

Laurie Hurd-Moore/Independent

**HORSE HOTEL.** The Sun Cities Stables were started over 20 years ago by the Del E. Webb Corp. to house privately-owned horses belonging to Sun City residents. Today the stables, located at 115th Avenue and Bell Road, are larger and are also open to Sun City West horse owners.

## Trail riders play out cowpoke fantasies

By LAURIE HURD-MOORE  
Sun Cities Independent

One of the most striking features of the Sun Cities is its extensive menu of recreational activities

These pursuits include the usual -- swimming, tennis, sewing and shuffleboard.

Less familiar undertakings can also be found, such as Hawaiian dancing and leather carving.

One of the more offbeat, but popular activities in the retirement communities is horseback riding.

Hitting the dusty trail appeals, not only to the recently retired (those labeled the Sun City youngsters), but to senior members of the community as well.

For more than 20 years, local horse lovers have used the Sun Cities Stable to accommodate their horses.

Stable User John Kirk of Sun City, says the facility appeals to a wide-range of residents who are all living out their cowboy fantasies.

The stables are located on more than two acres, at 115th Avenue and Bell Road.

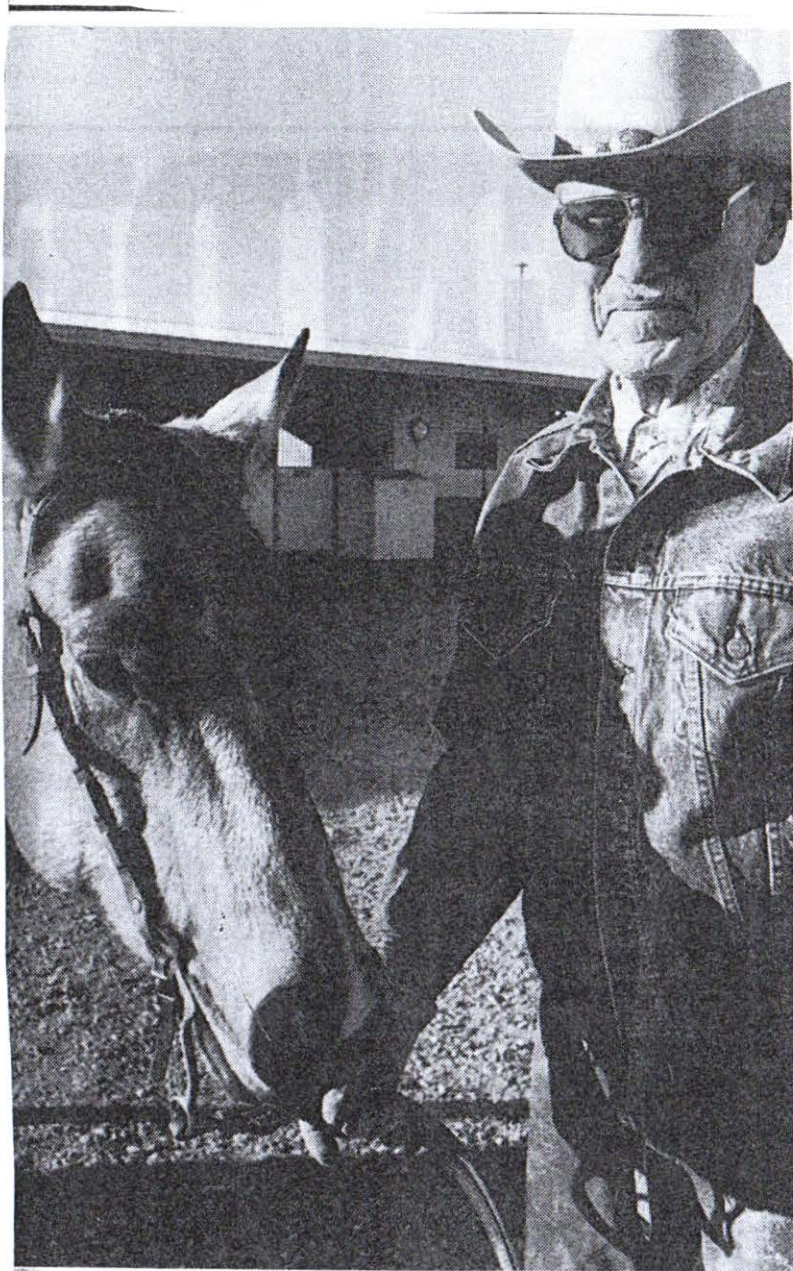
They share the area with the recreational vehicle storage compound.

