

MEMORIES
OF THE
SUN CITIES



**SAINTS REVERED FOR
DEDICATION TO SUN CITY**

One of a series on the history of
Sun City and Sun City West, Arizona

Sun Cities Area Historical Society
10801 Oakmont Dr. Sun City, Arizona
602/974-2568

SAINTS REVERED FOR DEDICATION TO SUN CITY

Among the many activities and diversions available to the early Sun City residents, one of the most popular was a girls' softball team called the Sun City Saints.

For 18 years--1966 to 1984, these girls provided delightful evening recreation and were seen by thousands of fans. They won numerous championships and raised a tremendous amount of money for local charities. The trophies they won fill a large space in the Sun Cities Area Historical Society museum at 10801 W. Oakmont Drive, Sun City. Their accomplishments gave Sun City national and worldwide recognition.

It all started in 1965 when the owner of the team, then named the Phoenix Ramblers, decided to go out of business. When the Ramblers suddenly found themselves without a coach, owner, or ball park to play in, some of the players started searching for a new home. Eventually, word got to the Del E. Webb Development Co. in Sun City. To test the waters, the News-Sun published a questionnaire: "Should Sun City have a girls softball team?" The favorable response was immediate.

After negotiations between DEVCO and local business leaders, the team was adopted. Webb constructed a park on an alfalfa field on 108th Avenue where JB's Restaurant is now located. The new field was enclosed by a chain-link fence. Rest-rooms, a snack bar and three drinking fountains were provided. The Webb company's first sales office was moved to the spot where it was converted into a storage and dressing room. Rented bleachers seating 1,000 gave the team a chance to collect \$1.00 at the gate. Many games were sellouts and the treasury prospered.

While beer was not permitted, Coors Brewery erected a 32-foot by 8-foot scoreboard above the backfield fence. Numbers had to be put up by hand, the scorers working from a catwalk.

Total cost of the park was \$11,000. Webb people considered it one of the best investments they ever made. The goodwill generated was tremendous.

With a park in place and interest high, a catchy name was needed for these transplanted athletes. In a contest publicized in the News-Sun, 800 entries were logged. Several had suggested the Saints, but C. E. Kingsley's entry bore the earliest postmark, so he was declared the winner. He received a season pass to the games along with a gift certificate from the Grand Avenue Merchants.

The first home game for the Saints was played on May 7, 1966, with the Phoenix Rainbows taking the field. On May 20, the California Cuties took the field against the Saints. What made the occasion uproariously funny was the fact the "Cuties" were men dressed as women.

During the winter of 1966-67, a women's winter softball league was organized with teams from Phoenix, Prescott and Tucson; but the first regular season for the Saints began in 1967, the year the Saints Booster Club was organized.

Spurred on by bumper stickers and ads in the News-Sun, attendance was great. Meantime, the Saints started their practice of fund-raising by donating all gate receipts from one of their big games with the Tucson "Poor Souls" to Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital. A total of \$1,100. was given to the hospital.

By this time, the Saints had become a top attraction with special entertainment such as skydivers from the Phoenix Parachute Club making a soft landing on the outfield.

Concessions, first operated by a local restaurant, and then by the Saints themselves, sold hot dogs for 30 cents, soft drinks for 15 cents, and peanuts for 5 cents. Campfire Girls from Peoria and Youngtown eventually became the operators.

When the park was sold in 1970 to make room for the Suntowner Restaurant, the Saints moved to the high school field in Peoria, a temporary arrangement; Webb had started construction of the Sun City Stadium on 12 1/2 acres north of the tracks on 111th and Grand avenues.

With the new park opening on July 4, 1971, the Saints scheduled out-of-state games with California, Colorado, Nebraska and Utah teams. They hit a new attendance record of 2,067 on July 10 when they hosted the Greeley, Colorado team.

By February 1972, the Saints had adopted a new logo, a softball player with a halo. It was designed by William "Bill" Kohler, deputy sheriff of Maricopa County, who had doubled as security guard at the park on game nights.

Adding an international flavor to the Saints was the May 26, 1972, game with the University of Tokyo, Japan.

Until this time, Bev Dwyer had served as coach, but in 1973 Gerald Stapely replaced her and coached the team during the rest of its stay in Sun City.

In 1973, the Saints placed third in the national tournament. They later traveled to South Africa and Rhodesia. In 1975, they won their second Pacific Coast League championship. By 1977, they had logged wins and runner-up places in both national and international tournaments. Sun City had played host to Tokyo, Japan's Women's College of Education with two victories before record crowds.

In 1979, the Saints chalked up first place in the prestigious Houston, Texas, tournament with Michele Thomas hurling five straight shutouts and one perfect game. Other outstanding performances included two marathon games in which Paula Noel pitched 37 innings, winning both games that lasted until 3:00 a.m. Sunday.

In 1980, the Women's Professional Softball League was disbanded when only three of the teams could muster the needed support. But the Saints continued to attract good crowds playing teams from Canada, Hawaii, Florida and Indiana. Booster Club membership reached an all-time high.

Sun Citians fell in love with the team right from the beginning. Just as quickly, the Saints decided to become a visible part of their new home town. Although no team members ever lived in Sun City, participation in a variety of community activities became a Saints tradition. The girls made themselves available. After games they would go up into the stands to meet and talk to the fans. "We felt like they were our daughters", was expressed by many Sun Citians.

Eventually the first members of the team gave up the game to give younger college students a chance to play. The Saints had become a Sun City "treasure" and became a model for many fine college athletes.

The Saints ended their stay in Sun City in 1984 when the stadium was sold and the future status of the ball park was uncertain. Unable to afford the increased rent and unsure of their future, the Saints departed for Phoenix.

NOTES ON SUN CITY SAINTS

Phoenix Ramblers disbanded in 1965.

Questionaire: Should Sun City Have a Girls Soffball Team? in NEWS SUN
2/3/65.

1965 - Saints name adopted.

1966 - First Park where Suntowner Restaurant is now. First Devco sales office
became dressing room.

May 7, 1966 First Saints Home Game

1970 Grand Ave. field closed

1971 - July 4, Stadium opened

1974 -1975 Two Pacific Coast League Championships

1975 - Trip to South Africa and Rhodesia

1977 - Wins & runner ups in national and international tournaments.

1977 - Beat Tokyo twice.

1979 - Pom Pom Girls first appearaance

1979 - First place - Nationals at Houston.

1983 - Stadium sold to Bade Boyes of Glendale.

1990 - Played in Sun City Stadium and elsewhere on weekends.
Played in National in Calif. - Finished 8th out of 38 teams

PEEK INTO THE PAST

From the photo archives of the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum



Sun City's national champion Saints

The Sun City Saints, a women's fast-pitch softball team sponsored by local merchants, captured the women's softball national championship title in 1979. The team played at Sun City Stadium, once located at 111th and Grand avenues, and was very popular with local fans. Home games consistently attracted crowds of over 2,000. The late Joe Davisson, president of the Saints Booster Club, is shown here celebrating the team's success with two players and Sun City Poms organizer Corrine Leslie, center. The Poms were initially created to serve as cheerleaders and boosters for the Saints and even though the stadium and Saints are long gone, the Poms remain popular ambassadors for the Sun Cities. A salute to the history of the Sun City Saints is included in an exhibit on display at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum. For more history about the Sun Cities, visit the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum at 10801 Oakmont Drive, Sun City. Visit www.delwebbsuncitiesmuseum.org and find the museum on Facebook.

VF 50 Saints

'Lefty' blazed a softball trail



Photos by Angela Cara Pancrazio/The Arizona Republic

Billie Harris was one of the first African-Americans to make her mark in major-league women's fast-pitch softball.

Harris a pioneer in women's league

By Angela Cara Pancrazio
The Arizona Republic

The sun is staying out longer, and it reminds Billie F. Harris of playing ball. But not the boys-of-summer kind of ball.

From 1948 to 1975, Harris played major-league women's fast-pitch softball and was one of the first African-American women to gain notoriety in the big leagues.

West Valley fans may remember her from the Sun City Saints.

She could run from home plate to first base in 2.8 seconds, she said. But

at 71, her body has begun to betray her. "My mind is still young, but my body is aging," said Harris, who lives in south Phoenix and loves to reminisce about her glory days.

In her younger days, Harris was called "Lefty." By the time she turned 60, she had earned the nickname "Mama." That's when she pitched for Mesa Community College's women's softball team, the Lady Thunderbirds.

Her love of the game began as a young teenager in Tucson.

See HARRIS Page 3

OVER

HARRIS

Blazed trail in softball

From Page 1

When Harris was 14, she spotted a picture of the Phoenix PBSW Ramblers women's fast-pitch softball team in a sports magazine.

That's what got her started pitching balls to the neighborhood kids. She threw the ball so hard and fast that she ran out of willing catchers.

By the late 1940s, all the practice paid off. Harris earned a spot as pitcher for the Ramblers, staying with the team until it folded in 1965.

She continued with other major-league teams such as the Yakima (Wash.) Webcats, the Sun City Saints and the Phoenix Bird, until the mid-1970s, when the Birds also folded.

Her years with the Ramblers were the glory years for women major leaguers.

That's when Pacific Coast League teams like the Ramblers, the Orange Lionettes, the Fresno Rockets and the Salt Lake City Shamrocks filled the bleachers.

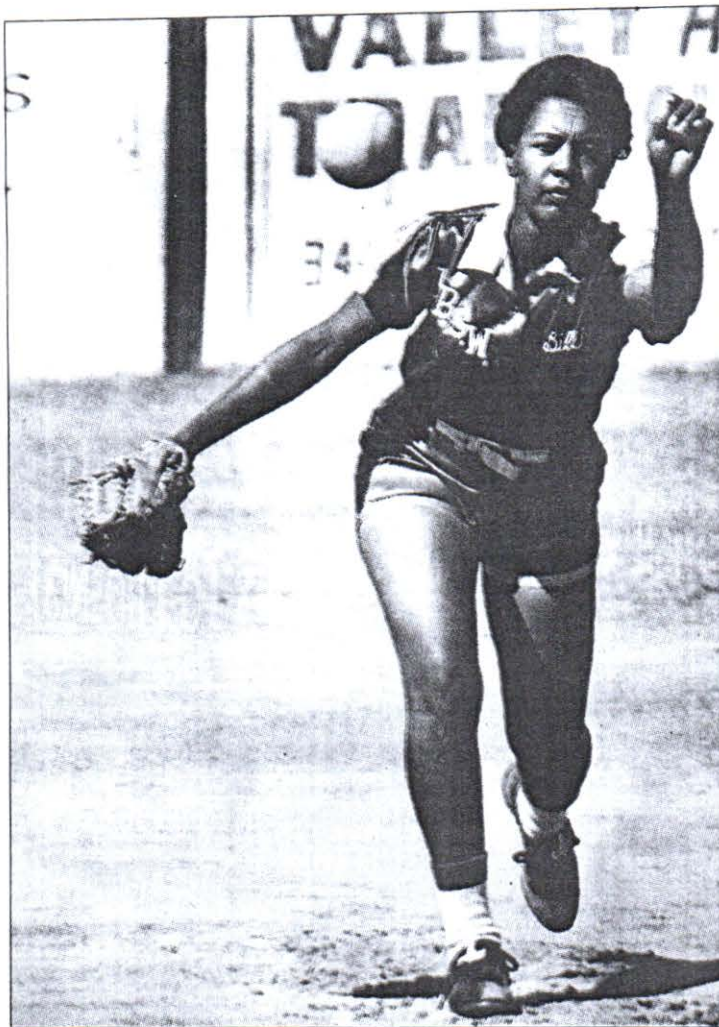
In fact, the Ramblers were so popular they had their very own diamond, Ramblers Field at 37th and Van Buren streets.

It's long gone now, and Harris wonders if anyone even remembers the women or their stadium.

On a recent evening, she pulled out bat and glove to demonstrate her skills outside her south Phoenix home.

She sunk her right hand into the leather glove smoothed by four decades of wear. She clenched her left fist like a ball and gently beat the worn-out sweet spot.

"It was my life," Harris said. "I lived for that; it was just like a high."



Billie Harris pitched for the Phoenix PBSW Ramblers from the late 1940s until 1965.

She hasn't had to let go of the game yet. Some older former major leaguers patch games together every now and then.

That is, if enough players show up.

They call their team the Silver Saints; they travel from as far away as Lake Havasu. They're women like Harris whose love of the game has not faded, despite knee replacements and weakened limbs.

"Once you've played ball,

it's in your blood until you die," said Kathryn "Sis" King. The 77-year-old who lives in north Phoenix is a former Rambler fielder.

The Silver Saints recently won a gold medal in the Senior Olympics.

"My hands are so tender anymore, and when I'm running I see three balls," Harris confessed. "No one seems to understand that; I tell them I wear trifocals."

But she doesn't have anything to prove. She has been

inducted into the National Softball Hall of Fame, the Arizona Foundation Softball Hall of Fame and the Tucson Softball Hall of Fame. She was MVP of the 1969 national championship, when she batted .400 and compiled a 4-1 pitching record.

Named an All-American three times, Harris hurled 70 no-hitters and four perfect games during her career from 1948-75.

"When she first started she was fast and wild; she didn't know where the ball was going, and neither did I," said Dot Wilkinson, a former Ramblers catcher who is also a Hall of Famer.

"She wasn't a strikeout pitcher," Wilkinson, 82, said. "She kept the ball down low all the time."

"They had to hit what she threw; we kept the batter guessing all the time."

Today, Wilkinson and Harris live only a couple of blocks away from one another. Wilkinson helped Harris buy her house. "She's like a sister to me," Wilkinson said of Harris. "She never went anywhere I didn't go."

If the team sat down at a restaurant and it refused to serve Harris, Wilkinson said they'd get up and leave.

Regardless of race, the Phoenix Ramblers players never earned a paycheck. Members of Arizona's first big-league women's ball club that dates to the early 1930s bought their own spikes and gloves and raised their own money for trips.

"We were kind of like pioneers," King said. "At least women are getting college scholarships through softball now."

Reach the reporter at angela.pancrazio@arizona-republic.com or at (602) 444-8126.

First family of softball

By Nora Fascenelli
The Arizona Republic

The photos are slightly faded, the colors slightly off. But the memories are sharp for Rosie Miranda Andrade, a major-league softball player in an era when girls weren't celebrated for the strength of their throwing arm.

Her daughter is no athletic slouch, either.

The two are the only mother-daughter duo in the Arizona Foundation Softball Hall of Fame, inducted 21 years apart.

"Dream Catcher," an exhibit showcasing the career exploits of 65-year-old Andrade and her daughter, Helen Andrade Siggelkow, 40, is on display at Arizona State University in Tempe.

Andrade's 22-year softball career was built on a strong, fast, accurate arm and a hefty helping of hard work.

She earned a place in the Hall of Fame in 1979, a decade after retiring from the game.

Her talent turned into a double play in 2000, when Siggelkow was inducted.

It was the finishing touch to a love that started when Andrade was born on the Valley's west side.

"Ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to play against the big girls," said the 5-foot-1-inch Andrade. "My four big brothers always let me play ball with them, but they said I was too little to be any good."

She was only 10 years old when the late Frank Shelton, a janitor at Glendale Grammar School, put a team together called the Poston Tillage Sweethearts.

"We were really little," Andrade said. "But we played against those big girls.

"And we won."

Andrade spent the next seven years playing with the Sweethearts, earning all-state honors five times as a shortstop and traveling relatively far from home for weekend games.

"The first game we went away to was in Prescott," An-



SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 2003

Suzanne Starr/The Arizona Republic

Rosie Miranda Andrade stands by one of her old uniforms at a display honoring her and her daughter, Helen Siggelkow, who are both members of the Arizona Softball Hall of Fame.

If you go

WHAT: "Dream Catchers: The Papers of Four Arizona Women" is a special exhibit highlighting the photographs, manuscripts and artifacts of Rosie Andrade and other outstanding women.

WHEN: Daily through July 25.

WHERE: Luhrs Gallery, fourth floor of Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe. Call (480) 965-3415 for hours.

drade said. "I had never been out of Glendale so this seemed like going to the end of the world."

Andrade played for women's major-league softball teams, including the Phoenix A-1 Queens, the Phoenix PBSW Ramblers and the Sun City Saints, in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

She won a slew of awards, especially for her skill as a third baseman.

Between teams, she got married and had two children, including Helen, who started playing catch with mom at 5

About the Hall of Fame

ARIZONA FOUNDATION SOFTBALL HALL OF FAME

■ On display at Luhrs Gallery.

■ Founded in 1974.

■ Members include 45 women and 55 men.

■ Annual "League of Their Own" reunions are held in November at El Zaribah Temple, 552 N. 40th St., Phoenix. For information, call Dorothy "Dot" Wilkinson at (602) 276-1531.

years old.

Andrade said her daughter had a natural talent for softball.

"She knew how to throw the ball and get down low to catch the grounders."

Helen spent summers playing softball in Glendale's recreational leagues and played with her mother's old team, the Sun City Saints.

In 1976, she landed the job of starting shortstop on Apollo High School's inaugural girls softball team.

She later played third base for San Diego State Univer-

sity from 1982 to 1984, helping her team win awards.

Having a mother for a coach could have been difficult, but Siggelkow says their relationship was based on friendship and respect.

"It wasn't until I became a parent myself that I realized how great my mom and dad were to me," said Siggelkow, who now plays ball in Minnesota with her two children, Zachary, 7, and Samantha, 4.

"Mom would turn down the stove and let dinner sit while she came out front to play ball with me," Siggelkow said. "Both my parents worked hard, and they never got a chance to relax. I kept them too busy."

For Andrade, there was no better year than 2000.

"My son, Paul, was ordained and became a priest on the very same day his sister, Helen, learned she was going to be inducted into the Hall of Fame," Andrade said. "So now all of us have made our dreams come true."

Reach the reporter at
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Reunion game brings Saints players to tears

By DAVID R. BECK
Staff writer

PHOENIX — Many of the players hadn't been on a softball diamond in more than five years, but that didn't deter a competitive streak from entering the softball Legends Game.

Softball

Sixteen former Sun City Saints split up to help form the Trailblazers and Pioneers teams that battled at the Rose Mofford Softball Complex Friday night. The Pioneers won 7-3, an outcome that was more meaningful to players than one might think.

"You go into it saying, 'we're just out there for fun,'" said Suzie Gaw, who played for the Trailblazers and was a Saint from 1976 to 1984. "But I think it (competitiveness) kind of came out naturally for everybody."

Phoenix Mercury coach Cheryl Miller and Mofford, a former softball player, were on hand for pregame festivities, but it was the legends that brought the loudest cheers from the near-capacity crowd.

Among the most star struck players was Pioneer Helen Siggelkow — a Saint from 1982 to 1984 — whose mother, Rosie Andrade, donned the Trailblazers uniform and is also a former Saint.

"I was actually in awe of seeing these players," said Siggelkow, at 35 the youngest Legend. "It was really great. I knew a lot of the players from when my mom was playing for the Saints and when I was a batgirl for them. To actually be on the field with them was quite an experience because they are truly pioneers.

"And to see (National Hall of Famer) Dot Wilkinson, who's 75,

► See Mofford, Mercury coach, B3

◀ From B1

catching, was amazing."

Siggelkow even managed to hit the ball to Andrade at third base and reached on a fielder's choice. Siggelkow appeared to score two batters later but was called out because she slid to avoid a collision at home plate.

Said Andrade: "It was really neat. All of us were really playing competitive ball. It was kind of fun (playing against her daughter) and we were yelling at each other during the game."

Some players were moved to tears by the first reunion game.

"It was emotional because the whole history of softball was here on the field in one night," said Becky Rice, a Saint from 1971 to 1976 who collected two hits Friday. "It's really neat, seeing all

these friends and the history there. No matter how many years it's been, it brings out the competitive spirit."

Before the game, former Saints gathered for a reception and reminisced about their softball glory days. Thelma Keith, who coordinated the game and is a former Saints player and coach, introduced each player before the five-inning affair.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime, awesome night," said Keith, who played for the Trailblazers. "It was probably one of the most rewarding things I've ever done in my life with softball, to bring all these players from across the United States here for this.

"I tried to create a tradition and I wanted Phoenix to get on the map."



Steve Cherek/Daily News-Sun

Rosie Andrade, left, and daughter Helen used to play for the Sun City Saints and will reunite with former teammates in a legends game next week.

Family affair

Saints players share softball memories

By DAVID R. BECK
Staff writer

Most of all, Judy Hoke remembers the endearing support of the faithful softball fans who often filled 3,500-seat Sun City Stadium.

"Our fan support was tremendous and no other team had that kind of support," said Hoke, one of 19 former Sun City Saints who are expected to compete in a Legends Game next week. "To be able to go out and see those fans every game was great."

Hoke played center field for the

If you go

WHAT: Sun City Saints reunion and Legends Game

WHEN: 6:30 p.m. Aug. 15

WHERE: Rose Mofford Sports Complex, 9833 N. 25th Ave. in Phoenix

Saints from 1971 to 1977 and now teaches physical education and driver's education at Marcos de Niza High School in Tempe. She was a two-time All-American with the Saints and has stayed in contact with several former teammates.

"Just playing with the other

ladies and getting to meet people stands out the most," Hoke said. "It was fun competing and getting to travel."

The Legends Game — which will feature more than 85 softball players — and a tribute to the Saints are set for 6:30 p.m. Friday at Rose Mofford Sports Complex, 9833 N. 25th Ave. in Phoenix. The 1997 Women's Major Fast Pitch National Softball Championship runs from Aug. 13th through Aug. 17.

► See Legends Game, C3

over

Legends Game pays tribute to Saints

■ From C1

At least one mother-daughter combination will play in the Legends Game.

Rosie Andrade, a Glendale resident who played with the Saints from 1966 to 1968 and her daughter, Helen Siggelkow, who was a Saint from 1982 to 1984, will don Saints uniforms again. Siggelkow arrived from Minneapolis to participate in next week's game.

A picture in the yet-to-be-published Legends commemorative program features a 4-year-old Helen watching her mother play softball.

"When we first started, we traveled to California and Connecticut and it was neat," said Andrade, a receptionist with the Glendale Unified School District. "We went to nationals and I'd bring my daughter."

For Becky Rice, a Saint from 1971 to 1977, a whirlwind softball tour of South Africa and a trip to France and England are especially memorable.

"The fans were great in Sun City and Del Webb really took care of us," said Rice a former police officer and now an investigator for ABCO Foods. "He gave us money for traveling and even helped some of us find jobs.

"I loved going out to the stadium and it would be nice to see Sun City fans at the game (next week)," added Rice, whose sister, Stephanie, was a bat girl for the Saints.

Among the other former Saints expected to play in the Legends Game are Billie Harris, Marilyn Rau, Leanne Easley, Roxie Harvey, Beth Dreyer-Stewart, Ginger Kurtz,

Linda Coats, Georgia Buelow, Denny Buchanan, Ann Beiser, Lisa Clinchey, Andie Ervin, Connie Mullen and Cathy Gonzales.

Monday, Aug. 11, 1997 Daily News-Sun, Sun City



Steve Chernek/Daily News-Sun

Connie McMillin, left, secretary of the Sun Cities Historical Society, holds a miniature promotional Sun City Saints bat. A ceramic version of the Sun City Saints logo, right, is on display in the society museum.

DIAMOND KEEPSAKES

Historical society preserves Saints memories

By RUTHANN HOGUE
Staff writer

From the time the Saints came marching in to Sun City in 1966 until their departure in 1984, the popular women's softball team kept Sun City Stadium packed.

On Friday, fans and players alike will get a chance to recall the "good ol' days" when the Saints participate in a 6:30 p.m. Legends Game during the Women's Major Fastpitch Tournament in Rose Mofford Sports Complex in Phoenix.

Among those eager to attend the reunion game is Al Foster, vice president of finance of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society.

"That was my first impression of Sun City," said Foster, who regularly attended Saints games with his first wife, Esther.

"When I came here in 1973, that was the big deal. I was amazed when I saw those girls throw a ball like a man does."

In those days, the Sun City Saints, formerly the Phoenix Ramblers, played in Women's Pacific Coast League against teams such as the Orange Lionettes and the Fresno Rockets of California.

The team was transplanted to Sun City by Del Webb when the Ramblers lost their playing field in Phoenix. They moved to the Sun City Stadium, which was also used by the Milwaukee Brewers and other major-league baseball teams during the spring training season.

"I used to ride my bike down there to watch them play," Foster said of the Cactus League games. "I saw a lot of Brewers games."

He said he was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the Saints' play, particularly with player Suzie Gaw, a shortstop.

"I was impressed," Foster said. "She was a little gal and could really play and hustle."

These days, Foster enjoys showing off the historical society's extensive collection of Saints memorabilia — including a scrapbook that features a black-and-white photo of Gaw.

He's not the only one who enjoys reminiscing about the Saints.

"That display always draws a smile, even from a person who is least likely to go to a historical place," said Connie McMillin, secretary and member of the board of trustees with the Sun Cities Area Historical Society.

"The Saints are an important part of our history here. Our collection is quite extensive."

Indeed.

From a ceramic figurine in the likeness of the Saints logo to trophies, uniforms, rain gear, red and gold pompoms, autographed game balls, scrap books and numerous programs, the historical society's collection is sure to please.

One room of the museum was once used to sell concessions at Saints games and later as a dressing room for players. It was donated by Del Webb, who originally used the room to hand out sales literature in Phase I in 1969. It was added onto the museum in 1991.

The items were donated by adoring fans and from the Sun City Saints Boosters Club.

"The people here really supported them because they just turned out in droves," said Phyllis Street, president of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society.

The exhibit is open from 10 a.m. to noon on Fridays and Saturdays in the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, 10801 Oakmont Drive, Sun City.

Diamond dandy

Sun Citian recalls softball glory days

By RICH BOLAS
Sports editor

Helen Watkins Howk puts the newspaper clippings, photographs and Hall of Fame plaque into her handbag as smoothly as she used to field **Softball** ground balls.

The bag, however, can't hold all the memories the Sun City woman has of an amateur softball career which spanned three decades.

"My favorite memories are the six-week tours we used to take around the country," the 75-year-old Howk said. "It usually started in mid-July and went until the last of August.

"I would have never gotten out of Phoenix if not for softball."

Howk will be one of the softball legends honored next week as part of the festivities surrounding the 1997 Women's Major Fast Pitch Championship.

Games will be played Aug. 13 through Aug. 17 at the Rose Moford Sports Complex, 9833 N. 25th Ave. in Phoenix. The tournament will also feature a tribute to the Sun City Saints as well as other softball legends at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 15.

Howk played second base, short-stop and third base for the A-One Queens, whose name was derived from a beer produced by its sponsor, a Phoenix brewery.

Teams such as the Queens and Ramblers played for three decades beginning in the 1930s and served as predecessors to the Saints.

"We were groundbreakers," Howk said. "We paved the way for teams like the Saints."

Howk began playing softball as a fifth-grade student in the summer of 1933. Her infield skills quickly caught the attention of various teams, including the Queens, who played their home games at Phoenix Softball Park, a now defunct facility located at 17th Avenue and Roosevelt.

The team's name frequently changed to accommodate new sponsors. One year Howk's team was known as the Cantaloupe Queens. Another year they were affiliated with Denton Tires.

Each summer the team would travel around the country, stopping in such locales as Gallup, N.M., Tulsa, Okla., and Des Moines, Iowa, en route to their final stop, Chicago.



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Helen Watkins Howk has had her softball success chronicled in newspaper articles and photographs. She was inducted into the Arizona Softball Hall of Fame.

"We had a dress code that was enforced whenever we traveled," the retired school teacher recalled. "I remember we stopped traffic in Chicago dressed in our Western outfits and boots."

The teams traveled a variety of ways on these barnstorming trips, including trains, buses and car caravans.

"One time we drove all night and didn't get to where we going," Howk recalled. "By morning we discovered we had been heading in the wrong direction.

"We turned around and made it to Des Moines just minutes before the game. We dressed in the stadium bathroom and played the

OVER

If you go

WHAT: Sun City Saints reunion and Legends Game

WHEN: 6:30 p.m. Aug. 15

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game before we even checked into our hotel."

Howk was known as a singles hitter, frequently batting second or seventh in the lineup.

