

In the fall of 1996, a group was playing tennis in Sun City West. While they were playing, two professional photographers were at the courts taking their pictures. When asked where they were from, they said they were from a French health magazine based in Paris and that they were videotaping the lifestyle in the Sun Cities, Arizona, U.S.A. The program would be televised later on Channel France 3. One of the tennis players, Jim Acker, asked the date it would appear on TV, and he contacted several of his distant cousins in Strasbourg, Alsace, France to be sure one of them would tape the program. He has received this tape. It is a 60-minute news-type program, all in French. About 20 minutes of this 60-minute video cassette shows different people engaged in various activities in the Sun Cities and in France. Jim had 40 minutes eliminated, with only the 20 minutes mostly about the Sun Cities appearing on the new cassette. He then had Helene Patterson, who lives in Sun City West and is a native of France, translate the French to English.

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Keys to aging gracefully.

(French retiree comments): "If I had to go to a retirement home, that would be the end of my life. The essential is to continue to have good morale." 1st little girl: "When I get old I will have plenty of free time." 2nd little girl: "I will try to retain the same attitude I had when I was young. It's not because you are old that you should think that you can do nothing." Bernard Colnot: "Now things are different but we continue our normal style of life—" Mme Colnot: "Life goes on; we don't think about it. Our children say we are crazy, but also that we're terrific." "Dusty" (USA): "People say we come here to die, but that's not true. We came here to live. We add years to our lives. No more stress, no worries, no violence, no snow to take care of—it's a more relaxing life."

Prof. Francoise Forette, Broca Hospital, Paris: "Is there a universal recipe for getting old? The only recipe for that is to have the will to live. I think it's important that you foresee the type of life you want to have. If not, you are at the mercy of what people choose for you. When, at age 60 or 65, you live on the sixth floor in a beautiful apartment in Montmartre, climbing six floors gives you the exercise you need. If you remain in that apartment until you're 80, and then perhaps have some slight heart trouble, you realize you can no longer live in that apartment. While you are still in your sixties, you need to try to anticipate the type of life you will have after 80, to foresee the type of life that will be possible considering whatever handicaps you may have."

Such is the golden rule for retirement communities that have, for the past twenty years, flourished in the heart of the Arizona desert. (Scene at breakfast table) "We came here two years ago. We spent a week in Sun City and a week in Sun City West, a town for retired people only. We liked it. It's quiet, no violence, very clean. We decided to sell our house in Michigan and move here."

(Narrator): Today in general seniors account for more than twenty percent of the population. In 2015 this figure will be 40 percent, and the third millennium will be the one of retired people. In the course of the last fifty years, life expectancy went from 55 to 73 years for men and from 61 to 81 for women. This is a new generation, the senior generation.

The best guarantee of good retirement is physical activity. (Question to Andrew M.): How long have you played tennis? "I started tennis a year ago." Do you think it's good for your health? "Yes, I do." Do you like it? "Very much; it's good exercise. We play about two hours a day."

Dr. Forette: "Physical activity is very important but it becomes more important when you get older, for several reasons. The first is that it helps you to maintain good muscular strength, helps you to avoid falls, and allows you to function in life—to walk, to run, to run after a bus, to climb stairs, etc. Second, it helps you to avoid many illnesses, especially cardiovascular diseases."

Man in golf car: "There's lots to do in this town. We can do almost anything we want. We get up at 6:30 or 7 in the morning, spend some time in the pool, golf sometimes. There are seven golf courses, of which only three are private for members only."

Dr. Forette again: "Not liking to move could be a great handicap when you get older. Two reasons: lack of activity brings on bad consequences. And the less

you move, the less you want to do things. The less one moves the less one is mobile, able to walk, cycle, swim, to participate in collective life."

Nancy Dewhurst with Jazzercise class; narrator's comment: Sun City West welcomes 40,000 seniors. It offers all the activities they could dream of—a veritable village of grown-up children. Here everything is designed to escape boredom. They engage in activities that enable them to live better, longer and in better shape. This conception of life tends to apply to those whose circumstances are financially and intellectually favorable.

Helene Patterson: What prompted you to come here? "Connecticut is beautiful, it's cold, there's snow; we wanted a place where it's warmer. My husband's parents had retired in Arizona and every year we'd come to visit. We looked around and thought, why not? And since Sun City West is a region for older folks, we decided to come here."

Man's comments: "In general, it's a very good place considering all the activities. It's after having been invited here for a week by the Del Webb Co. that the majority buy their house. You have to be older than 55 and retired. Houses cost between 500,000 and 2,000,000 francs. Once they are settled, residents can, for 600 francs a year, use all the facilities. In all 200 clubs are available, meaning that one can discover hidden talents." Question: Do you come here every day? "I try to. I cannot come here as often as I would like; my wife finds all sorts of things for me to do, such as going shopping. Card game question and comment: When you live in a town which is only for older people, don't you have the feeling of living in a ghetto? HRP: "Some people might say it's like living in a prison, or as you say, a sort of ghetto. But in this community we don't think of it as such. This is a place we chose; we weren't obliged to come here. There are probably some people who don't like it. In France, maybe it wouldn't work. It's a question of mentality."

Dr. Forette: "I don't think it's a type of ghetto in their way of thinking. In the USA the mobility is such that, because of the size of the country, family members do not live close to one another. Children live in different towns and states and people are used to that type of life. Maybe it is better to live in a retired community than isolated in a regular town, in short a type of life distinctively USA, which we will not see in France."

Bustour, back in France: In France there are usually associations which organize activities for senior citizens. (Colnot couple) "We make of our retirement the logical extension of our life. We were very active in our working life, so we chose to be very active in retirement. We don't feel old. No longer being engaged in professional activity doesn't mean we have to stop all activity. Since we are still able physically and intellectually, we say use our faculties; don't go to seed."

Dr. Forette: "Many people older than sixty have become involved in altruistic endeavors. We've seen this in the rapid growth of two types of associations, some purely for leisure, or organized for humanitarian reasons, either within this country or outside of it."

Several times during the year such groups may go through France to meet other retired people of the same type. One of these groups travels to Aurillac in Auvergne to visit a group of retirees who are helping to repair and recondition motorbikes. The reconditioned bikes are not sold but are put at the disposition of younger people who need transportation while looking for work.

USA: In retirement communities, a certain form of volunteerism develops. In Boswell Hospital one out of four employees is a volunteer. Recognizable by their green jackets, they are everywhere—at the reception desk, performing numerous services such as delivering medications, entertaining patients.

Organist: "At mealtimes, when I am playing, they come to the room. They seem to enjoy it; I think it changes their state of mind." Do you enjoy it? "Yes, a lot. Besides, I've been playing organ since I was a little girl."

It is thanks to such volunteers that Sun City has such a good hospital. Money saved by volunteer work is almost totally invested in hospital equipment. The seven operating suites are well equipped and there are plenty of doctors, so that all types of surgery can be done on site, under the best possible conditions. We must say that most of the retirees in Sun City, and in the US in general, are all well motivated in their efforts to improve their state of health.

Woman runner: "I run six kilometers a day for 40 minutes. I'll be sixty next month." Did you mention this to your doctor? "Yes. That's why I started because my cholesterol level was too high. And I was too heavy. For the past two years I have been in training and I've already lost 15 kilos and my cholesterol has gone down. I am very satisfied with my present state of health."

Palm Ridge Track: Not everyone aged 60 is capable of running in a marathon. And since in the Sun Cities everything is foreseen, for less sports oriented persons they provide an enclosed air-conditioned walking track because of the high summer temperatures in Arizona.

"I had bypass surgery in 1992; I was stressed out by work, stressed out all the time. Now I am free of all stress. I want to enjoy the rest of my life. I still may have 30 years left. By then I'll be 98."

Dr. Forette: "It is very important, after a certain age, to know one's state of health and the risk factors regarding certain disabling illnesses which one can avoid. I think that this is the key to good aging. You have to avoid cardiovascular diseases, know your blood pressure, your lipids, your cholesterol, your weight, your risk of osteoporosis, and, for a woman, how to treat menopause, since we know that estrogen treatment helps to avoid osteoporosis and fractures of the spinal column. In a word, we have our health in our two hands."

Posse. Sun Citians do know they have their health in their hands and they leave nothing to chance. Whereas there is much insecurity all over the US, in Sun City criminality is almost zero—an occasional theft of golf equipment here and there. If the town is secure it's because of the 480-member posse. They were former businessmen, professors, doctors, orthodontists, like Henry. Today, they take turns patrolling the town.