The Del. E. Webb Corp initiated the idea. The development company built six box stalls and an adjoining exercise pen in the area known as Rancho Estates,

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OVER





**RIDE 'EM COWBOY.** Dr. Ray Williams is one of many Sun Citians who house their horses at stables located on Bell Road. Most of the horses are used primarily for riding pleasure but there are some show horses kept there as well as some horses that are just pets.

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just south of Peoria Avenue on 111th Avenue.

In 1973, the stable was relocated to the Bell Road location after the property was sold to a subdivision resident.

The corporation subsequently deeded the property to the members of the stable and recreation vehicle groups.

These first stalls still exist, according to Sun Cities Stable Treasurer Chuck Billingsley.

Mr. Billingsley, along with his horse, Elegant Lady, have been long-time users of the stables.

Elegant Lady, a 23-year-old thoroughbred, is temporarily lame and cannot be ridden, says her owner.

"She'd be as old as a 70 year-old person. She used to be a good jumper.

"Now I couldn't get anything for her. She's just a pet," says Mr. Billingsley.

More than pets, many of the horses at the Sun City Stable are registered breeds such as Arabians and Morgans.

Other horses, adds Mr. Kirk, are worth in the \$400 to \$600 range.

The owners of these horses are also a diverse assemblage.

Several of these Sun Cities cowboys came from urban areas in New York and Illinois.

Some of the stable users rode horses in their youth and were only able to take up the pastime again in retirement.

Each user pays rent on the stall. Larger stalls cost more than the smaller ones.

There are 14 box stalls with adjacent exercise pens and 14 open pens with sun shades.

A tackroom contains individual lockers for use as saddle and bridle storage.

A telephone, and a small refrigerator for horse medicine "and beer," jokes a rider, have been installed in the facility.

"This is a very economic place.

"You pay rent and it includes water, waste hauling and maintenance," says Mr. Kirk.

The feeding, grooming and riding are responsibilities of the horse's owner.

Mr. Kirk says stable users have been taking turns feeding the horses and cleaning the stalls.

The horses are fed twice a day.

"As you can see, we keep everything clean and neat," says Mr. Kirk.

Both Mr. Billingsley and Mr. Kirk estimates it costs \$125 a month to feed, board and shoe a horse (quarterly), at the Sun Cities Stable.

A blacktop road, built by the Webb Corp., provides easy access to the horse facility.

A fence, topped off with barbed wire and security lights, protects the stable while its users are away.

For more information about the Sun Cities Stable, telephone 972--0641 or 974-6277.



# Just horsin' around

## Stable helps retirees realize dreams

By Betty Latty  
Special to Community

**P**itching horse manure isn't shown in those slick brochures that tout the enticements of active retirement living.

To members of Sun Cities Stable Inc., though, pitchfork duty and trundling manure-filled wheelbarrows are a big part of retirement.

But they say it's a small price to pay for the pleasure of finally owning horses and having a place to house them.

At the stable, located near the Sun Cities with easy access to riverbed trails, Gene Vila discussed that well-known fact of horse life:

"Well, I don't love it — those green apples, you mean? Especially after you've emptied your wheelbarrow and he goes and does it again.

"But once you get a good ride, come back and comb him and brush the hindquarters and he . . . shows me he loves me, well, it's all worthwhile."

