

# Cost scale varies for Sun City music

**Concert Band plays last free event, others see few effects**

**By Rusty Bradshaw**  
Independent Newspapers

**A**nother Sun City performing group is making changes to its operation in reaction to Recreation Centers of Sun City Board of Directors' changes to its club policy.

Sun City Concert Band Director George Zoske announced during the group's April 22 spring concert the performance would be the band's last event with no admission charge. For decades, the band has presented the vast major-

ity of its concerts free of charge.

"But with the club rule changes, we can't afford to do that anymore," he said.

It is the second change by a large performing group in two months. Sun City lost one of its two large performance bands when Pops Band members voted to leave the community fold and change the group's name. It is now called the West Valley Pops Band.

"We could no longer afford to be associated with the Sun City recreation department," stated a press release sent to band patrons by Len Shykind, the band's publicity coordinator.

The moves came after a months-long dispute between the Sun City Concert Band Club,

a chartered RCSC club, and the RCSC Board of Directors over a change in the corporation's club policy. The policy, approved in December, requires any club participants who live outside Sun City to pay a \$2 guest fee for each club visit. The policy also requires clubs that have non-resident members to track their attendance and turn over all guest fees to RCSC. The new policy also required rental and setup charges for club performances offered to the general public.

While the rule changes have placed a burden on the concert and pops bands, they have not adversely affected other performing groups.

The Sun City Handbell Ringers has about 25

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## Music

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members, but only five live outside Sun City. Helen Buist, group president, said the club picks up the cost of the guest fees for those members.

"We had one person we knew it would be hard for her to pay the fee," she explained. "Since we decided to do it for one, we did it for all."

Ms. Buist said the Handbell Ringers do need to look outside the community for participants because there are not enough people within the community with the specialized skills to perform the bells — or at least not enough who have expressed an interest. However, the Handbell Ringers will never have more than 50 percent of the membership from outside Sun City, she added.

"If someone is missing, it is hard to fill that hole," Ms. Buist said. "You need to be able to read music and know the value of each beat."

While the rule changes were confusing during a period of adjustment, Doris Srsen, Sun City Women's Chorus president, said the drama group remains compliant with the new rules.

"We haven't lost any members over this (rule change)," she said.

Rental charges for facilities has not affected the chorus because the group has paid for facility use throughout the six years she had been involved with the group. How-

ever, she is concerned about future rent cost increases.

"I just wouldn't want them to go up," she said.

The Sun City Players drama group has individual rules that required participants to be club members, and rules also stipulate membership can only be granted to RCSC cardholders.

"The only time we go outside the community is when, after auditions for a production, we are not able to find the right players," said Connie Groff, Players president.

### Effects minimal

While guests are rare, the Players absorb the guest fee costs, according to Ms. Groff. The Sun City Players are also not adversely affected by the rental charge, as the group has always paid for Mountain View Recreation Center, 9749 N. 107th Ave., use.

"We have not had to address any problems or concerns," Ms. Groff said. "But, then again, we have a little more unique situation than other clubs."

Ed White, Sun City Concert Band president, said in March when the Pops Band announced its decision to decharter that the Concert Band would wait and see how things worked out with the Pops Band before making a decision about its fate.

The RCSC board did alter its policy prior to approval to offer performing clubs the option to decharter and still perform in rec center facilities. The alternative also retained the rent-free status quo if performing clubs offered four free concerts annually and did

not solicit donations at their conclusion.

"We recognize this (alternative) does not work for all clubs, but it does work for the majority of people who believe it is not fair they pay for the facilities but those from outside do not," Larry Klein, RCSC board member, said during a Dec. 11 RCSC member/director exchange meeting.

The Pops Band is now sponsored by Valley View Community Food Bank, 10515 W. Peoria Ave., which provides space for the group to rehearse.

The April 22 Concert Band performance was the last of the current season. Mr. Z said the band will charge \$5 per person for its concerts when the new season begins in October. He also held out hope there could be some changes that would bring free concerts, but said residents had to forward to help with that.

"We are looking for people to run for (RCSC) board," he told the crowd April 11. **News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.**



# Sun City bands prepare for holiday shows

By Jen Lebron Kuhney

The Republic | azcentral.com

As the holiday concert season begins, two longtime Sun City-based bands that once faced an uncertain future will play on.

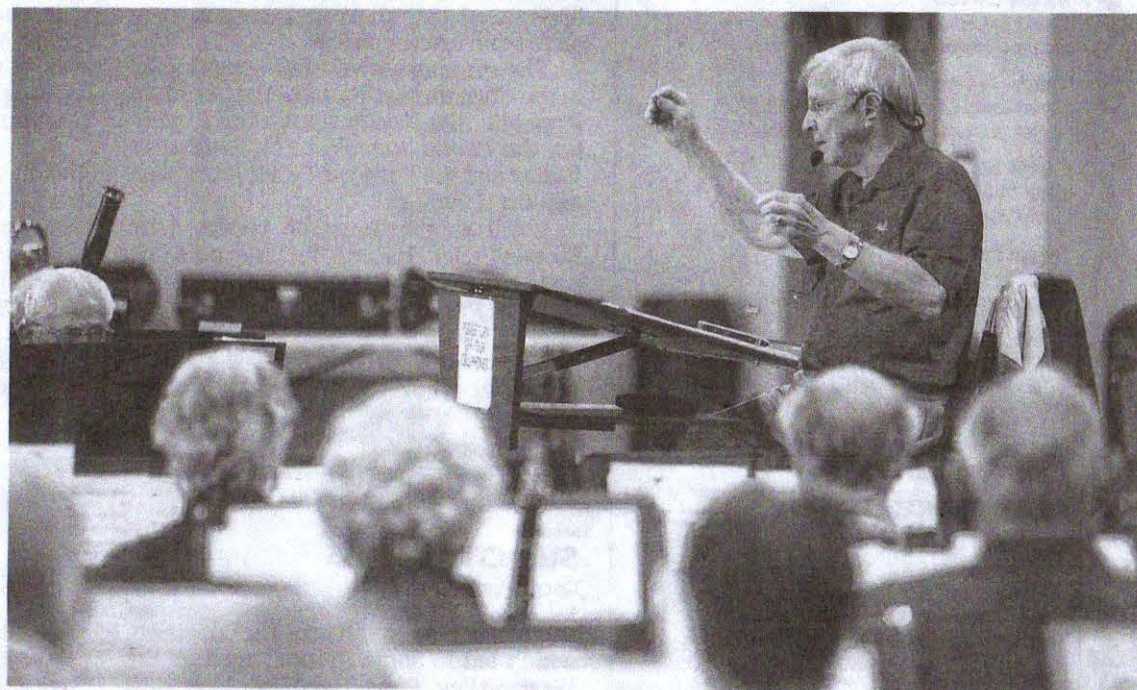
The Sun City Concert Band is getting ready to perform its annual holiday show while its former sister band is looking for new venues to play.

It has been nearly a year since Sun City's performing-arts clubs were forced to make a difficult choice. Either band members who don't live in Sun City had to pay a new fee for every rehearsal in the retirement community or they must practice elsewhere. Two of the bands at the heart of the kerfuffle have taken different paths, but continue to play free shows.

The 100-member Sun City Concert Band, which plays a variety of music with a full symphonic band, is preparing for its annual holiday show at the Fairway Recreation Center in Sun City. Meanwhile, the 85-member Pops Band has a new name, West Valley Pops Band, and is looking for new places to play big-band and other popular music to broaden its reach.

While both musical groups have had to make tough adjustments this year, they still draw thousands to their performances, club leaders say.

About 10,000 people from across the West Valley attended more than a dozen free performances for the two bands during 2012 before the fees changed, according to club organizers. Pops Band spokesman Len Shykind said that the group's performances have had



Conductor George Zoske leads practice with the Sun City Concert Band. The Concert Band has been a staple of Sun City entertainment since 1979, and will perform Dec. 15. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL SCHENNUM/THE REPUBLIC

cope with the fees and continue providing entertainment for Sun City residents. The Concert Band kept most of its members, but lost about 30 members because of the increased fees, White said.

Unlike past years when the Concert Band could play free concerts at no cost, the band now must pay nearly \$300 to rent the Sundial Auditorium and a 50-cent-per-chair setup fee. The \$800 to \$900 cost has put financial pressure on the band, but there have been enough donations to keep up with the costs for now, White said.

"It's not to say there's isn't room for improvement, but I'm



Jane Higgs practices with the Sun City Concert Band. The band's annual holiday performance is free, but donations are accepted.

## HOLIDAY PERFORMANCE

**Sun City Concert Band**  
"Sounds of the Season"  
holiday show

**Where:** Sundial Auditorium,  
103rd Avenue and Boswell  
Boulevard.

**When:** 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 15.

**Cost:** Free

## REHEARSALS

Both groups welcome anyone who has an instrument and music stand, and who can read music and play with some skill.

### Sun City Concert Band

**Where:** Fairway Recreation  
Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave.,  
Sun City

**When:** 9-11 a.m. Tuesdays.

**Details:** People who do not live in Sun City must pay a \$2 fee. For more information, contact President Ed White at Edpawh2@cox.net.

### West Valley Pops Band

**Where:** Valley View Communi-  
ty Food Bank

10515 W. Peoria Ave., Sun City.

**When:** 9-11 a.m. Saturdays.

**Details:** For more information,  
e-mail futureconcerts@cox.net.

## MORE ONLINE

Watch the Sun City Concert  
Band play at [surprise.azcentral.com](http://surprise.azcentral.com).



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weekly rehearsals and performances.

Groups also must pay a \$1,000 setup fee for each performance.

Leaders of performing-arts groups in Sun City unsuccessful

**See SUN CITY BANDS, Page 4**



As the holiday concert season begins, two longtime Sun City-based bands that once faced an uncertain future will play on.

The Sun City Concert Band is getting ready to perform its annual holiday show while its former sister band is looking for new venues to play.

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While both musical groups have had to make tough adjustments this year, they still draw thousands to their performances, club leaders say.

About 10,000 people from across the West Valley attended more than a dozen free performances for the two bands during 2012 before the fees changed, according to club organizers. Pops Band spokesman Len Shykind said that the group's performances have had standing-room-only crowds during shows at the Happy Trails Resort and Westbrook Village senior communities. The concert band's only show this season at the Sundial Auditorium in Sun City was well-attended, according to organizers.

Ed White, the Sun City Concert Band president, said that the group has found ways to



Conductor George Zoske leads practice with the Sun City Concert Band. The Concert Band has been a staple of Sun City entertainment since 1979, and will perform Dec. 15. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL SCHENNUM/THE REPUBLIC

cope with the fees and continue providing entertainment for Sun City residents. The Concert Band kept most of its members, but lost about 30 members because of the increased fees, White said.

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"It's not to say there isn't room for improvement, but I'm very pleased with how things are going right now," he said.

### This year's holiday show

The Sun City Concert Band has been a staple of Sun City entertainment since 1979. The holiday show was a regular part of the band's schedule for as long as anyone can remember, according to White.



Jane Higgs practices with the Sun City Concert Band. The band's annual holiday performance is free, but donations are accepted.