"The main responsibility of a posse is to patrol the town, to observe what does not seem normal. Most of the retired people here have new cars; if you see an old car, you know in general that it's not from here. In that case we start to watch it. Certain simple but effective ideas should serve as examples. We advise residents to put in this bottle a list of all medications for both husband and wife and keep it in the refrigerator. In an emergency many people do not remember what they are supposed to take. This way we have a list of medications we can give to the medics so they know exactly what the patient should take or has taken."

Entrance of SCW. Protected behind their clean walls and their model homes, using one activity after another to escape boredom and solitude,

reassured by the close presence of medical help, the inhabitants of the Sun Cities consider that they have created a paradise on earth. Being far from their children and from homes where they lived for many years does not seem to affect them.

Gardener. "I've made a lot of friends here, who garden with me. They give me a lot of advice because it's the first time I have rented a garden of this type. It was hard to leave Michigan because we had a lot of friends there. Our children no longer live just in Michigan; one of our daughters lives in Chicago, the other in Lansing. The kids left us, so we must take care of ourselves, so we came here."

Dr. Kowelski. Depression is common here. People have left their roots. They form new friends here, but their families are not here. Doctors recognize that people live longer but depression is more common in spite of all the amenities provided by the community.

Cemetery (Angelo). Away from their families, seniors have decided to take care of every eventuality.

"Since our children are all over the country, my wife and I decided five years ago to take care of our funeral arrangements. We arranged everything. We bought a crypt and paid ahead of time. Someday my wife and I will be buried here—first one casket, then the other. Everything is settled: caskets, religious service, everything foreseen, arranged, prepaid. This is our second home."

Sun City: A model for the world

Now 50, retirement community continues to inspire imitators

By Sherry Anne Rubiano and Cecilia Chan
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

At 50, Sun City is still turning heads.

The community that revolutionized how people lived out their retirement years now thrives as an international model that spans continents, cultures and languages.

There are hundreds of Sun City-inspired re-

tirement communities throughout the United States and in other countries, including Japan, Spain, England and China.

Retirees in England play croquet. In Japan, they live in high-rises with rooftop pools. The elderly in China, where multigenerational households were the norm, are moving into enclaves of their own.

Each country has a unique sense of place, a twist on the tradition of Sun City. But from one end of the world to the other, the communities



Active-adult communities modeled after Sun City have popped up around the world, like this one in England.

COMING SUNDAY

Retirees share their stories of living the good life in Sun City.

MEDIA MATTERS

See **SUN CITY** Page A14

Retirement community inspires global imitators

SUN CITY

Continued from A1

have at least one thing in common with the Arizona original: Only those of a certain age are privileged to live there.

Sun City, world model

Think of Sun City like a top fashion model. People study her, gaze at her, try to copy her look, all in the hope that they, too, can become like her. Especially when that model makes money.

"Competitors started to see the opportunities," said Michelle Mace-Basha, an Arizona State University faculty associate at the W.P. Carey School of Business, who has watched Sun Cities proliferate



HALF CENTURY MORE

Residents at Sun City Kanagawa, a 400-unit tower in the suburbs of Tokyo, enjoy a music concert. Amenities at the community include a library and rooftop swimming pool.

Innovative concept

The innovative concept of an active-adult community that landed Del E. Webb on the cover of *Time* magazine as Man of the Year in 1962 has developed into a standard formula, easily adapted to differing climates and aging populations abroad, experts said.

The developments, including neighboring Sun City West, are age-restricted, usually 55 and older. They tout cleanliness, order, safety and connection to community.

A major selling point is the "active adult" feature, offering a wide range of activities that encourage a get-up-and-go lifestyle.

"(Sun City) is really the model the industry worldwide has built on," said David Collins, chairman of Active Living International, a consultant group that works with developers of active-adult and assisted-living facilities.

Residents at Sensara, the first active-adult community in Spain that Collins helped launch, are attracted to the lifestyle, much like Sun City residents are, Collins said.

"People from Northern Europe come to sunny Spain because they wanted to live in a community here with people of similar interests, of the same age," he said.

In Japan, independent-living retirement communities developed by Half Century More offer seniors a slew of activities. Sun City Kanagawa, a 400-unit tower in the suburbs of Tokyo, includes a library, social club, courtyard garden and swim-

Developers, government officials and filmmakers from cold North European countries like the Netherlands flock to the development in the Arizona desert to study the community's housing and residents.

Sun City has attracted visitors from Germany, Britain, Italy, Denmark, China and South Korea in just the past five months, said Paul Herrmann, executive director of the Sun City Visitors Center. It has happened so often since Sun City opened in 1960 that he rarely bothers to keep track of who is coming from where.

"We were the first," he said. "We have 50 years of success behind us."

Alex Sievers, a partner with an urban design, architecture and engineering consulting firm, has visited from the Netherlands a number of times.

Sievers said he was inspired by the recreation activities available in Sun City: swimming, squash and tennis, and hobby clubs like woodworking. He wants to use some of those elements in an age 55-plus housing development he is planning in the Netherlands.

"What we wanted to do, as in Sun City, is have more vitality, more activity, more than what we are used to in our country," Sievers said. "Our country is aging heavily. And senior residents ... want to be respected as persons who can be part of society, can be worthwhile in society."

light.

At Retirement Villages' 11 communities in England, croquet lawns and lawn bowling are mainstays for residents.

"I think there is international interest in new forms of housing as the population is aging and Western-style ways of working are making it more difficult to care for elders at home," ASU professor Vincent Waldron said.

Cultural differences

The focus on recreation and socializing is a common element here and abroad. But not all senior communities are alike.

Internationally, they have adapted to limited land, health-care needs and cultural influences.

Instead of one-story homes that stretch for miles of neighborhoods, Japan has senior-retirement high-rises with Ja-

panese baths, or ofuros. Cold climates in Canada translate to "elegant indoor living" with indoor pools, theaters, and game and computer rooms.

Jeremy Trasker, who heads health care in the British office of real-estate firm Colliers International, said communities in Britain tweaked the Sun City concept by adding a care component, such as assisted-living services.

"No one looks forward to spending time in a nursing home or hospital, but it is comforting to know that one is nearby," he said.

Retirement communities overseas showcase not only physical differences from Sun City but also changing cultures. In China, the one-child-per-family policy instituted more than three decades ago has meant a shift from multiple-generation households. There are no

larger enough children to share care for an aging parent.

Globalization also has changed matters, Collins said. Chinese who had worked and lived in Canada, Britain and the U.S. are returning home to China to retire. They expect a more Western lifestyle.

Active mode of living

Residents who live in active-adult communities, whether in Sun City, elsewhere in the United States or overseas, choose them for much the same reasons.

David Cawley and his wife, Susan, live in a retirement village in Hertfordshire, England. They moved seven years ago to Castle Village, a 55-plus community, to live closer to their children and for a more active lifestyle.

David, 75, plays games like whist, croquet and boules. He serves on the

committee of a film club. His wife rediscovered her taste for acting and helps cater social events.

"We also liked the idea of living in a larger, congenial community, and we now have far more good friends than we've had for very many years," David said.

Lia Jansen, 54, and her husband, Louis, 80, moved to Sol Andalusi Health & Spa Resort in southern Spain from the Netherlands. Their new home features leisure and sport amenities such as a spa, spinning, yoga, soccer and a movie theater.

"We lived in Holland," Lia said. "That is very cold and raining. Spain is sunny and warm weather. Yes, we are very happy."

Expansion of cities

Active-adult communities here and abroad are expected to expand as the world's population ages. Within two generations, people older than 60 will outnumber children younger than 14 for the first time in history, according to the United Nations.

On the horizon for copycat potential, ASU's Mace-Basha said, are master-planned communities that will include age-restricted neighborhoods to allow retirees to live near children and grandchildren, like Peoria's Vistan-cia.

The active lifestyle will be amped up as more fitness components, like nutritional analysis, are added.

Assisted-living facilities will likely be incorporated into retirement communi-

50 years ago, Sun City, Ariz., opened as the hot new model for U.S. retirement communities



LAURA SEGALL / FOR THE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Pat Maier (left) of Elkhorn and Ken Klein of Whitewater walk around their winter neighborhood in Sun City, Ariz., this week without need for snow boots.

