

HISTORY

The Leslie Sun City Pom Pom Squad, organized in April 1979, first performed at the local Sun City Saints softball games. It was hoped their appearances would increase attendance.

The POMS evolved from classes taught by Corinne and Roy Leslie, a professional dance team for more than 50 years. The POMS come from all walks of life -- teachers, secretaries, business executives, and housewives -- with no previous dancing experience. The POMS became an adept group of performers under the expert instruction and guidance of the Leslie's.

In the spring of 1979, the News Sun ran a story on the group and released it to the Associated Press. In June of 1979, NBC-TV's "Real People" came to film the group. This resulted in national and even international recognition. A Tokyo friend sent a picture and clipping that had appeared in a Tokyo newspaper.

On December 15, 1979, the Pom Pom girls marched in front of the 100-foot long Sun City - Sun City West float leading the Fiesta Bowl Parade.

The 1980's continued their success in numerous appearances at conventions, schools, parades, rest homes, fund drives, charity shows, sporting events, etc., etc.

In 1984, the POMS were photographed by Del Webb photographer, Ken Casley, for a calendar patterned after the Dallas cheerleader's calendar. About 25,000 were printed and sold with the proceeds going to the group's travel expenses.

A highlight of the group's travels came in 1985 when the group was asked to perform at the annual fundraiser for the National Fitness Foundation in New York City. Here they met and were photographed with the First Lady, Nancy Reagan.

In December 1987, the POMS were sponsored by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Arizona. This sponsorship has meant a great deal as it helps pay for the beautiful costumes they now wear, and their travel expenses.

Over the years, the POM squad advanced in proficiency and gained experience in stage performance through many long hours of hard work in twice weekly rehearsal sessions.

They have continued their success to this day as evidenced by the attached sheet of their many activities.

MAJOR APPEARANCES BY POMS - UNITED STATES

ABC's Good Morning America	Edison Electric Convention
American Business Women of America	David Letterman TV Show (CBS)
American Farm Federation	Martin Luther King Celebration
American Heart Association	Maury Povich TV Show
Amer. Soc. of Medicine & Surgery	Milwaukee Festival of Parades
Amer. Veterans' State Convention	Muscular Dystrophy Telethon
Annheuser-Busch TV Paid Commercial	NBC Sunday Night TV News
Arizona State University	NBC Weekend Today TV Show
Blue Cross/Blue Shield (AZ) Convention	Nissan Auto TV Paid Commercial
Blue Cross/Blue Shield TV Paid Commercial. Airing	Northern Arizona University
Bob Hope Show (Sun City, AZ)	Nutra Sweet TV Paid Commercial
Carol Lawrence "Active Living" TV	Oak Park Arms Ret. Community (IL)
CBS Radio Super Bowl Tailgate Party	Parada del Sol Scottsdale Jaycees Par.
Channel 45 TV Phoenix 1/2 Hr. Special	Phoenix Cardinals Football Halftime
Channel 3 TV Promo-Medicare Blue	President's Council on Physical Fitness - New York
CNN TV News	Pro-Football Legends
Columbus Day 500 Anniversary Parade	Real People TV Show
Coor's Light Biathalon	Santa Rosa Health Care Cen. San Antonio
Dallas Cowboys Victory Party (Texas)	Southwest Airlines
Del Webb Palm Springs Opening - CA	Thanksgiving Day Parade (Houston, TX)
Del Webb Summerlin Opening - Las Vegas	Timber Wolves 49th Army Reunion
Delta Airlines Floral Parade & Shows (Portland, Oregon)	Veterans' Day Parade
Fiesta Bowl Golf Challenge	VFW State Convention
Fiesta Bowl Parade - Arizona	Vicki! - TV Show (NBC)
Geraldo TV Show	Wickenburg Gold Rush Days Parade
Hawthorne Lakes Rec. Community (IL)	Women's Arizona Family Expo
HBO "Never Say Die"	Yarnell Daze Parade - Arizona
Int. Drill Team Pageant - Los Angeles	You Bet Your Life - NBC
Jon Stewart TV Show	Zone 1-7 Rotary Institute

MAJOR APPEARANCES BY POMS - FOREIGN COUNTRIES

CANADA, Alberta - Calgary Stampede	CHILE - Television Nacional De
CANADA, Queen Victoria Birthday Parade	FRANCE - M. Drucker TV Show - Paris
	JAPAN - Nippon TV Show

MAJOR PUBLICATIONS FEATURING POMS

American Health Magazine	New York Sunday Times
Arizona Highways	Phoenix Republic/Gazette
Arizona News	Readers Digest Health Book (1992)
Bristol-Myers 1988 Annual Report	Ripley's Believe It or Not
Cheer Magazine	Seattle News
Denver Post	Self Magazine
Hope Magazine	Smithsonian Magazine
Junior Sports Illustrated	Sports Illustrated
Life Magazine	Sun Life Magazine
Modern Maturity	Westerner Club Magazine
National Geographic	Women's World Geographic

MAJOR PUBLICATIONS - FOREIGN COUNTRIES

AUSTRALIA - Marie Claire	GERMANY - G.E.O. - Hamburg
BRITAIN - Cheerleading Journal	GERMANY - Die Zwi, Munich
CANADA - Edmonton Journal	GERMANY - Das Magazine Publication
CANADA - Montreal Gazette	ITALY - Oggi, Milan
ENGLAND - London Sunday Express	JAPAN - Tokyo News
FRANCE - Paris Le Figure	SWITZERLAND - Illustre

NOTE: POMS Interviewed (and/or) filmed by people from: Denmark, England, Germany and Japan.

SUN CITY POMS - PERFORMANCES
 SEPTEMBER 1997 THROUGH MAY 1998

1997

- | | | |
|-----------|----|---|
| September | 12 | Blue Cross/Blue Shield National Convention at the Sheraton Crescent Hotel |
| | 24 | National Association of Nurses - Doubletree Inn, Scottsdale |
| | 25 | Sun Grove Resort Village |
| October | 14 | Southwest Airlines Health Fair |
| | 20 | Sun City Players at Mountain View |
| | 25 | Long Haven Mobil Home Park |
| | 29 | Arizona State Fair Senior Day |
| November | 1 | Grand Old West Fest Variety Show at the Sun Bowl |
| | 3 | Sun City Handicapables Club at Fairway Recreation Center |
| | 16 | Arizona State Miners Picnic at Mountain Park |
| | 19 | Blue Cross/Blue Shield for Board Members at the Biltmore |
| December | 12 | Senior Expo in the ballroom at the Phoenix Convention Center |
| | 15 | Samaritan Wendy Paine O'Brien Center |
| | 30 | Fiesta Bowl Parade, Central Avenue, Phoenix |

1998

- | | | |
|----------|----|--|
| January | 20 | Heard Museum Senior Day, Phoenix |
| February | 7 | Buckeye Valley Pioneer Parade, Buckeye, AZ (won a ribbon) |
| | 7 | Arizona Builder's Alliance, Phoenix |
| | 9 | Camelot Gardens Retirement Home, Peoria |
| | 14 | 50th Annual Gold Rush Days Parade, Wickenburg (won leather plaque) |
| | 17 | Heard Museum Senior Day, Phoenix |
| | 28 | Phoenix Orthopedics Open House, Sun City |
| March | 6 | 3rd Annual Health & Beauty Fair, Sundome Center, Sun City West |
| | 17 | Heard Museum Senior Day, Phoenix |
| | 21 | Sundial Fun Fair, Sun City Recreation Center |
| | 28 | Bell Fun Fair, Sun City Recreation Center |

SUN CITY POMS - PERFORMANCES

Page 2

1998

- April 1 Sun Cities Senior Softball Spring Banquet, Palm Ridge, SCW
3 Granite Gate Retirement Center, Prescott, Arizona
4 Parade - Tolleson, AZ - Whoopee Daze
11 Marinette Fun Fair, Sun City Recreation Center
- May 2 Ageless Heroes, Sponsored by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Az -
Arizona Biltmore Hotel, Phoenix
30 Rally in the Valley - Patriot's Square, Phoenix, Arizona

POM'S SPECIAL EVENTS

1997 - 1998

- September Received a copy of Marie Claire magazine from Australia where we had a 2 page colored picture of the group and a write-up as part of an article on the Sun Cities.
- Received a copy of The Quarterly Journal of British Cheerleading. It contained a 2 page article and a picture of the Poms with Ronald McDonald.
- October 13 Japanese Women's Dance Group asked to attend our rehearsal. They had modeled their group after our group. Foofie had corresponded with their leader. We had a retirement luncheon for Foofie at Union Hills Country Club and invited the Japanese group.
- November 10 Photo shoot for pictures to be put in new brochures and postcards. Pictures taken at the Sun Bowl by a Blue Cross/Blue Shield photographer.
- December 10 Sun City Poms featured in Sun Life Magazine with picture and article explaining the history of the Poms and detailing their current activities.
- 12 Poms' Christmas Party at Union Hills Country Club.
- January 13- 6 Poms invited to San Antonia for the Santa Rosa Health
14 Care Center opening. They were interviewed on 6 radio stations and 2 television stations. The Poms were also featured in 2 newspaper articles.
- March Received a video tape from the Japanese Dance Group. It was a tape of their day with the Sun City Poms in October.
- April 7 19th Anniversary Luncheon - Palmbrook Country Club.

VF IC PONS



SUN CITY POMS Phoenix

**“You can be a
member of the
club right away.”**

—Greta Paulsen



Sun City Poms boasts 28 members with an average age of 71. Most perform in a marching troupe, with a smaller number in a group that does acrobatics, including human pyramids and splits. The Poms practice four times per week, totaling nearly 10 hours, and perform at venues ranging from high school auditoriums to the Fiesta Bowl parade.

VF IC POMS

Pompon squad deserves more than just 3 cheers

By Sue Ellen Christian

Watching Lucile Tabbert, 68, shimmy in her red sequined leotard, kick her white go-go boots toward the ceiling and shake her hips—both of which have been replaced with artificial ones—is pretty amazing.

But heck, the retired paralegal is considered a spring chicken among the Sun City Poms, a pompon and dance troupe of women from Sun City, Ariz. After all, the troupe's average age is 74.

The Sun City Poms were in the Chicago area this weekend, performing at halftime of the Oak Park High School football game, for their peers at the Oak Park Arms retirement community and aboard the Spirit of Chicago cruise ship.

They call themselves "girls" and wear clinging costumes with swinging tassles. Some do splits—all the way to the floor. One does cartwheels. Others stand on their heads or climb to the top of human pyramids.

The 16 women in the troupe, which was founded 12 years ago,

range in age from 65 to 90, and they want to send a message to their audiences.

"Stay active as long as you can," said 80-year-old Gene Sonnenleiter, the troupe's choreographer and a gymnast on the 1936 U.S. Olympic team.

The fact that Sonnenleiter has two artificial knees just goes to show that "no matter what problems you have physically, if you have the proper attitude, you can overcome it," she says.

The women practice twice a week for three hours at a time, and many play golf, walk or swim regularly. They are former bankers, teachers and bookkeepers who live at the Sun City retirement community and, in the interest of keeping fit, joined the troupe, which has 50 performances nationwide each year.

Their performance Sunday inspired some passengers aboard the cruise ship.

"First thing Monday morning, I'm going to sign up at a gym, no doubt about it," said Donna Foutz of Chicago, who just turned 50.

Chicago Tribune

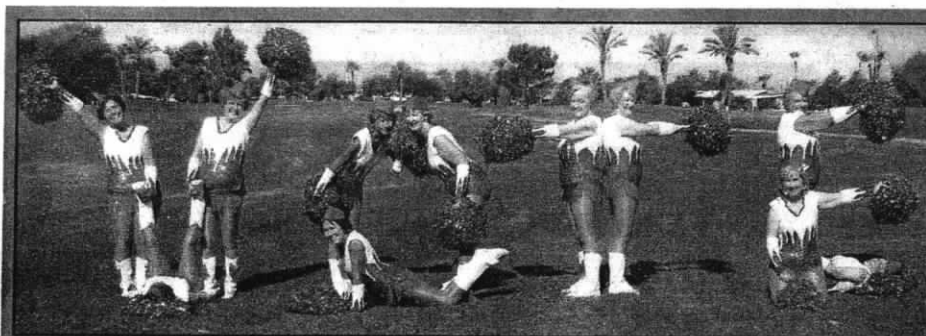


The Sun City Poms, a pompon and dance troupe of women from Sun City, Ariz., perform Sunday on the Spirit of Chicago cruise ship. The squad's average age is 74.

Tribune photo by Jim Prisching

Foutz and about 100 other passengers watched the women prance around the ship's dining room, shaking their pompons to "If They Could See Me Now." "Someone is not going to get their afghan this year," said Foutz, who is a billing coordinator for Lake Forest Hospital.

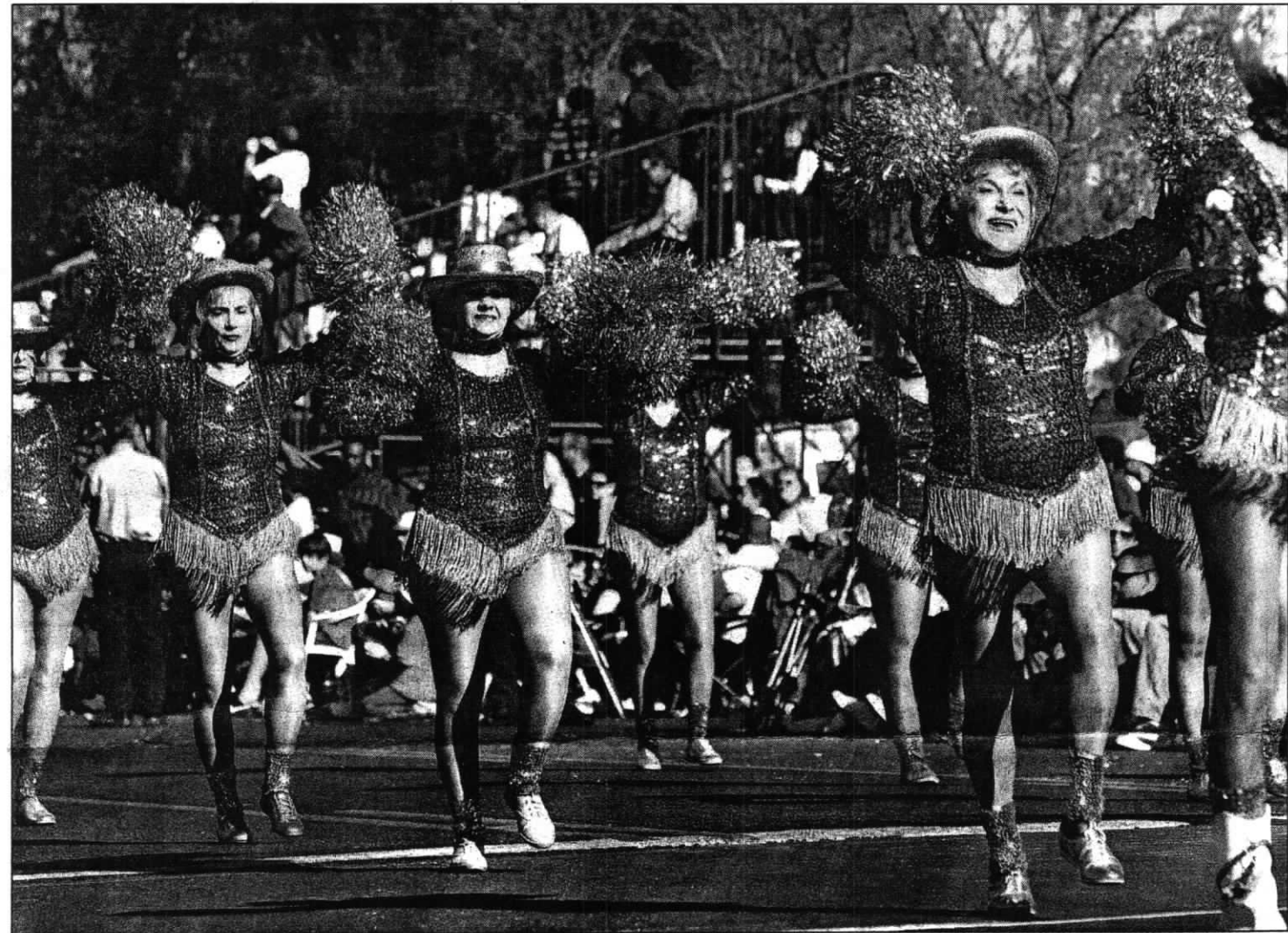
Sunday Nov 3, 1991



Get out and vote

A photographer from AARP photographed the Sun City Poms Aug. 26. The Poms spell out vote, as a message for everyone. The Poms will be featured in a future publication for AARP. Standing, from left, are Sue Randall, Jolene Wolzen, Lois Strong, Penny Matsler, Shirley Hoffmann, Tommie Sebring and Louise DeStories. On the ground, from left, are Karen Miles, Maggie Thomas, Roz Myers and Pat Weber. Call 602-392-4242.

Fiesta Bowl Parade lifts spirits



DEIRDRE HAMILL/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Sun City Poms of Arizona perform during the Fort McDowell Fiesta Bowl Parade on Saturday in Phoenix. The 39th annual parade featured an eclectic mix of local groups, including Fighter Country Partnership from Luke Air Force Base and Arizona Twirling Athletes.

Thousands watch, cheer diverse participants

By **Connie Cone Sexton**
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Donna Lawson called it a “fresh beginning” for the decade. Cheryl Nakai was grateful for the emotional lift. And Mike Stallard deemed it an example of great community spirit.

The three were among the thousands who gathered Saturday along central Phoenix streets to watch the 39th annual Fort McDowell Fiesta Bowl Parade.

For Lawson, the parade was a matter of tradition. For years, fellow family members have cheered and clapped the parade participants along, calling out good wishes for the new year. Saturday was no different, as four generations of the family hunkered down at about the midpoint of the 1.8-mile parade as they waited for just over 100 groups to march past.