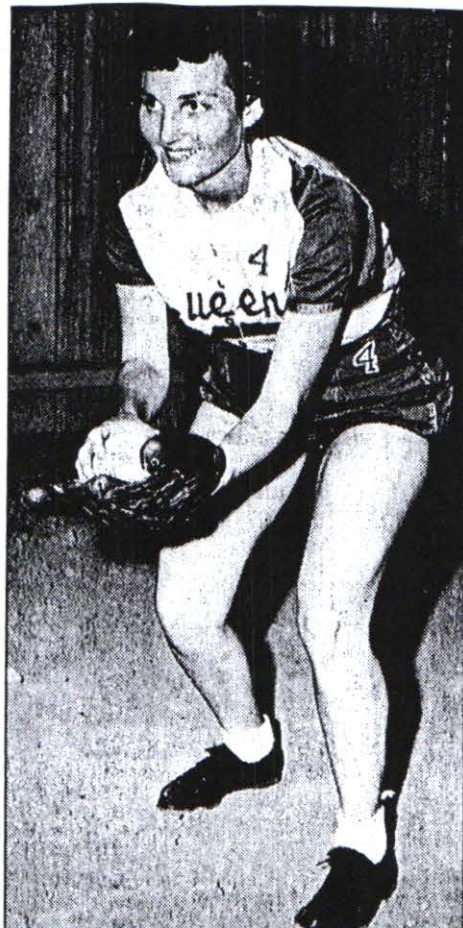
It was her fielding that drew acclaim and led to her induction into the Arizona Softball Foundation Hall of Fame in 1978. Hall voters also recognized her part in founding the girls softball program in Fort Bragg, Calif.

The Ramblers and Queens frequently battled for the right to represent Arizona in national softball tournaments.

Howk said her favorite memory is the 1945 national tournament in Cleveland, when the Queens reached the quarterfinals.

Howk stays in frequent contact with her former teammates. They get together once a month.

"There are 12 of us and we get together out at McCormick Ranch in Scottsdale," Howk said. "I still have my cleats, glove and a ball at my house, but I don't get much of a chance to use it."



Submitted photo

Helen Watkins Howk was known as a slick-fielding infielder during her playing days.

Former Saints manager dies at 63

By ANN T. DALEY
Assistant Sports Editor

Softball and Gerald Stapley.

Anyone who followed the Sun City Saints women's fastpitch softball team during its heyday knew it was a perfect match.

"Softball was everything to my dad. The Sun City Saints came first, the family came second," said Clyde Stapley, son of former Saints manager Gerald Stapley, who had a heart attack and died at his Mesa home on Sunday. He was 63.

"We used to do things on the weekend many times without dad because he'd be coaching. He always did things his way, down to the very end."

'He was an outstanding man and a marvelous coach. He really developed some outstanding players in his time.'

Joe Davison
Sun City Saints Booster Club



Stapley

Until his death, Stapley coached all levels of fastpitch softball, including almost a decade at the women's amateur level with the Saints. An avid fastpitch softball player since his teens, Gerald Stapley became manager of the Saints in 1973, replacing the team's original coach Bev Dwyer. He led the team through two seasons before leaving to coach a girls'

team. He returned to lead the Saints to an American Softball Association national championship in 1979 and played internationally in South Africa and Japan. Although the team disbanded in 1985, Stapley remained active coaching girls teams in the East Valley. He returned to Sun City when the Saints regrouped in 1990. The following year the team moved its games to a Phoenix complex and disbanded a second time following the 1991 season.

"He was an outstanding man and a marvelous coach," said Joe Davison, former treasurer and president of

See Club members, B4

Club members pay tribute to Stapley

— From B1

the Sun City Saints Booster Club. "He really developed some outstanding players in his time."

In addition to enticing fans with a winning program, Stapley gained respect of the community and players with his likable personality.

"He was a good man, a very personable person," said Sun City's Alice Messick. "He was very easy to get along with. Of course, he had a regimen they had to follow or else."

"I think everybody liked Gerald when they met him. He was a very good friend."

Sun City resident Sam Higginbotham, a cashier at the stadium's concession stand in the mid 1970s, agreed.

"I worked out there every night and he coached out there every night," Higginbotham said. "I think he did a pretty job. They had a pretty good team."

Stapley and his team received much help from the Saints Booster Club and area residents.

"My husband and I were very interested in the girls' team," Messick said. "We worked closely together."

"When I lost my husband, I

continued to give the trophies in his honor. It's something we enjoyed very very much."

When the Saints disbanded in 1985, Messick stored the team's trophy collection at her home. Shortly thereafter, she decided to give Stapley the chance to select a trophy in honor of "all the work he had done over the years."

She led him into the room where the trophies were stored, protected from dust by black cloths.

"He didn't even uncover any, he just pointed to one and said, 'That one,'" Messick said. "It was the national championship trophy. I asked him, 'Gerald, how in the world did you know that that one was the championship trophy?'"

"He said, 'I had carried it around for a week after we had won it. I should know it covered or uncovered.'"

Visitation will be 6 to 8 tonight at Bunkers Garden Chapel, 33 N. Centennial Way, Mesa. A second visitation will be 9 a.m. Friday at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 848 N. Westwood, Mesa, with the service following at 10 a.m.

Gerald Van Stapley, 63, of Mesa, a fleet maintenance worker with the U.S. Postal Service, died Aug. 21, 1994. He was born in Snowflake. Survivors include his wife, Hazel; daughters, Rena Ray, Karen Chambers, Jolene Haymore, Marla Colby, Lanell Yardley, Gwendolen Smith and Janette Palmer; sons, Delwin, Clyde and Leo; sisters, Velma Pendleton, Wilma Lamb, Pearl Martindell and Leona Tatlow; brother, Floyd; and 45 grandchildren. Visitation: 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Bunker's Garden Chapel, 33 N. Centennial Way, Mesa. Services: 10 a.m. Friday, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 848 N. Westwood St., Mesa, with a second visitation one hour before services.

Former Saints manager dies at 63

By ANN T. DALEY
Assistant Sports Editor
Softball and Gerald Stapley.

Anyone who followed the Sun City Saints women's fastpitch softball team during its heyday knew it was a perfect match.

"Softball was everything to my dad. The Sun City Saints came first, the family came second," said Clyde Stapley, son of former Saints manager Gerald Stapley, who had a heart attack and died at his Mesa home on Sunday. He was 63.

"We used to do things on the weekend many times without dad because he'd be coaching. He always did things his way, down to the very end."

'He was an outstanding man and a marvelous coach. He really developed some outstanding players in his time.'

Joe Davison
Sun City Saints Booster Club



Stapley

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Memory lane

*Daily News Sun
Tuesday 6/7/94*

Veteran player recalls days as Sun City Saint

By ANN T. DALEY
Assistant Sports Editor

SUN CITY — Susie Gaw felt a wave of familiarity on her way to practice at Sun Cities Stadium Saturday morning.

"It was like my car was on automatic pilot," said the 33-year-old Scottsdale resident, who played women's fast-pitch softball with the Sun City Saints for nine years beginning in 1976. "It was like it knew where to go."

"Once I got to the stadium, I could smell the popcorn and hear the horns honking. When I got inside I wandered around looking at things. There used to be a big trophy case where you entered and locker rooms and water fountains and the bathrooms to the left."

"Being there again made it seem like yesterday."

Until Saturday, it had been almost a decade since Gaw visited the stadium where the Saints enjoyed much of their success before disbanding in 1985.

Now she returns as a third-year outfielder with the Sun Cities Storm Sunbirds, a women's fast-pitch team which previously had played in Phoenix.

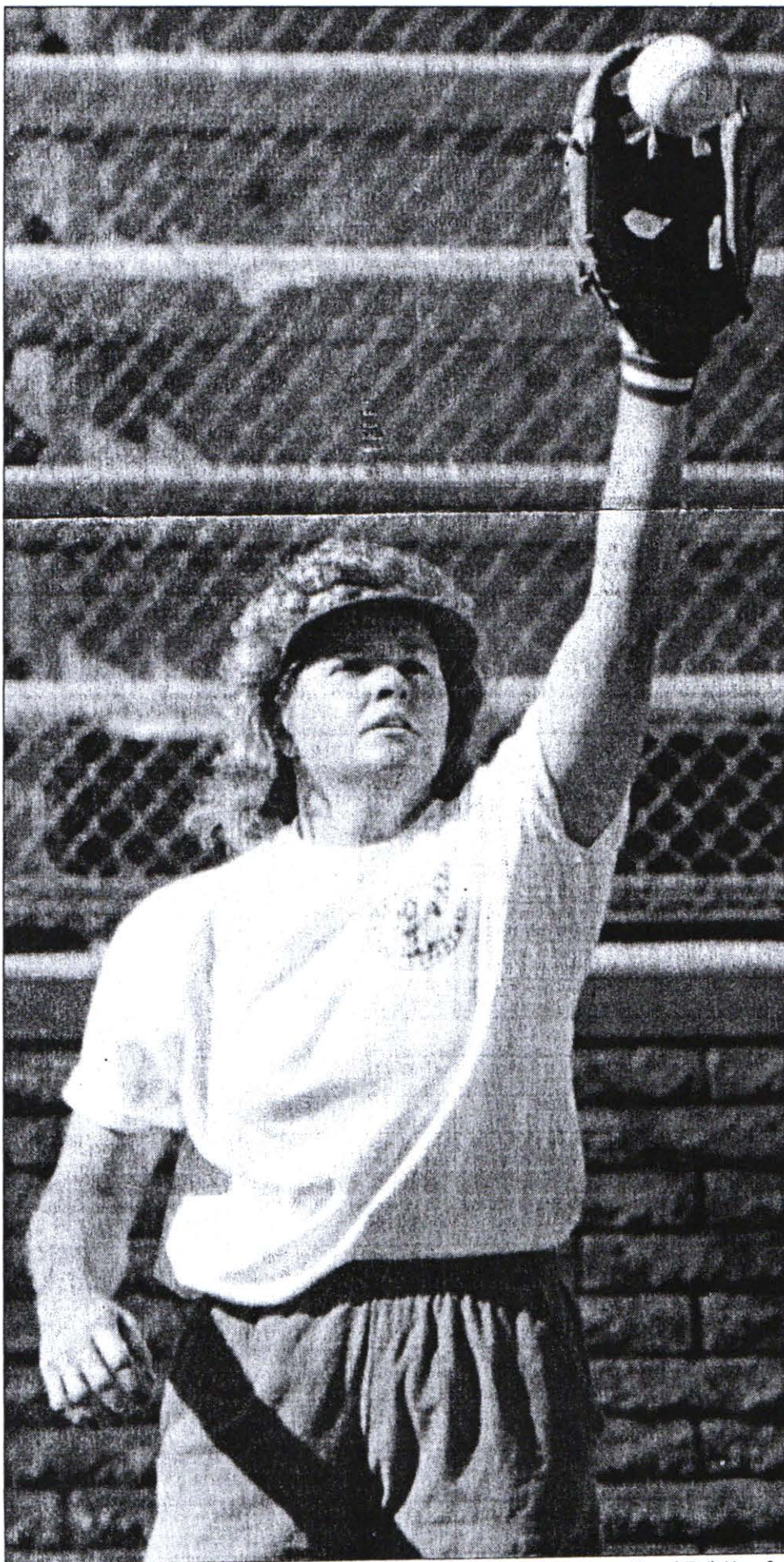
Gaw's memories of the Saints remain crystal clear.

"There were a couple of ladies who had cow bells that they would ring everytime we'd get a hit," recalled Gaw, an engineer with the Phoenix Fire Department. "The crowd would razz the other team. Those fans didn't want anyone but their Saints to win."

Gaw said she hopes some of the Saints' magic will return as the Sunbirds debut at Sun Cities Stadium against the Phoenix Patriots at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday.

"I'd give anything to get some teams in here and have it be like it used to just so these girls can know what it's like to have a wonderful community behind them," said Gaw, the only Sunbird to have

See Gaw spent, B2



Steve Cherek/Daily News-Sun

Susie Gaw starred for nine years with the Sun City Saints. The 33-year-old returns to Sun Cities Stadium as a member of the Sun Cities Storm Sunbirds, who play host to the Phoenix Patriots at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday.

If you go

WHO: Phoenix Patriots vs. Sun Cities Storm Sunbirds

WHEN: 6:30 p.m. Wednesday

WHERE: Sun Cities Stadium, 111th and Grand

ADMISSION: \$2 adults, \$1 children

Saints honor day scheduled

By Julia Jones
Staff writer

SUN CITY — A Sun City Saints Recognition Day is planned for 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday at the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, 10801 Oakmont Drive.

The celebration honoring the now-defunct women's softball team is a highlight of the society's observance of National Historic Preservation week. Sunday happens to be the anniversary of the birth of the late Del Webb, founder of Sun City, said Jane Freeman, a member of the Historical Society and of the Saints Booster Club.

On hand for the celebration will be Saints coaches Thelma Keith and Gerald Stapley, plus several team members and a special display of memorabilia.

The first Saints home game was played at the field at 109th and Grand avenues on May 7, 1966; the Sun City Stadium at 111th and Grand avenues opened July 4, 1971.

Although no team members, who ranged in age from 16 to 26 years, ever lived in the Sun Cities, support for the "home team" was wholehearted, said John Davisson, former president of the booster club.

During the Saints' glory years, in the 1970s, the team won two Pacific Coast League championships, toured South Africa, Rhodesia and Australia, won two national tournaments, and was runner-up in international competition. Four players on the 1979 team were named to the All-American Team. They were Lynn Mooney, Marilyn Rau, Paula Noel, and Suzi Gaw.

But the team faced the beginning of the end, when the International Women's Professional Softball League Association was formed in 1976, and most of the Saints' opponents fled to be part of the first professional women's team-sport enterprise.

Because of a lack of qualified opponents and increasing stadium operating costs, the Saints folded in the mid 1980s. A brief flurry toward reviving the team was made in 1990, and the team, in fact, finished eighth out of 38 in national competition, but the team folded again at the end of the season.

The celebration and display will be arranged in the Historical Society headquarters in the first home built in Sun City. The house sold for \$8,500 in 1960, Freeman said. Information on the Society and the celebration is available at 974-2568.

"Preservation Brings History to Life" is the theme of this year's National Historic Preservation Week.



SUN CITY

SAINTS

RECOGNITION DAY

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 1992 2:00 - 4:00 P.M.

SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

10801 OAKMONT DRIVE

SUN CITY, ARIZONA



WELCOME COACHES THELMA KEITH & GERALD STAPLEY

RENEW FRIENDSHIPS WITH TEAM MEMBERS

SEE SPECIAL DISPLAYS - MEMORABELIA

ENJOY TROPHIES - 32 OF THEM

FURTHER INFORMATION

974-2568



SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

May 2, 1992

Dear SUN CITY SAINTS (former) Sponsor:

Re-live the good old days on Sunday, March 17, 1992 when we plan to recognize the Sun City Saints. Further details are available on the back of this letter.

May 17 also happens to be Del Webb's birthday and ends the National Historic Preservation Week. So this is really a triple celebration.

The SUN CITY SAINTS depended on your faithful support and without your financial backing the team would not have been a national and international championship team.

We do hope someone from your organization can join us on the 17th. If you have any questions you may leave a message for me at 974-2568.

Cordially,

Jane Freeman
Jane Freeman



SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

April 21, 1992

Dear Sun City SAINTS Booster,

Re-live the good old days on Sunday, May 17, 1992 when we plan to recognize the Sun City Saints. Further details are available on the back of this letter.

We have talked with former coaches Thelma Keith and Gerald Stapley and they will try to contact some of the players. We have asked the ARIZONA REPUBLIC and PHOENIX GAZETTE to run an announcement in the sports section asking former Saints players to contact Thelma, Gerald or Alice Messick. If you, as a former booster, have kept in contact with any of the players, please let them know about our program. Also, please do the same for any boosters you may remember. We have a skeleton list but it is far from complete.

We plan to have publicity in the local papers closer to the date, May 17th. Hopefully they will print it...you can't ever tell these days.

In our files we have programs for the years 1971 through 1983. Can you supply any of the missing years? Also, any other memorabilia?

Let's have a good turn-out, see you the 17th! If you have any questions please call and leave a message at 974-2568 or my home, 974-5377.

Cordially,

Jane
Jane Freeman
Archivist

The hometown team

Special event pays tribute to Sun City Saints

By **BRET McKEAND**
Sun Cities Independent

Sun City Stadium has hosted a number of professional ballteams over the years and has seen the likes of such greats as Henry Aaron, Rod Carew and Reggie Jackson.

Ballteams have come and gone over the years, but the most popular team to ever grace the Sun City diamond may have been a team of female softball players, the Sun City Saints.

It's been almost 30 years since the Saints played their first game in Sun City. According to local historians, the community's fondness for the Saints continues as strong as ever.

The Sun Cities Historical Society will conduct their first Sun City Saints Recognition Day on May 17. The event will be held 2-4 p.m. at the society's headquarters, 10801 Oakmont Drive, Sun City.

According to Jane Freeman, president of the society, letters have been sent to several former Saints players and organizers are hopeful many will be on hand for the event.

The team was organized in 1966 and was known as one of the



In addition to playing softball, members of the Sun City Saints often became involved in various fund-raising activities. It was not uncommon to find Saints players roaming the stands before a game, selling kisses for \$1 in an effort to help a local charity.

strongest female softball teams in the nation. During their 18-year-run in Sun City, the Saints won numerous championships, raised a tremendous amount of money for local charities and were seen by thousands upon thousands of loyal fans.

"They were very popular and well-supported by Sun City," says Mrs. Freeman.

According to "Jubilee," a book detailing the history of Sun City, the Saints were the offshoot of the Phoenix Ramblers, a women's softball team which disbanded in 1965.

Team members were lured to Sun City in 1966. A local newspaper published a survey, "Should Sun City have a women's softball team?" and the response

was overwhelmingly positive.

On May 7, 1966, the team played its first game in a new stadium constructed on the corner of Grand and 108th avenues, where JB's Restaurant now exists.

The first stadium seated 1,000 fans and sellouts were the norm, not the exception. A local boosters club was soon organized and, in addition to tickets, money was raised through concessions and team merchandise.

Retha Beveridge, one of the founders of the Saints Boosters Club, recalls how "everybody just loved the Saints." Attendance was always solid — 1,000 people would be considered "poor attendance" back then.

"They were kind of like our daughters," she says. "And there were no problems raising money. Everyone would pitch in."

Mrs. Beveridge remembers one particular game where the Saints battled their opponents for 36



Evelyn Parry, a Sun City Pioneer, proudly displays various Saints memorabilia and awards which are on display at the Sun Cities Historical Society. The society will host a Saints Recognition Day, 2-4 p.m. May 17..

innings. "Everyone stayed until the end and we didn't get home until about 3:30 a.m."

The Saints were scheduled to play the very next morning and, when she and her husband got to the ballpark, "there were several hundred people who remained at the stadium."

Bev Dryer-Stewart, the original owner and first coach of the team, says the closeness of the community at that time was one of the reasons behind the team's popularity.

"(Sun City) was a small community then and most people felt the Saints were their ballteam," she says.

The team quickly became "part of the community" and, through their participation in community activities outside of softball, they

grew close to many of their most loyal fans.

"We felt like we were their daughters," says Ms. Dryer-Stewart.

"The girls made themselves available. After the games they would go up and talk to many of the fans.

" They would attend events in the community. The people got to know (players) by name and there was definitely a close relationship," she adds.

Like many people, Mrs. Beveridge was disappointed to see the team leave in 1984. "It was a shock to everyone when we found out they weren't coming back," she recalls. "It wasn't for lack of support or attendance."

The stadium was sold in 1984 and the future status of the ballpark

was uncertain. The Saints, unable to afford the increased rent and unsure of their future, left for Phoenix.

The history of the Saints will be relived through various displays of uniforms, old programs and other memorabilia at the May 17 Recognition Day.

The Saints exhibit will remain on display at the Historical Society throughout the summer. Starting next fall, Mrs. Freeman says the organization plans to feature a different organization each month.

The Recognition Day and open house are being held in conjunction with National Historic Preservation Week and, coincidentally, happens to fall on the birthday of Del Webb, founder of Sun City.

The public is welcome to the event. Refreshments will be served.

Sun City Saints highlights

- 1965 — Phoenix Ramblers disband
- 1965 — Local newspaper begins drive to bring softball team to Sun City.
- 1966 — Saints, consisting of several Ramblers players, begin play in Sun City.
- 1971 — Saints move into new Sun City Stadium.
- 1974-75 — Saints notch two consecutive Pacific Coast League titles.
- 1975 — Saints invited to compete in South Africa and Rhodesia.
- 1977 — Runners up in national tournament.
- 1979 — First place, national tournament.
- 1984 — Team moves to Phoenix, disbands.

Source: Sun Cities Historical Society

Heavenly

Saints reunion set for this Sunday

By ANN T. DALEY
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Former Sun City Saints Coach Thelma Keith remembers playing softball the night that astronaut Neil Armstrong took the first steps on the moon on July 20, 1969.

"We were playing against the astronauts landing on the moon and we

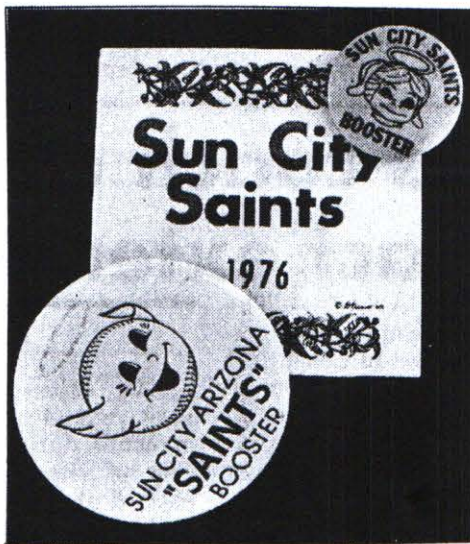
Softball

still had about 270 fans sitting in the stands at the old field at 107th and Grand (avenues)," Keith said. "That's dedication."

Former Saints players and coaches will join Keith in reminiscing at a reunion hosted by the Sun Cities Area Historical Society this Sunday. Fans and boosters are invited to attend the reunion from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, 10801 Oakmont Drive.

Refreshments and souvenir Sun City Saints hand-held cooling fans will be available.

SCAHS archivist Jane Freeman has been collecting Saints memorabilia to display at the reunion. Among the items are 32 Saints trophies, autographed balls, uniforms and game programs spanning the team's inception in 1966 through their final season in 1984. In 1990, the team regrouped and played in the national



Stephen Cherek/Daily News-Sun

Buttons and other Saints memorabilia will be on display this Sunday.

tournament, but moved to Phoenix in 1991 when players opted to change leagues.

Freeman said the reunion will highlight the society's celebration of National Historic Preservation Month and Sun City founder Del E. Webb's birthday.

"We wanted to feature one group from the Sun Cities each month and I thought there would be a lot of inter-

est in the Saints," Freeman said.

Through a 25-year history in Sun City, the Saints finished as Amateur Softball Association National Champions in 1979 and three-time champions in the Olympic Sports Festival.

"This is wonderful," Keith said of the reunion. "Who knows, it might generate some interest. (Sun Citians) adopted us and we were a big part of this community for a long time.

"It left a big void in the community and in my life and my heart when the team disbanded."

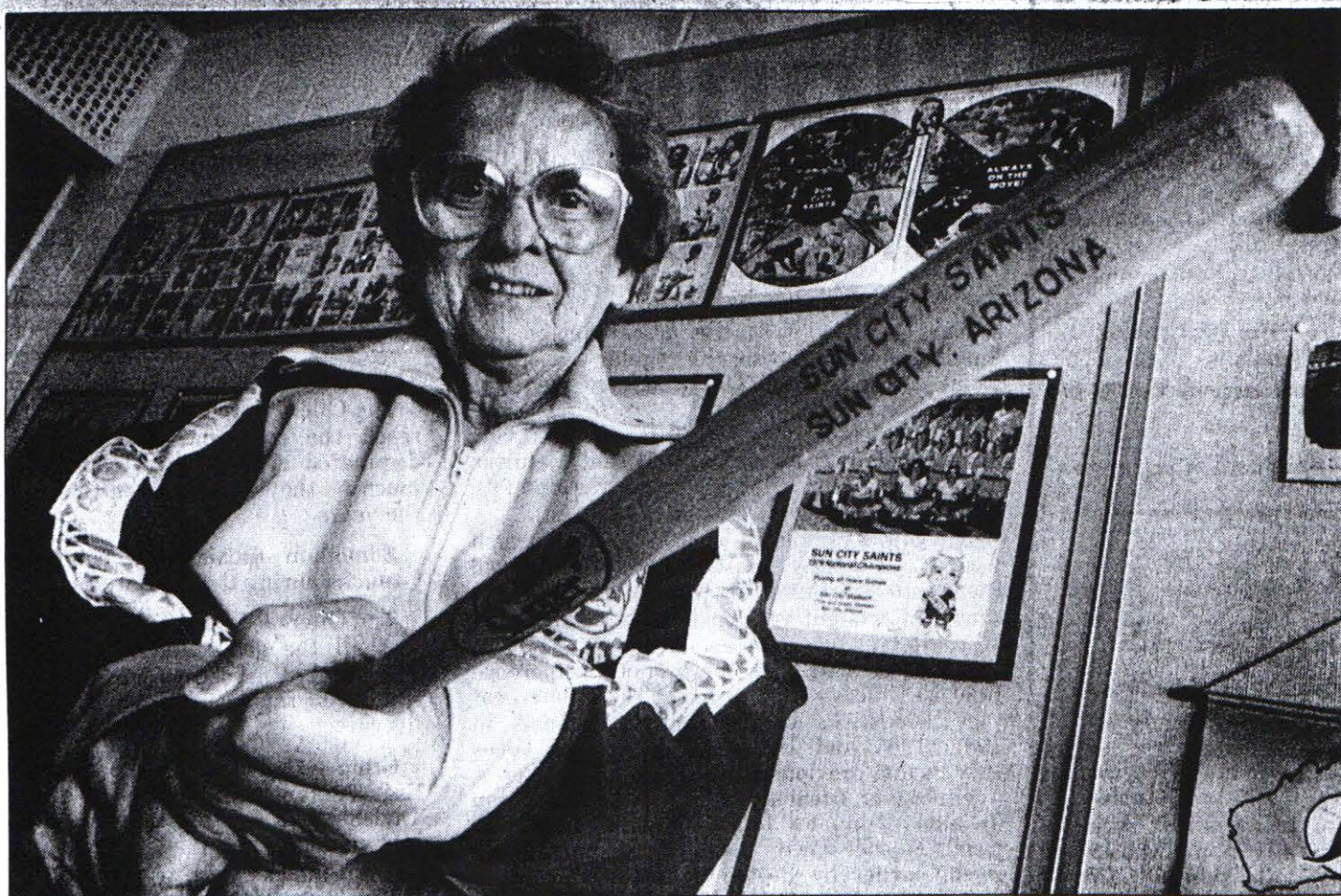
Although the Saints have disbanded, Keith, Freeman and former Coach Gerald Stapley have contacted and received commitments from a number of former players.

Among players expected to return are pitcher Billie Harris, shortstop Ginger Kurtz, shortstop-outfielder Susie Gaw, second baseman Karen Fellenz, outfielder Val Troxcel, shortstop Woody Woodcott, first baseman Gay Turley and mother-daughter third base duo Rosie and Helen Andrade.

"I was surprised when I got the phone call and a couple of letters," Stapley said of the reunion. "I talked to some of the kids and they're planning on riding out with me.

"It should be a lot of fun."

OVER



Stephen Chernek/Daily News-Sun

Jane Freeman of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society takes a swing with a Sun City Saints toy bat. The society will play host to a reunion of fans, boosters and former players this Sunday.

Monday, May 18, 1992 Daily News-Sun, Sun City, Ariz.



Rick D'Elia/Daily News-Sun

Harriette Kanel of Sun City, left, a fan of the Sun City Saints, a women's fast pitch softball team, chats Sunday with Billie Harris, a former Saints player who pitched for the team from 1970 to 1975. The Sun Cities Area Historical Society sponsored the Saints Recognition Day in the society's headquarters on Oakmont Drive.

SPORTS

Recognition Day at Historic Society

by Ruth Borchardt

Not a "heavenly body," but a group of the greatest girl softball players ever. Join the fun! Come to a wonderful "package deal" on May 17 at 10801 Oakmont...Sun City honoring the Saints, Del Webb's birthday and National Historic Preservation Week. All this is put on by the Historic Society of Sun City.

Jane Freeman has been working diligently to bring this to fruition... enjoyment guaranteed! Surrounded by nostalgic memorabilia and beautiful trophies, you may spot former coaches Thelma Keith and Gerald Stapley. Also some of the team members.

One of the players, Marilyn Rau who eclipsed many of the national players, hoped to come



Jane Freeman

but since she can't make it, mention should be made that she won the All American title 11 times and was voted into the Hall of Fame for lady softball players.

"Off and running" in 1966, the first Saint's home game was played on Grand Avenue.