Seniors still having fun in the sun

By **BILL GLAUBER**

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Sun City, Ariz. — Pat Maier is a snowbird.

Every autumn, the 72-year-old flees the cold of Elkhorn, Wis., and enjoys six months of leisure in Sun City. She walks along the broad streets, goes bowling at a local recreation center, and plays golf on courses that roll through neighborhoods like wall-to-wall carpeting.

The other day, she joined a golf foursome that included a 93-year-old man.

“He shot par on the first four holes,” Maier says. “He was a better golfer than me.”

Like the seniors who have flocked here for decades, Sun City is aging well. America’s first active adult community for retirees hits late middle age, turning 50 on Friday.

On Jan. 1, 1960, the modern way of American retirement was born with the opening of Sun City, a new community carved from the desert, 12 miles northwest of downtown Phoenix. The creation of the city was nothing less than a social phenomenon, a new way to live into old age.

Please see **RETIREMENT, 14A**

Golf cart crossing signs are visible in Sun City.

JSOnline.com

To view a slide show, visit www.jsoline.com/photos.



From page 1

RETIREMENT

Sun City turns 50 today

It was a different time, a different country. Dwight Eisenhower was in the White House. John F. Kennedy was on the cusp of announcing his historic candidacy. And Elvis Presley was in the midst of a two-year hitch in the U.S. Army.

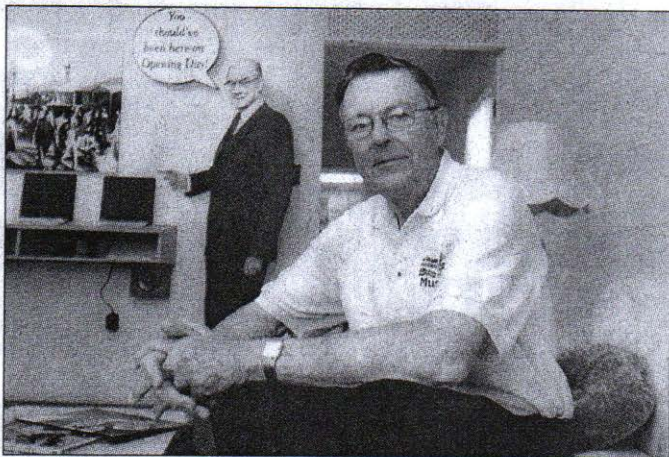
New York was still the country's most populous state as America's population surged to 179 million. There were 16 million Americans 65 years of age and older.

For many back then, the notion of a long, comfortable retirement was almost unheard of.

A half-century later, nearly everything has changed. The country's population has tilted west and south and soared to more than 300 million people. And the population of seniors age 65 and over reached 36.8 million.

Sun City grows up

Sun City, built over nearly two decades, has long since grown to full maturity with single-story homes, asphalt roads, shopping centers, condos, apartments, assisted-living facilities, a hospital, recreation centers and golf courses.



Ed Allen, 75, who moved to Sun City West in 1996 after retiring from Milwaukee's Allen-Bradley, volunteers at the historical society.

Around here, a second car is a golf cart and the cardiac softball tournament is open to guys with stents, bypasses and a history of cardiac events.

This is fun-in-the-sun for those 55 and over.

About 40,000 people live here now — median age 72 — some following in the footsteps of parents and grandparents who settled here decades before.

Rolling back through the years, the creation of Sun City appears so seamless now. The combination of demographics, pensions, increased life expectancy and the rise of jet-age travel triggered a new way to look at old age.

But in its time, Sun City was truly revolutionary. The first residents saw themselves as pioneers, even if they did swing golf clubs instead of axes.

It showed Americans that after a lifetime of work, you could break free of old homes, communities and

families, head to a warmer climate and navigate your way through the so-called golden years.

"It gave a whole new dimension of an active retirement," says Ed Allen, 75, a former Milwaukee resident who now volunteers at the Sun Cities Area Historical Society.

In 1996, Allen moved with his wife to Sun City West — the area's second big retirement community — two weeks after retiring as vice president of corporate communications from Allen-Bradley.

He's among thousands of former Wisconsin residents who have made their way here over the decades. The number of Wisconsin natives is so large that there is an annual Wisconsin Day celebration with bands, beer and brats.

A dream for the masses

Sun City wasn't America's first master-planned retirement community. But what

Sun City did was bring a dream of retirement to the masses through a combination of marketing savvy and heavy construction.

It was the brainchild of the Del E. Webb Development Co.

In his time, Del Webb was one of America's biggest movers and shakers, a 19th-century man who put his imprint on the 20th century.

Born in California in 1889, tall and lanky, an ex-semipro baseball player turned carpenter, Webb came to Phoenix after a serious bout of typhoid fever. He started a contracting business and struck it rich during World War II.

His firm built air bases, as well as a sprawling internment camp for Japanese Americans. Later, he helped put the glitz into Las Vegas, constructing the Flamingo, which was overseen by mobster Ben (Bugsy) Siegel. Webb was also part owner of the New York Yankees.

But Webb's lasting monument was Sun City and a brand of retirement communities planted throughout the United States. By 2001, the Del Webb Corp. was merged with Pulte Homes Inc.

Webb, who died in 1974, selected one of his company's vice presidents, Thomas E. Breen, to oversee the Sun City project. Breen consulted with experts in geriatrics, visited places such as St. Petersburg, Fla., where older people lived in rooming houses, and came up with plans for the new city.

Another Webb associate, John Meeker, enhanced the project by focusing on the sense of community with the addition of clubs that catered to the social needs and hobbies of the new residents.

"They realized that people didn't want to sit on their hands," Allen says. "They wanted an active, fun lifestyle."

Built on volunteers

At 8 a.m. on Jan. 1, 1960, Sun City opened to prospective buyers, with five model homes — priced from \$8,500 to \$11,750 — a shopping center and a golf course on display.

Over the first 72 hours, more than 100,000 people

wandered through the site and 237 homes were sold.

To see Sun City now, a half-century later, is to see what amounts to a 1960s-style development, with spacious lots and modest ranch homes, neighborhoods cloaked behind walls that hide major roadways.

But the essential ingredients of Sun City, both then and now, are the residents. They call this a city of volunteers, and for good reason. Sun City is unincorporated. Residents volunteer for everything from making sure the sidewalks are clean to joining a neighborhood watch group.

Decades after its founding, people still arrive.

Maier and her partner, Ken Klein of Whitewater, Wis., came here in 2001. She was drawn by memories of coming to Sun City years before, visiting an aunt and uncle with her children and her now-deceased husband. He was attracted by the warmth and the dozens of activities available, such as water aerobics and bowling.

"I grew up in Superior," Klein says. "I've been thinking about a warm-weather retirement for many, many years."

A new generation

Sun City is changing with the times. Several of the city's recreation centers have been modernized, huge pools, elaborate weight rooms and well-stocked craft shops drawing the athletic and the artistic. The new growth sport is mini-tennis, or pickle ball.

The housing bubble and bust hit here, too, though not as severely as the rest of Arizona.

"We bought a house two years ago before the big price slide," Klein says. "We paid \$189,000. If we got \$145,000 for it now, we'd be lucky."

But Klein doesn't plan on selling. He's poised for a long retirement.

The question that looms over Sun City is, how will

the community attract the next generation of retirees, the boomers?

Many boomers are still looking at depleted nest eggs, 401(k)s. The whole notion of a retirement built around an endless season of golf may not be as attractive to the boomers as it was to their parents and grandparents.

When can boomers retire?

R. Gillie Stephan Jr., 79, a Milwaukee native who has lived in Sun City since the 1980s and who runs the annual Wisconsin Day celebration, isn't sure the city will appeal to the boomers.

"I see them active in walking and exercising," he says. "They do not get into the clubs like woodworking or the metal shop. The boomers to me are independent."

He wonders whether the boomers will be able to retire anytime soon.

"Do they have the money to retire?" he says. "Will they have to get their Social Security and continue to work? I don't know. I came down here at 55. I don't think they'll do that."