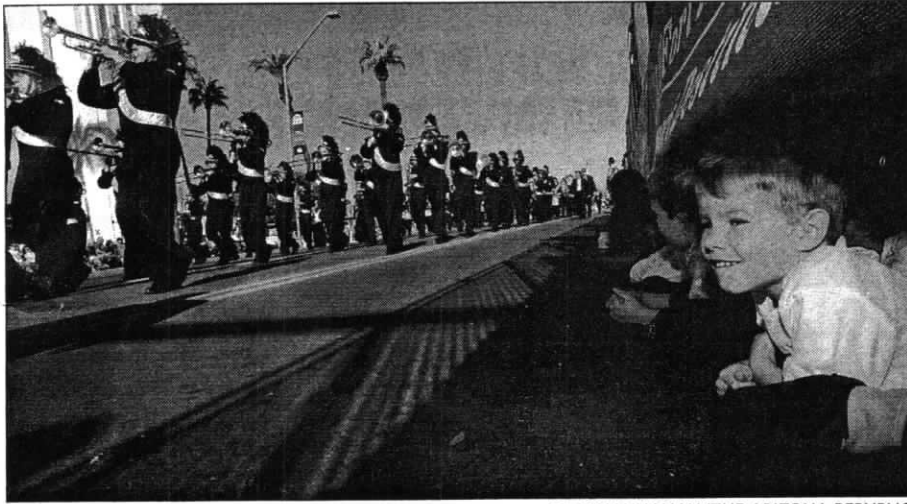
Lawson’s daughter, Tara, 30, spiritedly

See **PARADE** Page B2



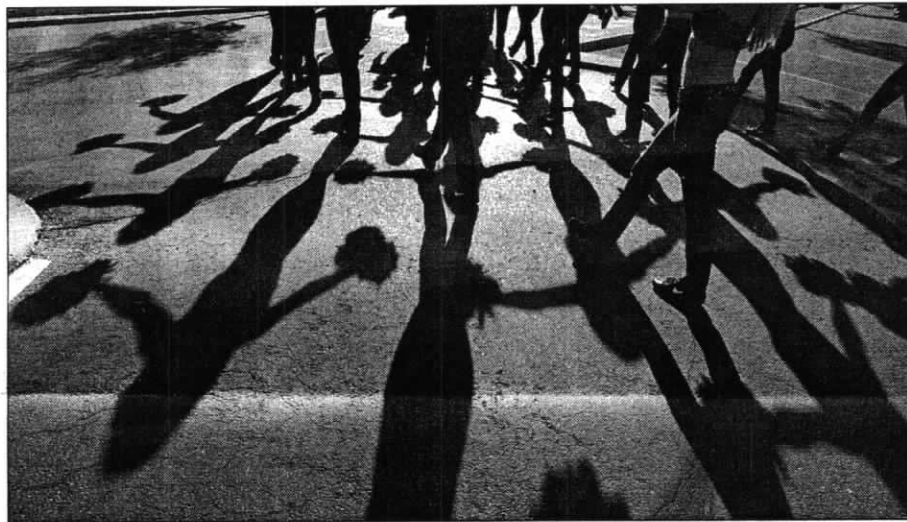
PAT SHANNAHAN/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Kittanna O’Connor marches with Caribbean Zone, one of about 100 groups in the parade.



PAT SHANNAHAN/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Andrew Logan, 4, of Phoenix, pokes out from under the bleachers while watching the Fort McDowell Fiesta Bowl Parade move along Central Avenue on Saturday.



DEIRDRE HAMILL/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Texas Christian University cheerleaders perform during the 1.8-mile Fiesta Bowl Parade. TCU and Boise State are competing in Monday's Fiesta Bowl.

Fiesta Bowl Parade lifts spirits in Valley

PARADE

Continued from B1

whooped and hollered, shooting her hands into the air.

"I've been coming to this since I was a little girl," she said.

The parade theme, "Spirit of the Southwest," featured a diverse mix of local groups, including Desert West Dance Academy, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation and Ballet Folklorico Alegria. The Arizona Twirling Athletes spun and tossed their batons high in the sky, yielding a burst of applause from the sidelines.

The parade, which started at 11 a.m. at Central Avenue and Bethany Home Road, featured professional wrestler and actor John Cena as the grand marshal. Scottsdale native Chelsea Staub served as honorary grand marshal. Staub plays Stella Malone on the Disney TV show "Jonas."

This was Nakai's first Fiesta Bowl parade. Her mother, Etta, came down from her home on the Navajo reservation in northern Arizona and encouraged her to attend.

"I'm really enjoying the bands," Nakai said. "The music gets you all excited and makes you want to dance."

Stallard came to see daughter, 18-

year-old Sarah, walk by as a member of the Texas Christian University cheerleaders. TCU and Boise State are competing in Monday's Fiesta Bowl. Stallard, his wife, Katie, and daughter Elizabeth, came to the Valley from their home in Connecticut.

"Parades give you such a sense of community," he said. "Sometimes people feel so isolated, but being together like this shows you can get through the difficult times in life."

One of the most moving moments of the parade came as the Fighter Country Partnership from Luke Air Force Base neatly walked the parade path. Participants that had been sitting jumped to their feet, putting hands to hearts, with some people calling out appreciation for their military service.

Erika Pumphrey, director of sales for the Fiesta Bowl event, said clear weather played a role in the strong turnout, as well as interest in Boise State and Texas Christian University.

Stephen Przecioski, 7, ate peanut butter and jelly as he sat with his father, Neal, 31. Stephen nodded when asked if he was having a good time.

His father smiled in appreciation. "This parade is just something that's an all-American thing to do," Neal said.

Sun City POMS Alumni Still Friends – Still Having Fun!

By Cherie Lee

Still vibrant and vivacious, the Sun City Pom Poms Alumni recently gathered for a luncheon. Friendship gleamed and sparkled from their eyes as smiles graced their faces. Those friendships are so strong that Michelle, a liaison/representative from their sponsor, Blue Cross® Blue Shield®, also attends even though the 15-year sponsorship has ended.

Michelle giggled and said, "I love their friendships and I don't even have to bring a pen that lights up." Then, she handed out light-up ballpoint pens to everyone, including this author as the members chuckled.

These former internationally famous Sun City Pom Poms now consist of 30 members ranging in age from 68 to 93 who gather four times per year to stay-in-touch and reminisce.

"However, even though they

are retired from dancing and acrobatics, last year, some stepped out of retirement, put on dancing shoes, built pyramids, preformed headstands, and delighted a local church crowd with their famous Pom Routine," said Joan a former director for the Poms.

Gloria said, "I loved the dancing, and the relationship within the Poms. We had lots of fun. I liked being on top of a pyramid."

First Pom MC, Glenn, remembers when they had 50 shows in a nine-month time span and practiced two times a week. "We participated in the Fiesta Bowl Parades and Gold Rush Parade, but I enjoyed the nine days we spent at the Calvary Stampede best. A highlight for me was returning from Williams Parade and our bus broke down. I managed to fix it and got told that I could go along anytime, espe-

cially to fix the bus."

Second Pom MC, Frank said, "I took care of the music and being MC for the group after Glenn retired. I made sure music was set-up all the time and had a lot of fun. Most of all, I loved it when everyone did what they should do and it turned out well."

Many told stories about Foofie, now deceased, who could do anything acrobatic with her body like back flips during parades, but stopped counting them after she completed seventeen. She also practiced splits by using signposts or someone's back to stretch out a leg.

Lory remembers, "Once when Foofie sat next to me on the bus, the girls started singing and Foofie said I'd better stick to my dancing. Foofie was a character and at Wiggly Mansion, I helped her do a flip."

Doris said, "I loved performing and my favorite memory was going to Las Vegas and winning a National Dance Competition. The crowds went crazy over the Poms. We stayed for two days."

"I just liked



Photo of Poms in earlier times includes many Alumni members, plus some who are still active.



being a Pom, being together and going to the Calvary Stampede.” said Mildred who added, “I was asked to lead the band.”

Alverta added, “All the girls still are friends and we had such a good time. When President Regan had the President’s Council on Physical Fitness, we attended along with Nancy Regan and Mary Lou Retton.” She also remembers that lots of security was in place, especially since Nancy Reagan was there.

“Being in New York with Nancy Reagan is my favorite memory,” Vera said.

“I still enjoy the comrade with the girls and my favorite memory comes from performing at the Sun Bowl,” Rodie said.

Zee said, “Going to Canada was my best memory.”

“I was just a singer,” Margie said, then added, “the friendships, all the different entertainment we did and traveling in the bus having a ball are all favorite memories for me.”

Evelyn added, “We did so many fun things together. Now we get together and still have fun.”

Stacy, Evie, and Rose stated they enjoyed their Pom years, but Marie summed up lots of feelings when she said, “Being in the Poms were the best years of my life. I loved it and being on the bus were my favorite times.” ☺



RYAN D'AGOSTINO/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Gov. Janet Napolitano presents Lois Strong and the Sun City Poms with the Arizona Treasure Award Tuesday at Sundial Auditorium.

Governor cheers Poms with Treasure award

JARED HARTUNG
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Since 1979, the Sun City Poms have danced their way into people's hearts, and Gov. Janet Napolitano has taken notice.

The governor named the Poms a "True Arizona Treasure" during a ceremony Tuesday at Sundial Auditorium.

Napolitano was in the Northwest Valley for her Arizona Treasures tour, stopping in Glendale and Peoria before taking in a Poms show in Sun City.

The Poms performed two dances from their program, including their Poms Routine, where the ladies, whose average age is 72, did headstands and splits.

"Like many people in the audience, I was saying 'I could never do that,'" Napolitano said.

"I have really grown to appreciate what the Poms do and the amazing quality they bring to Sun City and the state," she said. "They are

true Arizona Treasures."

The governor presented Poms Director Lois Strong with a plaque, and each member received a bag of gifts from Napolitano.

"Four weeks ago when the Poms received a call from the governor's office, we thought 'Oh, wow! What did we do now?'" Strong said.

The dance group had performed in parades and events across the state with the governor, and she wanted to recognize them for their achievements.

"The Poms have a number of treasures we can be thankful for," said Strong.

Some of those treasures, Strong said, were the Poms' audiences, the Recreation Centers of Sun City and the sponsors.

"We treasure our good health," she said. "It's the impression we try to pass on. Once you retire from a profession, you should not retire from activity."

Jared Hartung may be reached at 876-2513 or jhartung@aztrib.com.

6588

Governor bestows gem on Poms

STAFF REPORT

Gov. Janet Napolitano will honor the Sun City Poms and three West Valley destinations while stopping Tuesday in the Northwest Valley on her Arizona Treasures Tour.

Napolitano will visit Cerreta Candy Co. in Glendale and the city's Historic Downtown District. She also will pay tribute to the Peoria Sports Complex while watching an Arizona Fall League baseball game.

The Poms is a women's cheer and dance squad, which has performed nationally at sporting events and parades. The women, who are 61 to 81 years old, perform several cheerleading routines including headstands, handstands, pyramids and splits. They also are accomplished in modern jazz and tap dance.

The governor plans to be at the Sundial Auditorium at Boswell Boulevard and 103rd Avenue at 4:30 p.m. to watch a performance by the group and to officially name them as an Arizona Treasure.

Before visiting Sun City, Napolitano will stop in Glendale at Cerreta Candy Co. The family-owned business has been making chocolates by hand for 70 years.

The governor plans to shop in Glendale and will take in an Arizona Fall League ball game at the Peoria Sports Complex.

The AFL is the "graduate school" for Major League Baseball, where young MLB prospects hone their skills before spring training begins in February.

The Peoria Sports Complex is home to MLB's Seattle Mariners and San Diego Padres during spring training.

The Arizona Treasures tour was designed to highlight the state's vacation destinations.

COVER

Here & Now

What's Hot and What's Happening in the Sun Cities

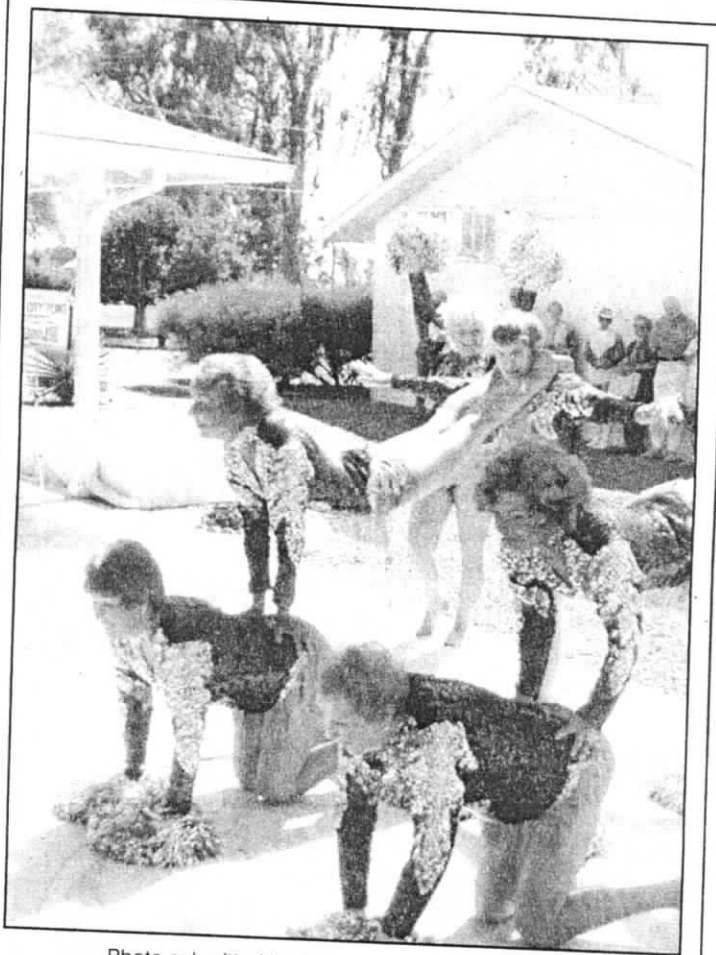


Photo submitted by David Verble/Special to the Independent

Poms pump up crowd

The Sun City Poms celebrated their 25th anniversary by doing what they are famous for — their Signature Poms Routine. The acrobatic routine, which includes headstands, handstands, cartwheels and splits, was performed at the Sun Cities Historical Society, where the silver celebration was held April 21. Visitors enjoyed watching the routine, eating carrot cake and sipping punch, and viewing the Poms memorabilia on display at the Society. Three original Poms (now retired) shared their experiences about what it was like to be a Pom "back in 1979." Current Poms range in age from 62 to 80 years. For more information about the Sun City Poms, call (602) 392-4242.



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Members of the Sun City Poms, dressed in costumes from the group's history, pose for a photo during the 25th anniversary celebration Wednesday at the Sun Cities Area Historical Society.

Poms show silver style

ANNIE KARSTENS
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Alverta Hanson remembers the days when the famed Sun City Poms started brightening the community with dynamic dance routines and sequined costumes 25 years ago.

Little did the original group know that by the Poms' 25th anniversary, the team would be a national sensation credited with unveiling the new face of senior vitality.

"Back then, we had no idea that we'd come to do over 50 shows a year," Hanson said, remembering the growth of Pom popularity. "It just got to be more and more fun and more and more ladies wanted to join."

Hanson was one of three original Poms who attended the 25th anniversary afternoon tea at the Sun City Area Historical Society Wednesday. The home was packed

with costumed Poms, retired Poms, ladies in the marching unit and proud Pom fans. The public was invited to the event, which featured a live Poms performance.

The internationally acclaimed acrobatic, pom, dance and marching group began as a simple dance class and made their debut at a community softball game in 1979. The original choreographers, the late Ray and Corena Leslie, were fondly remembered at the tea. Since their beginnings, the Poms performed on national television, traveled the country, appeared in countless parades and events and have been featured in several publications.

Vera Kraker, an original member who retired 10 years ago, toured the historical society's displays of past Pom costumes, clippings and pom-poms. Through the

years she's kept the sunny Pom attitude and is forever grateful for the Pom's roots.

"Many of us were out here without family and we poms became our family and filled that vacant spot. They are lifelong friends," Kraker said. "The routines have change and it's always nice to see new faces. Now I think they're celebrities, but it wasn't like that back then. We just had a lot of fun."

Pom Director Lois Strong said the group aims to be ambassadors of good health and fitness.

"We try to show older people that they don't have to retire to the rocking chair," she said. "Not all of them can do splits and dance like we do, but they can stay active."

The Pom's latest number is "All That Jazz" from the hit musical and movie, "Chicago." Three-year pom Annie Keller wore the costume from the routine to the event, and explained why she's proud to be a member of the group.

"A great part is the social life, getting to meet all kinds of people and go places you wouldn't normally go," Keller said, adding that she loves performing for nursing home residents. "When we're in our traveling outfits, people gather around, ask for autographs and take our picture. It's a lot of fun."

Betty Andrews joined the poms a year ago and is the group's oldest active member. She knew it would be a fun activity, but she quickly discovered that the Poms would truly enriched her life.

"They're the original performers," she said. "They've really held their good reputation through the years — it's just a good organization and it will always be that way."



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Paul McDonald, left, and Vera Kraker look at photos and costumes from the Sun City Poms' history.



Submitted Photo

The fabulous Sun City Poms will celebrate their 25th birthday at a tea 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. April 21 at Sun Cities Historical Society, 10801 W. Oakmont Drive, Sun City.

SILVER CELEBRATION

Poms mark 25 years of national fame

By **Geno Lawrenzi**
Independent Newspapers

It all started a quarter century ago when a group of Sun City women organized with the simple goal of boosting attendance at a woman's soft ballgame.

Out of that grew the Sun City Poms and today the organization founded in April 1979 by professional dancers Corrine and Ray Leslie is stronger than ever.

To help honor their 25th anniversary, the Poms will host a tea 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. April 21 at Sun Cities Historical Society, 10801 W. Oakmont Drive, Sun City.

"Each Pom will wear a different current or former costume," said Lois Strong, a member of the unique group. At 2:30 p.m., the Poms will perform one of their choreographed routines. The public is invited to watch the acrobatics, the dances and the marching. Admission is free.

When the Sun City Pom Squad, as they were then known, performed; they helped increase attendance at Sun City Saints ballgames. They also managed to propel themselves to national and even international acclaim.

Over the years, the Poms — made up of former teachers, secretaries, CEOs and housewives — have appeared on national and



Over the years the Poms have performed throughout the nation, including a performance in the 1980s before former First Lady Nancy Reagan.

international television. They made a guest appearance with Nancy Reagan and have shared the spotlight at nationally recognized sports events.

"One of their main functions is to convey an image of good health and fitness," said Ms. Strong. This involves doing headstands, handstands, cartwheels and splits — actions that prove retirement does not mean retirement from life, she added.

Two of the original Poms will be present to participate in the tea. Refreshments will be served.

The Poms even have a sponsor: Golden Flax4U, a health food product company.

For more information on the Poms and how to become a Pom, call 815-0137 or 974-2568.

The society is located in the first model home built by the Del Webb Corp. The home first opened its doors Jan. 1, 1960 and today serves as a museum, exhibition facility and multi-faceted resource center for local residents and guests. While there is no charge for admission, donations are always welcome.

Silver Celebration for the Sun City Poms

The original POMS with
founders Ray and
Corinne in the center.



On Wednesday, April 21 the Sun Cities Area Historical Society will honor the Sun City Poms with a 25th Anniversary Tea at the Society's museum home on Oakmont Drive in Sun City.

Formed 25 years ago, by late founder Corinne Leslie and her husband Ray, to cheer for the Senior Saints softball team, the Poms have gone on to make almost half a hundred TV appearances including programs in France, Japan and on all



Shown left to right, top to bottom: Larry Turgeon, President and founder of sponsor Golden Flax 4 U, Phoebe Saunders, Lois Strong and Linda Tabor.

major U.S. networks. The group has given over 60 major per-

formances ranging from the world-renown Calgary Stampede to a Bob Hope Special, to the 1985 annual fundraiser for the President's Council on Physical Fitness where they met and were photographed with then first lady Nancy Reagan.

The group has appeared in print in such prestigious publications as *National Geographic*, *Life Magazine*, *Time Magazine*, *Sports Illustrated*, the *New York Sunday Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, plus almost two dozen publications in foreign countries. They even made it onto the pages of the *National Enquirer*!

The groups' awards are numerous, their energy seemingly boundless. Keeping the kind of schedule they do requires large doses of practice, hard work and of course money. The Poms do not charge to perform, but they do accept honorariums. Help also comes from sponsors. The groups' current sponsor is Golden Flax 4 U.

The group is comprised of 9 members in the performing group and 17 in the marching unit along with 2 men banner carriers, an MC, a singer and a music man. The average age of a Pom member is 69. Lois Strong is Director, Phoebe Saunders serves as Assistant Director, Susan Dana Allen is the groups' choreographer. There are almost 20 "Alumni" members.

As the Poms celebrate their 25th anniversary they continue to be a role model and inspiration to all. Congratulations Poms!