Owning horses is a dream come true for Vila and his wife, Betty, former Californians who moved to Sun City West three years ago. Gene Vila rides Sizzler, a 16-year-old gelding quarter horse; Betty Vila chose a 5-year-old mustang named Que Pasa? The couple serve the stable group as treasurer and secretary, respectively.

"Everyone has a private dream," said Mike McCarthy, 69, immediate past president of the group. "For me, I just want to ride until I drop dead. I

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## STABLE

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want to ride forever."

McCarthy, a former Coloradoan who lives in Sun City, rides Hija, the Arabian mare he has owned for six years. "I've had a horse all my life," he said.

Gesturing toward the stable complex, McCarthy said: "We have a beautiful setup here, including an arena for exercising the horses. We also have room for a few more customers, if they live in the Sun Cities."

The stable operation charges a monthly fee, and owners are required to clean stalls and feed their animals twice a day. "We don't provide that service," McCarthy said.

However, he added, the owners can and often do work out ways to get some respite from the daily chores by setting up trade-off schedules.

Clearing manure "just goes with the territory," said Irene Brown, president of the group and owner of an appaloosa, Angel. Brown, a Sun City resident for 20 years, always has been a horse owner.

Brown said the manure produced by the horses is hauled out by a waste-removal company and is also made available to Sun Cities gardeners for fertilizer.

Stable members share an easy camaraderie. When a few gathered recently for a morning ride, Jan Eldridge of Sun City West readied Chino, her part Arabian, part quarter horse. "We never knew there was any Arabian in that horse," another rider kidded. Eldridge patted Chino's head and answered, "It's here, all right, right between the ears."