The 2013 "Sounds of the Season" performance is free, though the band collects donations to help offset the music licensing fees it pays and other band expenses.

It will feature songs such as "Sleigh Ride," "Hanukkah Fantasy" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." The band has about 100 members

and vocalist Jane Higgs.

Back in February, it was uncertain if the band would return to its longtime home.

The Sun City Recreation Board voted 8-1 to impose a \$ fee on any non-resident who used the community's facilities. White estimated the use fee would cost some members \$7 annually when factoring in



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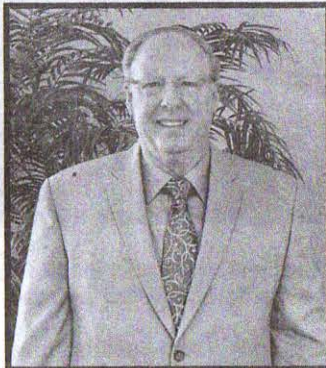
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## SUN CITY BANDS

Continued from Page 3

fully tried to overturn the decision, which led to some groups, such as the West Valley Pops Band, seeking new homes.

White said that the Concert Band opted to stay but now "puts the fishbowl out" at every rehearsal so non-residents and residents can contribute to their bandmates' fees.

"It's been working out really well," he said. "We can't use the Sun Bowl as a performance space, but we're trying to work something out."

The Sun Bowl is an open-air 7,500-seat amphitheater that is considered Sun City's top entertainment venue. The site hosts professional bands and other musical acts throughout the year.

White added that at the beginning of the band's season in the fall, he met with the recreation board president, James Brasher, to smooth things over after the fee debate left their relationship a little rocky.

White said that the relationship between the board and the band isn't perfect but that wounds from the battle over the fees are beginning to heal.

## West Valley Pops Band

Things haven't gone as smoothly for the West Valley Pops Band.

After the recreation board imposed the fees, the Pops Band sought a new home and a new name.

The band had rehearsed and performed free shows in Sun City for 38 years before it left to use rehearsal and storage space at the Valley View Food

Bank in February.

The free space allowed the Pops Band to keep concerts free but now the band asks audience members to bring non-perishable food items to each concert. Shykind said each show has provided about 300 pounds of food in donations for the food bank so far in the organizations' 10-month relationship.

This season, the band has played four shows for about 2,000 people at venues of varying sizes at senior-living communities. Each show has had standing-room only crowds, which makes Shykind worry that there hasn't been enough room for the more than 600 people on the band's e-mail list to attend.

The Pops Band has five more shows scheduled at various community centers this season throughout the Northwest Valley. However, Shykind said the strong attendance so far has led the band's board to explore finding bigger venues, though it could mean that the band would have to stray a little from its big-band roots.

"Trying to play at new venues in Surprise or El Mirage means we'd have to play more than the songs from the '40s and '50s we're used to," said Shykind, who lives in Surprise. "We'd be playing the Beatles and other more modern things."

Shykind said the Pops Band board is looking into using Dysart Unified School District auditoriums, including the Valley Vista Performing Arts Center, a 1,300-seat venue in the heart of Surprise.

Until then, the band will continue to have open rehearsals. Anyone with an instrument, who can read music and play with some skill, may attend them Saturday mornings at the food bank.





Charlie Musgrave, 80, of Sun City (from right), and Karen Moeck, 67, of Surprise, play french horns in a Sun City Concert Band rehearsal. The community's recreation board will vote on strictly enforcing a fee to participate in activities at its facilities. DAVID WALLACE/THE REPUBLIC

# Sun City bands face fee

*Stricter enforcement of recreation charge could pose burden for performers*

**By Jen Lebron Kuhney**  
The Republic | azcentral.com

**N**early 300 members of Sun City's performance bands fear a fee from the community's recreation board could force them to play their final tune.

The board is considering strictly enforcing an existing policy that charges all non-residents \$2 for every practice and performance they attend on Sun City's

grounds.

The fee is an issue of fairness for other groups who use Sun City facilities, according to the management staff who operate the West Valley senior community. The board plans to vote on the staff's recommendation on Dec. 20.

Although the majority of the three bands' members are Sun City residents, 44 percent of members live outside the community, according to organizers.

Since many of the bands' members

attend dozens of practices and performances a year, the fee could force many members to quit, said Ed White, the president of the concert band.

Some band members said they would have to pay about \$72 a year to use Sun City facilities. Now, they pay just a \$4 annual fee to participate.

"We'd end up with no bassoon players and one french horn," White said. "It

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Art Pincusoff, 84, plays with the Sun City Concert Band. Organizers fear strictly enforcing a facilities fee could reduce the number of players. DAVID WALLACE/THE REPUBLIC

## Band

Continued from Page B1

doesn't make sense to have an orchestra band without the full orchestra."

### Musical tradition

About 10,000 people from across the West Valley attended more than a dozen free performances last year, according to estimates by club organizers.

Sun City concert bands have been around in different forms since 1965. Currently, the community of 38,000 residents has a pops band, chamber orchestra and concert band. Each holds rehearsals at least once a week. Members range in skill from beginners to retired professionals.

Some members are in as many as four different performing groups. The fee burden would be greater for couples who play in multiple bands.

Though the bands have been the most vocal about opposing the changes, other clubs including a weaving club and a choir would face the same fees.

The visitor's fee is simply a matter of fairness, according to Sun City staff members.

Sun City residents pay \$444 a year per property for unlimited use of the community's golf courses, bowling lanes and recreation centers. The fee also pays for memberships to clubs, which include everything from politics to dance.

A non-resident can purchase an annual "privilege" card for \$222 or pay \$60 a month for short-term use. Visitors to the community are charged \$2 a day to use the facilities if they do not buy a card.

The Recreation Centers of Sun City's "Board of Directors believe that it is vitally important that all guests be treated the same, however, they understand the uniqueness of this situation," said Jan Ek, general manager of the centers.

The board has been talking to White and "they will be examining further a solution for the participating guests in these bands at their next work session," she said.

The nine-member board could not be reached for comment.

The board was supposed to vote on the fee policy on Nov. 29, but pushed the vote back to Dec. 20 so members would have time to sort through the dozens of e-mails and consider feedback they've received from the members of the clubs that would be impacted, Ek said.

### Bands could seek new home

Some band members would like the performance groups to move to nearby Surprise.

Len Shykind, a trombone player from Surprise, has asked Surprise Mayor Sharon Wolcott to help them find a new home.

Shykind, who lives in the mayor's neighborhood, said he has talked to Wolcott in the past about having the bands perform in Surprise.

Last month, he sent her an e-mail asking if the city would be willing to take on a "world-class" band.

Wolcott said that she met with Surprise staff to see what options may be available to help the band.

Shykind said he hopes it doesn't have to come to that.

"I moved here from the east side nine years ago because (the northwest Valley is) the best place in the country for a retired musician," he said.

"There are a lot of people who consider this the highlight of their week. We don't want to see it stop."

### SUN CITY BANDS

#### » The Recreation Centers of Sun City board meeting

When: Thursday, Dec. 20, at 9 a.m.

Where: Sundial Auditorium, 14801 N. 103rd Ave., Sun City.

More information: The meeting is open only to recreation-center cardholders, but questions about the meeting can be sent to [boardoffice@sunaz.com](mailto:boardoffice@sunaz.com).

#### » Christmas performance

The Sun City Concert Band will perform its annual Christmas show.

When: 7 p.m. tonight.

Where: Sundial Auditorium.

More information: See a video about the Sun City Concert Band at <http://youtu.be/HMNNcYiK-w8>.



# Group hopelessly hooked on handbells

"Handbell ringing is a disease," says Marilyn Chandler, director of the Handbell Ringers of Sun City. "The good news is that it's a good disease but the bad news is that there's no cure. Once you start handbell ringing and like it, you're hooked for the rest of your life."

Born and raised in Detroit, the Goodyear resident earned an elementary education degree from Western Michigan University. When she first moved to Arizona with her husband in 1999, the only person she knew in Arizona was the choir's handbell director who wanted her to join them.

"When my friend told me the group was in Sun City, I remember saying, 'I don't want to ring with a bunch of little old, gray-haired ladies.' But when I heard them ring, I was absolutely stunned. They were phenomenal ringers and, through the course of a couple of years, I became their director."

For Marilyn, directing such "consume ringers" is a privilege.

"They are dedicated to what they're doing," she said. "They think it is important and because they do, they ring well. It's pure joy standing in front of these people."

The choir's current president is Faith Gossett of Sun City.

She joined the group after reading an advertisement in the newspaper.



**Rich Kenney Jr.**



MOLLIE J. HOPPE/DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun City Handbell Ringers practice Friday at Fairway Recreation Center in Sun City. For information about the group, call 875-7141

"When we retired here five years ago, I saw an ad in the paper on a Wednesday for handbell ringers and, by Friday, I was ringing," she said. "I thought I was the luckiest person in the world that I found them."

Although she was an experienced ringer, having played for a number of years at her church in Iowa, Faith felt stifled in her musical role there.

"If you know anything about handbells, you ring only two bells," she said. "I was stuck on two notes for 15 years. When I came out here, I said I don't want those notes. I always wanted to play the rest of the scale. So I got my chance to bloom."

Anyone who plays bells is all right with Faith.

"I adore bell people," she said. "Bell people are different. Wherever I go, if I want to have a good time, I look for bell people."

The only couple in the club is the husband-wife team of Bill and Lee Carter.

The Peoria pair have been married for 51 years and started ringing 27 years ago

for their church in Scottsdale.

"We're real dedicated to the bells," Lee said. "It's a commitment we take seriously. Right, now we're working on our spring concert, which includes songs from the 'Phantom of the Opera,' 'Pocahontas,' and 'Rainbow Connection.' It'll be a fun concert where we can kind of let our hair down."

Lee pointed out that Bill is one of the few men in the club.

"There's three men and the rest of us are their harem so to speak," she said, laughing. "We also dance together as a team so music has always been part of our lives."

"We don't dance when we ring, though," Bill quipped.

Twenty-year Sun City resident Julia Ferguson, originally from Omaha, Neb., is an earnest handbell ringer as

well.

"I take the bells home to practice," she said. "I generally practice on Thursday night before rehearsal on Friday so they're in my head. You have to stay alert and be able to read your notes. Practicing helps me to ring my bells on time."

Going to choir practice for Carol Fagerlund of Sun City, is like going to the gym for a workout. One of three bass bell players in the group, she manages to keep her arms in top ringing shape.

"The heaviest bells are 8½ pounds," she said. "And to swing those over and over again for a 2½-hour rehearsal is hard work. Physically, my arms are tired after practice."

The California native has been a handbell ringer for eight years. She believes each member is a vital cog in the musical experience.

OVER



"What I love is the ensemble of the one instrument," she said. "We all play different bells and it's more than just the two each of us plays. Every bell is an integral part of the whole instrument, which is the handbell choir. It's the whole ensemble and that's what I really enjoy about playing bells."

Call Helen Buist is the magician of the choir. The Sun City resident who grew up in Kalamazoo, Mich., rings 15 bells for the melodic assembly.