Photo by Rose Lausten Photography



Submitted photo

Poms perform with Santa

The Sun City Poms Marching Unit appeared Dec. 3 with Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus for "Friends of Thunderbird," a children's Christmas show held at the Thunderbird American Graduate School of International Management. After the parade, the performing Poms treated the children and their parents to the acrobatic Pom routine. The Poms currently are in need of a music person for the coming year. This position would necessitate handling musical equipment capable of playing tapes and CDs. The Poms also are accepting applications for marchers and performers. Call (602) 392-4242 for additional information.

September 17, 2003

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT



Submitted photo

Sun City Poms in full swing

The Sun City Poms acrobatic dance group and marching unit have started their practice sessions and are inviting interested participants to join the fun. The dance group, doing jazz and tap in addition to acrobatics, meets 8:30-10:30 a.m. Mondays and Thursdays at the Marinette Recreation Center. It is not necessary to have former dance experience. The group will be performing 40 shows during September through May. Costumes and choreographer are provided by the group at no cost to members. The Sun City Poms Marching Unit appears in about six parades and practices Thursday mornings at Marinette Recreation Center. Costumes are provided and participants furnish their own shoes. Call (602) 392-4242.

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

May 28, 2003

**SC Poms part of
Japanese film**

Between May 16 and 18, the Sun City Poms were filmed for a Japanese television documentary on seniors.

The program is scheduled to be broadcast during the first week of June to people throughout Japan.

The film crew took part in a rehearsal and documented a performance of the Poms at the annual Onion Festival in Glendale.

The crew also recorded the home life of Rose Russo, the oldest performing Pom, as a special feature for the documentary.

5/24-25/03

www.dailynews-sun.com

Drawing international acclaim

The Sun City Poms, right, are joined by a Japanese television film crew. The acrobatic dance troop was busy last weekend working with the Fuji Japanese television network, filming a documentary about seniors. The program will be aired in the first week of June and is expected to draw 8 million to 10 million viewers. The film crew was on hand for rehearsals and a Poms' performance at the annual Sweet Onion Festival in Glendale. The crew also filmed the home life of Rose Russo, the oldest performing Pom, which will be a special feature of the documentary.



SUBMITTED PHOTO



Photo by Diana Shaughnessy/Independent Newspapers
About 35 members of the Sun City Poms Alumni got together to reminisce Dec. 13 at Union Hills Country Club. The group has performed around the country and is known internationally.

Sun City Pom Alumnae recall headstands and more

By **Diana Shaughnessy**
Independent Newspapers

It is not unusual for a group of former pom dancers to recall the headstands, handstands, cartwheels and splits they did during their performances. However, it might be considered unusual when the dancers are in their late 70s, or even their 90s.

"We were like the Energizer Bunny," said Alverta Hanson. "We just kept going on and on, and didn't know enough to stop."

Mrs. Hanson is one of the former Sun City Poms Alumni group, and she left the group in 1999 when she was 78, after more than 16 years of performing. She and about 34 other former Poms

got together Dec. 13 to recall their good times as performers.

The Sun City Poms were organized in 1979 by Corrine and Ray Leslie, a professional dance team that relocated to the Sun City area and started teaching dance to seniors.

"I saw a picture of Corrine and Ray in a local paper and read in the caption that they were starting a dance school," said Mrs. Hanson, who was a charter member of the group. "My mother had taken me to dance school when I was a child, but through the years I had gotten away from it. This sounded like fun."

Natalie Alderson, another charter member, had never

done jazz or tap before joining the Leslie's dance school, which met for a time in the Peoria Boys Club.

"I loved dancing, but I worked for the telephone company and raised five children," she laughed. "I

OVER

POMS

Continued From Page B1
didn't have time for dance lessons."

The Leslie Sun City Pom Squad gave its first performance at a girls fast-pitch baseball game around 1984. According to Mrs. Hanson, two evening games were played, and the women performed during the break.

"A local news program showed us on a segment," she recalled. "That was the beginning of what would become national coverage."

Shortly after their local spot, NBC-TV's "Real People" flew the group out to California and shot a segment about the group. After that, the Sun City Poms were invited to be part of the Fiesta Bowl Parade, The National Fitness Foundation in New York City, where they met then-First Lady Nancy Reagan, Festival of Parades in Milwaukee, Rose Parade in Portland, Calgary Stampede in Canada, and even an appearance

on the David Letterman Show. They have appeared in National Geographic, and have even been featured in a Japanese magazine.

One member whose name is still spoken with fond memories is Foofie Harlen. A real go-getter, Ms. Harlen was able to do the splits well into her later years. Although she passed away in 1998 at 91, she was directly responsible for other women joining the group, including Lory Vaichinger.

"I was in an exercise class with Foofie when she suggested I apply," Mrs. Vaichinger said. "I never thought I'd be able to do the handstands and headstands the other ladies did. I mean, who thinks about doing that when they are 68 years old?"

Through Ms. Harlen's encouragement, Mrs. Vaichinger discovered she was indeed able to do a headstand.

"I locked the bedroom door and practiced. In fact, I scared myself when I actually stayed up there," she said.

Joan Sullivan, who left the group in 2001 after seven years, was nervous about joining, so she took six months of private dancing lessons before attending her first meeting.

"There is no audition," she said. "You just dance with the group, and after six months probation the group either votes you in or out."

The Poms practice twice a week for at least two hours. It is not unusual for them to perform two or three times per week.

"It's like a full-time job," Mrs. Sullivan said.

Some of the women left the group because they wanted more free time to spend with families. Mrs. Alderson said she finally left "... because I couldn't move as well."

That was about five years ago after the 91-year-old had been a member for 28 years.

SUN CITY WEST INDEPENDENT

November 13, 2002



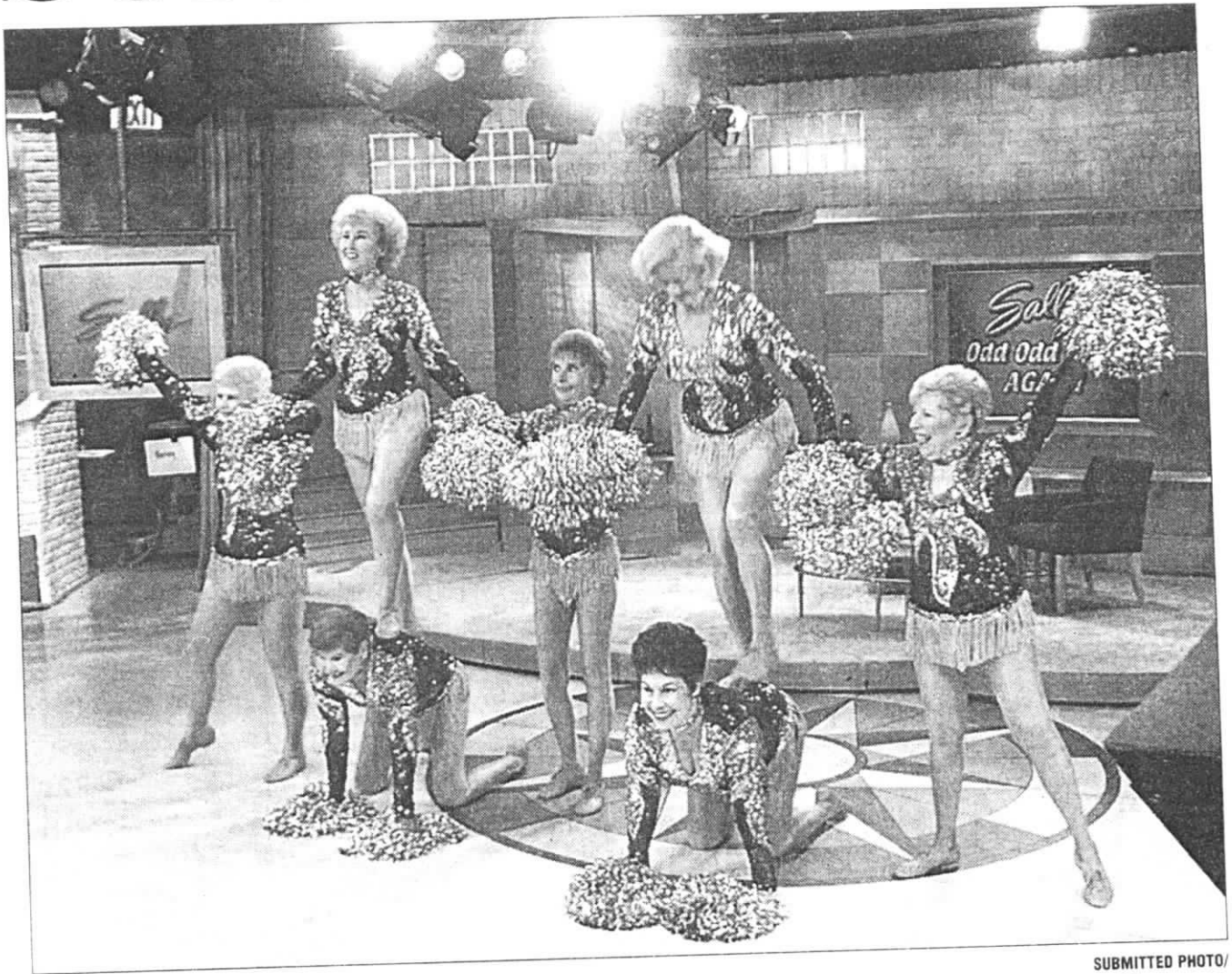
Submitted photo

Poms capture first place

The Sun City Poms Marching Unit, sponsored by Sanderson Lincoln-Mercury, captured first place as the best Non-Musical Marching Unit during the Billy Moore Western Heritage Days Celebration held Oct. 19 in Goodyear. Pat MacDonald is the parade leader and Edna Blau is the assistant leader. The troupe's next appearance is the Fiesta Bowl Parade on Dec. 31.

Daily News-Sun • Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2002

SUNNY SIDE UP!



SUBMITTED PHOTO/

The Sun City Poms appear on Sally Jessie Raphael's nationally syndicated show Wednesday. The Sun City group will appear on the episode titled "Odd Odd News" and will perform a lively set of cheers for the studio audience. The program airs at 9 a.m. on KTVK Channel 3.

Daily News-Sun • Monday, Feb. 11, 2002

Poms taking to airwaves

● Already internationally renowned, including appearing in the Nov. 11, 2001, issue of the German magazine "Stern," the **Sun City Poms** are hitting the broadcast waves this month.

Members of the Poms' performance troupe — **Betty Perrett, Jane Fry, Lois Strong, Phoebe Saunders, Gloria Clark, Palma Mitzel** and **Rose Ann Russo** — were in New York on Jan. 28 for a taping of the Sally Jessie Raphael show.

The episode's theme is "Unique and Interesting Stories Around the World," and it should be airing in the next couple of weeks.

After the ladies performed their famous Pom routine, Raphael told them their group was the best booking her assistant producer has ever done.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Appearing with talk show host Sally Jessie Raphael during a taping of the show to air in the next few weeks are the Sun City Poms, from left, Betty Perrett, Jane Fry, Lois Strong, Phoebe Saunders, Gloria Clark, Palma Mitzel and Rose Ann Russo.

SUN CITY POMS:
Members garner first
place in marching
division of Phoenix
Veterans Day event

Daily News-Sun • Monday, Dec. 10, 2001

Group wins parade award

The renowned **Sun City Poms** earned first place in the marching division of the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade last month.



**Katie
O'Grady**

Your turn

The Poms were first organized as cheerleaders for the Saints women's softball team that played in Sun City Stadium, which was built as a spring-training site for the Milwaukee Brewers.

Lory Vaichinger, who's been with the group seven years, said this is the first time the Poms have participated in the parade since she's been a member, although she believes members participated several years ago.

About 25 members of the team marched the three-mile parade route. The team was led by baton twirler **Nancy Foster**.

Director **Lois Strong** said the Poms took first even though the members were competing against a dozen other marching groups.

The Poms' next big engagement is marching in the Dec. 29 Fiesta Bowl Parade, which begins at 11 a.m. on Central Avenue in Phoenix.

Members of the Poms are **Barbara Balding, Gloria Clark, Nancy Foster, Jane Frye, Palma Mitzel, Betty Perret, Rose Ann Russo, Phoebe Saunders, Lois Strong, Joan Sullivan and Lory Vaichinger**. Assistants to the Poms are **Frank Kinney, Bill Lohmeyer, Sam Russo and Frank Schneider**.

Members of the Poms marching unit are: **Barbara Blansit, Edna Blau, Linda Brooks, Pat Fisher, Dorothy Flint, Anny Keller, Flo Lanthier, Carolyn Maxfeldt, Pat McDonald, Trudy Pommier, Margie Plunkett, Mary Reichstein, Carol Roseborough, Lee Schumaker, MariLou Stanley, Mae Strong, Jan Susuras and Linda Thompson**.

● Speaking of the **Poms**, the Daily News-Sun wishes to extend a heartfelt thanks to the group, as well as the local **Sundames** barber-shop octet, who performed at the newspaper's open house Dec. 1.

Several hundred residents visited the open house and were entertained by the groups performances. Also performing during the event were the **Marshall Ranch Elementary School Jazz Band** and the **Dysart High School Drama Demons**.

The Daily News-Sun thanks each group for making the open house an entertaining and enjoyable event for all our visitors.



The Sun City Poms won first place in the marching division of the Veterans Day Parade in Phoenix.

MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN



Photo by JULI NESSETT/Independent Newspapers

Poms celebrate anniversary

The Sun City Poms celebrated its 22nd anniversary April 17 with a luncheon at Sun City Country Club attended by many present and former members. From left, front row, Evie Hartman (former member), Gene Sonnenleiter (former member), Helen Sisko (former member), Mildred Studnicka (former member), Gloria Trudeau (former member), Natalie Alderson (former member) and Vera Kraker (former member and current marching member). Back row, Palma Mitzel, Sam Russo, Rose Ann Russo, Lois Strong, Frank Kinney (emcee), Betty Perrett, Gloria Clark, Ro-Zee Szalay, Randy Bittle, Pat Cross, Glenn Jensen, Marge Klemm, Doris Stein, Phoebe Saunders, Lori Viking, Jane Fry, Rodie Wright, Andy Outhuse, Susan Allen (choreographer) and Joan Sullivan (director).

POMS STRIKE GOLD

Troupe wins national championship

By JULI NESSETT
Independent Newspapers

8/2000

The Sun City Poms have once again returned triumphantly from a national competition.

The renowned Sun City dance troupe was selected as national champions in the mini-production championships of the International Dance Challenge held July 28-30 in Las Vegas, Nev.

However, this was not the only award the enthusiastic, acrobatic group won. They also received a gold award in the specialty category and were selected to receive one of the highest achievement awards - The True Divas Award.

This group of divas competed

against 250 groups comprised of over 800 dancers from across the country. Age proved no barrier to the Sun Citians as they poms successfully competed against dancers as young as 12 years old.

The Poms qualified for the International Dance Challenge back in March at the regional competition held in Phoenix.

As the Poms performed their now famous routine, the judges and the appreciative Las Vegas audience alike stood, while shouting and cheering encouragement, according to Pom Joan Sullivan.

Ms. Sullivan and Lory Vaichinger both said that the per-

See ■ POMS, Page 3

formance was very emotional. "I walked of the stage in tears," said Ms. Vaichinger.

Art Stone, CEO of International Dance Challenge, personally

thanked the Poms for a wonderful and exciting presentation.

Judges called the performance "wonderful, exiting and energetic and precision at its best."

According to the Poms, they felt extremely proud to represent Sun City at such a prestigious event. They also said they feel very honored for the support and encouragement they received from family, friends and the community.

Funds for the competition were raised through numerous community and business contributions, including, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Meade Realty, Promenade Travel, Prudential Realty and Dr. Ankar

Bhowra.

Also, Barbara and Gene Turiano, Mrs. Pat McDonald, Steve Carpenter, Gold Coast Hotel, Sun City Poms Alumni, *Daily News Sun* and Independent Newspapers.

According to Ms. Sullivan, Jay Leno is looking to book the Poms for the "Tonight Show" some time in the near future. The Poms will also be performing at the "Sun City Shines" variety show for the 40th anniversary celebration of Sun City at 2 and 7 p.m., Sept. 25 at Mountain View Recreation Center.

All of the awards will be on display at the Sun City Historical Society.



Submitted photo

The Sun City Poms recently won the International Dance Challenge in Las Vegas. Members of the winning dance troupe are, from left, Doris Stein, Joan Sullivan, Gloria Clark, Mildred Studnicka, Lory Vaichinger, Lois Strong, Phoebe Saunders, Jane Fry, Rose Ann Russo and Rodie Wright.

Sun City Poms picked as nation's top dance troupe

HAYLEY RINGLE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun City Poms danced their way to being named national champions in the Mini Production Championships of the International Dance Challenge Competition in Las Vegas July 28 to 30.

Competing against 250 groups with more than 800 dancers of all ages, the Poms also received a gold award in the specialty category and were selected for one of the highest achievement awards, the True Divas Award, said Joan Sullivan, director of the Sun City Poms.

"The ladies had really worked so terribly hard until they had gotten their precision down," Sullivan said. "Emotions were high by the end of the show because we had contributed so much to make it a success."

The acrobatic dance group was

Poms plans

The Sun City Poms' next performances are: Sept. 15 for the National Association of Women's Health in Scottsdale; Sept. 22 for the Light the Night Run, a leukemia benefit; Sept. 25 for the 40th anniversary "Sun City Shines" Variety Show at Mountain View Recreation Center; and Sept. 30 for a World War II military reunion in Phoenix.

For information on the Sun City Poms, call 602-392-4242.

eligible to participate in Las Vegas after receiving three awards at the International Dance Challenge in Scottsdale in February.

The dancers competed against all age groups in Scottsdale and received a gold medal in the senior division, a gold medal for the best presentation of show and third place for best of the show.

The Poms are sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield. They were able to raise enough money for their trip to Las Vegas, through help by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona, Meade Realty, Prudential Realty, Betty and Joe Gregoire, Dr. Ankar Bhowra, Barbara and Gene Turiano and Pat McDonald.

"To me it was one of the most thrilling things I have ever done," said Lory Vaichinger of Sun City, a member of the Poms for 5½ years. "By the time we were half-way done, five of the 10 judges were applauding, and at the end all of the judges were standing and applauding."

The Poms practiced every day for two weeks before the dance challenge. Ten members of the Poms attended the contest with ages ranging from 63 to 80 years old.

"The judges' response to our performance was overwhelming, with all judges, plus the CEO, Art Stone, standing, clapping and shouting during most of our performance," Sullivan said. "The judges especially liked when our pyramids were built and cartwheels, splits, headstands and handstands were performed."

Sullivan said the auditorium,

with several thousand people in it, was standing and shouting in response to their performance.

"Art Stone, CEO of International Dance Challenge from New York City, personally thanked us for a wonderful, exciting presentation," Sullivan said.

Judges' comments on the Poms evaluation report included, "wonderful, such enthusiasm, talented, great energy, precision at its best, exciting presentation and super acrobatics," Sullivan said.

"We were so keyed up and we had really worked hard," Vaichinger said. "It was perfection. Everybody was right there and right on time."

Sullivan said the group has also been contacted by Jay Leno, and may be on the show in the fall.

For more information on the Sun City Poms, call 602-392-4242.