On July 4, 1972 the stadium opened. In 1974

and '75 there were two Pacific Coast League Championships. 1975, away they went to South Africa and Rhodesia. Lucky seven! 1977 found winners and runner-ups in national and international tournaments; also beat Tokyo twice. 1979, the team garnered first place in the Nationals in Houston AND, a red letter day the same year the Pom Pon Girls' first appearance under the guidance of Corinne Leslie.

1983, the end of an era. The stadium was sold to the Bade Boyes of Glendale and the Saints played no more until 1990 when they played in the Sun City Stadium and elsewhere on week-ends; also playing in the National in California, where they finished 8th out of 3 teams! A remarkable record for an accomplished team!

B2 Sports

■ SIDELINES

Former Sun City Saints players sought for reunion

SUN CITY — The Sun Cities Area Historical Society has planned a reunion on Sunday, May 17, to honor former Sun City Saints players.

The Society will have 32 team trophies and team memorabilia on display during the event, which will be conducted from 2 to 4 p.m.

Players should phone Thelma Keith at 246-8890, Gerald Stapley at 964-8579 or Alice Messick at 977-5745.

For information, phone Jane Freeman at 974-2568 or 974-5377.

**Sun City Saints
players to gather**

Former Sun City Saints softball team members will be honored by the Sun Cities Area Historical Society from 2 to 4 p.m. May 17.

Players are asked to contact former coaches Thelma Keith

(246-8890), Gerald Stapley (964-8579) or Alice Messick (977-5745).

Saints leave Sun City

Softball team will play in Phoenix

By ANN T. DALEY
Daily News-Sun staff

A 21-year tradition of amateur women's fast-pitch softball in Sun City has come to an end.

The Saints, founded in Sun City in 1965, will play their 1991 home games at Papago

Softball

Sports Complex in Phoenix, said Gerald Stapley, team manager.

The Saints played previously at Sun City Stadium, which was vacated in December after the demise of the Senior Professional Baseball Association's Sun City Rays.

In addition to the move, Saints players voted to leave the Open division and join the 12-team Copper State League.

"We already put the initial

deposit down and the Copper State League has accepted us," said Stapley. "We're in the process of trying to find funds for the team."

The Saints '91 season will begin in mid-May and conclude in early August.

A schedule of games will be available at a later date, said Stapley.

The Saints earned a national championship in 1979 and played in Sun City before disbanding after the 1984 season.

Stapley revived the team last year.

Among the returning Saints this season are pitcher Bonnie Kramer and first baseman Gay Turley.

Stapley said the '91 Saints will be without former third baseman Helen Andrade, who moved to the Midwest over the winter, and second baseman Karen Fellenz, who decided to retire.

The coach said practices will begin in late April.

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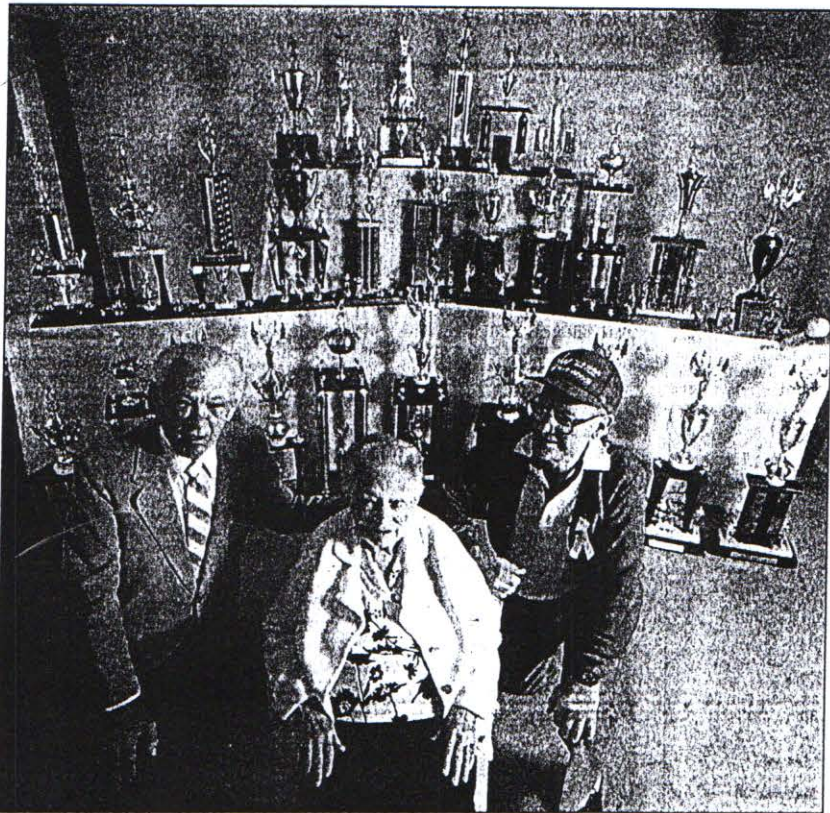
Northwest COMMUNITY

THE
PHOENIX
GAZETTE

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Wednesday, March 13, 1991

1W



Community
Memorabilia and memories of the Sun City Saints are all that remain for Les Merydith (left), Historical Society president; Alice Messick, booster; and Jack Falerni, stadium groundskeeper.

James Garcia / Staff photographer

Marching out

Sounds of Saints softball team are only memories at stadium

By Julia Jones
Staff writer

Sun City

The grass is sprouting in the dirt along the base line in Sun City Stadium at 111th and Grand avenues.

No one runs the bases anymore.

Jack Falerni, groundskeeper, goes occasionally to check on the property and equipment, but he doesn't turn on the sprinklers to water the field.

No one is there to care if it's green.

A couple of weeks ago, he helped Alice

Messick move 27 trophies, won by the 1979 world champion Sun City Saints, a womens' fast-pitch softball team, from showcases in the deserted stadium to the Sun City Historical Society headquarters on Oakmont Drive.

The home team's trophies are big, glittering masterpieces of brightly colored metal and polished wood, tributes to an excess of design with fluted columns, spheres and plaques in abundance. Most have a tiny batter poised, forever ready to knock one out of the park.

They mark the Saints' glory days,

between 1966 and 1984.

But after 18 seasons in the sun, the Saints were called out on a squeeze play: they lost to the money men.

"We have the trophies on display now, but there are too many for us to keep out all the time," said Les Merydith, Historical Society president. "They take up our whole meeting room."

Messick was president of the Saints booster club earlier this year when the team took another swing at a comeback, and missed.

But the game is over, Messick said; this

time, it's for good.

Messick, 81, and Falerni, 77, were more than fans.

Since Messick came back home to the Valley with her husband in 1971, she had been a part of the Saints, body and soul. The Saints were playing in a dirt field along Grand Avenue then, where a family restaurant now stands. They were making their own posters announcing their schedule, persuading area merchants to display them.

The team needed help with that, so
See TROPHY, Page 6

OVER

TROPHY

From Page 1

that's what the Messicks did, she said. They had always been active volunteers, working for 40 years with the March of Dimes, for instance, and she had chaired Wyoming's 75th anniversary celebration of statehood.

And from then on, they helped the Saints wherever and whenever help was needed.

"We were just there to help expedite anything the girls did," she said, "any fund-raising, selling ads for the program or scorecard or whatever. It was really a pleasure for us. We were with them before there was a booster club."

"We probably averaged 1,000 or 1,200 fans in the stands in those days," Messick said. "These other teams would come in with their boosters, maybe 40 people, and I think it kind of scared them to see all these people in that pretty stadium. And then this year, we had 900 people there, and I thought that was pretty good, since a lot of our old-timers had passed away."

Falerni has his own set of memories.

"I took care of the place when the (Milwaukee) Brewers were there for spring training, too," Falerni said. The San Francisco Giants played there briefly, as did a legion of other teams, including Arizona State University and Grand Canyon University, and some Pop Warner boys.

The ballpark, built on 12.5 acres by the Del Webb company, opened July 4, 1971. Building permits still posted show the cost as \$300,000. It was the third field Webb had built in its Sun City development, and by far the most elaborate.

Falerni, who started out as a hooper in the Catskills and New York City's burlesque houses, learned pick-and-shovel work in his dad's construction business.

"I'm just the guy out there (at the Sun City Stadium) with the mower now," he said.

And the Saints are just part of Sun City history, Messick said.

Messick's eyes moved over the assembled trophies again to one she bought, the first big trophy commemorating the Del Webb Memorial Day Tournament, back in 1978, as a memorial to her husband, who died that year.

Another one, she pointed out, was when the girls won the state championship, and one marked a trip to Australia.

A Japanese team came over here to play, she said. Then the Saints went to the Netherlands and Canada, down to Rhodesia. And everywhere they went, they held classes, to spread the word about their sport.

The team, most recently coached by Gerald Stapley of Mesa, never finished below fourth in the Amateur Softball Association National Tournament for eight straight years.

But in the mid-'80s, the property changed hands twice, and stadium rent soared to \$6,000. Now, the stadium is for sale, through the federal government's real estate office, Merydith said. The asking price for the property, in the Agua Fria River floodplain, is \$1.8 million.

The Saints tried a comeback last year, Messick said, at about the same time the Sun City Rays, a senior league ball club, got rolling, but it seemed both clubs struck out.

Messick is not optimistic about another revival. It isn't just the rent, she said. There also is a matter of upkeep.

"People don't realize it costs about \$25,000 a year to maintain that field," Falerni said. Watering alone would cost about \$1,000 a month.

Some of the trophies will be on display at the Historical Society, Merydith said. They would like to loan others to Sun City agencies and firms with display space, so people won't forget.

Their love of softball still strong

Women's team regroups for memories, fun

By Gary Horowitz
The Arizona Republic

When Billie Harris took the mound last week in an Old Timers Celebrity Softball game and saw her longtime teammate, Dot Wilkinson, take her customary spot behind the plate, it was just like old times.

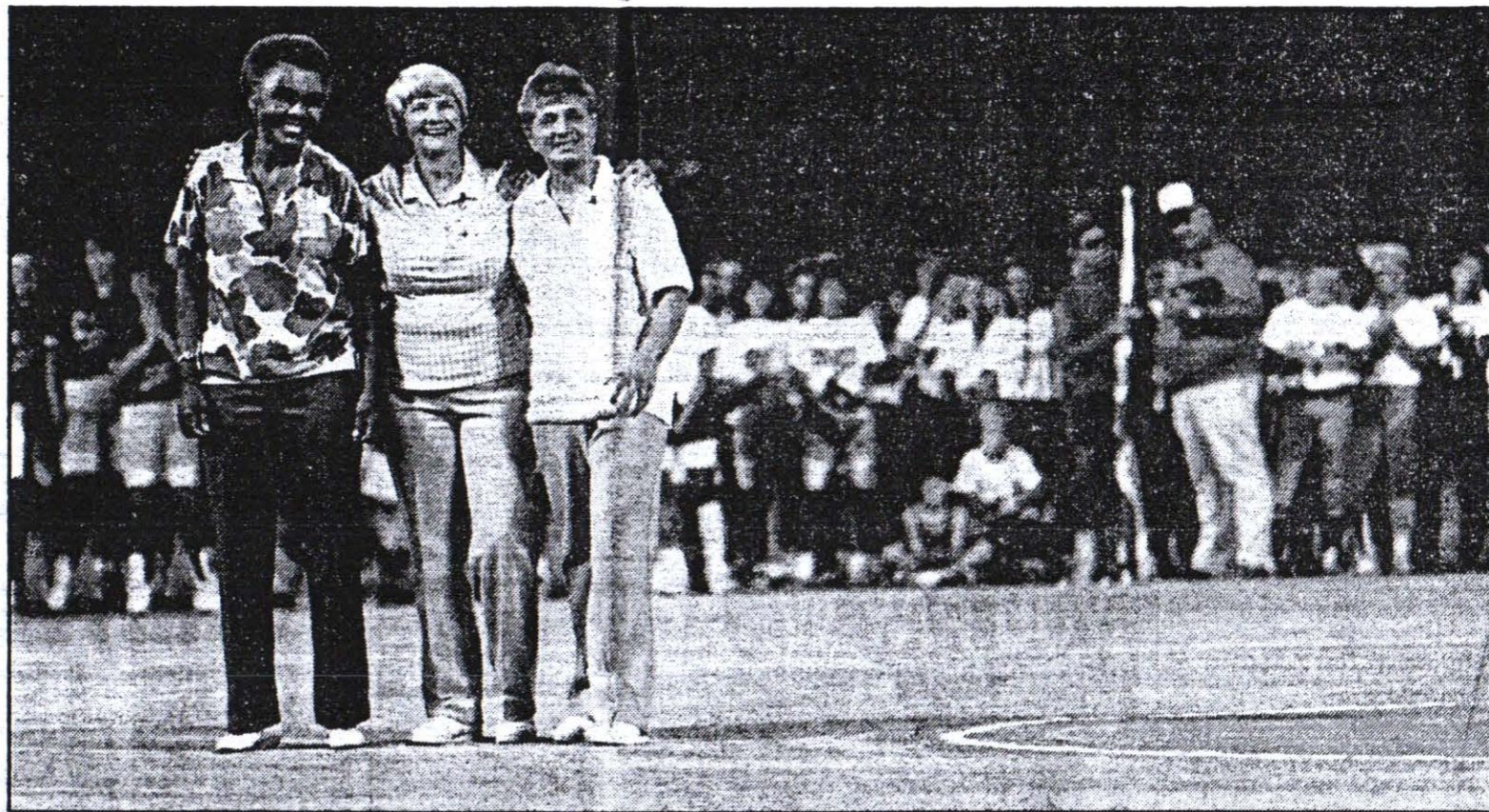
Harris and Wilkinson, who played for the Phoenix-based Ramblers, one of the premier women's fastpitch softball teams in the nation in the 1940s, '50s and '60s, were reunited along with teammate Ricki Caito as part of the festivities for Women's Softball Week.

The Amateur Softball Association National Women's A Fast Pitch Softball Championships, which began Thursday at the Cave Creek Sports Complex in Phoenix, features 46 of the top teams in the country. The championship game is scheduled for Sunday at 7 p.m.

"We had so much fun," said Wilkinson, 68, who played for the Ramblers from 1933 until the team's final season in 1965. "No one could believe I could squat down behind the plate like I did the other night. I told the ump 'If you see me hold up my hand you know I need help getting up.'"

During her day, Wilkinson was regarded as one of the best catchers in women's softball.

"That's quite an honor and I'm happy people say that," said Wilkinson, who was inducted into the Amateur Softball Association Hall of Fame in 1970, and named to the All-American team 19 times.



John Samora/The Arizona Republic

Hall of Famers (from left) Billie Harris, Dot Wilkinson and Ricki Caito acknowledge the cheering crowd at the Cave Creek Sports Complex.

Memories of some of the glory days for women's softball in the Valley linger for Wilkinson, Harris and Caito, who live in Phoenix. The A-1 Queens, another national power based in Phoenix, were the Ramblers' chief rivals.

"It brought back a lot of memories and a lot of stories talking to some of the Queens gals," said Wilkinson, who was on the Ramblers national championship teams in 1940, '48 and '49. "We used to love to play. When we started, that's all there was to do. Softball was our life."

Governor Rose Mofford came to Phoenix in the '40s and pitched for the Queens.

"It (Ramblers-Queens games) was such a heated rivalry even people in the stands would fight," recalled Caito, 64, inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1973, and a Ramblers

player from 1962-65. "The game was played for blood then. Of course, we wanted to win too."

Wilkinson said the Ramblers could have held their own against today's best teams.

"I think we would have been comparable to the best teams now,"



John Samora/The Arizona Republic
Gov. Rose Mofford, who pitched for the national powerhouse Queens, greets umpires at the fastpitch championships.

she said. "I go out and watch ASU play now and they play a good brand of ball, but there's no place to go after that.

"We never got paid to play. It was all for fun, but I think it was more serious for us then. When we got through we sat around and talked about it."

Harris, a left-hander, played for the Ramblers from 1950 to 1965, and was the team's first black player. She was also the first black player in the Hall of Fame.

"There were many times I couldn't go to some of the same places my teammates did," said Harris, 57, alluding to racism she encountered while with the Ramblers. "I just think it was one of those things I dealt with as I grew up. I think I was accepted by about 90 percent of my teammates."

Harris was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1982.

"That means a great deal to me," she said. "That's something they can never take away from me."

Harris, who works in the maintenance department at Mesa Commu-

nity College, hasn't strayed too far from softball. She coaches girls softball and even played a season for MCC in 1984.

"I had never gone to college so I still had eligibility," said Harris, who still takes classes at MCC. "I was the oldest player, but I did OK. I had to pitch the second game most of the time and we played in the heat of the day."

Harris, who played for the Sun City Saints when the Ramblers disbanded, missed being part of a national championship team by one season.

"But the highlight for me was just being able to play softball," she said.

For Wilkinson, the competitive fires still burn. Also a bowler, she was inducted into the Women's International Bowling Congress Hall of Fame in April and still carries a 183 average.

Bowling is fun for Wilkinson, but playing softball was her passion.

"In our day, that home plate was mine," Wilkinson said. "You had to take it away from me."



Submitted photo

GOOD TIMES — The Sun City Saints gathered for a reunion on Sunday. The team displayed a variety of photos, including this picture of the inaugural 1966 team, which featured, front row, left to right, Lou

Kosteliney, Connie Mullen, Marilyn Rau, Dee Everhart, Bev Dryer, Thelma Rae Keith. Back row, left to right, Sandy Kelly, Betty Phillips, Cotton Williamson, Betty McIlvain, Judy Boswell, Roxy Harvey, Rosie Andrade.

Glory days

Saints players relive heavenly memories

By ANN T. DALEY
Daily News-Sun staff

PHOENIX — Spunky, vibrant and energetic.

Those three words described the Sun City Saints of yesteryear as they played a reunion game Sunday at Cave Creek Park (25th Avenue and Mountain View, one block south of Peoria) in Phoenix.

The game was the ceremonial opener of the National Women's Fast Pitch

"A" Division Softball Tournament. Approximately 100 fans turned out for the reunion of former Saints, A-1 Queens and Ramblers.

For players, the competitive aspect of the game meant little in light of the opportunity to relive memories.

"I'd kept in touch with a few players," pitcher Billie F. Harris said. "But, it's things like this that make it all worthwhile."

Reunion organizer and former Saint Thelma Keith gathered scrapbooks, photos, uniforms and plaques for display at the event.

Players in attendance were Marilyn Rau (1966-84), Ginger Kurtz (1966-77), Lee Ann Easley (1973-80), Billie F. Harris (1969-75), Thelma Keith (1966-69), Rosie Andrade (1966-68), Lou Boyles (1966-67), Connie Mullen (1966-69),

See Saints, B2

Saints gather for reunion

— From B1

Roxy Harvey (1966), Linda Coats (1978-80), Barbara Quijada (1970-73), Diana Stevens (1972), Ann Belssek (1980-83), Georgia Buelow (five seasons) and Cathy Gonzales (two seasons).

The reunion prompted numerous recollections:

- Harvey and her husband Jim Craig, started the Sun City Saints after the Ramblers disbanded.

Harvey said the Saints were sponsored by the Sun City Merchants and played on a field at 107th and Grand avenues (also known as Sun City Ballfield).

"We had to have people bring dirt from the riverbed and we borrowed our light poles from (Arizona Public Service)," she said. "There was tremendous pressure that season, trying to get things together."

Former Ramblers Keith, Harvey, Andrade and Bev Dryer formed the nucleus of the first-year Saints.

The Saints used the field until 1972 when local developer Del Webb built Sun City Stadium (now in use) across the street at 111th and Grand avenues.

Harvey served as the the announcer at the reunion game, a job she held with the Saints in 1966. She played as a Saints outfielder in 1967.

- Former Saints catcher Rau recalled winning the national championship in 1979.

"I was named the (Most Valuable Player) in the tournament," she said. "I guess that's the highest honor you can earn at that level of competition."

Rau joined the Saints when she was 14 and played for 19 seasons.

- Arizona Hall of Fame member Harris

remembered an aspect of the early Saints era that was unique in her career: changes in racial beliefs.

"I'd been playing ball since 1947 and I was usually the only black person on most of the teams," she said. "When I got to the Saints, times had changed. A lot of the prejudices earlier in my career were gone."

"I was very fortunate. Everybody was a part of the team."

- Prior to joining the Saints, Arizona Hall of Fame member Andrade had been in retirement for five years, gotten married and given birth to a daughter, Helen.

Andrade said returning to the ballfield was exciting.

"Every game was exciting, to be out here," the former third baseman said.

Andrade's career highlight is unique, since it's connected with her daughter's softball career.

"Seeing Helen become a Saint and play my position as I had is my highlight," Andrade said. "Having Helen win the gold medal with the Saints at the Olympic Sports Festival in Indianapolis in 1981 meant so much."

- During pre-game activities, former outfielder Mullen remembered some of the special times she had as a Saint.

"The camaraderie with the girls was really special," she said. "The older girls took care of the younger ones, we learned the rules and values. We got to travel to Connecticut, Florida, California and all over the Western region."

"Everybody moves on, so it's wonderful to see old friends."

Saints player second to none

By ANN T. DALEY
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — "You can't beat her as far as a second baseman."

That's high praise for Sun City Saints second baseman Karen Fellenz from Saints coach Gerald Stapley.

The 27-year old Saints veteran said she doesn't remember her more outstanding plays, but

Saints softball

Stapley recalls them from as far back as 1979.

"She made two of the darnedest catches during the Nationals game to save Michelle Thomas' perfect game" he said. "She may not be the fastest, but she's got a jump on the ball and will make the play."

With a background like that, the Saints have a sense of security with Fellenz at second base. Sun City is 6-1 with her in the lineup this season.

"I like doing a double play," the Phoenix resident said. "I'm pretty good at going at the ball with my backhand."

The Saints are not only drawing upon her defensive skills, but also her offensive abilities.

Fellenz is the Saints' leadoff hitter this year and Stapley couldn't be more pleased with his southpaw batter.

"She's got a good eye and



Daily News-Sun

KAREN FELLEENZ — "I tend to get more motivated when we play good teams like California teams."

does a good job for us at lead-off," he said.

"I have an advantage in bunting, batting left-handed," she said.

Sun City compiled a 4-1 mark at California tournament last weekend, a turnaround from the previous week's 1-3 record in a home series with the Southern California Jazz. Fellenz was not in the lineup during the Jazz series.

"(In California) we played wisely defensively and had fun,"

See Fellenz, B2

Fellenz sparks Sun City

— From B1

she said. "We still have to work on hitting."

Like many intense players, good competition brings out the best in Fellenz.

"I tend to get more motivated when we play good teams like California teams," she said. "I'm a positive person. If I make an error, it's hard for me to forget about it."

"But, I try to stop thinking about it and get ready for the next ball," Fellenz said.

As a veteran Saint, she enjoys sharing her motivational tactics with teammates.

"When I see someone else who I can help, I will," she said. "But, I'm much harder on myself."

The old saying of "practice makes perfect" partially describes a Fellenz philosophy. She spends a couple of hours

every other day at a batting range, but she said practice alone won't make things perfect.

"You've got to spend some time alone on the field, time just for yourself," she said. "Other things that can't be done on the field like running, practicing in the batting cage, and swimming also help my game."

"When I'm at the plate, I concentrate on the pitch release. I tell myself I'm going to get a hit and I focus it in my mind," she said.

Fellenz's role model, Dot Richardson, plays second base for the HiHo Breakettes of Stratford, Conn. Ironically, the Breakettes are a national rival team of the Saints.

"She's (Richardson) is a great hustle ballplayer," Fellenz said. "She's also a lefty. I just try to imitate her style."

Fellenz has not had an injury-free career. In 1981, Fellenz

said she suffered an injury to her back when she tripped over her feet while playing basketball.

It took doctors six months to diagnose the injury, which meant six months before surgery was performed to correct the problem.

"It's never kept me from doing anything," she said.

Fellenz, a mail courier, spends much of her time on her feet in a job that requires a lot of lifting.

Little League baseball first attracted Fellenz's interest. She played for 10 years in the league before moving on to softball.

After a three-year career (1982-85) at the University of Arizona (which she attended on a softball scholarship), she played with the Cherrups, a Saints' farm team. She got the call to join the Saints in 1979.

SAINTS

When: Saturday and Sunday.

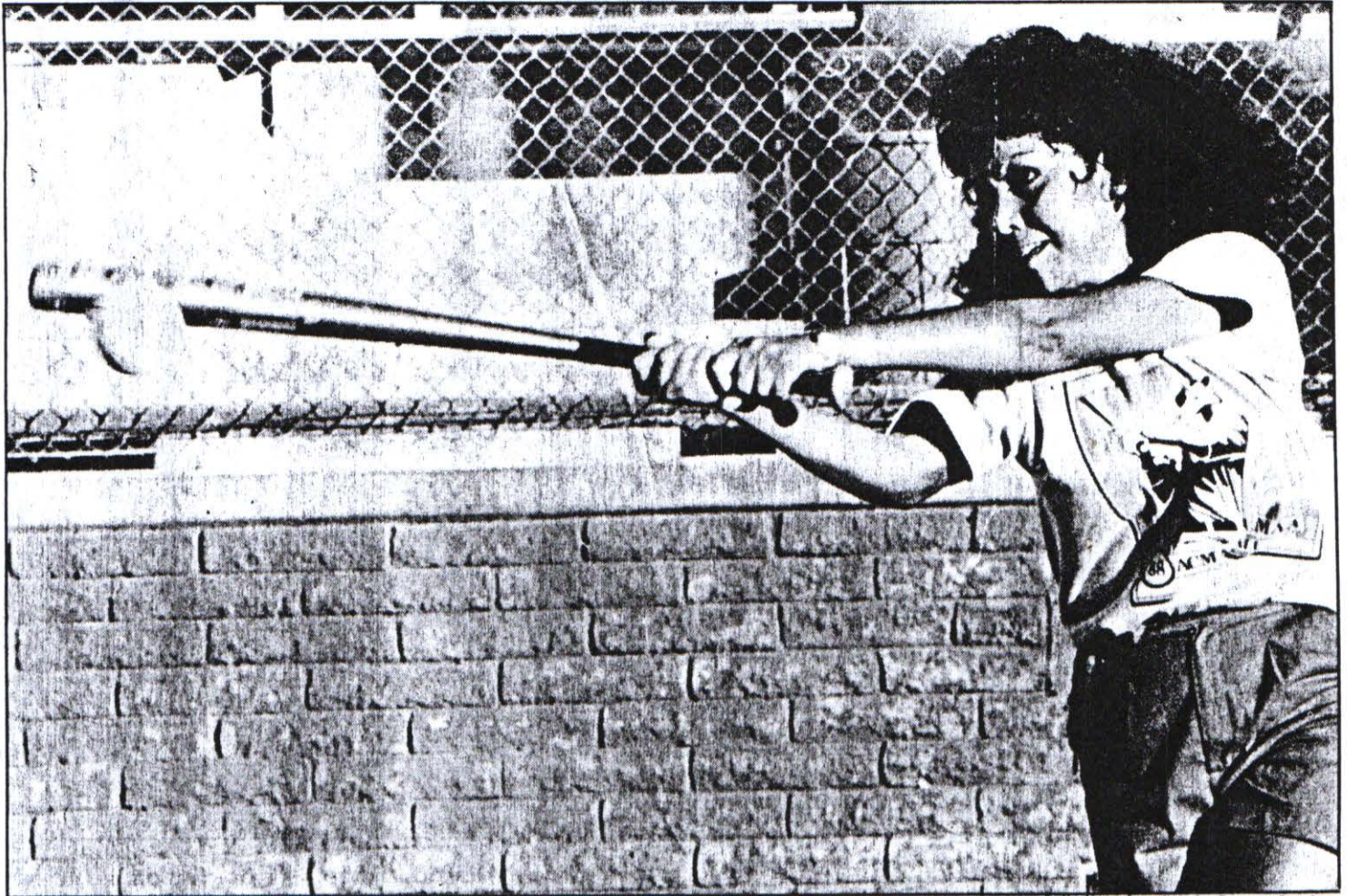
Where: Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues.

Who: Phoenix Thunderbirds on Saturday; Phoenix Spirit on Sunday.

Game Times: 7 p.m. (doubleheaders) both nights.

Her softball performances have helped Fellenz garner a variety of honors. During her college years, she traveled to Australia with the ASA All-Star team and was named All-American with the Wildcats.

In summer leagues, she has been named second team All-American once and third team All-American twice.



Daily News-Sun photo by Frances Guarino

ALL IN THE FAMILY — Sun City Saint and Glendale resident Helen Andrade is a fixture at third base, the

same position her mother Rosie played for the team during the 1950s.

