing for their safety inside their own homes.

Six home invasions were

reported in the past six months, according to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, with three of those incidents taking place within the past month.

"Unfortunately, it appears these guys are preying on seniors because they appear more vulnerable," said Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. "These are retirement communities and sometimes those living there are not as alert. But I assure you, we have launched a 24/7 investigation that will continue until these

suspects are brought to justice."

Residents became aware of the problem following a pair of recent home invasions in both Sun City and Sun City West. No one was hurt in either of those instances.

But the string of incidents took a turn for the worse March 31 when a man visiting friends in Sun City was shot and killed by unidentified men who stormed their way into the owner's home on Bolivar Drive.

"We recognize this to be

extremely serious," the sheriff said. "The investigation is continuing. The wrath of the sheriff will come down on who is responsible for these crimes."

Sheriff Arpaio said there is a "strong possibility" the crimes are related. Other than that, few details on the investigation are being made public.

Residents are leery following the multiple home invasions.

Sun Citian Nona Grindinger

See **Safety** — Page 8

# Safety

Continued From Page 1

said neighbors are on edge.

"At this point, we are all watching out for each other. It's scary," said Ms. Grindinger, a resident since 2003. "You just don't know what these criminals might do. Everyone is edgy and looking out before they leave their homes."

The sheriff promised a "full force" approach to addressing the problem.

But that full force may not be large enough to handle the vast area that makes up the MCSO's District 3.

With fewer than six deputies on shift at a time and a district that spans west all the way to Wickenburg, the sheriff's office cannot be everywhere all the time.

"We cover all the area with multiple beats in the Sun Cities," Sheriff Arpaio said. "But it is a large district. I think any law enforcement official will tell you that you can never have enough deputies. That's where the posse is of great assistance to us."

The Sun City and Sun City West Sheriff's Posse have stepped up their visibility efforts at the sheriff's command.

"We've added quite a few more patrols in the community," explained Sun City Posse Cmdr. Jim Demel. "More eyes and more ears will help. People are concerned, with good reason, but we've ramped up our efforts to make them feel safe."

The Commander said the top priority for residents is to protect themselves.

"And if you see something, don't be afraid to call 9-1-1," Cmdr. Demel added. "That is what it is there for."

He also suggested starting a Block Watch to raise awareness and better galvanize individual neighborhoods.

"Sun City now is in the center of the population in the Valley," Cmdr. Demel said. "More people and more crime are going to be part of that equation."

There have been at least five home invasions during the past few weeks in Sun City and Sun City West. The Sun City West Sheriff's Posse offers precautionary tips for residents:

- Always keep all doors and windows of home locked at all times.
  - Never leave the garage open — do not get out of the car or unlock it until the garage door is completely shut.
  - Keep a cell phone on a belt or in a purse. There are many inexpensive cell phone plans designed for emergencies.
  - Be aware of surroundings. Do not unlock car until checking around. When in the car, keep it locked.
  - After an evening activity, establish a calling tree to assure that everyone has arrived home safely.
  - Keep driveway and garage area well lit.
  - If feeling someone has followed you, do not stop at home but continue on to an area that is safe.
- Call the posse in Sun City (972-2555) or Sun City West (584-5808).

For Block Watch information, call the posse at 972-2555.

In Sun City West, the posse added two more night patrols and extended its hours on the job.

"There are now seven posse members patrolling every night," Cmdr. Harry Wells explained. "They are out from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. In addition, the midnight patrols have increased."

"We are throwing all the resources we have into this," the Cmdr. added. "We are saturating the area with people."

Cmdr. Wells said Sun City West has been fortunate to be relatively crime-free since its inception.

"Overall, with about 30,000 residents, our crime is almost none. But this murder exposes a lot. This can happen anywhere at any time," he said.

The Commander said residents should not live in fear, but instead be concerned and "aware of their surroundings."

Both communities also have benefited from participation of other nearby posse organizations. The Sun City and Sun City West posse vehicles are identical to those of the Maricopa County deputies.

"There's a reason for that," Sheriff Arpaio said. "The bad guys will never know the difference."

Despite the increased visibility, some believe that law enforcement presence is not nearly enough.

PORA President Chuck Ullman

said his organization is brainstorming alternatives to get more cops in the community.

"We are looking at various alternatives, one of which is contracting to get more law enforcement in Sun City West on a permanent basis," he explained. "We need more deputies here on a proactive — not a reactive — basis. When something happens, the MCSO is there but it is always reactive."