Hayley Ringle can be reached by e-mail at hringle@aztrib.com or by calling 876-2519.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The champion Sun City Poms pose in the Ham Concert Hall at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. The Poms are, from left, Doris Stein, Joan Sullivan, Gloria Clark, Mildred Studnicka, Lory Vaichinger, Lois Strong, Phoebe Saunders, Jane Fry, Rose Ann Russo and Rodie Wright.

A CHORUS LINE

Poms to compete in nationals; funds needed

By JULIE RIDDLE
Independent Newspapers

Fresh off the taste of triple victory at the regional International Dance Challenge, the Sun City Poms are now set to compete for wider recognition at the National Championships, scheduled for July 28-29 in Las Vegas.

Competing in the mini-production routine, the Poms hope to improve on their previous placing, according to director Joan Sullivan.

"In regionals, we came in third overall in Best of Show because we had 286 points — the winners tied with 290, so we are really hoping to really do more as far as precision and really go for the big one."

In their hunt for a win, the ladies will compete against groups from across the country, in every category.

"(The competition) will include junior high school soloists clear up to seniors — we are not exactly in competition with the younger kids, because the ones with the most points wins," she said. "We are confident since we had so many points in regionals that we are hoping to excel in this competition."

The performance will include everything that makes the Poms famous, Ms. Sullivan said.

"We are doing our famous Pom routine again. Cartwheels, handstands, headstands — we don't know how many have entered (this competition) — in regionals there were 300, and this is a lot bigger," she said.

"Coming so close has inspired the team to try even harder," Ms. Sullivan continued.



Submitted photo

The Sun City Poms, who recently appeared with TV personality Willard Scott, are now preparing to compete in the national dance championship in July 28-29.

“

We are confident since we had so many points in regionals that we are hoping to excel in this competition.

Joan Sullivan
Sun City Poms Director

Before that happens, however, the Poms need the means not only to get to the gaming mecca, but a place to stay once they arrive.

"We are hoping for community support," Ms. Sullivan said. Both Ken Meade Realty and Blue Cross/Blue Shield have donated to

the cause, she added.

"We are hoping to acquire funding for the trip, including housing and transportation for the 10 dancers," she said. "We are hoping for another \$800." The Poms plan to leave on July 28.

In return for donations, positive publicity will be brought to Sun City, she noted.

"It supports the community when we go — we are the only ones from a Del Webb community entering, so it is pretty special," Ms. Sullivan said with pride.

Poms dance way to Vegas

HAYLEY RINGLE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun City Poms have danced their way for the first time into a national dance competition in Las Vegas.

The acrobatic dance group became eligible in February after receiving three awards at the International Dance Challenge in Scottsdale, said Joan Sullivan, director of the Sun City Poms. The dancers competed against all age groups and received a gold medal in the senior division, a gold medal for the best presentation of show and third place for best of show.

"It's great fun and great exercise," said Sullivan, who has been in the group for two years.

The 10-member group recently came back from a Dallas trip, where it performed for sponsor Blue Cross Blue Shield at the annual

Ageless Heroes conference.

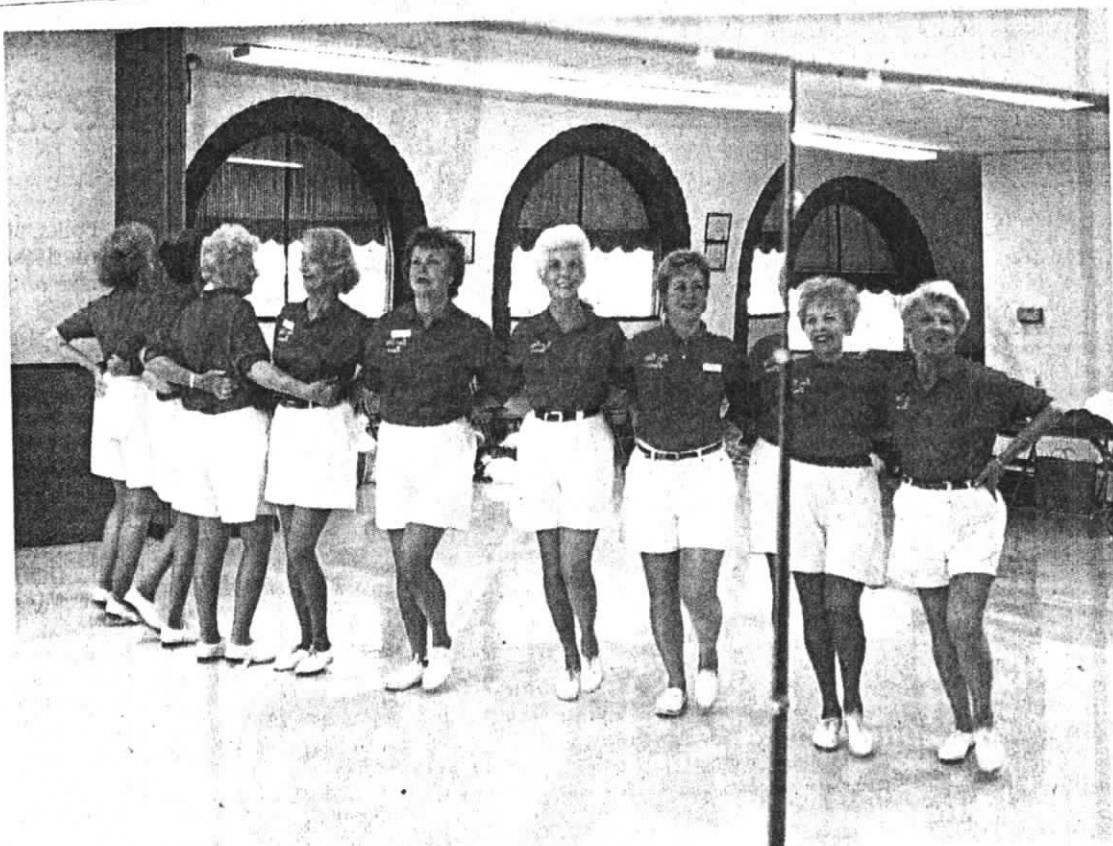
And in March, the Sun City Poms entertained the National Broadcasters Museum Association in Scottsdale for a tribute to Hugh Downs.

Sullivan said the group has been contacted by Jay Leno and may be on The Tonight Show in the fall.

"We are looking forward to Las Vegas — it should be a lot of fun," said 80-year-old Mildred Studnicka, the only original member of the group, which began in 1979.

The Sun City Poms are looking for support for the trip, set for the end of July. Members hope to raise \$1,000 for travel, room and food expenses.

Contact the Sun City Poms at 602-392-4242, or P.O. Box 2287, Sun City, AZ 85372.



Photos by Mark Henle/The Arizona Republic

The Sun City Poms practice for their appearance in the Sun City Golf Cart Parade. The event is one of the highlights of Sun City's yearlong 40th anniversary celebration.

Sun City Poms plan for parade

By Jim Gintonio
The Arizona Republic

The Sun City Poms do routines that get their hearts racing. That's just fine with Doris Stein, 75, whose memories of her triple-bypass surgery in 1995 fade with every handstand, split and cartwheel.

"The doctor told me that if I didn't do this, I'd be in terrible shape," said Stein, who said symptoms of a muscle disease also are controlled by her participation in the group.

The Poms will be one of the featured attractions Saturday at the Sun City Golf Cart Parade that organizers hope will set a record. More than 320 golf carts are expected to putter along the 2.6-mile route.

The grand marshal will be the Phoenix Suns Gorilla.

The event, one of the highlights of Sun City's yearlong 40th anniversary celebration, will include bands and antique cars. It starts at 10 a.m. from the south parking lot at the Bell Recreation Center.

The Poms, formed in 1979 to be cheerleaders for the Sun City Saints softball team, have performed throughout the country and won numerous awards. Members of the Poms, with an average age of 71, perform two to three times a week.

"We have a lot of fun," Stein



Doris Stein, 75, participates in the Sun City Poms to stay in shape. "We have a lot of fun," Stein says.

If you go

Sun City 40th anniversary celebration

WHAT: Golf Cart Parade.

WHEN: Saturday, 10 a.m.

WHERE: Starts at Bell Recreation Center in south parking lot.

said. "I have three sons who can't believe their mother is doing this. I know I'm healthy. I didn't want to be sick. Being sick was not the way I wanted to end up."

There are 11 active Poms, with two in training. There is

also a strong link to the past. Eighty-year-old Mildred Strudnika is an original Pom member. Another original member, 84-year-old Vera Kraker, recently joined the Poms' marching unit.

"I'm amazed I'm still doing this," Strudnika said. "It must be the good Lord saying, 'You've got a job to do.'"

"I'm still dancing real good. I probably can't jump as high as I used to, but I can kick as high as the rest of them."

The Poms were featured during a Japanese documentary on aging. One segment showed Strudnika dancing

PARADE | Sun City Poms get ready

From Page 1

around while doing housework.

Her son, Gary, said he remained pleasantly surprised that his mother is still involved.

"I always tell my friends she's 80 going on 20," he said.

Fran Park, who is overseeing the yearlong project, said the Poms are a vital part of the community.

"They epitomize the spirit and excitement of what it means to be retired in these days," he said. "I think they've generated a lot of enthusiasm and excitement representing the whole spirit of retirement."

The Poms' business manager Joan Sullivan, said the group feels like it is giving back to the community when it puts on shows. Practice remains a key element, and the women rehearse at least six hours a week.

Even when the Poms are just practicing, they draw a crowd. At a recent session, 78-year-old Joe Zweben was an interested onlooker.

"I'm impressed with them. They're exciting to watch," he said. "I've seen them many times, and they're like Sun City. By not changing everything they're getting better. We appreciate the ladies."

Reach the reporter at Jim.Gintonio@ArizonaRepublic.com or (602) 444-7125.

See PARADE | Page 3

Still shaking their poms

Sun City group continues to win honors

By JULIE RIDDLE
Independent Newspapers

They have been courted by David Letterman, the National Football League and the Phoenix Suns, and have performed in Japan and Canada. Now, the renowned Sun City Poms have added three more titles to their impressive list, when the squad won two firsts and a third-place ribbon at the recent International Dance Challenge Feb. 27, qualifying them for a national competition in July.

Business manager Joan Sullivan said the reaction to their performance was overwhelming.

"It is very unusual to see us," she

said. "What makes us different is that we do acrobatics, even though our average age is 71."

The dancers say the need to be involved in something helped in their decision to apply for the squad, a process which includes at least three interviews and a "probationary" period of six months.

"After I lost my son, my tennis partner saw that I needed something," said squad member Phoebe Saunders. "It turned my life around."

Saunders now has one of the most eye-catching roles of the squad, when she is out front performing the splits.

"I could not do it (the splits) till I

was 60," she said. "I saw that the Poms needed someone — it took me about two years to learn how. I practice every day." Those who see it, she says, are surprised.

"People scream," she said. "They are shocked!"

The other members are no slouches themselves, as they work on human pyramids, cartwheels, handstands, and a move they call "angels," when one member puts their hands on the ground and their feet on another person's shoulders, a sort of human wheelbarrow.

Member Lory Viking said she hopes to inspire a younger genera-

See ■ SC POMS, Page 9



BY JULIE RIDDLE/ Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Poms pose proudly with the three awards they won at the International Dance Challenge Feb. 27, where they beat out 400 contestants of all ages from across Arizona. Back, left to right: Betty Perrott, Rodie Wright, Lory Vaichinger and Mildred Studnicka; middle: Roseann Russo, Doris Stein and Rosalie Hickey; front: Gloria Clark, Phoebe Saunders, and Joan Sullivan.

tion.

"We performed for a convention of student councils," she said. "I would like for us to be an incentive for them to take care of themselves."

Most of the members say they joined simply because it looked like a lot of fun.

"I wanted to do it," said Rose Ann, 76. "It gives me something to look forward to."

Ms. Sullivan said the need to give

back to the community led to her involvement.

"It is a way of giving back to the community and a way to entertain them," she said.

Proud of their accomplishments, the squad is now concentrating on a full schedule, which includes the Nationals, the St. Patrick's Day Parade, in Phoenix; Ostrich Festival, in Wilcox, and a tribute to recently-retired broadcaster Hugh Downs.

Poms remain lively despite parade circumstance

SILLY: While Fiesta snub hurts, Sun City institution is upbeat

JEFF OWENS
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Trainer Donna Sanchez cranked the volume on the boom box, blaring a dance number called "Get Ready For This" and told her red-shirted girls to get busy.

"Up!" she yelled. "Point your toes!"

With that, the dozen or so lithe and limber ladies of the Sun City Poms kicked into gear Thursday morning with a flurry of blue and white crepe paper during rehearsal in the Fairway Recreation Center Music Room.

If they were disappointed about not appearing in the Fiesta Bowl Parade for the first time in 20 years, you couldn't tell from looking at them.

"They're silly today," Sanchez said. "They're always fun."

The women stepped, kicked, stretched, bent, tangled and grinned

their way through "The Mashed Potato," "The Macarena" and "City Lights" before calling it a morning. After rehearsal, the Fiesta Bowl snub was still a hot topic.

"We were terribly disappointed," said Pom Joan Sullivan. "The Fiesta Bowl had a new committee this time that said the Poms would need about 35 people in order to march."

The Poms usually march 16 to 20 women in the parade. That's all they have. With 12 dancers, an extra one in training and 10 extra women enlisted in the marching unit, the group fell short of the committee's new guidelines.

"We didn't take it personally," said Pom Phoebe Saunders. The group does want its spot on the parade route back though and is looking for women to join their marching unit.

Both ends of 1999 held a couple of tough breaks for the 20-year-old group: Founding Pom — and probably the most famous one — Fofie Harlan died in February, and the parade snafu in December.

Harlan is missed. A diminutive,

vivacious woman whose age belied her astonishing flexibility, she was often the Poms' most genial and visible ambassador.

"She was amazing," said Pom Lory Viking. "You never knew what she was going to do next."

Founding member Mildred Studnicka remembers when the Poms first started out in 1979, cheering on the Sun City Saints at softball games. More than 20 years later, both she and the group are going strong.

"Apparently we're doing something right," she said, grinning. "Apparently we're aging properly. It's a privilege, not a punishment, aging."

"I love it," said Pom Gloria Clark, who has danced since she was 9 years old. "I'm having such a good time, and I'm learning new things."

The Poms have been sponsored by Blue Cross/Blue Shield for the last 12 years, and the troupe has traveled the nation and the world making live and televised appearances.

Member Rosalie Hickey said the Poms are "stronger and more fun, absolutely."



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Phoebe Saunders, left, Rosalie Saunders and Betty Perrett practice Thursday in Fairway Recreation Center. The women perform for various occasions during the year.

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POM POMS

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 2000

Sun City dancers didn't toe line for Fiesta Bowl Parade

By Lori Baker
The Arizona Republic

The Sun City Poms — acrobatic performers ranging up to 80 years old — have dazzled audiences around the world. But their group of 16 to 20 ladies was deemed too small to participate in their home state's MicroAge Fiesta Bowl Parade on Friday.

"We're all disappointed because the Poms have been performing in the parade for the past 20 years," said Joan Sullivan, Poms business manager. "Our group is internationally known."

Another senior woman dance troupe, the Hot Flashes of Tucson, performed in the parade.

The Poms especially wanted to strut their stuff this year because

it's the group's 20th anniversary and Sun City's 40th birthday.

Sullivan thought there was a mistake when she received a form letter in September from the Fiesta Bowl Committee saying that it received applications from several equestrian groups and could not accept the Poms.

"We're not equestrians, we're dancers," Sullivan said she told the Fiesta Bowl organizers. She then was sent a second form letter about an abundance of specialty groups applying.

To make sure the Poms are in next year's parade, Sullivan will try to boost membership.

Reach the reporter at firstname.lastname@ArizonaRepublic.com or (602) 444-7120.

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT — JULY 21-27, 1999

Sun City Poms kick up their heels for national TV

Pom squad to be featured on PBS program

By MIKE RUSSO
Independent Newspapers

Some familiar faces will soon be popping up on national television.

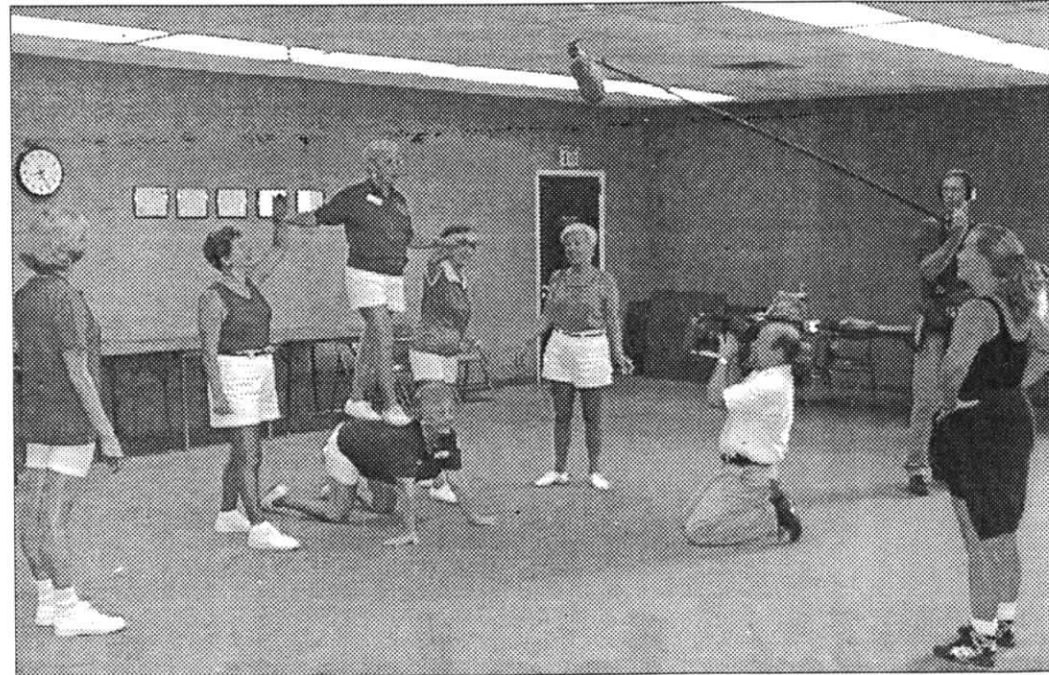
Sun Citians may recognize a family member, friend or neighbor on the screen later this month or in early August.

A video crew from "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" was in town last week to videotape a Sun City Poms' workout for inclusion in health care segment of the Public Broadcasting System nightly news program.

The show airs 6 p.m. Monday through Friday on KAET, Channel 8. The segment featuring the Sun City Poms deals with prolonging life by remaining active and dealing with death on your own terms.

Susan Dentzer, PBS' health policy correspondent, conducted interviews.

The six members present last week — Joan Sullivan, Rodie Wright, Doris Stein, Gloria Clark, Phoebe Saunders and Geri Hoffman — enthusiastically performed drills, forming pyramids, forming



Six members of the Sun City Poms go through their paces under the watchful eye of a video crew from "the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer."

angels and performing splits, for the watchful eye of the camera.

"This is a lot of fun," said Geri Hoffman, a two-year veteran of the popular dance squad, during last week's practice session.

The summer is generally a slack period for the Sun City Poms. There are not as many activities at which to appear and members use the summertime to vacation, but the members who remain in the community gather once a week to stay practice routines to stay sharp.

The energetic group, which is sponsored by Arizona Blue Cross/Blue Shield, makes 50 to 60 appearances annually, according to Mrs. Hoffman.

"We don't charge for our shows, but we do accept donations," she said.