Saintly legacy

Third base stays in Andrade family

By ANN T. DALEY
Daily News-Sun Staff

SUN CITY — Helen Andrade's roots run deep in the Sun City Saints softball organization.

For starters, the 28-year old third baseman played with the team from 1981-84.

Prior to that, Andrade's mother Rosie played third base for the Saints in the 1950s.

Rosie Andrade made a name for herself as a third baseman for the Saints (known as the Queens in the early '50s and the Ramblers in the late '50s.) Her accomplishments helped her earn a spot in the Arizona Hall of Fame.

Helen originally started as an outfielder for the Saints, but took over her mother's former position during the National Sports Festival at Indianapolis in 1982.

Her performance helped the Saints win a first-place gold medal and Andrade earned accolades as the tourna-

Saints softball

ment's outstanding defensive player.

"At the time I was out there for the sake of playing ball," she said. "I didn't think about winning any awards, so it came as a surprise."

She was named second-team All-American in 1983, and third-team All-American in the 1982 and 1984 seasons.

In addition to her mother's influence, Andrade's high school softball coach, Thelma Keith, played an important role in Andrade's development. Keith also previously played and coached for the Saints.

"She (Keith) used to call me long distance when I was at SDSU (San Diego State University) to offer words of wisdom and encouragement," she said.

Andrade played at Apollo High School and Glendale Community College before moving on to San Diego State University.

The Saints reformed this spring after a five-year hiatus and Andrade began training in late March for the upcoming season.

"It was hard to get back into shape so quickly," the City of Glendale employee said. "I'm still paying the price."

Andrade is not alone in the quest to refine her skills as a fast-pitch softball player.

After a five-year layoff, the 1990 team faces the challenge of molding the incoming players with the talents of just four returning Saints.

"We're just trying to get the team established," she said. "The Saints teams of the past were established and knew what they were capable of doing."

As a veteran player, Andrade knows she will be asked to accept a leadership role on this year's team.

She and returning players Bonnie Kramer, Karen Fellenz, and Gay Turley began plotting strategies during the See Glendale, B4

Glendale woman stars

— From B1

team's recent trip to Las Vegas.

"We should be able to get the kinks out by August in time for the national tournament," she said. "Hopefully we'll be able to make a good presentation at that tournament."

In addition to being a role model for the younger players, Andrade's goal is to work on basic plays and continue her steady hitting.

"In the past my defense was my strong point, but recently I've been hitting the ball pretty well," she said.

"I don't feel intimidated by power pitchers. I'm confident that I will get a hit, or at least make contact."

Andrade's dedication at the plate includes spending plenty of time in the batting cages.

In regard to her value at third base, Stapley said, "Helen's reaction time makes her great defensively."

"We need to prove ourselves," she said. "We're working well as a team. Everyone is out there giving 110 percent."

"By playing good ball, we'll get the fans and supporters back."

The Saints travel to Bakersfield, Calif. today to compete in a 32-team tournament this weekend.

They host the Phoenix Thunderbirds 7 p.m. next Saturday.

When the Sun City Saints returned to the field, so did their coach. For eight years prior to the team's 1984 demise, Gerald Stapley coached the team to finishes of fourth or better in the Amateur Softball Association's national tournament.



Community

Saints holding a revival

Team a hit in Sun City

By Ryan Konig
Staff writer

Sun City

Years after financial hardship and minutes before 70-year-old cheerleaders surrounded home plate, the Sun City Saints won their first game in five seasons.

June 2 marked the first time that the once nationally feared fast-pitch women's softball team had taken the field since previous owners of Sun City Stadium sent the Saints to purgatory by raising the team's rent too high.

The demise of the Saints arguably marked an end to an era in which "Arizona was the softball capital of the world," said Gov. Rose Mofford, who in 1939 had played for the Queens, a women's fast-pitch dynasty.

Mofford said Arizona's affection for women's softball was perhaps never stronger than it was during the 1940s and 1950s, when the rivalry between the Queens and the Ramblers — the team that later became the Saints — was similar to today's sports rivalry between Arizona State University and the University of Arizona.

But the Saints have returned.

And so has Arizona's chances of again rising as a softball capital, Mofford said.

And so have the golf carts in the Sun City Stadium parking lot, the shades in the bleachers, and the Sun City Poms, the community's longstanding, back-flipping cheerleading troupe, with an average age of 72.

The return of the Saints is not an event taken lightly in Sun City. The team's resurrection already has improved Sun City's economy and increased its population by keeping Sun City residents Lou and Flo Mertel home for the Valley's unheavenly summer.

"Since the Saints disbanded, we've been spending our summers in California because of the heat in the Valley," Lou Mertel said.

"But the Saints are back," Flo Mertel added.

And so were the Mertels, parked in their golf cart, between the snack bar and an uninterrupted view of first base.

The only time the Mertels will leave Sun City this summer is when the Saints do. "We will follow the girls when they go on the road," Lou Mertel said.

Sun City, a 46,000-resident retirement community founded by developer Del E. Webb in 1960, has been home for the Saints most of

See SAINTS, Page 3

its existence.

Webb, a former part-owner of the New York Yankees, had built Sun City stadium as a spring training site for the Milwaukee Brewers after recruiting the team to his retirement community.

In recent years, the stadium had been home only to weeds and the coughs of dust from occasional winds.

In 1984, a year after the 13-acre facility was sold to B&B Construction & Development of Glendale, the Brewers moved to their spring training camp in Chandler.

That same year, the Saints disbanded after its 19th season when the new stadium owners imposed a \$6,000-a-month stadium usage fee. Before that, the Saints paid a \$1-a-year stadium lease.

The stadium at 111th and Grand avenues was bought last year and renovated by businessmen Bob Atkinson, Marvin Harper and Bill Bolick. The team pays no rent now.

And the Saints returned. According to ticket booth volunteer Fritzie Holquist, so did about 600 fans for the Saints' June 2 opener.

"Not bad for an opening night," Holquist said.

In the past, the Saints at times proved to be a bigger draw than the Milwaukee Brewers when they had played in Sun City Stadium during the Major League Baseball training season.

The popularity of the old Saints was the product of Sun City's intimate nature, said George Tanner, who had announced the Saints games throughout the early part of the 1980s.

Tanner is now news director for KFLR-FM radio in Phoenix.

"They had a good camaraderie there," Tanner said of Sun City's residents. "They knew who the players were."

And they still do.

Helen Andrade, who played for the Saints for the three seasons prior to the team's temporary demise, said fans seemed to welcome her.

"I had shorter hair back then," the third baseman said, "but they recognize the name."

Andrade's mother, Rosie, also started at third base when members of the former Phoenix Ramblers became the Sun City Saints in 1966.

Another of original Saints, former catcher Marilyn Rau, said a Saints game night consistently drew upwards of a thousand people.

For its era, Rau said, the popularity of the old Saints was comparable to that of the famed Ramblers or the Queens.

1984

the team never finished below fourth in the Amateur Softball Association's national tournament. Adding to its national reputation among the estimated 16 million women who play amateur softball, the Saints also won the Olympic Festival Tournament three times.

And the field of dreams could broaden: Bill Plummer, spokesman for the Amateur Softball Association in Oklahoma City, said softball, played by an estimated 50 million people in 70 countries, this summer might be named an official Olympic event for the 1996 games.

Back in Sun City, Saints pitcher Bonnie Kramer, the only returning pitcher from the old Saints roster, anchored the team's first victory after its five-year hiatus.

During the first game of a four-game series, the right-hander struck out 14 and gave up no runs, for a 6-0 victory over Phoenix Tequilla. Kramer pitched the other three games as well, winning all of them.

Also returning to the Saints is Karen Fellenz at second base and right-fielder Kathy Pfab, who had been a bat girl in 1984 when her older sister played for the team. Pfab's younger sister, Jodi, is now a Saints bat girl.

The Saints will compete as an independent team in the Amateur Softball Association's Open Division. Most of their home games will consist of doubleheaders on Saturday and Sunday nights, beginning at 7 p.m.

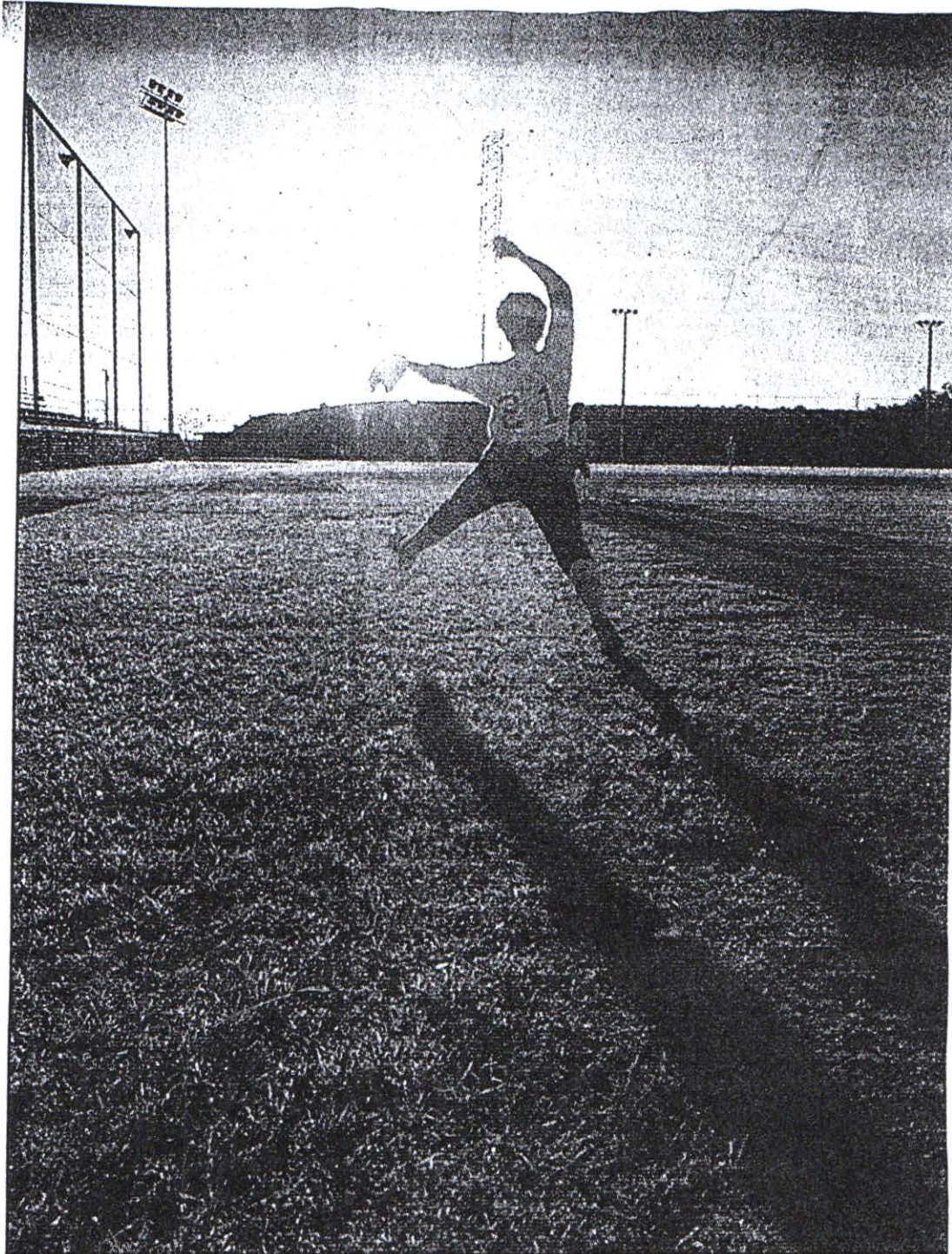
The Saints play an exhibition game at 7 tonight against the Sun City Sons, a new men's baseball team.

Having played for the Saints for half of her life, Rau, now a Phoenix police officer has no plans to make a comeback. The 41-year-old was the Most Valuable Player of 1979 Amateur Softball Association's women's fast-pitch tournament from which the Saints emerged as national champion.

Saints coach Gerald Stapley, who coached the 1979 team to its national victory, said Sun City residents "adopt these girls. They watch them as if they were their daughters out there in the field."

The team's trophy case shows evidence of other reasons for the Saints' popularity.

During Stapley's eight-year coaching tenure with the Saints prior to the team's 1984 demise,



Nancy Engebretson / Staff photographer



Members of the Sun City Saints have done plenty of practicing in hopes of regaining the national reputation the team once had. Bonnie Kramer (above) is the only returning pitcher from the old Saints roster.

The Saints come marchin' back

6-12-1990

By RICK GONZALEZ
Sun Cities Independent

After a long absence, the Sun City Saints have returned to their old stomping grounds.

Sun City Stadium, located at 111th Avenue and Grand, used to be home for the women's fast-pitch softball team, which began as the Phoenix Ramblers in the 1960s. In the mid-1980s, however, the Saints disbanded.

Gerald Stapley, longtime coach of the Saints, says that about a year ago the new owners of the stadium approached him and asked if he were interested in putting together a new team, which he was.

Mr. Stapley says that, although it was too late to put together a team for last season, he went

about preparing for this season.

"We have a pretty good team. We're going to make ourselves known."

The Saints are registered as an independent team and consist of players whose ages range from 17 to 28, with some of the team members still in high school or college.

Mr. Stapley says that most teams have a roster of about 16 players, but he plans to keep the Saints' roster to 14 players in order to give everyone a chance to play.

Scheduling opponents was not too hard, he says, because of the Saints' good reputation. "We have a good rapport with the other teams."

The Saints are hoping to draw large crowds to the games, as

they did in the past. Before disbanding, says the coach, "we averaged about 1,000 people per night. We were very pleased."

Mr. Stapley acknowledges the strong bond between Sun Citians and the team.

"Sun Citians are so nice," he says. "They adopt the girls like their own kids."

"If you do something to one of the girls, it's like you're doing something to one of them (Sun Citians)."

Mr. Stapley is also very pleased with the continued support of the Saints Booster Club, whose members support the team as well as help raise funds when needed.

"We really appreciate the

See SAINTS, page 2

• SAINTS

From page one 6-12-1990

Boosters," says Mr. Stapley. "They're a fine bunch of people."

Mr. Stapley says he is sure Sun Citians will be pleased with the return of the Saints.

"I feel great (being back)," he says. "I'm real excited about these kids because we have some real good athletes on the team."

The Sun City Saints will play every Saturday and Sunday at the stadium, beginning at 7 p.m.

Tickets at the gate are \$3 per person.

Most of this season's events will be doubleheaders.

The Sun City Sons, a men's baseball team, will play at the stadium every Tuesday and Thursday at 8 p.m.

On June 13, both teams will meet and play a "fun game" at 7 p.m., at the stadium. The public is invited to cheer both home teams on.

Sun City Saints

June 9 and 10 - Tournament in Las Vegas, Nev.

June 16 vs Southern California Jazz, 7 p.m.

June 17, vs California team, 3 p.m.

Sun City Sons

June 7, league play, 8 p.m.

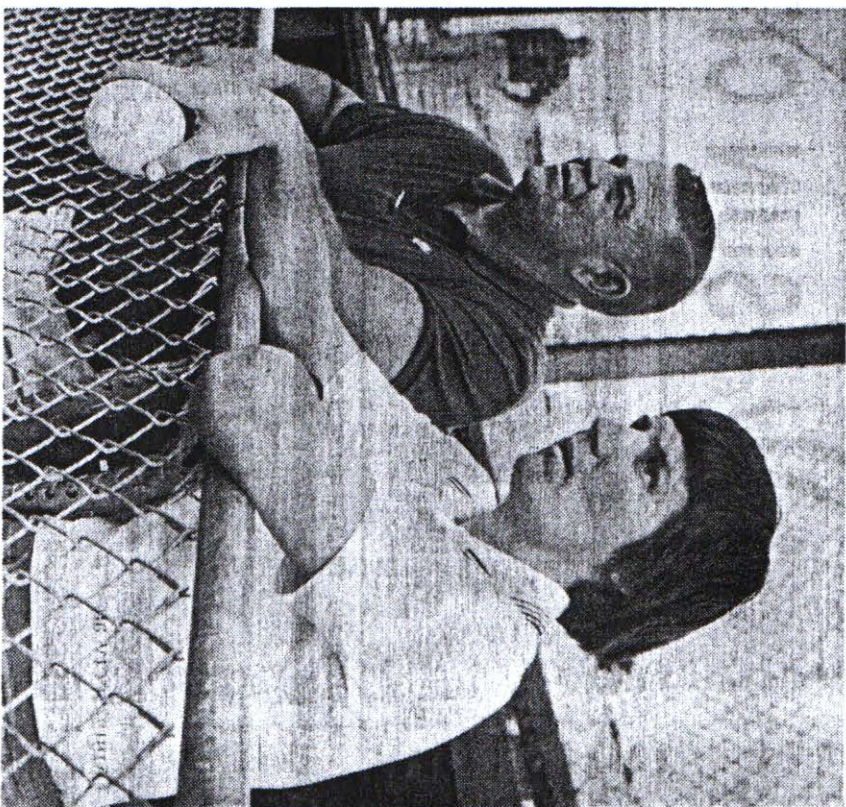
June 9, vs Garden of Gears, doubleheader, 6 p.m.

June 10, league game, 8 p.m.

June 12, league game, 8 p.m.

June 13 - Saints vs Sons, 7 p.m.

June 14, league play, 8 p.m.



COACH GERALD STAPLEY, happy to be heading up the Sun City Saints once again, watches a practice session with Marilyn Rau, former Saints catcher.

Independent file photo

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Tickets at the gate are \$3 per person.

Most of this season's events will be doubleheaders.

The Sun City Sons, a men's baseball team, will play at the stadium every Tuesday and Thursday at 8 p.m.

On June 13, both teams will meet and play a "fun game" at 7 p.m., at the stadium. The public is invited to cheer both home teams on.

Sun City Saints

June 9 and 10 - Tournament in Las Vegas, Nev.

June 16 vs Southern California Jazz, 7 p.m.

June 17, vs California team, 3 p.m.

Sun City Sons

June 7, league play, 8 p.m.

June 9, vs Garden of Gears, doubleheader; 6 p.m.

June 10, league game, 8 p.m.

June 12, league game, 8 p.m.

June 13 - Saints vs Sons; 7 p.m.

June 14, league play, 8 p.m.



COACH GERALD STAPLEY, happy to be heading up the Sun City Saints once again, watches a practice session with Marilyn Rau, former Saints catcher.
Independent file photo



Daily News-Sun photo by Stephen Cherek

BACK IN ACTION — Glendale resident Bonnie Kramer is back in action for the Sun City Saints.

Kramer, who also pitched for the team in 1984, has a 4-0 mark this season.

Heavenly

Glendale resident back in Saints jersey

RICH BOLAS
Sports Editor

IN CITY — Bonnie Kramer always had to be a Sun City Saint. Now she's back in heaven.

The West Valley's once-renowned amateur softball team reformed this past year and the 31-year-old Glendale resident is back in the uniform she last wore in 1984.

"I'd like it to see it be as strong as it used to be," the Arizona Public Service employee said. "I'm impressed with the players that have joined our team and I think the people will be open-minded about the first year back."

The Saints ruled amateur fast-pitch softball during the 1970s and early 1980s, winning three Olympic Festival titles and finishing lower than fourth in the national tournament.

Their domination intrigued Kramer,

Saints softball

who heard of them while growing up in Chicago.

"I saw them when I was 18 and I was mesmerized by the people that followed the team," she said. "Relatives and friends follow every team, but when you're with the Saints, you're with a real organization."

While leading her Chicago-based squad to a fourth-place finish at the 1983 national tournament, Kramer pitched and lost 1-0 to the Saints.

She suffered defeat on the field, but she pulled off a big win on the sidelines, introducing herself to Gerald Stapley, then and current Saints manager.

"It was my philosophy never to recruit players, but she came up to me and asked me about the team," Stapley said. "I told

her she was welcome to try out if she ever came out to Arizona."

Released from her post as an assistant softball coach at Northwestern University, Kramer decided to make the move and landed a spot with the Saints in 1984.

The team, however, would disband later that summer.

"It was like walking into a nightmare with all the things going on," Kramer said. "I decided to move out west because I had nothing to keep me back in Chicago and then the Saints disband in my first year."

She continued to play softball, pitching for a variety of teams in the past five years. But she couldn't resist a return engagement with the Saints this summer.

"The little things make you a great team and I think we have a lot of potential," the right-hander said. "Putting the See Kramer, B4

(over)

Kramer returns to Sun City Saints

— From B1

team together after being gone for five years could have made it tough to get players, but it's like we pulled some rabbits out of a hat.

"We've really got some talent."

Kramer became a devoted tennis buff last winter and the added physical stamina proved vital as the Saints opened the season last weekend. Kramer pitched back-to-back doubleheaders on consecutive nights and permitted just four runs in four games as the Saints swept two opponents at Sun City Stadium.

"She's just as effective as she was back in 1984 and she showed it the other night," Stapley said. "She's probably not as fast as she used to be, but she's heady and that keeps her effective."

She also found a perfect complement in catcher Betty

Wonyetye, who signed with the Saints just before the season opener.

"With catchers, I either love them or hate them and getting Betty on this team has made me a happy camper," Kramer said. "We think alike out there and that's a real asset."

Stapley said he hoped to add a second pitcher in time for the Saints' weekend trip to participate in the 32-team Las Vegas Classic. The Saints will play three games Saturday and could play as many as three more Sunday.

"To get to nationals you have to have two strong pitchers," Kramer said. "That's what our goal is."

And that would be heavenly.

SAINTS NOTE: The Saints host the Southern California Jazz June 16 and 17 at Sun City Stadium. Doubleheaders begin at 7 p.m. Saturday and 3 p.m. on Father's Day.

Back to future for SC Saints

By RICH BOLAS
Sports Editor

SUN CITY — Gerald Stapley remembers the good ol' days of the Sun City Saints women's softball team.

He'd like to create some new memories beginning this Saturday.

After a five-year hiatus, the Saints have returned to Sun City and they've called upon an old friend from the past to lead them into the future.

Saints softball

"I didn't do anything last year and the year before and that's the first time in my life I didn't have to be at a ballgame or work," Stapley said. "It feels great being back, especially if these kids come through like I think they can."

The Saints will compete as an independent team in the American Softball Association's Open Division. They open the season with consecutive doubleheaders this Saturday and Sunday against Phoenix Tequilla and

Saints

When: 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Where: Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues.

Opponents: Saturday, Phoenix Tequilla; Sunday, Arizona Rays.

the Arizona Rays, respectively. Games are slated at 7 and 8:30 p.m. each night at Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues.

"I hope they can come together as a unit because individually we've got some very nice kids," Stapley said. "After the tournament in Bakersfield, Calif. (June 23-24), we'll know where we stand."

During Stapley's eight-year tenure prior to the team being disbanded in 1984, the Saints never finished lower than fourth in the national tournament and See SC Saints, B4



Daily News-Sun photo by Frances Guarino

SAINTLY SWING — Karen Fellenz takes a swing at a pitch Wednesday during a Sun City Saints softball practice. The Saints open their 1990 season this weekend.

(OVER)

SC Saints open season

— From B1

won the Olympic Festival Tournament three times.

The team will feature a 14-player roster, including three women who played for the 1984 Saints. The women range in age from 17 to 28 years-old.

Right-handed hurler Bonnie Kramer spent one season with the Saints and also has played with the Phoenix Sunbirds. She will be joined by second baseman Karen Fellenz and third baseman Helen Andrade as the team's present link to its successful past.

"Helen used to be a bat girl when her mother played for the Saints," Stapley said.

While six starting positions are set, competition continues for openings at first base, shortstop and right field, the coach and Mesa resident said.

Catching duties will be handled by Betsy Wonyette, a recent acquisition who belted three homers during a practice session at Glendale Community College.

"She real strong and very

"I don't like to compare this team to the Saints teams of old."

Gerald Stapley

heady," Stapley said. "I rely on the catcher quite a bit because I was a catcher and because you need the catcher to run the team.

"They can see everything in front of them."

Outfield duties will be rotated among Cherry Curry, Monica Manginelli, Dee Brewer and Kathy Pfab, another former Saints bat girl.

"I don't like to compare this team to the Saints teams of old because I've got quantity unknown as of right now," Stapley said. "After two or three weeks I can make a comparison, but right now we haven't played a game."

Because of the scarcity of Arizona teams competing in the ASA Open Division, the Saints are guaranteed one of two regional spots in this year's national tournament, which will be played late this summer in Redding, Calif.

Stapley said the 32-game regular season should provide ample seasoning before the national event.

"We need to show more hustle on defense, but on offense I think we'll be able to hold our own," the coach said.

Former Saint marches in with memories of softball

By Betty Latty
Gazette correspondent

Barb Garcia says she always felt special whenever she would put on the uniform of the Sun City Saints women's softball team.

"And I think all the other members of the team felt the same way," Garcia said.

The Sun City Saints' leadoff hitter and center fielder from 1981 to 1984, when the team folded, Garcia has been visiting old friends and former teammates in the area.

It is an interesting coincidence that, amid all the talk about reviving a women's fast pitch softball team to play in Sun City Stadium, the former team member is in Arizona. Garcia will be heading for Dallas and eventually, an overseas assignment with Pioneer Bible Translators.

"I have a lot of great memories of those seasons with the Saints," Garcia said, "and I am especially pleased with the report that Gerald Stapley is going to coach the new team."

Stapley coached the Phoenix Sunbirds in 1986, when Garcia played with that team, following the earlier demise of the Saints.

In a recent quick visit to Sun City, Garcia lunched with long-time friends, the Rev. John and Mable Stone of First Christian Church.

She also was planning to get in touch with Alice Messick, once a member of the board of directors of the Sun City Saints, in the hopes that the two might visit the stadium and see the display cases of Saints memorabilia which Messick recently donated to the stadium's new owners.

She credits Messick with a big assist in helping her Saints career. "I stayed with Alice that first summer," she said. "I had had quite a hassle getting on the team because I was getting my degree in Tucson, which was my home, but planning to live in Phoenix, and there was a question about my being a resident of Maricopa County."

A second summer found Garcia quartered with Jake and Edie Steving, in Sun City West. At the end of that season, she obtained a teaching job at Tolleson High School, where she stayed four years, teaching physical education, science, health and math, and continued her softball.

"It was so neat, starting our games in Sun City Stadium, when we would hear the Star Spangled Banner, and look up at the flag rising," she recalled.

"We had such good times," she continued. "I remember a fan, Charlie Blieko, who always sat behind the on deck circle and always talked encouragement.

"And there were the Cinerama fund-raisers, with all the entertainment — we sold kisses, too. And in the grandstands, during the games, someone always brought cowbells to ring, and the golf cars would be honking."

Told the Sun City Poms by Leslie recently had their 10th anniversary (the Poms got their start at Saints' games, before Garcia's time), the erstwhile player said she was pleased to know they still were going strong, because the team "really enjoyed them, and they were wonderful to be around."

A big thrill, Garcia said, was the year the Saints defeated the Stratford, Conn. Brakettes in a sportsfest at Indianapolis.

"The team had been so hot all year, then we got the gold medal in Indiana. That was my first time ever on a podium, getting the award, and it was really something."

After she left the Valley, Garcia went to California, where she received her master's degree at Pacific Christian College. While there, to help pay for her tuition, she coached women's sports, heading volleyball, basketball, and later, softball programs.

In 1988, her volleyball team was first in National Christian College Athletic Association playoffs; a



Sundi Kjenstad, *The Phoenix Gazette*

Barb Garcia, a former softball player for the Sun City Saints, is visiting the Valley before going overseas on a church mission.

year earlier, they earned second place.

In Dallas, Garcia will study linguistic training for the equivalent of three semesters, then take an assignment for the Bible translators organization somewhere overseas.

Most likely, she will be going to Papua, New Guinea, she said, or possibly, West Africa. Her responsibilities will be to learn the languages, then to teach reading and writing, ultimately translating the Bible for the natives' use.

"It's exciting to me, because I love adventure," Garcia said. "I like academic challenge, people, and evangelism. The job incorporates all three. And there is plenty of work ahead; of the known 6,000 languages in existence, almost half are unwritten."

Her physical education training will be a plus, she continued. "Partly because you need to be in good condition for these assignments, but who knows? I might get busy and build some kind of Olympics team from over there."

Saints are back

Women's fast-pitch team will start

By VERONICA GREENWELL
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Women's fast-pitch softball is returning to Sun City and longtime Sun City Saints coach Gerald Stapley is leading the way.