"Let's assume there are five deputies working in District 3," Mr. Ullman added. "Well, that's a huge area. The posse has been very effective but there is only so much they can do due to their limited enforcement power. We need additional help inside Sun City West on a permanent basis — desperate times call for these measures."

Mr. Ullman confirmed PORA has been flooded with calls related to the home invasions.

"Residents are questioning what they can do," he explained. "We are giving them the common-sense tips — make sure everything is secure. Make it look like you are home even if you are away."

"Do not live in fear but be aware of everything going on around you," Mr. Ullman added.

George Davis, a board member with the Sun City Home Owners Association, said SCHOA received the same worried calls.

"A number of people have spo-

ken to us about these home invasions," Mr. Davis said. "It's a serious problem. People, especially those living in isolation, need to keep their eyes open and be aware."

Mr. Davis said crime was bound to increase in the area due to the West Valley's massive growth.

"When we got here in 1987, Sun City was isolated. But with more and more people coming in, there are going to be problems. We are now in the center of a major population area."

"We used to feel like the perimeter areas were more prone to this type of thing," Mr. Davis added. "But now it has hit home."

The SCHOA board member said he is pleased with the sheriff's plan but would like to see deputies more visible in Sun City.

"The presence of the law is definitely a deterrent, but I would hope that would continue once we get through this," Mr. Davis said. "Don't just pacify us — it needs to continue. There are a lot fewer deputies than I would like to see."

He said the posse is performing an "invaluable service" and hopes more Block Watch programs can be established.

Unfortunately, Mr. Davis believes the worst may be yet to come.

"I'm afraid this may only be the tip of the iceberg," he said. "And that really concerns me."

Sheriff Arpaio said he will apprehend the suspects.

"This is an intensive investigation," he said. "We will get to the bottom of this."

Still, neighbors are banding together and helping each other through this tough time.

"This area used to be so quiet," Ms. Grindinger said. "But things really got worse when that man was shot. You just don't know what will happen next."

*Post your comments on this issue at [www.newszapforums.com/forum29](http://www.newszapforums.com/forum29). Reach News Editor Matt Loeschman at 972-6101 or [mloeschman@newszap.com](mailto:mloeschman@newszap.com).*

## NORTHWEST VALLEY NEWS

1

THE NORTHWEST VALLEY REPUBLIC • WEEKEND EDITION, APRIL 22, 2006

# Father, son arrested in Sun City slaying, invasions

By Brent Whiting

BRENT.WHITING@ARIZONAREPUBLIC.COM

It was the news they wanted to hear as a standing-room-only throng of more than 400 people gathered in Sun City for an announcement from Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

Arpaio didn't waste time getting to the point, saying that the use of a stolen cell-phone had led Maricopa County investigators to a West Valley father and son suspected in a Sun City slaying.

"The citizens of Sun City can rest a little easier," the sheriff said Thursday.

Arpaio said Gilbert Martinez Sr., 41, and Gilbert Martinez Jr., 19, have been linked to nearly a dozen home invasions, armed robberies and burglaries in Sun City, Peoria and Phoenix.

"It's sickening when people victimize senior citizens like these men did," he said.

He spoke at the Sundial Center, 14801 N. 103rd Ave., not far from where a South Dakota man was shot dead March 31.

Lavern Jark, 51, a well-known sports coach in Aberdeen, was at a home in the 15200 block of North Bolivar Drive when masked intruders broke in, killed him and bound the other occupants. About 2,000 people attended his Aberdeen funeral.

Gilbert resident Steve Picotte, 35, a former Aberdeen resident, said he was thrilled to learn of the two arrests.

"This is a sad incident," Picotte said. "Mr. Jark was my junior high school gym



BRENT WHITING/THE REPUBLIC

Joe Arpaio tells a standing-room-only crowd of more than 400 people of the arrest of two suspects in a Sun City murder case.

teacher and was a good man."

Arpaio said that within 10½ hours of the slaying, detectives got their first break when they tracked a call made on a cell-phone stolen from the home.

Eventually, that call, plus other information, led detectives to the elder Martinez, he said.

Father and son were arrested April 5 on

burglary charges and have remained behind bars while detectives gathered information in the murder case.

Each has been charged with three counts of armed robbery and burglary, as well as one count of theft, Arpaio said.