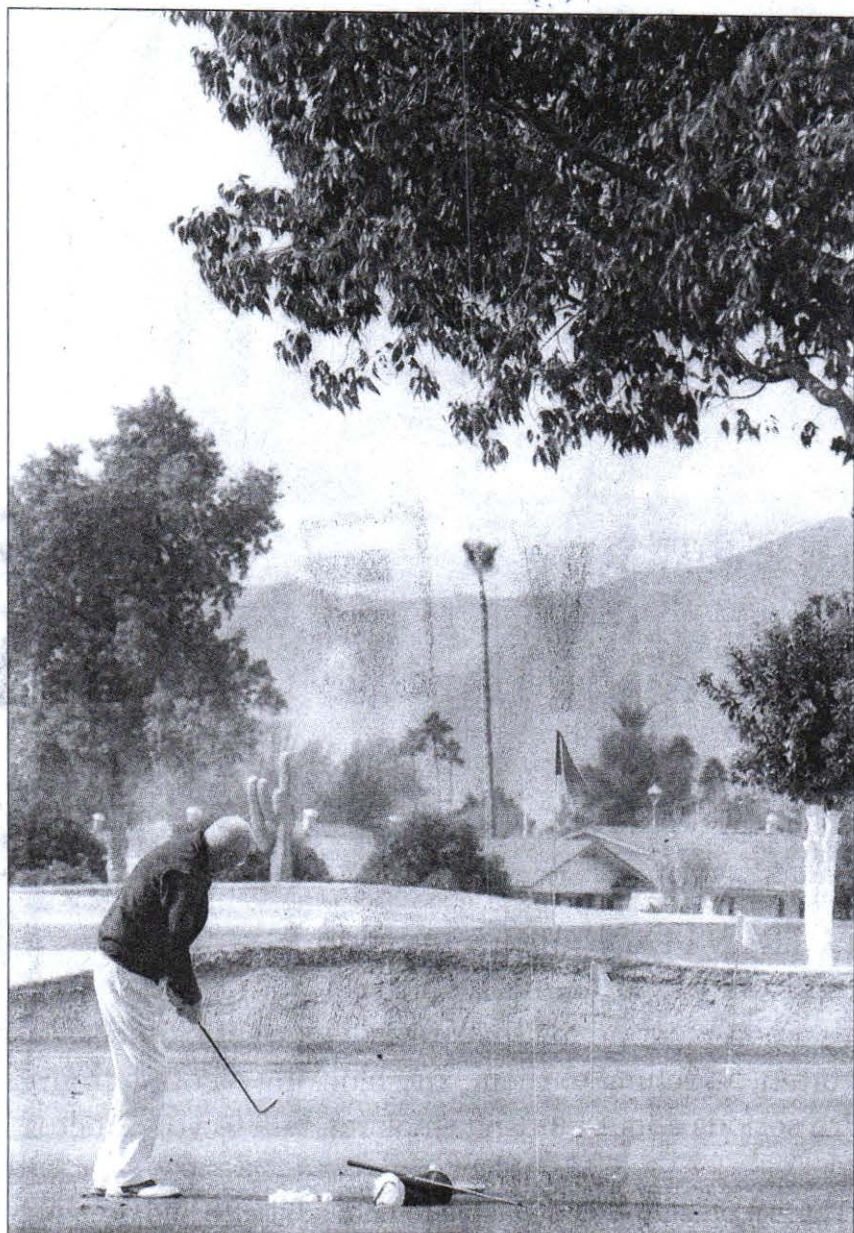
The new retirees also reflect a nation far more diverse than generations past. Sun City reflects an older, mainly white America.

Among the handful of African-Americans who have settled in Sun City is Vance Coleman, 79, a former Milwaukee resident who served in government and the military.

"This place hasn't been publicized too much," he says. "And it needs to be. Once people come here, they love it. It's clean, quiet, secure and inexpensive. The real selling point is the population. It's easy to get along here."

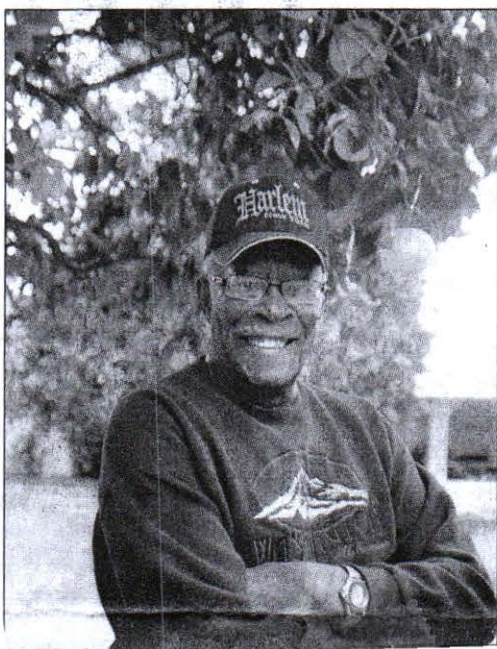
Coleman says the city's future remains bright because the formula for retirement works: sun, recreation and friendship.

"No snow and no stress," he says. "Gosh, it's just so relaxing."

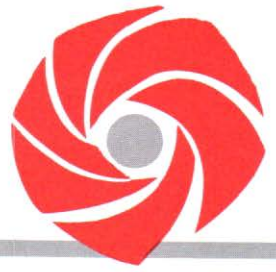


Laura Segall / For The Journal Sentinel

In balmy Sun City, it's not hard to find a place to play golf this week.



Vance Coleman, 79, a former Milwaukee resident who served in government and the military, says Sun City hasn't been publicized enough. "Once people come here, they love it," he says.



DEL WEBB'S
Sun City

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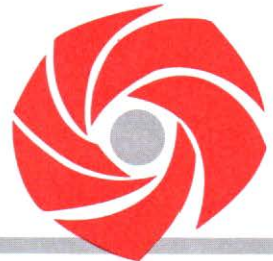
You simply select your home or apartment and lot and make a \$500 deposit on it now. This guarantees the price of your purchase at today's prices up to 15 months depending on the date of your purchase. The expiration date is clearly printed on your sales agreement.

What If I Need To Cancel My Purchase For Any Reason?

You may cancel your purchase at any time *prior to the start of construction in your area* and forfeit \$250.00 of your \$500 deposit. The remaining \$250.00 will be refunded to you. Should one of the purchasers expire, the full \$500.00 earnest money deposit will be refunded if you wish to cancel your contract.

Summary

If you are contemplating moving to Sun City you can save yourself many dollars by using this Pre-Planned Retirement program as a hedge against national inflation which drives up the cost of housing annually. This plan can help you retire successfully, easily and *save money*, too. Please call collect or write if you wish further information.



DEL WEBB'S
Sun City

America's Most Famous Resort - Retirement Communities

Sun City: A model for the world

Now 50, retirement community continues to inspire imitators

By Sherry Anne Rubiano and Cecilia Chan
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

At 50, Sun City is still turning heads.

The community that revolutionized how people lived out their retirement years now thrives as an international model that spans continents, cultures and languages.

There are hundreds of Sun City-inspired re-

tirement communities throughout the United States and in other countries, including Japan, Spain, England and China.

Retirees in England play croquet. In Japan, they live in high-rises with rooftop pools. The elderly in China, where multigenerational households were the norm, are moving into enclaves of their own.

Each country has a unique sense of place, a twist on the tradition of Sun City. But from one end of the world to the other, the communities



Active-adult communities modeled after Sun City have popped up around the world, like this one in England.

COMING SUNDAY

Retirees share their stories of living the good life in Sun City.

See **SUN CITY** Page A14

MEDIA MATTERS

Retirement community inspires global imitators

SUN CITY

Continued from A1

have at least one thing in common with the Arizona original: Only those of a certain age are privileged to live there.

Sun City, world model

Think of Sun City like a top fashion model. People study her, gaze at her, try to copy her look, all in the hope that they, too, can become like her. Especially when that model makes money.

"Competitors started to see the opportunities," said Michelle Mace-Basha, an Arizona State University faculty associate at the W.P. Carey School of Business, who has watched Sun Cities proliferate.

Developers, government officials and filmmakers from cold North European countries like the Netherlands flock to the development in the Arizona desert to study the community's housing and residents.

Sun City has attracted visitors from Germany, Britain, Italy, Denmark, China and South Korea in just the past five months, said Paul Herrmann, executive director of the Sun City Visitors Center. It has happened so often since Sun City opened in 1960 that he rarely bothers to keep track of who is coming from where.

"We were the first," he said. "We have 50 years of success behind us."

Alex Sievers, a partner with an urban design, architecture and engineering consulting firm, has visited from the Netherlands a number of times.