Under a verbal agreement made earlier this week between Stapley and the three new owners of Sun City Stadium, Stapley has agreed to form and coach a women's fast-pitch softball team based in Sun City.

The team will play its home games at Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues, which was bought, renovated and reopened earlier this year by Bob Atkinson, Marvin Harper and Bill Bolick.

Stapley said the three stadium owners approached him about two weeks ago and asked him to coach a new women's softball team based in Sun City. Stapley said he thought about the offer for several days before finally accepting the plan on Monday.

"I'm just tickled pink that they chose me and that they have confidence in me," Stapley said Thursday. "I'm just going to do my darndest to make it work."

Stapley coached the Sun City Saints from 1973 to 1983. The amateur, fast-pitch women's softball team was formed in 1965 and played in Sun City until 1984.

The club played at Sun City Stadium from 1971 until 1984, when a lease dispute between

'I'm just tickled pink that they chose me and that they have confidence in me. I'm just going to do my darndest to make it work.'

Gerald Stapley

the Saints Booster Club and stadium owner Bade Boyes Partnership forced the team to find another home. The team later disbanded.

The Saints had many successful seasons and often drew large crowds to Sun City Stadium. In 1979, the team won the National Women's Fast-Pitch Softball Championship.

Atkinson said he and his partners contacted Stapley through Alice Messick, who once served on the board of directors of the team. Early last month, Messick donated about 40 trophies won by the Saints to the new owners when she learned Sun City Stadium was going to be reopened.

Atkinson said Stapley seemed to like the idea of coaching another softball team in Sun City.

"I got the idea that he really enjoyed his experiences out here with the Saints and he looked forward to putting it back together," said Atkinson, who

remembers seeing many Saints games in Sun City.

"He's going to put the team together and we'll provide the stadium," Atkinson said.

Atkinson said several people who came to a stadium open house in early June had suggested that the new stadium owners start another Sun City softball team.

"We can't bring back the old team but we sure can rebuild a new team," said Atkinson, whose group bought Sun City Stadium from Bade Boyes on June 1.

Stapley said the team will be composed of amateur players age 16 and older. The club will belong to the Amateur Softball Association and will play an independent schedule, with no league affiliation.

Stapley, who wants to carry a team of about 14 or 15 players, said he plans to have tryouts after Thanksgiving. From there, Stapley said he hopes to have a nucleus of players formed by the first part of next year; recruiting efforts should fill in the gaps after the tryouts.

Stapley said he hopes to start playing the first part of May 1990.

Atkinson said the three owners and Stapley have agreed to hold a contest in Sun City later this year to choose a nickname for the team. If most of the residents favor the name Saints, then that's what the team will be. See Softball, B2

Softball returning

—From B1
select as its nickname, Atkinson said.

Plans call for the team to wear red, white and blue uniforms, a change from the red and yellow uniforms the former Saints used to wear.

Stapley said he is confident softball can return successfully to Sun City.

"This will be entertaining for the people out there," said Stapley, who lives in Mesa. "They (Sun Citizens) are great sports fans. I also think this will be a chance for kids to improve their skills."

Also this week, Atkinson announced that the stadium owners have been granted a charter from the American Baseball Congress to start a new boys baseball team based in Sun City.

The team will be composed mostly of high-school age boys from Peoria and Glendale, said

Atkinson, who plans to be one of the coaches.

The baseball and softball teams will share the stadium, with one team using it while the other club is on the road, Atkinson said.

Atkinson said there are several teams playing in Sun City.

Among the pluses is the fact that the stadium will be used year-round, Atkinson said.

"And that's a benefit to us," he said. "It also gives people here both baseball and softball."

More importantly, said Atkinson, Sun City will now have two home-based teams that the community can root for.

Those interested in trying out for the Sun City softball team may call Gerald Stapley at 964-8579. For information on the boys baseball team, call Sun City Stadium at 972-2247.



News-Sun file photo

STARTING AGAIN —Gerald Stapley, former coach of the Sun City Saints women's fast-pitch softball team, has agreed to coach a new softball team based in Sun City. Stapley is shown before a Saints game on March 31, 1974.

Fans support new softball team

News brings back memories of Saints team

By WALTER L. DOZIER
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The recent news that a women's fast-pitch softball team will be started in Sun City has brought a favorable reaction from longtime fans, former players and team officials of the Sun City Saints.

The Sun City Saints were a popular fast-pitch softball team that played in Sun City from 1966 to 1984. The team won the National Women's Fast-Pitch Softball Championship in 1979 and placed second in 1982.

Last week's announcement that another softball team will be started by former Coach Gerald Stapley has brought a sense of anticipation and excitement.

"I think it's the most wonderful thing that could happen here," said Sun Citian Alice Messick, who once served on the board of directors of the Saints.

"Many of my friends are looking forward to it. It makes them feel young to see the girls out there playing again."

Messick said the thought of the Saints playing again brings back good memories of the team.

"I enjoyed the girls," Messick said. "They kept me young. It was a real treat for me to see them."

Messick said she is especially elated and encouraged to know that Stapley was spearheading the effort to start a new team.

Joe Davisson also supports Stapley.

"I think Gerald will be a fine



Courtesy of Sun City Saints

SAINTS MAY RETURN —
The Sun City Saints softball team had this angel wearing softball gear as its logo.

Daily News-Sun

Tuesday, July 25, 1989

TRIBUTE TO SAINTS — Alice Messick of Sun City stands in front of the trophy case at Sun City Stadium, 111th and Grand avenues. The trophy case displays dozens of trophies

and outstanding manager," said Davisson, Saints Booster Club president from 1975 to 1984.

"I think with Gerald things will proceed along the right course," Davisson said. "He would be the one to make it a successful return."

Stapley and stadium owners

Bob Atkinson, Marvin Harper and Bill Bolick plan to organize a contest in Sun City later this year to choose a nickname for the new team. If most of the residents favor the name Saints, then that's what the team will be called, Atkinson said.

Stapley, who coached the team

ies and mementoes from the Sun City Saints fast-pitch women's softball team, which played in Sun City from 1966 to 1984. Messick was on the team's board of director.

in 1972 and 1973, and again from 1977 to 1984, plans to hold tryouts in late November. He said he hopes to attract both high school and college softball players for a summer season in 1990.

"I don't know what kind of players will come out and be on

the team," Stapley said. "I know of only two (former Saints) players who are still playing fast-pitch softball."

Stapley said he has the support of the Sun City Stadium owners but added that the team will once again need the support of the fans as well.

"Hopefully we'll get a booster club going again," he said. "And we'll have to find businesses that will help us. We're checking into different things."

"I think we're going to have a strong bunch of people who will support us."

L.Q. Yowell of Sun City used to handle statistics and media publicity for the Saints.

"I certainly wish the new Saints club all the luck in the world," Yowell said.

"Bringing the Saints back brings back many fond memories," Yowell said. "With Gerald Stapley back as coach they certainly have a good leader."

Jeff Griffith, who coached the Cactus High School girls softball team to the 1987 and 1989 Division AAA-II state titles, said the Saints should have no problems attracting the area's most talented players.

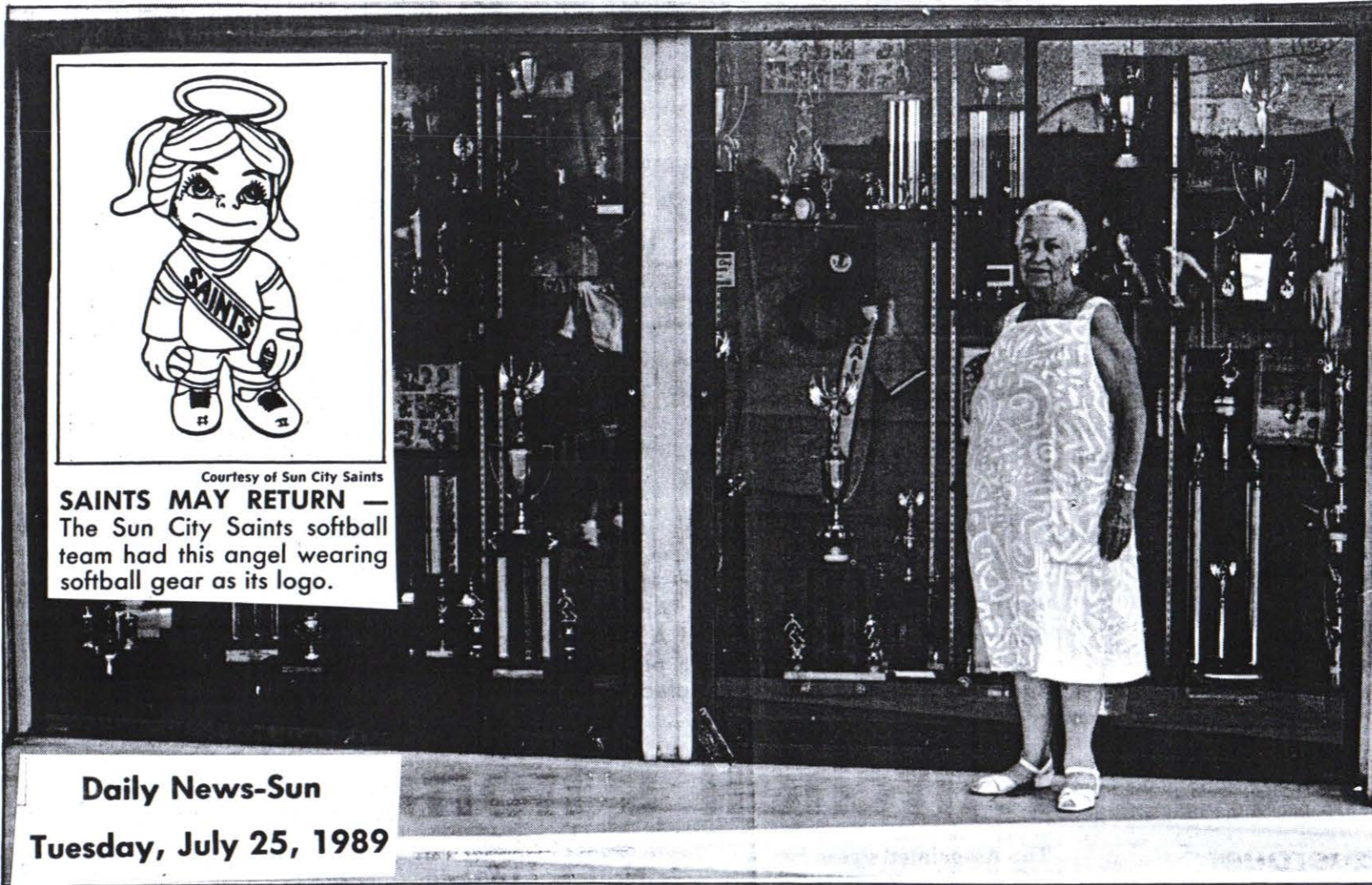
"If they are as competitive as they used to be they will be able to get the cream of the crop from the high school kids," Griffith said. "I used to go out and watch them play. They were the highest caliber of women softball players."

Former player Rosie Andrade of Glendale said she thinks starting the Saints again is a wonderful idea.

"I think it would be great to get some of the former players back again," said Helen Andrade, 27, who played for Stapley from 1982 through 1984.

"I think it's great that Gerald is trying to get the team back to Sun City. I would like to play if he'll have me."

News-Sun photo by Patrick Knight



Saints need backing to survive

By STEVEN SEXTON
Sports Editor

In 1966, the Phoenix Ramblers, a women's fast-pitch softball team, was searching for a new home and with the help of the Daily News-Sun, Del E. Webb Development Co. and overwhelming support from the community the Ramblers became the Saints and moved to Sun City.

During their stay in the community, the Saints achieved notoriety by capturing a national championship in 1979 under the direction of Gerald Stapley.

Over the years, the Saints made repeated trips to the nationals and came home with two runnerup trophies, four thirds and one fourth.

NOT BAD for a team that was almost without a home.

Now, it seems times have changed and matters have worsened for the Saints. A once-thriving organization appears to be ready to go under.

Internal dissension, problems with a rent increase at Sun City Stadium and the loss of support by the Sun City Saints Boosters Club has made the club's future dim and bleak.

The team's only hope of survival in the past few months has been left up to Stapley.

STAPLEY WAS trying to find a new home and raise funds for the Saints, but has decided to call it quits.

"I am dropping out as of now," Stapley said this week. "There is no place to play, the booster club has disbanded and without help of Sun City people I can't see raising funds and putting the

team together."

Stapley's frustrations are understandable.

Last season he had to deal with strife among the Saints. The stadium's rent was raised to \$6,000 a month from \$1 a year, a decision made by Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale which bought the stadium from Webb in 1983.

EVEN THOUGH there are a few players who say they won't play for Stapley, the Saints general manager believes he wouldn't have any difficulty forming a team.

"I would have little problem raising a team," he said. "Getting money is the main problem.

Supporting a team like the Saints can be an expensive proposition.

"If we can get nine people, we

could go to the Sports Festival," Stapley said. "But that costs money."

BY PLACING fourth in the 1984 national tournament, the Saints qualified for the 1985 Sports Festival in Baton Rouge, La., starting July 26. In August, the national tournament will be held.

Stapley said it costs between \$6,000 and \$9,000 to send the team to the national tournament.

Last year the tourney was in Buffalo, N.Y.

Stapley's recent decision to bow out as general manager and coach could be reversed. It all hinges on financial backing and a place to play.

"I WOULD be willing to come (to coach) but we have just been

priced out of a stadium," Stapley explained. "The faithful fans wouldn't be able to go to Peoria or Sun City West. We wouldn't have a following. I have enjoyed working with the Saints immensely," Stapley continued. "I have been with the Saints a total of eight years and the lowest place we got in nationals was fourth place."

Stapley, who lives in Mesa, says he wants to watch his daughter play softball on the eastside. Also, the time spent attempting to revive the team has been an emotional drain, says Stapley.

"I have tried quite hard," Stapley said. "It is just too much of a chore for one person to run the whole job. I am going to spend time with my daughter. She wants to play in a 15-and-under fast-pitch league."

Stapley says if residents are interested in keeping the Saints as a team something will have to be done within the next month or it will be too late.

"IT WOULD have to be accomplished in one month," Stapley said. "We got to let them (national office) know very shortly whether we will be defending champions or not."

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC - December 3, 1984

Sun City Saints may have made final softball out

Dissension, whopping rent hike wrack fourth-best team in U.S.

By JIM WALSH
Northwest Valley Bureau

SUN CITY — After a strife-filled season culminated by a huge rent increase — to \$6,000 a month from \$1 a year at Sun City Stadium — the Sun City Saints may have played their last softball game.

Although it appears to be a long shot, Saints General Manager Gerald Stapley — a focus of internal dissension on the team — is planning a fund-raising drive in an attempt to save the team.

One of the nation's top women's amateur teams, the Saints have been an institution since Del E. Webb, Sun City's founder, brought the team to the retirement community in 1966.

But after a national championship and years of excellence, the Saints may have to fold because of the rent increase, a loss of interest among aging boosters and squabbling between a group of players and Stapley.

The Sun City Saints Boosters Club, which had raised \$40,000 a year to field the team, voted to disband this fall after the stadium's rent was raised to more than \$6,000 a month from \$1 a year, club President Joe Davisson said.

The rent increase was a decision of the Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale, which bought the stadium in 1983 from the Del E. Webb Development Co.

"The current board does not feel we could assume the current liability," said Davisson, club president for nine years and a vice president of United Bank.

In addition, he said, the burden of running the team — raising money, scheduling, taking tickets and other

— Saints, A7

OVER

Saints

Continued from A1

responsibilities — grew too heavy for the few boosters who did most of the work.

"It wasn't just being burned out — a few of our key people passed away," Davisson said.

Internal dissension between the players and Stapley also made working for the Saints less enjoyable, said Helen Marie Flory, the club's director of finance for four years.

At one point in midseason, five Saints refused to play for Stapley after he fired coach Karmen Booth because the team was playing poorly, Stapley said.

The players agreed to play again only after Stapley appointed Marilyn Rau, the team's catcher for 18 years, as coach.

Stapley also said he was forced to miss the National Sports Festival Tournament and the Amateur Softball Association National Tournament because the players threatened another walkout.

The dissenters even forced him to sit in the press box at the stadium during games, refusing to play if he was in their dugout, Stapley said.

"He didn't deserve the treatment they gave him," Flory said. "When you listen to a lot of gripes, it's no longer fun anymore. I've just had it."

The rent hike and the club's dissolution leave the team with almost no money to pay expenses and no place to play.

Despite the obstacles and controversy, Stapley said he hopes to resurrect the Saints by finding a new field, kicking the dissenters off the team and organizing a fund-raising drive and a new boosters organization.

Despite the turmoil off the field, the Saints posted a 40-12-2 record and were the fourth-best team in the country. By finishing fourth in the Amateur Softball Association's national tournament in Buffalo, N.Y., the Saints earned a berth in the 1985 competition.

Davisson said the boosters have turned over the Saints' uniforms and equipment to Stapley, who must solve the financing and field problems if the team is to continue.

He said a decision must be reached on the team's future in January, when games have to be scheduled.

Helen Garcia of Glendale, the Saints' third baseman, said, "I'm very disappointed. It's kind of upsetting to think the team has folded since the team has been together for so many years."

Playing for the Saints is part of a family tradition for Garcia. Her mother, Rosie Andrade, played third base well enough for the Saints in the late 1960s to be

inducted into the Arizona Softball Foundation Hall of Fame in 1978.

If the Saints folded, Garcia said, it would end her softball career, even though she loves playing the game taught her as a child by Andrade. Garcia was a bat girl for the Saints when she was 12 years old.

Garcia said five Saints who refused to play under Stapley last year apparently had a "personal reason" for turning against the longtime team official and felt they were rallying behind Booth, their friend.

However, most of the other women were like Garcia.

"We just wanted to play," she said.

Stapley said his ideas for rejuvenating the team include a fund-raising drive that would ask 1,000 fans to donate \$10 each in order to collect \$10,000.

The remaining \$30,000 for running the Saints would come from ticket sales, concessions and community events such as car washes and the annual "Sinnerama."

The Sinnerama's most popular event is a Kiss-a-thon, at which Sun City residents make donations for the privilege of kissing the players.

But Stapley acknowledged that it would be almost impossible to collect gate receipts at ballfields in nearby Sun City West and Surprise because they have no gate to control admissions.

Davisson said another possibility is the Peoria Sports Complex, less than a mile from Sun City's eastern limit, which does have a field encircled by a fence.

However, the Peoria field also has bleachers with a seating capacity of not more than 100 people.

The stadium problem can be traced, at least in part, to the Del E. Webb Development Co.'s decision to pull out of Sun City and invest its resource into construction of Sun City West.

Webb sold the stadium to Bade Boyes Partnership of Glendale in 1983 for \$400,000 — a price below its value — after insisting on a proviso that the property would remain a ballpark through 1987.

The goal was to ensure that the stadium, which, ironically, was built to give the Saints a home and to attract a major-league baseball team for spring training, would remain available to the Saints and the Milwaukee Brewers.

But Davisson said that there was no provision to bar Bade Boyes from raising the rent and that he does not fault their decision.

Jerry Bade, one of the stadium's owners, could not be reached for comment on the rent increase.

"The Bades are fine people, and they're business people," Davisson said.

But Flory chided the Glendale developers for "asking an exorbitant price" that the volunteer group cannot possibly pay.

Booster club shuns stadium

By STEVE HAWLEY
Sports Editor

The Sun City Saints apparently will have to find a new home for 1985.

The Saints Booster Club Monday night announced it will not sign a lease with Bade Boyes Partnership to use Sun City Stadium next year.

Bade Boyes, owner of the 4,000-seat stadium, is asking that a new lease include a "facilities use payment" of \$6,000 per month, said booster club President Joe Davisson.

A FACILITIES USE payment was not part of this year's one-year lease which expired July 31. Davisson said that lease called for rent of \$1 and assumption of liabilities, which included utility bills and maintenance expenses.

That lease was the same as one provided by the Del E. Webb Development Co. in 1983, Davisson said. Webb sold the stadium to Bade Boyes in September 1983. A condition of the sale was that Bade Boyes maintain the property as a stadium until Jan. 1, 1988.

The facilities use payment would increase booster club expenses by \$20,000 next season and would make it difficult to operate without a deficit, Davisson said.

"AS FAR AS the current board is concerned, we're saying no," Davisson told about 100 booster club members Monday night in the Suntowner. "There's no way we can assume a liability such as this.

"Realistically, we cannot come out in the black using those kind of figures."

Helen Marie Stobar Flory, booster club finance director, said the Saints' operating budget this season was more than \$61,000.

THE BOOSTER club has more than \$25,000 in checking and savings accounts, she said. About \$19,000 of that, Davisson said, is money contributed by investors in 1981 "which guaranteed Webb that they would be paid back if there was a deficit."

The money will be returned to investors, Davisson said.

Davisson, vice president and manager of a Sun City West bank branch, said Bade Boyes also is asking that the boosters pay to repair a lawn mower and replace a golf car stolen from the stadium this summer. Repairs to the mower, used at the stadium, have been put at \$500, Davisson said. Value of the stolen golf car, he said, has been estimated at \$1,000. Davisson said those and additional expenses of \$650 for stadium repairs or maintenance probably would be made by the booster club to Bade Boyes, although he feels they "might be a little excessive."

NO ONE in attendance voiced disapproval at the board's decision to not sign a lease.

Long-time booster and board member Paul Morrill, citing a decrease in game attendance and club membership over the last few years, said, "Obviously softball is not as popular in Sun City as it used to be."

The cost of fielding a team has increased steadily, he said, and would continue upward.

Club shuns stadium lease in '85

"WE HAVE reached the point of diminishing return and it's time to get out," Morrill said. "Next year it's going to cost \$80,000 to put a team on the field. I hate to see this day happen, but I think you ought to go into it with your eyes wide open."

There also were problems for the women's fast-pitch softball team on the field this season, but Davisson said they had no bearing on Monday's announcement.

Former Saints General Manager Gerald Stapley received board approval to replace Karmen Booth as coach following the team's second-place finish in the July 6-8 Del E. Webb Memo-

rial Tournament.

WHEN HE announced on July 12 that he was replacing Karmen, several players, including veteran Marilyn Rau, threatened to leave the team.

In a compromise move made to keep the team intact and assure that it would compete at the national tournament in August, Miss Rau, not Stapley, was named interim coach.

The Saints went on to finish fourth in the national tournament at Buffalo, N.Y.

DAVISSON SAID he is attempting to find a sponsor and playing site for the Saints next year.

The Saints played their first game in Sun City in 1965. Stapley was their coach when they won their only national championship in 1979.

Saints BOOSTER CLUB - Sun City-Sun City West, Arizona



P. O. Box 2159
Sun City, Arizona 85372

President
Joe Davisson
584-4303

February 21, 1983

First VP
Col. Paul M. Morrill
933-6114 or 972-6784

Second VP
Rose Schwartz
977-3544

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Mahoney,
12554 Seneca Dr.
Sun City West, Az. 85375

Secretary
Betty Webb
974-1487

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Mahoney,

Director of Finances
Helen Marie Stobar
584-2414 or 584-4303

We wish to Thank You for your investment of \$500.00 in the Sun City Saints Booster Club - DEVCO FUND 1983. Hopefully, we shall soon attain our goal and maybe a bit more and then shall have a better operation fund.

Public Relations
Sam Higginbotham
933-3438

We have been contacting vendors for some interesting souvenirs for the fans and suitable refreshments for the concessions.

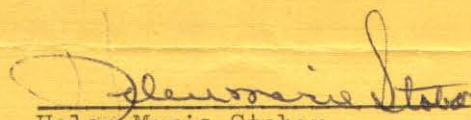
Membership Chairman
Gene Smith
933-7574

If our season is as good as 1982, we shall be again be in a position to return your investment along with the interest. We are hopeful to have a much better season from the enthusiasm displayed at our last meeting.

We hope to see you at our March meeting and at the games, which should be great fun. Thank You again for your support.

Sincerely,


Joe Davisson, Pres.


Helen Marie Stobar
Finance Director

Sun Cities Saints Booster Club

Helen Marie Stobar
FINANCE DIRECTOR

Residence
P.O. Box 1613
Sun City, AZ 85372
(602) 584-2414

Office
United Bank
Sun City West, AZ
(602) 584-4303



Saints BOOSTER CLUB - Sun City-Sun City West, Arizona



P. O. Box 2159
Sun City, Arizona 85372

President

Joe Davisson
584-4303

Vice President

Rose Schwartz
977-3544

September 8, 1983

Secretary

Betty Webb
974-1487

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Mahoney
12554 Seneca Dr.
Sun City Wst, Arizona 85375

Director of Finances

Helen Marie Stobar
584-2414 or 584-4303

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Mahoney,

Public Relations

Sam Higginbotham
933-3438

Please be advised that I have re-invested the principal and interest totaling \$530.39 in the 1984 DEVCO FUND. We are grateful for friends such as you and fans that continue to give their full support.

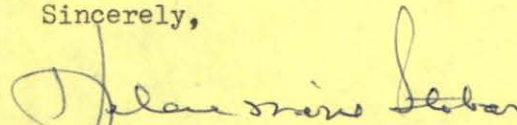
Membership Chairman

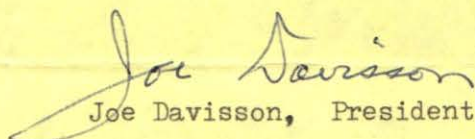
Gene Smith
933-7574

As you already know, we do have a Lease for 1984 all signed and ready to go. We do have to come up with the usual \$20,000.00 of up-front money and we are confident that we can reach that goal.

Thank You again, and we hope to see you at the Awards Dinner on September 24th.

Sincerely,


Helen Marie Stobar
Finance Director


Joe Davisson, President

Saints BOOSTER CLUB - Sun City-Sun City West, Arizona



P. O. Box 2159
Sun City, Arizona 85372

President

Joe Davisson
584-4303

Vice President

Rose Schwartz
977-3544

Finance Director

Helen Marie Stobar-Flory
584-2414 or 584-4303

Secretary

Sarah Fleming
933-9092

Membership Chairman

Betty Webb
974-1487

Mezzanine Sales

"Uncle" John Poja
974-1245

Stadium Manager

Duncan Jewell
977-4878

Advertising Chairmen

Frank Marti
977-9312

and

Alice Messick
977-5745

Publicity

L. Q. Yowell
977-6037

October 3, 1984

Mr. & Mrs. Michael Mahoney
12554 Seneca Dr.
Sun City West, Az. 85375

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Mahoney,

Enclosed herewith is a check in the amount of \$583.26 representing your investment in the DEVCO Fund plus interest. I attempted to reach you by telephone on several occasions, including just a few minutes ago, but to no avail.

The Board has decided that all investors be paid and all expenses paid at this time; the new season can be decided upon by a new Board of Boosters and new officers, if that will be the decision of the members. We are not certain as to whether there will be a team; also, the cost of rental of the stadium has increased to such a degree that we do not believe members will be in a position to handle this extra expense. Our membership has dropped and so has the attendance. The last year, as you already know, has been a bad one.

THANK YOU both for your generous support; we could have never made it without folks such as you.

Sincerely,

Helen Marie Stobar Flory
Finance Director

encl.

SUN CITY SAINTS

The below information is about ten years old and probably very much out of date. If you can up-date it and add any names that would be great!