The pom squad currently has 12 members, but is seeking additional members.

"We are looking for singers, who entertain while the Poms change costumes," Mrs. Hoffman

explained. "We also need an announcer."

Being a Sun City Pom requires dedication, Mrs. Hoffman noted.

"It's a real commitment," she said. "You must be available for performances most of the year." In addition, practice sessions are held twice weekly for nine months of the year.

But it is all worth it to the dedicated ladies who represent Sun City with smiles on their faces at a myriad of events.

OVER

- SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT— JULY 21-27, 1999



Photo by MIKE RUSSO/Independent Newspapers

Poms practice spreading their wings

There is no summer break for these members of the Sun City Poms, who were busy last week practicing routines for fall appearances. Working on their angel formations are, from left, bottom, Joan Sullivan, Rodie Wright and Doris Stein, and Gloria Clark, Phoebe Saunders and Geri Hoffman. For more about the Poms and an upcoming national television appearance, please turn to page 20.

Poms make news ... again

'Newshour' seeks input on aging issues

By STACY MANN PEARSON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City's Pom squad already had the action, but Wednesday morning, a reporter from "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" added the lights and the camera.

Susan Dentzer, health policy correspondent for the daily PBS news program, interviewed the squad for a story on people's approach to the end of their lives. The piece will air locally on Channel 8 within the next few weeks.

Despite the bright lights and large television camera, the Poms didn't sweat. They're media veterans.

"We've been every place but Jay Leno," said Geri Hoffman. "We weren't nervous."

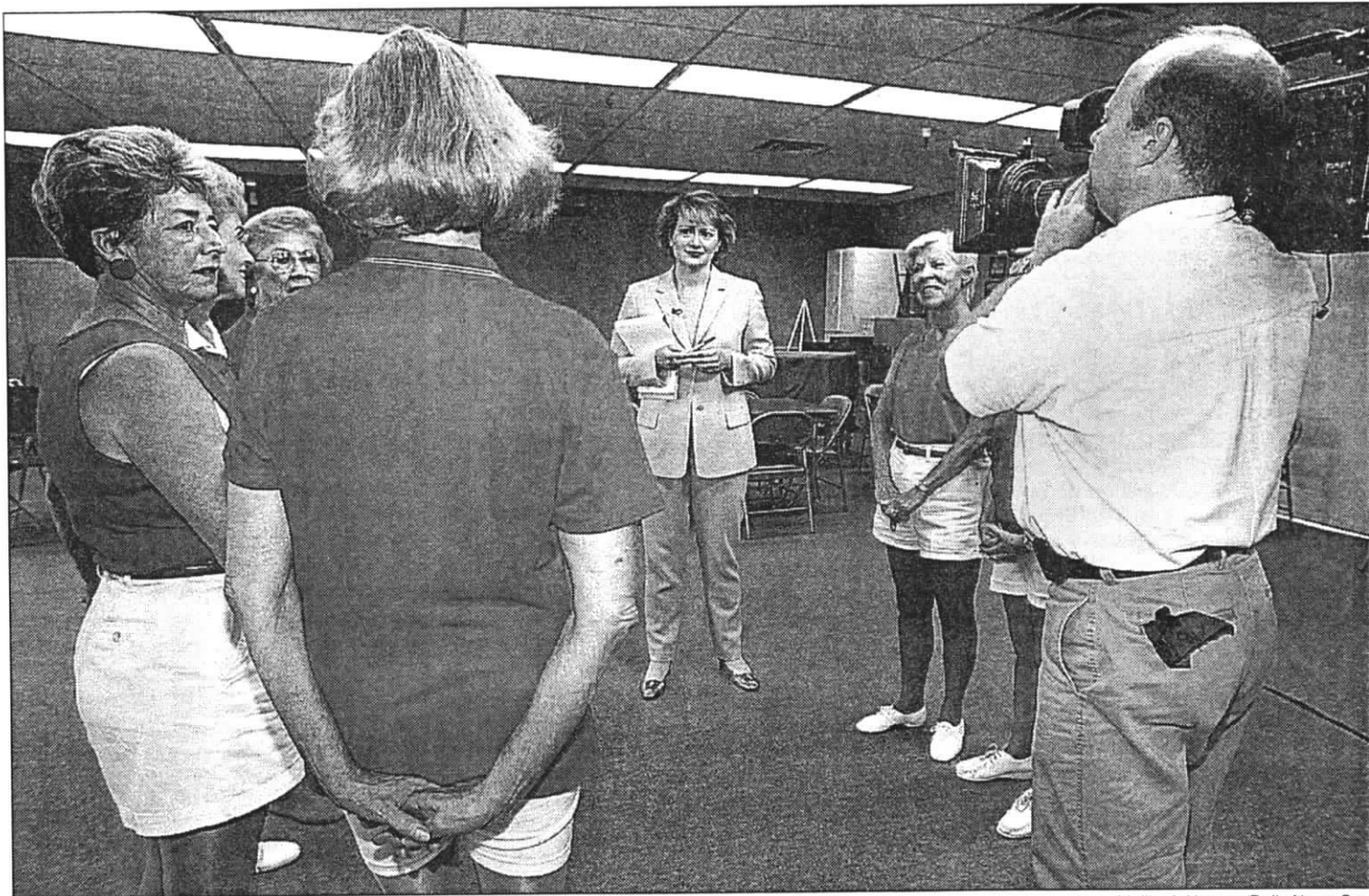
Their résumé rivals that of a diplomat, with appearances on Good Morning America, Geraldo and a handful of television commercials.

In fact, the group's list of appearances are sorted by category — appearances in the United States and abroad and spreads in major publications.

Nearly 100 appearances make the list, yet the television stars remain humble about their dancing and cheering.

"It's a big commitment," Hoffman said. "But it's a fun group to belong to."

A dozen pompon-toting women are on the squad during the season, which



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Susan Dentzer, center, health policy correspondent for the PBS show, "Newshour with Jim Lehrer," interviews members of the Sun City Poms about aging issues at Fairway Recreation Center Wednesday.

runs from September to May. During the summer, many leave Sun City, but a skeleton squad still performs.

"We exercise twice per week," Hoffman said.

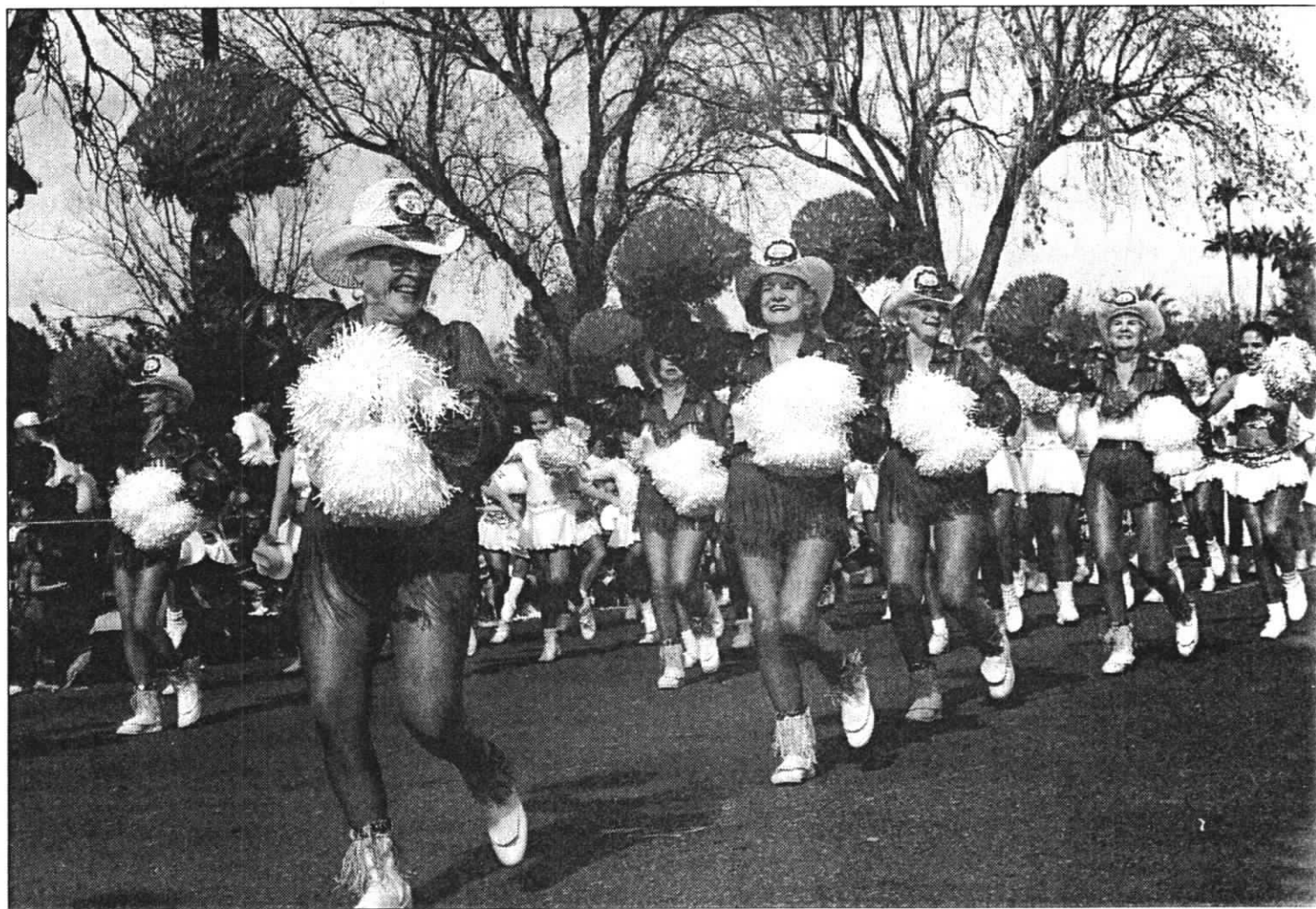
For Dentzer's visit, the Poms were decked out in matching red and white

uniforms. They performed a tough routine, including cartwheels, pyramids and splits.

"There are a lot of dance groups in Sun City," said Pom team member Joan Sullivan. "But we really emphasize acrobatics."

After lights turned off and the camera stopped rolling, it was business as usual for the feisty women.

"We just love it," Sullivan said. "Everybody wants their turn at the camera."



Daily News-Sun file photo

The Sun City Poms, shown here marching down Central Avenue during the Fiesta Bowl Parade, are celebrating their 20th anniversary this month.

Poms parade on

Troupe observes 20th anniversary

By JEFF OWENS
DAILY NEWS-SUN

It certainly has been a high-stepping 20 years.

This month, the Sun City Poms celebrate their 20th anniversary as one of the community's premier entertainment organizations and legiest goodwill ambassadors to the world.

And they have spanned the globe — the Pom's travels have taken them kicking and singing to New York City, Chile, France, Japan and Canada. They've appeared on U.S. television on "Good Morning Amer-

ica," HBO, "Late Night with David Letterman," "Real People" and "Geraldo," as well as dozens of commercials and print advertisements worldwide.

"I've been all over," said Pat Vick, a 13-year veteran of the troupe. "You don't forget that."

The Poms started out in April 1979 as the Leslie Sun City Pom Pom Squad, performing at Sun City Saints softball games in an effort to increase attendance.

They were taught by Corinne and Roy Leslie, a husband-and-wife team who had danced professionally for more than 50 years.

Now, sponsored by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Arizona, hardly a parade goes by in town — or in the state—

that doesn't feature the familiar gams of the most limber gals in Sun City, who range in age from 50 to 80.

Their calendar is always booked full with a steady stream of appearances at conventions, schools, rest homes, fund drives, charity shows and sporting events.

"I've truly enjoyed being a Pom," Vick said. "They've been truly wonderful to me, and it's a great organization."

The Poms will celebrate their 20th anniversary with a luncheon at the Palmbrook Country Club on April 14.

"It's just a fun, great group to belong to," said one-year member Geri Hoffman. "Everybody is for everybody, and it's just real nice."

Remembering 'Foofie'

Memorial planned for original member of Sun City Poms

By Ryan Konig
The Arizona Republic

Frances "Foofie" Harlan spent much of the past 20 years bringing national and international attention to herself, other members of the Sun City Poms and to Sun City itself.

On Tuesday, she again will be the focus of attention as friends gather to mourn her death and remember her friendship and her contributions to the community.

Harlan, 84, a longtime Sun City resident, died earlier this month after a series of ailments. She and her husband had moved to California months ago to be with their daughter. Her funeral was held there.

The local memorial service will be at 10 a.m. Tuesday at St. Elizabeth Seton Church, 9728 Palmeras Drive, Sun City.



Tom Tingle/The Arizona Republic

Even at age 82, Frances "Foofie" Harlan demonstrated flexibility that inspired one friend to say the dancer appeared to be "made out of Jell-O."

"She was indeed a very rare person, one who put a spotlight on Sun City and proved that just because you are getting up there in years, you don't have to hide in the shad-

ows," said Pat "Vikki" Vick, a close friend and fellow member of the Sun City Poms, a dance troupe

— Please see **MEMORIAL**, Page 4

— **MEMORIAL**, from Page 1

of senior women.

Foofie, as she was best known, was energetic, flexible and charitable. She spent many hours volunteering for organizations, including local food banks and meal programs.

Vick said that Harlan helped give the Sun City Poms an international presence with her vibrant personality and her acrobatic skill.

Harlan was an original member of the Poms, which formed in 1979. During those years, she and the Poms were featured in magazines in Japan, England, France, Germany and throughout South America.

The troupe also made television appearances, and Harlan herself was featured in greeting cards and posters distributed nationally.

Because of its fame, the group has been asked to perform at pa-

rades and festivals held locally as well as in Portland, Ore., Milwaukee, Dallas, Houston, many other cities and a few other countries.

The troupe also performed at a birthday party celebration in Canada for Queen Elizabeth II. About 10 years ago, a quiz show in Japan offered, as one of its prizes, a chance to dance with the Poms.

"Foofie was a character," Vick said. "I used to tell her that she was made out of Jell-O and did not have a single bone in her body — that's how unbelievably flexible she was."

Harlan made an impression on Vick as soon as they met in 1985: "She showed her agility by climbing into a parked car — through the window."

Vick hopes people will also remember Harlan for her community work.

"She spent tireless hours volunteering time on behalf of the community," Vick said. "She was a very busy person."

Pageantry and pride

Sun Citians cheer Glenn at bowl parade

By TINA SCHADE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

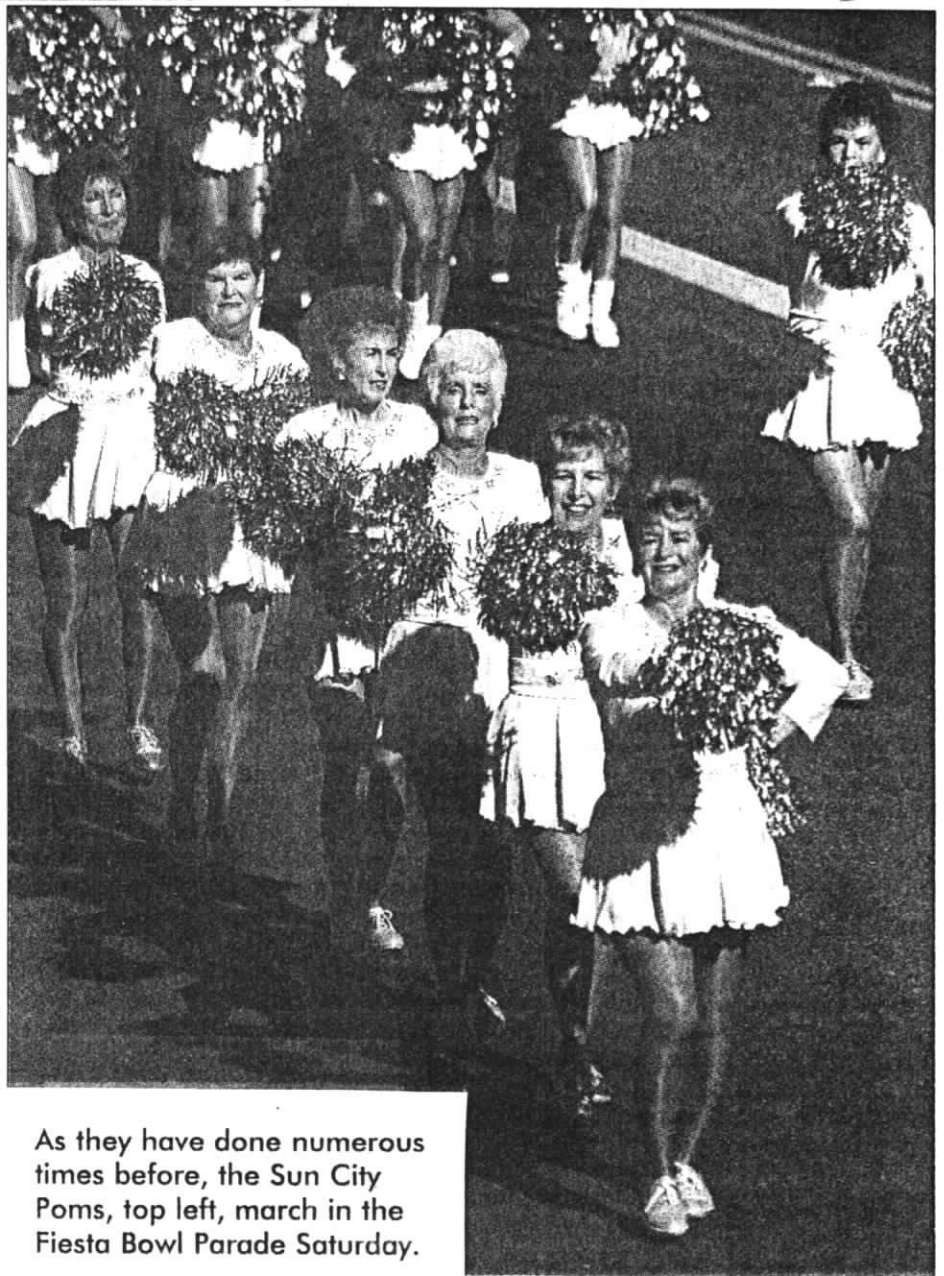
As the white convertible limousine carrying John Glenn and the rest of the Discovery space shuttle crew rolled down Central Avenue as part of Saturday's Fiesta Bowl Parade, Don Martin of Sun City West respectfully removed his baseball cap and saluted humbly.

"Being a senior myself, it's great seeing a senior do something like what he did," Martin said. "I'm proud of him and I'm proud to be associated with him and what he's doing. I think most people feel the same way."

The former astronaut turned senator from Ohio and six other STS-95 crew members completed a 3.6 million mile space mission in November and were named honorary grand marshals for the 28th annual Microage Fiesta Bowl Parade in Phoenix.

"If he can get himself into that kind of mental and physical shape, why can't we?" said Betty Moriarty, who secured a front-row seat on the four-mile parade route stretching from Missouri to Thomas roads.

"I'm just glad to be out here today and I appreciate their support," Glenn said of his senior followers as he tugged on his bright blue NASA jumpsuit.



As they have done numerous times before, the Sun City Poms, top left, march in the Fiesta Bowl Parade Saturday.

Steve Chernek/Daily News-Sun



Steve Chernek/Daily News-Sun

The space shuttle Discovery astronauts, including John Glenn, ride in the Fiesta Bowl Parade Saturday. The two-time space explorer, who drew the loudest applause from the crowd of about 400,000, was described by some curbside spectators from the Sun Cities as a "senior mentor." "I'm just glad to be out here today and I appreciate their support," Glenn said of his senior followers.