Sievers said he was inspired by the recreation activities available in Sun City: swimming, squash and tennis, and hobby clubs like woodworking. He wants to use some of those elements in an age 55-plus housing development he is planning in the Netherlands.

"What we wanted to do, as in Sun City, is have more vitality, more activity, more than what we are used to in our country," Sievers said. "Our country is aging heavily. And senior residents ... want to be respected as persons who can be part of society, can be worthwhile in society."

Innovative concept

The innovative concept of an active-adult community that landed Del E. Webb on the cover of *Time* magazine as Man of the Year in 1962 has developed into a standard formula, easily adapted to differing climates and aging populations abroad, experts said.

The developments, including neighboring Sun City West, are age-restricted, usually 55 and older. They tout cleanliness, order, safety and connection to community.

A major selling point is the "active adult" feature, offering a wide range of activities that encourage a get-up-and-go lifestyle.

"(Sun City) is really the model the industry worldwide has built on," said David Collins, chairman of Active Living International, a consultant group that works with developers of active-adult and assisted-living facilities.

Residents at Sensara, the first active-adult community in Spain that Collins helped launch, are attracted to the lifestyle, much like Sun City residents are, Collins said.

"People from Northern Europe come to sunny Spain because they wanted to live in a community here with people of similar interests, of the same age," he said.

In Japan, independent-living retirement communities developed by Half Century More offer seniors a slew of activities. Sun City Kanagawa, a 400-unit tower in the suburbs of Tokyo, includes a library, social club, courtyard garden and swimming pool under a sky-



HALF CENTURY MORE

Residents at Sun City Kanagawa, a 400-unit tower in the suburbs of Tokyo, enjoy a music concert. Amenities at the community include a library and rooftop swimming pool.

light.

At Retirement Villages' 11 communities in England, croquet lawns and lawn bowling are mainstays for residents.

"I think there is international interest in new forms of housing as the population is aging and Western-style ways of working are making it more difficult to care for elders at home," ASU professor Vincent Waldron said.

Cultural differences

The focus on recreation and socializing is a common element here and abroad. But not all senior communities are alike.

Internationally, they have adapted to limited land, health-care needs and cultural influences.

Instead of one-story homes that stretch for miles of neighborhoods, Japan has senior-retirement high-rises with Ja-

panese baths, or ofuros. Cold climates in Canada translate to "elegant indoor living" with indoor pools, theaters, and game and computer rooms.

Jeremy Trasker, who heads health care in the British office of real-estate firm Colliers International, said communities in Britain tweaked the Sun City concept by adding a care component, such as assisted-living services.

"No one looks forward to spending time in a nursing home or hospital, but it is comforting to know that one is nearby," he said.

Retirement communities overseas showcase not only physical differences from Sun City but also changing cultures. In China, the one-child-per-family policy instituted more than three decades ago has meant a shift from multiple-generation households. There are no longer enough children to

share care for an aging parent.

Globalization also has changed matters, Collins said. Chinese who had worked and lived in Canada, Britain and the U.S. are returning home to China to retire. They expect a more Western lifestyle.

Active mode of living

Residents who live in active-adult communities, whether in Sun City, elsewhere in the United States or overseas, choose them for much the same reasons.

David Cawley and his wife, Susan, live in a retirement village in Hertfordshire, England. They moved seven years ago to Castle Village, a 55-plus community, to live closer to their children and for a more active lifestyle.

David, 75, plays games like whist, croquet and boules. He serves on the residents committee and

runs a film club. His wife rediscovered her taste for acting and helps cater social events.

"We also liked the idea of living in a larger, congenial community, and we now have far more good friends than we've had for very many years," David said.

Lia Jansen, 54, and her husband, Louis, 80, moved to Sol Andalusi Health & Spa Resort in southern Spain from the Netherlands. Their new home features leisure and sport amenities such as a spa, spinning, yoga, soccer and a movie theater.

"We lived in Holland," Lia said. "That is very cold and raining. Spain is sunny and warm weather. Yes, we are very happy."

Expansion of cities

Active-adult communities here and abroad are expected to expand as the world's population ages. Within two generations, people older than 60 will outnumber children younger than 14 for the first time in history, according to the United Nations.

On the horizon for copycat potential, ASU's Mace-Basha said, are master-planned communities that will include age-restricted neighborhoods to allow retirees to live near children and grandchildren, like Peoria's Vistancia.

The active lifestyle will be amped up as more fitness components, like nutritional analysis, are added.

Assisted-living facilities will likely be incorporated into retirement communities.

Sun City timeline

- » **1960** — Sun City debuts Jan. 1. More than 100,000 people showed up the first weekend to view five model homes in the community.
- » **1963** — The Sun City Home Owners Association is formed.
- » **1964** — The only vote on incorporation is held. Voters reject incorporation 2,558 to 1,036.
- » **1967** — Sun Bowl, an outdoor amphitheatre, opens.
- » **1969** — Construction of Boswell Hospital begins.
- » **1972** — The Sun City Community Association changes its name to Recreation Centers of Sun City Inc.
- » **1973** — Sheriff's Posse of Sun City organizes.
- » **1978** — Sun City is built out.
- » **1985** — President Ronald Reagan honors the Sun City PRIDES with a President's Volunteer Action Award.
- » **1993** — Sun City is declared the "City of Volunteers."
- » **2009** — Sun City's 50th anniversary year-long celebration kicks off Dec. 9 with a grand-opening ceremony.

Source: Sun City Visitors Center

RETIREMENT LIVING

The Evolution of Sun City

On a sunny New Year's Day weekend in 1960, about 100,000 people drove into the Arizona desert outside Phoenix. Retired postal clerks, salesmen and teachers from all over the country came because they had seen ads touting a new kind of retirement community called Sun City. That first day, cars stretched for two miles from the sales center, and the salesmen ran out of contracts.

The developer, Del Webb, sold 237 homes in three days and 2,000 that year. The new homes sold for an affordable \$8,500 to \$12,000, and the first model measured 858 square feet. With their purchase, the new homeowners got the then-amazing luxury of access to a golf course and swimming pool. The original Sun City grew to 46,000 residents by the time it was completed in 1978.

Most people in Sun City are happy with their comfortable homes, which are surrounded by rock landscaping dotted with cacti. They live full but relatively simple lives. They take pride in their community of neat houses and clean streets, working together to sweep the roads and maintain the common grounds. Their efforts also keep a lid on the community's association fees.

"Some people referred to this place as the poor man's Palm Springs," says Jane Freeman, a volunteer with the Sun Cities Area Historical Society. She purchased her home in 1970 for \$45,000 and sold it three years ago for the full asking price of \$145,000. In fact, Sun City's original homes typically sell for



W. Wendell and Emilie Fraser were the first couple to buy a home in a new retirement community called Sun City. They proudly posed in front of the house for this photo, which was taken in 1960.

between \$65,000 and \$100,000 today, and they draw plenty of buyers, many of whom express an interest in the low annual association fee of \$115 per person.

The Three Sun Cities

After completing the original Sun City, Del Webb built two adjacent communities: Sun City West and Sun City Grand, each more upscale than its predecessor.

In large part, the evolution of Sun City from a blue-collar retirement haven to an exclusive enclave for the wealthy shows how much richer many of today's retirees are than their predecessors were 40 years ago. It also mirrors the way age-restricted retirement communities have grown and changed nationwide.

Sun City West, which opened in 1978 and was completed two years ago, is adjacent to the original Sun City. Because it was built later, its 31,000 residents tend to be more affluent, and most live in more modern homes. Many Sun City West residents are quick to correct anyone

who forgets to add "west" to their Sun City address: They don't like being confused with their nearby neighbors.

Sun City Grand, which opened in 1996 six miles from the original Sun City, is even more dramatically upscale. The development is filled with successful professionals who retired in their late fifties and early sixties and spend lots of time playing golf and tennis.

Once you enter through the elaborately landscaped main gate, you find luxurious homes interspersed amid pools and

cascading waterfalls. The homes have large master bathrooms, often with Jacuzzi tubs, walk-in showers, marble countertops and skylights. The kitchens are filled with the latest appliances, and there are special garages just to house golf carts. The average home in Sun City Grand costs about \$182,000 and can be up to 3,000 square feet in size.

On workdays, a small army of laborers tend to the community's grounds, including the luxurious Adobe Spa and Fitness Center and the three 18-hole championship golf courses designed by PGA Hall of Fame golfer Billy Casper.