"I ring the upper octave and hold three bells in one hand and two in the other," she said. "My bells have a

higher pitch to them than the ones Carol plays. Mine weigh ounces. I probably don't have more than a pound and a half in my hand at one time. Sometimes I have four chimes mixed in so there can be nineteen instruments sitting there in front of me."

Gale Sieghart is a woman who does not like change.

"I stay in the same spot in choir," she said. "They can change everybody else but they leave me by myself."

She is also a woman who knows what she wants. When she moved to Sun City West from Colorado years ago, Gale went to a friend's house each night after work to learn how to mark the music for two notes.

"I still play the same two notes," she said. "I play E and F6. Those have been my notes for 10 years. Do not give me anything else. This is all I need."

To learn more about becoming a handbell ringer, call Faith at 875-7141.

Have a column idea? Contact Rich Kenney Jr. at [pitchnrich@cox.net](mailto:pitchnrich@cox.net).

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**'I play E and F6.  
Those have been my  
notes for 10 years.  
Do not give me any-  
thing else. This is all  
I need.'**

**Gale Sieghart  
Handbell Ringers**

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# MUSIC MAN



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

George Zoske, here in the study of his Sun City West home, has been elected to conduct the Sun City Concert Band.

**"I would like to continue to strive to improve the level of playing and continue to satisfy the audiences who come to concerts."**

**George Zoske, music director, Sun City Concert Band**

OVER



## NEW LEADERSHIP: Concert Band performer takes over baton

CLAUDIA SHERRILL  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

**T**hey say if you need something done, ask a busy person. Well-organized, multi-tasking individuals routinely accomplish much more than disorganized, albeit well-intentioned, people.

If the adage proves true, the Sun City Concert Band has latched onto a whirlwind for its new conductor.

George Zoske, who replaces Charles Musgrave, has a veritable schedule full of musical responsibilities. He and his wife, Joyce, both play in the Concert Band; he was assistant conductor under Musgrave; he also directs the Sun City Chamber Orchestra and the Christo Handbell Choir at American Lutheran Church in Sun City; he plays in the All-Star Big Band; and he and Joyce are librarians for the Symphony of the West Valley. Whew!

When asked why he chose to take on the directing responsibilities for the Concert Band Zoske said, "Music has been my life. I enjoy directing and it's a really neat group to work with."

Music really has been his life. Zoske and his wife moved to Sun City West six years ago from Wisconsin, where he was a music educator for 38 years, mostly at the high school level.

"It was a great way to have a career. It was never routine, it was always new and different. It was a fun career," he said.

The Zoskes chose the Sun Cities for their retirement because the area "offered so many musical opportunities."

"We first checked out Tucson, the Del Webb community there. It was beautiful, with the mountains all around. But when we realized that to be active musically, we would have to drive into Tucson all the time, we decided that the Sun Cities offered more," Zoske said.

"Here in the Sun Cities it is an ideal situation. You have performers who like what they're doing and you have audiences who appreciate the performers," he added.

Both Zoskes pointed out that the musical offerings appeal to a wide array of interests, from symphony to concert band. Conceivably there could be two entirely different audiences for two performances.

"Some people enjoy symphonic music while others are more drawn to what might be called more

popular music," such as what is heard at a Concert Band show, he said.

The musicians in the Sun Cities amaze the Zoskes.

"I wish some of the kids I taught could see these people actively participating in music at the ages they are. It would drive home the message I tried to convey that learning to play an instrument can be something you enjoy and continue to do all through your life," he said.

Zoske said he believes active participation in the Concert Band enhances the lifestyle of the players, from the social aspect as well as the mental exercise derived from reading and playing music.

"It's very good for the physical and mental state of being," he said.

The Concert Band has 132 members, although that number drops to about 65 by the Memorial Day concert at Sunland Memorial Park.

Zoske said there are no auditions for the band; people call and express interest and are invited to

come to a rehearsal.

"Sometimes people will take a few lessons, then join," Joyce Zoske said. "If it proves too hard, people usually weed themselves out (of the band). We never ask anyone to leave."

Zoske said the one of the best things about the band is that it is not a static organization, it keeps growing, both in numbers and proficiency.

His goals for the Concert Band center on continuing the tradition of good music and pleasing the audience.

"I would like to continue to strive to improve the level of playing and continue to satisfy the audiences who come to concerts," he said.

In the future, he would like to find a way to share the band with a greater audience, "to broaden our exposure without overburdening our schedule," he said.

He also would like to have members of the Concert Band establish a connection with high school musicians in order to pass along the message about music and

enhance the students' experience.

The Zoskes take the summer off from music in the Sun Cities, but they don't take the summer off from music. They play in an orchestra "back home in Mount Horeb (Wis.)." They also take the opportunity to spend quality time with their sons' families, getting to know their four grandchildren, "two girls who are both 3 and two boys, one 5 and the other 6."

In his spare time, Zoske likes to cook, especially on his outdoor grill. He is also a model railroad buff, and has started to build a layout in his garage.

Next season's Concert Band schedule is starting to fill. The first rehearsal will be Sept. 9, with the first performance coming on Veterans Day. Zoske said many of the performances are scheduled more than a year in advance to secure locations and to avoid schedule conflicts among the musicians, many of whom play in more than one band.

Zoske said he and his wife love the life they've developed in the Sun Cities. They enjoy the circle of friends and the support network that has grown from their involvement in the music community.

"We're having a great time being busy," he said. "I can't imagine retirement any other way."

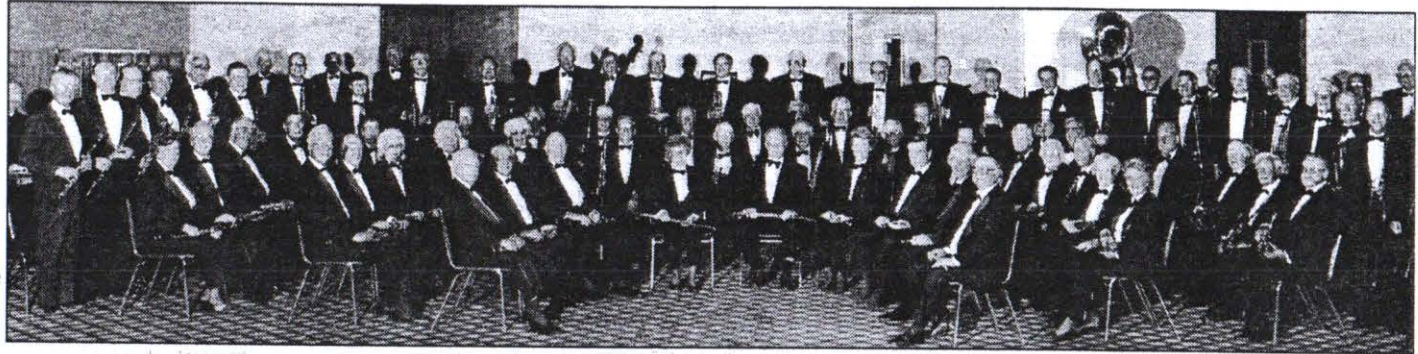


# Sun City's family of bands: saga of musical dedication

By Eleanor Derge  
For Arizona Senior World

Sun City is celebrating its 40th birthday this year and seems to possess a music magnet that attracts a remarkable number of retired musicians from across the United States and Canada.

It began in 1979 when a six-man polka band was established in Clancy Wolf's garage. Today the Sun City Musician's Club sponsors Clancy's original "Polka Band" renamed "Pops Band" with over 100 musicians, as well as the "Sun City Concert Band" composed of 10 retired musicians. There is also a small dance band named the Rhythm Ramblers. The Concert Band is larger than the Phoenix Symphony today.



The thrill of performing with these bands is as exciting for the musicians as for their audience. The Concert Band began in 1979 with 25 men directed by Clancy. An early

performance is fondly remembered. The band played on the shore of View Point Lake for an audience of 1,000. Many boat owners anchored close to the shore as the band played. Today trumpeter Cliff Brelsford, a World War II pilot, is the only remaining member of the early Concert Band.

By 1985 the Concert Band boasted 50 men and four women. Clancy continued to direct the band until his death in 1990. He was an inspiration to everyone. Chuck Mahaffey, current Pops Band director said that musicians throughout the West Valley are welcomed by the band. They bring countless years of experience with them. Some made a living teaching music and performing. Many come from U.S. military bands. Several still maintain their union cards.

Art Pincusoff, a native New Yorker and a master of the classical flute, blows a super jazz sax. He also has a remarkable talent for repairing ill or injured musical instruments. Today he still gets requests to repair their instruments for touring greats such as David Sanborn, Sunny Rollins, and Kenny G.

The oldest member of the band is Inez Thompson. Now 91 years of age, she sold her oboe to pay for her child's surgery. She raised her family and taught elementary school in Minnesota. The oboe is the most difficult instrument in the band. Shortly after she and her husband returned to Sun City, her children bought her a new oboe and Inez is now playing again with the Concert Band.

Current director Charlie Musgrave's aunt, Betty Meek is also amazing. She was a music major in college and was unable to find a job in her field. Fortunately, times have changed for women. Today Betty is an accomplished pianist and she plays cello for Sun City audiences. Last year, when the Concert Band needed another bass clarinet, she mastered the difficult instrument during summer break at Charlie's request.

We know that the music magnet will attract many more musicians to the Sun Cities because there is an unexplainable pleasure experienced by the retired musicians from playing and pleasing their grateful audiences in Sun City and the West Valley.





## Keeps Them Young *Listeners, Dancers – Musicians, Too!*

by Dick Kemp

If golf is the outdoor game for life, then music – playing *and* listening – has to be the hands-down, overall avocation winner.

Proponents of this claim certainly include the Sun City Concert Band and the Sun City Rhythm Ramblers, most of whose entire rosters have been playing instruments since early childhood.

The 110-member Concert Band, for example, contains 26 former school band directors – people responsible for starting tens of thousands of youngsters on a musical path for life.

“We don’t see many retirees learning instruments, but we see many former players returning to join a group, or play for their own enjoyment,” says Charles Musgrave, Concert Band director.

The former Alton, Ill., school band director and St. Louis Symphony member says the Concert Band is proof of music’s staying power.

“Our members average 76 years in age. One oboe player is

90, and she is one of our spriest. Music is a way to stay young.