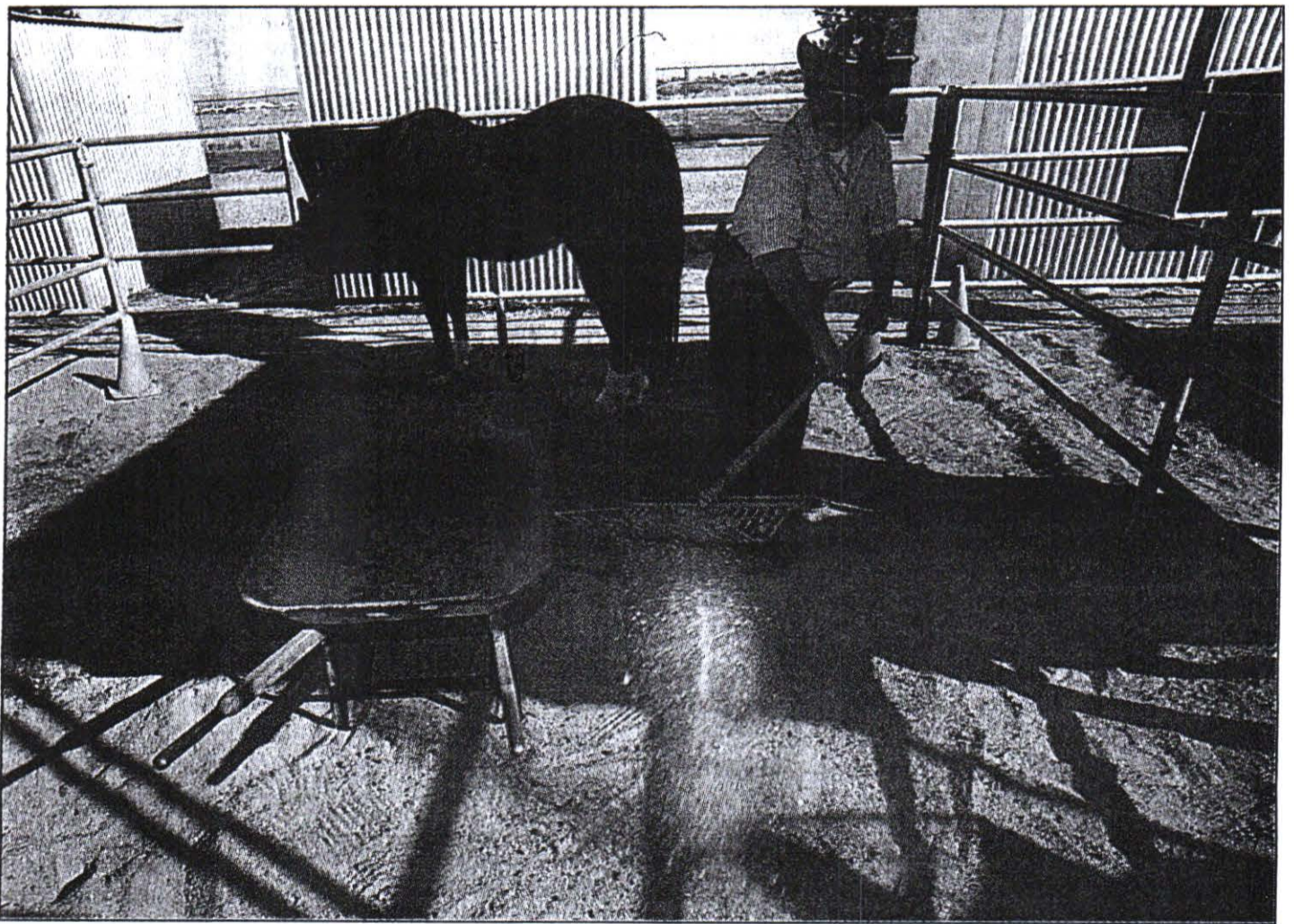
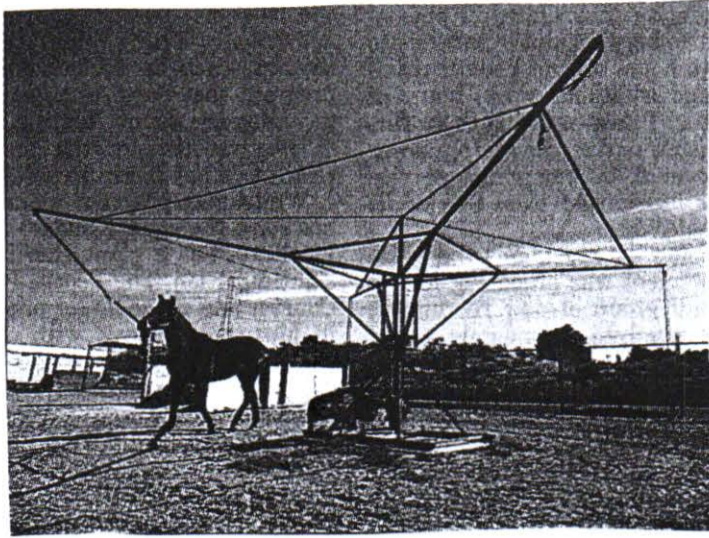
Virgil Miller of Sun City West, who will be 80 on April 17, rides his Arabian mare, Chrome, three times a day, according to one jokester, "because his wife, Marge, finds too much for him to do at home."

Nearby, horses were romping and being exercised in the arena. "Some like to roll," Vila said. "Some like puddles when it rains — we call them mudders — just like kids. We just stand and laugh at them."

Sun Cities Stable Inc. originally was operated by a Del Webb Corp. organization, which turned it over to the present group about 20 years ago. Other officers include Vice President Lee Yanssens of Sun City West and Bill Wagner of Sun City, stable manager.

For information, contact Brown at 933-6098.





Above, Gene Vila cleans the stall of Sizzler, his 16-year-old quarter horse, at Sun Cities Stable Inc. Horse owners pay a monthly fee but are responsible

Deirdre Hamill / Staff photographer  
for cleanup and feeding of their animals. At top right, Doc, an 8-year-old Doc Bar quarter horse, gets some exercise on the hot walker.