On Thursday, the father was rearrested in his jail cell in the murder, Arpaio said. A similar arrest for the son is expected in the



Gilbert  
Martinez Sr.



Gilbert  
Martinez Jr.

near future.

In the past five months, there have been several burglaries and home invasions in Sun City and Sun City West. The Sheriff's Office on Thursday said the Martinezes had been tied to 11 such incidents in the Sun Cities and nearby areas of Peoria and Phoenix.

The sheriff also raised the possibility of future arrests, describing the father and son as those "primarily responsible" for the crimes in the three cities.

On Feb. 13, Gilbert Martinez Jr. and another man, Manuel Barrera Stevens, 35, were arrested by Peoria police after a home invasion there, court records show.

Sheriff's deputies then said they were hopeful that the arrests would help clear up similar crimes in Sun City.

The pair were taken into custody after a high-tech tracking device led police to a pickup truck that had been stolen during the holdup. In March, before the slaying of Jark, both men posted bail and were released from jail.

Harry Wells, the posse commander in Sun City West, said that Arpaio's announcement came as very good news.

However, people need to remain vigilant against crime and should not let their guard down, he added.

Doris Wise, 80, a Sun City resident, agreed, saying, "I feel better, but I'm still going to make sure my doors are locked."

## MCSO: Arrests made in murder case



Sun Cities Independent/Matt Loeschman

Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio appears at Sundial Recreation Center April 20 to announce an arrest in the home invasion/murder case that occurred in Sun City on March 31.

# Arpaio: Burglary ring busted

By Matt Loeschman  
Independent Newspapers

Sun Citians may sleep a little easier knowing the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office arrested multiple suspects in connection with a home invasion and murder that recently rocked the community.

"Today I am happy to announce our detectives made arrests related to this horrible act that occurred in Sun City on March 31," Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio told a crowd of nearly 400 residents last week at Sundial Recreation Center. "This was a very complicated case to solve but the hard work of many led to the arrests."

Gilbert Martinez Sr., 41, has been arrested in the shooting death of a South Dakota man who was visiting friends in Sun City last month, according to MCSO documentation. His son, Gilbert Martinez Jr., 19, was also arrested, the sheriff noted.

Both men are incarcerated at the Fourth Avenue Jail on three counts each of armed robbery and burglary and one count theft. On April 20, MCSO officials re-arrested Martinez Sr. in his jail cell and booked him on first-degree murder charges.

A similar arrest for the son is expected in the near future as the investigation continues.

A third, unidentified man is also being held in connection with a string of robberies in the area.

"Others were arrested in this burglary ring," Sheriff Arpaio said. "We feel like the ring has been broken up. So far, three home invasions and eight burglaries were solved by this investigation."

The press conference was held not far from where Lavern Jark, 51, was killed last month.

According to MCSO reports, Mr. Jark, a well-known sports coach, was at a home in the 15200 block of Bolivar Drive when masked intruders stormed the house, bound the other occupants and eventually killed the visitor. No one else was injured.

Mr. Jark's funeral was attended by nearly 2,500 people.

The sheriff said within 12 hours of the murder, detectives caught a break when they tracked a call made on a stolen cellular phone belonging to one of the victims.

That call, plus other information, led detectives to Martinez

Sr., Sheriff Arpaio said.

"We have arrested both people who were in that house," explained the sheriff, adding both men are legal U.S. residents.

The sheriff did not reveal Martinez Sr.'s place of residence, saying he lived on the "west side" of the Valley.

"He knew Sun City pretty well," Sheriff Arpaio said. "He did not live in Sun City, however."

Some property has also been recovered, he explained.

About 400 anxious residents attended the press conference at Sundial. Many stayed after media members departed to have their own questions answered by Sheriff Arpaio.

Residents reacted with insecurity following the recent string of home invasions and business break-ins in the normally serene retirement community.

The sheriff told the crowd to take measures to protect themselves.

Sun Citian Bob Cottrell, a resident for eight years, said the MCSO was efficient in this case.

"I was impressed they wrapped this up so quickly," Mr.

See Arrests — Page 9



# Arrests

Continued From Page 1

Cottrell said. "I thought it was going to drag on and on. It could have been another unsolved murder.

"You would never think something like this would occur in Sun City, Arizona. It made us feel uneasy," he added. "Burglary is

one thing but home invasion is quite another. We used to think these take place in other parts of the Valley, but now we know better."