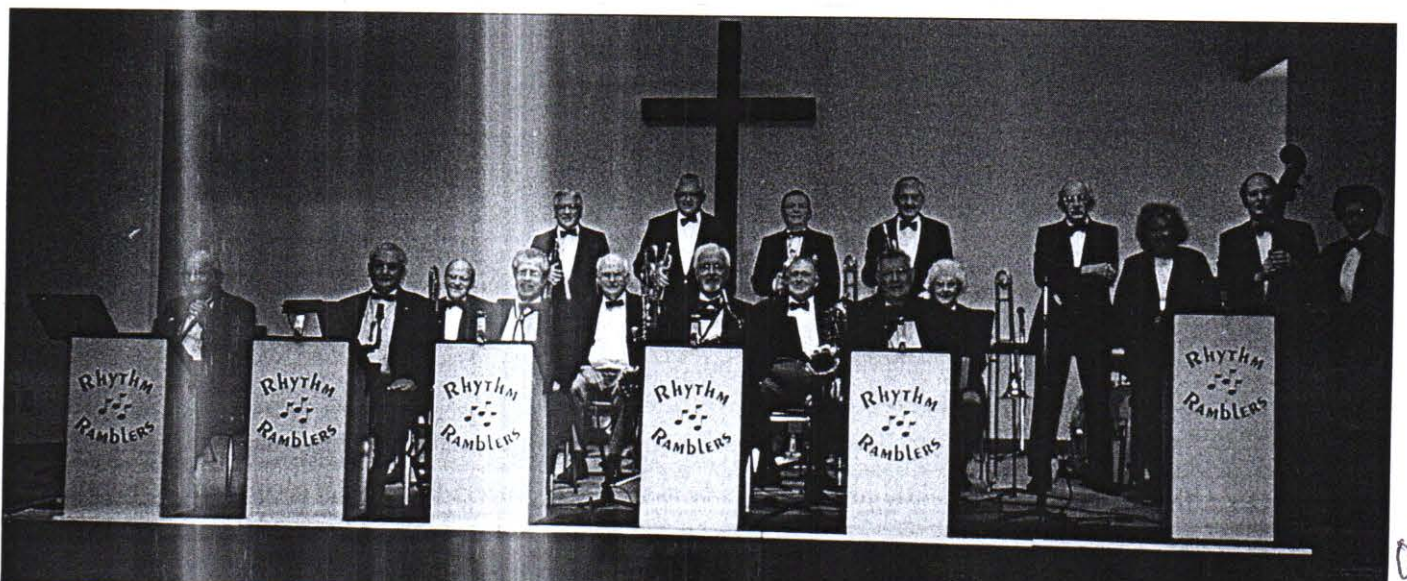
“Some people ask if a band containing 26 former directors presents an ego problem. Happily, they provide lots of positive feedback.”

### Win some, lose some

Most directors once fought the *Mr. Holland’s Opus* (movie) battle – winning some school budget fights, losing some – and are delighted to return to playing instruments.

“In Sun City I

**VETERAN PERFORMERS –**  
Inez Thompson and Benny Bentfield, both 90 years old, are highly regarded performers for the Sun City Concert Band and the Rhythm Ramblers, respectively. Their skills include sunny smiles and ready quips.



**RHYTHM RAMBLERS**, a familiar name around Sun City for nearly 40 years, averages about 20 appearances a year.

OVER



Also like Mr. Holland, Charles and many other directors wrote/arranged music on the side – often because there were no funds to purchase new sheet music.

“Even with these hang-ups, band music may be the most rewarding teaching assignment. You see results so much quicker,” he says.

#### Started 20 years ago

Sun City’s Concert Band started 20 years ago in Clancy Wolf’s garage, and today is larger than the Phoenix Symphony or Symphony of the West Valley.

“In February we had our most successful concert to date,” says Phil Wendell, band president and former Bay City, Mich., school band director.

“Our Sousa concert sold out in advance. While marches are standard fare, we play anything

from classical to ‘Looney Tunes’ in about 10 concerts a year.

“We practice for 2-1/2 hours a week for nine months.

While most members are from Sun City, others come from places like Sedona and Prescott.

Several are younger than 55,” explains Phil.

“With Phil’s help we raised the level of difficulty several times to reduce the size of the band. The quality and quantity just kept improving” adds Charles.

“I’ve been told that the *Arizona Republic* rates our music at a medium-size university level.”

#### Even longer history

A Sun City musical group with an even longer history, and probably greater name recognition, is the Rhythm Ramblers.



No one seems to know for sure, but the Ramblers were probably launched informally in 1960 with five to eight members. Chartered in 1963, they have enlivened hundreds of events since then.

The Ramblers specialize in the “Big Band sound,” and like the Concert Band include former professional musicians.

“Nine of our 16 members are in the concert band,” says Rambler treasurer and spokesperson Cliff Brelsford, a charter Concert Band member who plays trumpet for both bands.

Cliff, and Bill Fedor, newest Rambler, who plays trumpet and handles emcee chores, typify the love of music (and energy) of musicians.

#### Four other groups

“The Ramblers practice two hours weekly for nine months. Bill and I play in four other musical groups,” says Cliff.

“Benny Bengston, one-time Ramblers director and now lead

tenor sax, will be 90 this spring. He can take solos with the best.”

Pre-retirement occupations include photography, engineer, bank vice president, optometrist, accountant, public relations, and computer manufacturing – as well as several former school band directors.

Ramblers Director John Madson was an architect, Cliff Brelsford in financial services and Bill Fedor was an Air Force colonel and aerospace executive. All three were Air Corps/Air Force pilots.

No one can say the Ramblers “dog it” in their (on the average) 20 appearances a year. For example, a February program featured 34 arrangements, including seven with soloist Marge Nelson.

#### Enjoy each other’s company

Musicians enjoy each other’s company. “We’re like an extended family,” says Charles Musgrave. “We visit members when they’re ill.”

This “camaraderie quality” was never more evident than during a January Congregational Church memorial service for Joe Barfuss, a Rhythm Rambler for 19 years.

The Ramblers played “I’m Getting Sentimental Over You,” “Mood Indigo,” “St. Louie Blues” and “Meet Me Tonight In Dreamland.”

In his short remarks, Bill Fedor said:

“This is a musician’s tribute to a fellow musician. And Joe, since we know you’ll be listening and tapping your foot to the tempo, we’ve left a chair open for you.”

The service concluded with the Ramblers’ rendition of “In The Mood.”





# Group preserves quality music

## Musicians Club to take note of 2nd decade

By BRITT KENNERLY  
Daily News-Sun staff

**S**trike up the band and light the candles: The Musicians Club of Sun City is 20 years old and ready to dance its way into its second decade.

And the community has an open invitation to share in the birthday festivities, which kick off at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in Sundial Auditorium.

The gala event, open to all recreation club card holders and starring the Sun City Polka Band, celebrates a club that was founded 20 years ago by organizers including Herb Tutelman, Norm Lattin, Charles Staubach and Homer Martin.

Since its first notes sounded, the group has focused on musical performance and enjoyment.

"The founders wanted to provide a setting for musicians to perform classical music as well as a place for audiences to hear them," said Diantha Gates, president. "Our bylaws have stayed the same, and the purpose of the club is still the same — it's still a showcase for musicians and good music."

The club provides more than one way for budding musicians and rapt listeners to present, polish and take pleasure in tuneful sounds.

At 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month, the Musicians Club presents a program in Sundial Auditorium.

At least half of the club's 200 members show up each month for varied programs, ranging from vocal soloists and ensembles to instrumental numbers and piano concerts, said Gates.

Then there are the groups within the club's "umbrella," including the Piano Division, the Choraliers singing group, the Sun City Chamber Music ensemble and the Morning Musicales programs.

At musicales, which are conducted the fourth Friday of each month in different members' homes, light programs of music are complemented by cookies and coffee.

"The musicales offer relaxing mornings," said Gates. "We usually have about 40 people for those programs."

Keeping track of all club activities, Gates said, are club officers.

Officers for 1993-'94 are Diantha Gates, president; Grace Chamberlain, vice president; June Swanson, secretary; Bertha Peterson, treasurer; and Sally Siekmann, historian and publicity chairwoman.

Siekmann is the "keeper" of stuffed notebooks with clippings detailing the club's history.

Some historical data in her files:

■ The group's charter was granted on April 8, 1974, and a practice room was dedicated at Fairway Recreation Center.

■ The club met for years in Mountain View Recreation Center but size prompted a move to Sundial Recreation Center in March 1983.

■ The first group to perform for the Musicians Club was the Chamber Music Ensemble, who "were so enthusiastically received that the group responded with three encores," club notes say.

Margaret Tutelman has been a member of the group since the beginning and wife of co-founder Herbert Tutelman, now deceased.

Her husband's love for music, she said, prompted him to rally for a club to meet musicians' needs.

The couple had moved from New York, where, Tutelman said, her husband "couldn't find musicians to play with unless he traveled."

And in Sun City, although there were choruses and an organ club, Tutelman and other founders dreamed of a club that would be a performance showcase as well as a place for audience members to relax and enjoy music.

There were about 30 people at the first meeting, said Tutelman.

"It was mainly musicians who belonged back in the early days," she said. "Now there's an audience contingency as well."

Tutelman, who doesn't play an instrument herself but calls herself "a listener and encourager," is convinced the club fulfills a vital role in the Sun City music community.

"I like the fact that people who play music and enjoy it are encouraged to practice, because they'll be playing for an audience," she said. "Then there

are the morning musicales, where people who don't want to play for such a large audience are comfortable."

And, the president said, it appears the club will have many more birthdays to celebrate in the future.

"We have new people at meetings all the time," Gates said. "There are so many marvelous musicians in Sun City already and there's always more wonderful talent moving here."





Steve Chernek/Daily News

Members of the Sun City Polka Band, pictured during a recent Fun Fair, will perform Tuesday during birthday bash for the Musicians Club of Sun City. The Musicians Club received its club charter on April 1974.



# 14 years, and the band played on

**J.J. McCORMACK**  
Daily News-Sun staff

The theme of a recent reunion of Sun City Concert Band alumni could have been, "You've come a long way baby."

The phrase fits when you learn something about the history of the group, which took shape at the close of the 1970s in the late Clancy Wolf's living room.

It started with six people who gathered to play polkas. Gradually, more musicians showed up at Wolf's door and the band was forced into the garage. Soon, the garage proved too small and the group moved rehearsals to the Sun City Christian Church choir room.

A 26-member band under Wolf's direction premiered in concert Oct. 3, 1979, on the dock at Viewpoint Lake in Sun City.

Now in its 14th season, the Sun City Concert Band boasts 75 musicians, including three founding members: Walter Frauenberger, Cliff Brelsford and Carl Teig.

Band conductors who followed Wolf, in chronological order, were: Chuck Mahaffey, Bill McEachern, Jack Lowman, Paul Schneider, Don Gilbert, Paul Anderson, and Don Gilbert again.

Walter Moeck has been the band conductor since September 1988. Mahaffey is his assistant.

The concert band has expanded its repertoire and has performed hundreds of free concerts over the years, inspired by loyal retirees who love music, says Joseph Lynch, band president.

Although some band members are retired music educators and performers, most played music for fun at one time or another in their lives,



Rick D'Ella/Daily News-Sun

Rawlston Pontow of Sun City West rehearses "Armed Forces Melody" with the Sun Cities Concert Band at Marinette Recreation Center. The 75-member band is entering its 14th season.

Lynch said.

"A lot of them just blew the dust off their old high school clarinet" when they heard about the concert band," he said.

Lynch is a retired music educator who had quit playing music until he moved to Sun City from California.

Now, he plays his trumpet regularly and writes and arranges music on a computer.

"Writing and printing out music on a computer is something I never thought I'd do in my lifetime," he said.

"I have a lot of fun playing with

these people. They enjoy their music. They're enthusiastic and like to practice. Music has become one of the important things in their life now that they've retired."

Last month's reunion brought together present and former band members, conductors and members of the Sun City Concert Band Society.

Louis Quiram, society president, is a one-time musician whose love of music prompted him to help promote and financially assist the Sun City Concert Band.