But nothing's perfect: Residents of Sun City Grand complain that the surrounding area lacks good restaurants and has too many cheap buffets and fast-food joints.

Change in Old Town

Back in the original Sun City itself, things aren't the same, either. Newcomers are stirring things up: They're renovating and expanding their small homes and pressuring the

RETIREMENT LIVING

Finding a Long-Lost Buddy

Six months after he logged onto the Internet for the first time, Gene Crawford came across the Web page for Military.com. The 73-year-old veteran from Gilbert, Ariz., noticed it had a section called "Missing Buddies." He clicked on it and typed in the names of a few guys he knew when he was in the Army stationed in Yokohama, Japan.

That's how he found Devant Beard, a former member of the 179th Finance Office, who lives in Garrison, Tex. The two have since been in touch by e-mail and phone, and they plan to meet this year when the weather cools a bit.

The excitement of finding each other has sparked the two cyber-sleuths to search for other military friends. Although they realize that surviving members of their unit may shy away from computers, they hope a relative may chance across their search and pass on the message.

Places to Start Your Search

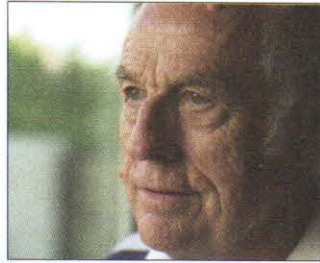
The Internet has made it easier to find long-lost war friends. Web sites offering such services include:

- **Military.com** (www.military.com) provides a bulletin board for posting messages. While you don't have to be a member of the group to read the messages, you do have to register in order to post notes. (Membership is free.)

This site also displays veterans' letters, photos (new and old) and journal entries. Perhaps an old friend of yours has posted a photo, or you could display something yourself.

- Established in 1988, the **American War Library** (<http://members.aol>

Gene Crawford holds photos of himself from his days in the Army during the post-World War II occupation of Japan.



Angela Jimenez

.com/veterans) is one of the largest online military registries with more than 27 million listings, most of whom are Americans. You can list yourself, search for friends, and submit photos. The service costs \$14.95 for six months.

- The **U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation** (www.lonesailor.org) offers a "Navy Log" where you can send a photo and information about yourself. Although you can wade through the site's 250,000 entries for free, there is a one-time fee of \$50 to post a photo and information, which can include your name, rank, service branch, service dates, date of birth, significant duty stations and awards.

The foundation won't release the addresses and phone numbers of listed persons, but it will relay a message to them. Send a letter, addressed to your friend, care of U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation, Attn.: Navy Log Dept., 701 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 123, Washington, DC 20004-2608.

- The **Retired Officers Association**

(TROA) (www.troa.org/locator) has a new locator service that posts reunion information and messages from people looking for their buddies. Notices from nonmembers appear on the Web site; messages from members appear on the site and in *The Retired Officer Magazine*.

Some Internet sites of military museums are also becoming hubs for searches. For example, the site of the new **National D-Day Museum** (www.ddaymuseum.org), in New Orleans, has an informal message board, which is peppered with people looking for military friends and grown-up children searching for people who knew their fathers back when they were in the service.

Other Useful Tips

There are other sites on the Internet that can help you find a friend.

Crawford and Beard hope to get addresses and phone numbers of other comrades by logging onto free people-search sites such as www.bigfoot.com, www.whowhere.com and www.switchboard.com.

When searching Web pages, keep these helpful tips from TROA in mind:

- **Leave out titles and abbreviations** (such as "Capt."), as most databases don't recognize military abbreviations and will read them as personal names.

- **If you recall the names of your friend's spouse or children**, include them in your search. This may make your friend easier to find.

- **Request that your Internet provider include your e-mail address** in its people-search function.

RETIREMENT LIVING

community association to upgrade or add amenities.

Many older residents say they won't use the new amenities, and those on fixed incomes fear they won't be able to handle higher association fees. They worry that higher costs could force them out of their homes. For the time being, however, that's unlikely. Longtime residents still make up the majority of homeowners.

In contrast, there was little opposition in Sun City Grand recently when the annual association fee was boosted 10% to \$545 per household, and the golf fee was increased by 7% to \$1,600 a year.

It's Not Always a Permanent Retirement Home

Not everyone who buys winds up staying. Roughly one-fourth of Sun City's residents eventually pull up stakes and leave, according to some estimates.

Some miss family and friends and head back to where they came from after a couple of years. Or one spouse returns home after the death of the other.

Other residents simply get tired of living in a town with too many people like themselves or in one without the sound of children at play.

Even those who love Sun City often wind up living in more than one house. Typically, a couple starts by buying a home that's smaller than the one they had been living in. Then they discover that they need more space and buy something bigger. And finally, when one spouse dies, the survivor finds that maintaining the home on a reduced income or managing alone with a physical limitation is too difficult, and he or she sells and moves back into a smaller home.



Jean Gruss



Jean Gruss



It's just seven miles from the modest homes in the original Sun City (top) to this 3,000-square-foot mansion in Sun City Grand (bottom), reflecting changes in retirement living over the past 40 years. Del Webb, the developer, now builds more upscale homes surrounded by lush landscaping (middle) for today's wealthier retirees.

RETIREMENT LIVING

Build a Home Page for the Family

Keeping track of far-flung relatives can be challenging, even for the closest families. One way to keep in touch is to create a family Web page so you can share photos, update addresses, discuss family matters, build a genealogy tree, or plan a reunion.

The Web-page services listed below are free and easy to set up and use. We liked Homestead the most because it was easy to use and allows you to decide whether you want advertising or not.

Our Favorite

Homestead (www.homestead.com) is a useful Web-page service for those who want to keep the construction job to a minimum. All you need to know is how to use your Internet browser and mouse to drag items around the screen. So far, Homestead says it has more than seven million registered users. The company makes money when you link from your Web page to a commercial site.

After you sign up with Homestead, you can choose a page from more than 40 predesigned pages and add to it by clicking and moving text, images, graphics and other Web-site elements onto it.

There are over 150 elements to choose from, including a chat room, message board, online address book, photo album and even a poll taker. Once you position an element on your Web page, it's ready to go.

When you're done, Homestead saves your page and posts it on the Internet, and you can tell your family about it. If you want to tinker with your page, say by adding or deleting elements, you can do so by



entering a special password.

Your relatives can also post their own photos and text onto the site, or even collaborate to improve it.

If you wish to limit access to the site to protect your family's privacy, you can set up password protection when you create the site or add it later. No advertising is allowed on your Web site unless you authorize it, but if you want to link from your site to a commercial site, such as Amazon.com, you can.

To get an idea of how other families have put together their sites, take a look at Homestead's sample sites.

Other Good Page Builders

These two services also offer free Web-page services, but make money by running ads on users' pages.

- At eCircles (www.ecircles.com), you can create a Web page and invite relatives by e-mail to improve the site and add to it. You can start several eCircles, with access limited to those you invite. For example, you could start an eCircle for your friends and another for your family.
- At Yahoo! GeoCities (geocities.yahoo.com) you have several ways to create a page, including an easy drag-and-drop Web-page editor called Yahoo! PageBuilder. If you are more experienced, you can use the advanced HTML editor.

Before You Tackle the Job

Before you hustle to your PC to establish a new family forum, consider the following:

Is your computer too poky? If you have a slow modem (less than 56K), building a site will be irritatingly slow.

Do you have time to maintain the site? If you create a family page, appoint yourself or someone else to keep order on the site and manage the chat rooms.

Who will keep the family posted on new developments? To keep everyone interested in the site, someone must volunteer to e-mail family members when there's news.

What about rules? Consider imposing a few basic rules to govern the site, such as no profanity. ■

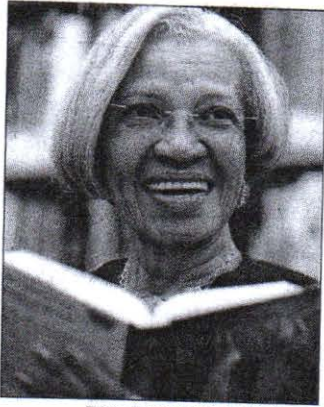
Good Ideas From the Dykstras

FOR INSPIRATION AND AN IDEA of what your family's Web page could look like, visit the site created by the Dykstra family (www.dutchnsuch.com), which they built using Homestead.