Nine-year resident Rose Kuipers concurred with Mr. Cottrell.

"I'm glad that they got 'em," she said. "I'm sure there are a lot of people older than me that were extremely frightened. This is a very safe area but now we are more aware of what can happen."

The sheriff warned criminals who may be planning an illegal activity in the area.

"The message is, 'don't come into this community.' If you do commit a crime, the sheriff's office will bring you to justice," Sheriff Arpaio said.

Post your comments on this issue at [www.newszapforums.com/forum29](http://www.newszapforums.com/forum29). Reach News Editor Matt Loeschman at 972-6101 or [mloeschman@newszap.com](mailto:mloeschman@newszap.com).

# 22-year-old sentenced for home invasions in Sun City

STAFF REPORT

A 22-year-old Chandler man has been sentenced to 37½ years in prison for a string of 2006 home invasions in Sun City.

Gilbert Anthony Martinez was sentenced following a series of trials over the past several months, Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas said Wednesday. The juries in those cases found him guilty on seven felony counts: two counts of armed robbery, three counts of first-degree burglary, theft of means of transportation and theft. He also pleaded guilty to one count of second-degree burglary.

Martinez was indicted May 2, 2006, along with two co-defendants, including his father, Gilbert Martinez Sr. The series of home invasions in which prosecutors allege the defendants participated resulted in the death of Lavern Jack on March 31, 2006, who was visiting relatives.

Martinez Sr. is facing a first-degree murder charge for that death. There is no firm trial date for him, county officials said.

"It is especially concerning that this crime spree targeted an elderly segment of our community," Thomas said.

According to courtroom testimony, on Feb. 4, 2006, Martinez was involved in three home invasions in Sun City.

On Feb. 9, 2006, he was involved in two more home invasions, and another took place on Feb. 13, 2006. All occurred in Sun City.

The defendant was armed during the break-ins, and he threatened to harm the victims, official said, adding he usually wore a ski mask and gloves during the robberies.

"I am grateful for the juries' verdicts and to the sheriff's office for making the arrests in this case," Thomas said.

# Block Watch: Posse wants volunteers for program

Revitalized effort to help prevent community crime

By Rusty Bradshaw  
Independent Newspapers

Sun City Posse officials are looking for a few good residents – quite a few – to sign up for the agency's rejuvenated Block Watch program.

Posse members have been busy removing Block Watch signs posted along streets in the community, but because the information on them is out of date. The program remains in place and is being strengthened, according to Posse M.Sgt. Dale Brandser.

## Related Link

[www.suncityposse.org](http://www.suncityposse.org)

"The problem is that some block captains died or left the community and those groups ceased to function," he said. "There has not been good continuity."

The program has lain dormant for some time, according to Leta McCormick, Posse operations lieutenant. However, she said Block Watch signs, to be placed in homes, are available at Posse headquarters, 10861 Sunland Drive.

Residents interested in participating in the program as a block captain are encouraged

to call the Posse at 623-972-2555, Ms. McCormick explained. Posse officials are specifically looking for people who served as block watch captains in the past and those serving as chairpersons or administrators at community or condo associations, according to Art Ellersieck, Posse social services lieutenant.

But getting the program going again will take more than putting signs in windows of homes, according to Mr. Brandser.

"We need to get neighborhood people together and keep them informed," he explained.

Part of the Block Watch program is having regular meetings for the participating neigh-

borhoods. Block captains would organize meetings and keep records of complaints and suspicious or criminal activity in the neighborhood, according to Mr. Brandser.

"The block captain would also serve as a vehicle to contact the Posse," he said.

There is no cost to residents to participate in the program, Mr. Brandser added.

Block Watch meetings would inform neighbors of crime associated problems in the neighborhood and provide tips on home security, avoiding scams and other safety matters, Mr. Brandser explained. A Posse representative would be at each Block Watch meeting.

See Block — Page 23

## Block

Continued From Page 1

The program is designed for residents in a neighborhood to look out for each other, according to Mr. Brandser.

"Getting to know your neighbors is the key," he said. "It is also helpful for neighbors to exchange emergency contacts, and maybe even house keys in case emergency crews need to get into a home."

He said getting to know one's neighbors allows each to spot things that are unusual at homes in the neighborhood.