The 3-year-old society, Quiram said, is responsible for buying music, taking care of equipment and "taking the edge off efforts to pass the hat."

The society's fund-raising efforts last year enabled band members to get new uniforms.

Quiram praised band members who love to play music. "They don't get paid. They only get paid with this," he said, applauding.

A successful fund-raiser last season was a John Phillip Sousa concert that drew more than 1,200 people to the Sundial Auditorium.

The band welcomes new players, Lynch said. Rehearsals are from 9 to 11 a.m. Tuesdays at Marinette Recreation Center, 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive.

The band's first performance of the season will be at 10 a.m. Thursday in the Sun Bowl, 107th Avenue and Clair Drive, Sun City. The band will play patriotic music for about 30 minutes before the start of the annual Veteran's Day ceremony.

A Christmas concert is slated for 7 p.m. Dec. 12 at the Congregational Church of Sun City, 18401 N. 99th Ave.

For information, call 977-1374.



# Rhythm Ramblers keep rolling

## Dance band keeps fans on their feet

By BRITT KENNERLY  
Daily News-Sun staff

**T**he word is out on a band that members call the "best kept secret" in Sun City.

The mysterious musicians? The Rhythm Ramblers, and as they celebrate the group's 30th anniversary, there are lots of memories to ramble on about.

One of the oldest chartered clubs of the Sun City Recreation Centers, the 17-piece group plays from 7:30 to 10 p.m. the third Thursday of each month in Mountain View Recreation Center, 9749 N. 107th Ave., Sun City.

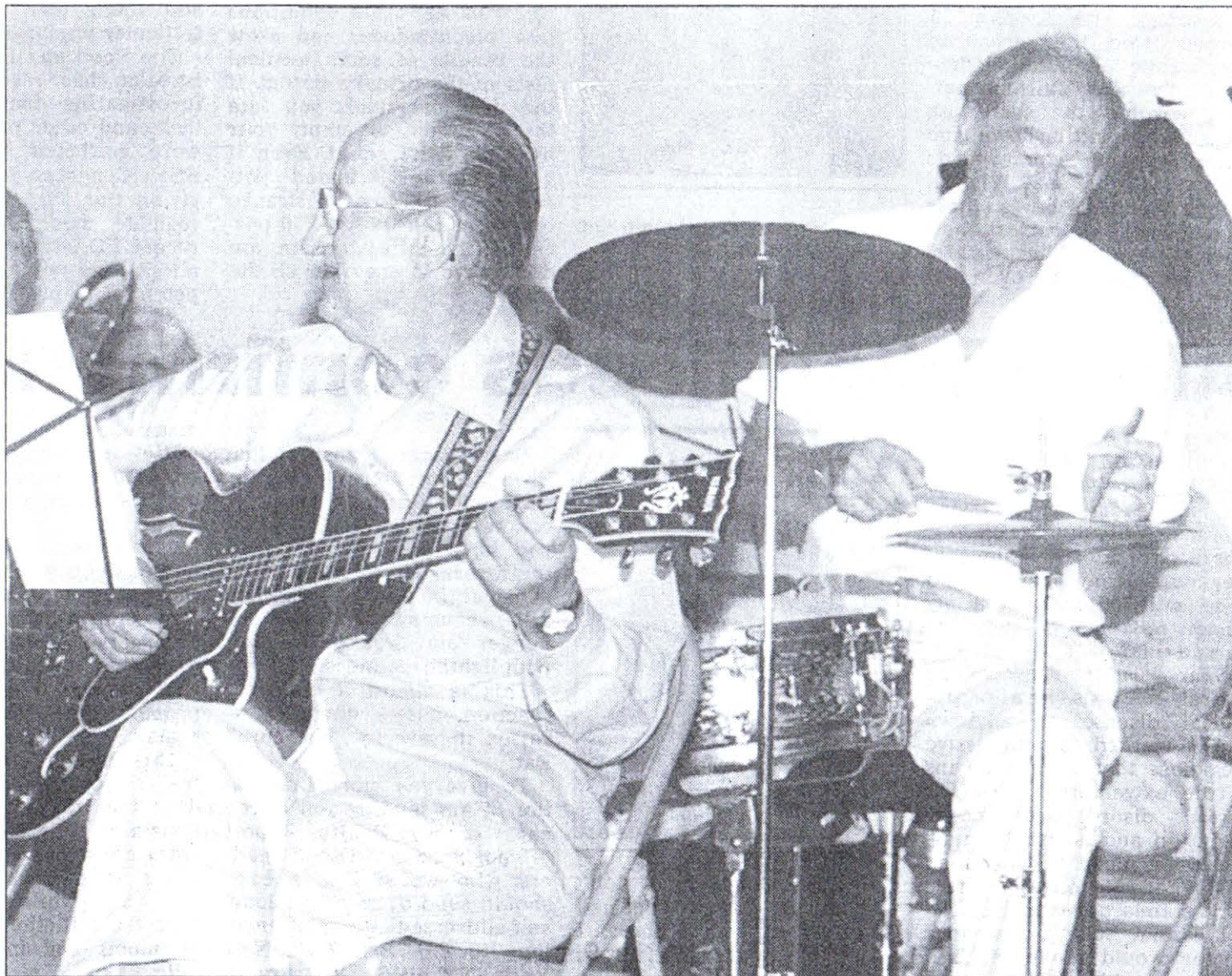
The band also plays for special events whenever possible.

Band members, whose ages range from 65 to 85, play dance music from the '30s through the '60s, music running the gamut from cha-chas to swing, from slow songs to fox trots.

What's the appeal? The music and the memories it inspires, members agreed.

"Every generation grows up with its own music, and this was ours," said Owen Harlan, president and trombonist. "We all liked Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, and people younger than us seem to like them, too."

"Our age group tends to reminisce a lot about the good old days," said Joe Kiefer, who plays clarinet and saxophone and is in his second year as



Willie Cedar, on guitar, and drummer Chuck Mahaffey of the Rhythm Ramblers rehearse for an up-

coming concert. The group is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

Frances Guarino/Daily News-Sun staff



director. "I wouldn't be here in Sun City if I didn't have the chance to play and listen to music like this."

Kiefer followed in the footsteps of past directors including Ed Detering, who enjoyed directing the Ramblers from 1987 to 1991.

"It was a pleasure for me to front the band, for I felt by their performance that everyone did their best," he said. "Those who attended our dances felt the same way. A few of those who came to our dances also came on Wednesday afternoon to listen to our practices."

Practices are work but also a lot of fun, said Adele Kiefer, one of the three female Ramblers and a tenor saxophone player.

"I started an all-girls band in high school," she said. "The reason a lot of us keep playing now is that we like to keep hearing the music we've heard all our lives."

There are lots of chances for the Ramblers to share that love: The band is like most Sun Cities groups in that since dance music is so popular, musicians have no problem finding work.

When the bulk of the Sun Cities population is in town, it's those looking to book a band who have the problem.

"The biggest problem here is that to hire a band for a Saturday night dance, you have to call six months in advance," said Kiefer. "You can't believe the demand, and a lot of members are in other groups."

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**'Every generation grows up with its own music, and this was ours. We all liked Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, and people younger than us seem to like them, too.'**

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**Owen Harlan  
president and trombonist**

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String bassist Clint Kimpel, for example, is also a member of the Sun City Salon Ensemble, the Sun City Banjo Band and several small groups that play in nursing homes.

After moving to Sun City in 1975 from Pittsburgh, the retired engineer was anxious to find a group that could use his skills as a bass player.

"Very quickly I learned about the Rhythm Ramblers and was thrilled to learn that they could use me," he said.

In those days, Kimpel said, the Rhythm Ramblers main gigs were weekly chuckwagon-style dinners for Sun Cities visitors, hosted by Del Webb Corp. in the Lakeside Banquet Center.

Before they were discontinued, the dinners were moved to Crestview Restaurant, now Mallaro's Crestview, when

Sun City West was established in 1978.

"We're better than ever now, and we keep improving," Kimpel said.

Kimpel and Harlan give credit for the band's current sound to Kiefer, a retired Dayton Power and Light lineman.

"There's a lot of kidding around, but when we start rehearsal, we knuckle down for two hours," Kiefer said. "If something's wrong, we stop and correct it."

As much as the music, members enjoy the camaraderie they've experienced at rehearsals and performances.

"I will always feel well rewarded for the five years I spent as director of the Rhythm Ramblers and the friends I made as a result," said Detering. "As I told them on many occasions, they



Frances Guarino/Daily News-Sun staff

Joe Kiefer, director of the Rhythm Ramblers dance band, plays the saxophone during rehearsal.

were truly a bunch of wizards, a term I used frequently to describe their performances."



# Sun City Concert Band pleases local audiences

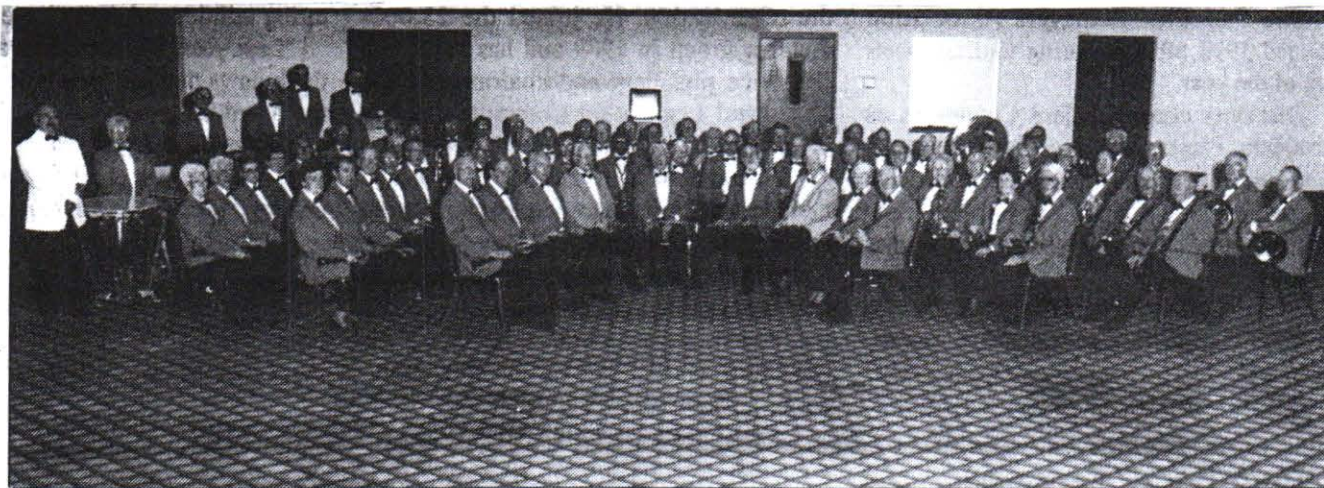
## Seventy-five member band celebrates 14th year in SC

The Sun City Concert Band, formed in 1979, is comprised of 75 men and women whose average age is 70.

The band includes many professional musicians as well as those who returned to playing instruments after working in other professions.