Karen Fellens

2230 N. Laurel Ave
Phoenix 85007
258-5237

Susue Gaw
4947 E. Kings Ave
Scottsdale 85254
788-0849

Billie F. Harris
2249 E. Desert Ln
Phoenix 85040
268-0620

Judy Hoke
1221 W. Bertrup
Chandler 85224
unlisted

Thelma Keith
2917 W, Rose Lane
Phoenix 85017
246-8890

Connie M. Mullen, PhD
2326 E. Delgado
Phoenix 85022
867-7767

Marilyn Rau
1023 W. Campbell
Phoenix 85013
274-9657

Valerie Troxel Stone
19021 N. Peirson Rd
Sun City 85373
933-7850

Laurie Woodcock
2145 E. Juanita
Mesa 85204
892-5531

SUN CITY SAINTS

NAME Suzie GAW
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST
ADDRESS 4947 E. Kings Ave APT. _____
CITY Scottsdale STATE AZ ZIP 85254 PHONE 788-0849
YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER 1976 - 1985
POSITIONS PLAYED Shortstop
COMMENTS - if any

May 1992

SUN CITY SAINTS

NAME Billie Y. Harris
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST

ADDRESS 2249 E. Desert Ln. APT. _____

CITY Phx STATE AZ. ZIP 85040 PHONE 268-0620

YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER 1970 - 1975

POSITIONS PLAYED Pitch

COMMENTS - if any

SUN CITY SAINTS

NAME Connie M MULLEN Ph.D.
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST

ADDRESS 2326 E. Delgado APT. _____

CITY Phx STATE AZ ZIP 85022 PHONE 867-767

YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER from the start - 1969

POSITIONS PLAYED field

COMMENTS - if any

Beverly Dreyer - Stewart
 5840 W. Northern 62 85301
 435-6577

May 1992

NAME Judy Hoke
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST

ADDRESS 1221 W. BENTRUP APT. _____
BENTRUP

CITY CHANDLER STATE AZ ZIP 85224 PHONE UNLISTED

YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER 1971 - 1977

POSITIONS PLAYED CENTER FIELD

COMMENTS - if any

May 1992

SUN CITY SAINTS

NAME Marilyn Rau
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST

ADDRESS 1023 W Campbell APT. _____

CITY PHX STATE AZ ZIP 85013 PHONE 2749657

YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER start to end

POSITIONS PLAYED catcher

COMMENTS - if any

SUN CITY SAINTS

NAME Valerie Tixel Stone
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST

ADDRESS 19021 N Pierson RD APT. _____

CITY Sun City STATE Az ZIP 85373 PHONE 933-7850

YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER 1980

POSITIONS PLAYED utility

COMMENTS - if any

?

SUN CITY SAINTS

NAME Laurie Woodcock
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST

ADDRESS 2145 E. JUANITA APT. _____

CITY MESA STATE AZ ZIP 85204 PHONE 892-5531

YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER _____

POSITIONS PLAYED 3rd + Shortstop

COMMENTS - if any

SUN CITY SAINTS

NAME Rosie ANDRADE
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST
ADDRESS 6613 W. Rose HA APT. _____
CITY Glendale STATE AZ ZIP 85301 PHONE 939-7317
YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER 3 yrs.
POSITIONS PLAYED 3rd BASE
COMMENTS - if any

PK
5/27/03

SUN CITY SAINTS

NAME Thelma Keith
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST

ADDRESS 2917 W Rose Lane APT. _____

CITY Phx STATE AZ ZIP 85017 PHONE 2468890

YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER SAINT original 1966-1979

POSITIONS PLAYED 1st - Coach

COMMENTS - if any Good Idea!

SUN CITY SAINTS

NAME Karen Fellenz
FIRST (MAIDEN) LAST

ADDRESS 2230 N. Laurel Ave APT. _____

CITY Phoenix STATE AZ ZIP 85007 PHONE 258-5237
258-5298-?

YEARS AS A TEAM MEMBER 1979-1984

POSITIONS PLAYED Second base

COMMENTS - if any



WE LOVE OUR
SAINTS

KEN & ALICE LANE



GO GET 'EM, GALS

LOU & BOBBIE MEEK



DON'T
BE
FOOLED
BY
PRETTY
FACES!

VERNIE & FRIEDA
DAUBY



LEONA



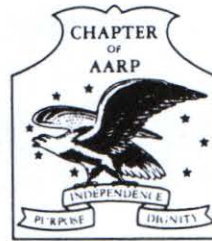
GET
OUT
AND
SUPPORT
YOUR
SAINTS!

TOM

BEST WISHES FOR 1982

to SUN CITY SAINTS

from SUN CITY #4



of the AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS, Inc.

Serving Sun Citians through

- Financial Investments
- "55" Alive" — Mature Driving Classes
- Income Tax Aid
- Tours thru U.S. and Abroad
- Interesting Programs
- Insurance for Retirees
- Legislation for Senior Citizens

Meetings: 1:00 p.m.

Sundial Auditorium

Second Wednesday of the month, except June, July and August

Dues: \$1.00 per calendar year

Membership Chairman: 933-0580

GOODBYE — AND GOOD LUCK

GAIL DAVENPORT



After three years of competition, Gail Davenport is doffing her Saints' uniform and her bat will be missed, as well as her versatility in the field. The regular centerfielder, she appeared behind the plate when catcher Marilyn Rau needed a rest. She garnered All-American honors as a rookie in 1979 and the next year was named to the Webb tourney all-star team. While with the Saints only two years, Gail Peters performed capably as a utility player, a valuable but too often overlooked role in a team's success. Meanwhile, at the scholastic level, she was pursuing a pre-med course. We wish the two Gails success.



GAIL PETERS



LYDIA A. WINTER

NO BUTTS ABOUT IT!



THE SAINTS ARE GREAT!

HARRIETTE E. WINTERER



YOU CAN DO IT, TEAM

WILLIAM & BETTY LIEBER



LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE SAINTS!

JOE YAEGER



THE SAINTS ARE COMING!

ROZELLA AND FRANK CARLIN

Serious Sainthood

Grand softball canons applied in Sun City

By Bob Cohn
Republic Staff

SUN CITY — A searing sun, on its descent but still plenty strong, roasts the empty ballpark. The nearly empty ballpark, that is. It is game day, and Chuck Currier, Uncle John Poja and a few others are working hard.

Currier is putting the finishing touches on the table loaded with souvenirs — T-shirts, programs, toaster sticks (for when the toast gets stuck in the toaster, naturally). Uncle John, the general overseer, scoots around, making sure the ticket-takers know their duties, loosening a gate that won't open.

"I love it, that's why I'm here," said Currier, who describes himself as an "old-time ballplayer." Currier is 77.

Later, more than 1,000 people will fill a good portion of the bleachers at Sun City Stadium. The Saints are playing tonight.

• • •
The Phoenix Ramblers, a women's fast-pitch softball team, folded in 1965 but was transplanted to Sun City, under the sponsorship of the Del Webb Corp.

That first year, 1966, the Saints had a 15-year-old catcher named Marilyn Rau. She was good, and, it turns out, durable because the 1982 Sun City Saints have a 31-year-old catcher named Marilyn Rau. She is an Original.

Before the Saints play the San Diego Trendsetters, Rau is in the dugout, taping the ankle of teammate Karen Fellenz. Rau pretty much does it all for the Saints. She is the field general



philosophical insights as to why she has remained a Saint, year after year, foul tip after foul tip, sacrificing her free time every weekend the past 17 summers.

"I just like doing it," she said.

• • •
The Sun City Saints are the creme de la creme of women's softball. They are known nationwide. In 1979 and 1980, the

and spiritual leader, the maker of rules (Thou shalt not drink alcohol 24 hours before a game or a practice) and a tough nut behind the plate.

"Marilyn's a clutch player," said Shawn Ritchey, a pitcher and designated hitter for the Saints. "Whether it's offense or defense, she's the steady, stoic one everybody looks to."

Rau, an eighth-grade teacher at Crockett Elementary School in Phoenix, has no deep,



Marilyn Rau, who's played for the Saints since 1966: "We work pretty hard on our image."

— Saints, E5

Saints

Continued from E1

Saints won consecutive national championships, and last year, they won the National Sports Festival softball competition.

"It's pretty high-class," Shawn Ritchey said.

But to be a Saint, you have to do more than display outstanding talent. You have to have the right stuff.

"They are ladies on and off the field," said the Saints' coach, Gerald Stapley, a genial, robust man of 51 who has been the coach for two terms, in 1973-1974, and then again starting in 1979. "It's like the old saying: We don't like neighbors talking about our kin."

Saints range in age from 19 to 31, although most are in their early 20s. Like Rau, a few of the Saints teach school. Others are students, and Mary Faure, the first baseman, works for a cable-television company. The majority tends to remain a few years, then drifts on to other pursuits. Those who leave are replaced at a tryout camp at the end of February. A residency requirement, more strictly enforced this season by the Arizona Softball Association, has made it tougher to import players, but the good players are available, anyway. Stapley said that nothing is guaranteed, but, for the most part, if you are a Saint, you stay a Saint.

"How you fit in with the team," is important to Stapley, he said. "Occasionally, there have been a little personality differences with someone. It's better for the team not to ask her to come back."

When Stapley watches a player, he notes more than the way she hits or throws or turns the double play. Always, there is the Saints' image.

"We work pretty hard on our image," Rau said. "We don't just pick a player on athletic ability but her attitude, too. Desire to play. Hustle. You won't play every game or every inning. You might be the greatest shortstop in the world, but you might not play there. You've got to accept that."

"I'm not saying we have a better class of girl than anyone else, but off and on the field, they're just nice kids. It's the girl-next-door image."

This year's team displays a real togetherness, Stapley said. It has been a difficult year. The Saints' shortstop, Deanna Dinota of New York, lost her sister in an automobile accident. Paula Stufflebeam broke her thumb. Then her father died. The Saints also were without Arizona State players Susie Gaw and Ritchey, because the ASU coach wouldn't let them play during the Sun Devil season. Pitcher Debbie Doom was off at UCLA and could pitch in just three games for the Saints.

"We're having a mixed-up deal this year," Stapley said. "It's different from what we've had in the past. But this is a more compatible team. Some years, they'd meet at the park, but they'd have no interest in each other. This year, they socialize. You've got to be friends on and off the field."

Stapley, a postal worker from Mesa with 10 children, apparently contributes to the atmosphere. He drives the team through three-hour practices every Wednesday and is a stickler for repeated execution of fundamentals. Still, the players like his easygoing approach.

"He's real supportive," Ritchey said. "He gets us thinking about the game. The other coach (of the San Diego team) didn't have one good thing to say. Gerald's the opposite. He's nothing but positive."

The Saints were nearly the Aints this year, as far as playing in their own ballpark was concerned.

The Del E. Webb Corp. owns Sun City Stadium, where the Saints have played since the park was built in 1971. But running the Saints was a money-losing proposition, with total expenses running in the \$35,000-\$40,000 range, according to some estimates. Last fall, the company announced the team would have to move. The Saints were being kicked out.

"We had placed an ad in the paper announcing the dissolution of the booster club," said Joe Davisson, the club president. "If we had played, it would have been at Diablo Stadium (in Tempe) or in Peoria. There wouldn't have been much support."

But not so fast. Negotiations, spearheaded by Stapley and Davisson, led to an agreement with the Webb Corp. The Saints couldn't remain, but only if the costs were otherwise assured.

The result was a massive volunteer effort. Members of the Sun City senior slow-pitch softball league maintain the field and the stadium in exchange for the right to play their own games there. The Sun City Sheriff's Posse provides one of two security guards. The Lions Club sells the tickets and concessions.

Revenue comes from ticket and souvenir sales, program advertisements, fund-raising activities and from donations from the booster club. So far, attendance has been better than last year. Through 14 home dates (the Saints play double-headers on Saturday and Sunday nights, starting at 7:30), the Saints had drawn 12,546 fans. Last year, the 14-date figure was 10,083.

One player was missing from the Saints during their series with San Diego last week, Debbie Doom. Under Doom's picture on the back of the Saints' program are the words, "Ace Pitcher." That about covers it.

Doom wasn't there because she was finishing up her freshman year at UCLA. This spring, Doom pitched the Bruins to the National Collegiate Athletic Association championship. In 4 1/2 innings of the NCAA tournament, she allowed one earned run and struck out 63. Doom, who lives in Tempe, is a two-year veteran of the Saints.

Doom was effective in 1981, when the Saints finished third nationally, but the big year was 1980, a championship season. Doom won about 60 games, pitched a no-hitter in the national tournament and was picked the best pitcher in the country.

Finally, last Wednesday, her classes and exams finished, Doom showed up at practice, a full-time member of the Saints for the rest of the season.

She is dark-haired and slender. She also is 6-foot-2. Doom uses her long legs to fullest advantage, taking a giant step toward the batter before releasing the ball in a windmill motion. It looks menacing.

"My legs have a lot to do with it," said Doom, who is playful and relaxed with her teammates but painfully shy with strangers. "I get my speed from my legs. I take long strides. Everything has to be right to work."

OVER

Warming up on the sidelines with her father and pitching coach, Dave Doom, then pitching to some of her teammates, she muttered angrily about the way she was throwing. A pulled muscle suffered in the NCAA tournament had slowed her down. But she still was getting some of her teammates out with her assortment of three basic pitches: rise, drop and change-up. Her fastball has been known to suddenly jump about a foot.

• • •
Two women are sitting in the stands, talking. Their husbands are watching intently. Says one of the women: "It's fun to come out and see the young people. It's the only place in Sun City you can do that."

The Saints are a popular item in Sun City. The crowd, some of whom arrive by golf cart, is enthusiastic and totally supportive. There are a large number of younger fans, but the majority, as would be expected, are senior citizens.

The games are tidy, efficient, well-played, and this evening, the red-and-gold clad Saints win them both. The first is a three-hit shutout by Michelle Thomas, a member of the 1979 championship team who is back after a two-year absence.

Thomas had her left arm tightly wrapped because of a torn muscle which, she said, is still giving her problems.

"I figure I'm only throwing at about 70 percent of my ability," she said afterward, applying ice to the elbow. "I'm just trying to mix it up."

Between games, the team wolfs down sodas, cookies and Danish. Then in the second game, Ritchey pitches, winning, 5-1. She drives in four runs, and the Saints improve their record to 20-9-1.

The crowd already has thinned out by game's end, but they apparently have been well-satisfied. Why not? The evening had cooled down, there was good softball on the field and a convivial atmosphere in the seats.

Earlier, Rose Schwartz, 80, who recently was honored with her own night for her diligent work on behalf of the Saints, looked out onto the field and said, "It's so much better to be out in this gorgeous air than to be at home, playing cards or watching TV."



Saints pitchers Debbie Doom (above), who plays for UCLA, and Shawn Ritchey, who plays for Arizona State.





The Arizona Republic/6-20-82

“
We don't just pick a player on athletic ability but her attitude, too. Desire to play. Hustle. You won't play every game or every inning. You might be the greatest shortstop in the world, but you might not play there. You've got to accept that.
”

Tim Rogers / Republic

Michelle Thomas, a member of the 1979 Sun City Saints championship team, talks to Coach Gerald Stapley.

OVER

Saints come flying home

By STEVE HAWLEY
Sports Editor

About 150 exuberant Sun City Saints fans Friday night turned out at Sky Harbor International Airport to welcome home the Saints from the women's national softball tournament.

The Saints, who finished second in the event held in Binghamton, N.Y., were greeted by one fan who played a whistle and another who sported a makeshift "Welcome Home Saints" hat constructed mainly of cardboard.

"You can't win 'em all," said booster John Poja, who deals Saints' wares at games in Sun City Stadium during the season. "They put their heart and soul into it.

"IF THEY weren't the type of girls they were I wouldn't be around," Poja added.

This was the fourth time Poja had welcomed the team home from the tourney.

Poja was among 76 Sun Citians who rode a chartered bus to the airport. Parents, many of whom live in the Valley, also were among the crowd.

MOST OF them broke into a chorus of "When the Saints Go Marching In" when the airplane landed at about 7:30. The singing faded when they realized the first few people off were businessmen

and families returning from vacations in the East. When the team finally departed, singing broke out again.

Rosie Andrade, who played third base and shortstop for the Saints in the mid-1960s, was there to congratulate her daughter, Helen.

Helen was one of five Saints named to the All-America team Thursday after their 2-0 loss to the Raybestos Brakettes, who won their 17th national championship.

"THIS IS more of a thrill than when I went (to nationals)," said Rosie. "It's thrilling because she's also playing for the Saints."

This past winter it looked as though there no longer would be a team known as the "Sun City Saints."

Del E. Webb Development Co., in a cost-cutting move, announced that it would not lease Sun City Stadium to the Booster Club this year. But after several negotiating sessions between Booster Club officials and Webb, an agreement was reached that raised the team from the ashes.

UNDER THE agreement, the booster club had to take financial responsibility for stadium operating and maintenance expenses.

More than \$20,000 was raised, and the Booster Club and team were back in business.

"We said a few prayers," remembered Booster Club president Joe Davisson. "It looked pretty bleak.

The Saints fought back through the tournament losers' bracket after bowing to the California

Blazers, a defeat they avenged before playing the Brakettes.

The Saints defeated the Brakettes 1-0 in a must-win game, only to lose 2-0 to the Brakettes behind All-American Kathy Arendsen's no-hitter.



SC Saints

Sun City Saints pitcher Debbie Doom leads the way as the team deplanes at Sky Harbor International Airport Friday night. An estimated 150 Saints boost-

ers, many of whom were Sun Citians, gathered to greet the nation's second-place women's softball team. (News-Sun Photo by Jim Painter)

OVER

Saints honor day scheduled

By Julia Jones
Staff writer

SUN CITY — A Sun City Saints Recognition Day is planned for 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday at the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, 10801 Oakmont Drive.

The celebration honoring the now-defunct women's softball team is a highlight of the society's observance of National Historic Preservation week. Sunday happens to be the anniversary of the birth of the late Del Webb, founder of Sun City, said Jane Freeman, a member of the Historical Society and of the Saints Booster Club.

On hand for the celebration will be Saints coaches Thelma Keith and Gerald Stapley, plus several team members and a special display of memorabilia.

The first Saints home game was played at the field at 109th and Grand avenues on May 7, 1966; the Sun City Stadium at 111th and Grand avenues opened July 4, 1971.

Although no team members, who ranged in age from 16 to 26 years, ever lived in the Sun Cities, support for the "home team" was wholehearted, said John Davisson, former president of the booster club.

During the Saints' glory years, in the 1970s, the team won two Pacific Coast League championships, toured South Africa, Rhodesia and Australia, won two national tournaments and was runner-up in international competition. Four players on the 1979 team were named to the All-American Team. They were Lynn Mooney, Marilyn Rau, Paula Noel and Suzi Gaw.

But the team faced the beginning of the end, when the International Women's Professional Softball League Association was formed in 1976, and most of the Saints' opponents fled to be part of the first professional women's team-sport enterprise.

Because of a lack of qualified opponents and increasing stadium operating costs, the Saints folded in the mid 1980s. A brief flurry toward reviving the team was made in 1990, and the team, in fact, finished eighth out of 38 in national competition, but the team folded again at the end of the season.

The celebration and display will be arranged in the Historical Society headquarters in the first home built in Sun City. The house sold for \$8,500 in 1960, Freeman said. Information on the Society and the celebration is available at 974-2568.

"Preservation Brings History to Life" is the theme of this year's National Historic Preservation Week.

7-29-82

DAILY NEWS SUN

Saints do it again

The name Sun City has gone far and wide with the Sun City Saints as they have traveled this country and the world to exhibit their superior ability at playing fastpitch softball.

They've brought honor after honor to this retirement area with their sportskills, and have represented their country admirably abroad. These "adopted daughters" of the Sun Cities have again given us reason to be proud.

Last night at the National Sports Festival in Indianapolis, the Saints, playing as the West team, defeated the longtime top-ranked Raybestos Brakettes (East team) and their famed pitcher, Karen Arendsen, 2-0, to win the gold for the second year.

Invited to play in the annual amateur event as the best women's softball team in the West, the Saints have proven themselves to be the best in the U.S. And all across the country today, newspapers and other media are reporting that the "Sun City, Ariz., Saints" won over the Brakettes.

So, congratulations to Michelle Thomas for her all-out pitching; to every other one of the Saints; to manager Gerald Stapley; and to the Sun City Saints Booster Club, which kept this outstanding team with us when it looked as though they might have to go elsewhere.

The Saints—they're what we call real ambassadors for the Sun Cities.

Sports

Friday, May 15, 1981



The 1981 edition of the Sun City Saints will be looking to improve on a 13-5 mark when the California Stars invade Sun City Stadium for Saturday and Sunday double-headers. From left, front row: batgirls Dana Reznik and Kathy Pfab, Karen Fellenz and manager Gerald Stapley; second row:

batgirl Lori Pfab, Barb Garcia, Linda Belcher, Ann Beisser and Vicky Smith; third row: Sue Bristow, Brenda Van Amburg and Gail Peters; back row: Marilyn Rau, Lisa Clinchy, Cindy Bristow, Debbie Doom, Gail Davenport, Suzie Gaw, Shawn Ritchey and Marla Stapley.

1980

WEB SPINNER

SUN CITY SAINTS

SUN CITY

VF

Dewdrops, Saints

(Continued from page 1)

While the Dewdrops play before sparse crowds on dusty fields, the national champs of women's softball play before large audiences on well-manicured grounds — not far away, in Sun City.

Saints Are Not Canonized—Yet!

The Sun City Saints are not canonized.

Officially!

Yet!

They have for 15 years been a very popular group of young ladies, however. And after winning the 1979 national women's fast pitch softball championship, their fame has increased in Sun City, where they play home games.

Attendance has increased to an average of about 800 a game.

The Saints are not without attractions.

Leading the cheers are the nationally-publicized Sun City resident Pom Pon "girls".

Some players have reached celebrity status.

Oldest Saint is Marilyn Rau, 29. The six-time All-American catcher this spring was named Arizona Amateur Athlete of the Year (among men and women) and Arizona Softball Foundation's Most Valuable woman player.

The elementary school teacher, destined for the Softball Hall of Fame, is the only Saint who has played all 15 years at Sun City.

Her leading pitcher is the youngest Saint, 17-year-old Debbie Doom. At 6-foot, 1½ inches tall, she has thrown a softball underhanded at 100 m.p.h. In early June her 11-2 record included two no-hitters.

When she is scheduled to pitch, newspapers headline: "It's DOOMSDAY for Saints Opponent!"

Opening game this season was against Arizona State University, minus the five Saints on ASU scholarships.

An early promotional game was against an excellent Sun City resident men's league team which included former major and minor leaguers. The Saints turned what some expected would be a men's victory into a 12-3 rout.

The Saints are co-sponsored by the Del E. Webb Development Co.

1980 Mint 400 Includes A Wedding



"GLITTER GULCH", the street named Fremont which fronts Del Webb's Mint Hotel in downtown Las Vegas, is closed each year one day prior to the Mint 400 desert race. Along with vehicle inspections, this year's pre-race event included a marriage between contestant Terry Smith and Cindy Triqueiro.

Each year the Mint 400 promotion adds momentum, and this spring included a marriage during the annual vehicle inspection held the day prior to the race.

The groom, a contestant, was able to resume his honeymoon earlier than expected when he failed to complete the gruelling 400-mile desert course, a fate that befell 71 per cent of the 474-car field.

Winner — who knocked more than an hour off 1979's best time — was Jack Jackson in 7 hours, 38 minutes,

37 seconds. The 3-1 betting favorite, Malcolm Smith and Bud Felkemp, set a course record of 1 hour 43 minutes on the first lap but never finished the race.

Mint General Manager Andy Zorne and Public Relations Director K. J. Howe were eliminated in the first lap of the race watched by an estimated 55,000 to 60,000 people.

More than \$130,000 in cash was distributed to winners, and 65 manufacturers posted an additional \$128,000 in cash and prizes.

Blackjack Classic Winners Are Getting Younger

If the winners of the Sahara Blackjack Classic get any younger, they'll be down to 40-year-olds.

Latest champ is 51-year-old Avery Waisbsen, an attorney from Studio City, CA. Winners of the three previous major tournaments held by Webb's Sahara hotels and casinos were aged 68, 61, and 57, in that order. Two

were retired.

Waisbsen, wearing the same jogging suit through three days of play, collected \$55,000 in prize money. He entered three previous Sahara Classics.

More than 1,400 contestants entered the May contest. The Fall Blackjack Classic will be Sept. 2-5, again at all three Saharas.



The original Sun City Saints, the 1966 edition, included: (front row, left to right), Lou Kostielney, Connie Mullen, Marilyn Rau, Betty Phillips, Kay Williamson, Betty McIlvain, Judy Bozman, Roxie

Craig, and Rosie Andrade. The only member of that 1966 squad still an active player is Saints catcher Marilyn Rau.

Rich tradition highlights history of Saints team

By MARK COAST
Staff Writer

In the words of friends and foes alike, they are "special," "the ultimate," "dedicated," "disciplined," and "just plain fun." They are the Sun City Saints.

Ex-players and opposing coaches rate the Saints as the top of the line in women's softball.

Returning from a national championship performance last year, the Saints are in their 15th season of softball in Sun City, bringing with them a history of quality.

WHEN the Phoenix PBSW Ramblers retired their uniforms in 1965, several players were left with lots of desire but no team.

All-American Dot Wilkinson, manager and captain of the Ramblers, decided to retire from the sport along with several of the other old timers and retired the franchise as well.

This came as a shock to

back-up catcher Bev Dryer (now Sheppard), since she first read about the decision in the newspaper, near the time the team usually started practicing.

THAT'S when Bev and several other Ramblers went looking for a sponsor to support a team for them to play on.

"It was a struggle," Bev remembered about trying to get a team together, as well as finding a sponsor.

She found a sponsor. The Merchant's Association and Del E. Webb Corporation of Sun City both welcomed the new team into the community and gave them a ball park to play in, located at 108th and Grand, where the Sun-towner Restaurant now stands.

IN 1966, the Saints took to the field for the first time, ending up with a mediocre 22-19 season, but winning the Cactus Regional title and finishing 14th at the national tournament. Since then, the Saints have won the regionals every year.

The original coach for the Saints was Ford Hoffman, founder of the PBSW Ramblers. For the

first year, he and Bev coached the team, after that Bev took over the helm for good until her retirement in 1973.

From the time of their formation up until just a few years ago, the Saints

had been members of the Pacific Coast Women's Softball League. In past years over half of the national champions were teams from that league.

UNFORTUNATELY, professional softball lured many players and even some teams away from the PCWSL in the early '70s, lowering the caliber of competition for the Saints, and bringing an end to the league.

Among the casualties were perennial powerhouse and Saints rival, the Orange Lionettes.

One of the most memorable games ever played in Sun City Stadium was between the Lionettes and the Saints. It was a Saturday evening nightcap lasting 25 innings, ending at three o'clock Sunday morning.

TO TOP IT all off, the teams played a total of 54 innings that weekend, with Paula Noel throwing every pitch.

In the early years, the Saints were constantly being compared with the PBSW Ramblers, but Bev, who played on both the Saints and the Ramblers, saw two totally different types of softball.

Whereas the Ramblers were a rugged, scrappy, no-holds-barred group of women, the Saints were disciplined, determined and every bit as dedicated as the Ramblers.

"**PLAYING** softball for the Saints is a full-time job," she said. "They get the ultimate out of their players.

"Anybody can play softball," Bev explained, trying to sum up her feelings toward the team, "but just to put on a Saints uniform is a heart-warming experience."

HOME
Of The
SUN CITY SAINTS
ARIZONA



- *Where softball players sell kisses*
- *Where softball boosters drive golf carts*
- *Where the play is as prickly as desert cactus*
- *Where the amateurs are as hot as the Arizona sun*

T

by Paul Schafer

hough it's a voyage of light-years back to the days when movies were a nickel and sports were what you played on the sandlot down the block, fans of amateur women's softball still glow with that down-home feeling. It reflects most brightly off the golden locks of the Sun City Saints in Arizona.

The Saints is the best of the Triple A women's softball teams that remained intact when the International Women's Professional Softball League Association (IWPSA) formed last year. Why it stayed amateur when all the other top teams scurried to be part of the first professional women's team-sport enterprise is easy to see when you put yourself in their cleats. Beneath the clear skies and hot rays ten miles from Phoenix abides Sun City Stadium, a gorgeous 4,000-seat arena, reputedly the best ballpark available for women's softball in the country.

The Saints also enjoy a large following of dedicated fans in their "hometown"—the nationally known retirement community of Sun City, Arizona. Most of the nearly 40,000 residents are in their late 50s or considerably older, but they hardly seem retiring when they are cheering on their favorite players or booing umpires. The Sun City Saints Booster Club has over 400 members, and more than 5,000 people attended a Saints fund-raising variety show last fall which featured professional entertainers, Sun City residents, and the players themselves. The show was sponsored and choreographed by Sun City boosters Ray and Corinne Leslie, who call themselves the nation's oldest still-performing professional dance team. The Leslies worked out some dance steps for the Saints to perform, demonstrated some of their own routines, and sought other variety acts—including a Sun City women's dance group they've trained, the "Scintillating Sisters of Swing." The ballplayers added their own special touch, mingling with the crowd to sell kisses for a dollar.

The Saints also sell pennants, team license plates, and "iron-on" patches; and they hold bake sales where boosters and uniformed Saints man tables in the major shopping centers. In Feb-

ruary, Sun Citians whipped up batches of homemade cookies and cakes to raise \$400 toward the purchase of a pitching machine for spring training.

The Saints seem to live on the outskirts of the brave new world of big-time women's sports promotion. Even the traditionally staid group of college p.e. coaches is marking the end of the old days by naming its AIAW fund-raiser "The Last Bake Sale," but the Saints, like islanders, keep the old ways.