Now, they belong to the ages.

For nearly 20 years, the Sun City Poms have been kicking around the globe, spreading the word near and far that there's more to a woman's golden years than cross-stitching, grandkids and AARP discounts.

Tuesday afternoon, 20 years' worth of Poms memorabilia was formally given a permanent home in the Sun Cities Area Historical Society museum on Oakmont Drive.

In a large wood-and-glass display case, the story of the Poms is told in trophies, photos, press clippings and magazine articles. A pair of red shoes, and, of course, a pair of pom-poms in the gals' trademark red and silver adorn the case.

A T-shirt is an artifact from a June 1979 appearance on the long-gone NBC magazine show "Real People." Even more prominent is a jersey from "Late Show with David Letterman," on which the Poms performed a routine in 1997 which, to their chagrin, was never broadcast.

"I think we got more publicity that way than if it had aired," said the Pom's Lory Vaichinger.

Photos show the group's most famous retiree, Foofie Harlan, in poses daunting to women a fraction of her age. She was there in spirit, having moved to California last year.

The display has been a long time coming. "We've been working on this since September 1997," Vaichinger said. "We've been trying for 15 years to find a place to display our memorabilia."

Success came courtesy of Phyllis Street, president of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society board, who formally welcomed the Poms and their collection to the museum Tuesday.

"They certainly do make the life-style of this community better," Street said in her introductory remarks.

Most of the 18 women in the Poms crowded into the small museum, housed in one of Sun City's five original model homes, to get a good look at their history.



Steve Chermek/Daily News-Sun

Pat Vick, second from left, of the Sun City Poms, presents a display case to the Sun Cities Historical Society and its president, Phyllis Street, left, at the society's office and museum in Sun City Tuesday. Other Poms on hand are from right, Margie Klemm, Geri Hoffman and Betty Perrett.

Gloria Trudeau, a retired Pom of 10 years, eyed the display and said "I think it's wonderful. I'm so pleased with it; I never thought it could be so beautiful."

Natalie Alderson, the most durable Pom of them all (even Foofie), said her comrades-in-leotards were "the most wonderful people in the world — they've been part of my life for many years."

The Poms evolved from classes taught by Corrine and Roy Leslie, a professional dance team for more

than 50 years. The Leslie Sun City Pom Pon Squad hit the diamond in April 1979, performing at Sun City Saints softball games.

National and international recognition followed the appearance on "Real People." Since then, it's been a non-stop chorus line of performances at parades, schools, rest homes, conventions, sports events, fund drives and charity shows. There have been many appearances on major television programs, and travels to Canada, Chile, France and Japan.

Now sponsored by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Arizona, the Poms' schedule is as busy as ever.

After the dedication ceremony, the Poms squeezed in a performance in the Oakmont Recreation Center before heading for a rehearsal for a routine at a Sunday's Arizona Cardinals/Dallas Cowboys football game.

In Oakmont, the Poms hit the floor for a rousing rendition of "If They Could See Me Now."

And all anybody could say was "wow."

Poms highstep into history

Thursday, Nov. 12, 1998 Daily News-Sun,

Sun City Pom-Poms

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Poms' Foofie Harlan retires

Japanese troupe joins in farewell

By JEFF OWENS
Staff writer

Foofie Harlan is accustomed to having a leg up on almost everybody else.

Literally.

One is hard-pressed to find an octogenarian more flexible than Foofie, who has become something of a local legend due to her prominence in the Sun City Poms dance troupe. At 83, she still has the legs of a dancer, and can prove it by high kicking over the shoulder the way you bat an eyelash.

And yet her high-stepping sidekicks are the ones who had a leg up on her Monday morning, as Foofie received the double treat of a surprise party for her birthday/retirement, and the arrival at the Marinette Recreation Center of the Japan Pom-poms.

Foofie's influence is truly international - the seven-woman Japanese troupe, which arrived from Tokyo on Sunday, is patterned after the Sun City Poms.

It all started in Tokyo when dancer Fumie Takano was reading a best seller.

"About two years ago, I was reading a book, 'The Age Wave,' in which the Sun City Poms were mentioned," she said.

As she read on, Takano said, she was struck by "how these people were very healthy and having fun in the United States, and I was very much impressed by reading that. And I thought, 'I've got to start pom in Japan.'"

Takano started the Japan Pom-poms in January 1996.

She also wrote to Foofie Harlan, who herself is an avid letter-writer with dozens of pen pals around the globe.

► See Party honors, A5



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun



The Japanese pompon squad, above, watches as the Sun City Poms do a routine at the Marinette Recreation Center Monday morning. The group from Yokohama is touring the United States and stopped in Sun City to visit the world-famous group that inspired them. Foofie Harlan, at left, takes a seat on the sidelines after many years of dancing with the Sun City Poms. Harlan says arthritis is keeping her from dancing. Both pom squads honored Harlan with a surprise farewell party Monday.

Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Party honors retiring dancer

◀ From A1

"Well, she wrote, hoping it would get to me," Harlan said. "I think this is phenomenal — people are always complaining about the post office — but she wrote 'Sun City Poms, Sun City, Ariz.' with no ZIP code, no nothing, and the post office brought it to me.

"I worked for the post office for 20 years, so they ought to know me."

That correspondence led to Monday morning's get-together, when Foofie and Fumie finally met as both dance troupes gathered in the Marinette Recreation Center.

First, the Japan Pompoms entertained their American counterparts with a dance to a number called "Communicate," choreographed by their teacher, Eiko Watanabe.

Watanabe, a recent Tokyo college graduate in her early 20s, was by far the youngest member of the Japanese entourage.

The Sun City Poms answered with a tap dance to "The Military Medley."

Foofie, who officially retired from the Poms in May after 18 years of cartwheels, handstands and high kicks, watched from a seat near the stereo, delighted.

Takano was pretty impressed too.

"I love it," she said. "These ladies' dance is wonderful,



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Foofie Harlan of the Sun City Poms chats with Fumie Takano of the Japanese Pom squad Monday at Marinette Recreation Center.

and we really wanted to learn something. That's one of the reasons we came here."

Takano and her colleagues were dressed in festive Happi coats — traditional Japanese festival garb.

Then it was off to the Union Hills Country Club, where a surprise party had been planned for Foofie.

Both troupes posed together for photos outside the entrance, although getting the giddy Sun City contingent to calm down long enough for a

few snapshots turned out to be an enterprise on the level of Operation Desert Storm.

Inside, Foofie was indeed surprised as colleagues from both shores of the Pacific honored her with gifts and a great time.

Takano presented her with a framed picture of a crane and turtle, Japanese symbols of health and longevity.

Phoebe Saunders, the Sun City Poms' new business manager, said that with the

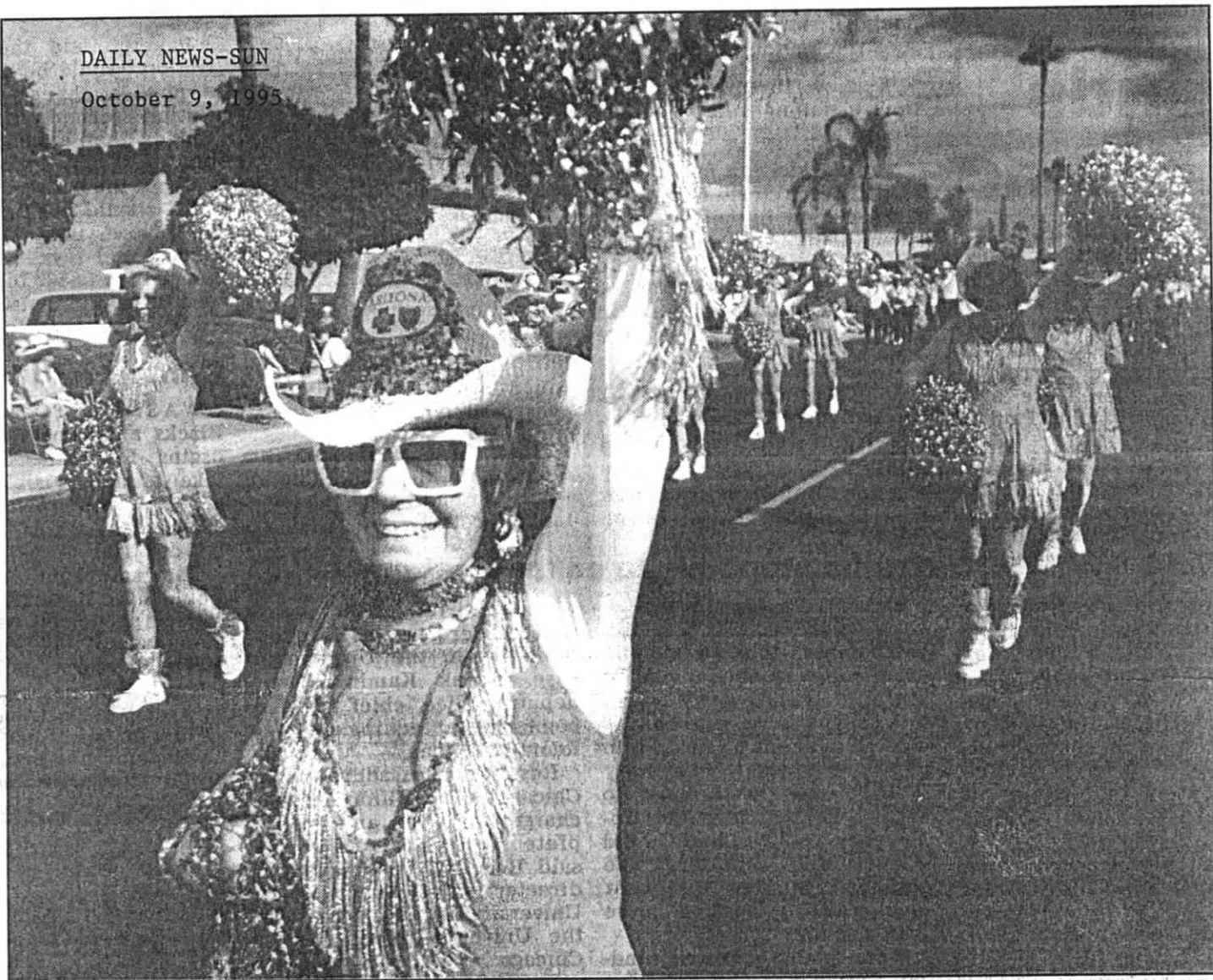
visitors in town, the timing of Foofie's party couldn't have been better.

"While the Japanese are in town would be a really nice time to honor her, because we really didn't want to accept her resignation, and we kept thinking that she would come back," Saunders said. "But I think now we have accepted the fact that she won't be back with us on a full-time basis, so now we're going to honor her with this little party."

Japanese Poms on 'Trade' mission



Ten ladies from Japan, who have fashioned a dance group emulating the Sun Cjty Poms, will be at the Marinette Rec Center on Monday at 8 a.m. to visit and exchange ideas. The event is a result of "pen-pal-ing" with Foofie Harlan of the local group.



The Sun City Poms, photo above, march in the Grand Old West Fest parade in Sun City Saturday. Lynn Platt and Heidi, her dachshund, top photo, await the parade on Del Webb Boulevard.



Peoria police officer Charles Rodriguez and his car Piglette draw looks from the crowd at the Grand Old West Fest Parade Saturday along Del Webb Boulevard in Sun City.

West Fest photos by Steve Cherek



Grand ol' time

West Fest attracts crowds in NW Valley

By J.J. McCORMACK
Senior staff writer

The Grand Old West Fest Parade lived up to its name Saturday, entertaining Northwest Valley residents with traditional homespun parade fare.

Hundreds lined the sidewalks and grass borders of Del Webb Boulevard for the parade celebrating Sun City's 35th anniversary.

A trio of Sun Citians staked out a strategic spot in a La Ronde Centre parking lot, arriving

two hours before the scheduled 9 a.m. start. The threesome, Ann Northrup, Mary Oswald and Marilyn Warren, had breakfast at a nearby cafe, then watched the parade from Northrup's car.

"We sure enjoy a parade from a nice comfortable seat," Warren said.

"We've got all the comforts of home," added Northrup.

Twin sisters Dale Mattson of Sun City West and Gale Gloe of Sun City sat side-by-side in front of the reviewing stand at La Ronde Centre

► See Residents enjoy, A5

Relaxing isn't their style

7-28-95

Sun City Poms going strong after grueling Calgary Stampede gig

By Julia Jones
Special to Community

The Sun City Poms are back from their nine-day gig at the Calgary Stampede, billed as the largest rodeo in the world.

Now they're back in their rocking chairs in the Sun Cities, recuperating after the string of 12- and 14-hour days, including 18 full-blown performances, right?

Not. Business manager Lucile Tabbert and her husband, Art, stopped in Sun City just long enough to repack, then tore off to Missouri and then to Hawaii. Alverta Hettinger jetted off to Australia.

Vocalist Dorothy Jensen and her husband, Glenn, the Poms' sound man, had to laugh.

"We told the Calgary newspaperman that interviewed us, 'If you want to sit in a rocking chair, go somewhere else,' because we don't have time to do that in Sun City," she said.

The truth is, though, the Calgary trip turned out to be a little more strenuous than they'd imagined: In the parade, they got to ride on a big flatbed truck, but they had to climb down a ladder six times to perform their routine along the course and then climb back up, which is heavy-duty stuff for the troupe with an average age of 73.

And two shows a day, early and late, meant walking the whole length of Stampede Park, toting costumes and paraphernalia.

But no complaints: Between

CURTAIN CALLS

performances, Dorothy Jensen said, the Poms visited hospitals and retirement homes, went sight-seeing to Lake Louise and Calgary Olympic Park, and shopping, always decked out in their red-and-white Poms shirts, which always meant autographs and snapshots.

The weather was great, generally, except on the big night of the chuck wagon races and the show with professional entertainers, she said: "It just poured rain, and the audience was just sitting there, clapping, in the rain." The show went on, of course, right up until lightning hit a nearby tower; after a while, the show continued.

"Our sponsor, a financial group, is already after us to come back next year," she said.

In the meantime, they'll perform at the Wrigley Mansion on Thursday for a meeting of professional fund-raisers, and then, on down the road, it's on to the Super Bowl. "We already have the letter; we've been booked," Dorothy Jensen said. "I don't know exactly what we'll do, but we're ready to go!"

They came back from Calgary bearing yet another trophy and an armful of ribbons to add to their collection. The dilemma, Dorothy Jensen said, is where to display them all: "We have so many, and we'd like to be able to display them, but no one seems to have room."

"We told the Calgary newspaperman that interviewed us, 'If you want to sit in a rocking chair, go somewhere else,' because we don't have time to do that in Sun City."

Vocalist Dorothy Jensen

Back in the Valley, summer entertainment continues, as Dark Horse will present country variety tunes at 7 p.m. Saturday at Westridge Mall, at 75th Avenue and Thomas Road, Phoenix.

Upcoming shows at Westridge will include Barrio Latino, Aug. 5; Persephone & Gunsmoke, Aug. 12; the Andy Gonzales Duo, Aug. 19; and Sedona Crossing, Aug. 26. Performances are free.

The Teen Creative Arts Group at the Glendale Public Library, composed of junior high and high school students interested in drawing, painting or photography, is planning to publish a literary magazine, according to Susan Sander, young adult librarian.

They're aiming toward a fall publication, but more artwork, particularly black-and-white drawings or photographs, is needed. Teens are encouraged to join the group, which meets again at 4 p.m. Thursday and Aug. 17. Information: 930-3537.

The R.H. Johnson Library in Sun City West will have a "Sum-

mer Survivor" book sale from 7 to 11 a.m. Saturday in front of the library at R.H. Johnson and Meeker boulevards.

Look for both fiction and non-fiction books, along with puzzles and miscellaneous items priced from 25 cents up. Proceeds will help purchase new books and videotapes for the library. Information is available from Walt Knecht at 546-6672.

The Israeli Boy Scout and Girl Scout Friendship Caravan will visit Temple Beth Shalom, 12202 101st Ave., Sun City, at 1:30 p.m. Saturday. The public is invited to attend the hour of song and dance in Hebrew, Yiddish, Arabic and English.

Baruch Koritan, cantorial soloist of Temple Beth Shalom, accompanied by Ruth Dubinbaum-Koritan, will participate in the program. There's no admission charge. Information: 972-4593.

Theater Works will hold auditions for "Mame" at 7 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday at the theater at 6615 W. Thunderbird Road, Glendale. In the tale, "Auntie Mame" sets about educating nephew Patrick, to the tune of such well-loved songs as "Open a New Window," "Bosom Buddies" and, of course, the title song.

Needed are men and women ages 18 and up, and one boy, age 10 to 12. Auditioners need to prepare an upbeat musical number and be dressed for movement. There will also be cold readings from the script.

6-28-95

Poms take center stage at Canadian event

It takes skill, talent and coordination to participate in the Calgary Stampede, often referred to as the largest rodeo in the world.

And for one Sun City group, it also takes a great set of poms.

Organizers of the Calgary Stampede have invited the Sun City Poms to participate in its 1995 program, scheduled for July 7-16. This will not be the troupe's first visit to the land up north. In 1985, the Poms went to Victoria, Canada, to participate in the queen's birthday celebration.

Several members of the Poms, who have been practicing dance and song routines diligently since they heard the news, leave for Calgary, Alberta, Canada on July 5. The Sun City song and dance troupe, founded in 1979, will take part in the pre-parade entertainment July 7.

The Poms will perform jazz, tap and western routines every day on the Centennial Stage, one of several outdoor venues in Stampede Park adjacent to the rodeo grounds. The group also performs in the Western Heritage Day program July 11 in Stampede Park.

All told, 15 Poms, including singers Margie Klemm and Dorothy Jensen, will go to Calgary along with Arthur Tabbert, the group's emcee, and Glen Jensen, the group's music man. Calgary-bound dancers include Pat Cross, Peg Hansen, Alverta Hettinger, Vera Kraker, Mildred Studnicka, Rose "Zee" Szalay, Lucile Tabbert, Thelma Ward, Delores "Lory" Vaichinger, Phoebe Saunders and Rodie Wright. Over the years the Poms have participated in parades in New York City, Houston, Portland, Ore. and Milwaukee, Wis. Members have also appeared on several television talk shows and in commercials.



Photo by TERI CARNICELLI/Sun Cities Inde

The Sun City Poms will travel to Canada to participate in the Calgary Stampede from July 7 to 16. Billed largest rodeo in the world, the event will feature the Sun City troupe performing a number of song and dances.

Here's a kick: Poms turn 14

By Julia Jones
Special to Community

The Poms had a birthday party Monday: They're 14.

The Sun City Poms, internationally recognized for their spirited routines and general good spirits, were organized in 1979 by choreographer Corinne Leslie with the support of the Del Webb Corp. for a half-time show at the Saints' ballgame at Sun City Stadium.

Since then, they've picked up a corporate sponsor — Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Arizona — and perform more than 50 shows a year. Terry Jones, Geri Parker and Dottie Peabody, members of the pre-Pom dance group, are still active, although Leslie has retired from the dance line. Leslie celebrated her 90th birthday, you'll recall, by sky diving.

Foofie Harlan has gone on to individual fame for her high kicks, splits and flips, with appearances as distant as Paris, and has also appeared with Alverta Hettinger and Park on the "Geraldo" TV show. Pat Vick appeared on Maury Povich's TV show, and Rose Bressler, the present director, Parker and Harlan were on Vicki Lawrence's TV show. Thelma Ward was Ms. Senior Arizona 1991.