The band's conductor is Walter Moeck, and the band rehearses each Tuesday from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Marinette Recreation Center in Sun City.

The band performs several times throughout the year at schools, churches, recreation centers, RV parks and the Sun Bowl. An annual fund raiser is handled by the Band Society, a support group.



The Sun City Concert Band.



# Musicians Club makes sweet music

JOHN SOKOLICH  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

It's more than performing, and it's more than listening. The Musicians Club of Sun City is about the music, the feeling and the life-long love of the noted art.

The club, formed in 1974 and chartered in 1978, crescendoed from a home-based gathering into the three-tiered club of today under the direction of 19 different presidents. The current vice president, Ann Woestehoff, described the club as an umbrella for various music genres and an outlet for music lovers to perform and experience the art with residents holding similar interests.

"The goal and reason for the club is pretty much the same as it was when it first started in 1974," Woestehoff said. "Back then, it was done out of people's homes and now it is much larger, but the club was for people who usually didn't get a chance to perform."

But unlike 1974, when the then-informal group had just four founding members, it now has a following of close to 150 members.

A misconception about the club, however, is that it is open only to performers. In fact, the primary base of the club is its audience — club members who attend the meetings as spectators.

"We need more members," Woestehoff said. "One of the most important aspects of a concert is the audience. It's very important. And most members don't perform."

Over the years, Woestehoff said, the club has evolved from a primarily performing group to more of a listening group. Because the club is titled the "Musicians Club,"



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Joan Luehrs plays a Baldwin piano recently donated to the Musicians Club by member Helen Ogston.

however, many potential members are turned off by believing they must be musically inclined to join. As proof of the club's open arms, Woestehoff points to its six annual concerts — performed by just a handful of the total membership.

"As long as they are Recreation Centers card holders, all they need to do is come to the door to join," Woestehoff said. "There is always someone at the door to

greet them."

A problem facing the club, according to Woestehoff, is many people who are interested in music aren't aware of the club, or choose to go out of town to find performances.

Woestehoff's husband and current club president Ellsworth Woestehoff said it's more difficult convincing newer residents to take part in recreation clubs than it used to be.

"The newer people don't join clubs as much," he said. "But looking for music programs was one of the main reasons we decided to head-up the club. When we moved here, we didn't know what to expect or what was here — and now, here we are in charge of the club."

The Woestehoffs come from a strong musical background, and both spent some time teaching the art. Ann Woestehoff's instrument of choice is the timpani, while Ellsworth prefers the French horn.

Both said the club has brought to life musical talents in others, including a 91-year-old woman who joined the club to play the oboe.

"There are a lot of good experiences here, and I don't think we would be living here if we weren't able to play our instruments," Ann Woestehoff said. "We have a wonderful time."

Helen Ogston, a long-time member of the club's piano division, recently donated a Baldwin grand piano to the group, enabling members to perform dual piano numbers in addition to pieces made strictly for solos.

Meetings are held at the Sundial Auditorium, at 103rd Avenue and Boswell Boulevard, on the third Tuesday of each month, October through April. Doors open at 7 p.m. and meetings begin at 7:30 p.m., with a musical program featured at each gathering.

Dues are \$3 per year. For more information, call the Woestehoffs, 972-8509.

John Sokolich can be reached at [jsokolich@aztrib.com](mailto:jsokolich@aztrib.com) or at 623-876-2526.



# Handbell choir makes joyful yule noise

## Musicians fete silver anniversary

By BRITT KENNERLY  
Daily News-Sun staff

Members of the Handbell Ringers of Sun City are happy to chime in with news about the choir's silver anniversary and holiday concert.

The concert, scheduled for 2 p.m. Dec. 12 in United Church of Sun City, is part of the church's winter entertainment series, a holiday show and anniversary celebration, all rolled into one musical package.

"We'll be playing secular and religious Christmas music, with special guests The

**Bells themselves date back as far as 800 B.C., and were worn on the hems of robes during temple services.**

Carol Singers," said Pat Edris, the bell choir's director. "They're all Sun Citians, and they'll sing carols from around the world."

The bell group, which now boast 144 bells, was founded in 1967 by Jo Gerig, now deceased. Handbell Ringers, with both men and women, host rehearsals on Fridays in Fairway Recreation Center.

Bells themselves date back as far as 800 B.C., and were worn on the hems of robes during temple services, said Florence Goodrich, choir member.

The use of small bells, with handles, came centuries later in England. In the past two decades, however, bell choirs have become increasingly popular in churches around the world, and are now a common sound at church services, Goodrich said.

Zella Wilson of Sun City joined the group in its second year.

Now 85, Wilson, who moved to the Valley in 1954, remembers watching the group grow right along with Sun City and surrounding communities.

"It's a team effort," she said. "Everybody has to do their

part, or the music will fall to pieces."

Billie Boyle has played bells for 12 years, and enjoys the music and companionship of choir members.

"It's almost therapeutic," she said.

Wilson, too, thrives on the fellowship she and other ringers have cultivated over the years.

"Playing bells is something I found I could do pretty well," she said. "I haven't come to terms yet with the fact that

I'm an old lady, and the people here are just amazing."

Admission to the Handbell Ringers' holiday concert is free; free-will donations will be accepted. United Church of Sun City is at 11250 N. 107th Ave., Sun City. *OVER*





Members of the Handbell Ringers of Sun City, above, prepare for a holiday program during a rehearsal at Fairway Recreation

Center of Sun City. The choir, which is celebrating its silver anniversary, is directed by Pat Edris, pictured below.





# Too old to rock 'n' roll?

## Sun City rockers prove heavy metal not just for young

By ANNE RYMAN  
and KATHLEEN WINSTEAD  
Sun Cities Independent

Once a week, the wail of an electric guitar and the clash of a drum set can be heard coming from a home on Glen Oaks Circle in Sun City.

Is it a radio station gone awry? An intruder? Grandchildren who have taken over the house?

No. It's One Foot in the Grave, the first known rock group to feature two 75-year-old Sun City residents.

Twice a month throughout the Valley, the group performs a unique combination of "rock 'n' roll, heavy metal and Lawrence Welk," says vocalist Jo-Dina.

"Our lyrics are geared toward people over 40, and (our) music is geared toward people under 25," Jo-Dina says.

"So anybody can enjoy us because if you don't (like) the music, the lyrics are hysterically funny."

Many of the band's songs focus on the difficulties associated with aging, and include such titles as "Aches, Pains, Capital Gains," "Menopause," "I've Fallen and I Can't Get Up" and "I Hate to be



ANNE RYMAN/Sun Cities Independent

One Foot in the Grave, a Sun City rock band that plays a combination of heavy metal and punk music, proves one doesn't have to be a teen-ager to play or enjoy rock 'n' roll music. The band, featuring Sun Citizens Jo-Dina and Gavin Weiser, is a favorite among fans at Valley clubs and nightspots.

Sedated."

Jo-Dina speaks and shrieks such lyrics as "One foot in the grave/While the other one's still in bed/When I wake up movin'/That's when I know I ain't dead," from the

song titled "One Foot in the Grave."

Lead guitarist Danny Walters and drummer Gene Costa, both of Sun City, are already traveling a road to fame, and possibly fortune,

with the six-year-old band as a result of their collaboration with bassist Gavan Wieser, 49, Jo-Dina, 53, and guitarist Mike Genova, 20.

See ■ GRAVE, Page B6



The band's first album, titled "Looking Good ... Who's Your Embalmer?" is set for release this month on the Triple Nixxon label, a subsidiary of Triple X Records. Two more albums are planned, Mr. Wieser says, and members are upbeat about the band's future.

"I want to keep playing 'til I die," says Mr. Costa, a retired court reporter who didn't take up drums until age 60.

"We want to get a tour and a sponsor. I don't care though, I'm having fun. The biggest charge is playing for young people. It keeps you alive."

Mr. Walters, who for 20 years was Lawrence Welk's music arranger, says he never dreamed he'd be playing this type of music.

The "younger" group members have nothing but praise for the eldest members of the band.

"Danny and Gene are so open-minded," Mr. Wieser says. "Danny is a great musician and he plays in half a dozen other bands. The stuff he does is really amazing."

Jo-Dina attributes the group's success, in part, to Mr. Costa and Mr. Walters. She says she thinks their age, as well as their skill, contribute to the band's uniqueness.

"There's a lot of bands out there, and what you need is something different, and you've got to be entertaining," Jo-Dina says. "But I think the downright basic thing is to leave everyone smiling, leave everyone having a good time."

Although Sun City is best known for its early-to-bed, early-to-rise philosophy, band members joke that the noise doesn't bother people — "because neighbors turn off their hearing aids at 8 p.m. anyway."

"(The band was) a little worried at first what the neighbors would think, but when we go home from rehearsal, they're all waving," Mr. Walters says.

One Foot in the Grave is the brainchild of Jo-Dina, who originally set out to form an "all-girl" band consisting of older, retired women.

"I was out dancing — punk rock dancing — and I was listening to these punk rock singers and they all had Philadelphia accents, and they couldn't sing," says former Philadelphian Jo-Dina.

"And so I like to see people have a good time, plus it's fun for me to be having my own good time and be entertaining at the same time. I knew a lot of ladies my age and I said I could sing songs about kids driving us crazy."

When Jo-Dina discovered that her peers thought her musical tastes somewhat bizarre, she placed an ad in the newspaper seeking retired musicians.



One Foot in the Grave is, from left, standing, Danny Walters and Gavin Wieser, Gene Costa, sitting, and Jo Dina.

"I said if your music career has been put on hold, I was interested," she says. "I told them it was something new and different. It had to be people who were older. And out of the 12 people (who initially responded), 10 of them were country players. They looked at me like I was evil. (But) Gene (Costa) has been with me ever since."

"We went through a (lot) of musicians. Gene recruited Danny. Gene has brought in a lot of people from Sun City who just sit in. They say 'I'd love to play with you, but you don't play out enough.' If our album does well, you're not going to have to work more than two nights a month."

Unlike most bands that perform whenever the opportunity arises, One Foot in the Grave performs

only twice a month.

"We only do two (performances) a month because it's a specialty act, and I guess we really don't need the money," Jo-Dina says.

The band's popularity soared in 1991, Mr. Wieser says, when the group made its television debut on KTSP-TV (Channel 10).

"It broke in April '91," he says. "We got on television. Channel 10 did a special on us doing our album. (But) we actually cut a whole new album (afterward)."

Since then, the group has appeared on "Entertainment Tonight," "Inside Edition," "A Current Affair," "The Montel Williams Show," "Sally Jessy Raphael" and four local television stations. One Foot in the Grave has also been featured in numerous publications such as *People* magazine, the German edition of *Elle* and a Moscow newspaper in Russia, Mr. Wieser says.

Mr. Costa, a widower, says his wife would have approved of his rock 'n' roll lifestyle. But Mr. Walters says his wife is not fond of the type of music the band performs.

"She likes songs like 'It Had to be You,'" he says. Mr. Wieser's wife, Carol, says she was shocked the first time she heard the band.

"The first song I heard was 'Menopause' and I thought 'How do they have the nerve?'"

She soon grew to love listening to the band and has missed only one performance in six years.