Mr. Ellersieck said Posse officials were not looking for residents to conduct neighborhood patrols. However, displaying Block Watch signs in home windows helps send a message to criminals casing neighborhoods, he explained.

"It is one element in crime prevention. Residents' awareness helps discourage

crime and displaying the signs tells criminals neighbors are vigilant," Mr. Ellersieck said.

While the program does not require regular resident patrols, Posse officials do encourage residents to walk their neighborhood to become familiar with the surroundings and routine.

"They could pick up newspapers in driveways and door hangers that have been there a while because that signals criminals that no one is home," he said.

Mr. Ellersieck suggested neighborhood walkers should not throw away those items, rather they should explore the situation a little further and put those materials in a less visible location on the property.

Block Watch is not designed to replace the Posse's vacation watch program.

"It will supplement vacation watch," Ms. McCormick said. "While the vacation watch might check a neighborhood once a week or so, the neighborhood watch will be there daily."

Block Watch may be an inaccurate name for the program and it might be changed to Neighborhood Watch when the existing Block Watch signs have been distributed, Ms. McCormick said.

"Sun City doesn't have blocks, it is more like neighborhoods," Mr. Brandser said.

Residents would determine the boundaries of each neighborhood, according to Mr. Brandser. Groups generally range from 10 to 30 homes, he added.

Forming neighborhoods watch groups throughout the community would help discourage criminal activity because they seek out easy targets, Mr. Brandser said.

"Criminals tend to find a certain spot and, once successful there, will go back to that area," he said. "Seeing Block Watch signs in windows of homes in a neighborhood tells them residents are on the alert and the area is not an easy target."

Post your opinions in the Public Issues Forum at [www.newszap.com](http://www.newszap.com). News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or [rbradshaw@newszap.com](mailto:rbradshaw@newszap.com).

SCINDEP

March 21, 2012

## Watch

Continued From Page 2

health and wellness issues are common and neighbors can help one another.

Block Watch groups have become social gatherings in many neighborhoods with regularly scheduled pot lucks and other social outlets. However, the program is primarily designed for residents in a neighborhood to watch out for each other. Unfortunately, crime is ever present in society. Even though the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Deputies and the Sun City Posse patrol community streets, they cannot be everywhere at once. But it is likely that someone is in a neighborhood most of the time.

Most crimes are crimes of opportunity, such as leaving doors unlocked and purses unattended. The Block Watch program educates residents how to eliminate or minimize that opportunity. Block Watch meetings inform neighbors of crime or other incidents in the neighborhood and provide tips on home security, scams and personal safety.

A Sun City Posse member will attend individual Block Watch meetings if requested.

Residents interested in starting a Block Watch in their neighborhood, or to find out if one already exists, are encouraged to call Sun City Posse M.Sgt. Dale Brandser at 623-972-2555.

*Editor's Note: Mr. Brandser is Sun City Posse Block Watch coordinator.*

## Sun City Block Watch revitalized

By David Miller

Special to the Independent

The Sun City Posse is in the process of re-energizing the Block Watch program in Sun City neighborhoods.

The Block Watch groups already functioning are very successful, but in several neighborhoods Block Watch groups have become dormant. A non-active or dormant Block Watch occurs when the leaders move or die and no one takes over for them.

Posse officials want to re-activate these groups and develop new Block Watch Groups.

Statistically, neighborhoods with an active Block Watch have significantly less crime than those not participating. Neighbors also benefit in many other ways as they keep informed of what is happening in the neighborhood. As people age,

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SUN CITY INDEPENDENT 3.21.2012

# Sun Citian posts bail in shooting case

JEFF DEMPSEY  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

An 85-year-old Sun City man charged in the shooting death of his ailing wife has been released from jail on \$20,000 bond.

Maricopa County sheriff's deputies arrested George Sanders after Friday night's shooting of 81-year-old Virginia Sanders.



Sanders

SEE BOND, A5

## BOND

FROM A1

Court documents show George Sanders told deputies he shot his wife because she asked him to.

He first called Virginia's caregiver to explain what he'd done and then called deputies. He told them his wife was sick and had recently been told that she needed to be hospitalized. He reportedly told deputies his wife was in pain and wanted him to shoot her. She died Sunday, officials said.

The prosecutor at his arraignment called the shooting a "mercy killing."

Sanders was released on \$20,000 bond on Monday. Jerry Cobb, spokesman for the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, said the bond is set by the judge presiding at the initial appearance in court. The county attorney can request bond and release conditions, but the judge makes the decision.