They've made commercials for Anheuser-Busch, Nissan Auto and NutraSweet.

There's more to come: Natalie Anderson, a former resident of Brooklyn, N.Y., has been invited to appear in that city's Senior Star Search program.

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The Sun City Poms have turned 14 in style. Members have appeared on national TV, and they've even made commercials for national advertisers.

Special to Community

Here's a kick: Poms turn 14

By Julia Jones
Special to Community

The Poms had a birthday party Monday: They're 14.

The Sun City Poms, internationally recognized for their spirited routines and general good spirits, were organized in 1979 by choreographer Corinne Leslie with the support of the Del Webb Corp. for a half-time show at the Saints' ballgame at Sun City Stadium.

Since then, they've picked up a corporate sponsor — Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Arizona — and perform more than 50 shows a year. Terry Jones, Geri Parker and Dottie Peabody, members of the pre-Pom dance group, are still active, although Leslie has retired from the dance line. Leslie celebrated her 90th birthday, you'll recall, by sky diving.

Foofie Harlan has gone on to individual fame for her high kicks, splits and flips, with appearances as distant as Paris, and has also appeared with Alverta Hettinger and Park on the "Geraldo" TV show. Pat Vick appeared on Maury Povich's TV show, and Rose Bressler, the present director, Parker and Harlan were on Vicki Lawrence's TV show. Thelma Ward was Ms. Senior Arizona 1991.

They've made commercials for Anheuser-Busch, Nissan Auto and NutraSweet.

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Lucile Tabbert has succeeded Hettinger (now consultant) as business manager; her husband, Art, is master of ceremonies for the group.



Special to Community

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Happy Anniversary Sun City Poms

THE WESTER
Apr. 29-May 5, 1993

The Sun City Poms celebrated their 14th anniversary at Portofino's Ristorante on Monday, April 26th.

Sponsored by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Arizona, the Poms perform over 50 shows a year in the valley, Sun Cities communities, out of state and country.

When the Poms started back in 1979 under the direction of Corinne and the late Ray Leslie with the support of Del Webb Corporation at the Saints ball game at the Sun City Stadium, they never anticipated they would have the success and pleasure they have known through the years.

Three of the ladies, Terry Jones, Geri Parker and Dottie Peabody, who were in the dance group which preceded the Poms,

are still with the Poms. Many events have happened during these 14 years. Corinne Leslie retired from the group. On her 90th birthday, she sky-dived at a local airfield which was shown on TV and placed her in the Guinness book of records. Foofie Harlan, who has been publicized for her splits, high kicks and flips, travelled to Paris representing seniors of Sun City. Alverta Hettinger, Geri Parker and Foofie appeared on the Geraldo TV show. Pat Vick represented the Poms on the Maury Povich TV show. Rose Bressler, the present director, Geri Parker and Foofie Harlan appeared on the Vicki Lawrence TV show.

The Poms have made commercials for Anheuser-Busch, Nissan auto and Nutra



Sweet.

Thelma Ward was former Ms. Senior Arizona in 1991. Every year the group marches in the Fiesta Bowl Parade. In addition, the Poms have marched in the Milwaukee Festival of Parades five years; Portland, Oregon Rose Parade; Houston,

Texas Thanksgiving Day Parade for the past two years; and on May 15th, will march in the Yarnell Daze Parade. On May 15th, Natalie Alderson, a former resident of Brooklyn, New York, has been invited to appear in the
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY
Continued on Page B6

Happy Anniversary Sun City Poms

Continued from Page B1

Senior Star Search in Brooklyn. After performing in Oak Park, Illinois, at the Oak Park Arms, the Poms did a show on the Spirit of Chicago cruise show on Lake Michigan.

Lucile Tabbert succeeded Alverta Hettinger (now consultant) as business manager. Her husband, Art, is MC for the group. Two other men, Randy Bittle and Glenn Jensen, handle the music and, along with Art, share in one of the dance

routines and march in every parade.

Every Pom has a job to do and there are many helpers not mentioned. There are two singers, Dorothy Jensen and Margie Klemm, who are part of the group. The entire crew says "We want to say how great we think it is to represent Sun Cities and have the wonderful support of all the residents."

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY
POMS, FROM THE WESTER.**

SL

Sun City
Poms

Rah, Rah!

Poms shake it in the name of fun

The Sun City Poms were organized in 1979 by Corinne and the late Ray Leslie, long time professionals. In January, 1990, Corinne, at 87, retired so she could travel and participate in other activities.

The Poms are presently composed of 20 women and three men, all retirees. They range in age from 63 to 84 and have gained national and international acclaim by performing throughout the country.

The Sun City Poms average 50 shows a year varying in length from 15 to 45 minutes. They do a variety of dances (tap, clog, etc...), including the famed "Pom" routine. The group regularly performs for

organizations throughout Arizona, including sports events, conventions and parades and travels extensively. They have appeared on major TV networks and have been featured in many articles in newspapers and national magazines.

For the fifth consecutive year our corporate sponsor is Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Arizona.

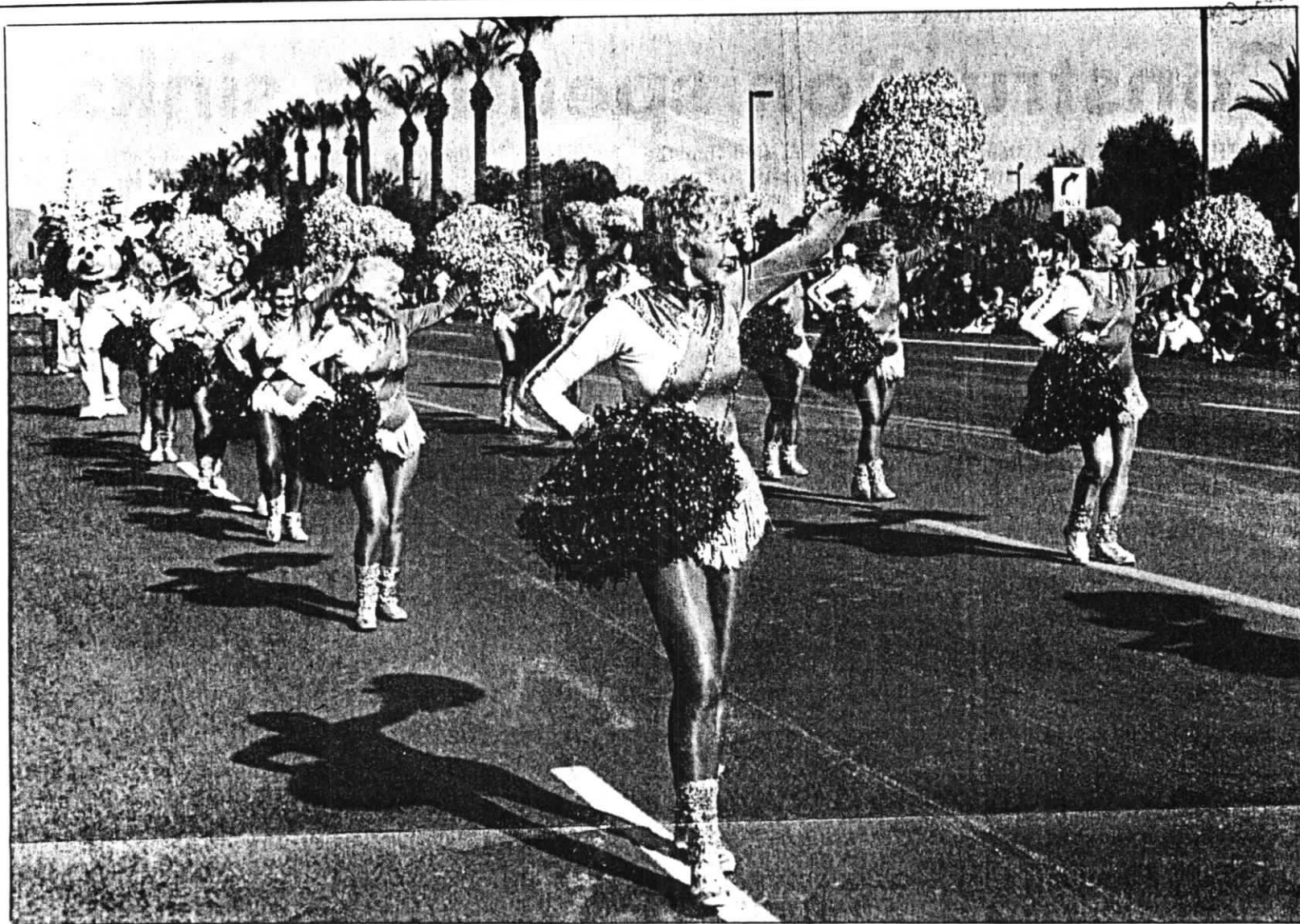
Major performances by Poms:

ABC's Good Morning America, Business Women of America, American Farm Federation, American Heart Association, American Society of Medicine & Surgery, American Veteran's State Convention, Anheuser-Busch TV commercial, Arizona State University, Blue

Cross/Blue Shield (AZ) Con., Bob Hope Show (Sun City), CNN TV News, Coor's Light Biathlon, Del Webb Summerlin Opening (Las Vegas, Nev.), Delta Airlines Floral Parade and Shows (Portland, Ore.), Fiesta Bowl Golf Challenge, Geraldo TV Show, International Drill Team Pageant (Los Angeles), M. Drucker TV Show (Paris, France), Maury Povich TV Show, Milwaukee Festival of Parades, NBC Sunday Night TV News, Nippon TV Show (Japan), Nissan Auto TV Commercial, Northern Arizona University, Nutra Sweet TV Commercial, Oak Park Arms Ret. Community (Ill.), President's Council on Physical Fitness (N.Y.), Pro-Football Legends, Queen Victoria Birthday (Canada), Real People TV Show, Southwest Airlines, Sunkist Fiesta Bowl Parade, Thanksgiving Day Parade (Houston, Texas), Veterans' Day Parade, VFW State Convention.

Major publications featuring Poms:

U.S., American Health Magazine, Arizona Highways, Bristol-Myers 1988 Annual Report, Denver Post, Junior Sports Illustrated, Life Magazine, Modern Maturity, New York Sunday Times, The Arizona Republic/The Phoenix Gazette, Ripley's Believe It Or Not, Smithsonian Magazine, Sports Illustrated, Westerner Club Magazine.



Stephen Chernelk/Daily News-Sun

The Sun City Poms march down Central Avenue in Tuesday's Fiesta Bowl Parade.

Fiesta fun marches at parade

By BRITT KENNERLY
Daily News-Sun staff

It took a lot of feet to cover the three-mile Fiesta Bowl parade route Tuesday, but scores of Northwest Valley residents were willing to toe the line.

Groups including the Cactus and Deer Valley high school bands and the Sun City Poms marched in the 90 minute-long parade, which ran along Central Avenue from Bethany Home Road to Thomas Road. The parade featured 23 marching bands and 50 other entries.

Bands had an average of 300 members, said Abbie Fink, assistant public relations director for the 21-year-old Fiesta Bowl, an annual New Year's Day event at Sun Devil Stadium in Tempe that attracts two of the nation's best football teams.

"That's 6,900 people, and when you consider all the people on horseback, in cars and in specialty entries, it's a lot of people," she said.

Each of the 73 entries also had two "extra feet," in the form of a walking marshal, to help move things along briskly, Fink said.

"A walking marshal is someone who walks along and helps participants keep the pace," she said.

One parade specialty act from the Sun Cities had no trouble sticking to the beat — the Sun City Poms have marched in parades from coast to coast.

In a pre-parade interview, Pom Alverta Hettinger, the group's business manager, said that the Poms planned to march to the tune of "Fidgety Feet."

"The celebration is geared toward chil-



Stephen Chernelk/Daily News Sun

Wearing their trademark fezzes, the El Zaribah Shrine Mounted Patrol takes to the streets near the end of the Fiesta Bowl parade on Tuesday.

dren, and which child doesn't have fidgety feet?" she said.

The 12-year-old dance group has been invited to participate in the 21-year-old Fiesta Bowl parade for at least the last eight years, Hettinger said.

Sixteen of 19 Poms marched in the parade — one member was injured in a car accident earlier this year and two mem-

bers are on vacation. Those participating wore purple and silver outfits and performed one of the Poms' many dance routines.

Although all the Sun City Poms are older than 60, they're just kids at heart, Hettinger said.

"We don't have wrinkles — we have character lines," she said.

Parade wraps up week-long bash

By JENNIFER ARP
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — A nearly cloudless blue sky and thousands of spectators shone over a long and colorful Saturday afternoon parade commemorating the 30th anniversary of the retirement community.

Winding along 107th Avenue between Grand Avenue and the Sun Bowl, the parade was the grand finale of a week-long birthday celebration.

"If you think this celebration was great, just wait until the next 30 years," anniversary events co-chairwoman Jane Freeman said during a post-parade awards and entertain-

ment program at the Sun Bowl.

"It's been a great week. I'm looking forward to doing it next year. How 'bout it?" Sun City Ambassador June Scott Darby asked the Sun Bowl crowd of about 3,000. "Right now, I'm going home and taking a nap."

Although a bit weary, several Sun City residents and visitors applauded the parade and the preceding week of activities as a tremendous display of community pride and spirit.

"It amazed me how many people turned out," said Harlan Clark, a 12-year resident from Baltimore. "I think they did a hell of a job putting it, on who-
See Parade, A5

Parade closes events

—From A1

ever did it. A lot of work went into it."

Warren Bergquist of Sun City West also was impressed with the crowd and parade participation.

"It's pretty nice. I'm surprised they put this much on," he said.

"I just loved everything," said Margaret Yale, a 23-year Sun City resident and parade spectator.

Yale called the entire celebration week "wonderful" and said she also was looking forward to some rest after attending many of the activities.

Parade highlights included several birthday theme floats, the Sun City Poms and Steppers dance groups, a pair of El Zarihah Shrine bands and fire engines of all shapes, sizes and eras.

Parade winners

SUN CITY — Six entries in the Sun City 30th anniversary parade Saturday were singled out for excellence and won trophies.

Six area news media personalities judged the entries. Receiving excellence trophies:

- Paradise Valley High School;
- Shriners Legion of Honor;
- Six Sun City Bicycle Clubs;
- Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce;
- Sun City Pioneers;
- Sun City Antique Car Club.

Sun City

By BRITT KENNERLY
Daily News-Sun staff

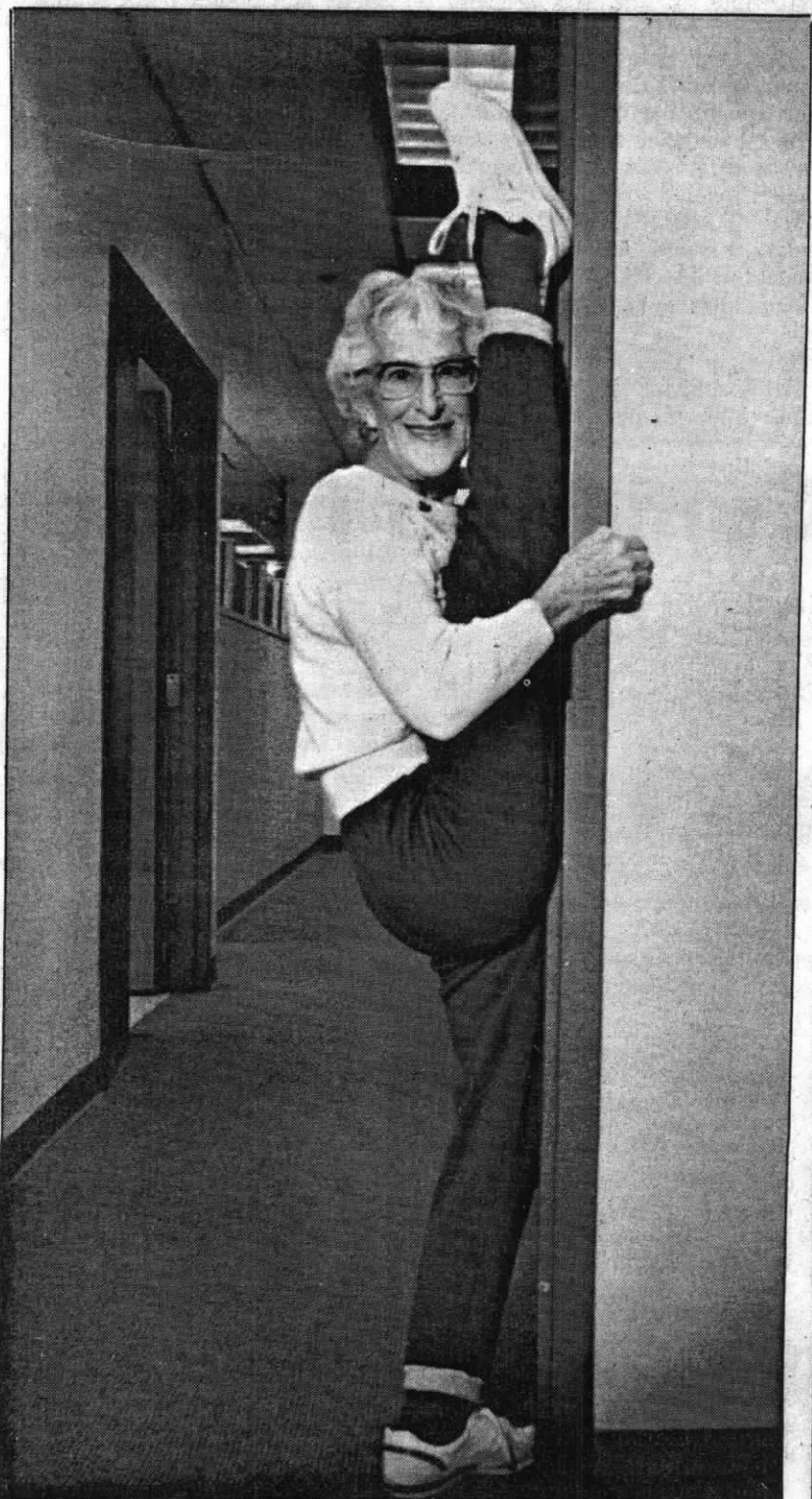
SUN CITY — When Sun City Pom member Foofie Harlan says she flipped over France, she's not talking about her love for the city — she's referring to handsprings.

Harlan has returned from a trip to Paris where she and Jack Sorenson, commander of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City, appeared on French entertainer Michel Drucker's talk show.

"The Poms and one of the members of the Posse were featured in Le Figaro, a popular French magazine, in September," Harlan said. "The article fascinated the French. When they saw the article, they just couldn't believe it."

The article included photos of 100-pound Harlan standing beside a bus stop pole, touching her right ankle to her forehead, and a female member of the Sun City Sheriff's Posse making her rounds.

What they "couldn't believe,"



Daily News-Sun photo by Patrick Knight

SMASH HIT — Sun Citian Foofie Harlan demonstrates one of the side-splitting poses that set Paris on its ear last month.



C'EST FOOFIE — Foofie Harlan with other members of the Sun City Sheriff's Posse.

Pom flips over France

Harlan said, was that "old people" in Sun City are "carrying guns, being sheriff, doing the splits."

The producers of Drucker's talk show, including production director Claude Gagniere, were taken by the photos, too.

Gagniere came to the Valley in November, choosing Harlan and Sorenson, residents of Sun City, to appear on French TV just before Christmas.