For example, click on "My Family," and you'll find a family tree and the memoirs of elderly family members.

Go to "Ships" and you'll learn something about the *Brimanger*, the ship that brought the first Dykstras to the U.S. shortly after World War II.

If you are planning a family gathering, check out how the Dykstras promoted a recent one by going to the section called "Reunion Summer 2000."



TOM TINGLE/THE REPUBLIC

"This is like a vacation for me," Sun City's Georgia Perry says.

Lifestyle is still golden as Sun City hits age 50

Retirees love what novel place offers

By John Faherty

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Fifty years ago, Sun City was an idea.

The idea was outrageous and revolutionary. It seemed almost dangerous.

Old people — or older people, anyway — could spend the last 30 or 40 years of their lives having fun.

You want to shovel snow and wait for the grandchildren to visit? Fine, stay in Iowa. If you want a place with low-priced homes and big blue skies, if you want clean streets and friendly neighbors, come to Sun City.

It was marketing, of course. It was slick talk and high-pressure sales. And it worked.

On Jan. 1, 1960, more than 25,000 people came to visit the five model homes on the western fringes of the Valley.

That first weekend, 252 homes were sold. Within a month, 400. By the end of the year, 2,000.

Now, five decades later, Sun City is golf courses and swim-

See **RETIREMENT** Page A8

RETIREMENT

Continued from A1

ming pools, chess clubs and shuffleboard. And it is home for more than 41,000 people.

They enforce the rules that define the place while they celebrate its lifestyle.

Each day, they work to make sure that Sun City's grand idea is their truth.

The enforcer

It is just after 7 in the morning, and Bill Szentmiklosi is standing on his tiptoes looking over a backyard fence in Sun City's Phase 1.

"Oh, looky here, somebody's been doing some work," he says. "This is nice."

Szentmiklosi, 59, is a Sun City resident. He is also the compliance manager for the Sun City Home Owners Association. It is his job to make sure his town remains as close to perfect as it can.

Like many Valley communities, Sun City requires all homeowners to obey rules known as covenants, conditions and restrictions.

If a resident breaks a rule, there is a good chance somebody — probably a neighbor — will call the HOA's compliance department.

In May, the HOA handled 935 reported violations.

Back in his car, Szentmiklosi continues to patrol the neighborhood. At another home, another problem.

"Larry, Larry, this is better, but it's not done," he says to himself as he gets out of his minivan to check on a repeat violation for weeds. "So, I'll send him another letter."

After serving as a police officer for 33 years in Michigan, he knows when to look the other way.

At yet another property, Szentmiklosi bends over to measure the distance between the garage wall and the property line, knowing by eye that it's going to be short of regulation.

"I'll measure this here. You need 5 feet," he says standing over his tape. "This is 4 feet, 6 inches. We won't quibble with this, not worth it."

The biggest problem he looks for is not illegal garages or weed-choked lawns. He's looking for young people.

Lifestyle is still golden at Valley's Sun City

Age limits aren't just part of Sun City's image. They're in the law.

The federal Fair Housing Act requires that at least 80 percent of the homes in communities like Sun City be occupied with somebody 55 or older. If a community is not in compliance, it is no longer a retirement community — it is just being discriminatory.

The "age overlay" allows Sun City to not have a school district. This is what keeps property taxes at such low rates.

Sun City's rules allow people under the age of 19 to visit but only for a total of 90 days in any 12-month period.

In May, there were 47 reports alleging underage people living in Sun City homes.

Szentmiklosi does not particularly like knocking on those doors.

"We like to have a heart, but we need to look at the needs of the whole," he says.

Szentmiklosi walks up to a door on Cinnabar Avenue and knocks.

The report says a resident's adult daughter has moved into the home with three young children.

The resident opens the door, and Szentmiklosi identifies himself.

The woman immediately steps outside and closes the door behind her.

"I have my grandkids over once in a while, but it's just visiting Grandma," she says.

"Nothing wrong with that," Szentmiklosi replies.

Then he starts asking some questions about her children and where they live. Then they meander off topic about home remodeling, and he finally steers her back to her children and grandchildren.

He appears to be looking for some inconsistencies, like the cop that he was for three decades.

"Yeah, old habits are hard to change," he would say later.

In the end, he thanks the woman for her time. The investigation, he says, is closed to his satisfaction.

But just as he is leaving, he turns to her again.

"Well, nice to see you this morning," he says with a smile. "You just need to know that

“No one controls Sun City; we control ourselves. I am a collectivist at heart. I think people do better when they have a sense of responsibility and ownership.”

Bill Pearson

Sun City resident and former union leader in Minnesota

somebody around here, one of your neighbors, is watching.”

The player

At 9 in the morning in the pool hall of the Lakeview Lanes Recreation Center, Helen Gregory is ready to break.

Gregory, 98, has been shooting pool for 30 years. She spends every Monday and Saturday morning with the Billiard Belles.

"Playing with your friends and visiting is very important when you get older," she says. "It's important to have things on your schedule, to have something to look forward to. I wouldn't miss it."

Her husband taught her to play. Then her grandsons bought her some books on the game, which taught her "the nuances."

She moves around the table slowly, chalking her stick before each shot. Her hands and arms have a little more quiver than she would like, but as she stands over a shot, she collects herself. She steadies at the last moment and then strikes.

"I'm not especially good anymore," Gregory says. "I played it a lot better when I was in my 80s."

The playing is more important than the results. The Billiard Belles are her friends.

"Oh, they are wonderful," Gregory says. "When some of them get too old, we keep getting nice new ones. They are all nice girls."

When her husband of 73 years, Kenneth, died three years ago, she missed two weeks but then reappeared.

"It gives me something to look forward to," she says.

The other women in the

group defer some to Gregory. She suspects they ease up a little on her during games, but they all say they do not.

After 90 minutes of shooting pool, the women then go for brunch at Mojos, the restaurant in the recreation center. Gregory skips brunch. She can't hear well anymore and stopped going when she felt she was missing the conversations.

But there is no way she is giving up the pool.

"I still like the same things I always liked. I'm just older," she says. "I'm still me."

The poster child

In the noonday sun, Bill Pearson leaves the Sun Cities Museum, locks the door behind him and climbs into his golf cart for the drive home.

He is 61 but looks 10 years younger. He is fit and intense. And he loves Sun City with a missionary zeal.

He remembers when he flew down from St. Paul, Minn.

"I fell in love with it the first time I came here in 1997 to visit my folks," Pearson says.

He called his wife to make an announcement. "The second night after I got in, I called my wife and said, 'This is where we are going to retire,'" Pearson says. "She said, 'What?'"

At the time of the call, Pearson was the president of the United Food & Commercial Workers Local 789.

He routinely worked 80-hour weeks. He liked organizing and negotiating. He admits to relishing a good fight.

He and his wife bought their Sun City home after Pearson turned 50 years old, still too young to move in. They rented it

out for four years, then they did some work on it. Then they left Minnesota for good.

"Everybody was stunned. I was a workaholic," Pearson says. "To a person they said, 'You are going to be bored to tears.' I never looked back."

What Pearson loved most about Sun City was its egalitarian nature. Although Sun City has a name, it is unincorporated. There is no city government. There are no positions of innate authority. There are volunteer boards and organizations that work together to keep the place going.

"No one controls Sun City; we control ourselves," Pearson says. "I am a collectivist at heart. I think people do better when they have a sense of responsibility and ownership."

Pearson has worked as hard at retirement as he did for the union.

He spent his first two years volunteering at the visitors center. Then he went to the HOA, where he served as a board member. "We rebuilt it from the ground up," he says. Now, he is the president of the Sun Cities Museum.

He played racquetball fanatically until he had his knees replaced. Now, he is into lawn bowling. He sets a goal of reading three books a week.

"When we go through life, we are always asking ourselves: What do I want to be when I grow up?" Pearson says. "I'm still asking myself that. I can wake up every day and ask myself: What do I want to do today?"

The striker

At 5 in the evening, Georgia Perry stands at the beginning of the lane, holding the bowling ball under her chin.

Her approach is studied and slow, her backswing graceful. Her ball does snap into its hook as it rolls down the lane, as much as it seems to change direction gracefully, like it was pushed by a strong breeze into the pocket of space right between the 1 pin and the 3 pin.

As all the pins fall, she turns around, smiles shyly and walks back.