Their story actually begins 11 years ago with the demise of a women's pioneer softball team, the nationally known Phoenix Ramblers. With Hall of Famers like catcher Dot Wilkinson and second baseman Ricki Caito, the Ramblers won the national championship twice and came close several other times. But after the 1965 season, team coach and owner Wilkinson retired from the squad. The Ramblers suddenly found themselves without a coach, owner, or ballpark to play in. Some of the players, determined not to let the team die, started searching the Phoenix area for a new home. The path led to the five-year-old retirement community on the city's northwest side.

After lengthy negotiations with the Del E. Webb Development Company, builder of Sun City, and with local business leaders, a ballpark was constructed; and through a community-wide contest, the Ramblers were renamed the "Saints." Right on schedule, the reorganized team opened the 1966 season.

Sun Citians fell in love with the team quickly; almost from the start, the Saints found out what it's like to play before partisan crowds numbering in the hundreds and even thousands. Just as quickly, the Saints made a decision to become a visible part of their new hometown. Although no team members have ever lived in Sun City, participation in a variety of community activities became a Saints tradition. The team rode in Sun City's Bicentennial parade, and frequently local service clubs will invite a Saint to speak at a meeting or show slides of one of the international tours.

When Del Webb, the community's guiding light, died in 1976, more than 7,000 Sun Citians attended his memorial service. Even though it was a

game night, the Saints were there, too—then dashed off to change clothes for the usual doubleheader.

After its first two years, the team became financially independent—another unusual development for women's teams. The only financial "string" still attached is a continuing annual grant from Webb developers, a company which was quick to recognize the depth of the Saints' local popularity. Confidence in the popularity of softball among geriatric sports fans was built right into the stadium in the form of ramps. Some spectators sit in their golf carts, which they can drive right up to the top row of the stadium.

"Their ability and character of play puts them in a class by themselves," says Joe Davisson, president of the Booster Club. "You hear so much about the kids who are messing up their lives," says Mrs. Aveline Pine, chairman of the bake sale. "Yet these girls are so nice, so appreciative, they really make it all worthwhile. They act like a nice bunch of young women, and you feel proud to be around them." Before and after doubleheaders, and between games, players regularly mingle with fans to add that personal touch.

"Older people normally have a sense that younger people don't care at all about them," observes R. Adam "Doc" Sauerbrun, the team's financial advisor. "In this case, it's not true." Conversely, the Saints have a special place in Sun Citians' hearts, and the residents will do anything for them. As might be expected, fans responded in spades when the Saints began fund-raising campaigns in 1975, after receiving an invitation to play in South Africa; and in 1976, after an invitation to tour the Netherlands and Germany.

They would probably be ready to do the same this year, but it won't be necessary; the international tour is coming to Sun City this time. The Netherlands' national squad plans to make Sun City its "home base" from June 15 to July 3 for a playing tour of the Southwest. The Dutch women are hoping to improve their skills in preparation for the 1978 world softball tournament at the Pan-American Games. A Sun City tournament is being planned for the European visitors, and the Saints have arranged for their guests to play additional games. (Continued on page 54)

SUN CITY SAINTS

(Continued from page 41)

in Nevada and California.

But Sun Citians don't like the Saints just because they've helped spread international goodwill; the Saints are winners, too. Although they've never won a national championship, the Saints have come very close, finishing fourth, second, and third in the last three tournaments. Many of their players, both past and present, have won all-American recognition.

This year's players range in age from 16 to 26, and without exception they are teachers or students in high school or college. Only one, Saint catcher Marilyn Rau, has been playing with the team since its 1966 opener, although coach Thelma Keith and franchise owner Bev Dryer were Ramblers as well as "original" Saints.

On the field, the Saints demonstrate a spirited style of play that is more appealing to many fans than the pace of the major-league baseball team, the Milwaukee Brewers, which also has a long-term contract in the Sun City Stadium. Neither member of the Saints' fine pitching tandem—Paula Noel and Melannie Kyler—wastes much time between deliveries, and both are very effective. In 1976, Noel had four no-hitters, including a perfect game, and Kyler had three no-hitters, including one in the national tournament.

More than a few veteran softball observers believe Marilyn Rau is the top catcher in the game, and perhaps the top player. With Rau behind the plate, opponents find it almost impossible to steal second, and her pegs to first and third have nailed runners there, too. Her batting averages the past three

seasons speak for themselves: .381, .381, and .421.

Regular third baseman Lynn Mooney owns a rifle disguised as an arm, and veteran shortstop Ginger Kurtz has one of the smoothest, most graceful fielding styles anywhere. Both are consistent hitters, as is second baseman Lee Ann Easley. Center fielder Judy Hoke, always hollering and whistling encouragement to her teammates, hasn't won the team's "sparkplug" award twice for nothing. Running, diving, and "impossible" catches have become her trademark. Outfielder Linda Coats, a relative newcomer to the squad, has an extremely high on-base percentage and is a top-notch fielder.

The Phoenix Police Department, however, stole one of the Saints' most popular players this season. Outfielder Becky Rice continued to play softball last season after graduating from the police academy, but the call of duty forced her to retire in 1977.

The Saints' winning tradition has paid dividends by attracting top players: on the 1977 squad are eight present or former all-Americans. To further player development the Saints have even formed two farm teams. Many current players started in the system, where, in addition to learning fundamentals of the game, they hear veterans and former Sun City players discuss "What It Means to be a Saint."

All these things—the team's high rate of success, extensive local support, fine ball park, and the uncommon opportunity to make international

tours—came into play early in 1976 when the Saints decided not to join the IWPSA. But the team decided that it wouldn't object if any player made an individual decision to join the pro league, and six did so, including three of their best: outfielder Denny Buchanan, catcher Linda Spradley, and pitcher Billie Harris, a 42-year-old veteran of 29 amateur seasons.

But collectively, the players, coach, and management decided that they had a good situation already, and that they owed Sun Citians a debt for ten previous seasons of support. Had the team turned pro, for example, it would have had to cancel the European tour that was being arranged through amateur organizations in the countries involved. Also figuring in the Saints' decision was uncertainty about the pro league's future.

Contrast a Sun City player's position at the time with that faced by most other women's softball players, who wore uniforms with "Bates Brothers Homes" on the back, played in multi-purpose, often poorly maintained city ball parks, and participated for nothing but love of the game. She certainly had no chance for national or international glory as an amateur; it was hard enough for her team to get coverage in the local newspaper. Give that player a chance to join a professional league, and she's gone. But for the Saints, not one of those factors was important.

What mattered, as Coach Keith put it, was that "we're just like a family out there to the Sun City people."

The Saints were firm in their decision, but they almost immediately had



Down
in
front



7/29/97 Rich Bolas

Sun City Saints make comeback

The Sun City Saints are making a comeback.

The amateur softball team captured championships and the hearts of Sun Citians in the '60s and '70s.

Players from those squads will be feted during the upcoming Woman's Major Fastpitch Tournament Aug. 13 through Aug. 17 at the Rose Mofford Sports Complex, 9833 N. 25th Ave. in Phoenix.

Thelma Keith, one of the Saints' co-founders in 1966, is organizing the tribute, which will feature a Legends Game at 6:30 p.m. on Aug. 15.

Keith played first base for the original Saints and later served as a consultant for the 1979 team which won the national championship.

She has contacted about 70 former Saints and expects almost 100 for the Aug. 15 contest.

Among those expected to be on hand are Marilyn Rau, a member of the National Softball Hall of Fame, Rose Andrade, an Arizona Hall of Fame member and Susie Gow.

Mofford will be on hand and Keith is also trying to get an appearance from Phoenix Mercury coach Cheryl Miller.

Keith also is putting together an "Angels page" as part of a special-edition program.

Saints boosters can pay tribute to the team by taking out a personal ad, which will be featured in the commemorative program. Keith is also searching for original merchants who supported the team back in 1966.

For information on the Saints reunion, call 246-8890.



Tuesday, September 3, 1974 - News-Sun

SAINTS TAKE 6 SPOTS**All-stars selected**

ORLANDO, Fla.—Successful defending champions, the Stratford (Conn.) Raybestos Brakettes, and the runnerup Sun City Saints made the all-American women's softball selections pretty much a two-team affair.

The Saints placed three players on the first team and three more on the second team. Stratford landed five berths on the 14-player first team.

Selections were announced in post-tournament ceremonies on the playing field here Saturday night.

Sun City selectees were Paula Noel, Denny Buchanan, and Linda Spradley on the first team and Marilyn Rau, Lynn Mooney and LeeAnn Easley on the second team.

Marilyn was a first-team choice a year ago as catcher and Paula made the second team as a pitcher.

ALL-AMERICAN FIRST TEAM

1b—Carol Salsbury, Santa Clara.
2b—Willie Roze, Stratford.
3b—Irene Shea, Stratford.
SS—Sharron Backus, Stratford.
OF—Diane Kalliam, Santa Clara.
OF—Denny Buchanan, Sun City.
OF—Marlene Piper, Portland.
OF—Mary Nutter, Lansing.
Utility—Mary Ann Kluge, North Tonawanda, N.Y.
C—Linda Spradley, Sun City.
C—Peggy Kellers, Stratford.
P—Joan Joyce, Stratford.
P—Paula Noel, Sun City.
P—Donna Schwenk, Indianapolis.

Most Valuable Player—Joan Joyce, Stratford.

Leading Hitter—Diane Kalliam, Santa Clara, .444.

Leading Fielder—Jamie Smith, Lansing.

SECOND TEAM

1b—Rau, Sun City; 2b—Easley, Sun City; 3b—Mooney, Sun City; SS—Smith, Lansing; OF—Harris, Indianapolis; OF—Guenzler, St. Louis; OF—Schneider, Indianapolis; OF—Elliott, Stratford; Utility—Nikiel, N. Tonawanda; C—Aubchon, St. Louis; C—Purves, Lansing; P—Benedetto, Portland; P—Kent, Lansing; P—Trendall, St. Louis.

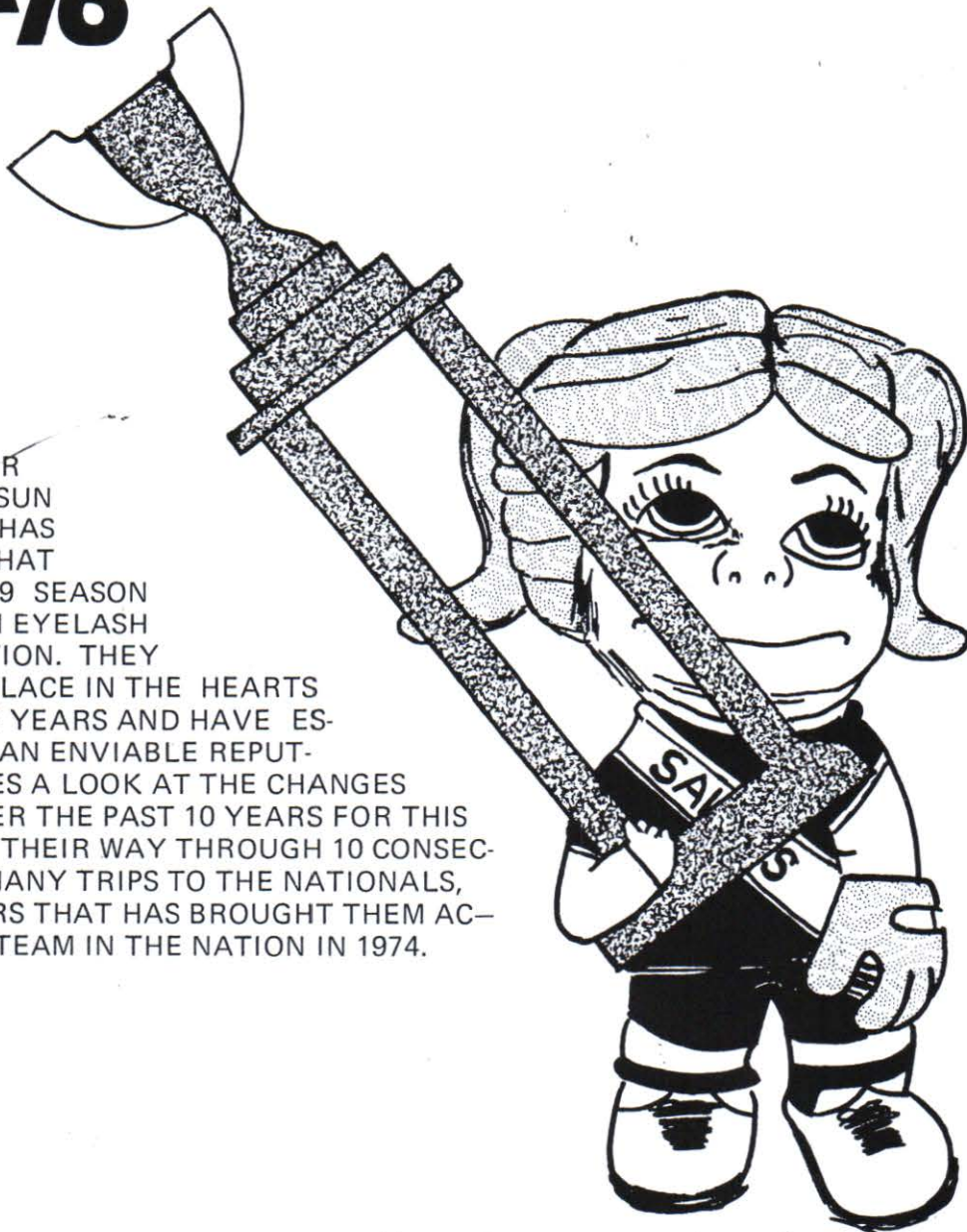
TOURNEY NOTES: The Saints' Buchanan was a strong contender for top hitting honors, going into the final night's action with .421. She went 2-for-11 Saturday, but her final .333 average (10 hits in 30 at-bats) tied her for second in the tourney . . . Ginger Kurtz, Saints' short-stop, gave her best performance against Stratford, but this was after much of the selection process had been done by the committee. She got three hits in 10 trips against Joan Joyce and showed outstanding range in fielding brilliantly . . . Sun City's Becky Rice, the tourney's only homer hitter, celebrated her 22nd birthday Saturday . . . A post-tourney snack and celebration was sponsored by Sun Citizens Dr. and Mrs. R. Adam Sauerbrun, who attended the eight days of action.



Saints earned six positions on 1974 All-American squad, three on first team and three on second, to ease pain of disappointing pair of losses to Stratford, Conn. From left are All-Americans Denny Buchanan, holding top of Saints' second place trophy; LeeAnn Easley, Paula Noel, Linda Spradley, Lynn Mooney, Marilyn Rau.

Instant replay: 1966-76

AS OUR NATION CELEBRATES ITS 200TH BIRTHDAY IN 1976, A ONCE-HOMELESS GROUP OF WOMEN ATHLETES MARK THEIR 10TH YEAR IN SUN CITY. THE SUN CITY SAINTS SOFTBALL TEAM HAS ACCOMPLISHED MUCH OVER THAT DECADE, MOVING FROM A 22-19 SEASON RECORD IN 1966 TO WITHIN AN EYELASH OF THE NO. 1 SPOT IN THE NATION. THEY HAVE EARNED A CHERISHED PLACE IN THE HEARTS OF THEIR FANS THROUGH THE YEARS AND HAVE ESTABLISHED FOR THEMSELVES AN ENVIABLE REPUTATION. HERE MAGAZINE TAKES A LOOK AT THE CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS FOR THIS TEAM OF AMATEURS, MAKING THEIR WAY THROUGH 10 CONSECUTIVE REGIONAL TITLES, AS MANY TRIPS TO THE NATIONALS, AND SUCCESS IN RECENT YEARS THAT HAS BROUGHT THEM ACCLAIM AS THE NO. 2 WOMEN'S TEAM IN THE NATION IN 1974.



Here Magazine Feb '76

determined to stay to the last out — whatever day of the week it might fall upon.

The stadium announcer, gravel-throated by now and drinking nothing but Listerine on the rocks, continued to repeat the batting order as each inning passed into the next, occasionally offering stabs at levity in the tradition of a late-night Johnny Carson to keep the fans from slipping into a comatose state.

It was a quarter to three in the morning before the final run was pushed across the plate on a single to the outfield and the Sun City Saints claimed a most memorable victory. The 25-inning test of endurance had fallen but a few innings short of earning a place in the record books. But no one suggested trying again.

As fans trickled through the gates on their way home, the girls headed for the parking lot, numbly aware that at 6 o'clock that same evening they would return to the same stadium to begin the third game of their four-game series. They didn't know it at the time, but those next two games would run another 17 innings.

During that weekend of back-to-back doubleheaders against the Pacific Coast league-leading Lionettes of Orange, California, the two teams amassed a total of 54 innings of head-to-head competition.

And no one was more painfully aware of the marathon feat than Saints pitcher Paula Noel. She had been on the mound for all 54 innings!

The stage was set for this dramatic duel several years past, but the rivalry between the Saints and the Lionettes has for years drawn crowds in excess of 2,000 to Sun City Stadium. But the intense competitive spirit that draws the fans to those games underlines the quality that is inherent in women's softball today.

Women's softball has been around for decade upon decade, but

it bloomed in Sun City in 1966, the first season the Saints brought its excitement to that community. In 1965, the community decided to adopt these homeless gals, left without a sponsor when the perennial national powerhouse PBSW Ramblers of Phoenix decided to discontinue its sponsorship of a fast-pitch softball team. In 1966, the Saints began a 41-game schedule under the sponsorship of the Sun City Merchants Association and the Del E. Webb Corporation.

That pioneer team, playing out of a little park built at Grand and 108th avenues gained acceptance to the Pacific Coast Women's Softball League, one of the premier leagues in the nation, but found it difficult picking up where the renowned Ramblers had left off. They won but 22 of their 41 games, finishing fourth in the PCWSL. They did however win their first regional tourney, the Cactus regionals, played that year in Sun City, and gained the right to move into the nationals in Florida where they managed a 14th place finish.

That first regional tourney win in 1966 has led to 10 straight regional victories, thus earning for them the right to vie for the national title 10 years running.

While they have yet to stake a claim to the top honor, the past several years have found them among the top three finishers, including a second-place trophy in 1974. Should the Saints finally attain the summit of women's amateur softball, they will be the first team to bring the national title back to Arizona since the Ramblers did so in 1949.

1966 was not only the year this group of women athletes needed a home, but also were in search of an identity — a name. It came to pass that year that a contest was held in Sun City to select a name for this team. Mr. W. C. Kingsley submitted the moniker "Saints" and thus it has stood. For his efforts, Kingsley received a season pass

In a few hours the light of dawn could break over the press box atop the sunken baseball stadium. On the field below, artificial lights continued to glow in the chilly darkness.

A softball game was still in progress.

This game, the second of a doubleheader, had begun the night before — at 9:30. The opening game of the series had gone five extra innings, finishing in the 12th inning. But who could remember that long ago?

It was now 2:30 a.m. Sunday. Sunrise services were already scheduled in that same stadium in a matter of a few hours. It could turn out to be the first church service ever to be conducted while peanuts and popcorn were being sold in the aisles and the crack of a bat punctuating the choir's solos.

But the 18 weary ball players who continued to wander, bleary-eyed, back onto the field every 15 minutes or so weren't thinking about the coming sunrise and its accompanying alleluhas. After 24 innings of intense softball rivalry, their only thoughts were on breaking that 1-1 tie that had held them adlocked since the final regulation seventh inning, some four hours earlier.

And, to add further to the oddity of this twilight scenario, they weren't alone in their quest. There were better than 100 fans still in the bleachers of Sun City Stadium,

and gift certificates from the team's sponsors — and a place a fame of sorts that still continues.

The 1967 edition of the Saints added a few more games to their schedule — and a few more wins, finishing 28-17. But nothing to set the sportswriters on their ears — not yet.

Again they won the Cactus Regionals and traveled on to the nationals, this time at Stratford, Connecticut, home of the Raybestos Brakettes. The Brakettes were the reigning national champs.

That was not to be the year for a repeat by the Brakettes, as the Orange, Calif., Lionettes defeated them in the title contest, 4-1, and became the No. 1 team in the nation for their seventh time.

Nor was it the year for the Saints. After winning their first two contests, they were downed by the Lionettes who went on to the title.

But there were some noteworthy events in that 1967 season. It was the year that 17-year veteran Rosie Andrade announced her retirement from softball, turning the role over to rookie Lynn Mooney, who has been holding down that position as a regular ever since. It signalled, to some extent the beginning of the influx of young talent for the Saints, the key that in the past few years has been paying big dividends as those rookies have seasoned into outstanding veteran players.

Of equal importance were several position changes made that year that have resulted through the years in the stability the Saints now possess in those spots. It was the year that Marilyn Rau moved from her shortstop position to a permanent location behind the plate. Ginger Kurtz moved in from the outfield to take Rau's place at shortstop and has been named to All-Star honors at that position many times since taking over.

The following year, 1968, brought few changes and little



The original Sun City Saints, the 1966 edition, posed for this picture at the early ball field at Grand and 108th avenues. That team included (front row, from left) Lou Kostielney, Connie Mullen, Marilyn Rau, Dee Everhart, Bev Dryer, Thelma Keith. (Back row) Sandy Kelley, Betty Phillips, Kay (Cotton) Williamson, Betty McIlvain, Judy Bozman, Roxie Craig, and Rosie Andrade. The only member of that 1966 squad still an active player is Saints catcher Marilyn Rau.

indication that the Saints would eventually be battling for the nation's No. 1 ranking. The team played 48 games that year, winning 29, and (ho-hum) grabbing their third straight Cactus Regional tourney. For all their efforts in their trip to the nationals that year, they managed but one win in the tournament at Stratford, Conn.

1968 was the year that pitcher Paula Noel joined the Saints — as a first baseman and outfielder. Her adjustment to a pitching role didn't come until the following year.

But 1969 was a different story. It was a year of "firsts."

1969 was the first year the team played without a sponsor, after the Merchants (association had helped them get the start they needed. The team felt that after three years, they were established enough in the community to meet their expenses for the year from the gate receipts.

And it was the first time that the team would be run under the tutelage of a former player, Bev Dryer. The ASU graduate, an eighth-teacher who spent her summers playing softball, had progressed

(Bottom photo)

The pitching staff in 1969 included these two aspiring rookies, Paula Miller (now Noel) L. and Georgia Buelow. Buelow departed after the '73 season, but Noel has become a mainstay on the mound.



ROOKIE PITCHERS ON SPREE—Paula Miller, left, and Georgia Buelow, both rookie pitchers for the Sun City Saints, each posted two wins last weekend in two doubleheaders against the Tucson Poor Souls. Paula tossed a no-hitter and a 2-hitter at the victors, and topped her mound performance with a home run. Georgia limited the Poor Souls to four hits in one of her two weekend victories. (Photo by Prather's)

game, which Bev set about to build into the program. The atmosphere for learning was certainly ripe that year that Bev took over, for the entire team consisted of teachers and students.

The 1969 season got off to a fast start, with the gals going 21 games before suffering their first loss, late in May. By the time the year drew to a close, the girls had posted a 32-2 season exhibition record, 46-17 overall, again nailed down the Cactus Regional crown, and moved into the nationals at Tucson. At the regionals, the team dominated the All-Star Team selections, placing six of the nine on that team, and grabbing three of the five tournament awards.

It was the Lionettes, once again, that proved the Saints' downfall that year in the nationals, dropping the Sun City team to the loser's bracket after they had won their first two contests.

But they managed a fifth place finish and, perhaps more important, over 300 fans bussed from Sun City to Tucson to watch "their" team compete with the best. Despite a plague of injuries that year (at second base alone, there were three ankles broken at various times throughout the season), the Saints had finished with their highest national ranking to that point.

Little changed, record-wise, in 1970, but one important change took place on the field. The Saints pitching staff was given added depth and additional years of experience when Billie Harris, the first Black woman All-American in the game, joined the Saints from the Yakima (Wash.) Webb Cats. The ageless pitching wonder, who had led Yakima to a third place finish in the nationals the year before and won the tournament's Most Valuable Player award, was added to bolster a mound crew that now included Lou Kostielney and Shirley Marshall, both of whom were approaching their final years

of play, and sometime hurler Paula Miller, who was still playing more outfield than pitcher.

While Harris was joining the Saints in 1970, veteran center fielder Dee Everhart was retiring. Everhart had not only been a mainstay in the outfield, but had been a base stealer deluxe for the team. And an additional new look was given the Saints outfield when 16-year-old Barbara Quijada moved into the left field spot left vacant by departing Andie Irvin.

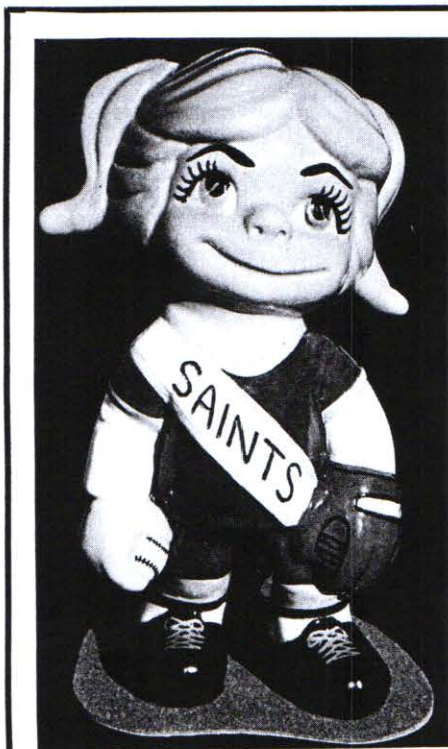
With the coming-and-going of various team members and the roster constantly reflecting the addition of rookies, the Saints managed to keep their youthful look, with the average age 20 years. Sun City newspaper publisher Burt Freireich was named the recipient of the Angel Award that year, showing the Saints appreciation for the years of assistance he had provided through his newspaper. Freireich was one of the earliest to come forth and endorse the Saints taking up residence in Sun City and has given the team such extensive coverage in his paper, the News-Sun, that it has become the envy of other teams in

the league who do not fare so well with their local press.

The Saints finished second in the Pacific Coast league that year, for the second consecutive year behind the Lionettes, and compiled a 40-14 season mark. As per usual, they copped the Cactus Regional title, their fifth straight, and advanced to the nationals where they garnered a ninth place finish. Rau and first baseman Thelma Keith led the team in hitting at the nationals and outfielder Betty McIlvain, Rau and second sacker Sandy Kelley were named to the league All-Star team.

It was a 50-game schedule the Saints faced in 1971, finishing with a 39-11 mark. The gals played 35 of their home games at Peoria High School while awaiting the completion of their new stadium at 111th and Grand avenues. By the time the 3,000-seat structure was completed, the team had time to play 15 games in their up-dated and ultra-modern new "home."

Del Webb won the Angel Award that year, and nobody had any trouble guessing why he had won the honor. The new home that he had provided the girls is one of the finest in the country and has been



The Sun City Saints doll shown here and appearing on the cover of this issue was designed and built by Maricopa County Detective Bill Kohler in 1971 and presented to Saints owner Bev Dryer. The ceramic figure stands a foot tall and is brightly colored in red and yellow.

ed for the past several years by major league baseball clubs as well. includes a \$12,000 scoreboard and 7½ acres of parking, adequate for many purposes.

Two new faces were added that year, Becky Rice and Chris Miner. Miner, who played both infield and outfield, was a veteran who was a three-time all-American and had been named to the 1970 National All-Star team. Rice was a rookie, attending school at Glendale Community College, but has since earned a starting role in the Saints' outfield.

On the other side of the coin, the Saints lost the services of two veterans that year, Kostielney and Betty McIlvain. Kostielney had also served as assistant coach before retiring, leaving Bev Dryer now in full command. McIlvain, an outfielder and 17-year veteran, had been an original Saint.

The Saints earned their sixth straight Cactus Regional title in '71 and survived four national title contests before being dropped and finishing in eighth place nationally. The Billie Harris acquisition proved to be a wise move as she won the Saints' the Most Valuable Player award that year. And, for Thelma Keith, it was equally eventful as she assumed the role of team manager and accomplished at the rate what every ball player would envy. She collected four home runs that year from Lionette All-American pitcher Nancy Wellborn, most valuable player at the national tournament.

In 1972, the Saints roster began stabilize with the addition of three rookies who have moved into regular starting roles since. Judy Hoke joined the Saints from the Copperstate Softball League where she had been playing, moving into the Saints outfield. Denny Buchanan was also added to the outfield, a youngster just departing high school, and Lee Ann Easley joined the club from the Las Vegas Belles of the Copperstate League where

she was an infielder.