Although One Foot in the Grave's music may not be particularly appealing to most Sun Citians,

the group has performed in the Sun City area, Jo-Dina says.

"We played at a retirement home," she says. "(The reaction)

was mixed. A lot of the ladies commented on my clothing. I had an outfit on that was all safety pins and they just loved that."

Sun City aside, One Foot in the Grave is a popular band no matter when it performs, attracting all ages to its shows.

Jo-Dina says she has a great deal of respect and admiration for Mr. Costa and Mr. Walters, whose musical expertise is not limited to One Foot in the Grave.

"Gene, he goes to nursing homes and helps people and feeds them," she says. "Danny goes to nursing homes and plays for them. Gene plays for them. They're fun to be around. When you get older, you've got to realize that what's going to keep you alive is having fun and laughing (at life)."



Popular with young and old alike, guitarist Danny Walters jams with 20-year-old Mike Genova.



# One Foot takes steps toward musical fame

By BRITT KENNERLY  
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Eddie Van Halen would never ask Sammy Hagar if his dungarees look OK, but if you're almost 75 years old and a member of a Sun City punk rock group, you can call your pants anything you want.

And you can call your band One Foot in the Grave.

Now, hanging around with the members of One Foot is sometimes, well, about as exciting as swilling a big glass of Met-amucil.

But the gang is loathe to grab hot water bottles and head for the home.

After a recent appearance on "Entertainment Tonight" and being interviewed for the Sept. 16 issue of People magazine, they're kicking up their amps for a Wednesday appearance at Anderson's Fifth Estate in Scottsdale and a Sept. 11 gig at Chuy's in Tempe.

When the Daily News-Sun first contacted members of the group 14 months ago, the band was an unheard-of living room combo.

Thursday, they were mugging



Daily News-Sun photo by Stephen Chernes

**CLOSE-UP** — Sun City guitarist Danny Walters comes face to face with Tomo Mishikawa's lens during a rehearsal of the Northwest Valley musical group One Foot In The Grave for a Japanese television show.

in style as they played hosts to members of a film crew representing Japanese production company Soto Group International. Based out of Los Angeles, the crew set up cameras in drummer Gene Costa's Sun City

home.

Costa, a 74-year-old native New Yorker with a strong accent and an "Elvis Lives" jacket over a plaid sport shirt, strolled around the house trying to say

See Japanese, A6

## Japanese film crew marvels at Sun Citians

By BRITT KENNERLY  
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — By the time a Japanese film production crew left Sun City Thursday, they were wearing Junior Posse badges and shaking their heads in amusement.

The crew, on a shoot for the Los Angeles office of Soto Group International, spent the day interviewing "not-so-usual" Sun City residents for a quiz show based in Tokyo.

"I'm so impressed — I may come back and live here in 40 years," said free-lance reporter Junki Okado. "The people dress so nice. I even saw a woman in a miniskirt."

Okado, a director and two cameramen filmed Sun City Posse Commander Jack Goodrich and posse members Dorothy Olmstead and Jack Best; Foofie Harlan and Geri

Parker, 76-year-old members of the Sun City Poms pompon squad; and punk rock group One Foot in the Grave, which boasts two 74-year-old Sun City musicians.

The team was sent to Sun City after Okado's boyfriend saw One Foot in the Grave on "Entertainment Tonight," she said.

"We wanted to talk to older people who are not so usual," she said.

Okado oohed and aahed over acrobatic poses struck in a calendar featuring the over-60 poms and clapped her hands and said "Cool!" while listening to a rehearsal of One Foot in the Grave.

Few senior citizens in Japan are like those she met while touring Sun City, Okado said.



—From A1

"Good morning" in Japanese. (By the way, that's Ohayo, pronounced almost like Ohio.)

Danny Walters, also 74 and one of the group's guitarists, was decked out in a black Garzone Funeral Home T-shirt, a beige straw hat and sport pants — until he decided on holey dungarees.

Walters, a retired musician until One Foot in the Grave picked up his option, worked for 20 years as a music arranger for the bubble-meister himself, Lawrence Welk. Costa didn't learn to play drums until after celebrating his 60th birthday.

The two senior citizens are bewildered at the attention they get from young fans, they said — but they eat it up.

While on stage at a Tempe nightclub, young people "went bananas," rushed the stage and started grabbing for Costa's and Walters' arms, Costa said.

"They acted like they'd never touched an old man before," he said.

"Old men feel just the same as anybody else," Walters said. "At first it seemed like a set up, but then we figured, if it was, it was OK."

Impending stardom has that wild and crazy Walters staying up a tad past his usual 8:30 p.m. bedtime.

"Sometimes I stay awake 'til 9 if my wife doesn't know it," he said.

Enter keyboard player Gavin Wieser, whose idea of having a good time is to sit down and

write a song. Wieser, a Glendale resident, is a veteran keyboard player and composer. By One Foot standards, at 48, he's a mere child.

"Mrs. Fletcher's Theme (I've Fallen And I Can't Get Up)" is a real rocker, Wieser said.

"Remember the lady on the commercial, the one who said 'I've fallen, and I can't get up?'" Wieser said. "This one's for her."

*I'd let you in but you're just out of luck*

*You see I've fallen and I can't get up ...*

*I hit the button on this beeper here*

*The house fills up and I offer them beer*

*They say "It's off to the hospital now"*

*I say "Oh man! Don't have a cow!"*

The group has hired a new guitarist, "a guy named Wayne Lien, a baby — he's about 22," Costa said. Lien missed Thursday's filming.

"Hey! Let's do a song we can do without him," said lead singer/screamer Jo Dina Erichetti, a 51-year-old ex-mortician with a penchant for sarcasm, tight jeans, sparkly vests and flip hairdos.

She's still working, selling maps, atlases and science materials, but she's getting some help from two sons.

"I've worked too hard to build up the business to give up the day job," she said — promptly before breaking into "Let's Get Crazy."



# Sun City's concert band is a hard-working group

By Paul Markey  
For Arizona Senior World

It's billed as "the oldest band in the world." But that distinction doesn't refer to the number of years the Sun City Concert Band has existed; rather, it's the age of its players, now averaging 71 years young.

Louis Armstrong once said, "musicians don't retire. They stop playing when there's no more music in them."

Ten years ago, Clarney Wolf decided there was a lot more music left in Sun City, so he organized a concert band with 20 members.

He was the first conductor and, at 76, still plays in the band along with five other originals, two of whom — Wilbur Smith and Hy Parks — are in their 80s. The oldest current member is trombonist Bud Pontow, 85.

The band has grown to 75 musicians, including eight women. And expansion is key to the plans of the conductor, Walter Moeck.

"I hope to expand both the repertoire of music we play and the area the band will perform in, outside of Sun City, around Arizona," the maestro said.

He is adding more classics to the usual program of show tunes and Sousa marches.

Also Moeck, who was named conductor last year, is working diligently to enhance the musical level of the band. For this task, he brings a wealth of musical talent and experience.

He was born into a musical family in Milwaukee, Wis., 67 years ago. "My parents had an orchestra, so I was surrounded by instruments from the beginning," Moeck recalled. "They bought me a concertina at age 4; then it was piano at 7 and trumpet at 9."

His expertise on the trumpet propelled him into the limelight at an early age. At 11, he was trumpet soloist with the WTMJ radio orchestra touring the mid-west theater circuit.

At 15 he won a first place in national instrumental competition, and two years later he was playing first trumpet in the Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra.

Following graduation from the prestigious Eastman School of Music and the University of Iowa, Moeck became a protege of world-renowned conductor Pierre Monteux. His talent led to



**WALTER MOECK**, left, Sun City Concert Band conductor, as he is today, and, at right, as he was 25 years ago when conducting the Alabama Pops Symphony Orchestra.

his selection as a guest conductor with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra in 1953.

About that time, the conductor returned to Birmingham, Ala., to launch a new orchestra and a new program that would gain international prominence.

Moeck said, "I wanted to reach the grassroots of the community and bring good music to the 99 percent of the people who had been deprived of hearing live concerts."

Lacking public finances, Moeck walked the streets soliciting donations from businessmen. "I even took out a personal loan to buy sheet music for the orchestra," he said. "But the struggle was well worth it; I would do it all over again."

So the Alabama Pops Symphony began with outdoor performances, and attendance soon numbered 7,000, large classical audiences considering Birmingham's size.

The success of these concerts brought Moeck a "Life Fellow" award from the International Institute of Arts and Letters in Zurich, Switzerland. Only one other conductor, William Steinberg of the Pittsburgh Symphony, received that high honor in 1963.

In 1977, the maestro moved to Los Angeles, where he founded the San Fernando Valley Theater of Performing Arts, serving as musical director and conductor until moving to Sun City in 1988.

"I thought I would be out of the musical mainstream here," Moeck said, "but I'm finding many outlets for my first love, conducting."

In addition to the Sun City position, Moeck is musical direc-

tor and conductor of the Fine Arts Orchestra of Scottsdale. This classical group of 25 strings holds eight concerts a season around the Valley.

Although the Sun City Concert Band conductorship is voluntary, Moeck feels constrained to adequately prepare his musicians for the 10 concerts each year. To that end, he has added weekly rehearsals for instrumental sections beyond the weekly full band practices.

Ann Woestehoff, concert band president and percussionist, announced the following schedule of concerts in Sun City:

Jan. 17, 3 p.m., Thunderbird Plaza; Feb. 25, 6 p.m., Sunflower RV Resort, El Mirage; Mar. 25, 3 p.m., Sundial Auditorium; Apr. 8 (Palm Sunday), 3 p.m., Congregational Church; Apr. 24, 7:30 p.m., Sundial Auditorium.



# Conductor stays cool

## Finds low-key approach with musicians works best

By DOUG DOLLEMORE  
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — One day when Walter Moeck wasn't looking, the music just rolled away.

In 1947, Moeck (pronounced Mack) was playing trumpet in an orchestra at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y. The group was playing a new piece by Heitor Villa-Lobos live on a network radio show when Moeck's score rolled off his music stand.

"Villa-Lobos had delivered the music all rolled up, so it tended to roll up that way. It was hard to keep on the stand," Moeck said. "I was just about to begin my solo when the thing rolled up, rolled off the stand and rolled across the floor into the cello section. Fortunately, I had practiced the piece so much that I had it memorized. I could have panicked and lost my cool, but I didn't."

Moeck, the new conductor of the Sun City Concert Band, has rarely lost his cool during his 50-year career as a musician.

"Sometimes when people make the same mistake several times, it gets frustrating. But I try to control it," Moeck said in a recent interview. "I'm kind of an energetic conductor, but I don't get violently angry like some conductors do. Toscanini was a great conductor, but he had a short wick when it came to his temper. I'd say my wick is about in the middle of the road. I try to maintain good morale in the orchestra."

The 66-year-old conductor began his career in Milwaukee, Wis. He began playing the piano when he was 7. Two years later, he began playing the trumpet. By the time he was 11, Moeck was playing in studio and theater bands throughout Milwaukee.

"I was something of a child prodigy," Moeck said. "I could play practically anything by ear after hearing it once."

At 17, he joined the Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra. During World War II, he was musical

director and conductor of an Army concert band and orchestra. He graduated from the Eastman School of Music in 1947, and earned a master's degree from the University of Iowa in 1955.