Perry, 69, loves the game, but she had never played it before she moved to Sun City from Connecticut in 1993.

When she first arrived, she was into race walking and would routinely walk past the bowling alley in the recreation center near her home.

She would often see a woman who worked at the center standing outside smoking, and she would wave to her. One day, they got to chatting.

"She said I should come on in and give bowling a try," Perry says. "When I said I didn't know how, she said, 'Well, there is a lady right over there who can teach you.'"

This, she says, is typical of her experience since moving here. Perry is a Black woman in a place that is, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 96.1 percent White.

Perry says she has felt as welcome here as anywhere else in the country.

"It's all right. For me, it doesn't matter. It's all about who you are," Perry says. "When you find ignorance, you make room for it. You set them straight in a nice way. You find some here, but honestly, you find some everywhere."

What brought Perry and her husband here is the warm sun after a lifetime of Connecticut winters. "Fry me to the moon," she says.

But what keeps her here are the endless opportunities. "There is something to do every day. This is like a vacation for me."

And one of those things is the bowling. It's better exercise than you think, she says. Then she raises her short sleeve and shows off impressive biceps.

The widow

As night falls in Sun City, a bouquet of fresh flowers sits on the Brozka grave site at Sunland Memorial Park.

Sunland was not around when Sun City opened in 1960. A cemetery might not have fit the image.

But eventually even the most active of active adults are going to die.

So Sunland opened two years later.

The grave markers closest to the cemetery buildings show birth years in the 1890s and deaths in the 1960s and '70s.

Moving west across the grass, the birth dates move into the 20th century. They show young men who went off to war to fight the Germans and the Japanese.

Many of the gravesites are for two. Leonard Brozka, 1920-1999, lies next to an empty spot for Edith.

"I'm only 87," Edith Brozka says. "People don't think I'm 87 because they think when you get old you have to get fat."

Edith, in fact, is as healthy as can be. Every day she takes a multivitamin and a fish-oil pill. She goes for a checkup once a year, and the doctor advises her to keep doing what she is doing.

On New Year's Day, 1942, Edith and Len eloped in Napoleon, Ohio.

In 1991, the couple moved to Sun City. Life was good. There were friends and activities. Then, in 1999, Len died.

"I do miss my husband — oh yes, all the time. Fifty-eight years is a long time," Edith says. "They don't make them like that anymore. They don't come that nice."

Three months after Len's death, her twin sister died.

"Life goes on. You do what you have to do," Brozka says. "God gave me a life, and he meant me to live it."

So she volunteers at the local hospital. She is committed to exercise and never misses her water-aerobics classes. She also loves to sew.

"I'm always shortening slacks for somebody," Brozka says. "It seems we are all getting shorter."

Her life, she says, is full and rich and filled with friends.

Her daughter, back in Pennsylvania, used to nudge her mother to come back east. But Sun City is her home. It is her husband's home, too.

"I'll still get him flowers, just to let him know that I am thinking about him," Brozka says. "I'll be buried with Len. After 58 years, I can't leave him. He's waiting for me."

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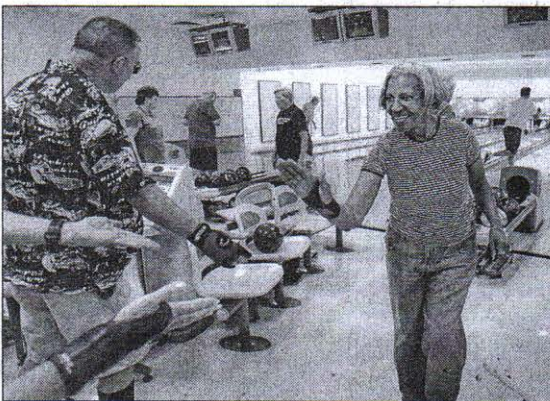
TOM TINGLE/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Sun City resident Helen Gregory, 98, plays pool with her friends at the recreation hall. She plays twice a week. "I'm not especially good anymore," she says. "I played it a lot better when I was in my 80s."



TOM TINGLE/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Edith Brozka, 87 (center), sings a song at the end of a water-aerobics class at the recreation center. Committed to exercise, she never misses a class. "God gave me a life, and he meant me to live it," she says.



DAVID KADLUBOWSKI/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Georgia Perry didn't even start bowling until she moved to Sun City. Now, she loves the game.



REPUBLIC FILE PHOTO

In 1960, Sun City debuted with five model homes. By the 1970s (above), thousands called it home.

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Retirement town offers fun in the sun

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SUN CITY, Ariz. — A widow from Juneau, Alaska, a divorcee from Chicago and an Indianapolis couple were all tired of the snow — and determined to do something about it.

So they recently traveled to the heart of the Sun Belt with an energetic Chicago travel agent, Janet Lampert, whose National Retirement Concepts offers a week's vacation, which includes a look at retirement towns, for about \$700 (plus air fare).

Lampert, whose father retired to Sun Lakes, Ariz., a few years ago, is not pushing any particular retirement community — she gets no commission from the realtors. In fact, she insists that the realtors and developers not pressure her clients.

The pioneering — and largest — retirement community in the Sun Belt is Sun City, about 15 miles northwest of Phoenix.

Sun City, built by contractor Del Webb, a one-time New York Yankees owner, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year and is comprised of almost 50,000 energetic senior citizens — who must be at least 55 years old. They seem to spend most of their time on the city's 11 golf courses, 17 tennis courts or in its seven swimming pools.

The residents insist that they lead healthier lives than their counterparts elsewhere, and there are statistics to back them up. A 1982 study by the University of Arizona says that 78 percent of the over-65 group in Sun City and neighboring Sun City West contend that their health is excellent or good, compared to a 69 percent national average.

Back in 1960, the cheapest model, two bedrooms, one bath, cost \$8,500. Today, the first house,

now home of the Sun Cities Historical Society, is appraised at \$44,000.

In newer Sun City West, still under construction by Webb, a buyer can spend more than \$100,000 for a house. Still, some of the prohibitive costs of the North, such as property taxes, are extraordinarily low here. Taxes may run a few hundred, rather than thousand, dollars per year — mainly because the residents don't need to build and maintain schools.

The Del Webb Corp. has prospered by building retirement communities in sunny areas. It recently announced plans to construct a fifth Sun City of up to 7,000 housing units just east of Palm Springs, Calif.

But, clearly, relocating thousands of miles away from sons and daughters and grandchildren is not for everyone. As a matter of fact, only about 10 percent of the retirees move out of their home area, Webb officials have found.

The concerns of the group on the Lampert tour centered not just on being far away from friends and relatives.

On this trip, the Indianapolis couple, Cecil and Kay Havens, liked what they saw and signed up to buy a house.

However, the reaction of Shirl Rendlen, a 63-year-old senior model from Chicago, was more circumspect.

"I'm unable to come to a conclusion at this point," she said after visiting 20 model homes in two days. "I'm seeing everything at once. It's too confusing."

She decided to go back to Chicago and think about it, perhaps making other forays with Lampert to Florida, the Carolinas or Arkansas.



Maturity News photo

AHEAD OF HIS TIME: Del Webb, the late Phoenix builder, pioneered retirement communities in the Southwest. The largest complex in Sun City, Ariz., is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

Another point of view was expressed by Mary Conyers of Juneau: "You like to have young people around you." She was thinking about a course of action many newcomers to Arizona first consider — coming down for a month or two in winter — to see if they really can stand all that sun, lack of seasonal change and the absence of "young people."

There are plenty of rental properties available for a short stay.

There are houses available in non-retirement communities, too, for those who feel lonely without the din of teen-agers in souped-up

cars or crying babies. But natives insist you get more for your money, and better recreational facilities, if you live in a retirement town.

The residents here are recreational fanatics — which raised doubts in the mind of one of the tourists. Anita Raplee of Louisville, Ky.

"If every day I had to go to a recreation center, it would drive me up the wall," she said.

But the natives counter that you don't have to use any of the facilities if you don't want to, and it is nice to know they're there.

Besides, with all that peer pressure from other seniors, even the most ardent non-joiner may soon find herself getting into the swim of things.

For the 90 percent of retirees who don't want to relocate, Charles Roach, general manager of Webb's Sun City West, said the company is thinking about building some Snow Belt retirement communities.

"Just because they don't want to relocate, that doesn't mean they don't want to enjoy an active lifestyle," Roach said.