The schedule included 88 games that year, with the Saints finishing with an impressive 70-18 record and moving on to their seventh straight regional crown. But despite their strong showing throughout the year, hopes were dashed at the nationals when the gals were blitzed in their first two games and dropped from tournament competition.

Six Saints were named to the regional All-Star first team in '72: catcher Linda Spradley (who joined the team in mid-season to act as a temporary replacement for injured catcher Marilyn Rau), Miller, Keith, Mooney, Quijada (now Barbara Thomas following a marriage at that season's start), and Hoke. In addition, the team added four players to the league's All-Star team: Keith, Hoke, Thomas, and shortstop Kurtz.

Again, it was personnel changes that marked 1973, as second baseman Sandy Kelley retired after eight seasons with the team, leaving Rau the only original member of that first Saints team who remains active. That year's newcomers included Georgia Buelow and Cheryl Stice. Buelow, a pitcher/outfielder, had been with the Saints during the 69-71 seasons, but left for a season after suffering a knee injury prior to the start of the '72 season. Stice came to the Saints from Kansas, where she played left field for the Mokane Drifters.

But even more notable, it was the year that Bev Dryer stepped down as coach, turning the reins over to long-time softball player Gerald Stapley and devoting more of her time to her profession. Bev still holds the Saints' franchise, but has found her spare time dwindling as she has assumed a recent role as athletic director for women's sports in the Phoenix Union High School District.

Stapley took the team to two impressive finishes in national competition before departing in 1974.

In '73, the Sun City lasses compiled a 67-13 season record and finished third in the nationals. Their season mark the following year was 66-12 and they moved into a second place national finish, losing to a strong Raybestos Brakettes team who has held the crown every year since 1971. (The Saints had defeated Raybestos 1-0 in the semi-finals the year before)

The Saints marched through the national competition in '74, coming down to the wire to face the Brakettes and only needing one win out of a possible two games to wrap it up. Both games ended in 1-0 decisions, both going into extra innings for the title.

1973 was obviously the year that Paula Miller Noel was coming into her own rite as a standout on the mound, as she pitched her way to a no-hitter against the league powerhouse Lionettes.

It was time for a change of major proportions again in 1975 as Thelma Keith moved into the coaches box, upped the season mark to 76 wins and 13 losses, making it 10 straight regional crowns, and took the team to a fourth place finish at the nationals.

Over the years, there have been a number of factors responsible for bringing the Saints to the pinnacle where they now rest and continue to give them the hopes of becoming the team to bring that national crown back to Arizona after these many years. Since the club is not professional and players receive no pay for their services, there has to be a dedication that keeps them coming back each year.

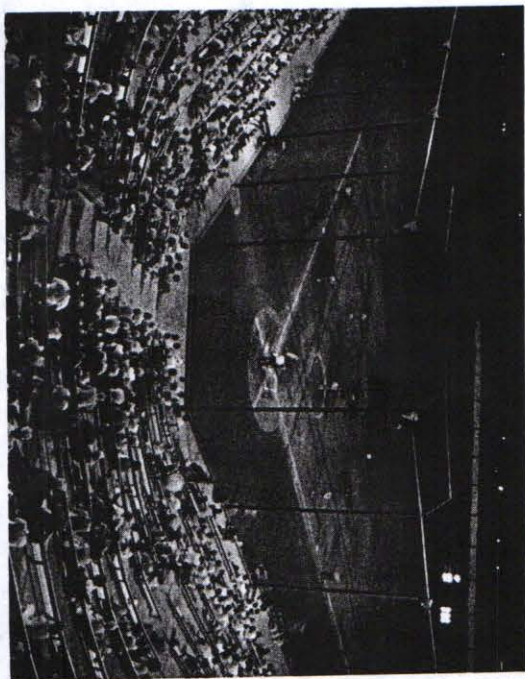
And there is youth. The average age of the players continues to range in the early 20s and the number of youngsters showing up in the spring (as many as 60) to try out for a spot on the Saints' "farm" teams (those teams for girls of a younger age who need to gain experience before moving into the league), are good indicators for the future.

SUN CITY SAINTS TO OPEN APRIL 28 VS. TRENDSETTERS

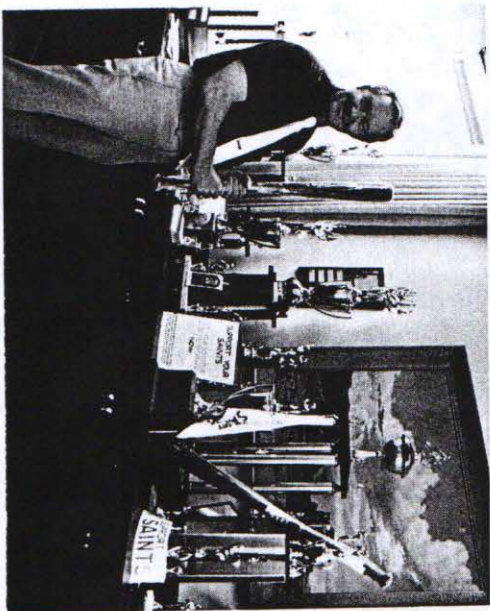
The smiling face of pitcher Paula Noel (right) and the rest of the Sun City Saints will return to Sun City Stadium this month. The Saints, one of the nation's finest women's softball teams, will open their 1979 season at home Saturday, April 28, at 7:30 P.M. against the San Diego Trendsetters. It will be the first of 25 home doubleheaders the Saints will play in Sun City Stadium.

Season tickets, good for all 50 games and priced at \$35, may be obtained from the First National Bank office in Grand Center.





★ SUN CITY SAINTS SUPER ★



Saints keep active with clinic, plans to hype ticket sales

The 14-member Sun City Saints softball team will conduct a clinic from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday at Chaparral School, 3808 W. Joan D'Arc, Phoenix.

The clinic will be used by co-coaches Paula Noel and Lynn Mooney as well as batting coach Marilyn Rau as an opportunity not only to look over their own talent too but to teach, assist and "scout" other area women who someday may wear the Saints uniform.

With the regular-season opener still some six weeks off, the Saints will be making a number of area ap-

pearances in their quest to hype ticket sales while getting in regular workouts.

SUN CITY'S Pacific Coast Women's Softball League entry has high hopes of surpassing its 1977 record when it took third place in the national tournament.



"One of the ways to do that," according to Booster's Club Public Relations Director Larry Shalet (with not too much tongue-in-cheek), "is to stay in existence. And the way to do that," he said, "is to get out and sell the team to the area. Without a solid ticket sale and season-long support, the Saints may well have to cease operation."

Shalet said that Mon-

day's 6:30 p.m. Booster's Club meeting at Melody Restaurant in Grand Shopping Center "is one that should be a must on the schedule of every Saints' fan.

"That meeting will feature plans for a full money-raising campaign," Shalet said.

ALSO TO BE discussed will be the upcoming Sinnerama, scheduled for 2 p.m. April 9, in Sun Bowl.

"We hope to fill the Bowl for this one," Shalet said, indicating that this year's event will include professional entertainment.

Meanwhile, coaches Miss Noel and Miss Mooney, the former a pitcher while the latter plays third base, revealed a roster that includes Lee Ann Easley, second base; leftfielder Linda Coats; shortstop Suzie Gaw; Lisa Clinchy, right field; Deanne Clark, first base; centerfielder Erika Binggeli; pitcher-infielder Anna Binggeli; outfielder Bertha Lozano; pitcher-outfielder Belinda Keyes; infielder Paula Stufflebean, and Miss Rau, a catcher.



Beaming with pride and hope, quartet of Sun City Saints' supporters recently got together at First National Bank at Grand Center for three big reasons: Talk about Monday's very important Booster's Club meeting, accept \$100 promotional fund donation from Lions Mid-Week Club and discuss plans to sell tickets

for upcoming Sinnerama scheduled 2 p.m. April 9, in Sun Bowl. Foursome includes Larry Shalet, left, Booster's Club public relations director, and Rose Schwartz, club treasurer, along with Saints rookies Paula Stufflebean and Anna Binggeli, holding poster publicizing Sinnerama. (News-Sun Photo)

Saints, once homeless, found fame

By PAUL SCHAFFER
Staff Writer

Sun Citians first heard about a homeless women's softball team called the Phoenix Ramblers in a News-Sun article published Feb. 3, 1966.

The team's sponsor of 25 years, Peterson-Brooks-Steiner-Wist Office Supply in Phoenix, had withdrawn when Rambler catcher-manager Dottie Wilkinson retired after the 1965 season. Searching for help, catcher Bev Dryer and outfielder Dee Everhart visited News-Sun publisher Burt Freireich, who offered to help.

To gain a playing field in Sun City, however, the ballclub needed approval of the Del E. Webb Development Co. Devco hesitated at first, so the players went right to Del Webb himself, who okayed the idea.

DEVCO then offered to build a playing field if it looked as though Sun City residents would support the idea. The Sun City Merchants Association, with Freireich's support, agreed to give \$3,000 to help the team in its first year.

A coupon included with that first News-Sun story asked residents to check either "I would like to see the Ramblers play in Sun City and would support them with my paid attendance" or "I would not

like to have a girls' softball team playing in Sun City."

GIVEN only five days to answer, Sun Citians responded with an overwhelming 148-7 "yes" vote.

The Webb company okayed construction of a field in February on a site now filled by the Sunowner restaurant.

THE TEAM'S first league opponent would be, of course, the Orange Lionettes—the 1965 national champions.

Practice for that first season was underway when the sponsoring Sun City Merchants Association announced the team would be the "Sun City Saints." The Merchants continued to support the team for the 1967 and 1968 seasons, after which the Saints became self-supporting as they are today.

The stadium, seating 1,000 and including an electronic scoreboard, field lights, and public address system, was constructed in time for the home season opener against the Tucson Raindrops May 7-8, 1966.

THERE were a few names which are still familiar on that first Saints' roster: Beverly Dryer, outfielder; Thelma Keith, first base, and Marilyn Rau—listed then as a utility infielder and outfielder.

Others included Kay Williamson, catcher-outfielder; Lou Kostielney,

pitcher; Lela Burns, pitcher-outfielder; Sandy Kelley, second base; Rosie Andrade, shortstop; Roxana "Roxy" Craig, third base; Shirley Marshall, pitcher; Dee Everhart, Betty McIlvain, Connie Mullan, and Betty Gibbs, all outfielders.

Jim Craig, Roxy's husband, was the first coach.

ABOUT 1,300 curious Sun Citians turned out that first weekend to see the Saints topple Tucson 5-1 and 3-2.

Speaking of familiar names, four members of the Orange Lionettes' squad—labeled the "titans of girls' softball" in pre-game publicity—were catcher Nancy Ito, shortstop Carol Spanks, pitcher Joan Joyce, and first basemen Shirley Topley.

It's always been tough for the Saints to beat Orange, but it was a phenomenal achievement in that first league weekend when the Saints shut out the defending national champs twice, 1-0 and 3-0.

BEGINNING a time-honored tradition, the Lionettes vented their frustrations on the Saints two weeks later by winning two 1-0 league games and a 3-0 exhibition contest against Sun City.

The Saints finished the '66 season with a 9-15 PCWSL record—due mainly to lack of success against

Orange—but they qualified for a national tournament berth at Orlando, Fla., by winning the Arizona-New Mexico regional tourney.

Two quick losses, including a 2-1, 12th inning heartbreaker, eliminated the squad from contention.

RIGHT from the start, the Saints also got involved in Sun City social life. One of their first events was a community strawberry festival, and they had a float in the October 1966 Western Days parade.

In November, it was announced some Class AA ball—one step below the Saints—would be played during the winter in Sun City, with the Phoenix Westerners to be considered the unofficial home team. A storm of protest followed.

Already the Saints had dedicated followers, and it seemed to them—although it wasn't true—that a move was on to replace the Saints with the Westerners. That issue was settled when the merchants agreed to sponsor the Saints in 1967.

In 1969 Marilyn Rau, who made headlines earlier in her career as the youngest Saint, converted to catcher.

Bev Dryer had retired as a player and had taken over the coaching chores by this time.

IN 1970 the Saints gained considerably when pitcher Billie Harris, the MVP in

the 1969 national tourney, joined the squad.

Paula Noel, today's two-time All-American pitcher for the Saints, then was playing just about everywhere except the mound. She was seen at second base and at least two outfield positions, even behind the plate.

In 1971 Noel—still Paula Miller—started pitching for the Arizona State University women's softball team and decided to try it with the Saints.

AFTER the 1970 season, the Webb company informed the Saints it wanted to develop the stadium site and instead would be building a new stadium at 111th and Grand Avenues.

But delay after delay occurred, in construction, so for the first several months of that season the Saints were forced to play home games at Peoria High School. Not until July 10, 1971, did the Saints play their first game in what now is considered by far the finest home park for any women's softball team in the country.

Bev Dryer retired as coach after the 1972 season, although she retained the team's franchise, turning over the leadership to Gerald Stapley who still holds it today.

Saints lose benefit game, but 'win'

By PAUL SCHAFER
Staff Writer

The scoreboard showed a 2-0 victory for Page's Sun City Raiders Saturday night in their exhibition contest with the Sun City Saints.

But the Saints were the real winners.

The Sun City gals collected about \$4,700 in gate receipts alone to give them a big boost toward making their playing tour of South Africa and Rhodesia a reality.

ON THAT tour, scheduled for Jan. 26-Feb. 16, the Saints not only will play more than 20 games in two weeks, but will give instructional clinics to young South African softballers all along the tour route.

While the Saints were adding to their financial coffers, the Raiders also were pleased to benefit from the large crowd of 3,321. It's likely many

had never seen the men's brand of softball before: Except for the International Softball Congress world tournament—which the Raiders won—they played to sparse Sun City crowds all summer.

U.S. Rep. Sam Steiger—who donated \$1,500 to the Saints' cause—got the "fun" game off to an appropriate start when he came in as the Saints' "starting pitcher."

HIS FIRST pitch was called a ball. Since it bounced off the upper part of the backstop, neither the umpire nor the fans thought there was much room for disagreement, but there is no accounting for temperamental pitchers.

The representative threw his glove to the ground in disgust but before further damage could be done coach Gerald Stapley hurried to the mound and replaced him with Gil Aragon.

THAT WAS the only noticeably different thing about the game; to offset the strength factor, the Raiders' battery of Aragon and Butch Chambers played for the Saints, while three Saints pitchers and Linda Spradley played for the Raiders.

The Raiders—94-15 this year and the winners of many tournament championships—earned applause from the crowd for volunteering their time to help the Saints. But the gals were sentimental favorites all the way.

No one knew quite what to expect once the game was underway; the fans were unusually quiet, as if all were holding their breaths. Would the Raiders run away with it? Would the Saints be able to eke out a victory?

NEITHER proved to be true, as the game was highly competitive. There was little on-field clowning, too, as the

two champion squads were eager to prove their skills.

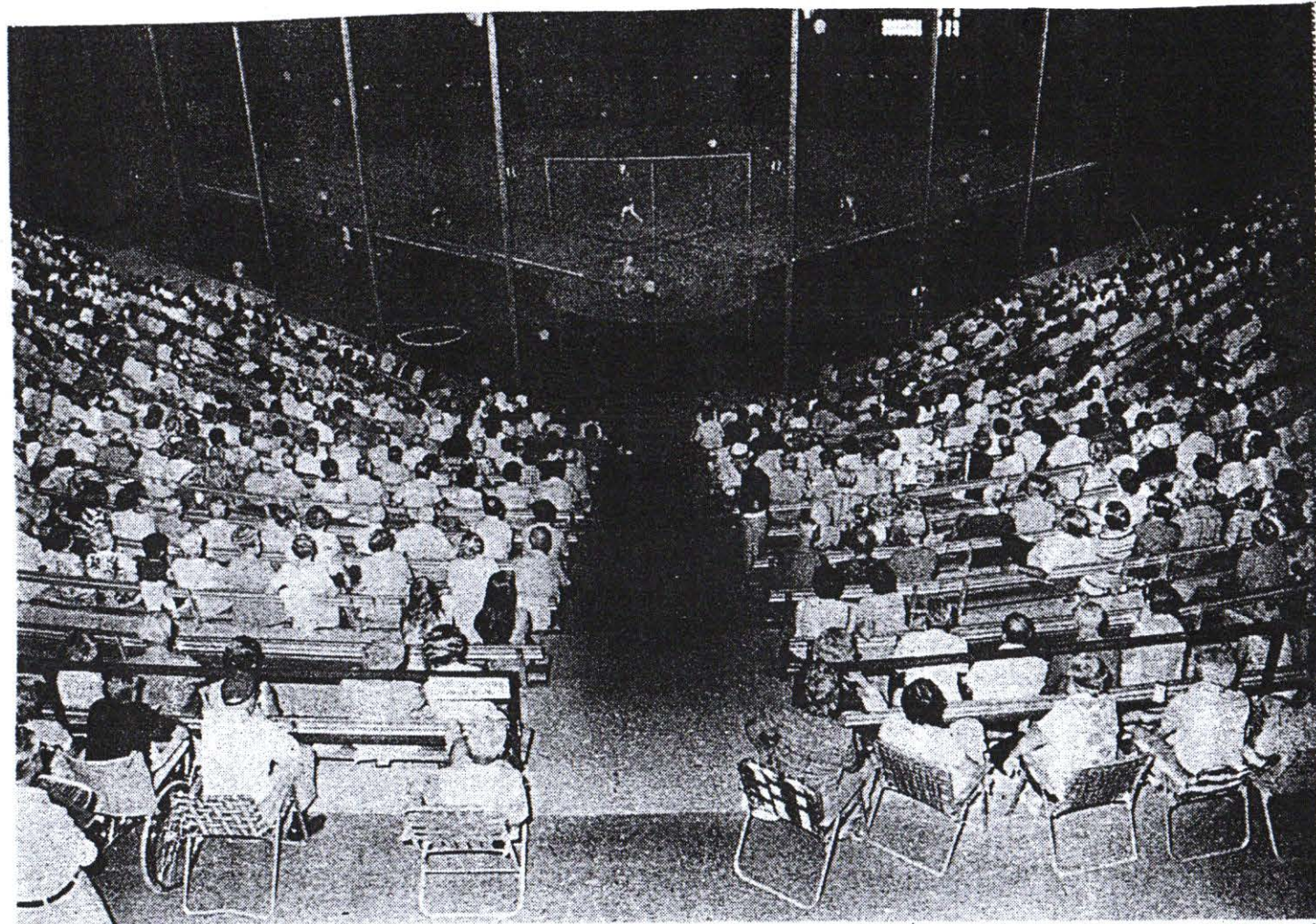
Donations are starting to come in now for the Saints. Already money has been received from the Organ Club, the Thunderbird Bank, Trans-World Airlines and Phillips Petroleum. But the Saints are still a long way from their goal.

"WE MADE considerable progress, but we need to go some more," said Dr. Adam Sauerbrun, who handled arrangements for Saturday's game.

He pointed out that if the Saints' financial resources are completely wiped out by the South Africa trip, the Saints still need traveling money for next year—including the big expense of making the national tournament.

So, fundraising projects go on. The latest plan is a picnic to be held somewhere in Sun City Nov. 3, details to be announced later.

(over)



Action in Saints-Raiders benefit game Saturday absorbed crowd of more than 3,000 from start to finish, raised \$4,700 toward Saints' Africa trip in January. For story, picture coverage of game, see 1B) (News-Sun Photo)

SUN CITY CITIZEN

SEPTEMBER 4, 1974



NATIONAL RUNNERS-UP— The Sun City Saints finished second in the Women's National Fast-Pitch Softball Tournament. Standing (from left) are Billie Harris, Lois Elkington, Marilyn Rau, Paula Noel, Lynn Mooney,

Georgia Buelow, Ginger Kurtz, Cheryl Stice and coach Gerald Stapley. Kneeling (from left) are Denny Buchanan, Linda Spradley, Judy Hoke, batgirl Stephanie Hedrick, Becky Rice, Lee Ann Easley and Hilde Barnett.

Saints Finish Second Nationally

Joan Joyce of the Raybestos Brakettes put the brakes on the Sun City Saints' march toward the Women's National Fast-Pitch Softball title in Orlando, Fla., Saturday night.

The All-American pitcher for the Stratford, Conn., squad shut out the Saints by identical 1-0 scores in a pair of extra-

inning games in the finals, giving Raybestos the national crown.

Sun City had swept unscathed through its first four tourney games to emerge as the winners' bracket champion. Raybestos battled back through the losers' bracket to earn a shot at the Saints in the finals of the double-elimination tournament.

Joyce fanned 23 Saints in the first game. Sun City pitcher Paula Noel battled Joyce on even terms until the bottom of the 15th inning when Irene Shay tripled and scored on Kathy Elliott's single.

In the title game, Joyce and Noel dueled again until the bottom of the 10th when Elliott tripled and was singled in by Peggy Kellers. Joyce struck out 13 Sun City batters.

The Saints, who

finished with a 66-12 overall record, earned a chance at the national title by winning the Cactus Regional Tournament in Sun City in August.

Sun City placed Denny Buchanan (outfield),

Noel (pitcher) and Linda Spradley (catcher) on the All-America first team. Selected for the second team were Lee Ann Easley (second base), Lynn Mooney (third base and Marilyn Rau (first base).

Saints Booster Club Organized

A Sun City Saints Booster Club has been organized with all proceeds from their campaign for membership going toward financing the Saints' trip to South Africa and Rhodesia.

Jack Harris of Sun City will head the Booster Club. Lifetime membership to the group will be \$10.

The Saints will play 28 games in 21 days on their tour of South Africa and Rhodesia next spring.

The team has just returned from the Women's Fast-Pitch Softball Tournament in Orlando, Fla.

Anyone who wishes to join the Sun City Saints Booster Club should send a check for \$10, payable to "Sun City Saints," to either:

Lynn Mooney, 2002 W. Glendale Ave. No. 17A, Phoenix, AZ. 85015 or

First National Bank, P.O. Box 248, Sun City, AZ. 85351.

Saints take 3rd in nationals

By BURT FREIREICH
STRATFORD, Conn.—
Sun City's Saints walked off
with a mountainous third-
place trophy, first-team all-
American honors for left
fielder Barbara Thomas and
catcher Marilyn Rau, and a
second-team all-American
berth for pitcher Paula Noel

in Friday's closing
ceremonies of the Amateur
Softball Association
national tourney.

But it took all those honors
to make up—partially, at
least—for the bitter
disappointment of a 6-0 loss
Thursday to the Raybestos
Brakettes of Stratford,

marking the season's final
action for the Sun City crew
which had provided the No.
1 shocker of the tournament.

Raybestos, seeking its
third straight national title,
was dumped into the
tournament's losers'
bracket by the Saints

Tuesday, 1-0. But they got
their vengeance and went on
to dump the Santa Clara,
Calif., Laurels by 1-0 and 2-0
scores Friday to win a
record 10th championship.

THE SAINTS' highest
previous finish in a national
tournament was fifth, and
they never before in their
eight-year history had
placed a player on any all-
American team. So there
was more than enough to
cheer about.

After upsetting Raybestos
Tuesday, the Saints were
dropped unceremoniously
into the losers' bracket by
Santa Clara, 1-0 in 11 in-
nings, giving them what
proved to be an un-
surmountable chore—the
need for a second win over
the Brakettes and their
pitching-batting superstar,
Joan Joyce.

Joyce had come within a
hair of hurling a perfect
game in their first meeting,
but a Thomas triple to right

and a Rau single to the fence
in left-center shocked her
and her mates. Joyce, on
her way to the most
valuable player award,
made sure Thursday—she
no-hit the Saints in an
impressive win.

NOEL KEPT the
Brakettes at bay for five
innings Thursday, then
suffered her only really
disastrous inning of a long
season in which she hurled
about 70 games. Raybestos
got to her for seven hits and
six runs, and that was that.

The Saints had the game's
first scoring chance. After
two outs in the first, Lynn
Mooney reached when the
first baseman dropped
shortstop Sharron Backus'
throw. Then Rau struck out,
but the catcher dropped the
third strike and overthrew a
lob over Marilyn's head
which went for the inning's
second error. Thelma
Keith's pop to first ended the
only Sun City threat.

OVER



Saints first baseman Thelma Keith brought national softball tourney third place trophy to News-Sun office soon after arrival home Saturday. Four-foot high symbol of Saints' highest finish ever can be seen in News-Sun front office.

(News-Sun Photo)

'SAINTS' COME MARCHING IN

Contest Provides Name For Gal Softball Team

SUN CITY ARIZ
News-Sun
March 1966

The former PBSW Ramblers girls softball team will open its 1966 campaign in its new Sun City ballpark with a new name -- the Sun City Saints.

More than 800 suggestions were submitted by Sun Citizens in a "name - the - team" contest, and a panel of three team members Saturday selected the name submitted by C. E. Kingsley of Sun City. His prizes will be a free season pass and \$25 in merchandise certificates from the club's sponsoring Sun City Merchants Association.

The team played 34 seasons of big - league softball in Phoenix under the Ramblers name,

winning two national championships. Manager Jim Craig said the Saints will open Pacific Coast League action May 21 at Sun City against the national champion Orange (Calif.) Lionettes.

In addition to a 12 - game home season against league opponents, the girls will host other AAA teams from the Western states in exhibition contests.

The Saints will follow up league play with a regional tourney against other Arizona - New Mexico teams, for the right to meet 15 other regional winners in the national championship tourney Aug. 20 - 27 in Orlando, Fla. The regional tourney has been set tentatively for the new \$17,000 Sun City park, which is being provided without charge by the Del E. Webb Development Co.



News-Sun March 1966

THAT'S NOT PLAY MONEY being dropped into cap held by C.E. Kingsley of 11802 Thunderbird Rd. Glen Davis, Sun City Merchants Association president, is making presentation of 25 \$1 merchandise certificates redeemable by any member merchant as award for Kingsley's submission of winning entry in Sun City girls softball team naming contest. Team will be called Saints.

SUN CITY—YOUNGTOWN NEWS-SUN

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1966

Saints Get Green Light For 1967 Campaign Here

The Sun City Merchants Association will sponsor the Sun City Saints' participation in the Class AAA Pacific Coast Women's Softball League again next summer.

Official action was taken by the merchants at their monthly meeting Tuesday.

The Saints, who had been a major Valley sports attraction for a quarter-century as the Phoenix Ramblers, were adopted by the merchants association last spring and drew a very favorable response from Sun City - Youngtown fans after the Del E. Webb Development Co. erected a stadium for them on Grand Avenue.

The merchants voted approval of an agreement to provide funds for the Saints' operation, which drew an enthusiastic comment from team manager Beverly Dryer. "We owe a great deal to the merchants and the many fans who gave us their loyalty last season. Even though we're not 50, we feel that Sun City is our home, and we're looking forward to the 1967 season."

She announced that the Saints plan to make season tickets a-

available to local residents for 1967 home games.

"The merchants association is delighted that the Saints once again will be representing our community in 1967," said association president Glen Davis.

Davis said the sponsorship funds will be used to buy new uniforms, pay league and tournament fees, and provide travel funds for Saints representatives to attend a league scheduling meeting on the West Coast in January.

Attending the meeting were Miss Dryer, Saints coach Ford Hoffman, and players Betty McIlvain, Thelma Keith, and Kay Williamson.

Miss Dryer, a Phoenix high school teacher who was the Saints' first - string catcher in 1966, has assumed the managerial reins from Jim Craig. Craig's wife, Roxanne, was the Saints' third baseman last season.

Miss Dryer said Pacific Coast League opponents again will include the Fresno Rockets, Orange Lionettes, and Buena Park Gold Sox plus "there is also a possibility that other California

teams will be joining the circuit."

She said the Saints will begin regular practice sessions in February and in the meantime "we'll be on the lookout for players to strengthen our 1967 roster."



Heroines of the Saints' 29-inning marathon victory over the Wichita Arrows in last weekend's Houston Tournament were Shawn Ritchey, left, and Michelle Thomas. Ritchey, better known as a pitcher, played the outfield in the game that went 7 hours 15 minutes and drove in all four Saint runs in the 4-3 win—two in the 25th and the two winners in the 29th. Michelle hurled all 29 innings to gain the pitching triumph.

PHOENIX, ARIZONA
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IT'LL BE THEIR PARK SOON

Members of new Sun City Saints softball team are willing to do a little weeding to help prepare their new park site, to be built for them at 108th Avenue and Grand by Del Webb Development Co. From left are Roxy Craig, Rosie Andrade and Pat Conaway. Team is reorganizing from players formerly with disbanded PBSW Ramblers of Phoenix. New name was suggested by C. E. Kingsley of 11802 Thunderbird Road, Sun City, who received season pass and other contest awards.