Since then, he has guest conducted the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Repertoire Symphony Orchestra, New Orleans Philharmonic and Burbank (Calif.) Symphony Orchestra.

He was the founder and musical director of the Alabama Pops Symphony Orchestra and founder of the San Fernando Valley (Calif.) Theater of the Performing Arts.

He taught at the University of Alabama, the University of Iowa and Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

In 1963, he was named a life fellow by the International Institute of Arts and Letters in Zurich, Switzerland. He was only one of two American conductors honored that year by the institute.

He moved to Sun City West in March, but he continues to be conductor of the American Philharmonic in Los Angeles.

"He's good because he knows how the music is supposed to go; not all conductors can do that. It's that simple," said Johnny Jacobs, a former student of Moeck's who is now supervisor of bands for a school district in Birmingham, Ala. "He's a good motivator. He knows how to get the most out of musicians."

Harrison "Bing" Price, president of the Sun City Concert Band, agrees.

"He's excellent," Price said. "Our only problem might be holding him back. We need a mix of classical and popular music to appeal to Sun Citians. But I think he'll tend to get us involved in some heavy stuff and our audience isn't going to go for it."

"I think we're going to have to give him some guidance. I don't think he's aware of what Sun Citians prefer."

But Moeck said he knows Sun Citians want more than just classical music.

"A conductor has to let his hair down," Moeck said. "He can't be a purest. He can't say, 'OK, we're going to play this and to hell with the audience.' He has to program lighter stuff, too."

Moeck also said he has to be easier on older musicians than younger ones.

"A kid is like a sponge. You tell him something and he'll do it. It's just like he absorbs everything you say," Moeck said. "But an older person has done it that way for years and years. If you push him too hard to change, he won't be back."

During a recent rehearsal, Moeck patiently led the concert band through a rendition of the "St. Louis Blues March." The band, which had only played the song twice before, was having difficulty.

"Watch your triplets. Keep your time," Moeck shouted as sour notes floated out of the sea of instruments around him. Then when the band finished, he smiled and quickly offered his assessment.

"You've got to work on that. All these triplets have to come out," he said. "I'm not hearing any of them. Let's try it once more, people."

Then irritated because some band members were talking among themselves, Moeck said, "Let's have a little cooperation, OK?"

"He has quite a bit of respect among the band members," Price said. "When he says 'Shut up,' we shut up."

But Moeck believes that good conductors can get the best out of their musicians without saying a word.

"A good conductor can convey how he wants that music to feel without saying a word," Moeck said. "If the orchestra feels that, the audience will feel it, too. That's communication. Those are the kind of concerts you go to and everybody gets goose bumps. That's what conducting is all about."

OVER





News-Sun photo by Stephen Chernick

**NEW CONDUCTOR** — Walter Moeck leads the Sun City Concert Band in a rehearsal at Marinette Recreation Center. Moeck, 66, is

the new conductor of the band. Moeck, who began his musical career at age seven, describes himself as a child prodigy.



# Rhythm Ramblers beat out

DEC 11 1969

By THELMA HEATWOLE

A3 - Republic  
Dec. 11, 1969

## tunes Sun City loves to hear

SUN CITY — Drummer Joe Sivoneck, 75, tapped out the beat on the battered drum he played in the Vaughn Monroe Band, and the foot tapping Rhythm Ramblers plunged musically into "April Showers."

The skilled Ramblers, ages 62 to 80, were rehearsing the pop tunes of yesterday. The Town Hall air jumped with the Roaring Twenties tunes, then soothed down as the musicians swung into the cool "Bye, Bye Blues."

Joe's 48-year-old drum was collapsible, great in the days it rode on the car runningboard when the Monroe band took to the road in cross-country tours.

Sivoneck's music hey day was in the era of the hot tunes "Barney Google" and "Yes, We Have No Bananas." His starting wage was \$6 a night, the union scale then for three hours.

Max Flinner, 80, the champion pork producer in Kansas in 1931, is the senior member of the band, "But," said Flinner, "I may be senior in age, but I'm young in heart."

Flinner, a violinist, takes a lot of ribbing, but his band back in Leavenworth, Kan., actually had no relation to the federal penitentiary.

"I'm the bad boy," Flinner quipped. "Everyone asks how long I've been out. I tell them I'm on parole."

Flinner beams when the Ramblers play "Margie" and "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home," the hit songs in his band playing days. Max was playing foxtrots and waltzes at the Ivanhoe Temple in Kansas City when he met his wife, Evelyn.

The Ramblers, playing jazz, show tunes and polkas — perform regularly at Sun City barbecues, Newcomer parties (for new residents of Sun City), local parades and military events. They were featured entertainment three years ago at the Arizona State Fair.

Newcomers, hailing from all parts of the country, find the Rambler's "Writing Love Letters in the Sand," and "Yes, Sir That's My baby," a common denominator.

Banjoist Bill Ring, who vocalizes "When You're Smiling," was a baker for 50 years for the Sunshine Biscuit Co. He once had a Hillbilly Band in the Ozarks.

George Mitchell adding the base guitar to the Rambler band, was an infantryman in World War I. He played the mandolin on the ship going to France with the troops and in military hospitals "over there."

Some Ramblers had stopped playing

their musical instruments decades before retiring to Sun City. Asked why they played in this band, Mitchell was quick to speak out, "Music is in our blood."

"It's in our hearts," added Ring. Jo Horn, the pianist, her former Hillbilly band played on radio in New York, rehearsed "Peg O'My Heart," then sang the lyrics.

"That's great, Jo," a Rambler said. "Don't be afraid to let it out."

Accordianist Margaret Schilling is a church organist, and Darrell Cressy, 75, the band leader, formerly directed the 75-piece All Nations Arsenal Band of Davenport, Iowa.

The players represent many professions. Violinist Charles Kemper was a civil engineer; Lyle Landon, worked 40 years with Sinclair Refining Co., and Henry Romain, the Ramblers' business manager, was a post office superintendent in Seattle.

Walt Eitzman, a former major with the St. Louis police force, plays the violin. Harold Yonk had a municipal band in Burlington, Wis., for 35 years.

Dr. A.D. Brukema has the distinction of playing with the Clyde McCoy band, famous for its Sugar Blues in 1932, and violinist Elmer Webster plays the French horn with the Sun City Symphony orchestra.

The Ramblers "know their stuff." Put

together they spell harmony and a nostalgic venture into old music favorites, the tunes that Sun Citians and a host of others love to hear.

And the musicians have fun along the way.

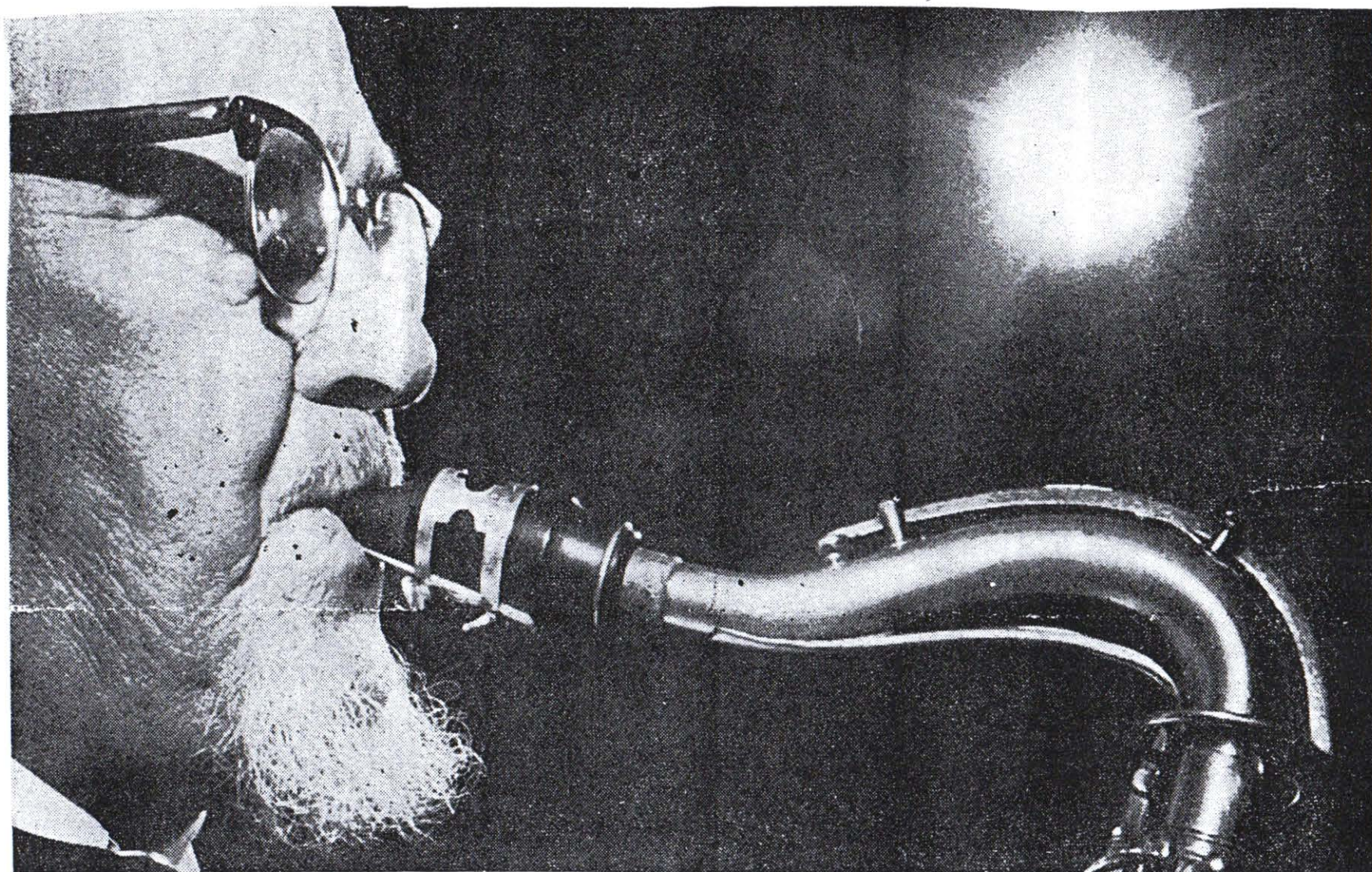
Take W. Fred Blechschmidt, who helped put automation on the linotype machines at the New York Times. Because of his Van Dyke-type beard, Fred is dubbed the Colonel Sanders of the music bunch.

Says Fred:

"One of the saxophone boys leaned forward to get a better look at the notes. In so doing his toupe fell into the horn.

"Since then, he's been blowing his top."





Republic Photos by Walt Johnson

Fred Blechschmidt worked on linotype machines at the New York Times, now plays saxophone in Sun City





Retired civil engineer Charles Kemper plays violin in Rhythm Ramblers





Joe Sivoneck beats out tunes he played in the old Vaughn Monroe band





Darrell Cressy and his trumpet help bring back the smooth melodies of swing





The Sun City crowd loves "Peg O' My Heart" and "Barney Google"