"In most homicide cases, the state typically requests a bond of at least \$100,000 to \$1 million, depending on the threat to public safety posed by the suspect," Cobb said. "In this particular case, the state requested a bond amount ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000, arguing that the suspect

posed no significant risk to the community, given his lack of any criminal history, the fact that he does not pose a flight risk, and the fact that the crime appears to have been some sort of attempted 'mercy killing' of his wife."

Sanders is free and is scheduled to appear in court Friday and Nov. 20 for a pretrial hearing and arraignment, though Cobb said there are restrictions in place.

"His release conditions prohibit (Sanders) from possessing a weapon," Cobb said.

Neighbors and friends of Sanders and his wife said they had a loving relationship.

"He was a very kind man, very good neighbors," Arvis Van Klompenberg, a neighbor, said earlier this week. "He treated (her) with a lot of respect, and he would play the piano for her, play the guitar and sing to her.

"He would do whatever he could. He'd take her for a stroll in a stroller. He's been very kind to her for many years."

Van Klompenberg said Virginia Sanders had multiple sclerosis since 1971 and was wheelchair-bound.

"He left golf to be with her, an avid golfer, a good golfer. He was very dedicated to her."

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

Wednesday, November 14, 2012

## THEFT

# Golf clubs stolen from homes

### Many residents continue to leave garage doors open

By Roger Ball

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office officials said there has been an increase in golf club thefts in the Sun Cities. Most of the thefts were from golf carts left in garages with open doors.

Sun City West resident Carole Pflieger told the Independent her husband's golf bag and clubs were stolen from their garage after they had left the door up for about 20 minutes after returning from a grocery store. When they went back out to the garage they noticed the golf bags were missing.

A neighbor reported seeing a white car in the cul-de-sac, which wasn't unusual, but thought it strange when it drove off at a high rate of speed.

MCSO District Three commander, Captain Paul Chagolla, said he is aware of the situation and will soon be deploying a new shift structure to better deter the home burglaries and thefts. He also reminded residents they must take certain precautions, like closing their garage doors. If the residence only has a carport, he recommends taking the golf clubs inside.

The Sun City West posse warns people every year about the dangers of leaving garage doors open for an extended period.

A drive down Ballard



Sun City West residence with open garage door and golf clubs plainly visible. (Roger Ball/Independent Newsmedia)



Glenn Johnson shows the proximity alarm he added to his garage that lets him know if anyone gets close. (Roger Ball/Independent Newsmedia)

Drive in Sun City West recently found four homes with open garage doors and golf carts very visible within a few minutes.

At the home of Ralph and Linda Peel, Ms. Peel said she

was not aware of any thefts and thought her husband was in the garage, which was not occupied.

A few blocks down the street, Gordon Morris said he was not aware of the golf

club thefts but knew of one other crime in the area. He reported a neighbor had their garage door opened remotely by thieves during the night, probably using a

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## Theft

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remote control—just driving down the road and pushing the button until one garage door responded.

As a result, he disconnects the remote control receiver from inside the garage every night.

Sun City West Posse public information officer Jan Vejraska said the posse reminds residents annually and throughout the year to keep their garage doors closed. They warn residents that snakes and other wild creatures can easily enter the garage, as well as thieves who may steal valuable items.

The problem of residents suffering thefts because of leaving the garage doors open is also an issue in Sun City.

SCHOA recently advised residents with a notice about a large number of car thefts as well as home burglaries in Sun City and warned residents to be very careful.

Sun City resident Glenn

Johnson on North Boswell Boulevard, was the victim of a golf bag theft December 28. Mr. Johnson said the thief parked in front of a worker's truck next door, greeted the worker, walked into his garage and picked up his clubs, again greeted the worker, and then drove off. Because he acted so friendly, the worker didn't realize the man was actually a thief.

Mr. Johnson said the suspect's vehicle was described as a two-door white Honda.

His golf clubs had been fitted for him, so not everyone could use them, he said. He anticipates a new set arriving soon.

Since that event Mr. Johnson still leaves his garage door open much of the time but has installed a motion detector near the door to alert him of anyone coming near his garage.

Visit [www.mcso.org](http://www.mcso.org), [www.suncityposse.org](http://www.suncityposse.org), and [www.scwposse.com](http://www.scwposse.com).

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