"Boy, did Jack take Paris by storm," she said. "He's 6 feet 3 inches tall and wears a big Stetson, cowboy boots and a bola tie he made of a big kachina. It was cold, and as he walked down the streets of Paris with his hands shoved in his pockets, people would stop and say, 'Look at the American cowboy.' Little children wanted his autograph."

Once they were actually on the set of Drucker's show, the treatment was equally impressive.

Harlan opened the show by entering to the strains of "Stars and Stripes Forever."

"They had arranged for eight pom-pom girls to accompany me," she said. "We did a few steps together on this big platform, and then they took me up to the host. He said, 'This is Foofie,' and I put my foot on his shoulder. He drew me close, and we both leaned back and looked at the audience. The look on his face was so cute."

Harlan then told the crowd her age — she's 76 — and was asked if she is retired.

"I said, 'Yes, one day a week I don't do anything,' " she said. Then I got back on the platform and did four kicks, two cartwheels, a handspring and the splits."

The audience, Harlan said, went wild when she did the splits.

"I thought the roof was going to fall down," she said. "These people thought my splits were

out of this world. None of the young girls accompanying me could do them."

Harlan and the host danced off stage as ballroom dancers from around the world danced, and then danced back in after the ballroom performers finished their act.

"We then came on with Jack Sorenson," she said. "They did more talking with him than with me. He explained how the Sun City Posse operates, how it's staffed by volunteers and funded by private citizens. He was great."

Does Harlan, who said she exercises regularly but had no formal dance training other than ballroom dancing with husband Bud, enjoy the brush with fame she is experiencing?

"I'm not Mitzi Gaynor or Ginger Rogers," she said. "I'm just a flash in the pan. Most people don't think I'm grown up yet. But I have plenty of time for that. I got my gray hair from old age, not worry."



Daily News-Sun photo by Frances Guarino

an, fourth from left, marches City Poms, an athletic troupe

of senior dancers that is attracting international attention. The average age in the group is 74.

DANCING



INTO RETIREMENT



Seventy-six-year-old Dottie Peabody (left) starts a series of the high kicks that keep the Sun City Poms in practice — and in shape. At top, 74-year-old Terry Jones makes a few last-minute adjustments to her glittering costume before the start of a Poms performance in Phoenix.

Senior women discover good health, great fun in the chorus line

STORY BY LINDA HELSER / THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Even from a distance, old age started to look a little better to Pat Vick as she watched television one chilly day in Minnesota.

On the screen, 16 fit, post-60 "grannies," decked out in sequin-encrusted costumes and synchronized smiles, were kicking up their heels in the sunshine. An appreciative crowd whooped and whistled.

"I was watching the Fiesta Bowl Parade when I saw the Sun City Poms for the first time," she said. "And they looked so glamorous."

That's when Vick, 63, made up her mind about her future with the senior women's dance line.

"I decided that if I ever got to Arizona," she said, "I wanted to do that. I wanted to have fun and dance with them."

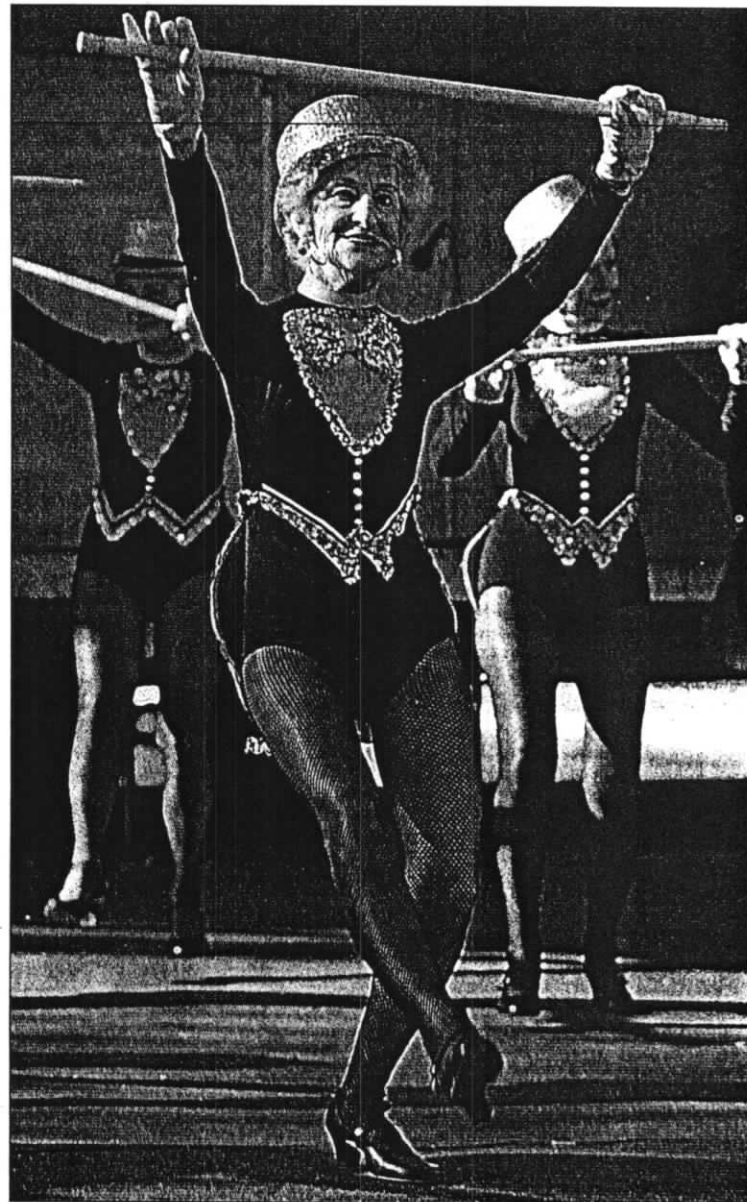
Vick was no born hooper. "I led this sheltered life in Minneapolis as a housewife and mother, and I worked," she said. "And I didn't know how to tap-dance."

Moving to Sun City in 1983 made her dream geographically plausible. But it took a year of dancing lessons, five times a week, to make it possible.

In 1986, Vick finally joined the Sun City Poms, known internationally as the first dance line of its kind. She has helped the Poms and groups like them — there are at least 25 senior dance lines in Arizona — redefine some



Pat Vick, 63, is considered one of the babies of the Poms troupe.



Photos by Tammy Vrettos/The Arizona Republic
Footie Harlan, 77, gave up her motorcycle to join the Poms. She's noted for handstands and flips.

OVER

Heading up the line of flag wavers — a departure for the Sun City Poms — is Evie Hartman, 72. The Poms have been featured in newspapers and magazines as well as on television.



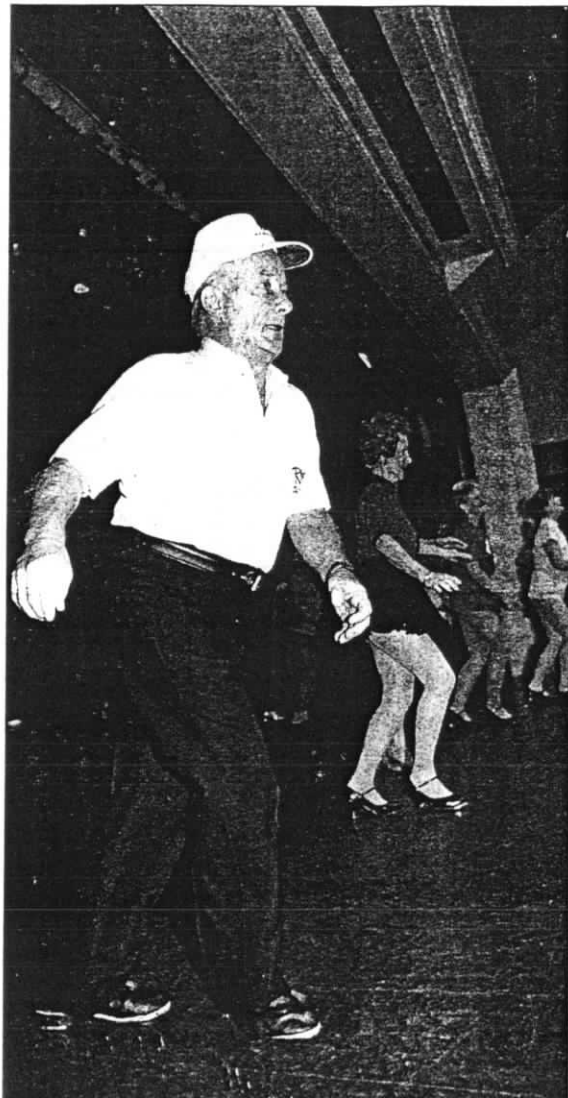
Sun City Poms pick up canes for kicks — and shuffle steps

CONCEPT INSPIRES OTHERS TO JOIN THE CHORUS LINE

"Granny" dance lines, composed primarily of women (with a few grampses thrown in for good measure) who are at least 50 years old, are growing in popularity in Arizona.

Here are the names of some of the groups, along with their locations and the names and phone numbers of the contact people:

- 1. SUN CITY POMS**, Sun City and Sun City West; contact Alverta Diez-Hettinger, 977-2655.
- 2. CONTEMPO DANCERS**, Sun City and Sun City West; Nian Cadman, 583-1113.
- 3. SUN CITY STEPPERS**, Sun City; Norma Jean Denny, 972-6031.
- 4. LEILANI HAWAIIAN DANCERS**, Sun City; Ruth Friend, 977-5176.
- 5. NANI WAHINES**, Sun City; Carol Jaslow, 972-7303.
- 6. RHYTHM TAPPERS**, Sun City West; Valerie Gitter, 584-6056.
- 7. THE CHRISTOPHER GIRLS**, Sun City West; Christopher Brown, 546-0785.
- 8. NANI KOMOHANA TUTUS**, Sun City West; Kay Herzog, 584-1966.
- 9. GRANNIES ON THE ROCKS**, Sedona; Mary Nolan, 284-9004.
- 10. RED ROCKIN' GRANNIES**, Sedona; Ron Roope, 282-2834.
- 11. DANCIN' GRANNIES**, Sun Lakes; Beverly Gemigniani, 895-7052.
- 12. CASA BELLES**, Prescott Valley; Winnifred Turner, 445-2260.
- 13. STYLE PLUS**, Prescott; Winnifred Turner, 445-2260.
- 14. TWC DANCE TROUPE**, Tucson; Kathleen Wilford, 327-7031.
- 15. ARMORY PARK STOMPERS**, Tucson; Helen Hennings, 296-9017.
- 16. THE HOT FLASHES**, Tucson; Helen Hennings, 296-9017.
- 17. GREEN VALLEY HOOVERS**, Green Valley; Helen Hennings, 296-9017.
- 18. GREEN VALLEY LINE DANCERS**, Green Valley; Eva Craft, 625-7141.
- 19. HAPPY HOOVERS**, Cottonwood; Vera Dutner, 646-6086.
- 20. SUMMITT GOLDEN GIRLS**, Payson; Moni Waloga, 474-5460.
- 21. THE CLASSY CHASSIS**, Chino Valley; Sue Summerow, 636-2276.
- 22. FOREVER YOUNG**, Scottsdale; Twila Stern, 990-2537.
- 23. FLAGSTAFF DANCIN' GRANNIES**, Flagstaff; Tina Schimke, 527-1331.
- 24. GOLDEN GIRLS OF PHOENIX**, Phoenix; Olive Cancellieri, 978-0246.
- 25. KELLY DANCERS**, Phoenix; Kathleen Kelly, 943-4524.



Photos by Tammy Vrettos/The Arizona Republic

“

"I have to be in the show because it's the only time I can stand out in a crowd."

BOB BERG

— SUN, from page G1

antiquated notions about what it's like to grow old in America today.

"I think they're great," said 28-year-old spectator Natalie Bradbury as she watched Vick and her 18 cohorts kick and tap during a recent performance in Phoenix. "To be able to do that at their age is amazing."

What's even more amazing is that Vick, at 63, is considered one of the two babies of the group. Members typically are in their 70s or 80s.

Four of them have earned the title "bionic Poms" by dancing even after knee and hip replacements.

Another wonder is 84-year-old Natalie Alderson, the group's oldest member, who crushed a leg, gashed a knee and broke her hand in a head-on car crash in August. "I'll be back dancing in another three months," she said.

For these women who grew up in the shadows of Shirley Temple, vaudeville, the Rockettes and Hollywood musicals, dancing has long been a passion denied.

"Women just love to dance," said Regina "Gene" Sonnenleiter, 80, an original member of the dancing Poms as well as a member of the 1936 and 1948 U.S. Olympic gymnastics teams.

Although many of them treated their daughters and granddaughters to dancing lessons, they generally sat on the sidelines.

"Now it's their turn, and this is a way for them to finally lose their inhibitions and get their own identity," Sonnenleiter said.

"And at our age, you don't have to worry about what people think anymore."

Many of the Poms had never danced before, and some were initially shy about performing. But almost all eventually turn into "hams," Sonnenleiter said.

"All you have to do is bring a camera, and they're ready to pose."

In the process, they appear to be healthier and more vibrant.

"We're all hedging against Old Father Time," said Alverta Diez-Hettinger, 70, who says dancing helps her maintain a 135-pound, 5-foot-6 frame with ease. "But this way, you feel good and don't have to look him right in the eye."

Corinne Leslie, 90, a former ballerina and professional tap-dancer, founded the forerunner of the Poms in 1972 with her husband, Ray, who died eight years ago.

"Del Webb (founder of Sun City) asked us to get a group of dancers

an ad in the paper, found some women, and my husband taught them tap and jazz."

They called them the Scintillating Sisters of Swing.

Leslie said those dancers were the first of their kind to perform publicly anywhere, and they had so much fun that they didn't want to quit.

"So that's how they gradually evolved into the Sun City Poms by 1979."

Recognition grew when the Poms appeared on the television show *Real People* in 1979. "I heard from dance teachers all over the world, even Africa, who wanted to start dance lines like ours," Leslie said.

In Arizona, performances have been in demand. They have performed on *The Maury Povich Show* and Japanese television and have been the focus of articles in publications as varied as *The New York Times*, *Ripley's Believe It or Not* and *Die Zwei*, a German magazine.

"We're trying to limit ourselves to just four shows a month because we've been so busy," said Diez-Hettinger.

At times they've performed "two or three shows a week," Sonnenleiter said.

Leslie retired as director last year at 89, so she would have more time for golf. But her legacy goes on.

"We didn't have any idea how many of us there were until we decided to have a dance review in October," said Mary Nolan, 61, of the Grannies on the Rocks in Sedona. More than 100 post-50 women showed up in Sedona for the three-day festival.

"We had workshops, so we could share ideas," said Nolan, whose group played host to the event, "and the whole purpose was networking."

The weekend culminated with *Grannies in Review*, a show featuring dance numbers by each participating group.

Time is ripe

"It was standing room only," Nolan said. "We printed up 300 tickets, but we also sold tickets at the door that we didn't really have."

Nolan, a retired nurse, is convinced that the time is ripe for dancing, prancing grandmothers.

"Only in the last decade has there been a lot of different thoughts about aging and the aging process," she said, "and only in the last seven or eight years has there been more emphasis in the field of geriatrics. Middle age is no longer considered to be 40 to 45, but rather it's 60 to 65."

And doctor approved dancing, es-

Dancin' Grannies in Sun Lakes, can be a great deterrent to the aches and pains of old age for some people.

"Our basic format is health and fitness," said Gemigniani, 57, "and our whole thing is how to move the body to look attractive and build muscle while dancing."

Not only do the Dancin' Grannies perform, they have produced instructional dance videos and a calendar for 1992.

"Eight years ago, when I started the group, nobody liked the name," Gemigniani said. "We loved being grandmothers, but the image was bad."

Gemigniani, who trimmed her dress size from a 16 to a 4 with dancing, said the dancers are now proud of their name and fitness level.

They can 'go for hours'

When Nian Cadman, 49, started her Contempo Dancers classes in Sun City and Sun City West, "the women had to take breaks every 10 to 15 minutes and were holding each other up," she said. "Now they go on for hours."

Valerie Gitter echoed that sentiment.

"Look up there and you'll see lots of knee bandages and ankle bandages," she said during a rehearsal of Rhythm Tappers of Sun City West, one of the largest senior dance groups, with more than 140 women and 10 men. "But even though there's a lot of people with hurt feet, no one wants to give it up."

More than "hurting feet" troubled 71-year-old Bob Berg, one of the few males rehearsing recently with the Rhythm Tappers.

Wearing a New York Yankees baseball cap, Berg, a retired coach and gymnast, who joined the other dancers because his wife did, would frequently squat near the edge of the stage while the others danced on.

"He needs back surgery, but he won't do it until after our show Dec. 5 and 6," Gitter said.

Berg says he has an appointment to have doctors "chop out part of my lower spine" Dec. 16. But first, he had to dance in the benefit performances at the Sundome on Thursday and Friday nights.

"I have to be in the show because it's the only time I can stand out in a crowd," joked Berg, who is 5 feet 4 inches tall.

Diez-Hettinger is into dancing for other reasons.

"I don't know how long we'll all last, and maybe we should quit while we're ahead," she said. "But it's too

The joke's on Japan

Version of 'Truth or Consequences' puts male ringer in Poms lineup



James Garcia / Staff photographer
The Sun City Poms were in on the fun recently when a Japanese film crew was in the city for a "Truth or Consequences" type show.

By Julia Jones
Staff writer

SUN CITY — What else could go wrong?

The resident ducks were inching back toward View Point Lake in spite of persistent shooing. The penalty game director kept changing the choreography. And Foffie Harlan wasn't sure she could read the words of greeting without her glasses, and she never wears them to perform since she's the most acrobatic of the Sun City Poms.

The filming schedule was so far out of whack that guests invited to view the Poms routine had been sent home to rest for a couple of hours.

Although it was surreal for Sun City, it'll be great on TV, if you happen to be in Japan in November when the film of all this rolls.

And be sure to watch for Suzie Pom Pom, that tall dancer on the left, the one with the great legs.

Suzie's a ringer.

Suzie's a "he," and he's actually a

22-year-old Japanese salesman for Canon business machines. And he was the latest loser in the Nippon TV hit series, "Trans-America Ultra Quiz XV."

He was left holding the bag when the other 10 remaining contestants correctly answered a question, then matched a Sun City resident to a childhood photograph.

It's bad enough to win: When a contestant pounded the button in front of Him, signaling a readiness to answer, his number popped up from his silly cardboard hat, and a slick emcee popped a factual question. After also conquering the photo-match bit, the contestant had to retrieve his own bags and head for the bus, the next city and the next question in this whirlwind trip of one-night stands.

It's worse to lose.

Suzie Pom Pom was done up in a red Lycra costume trimmed with silver sequins and five-inch white silk fringe, made up with pancake foundation and lipstick and wigged with white curls a lot like those Harpo used to wear. Suzie gamely

See POMS, Page 3

POMS

joined the dance line of the Sun City Poms, a non-profit 19-member performing group of Sun City women with an average age of 75.

"He's great! He really caught on so quickly, I told Genie (Sonnenleiter, Poms choreographer) they should have switched to a harder routine," grumbled Poms founder Corinne Leslie good-naturedly, watching a rehearsal.

Suzie had matched Harlan, known as the most acrobatic Pom, split for split, and by the time the segment was completed, had even stopped trying to bend down to fidget with the sequins that trimmed his tall white boots.

Fun in embarrassment

Twenty-eight thousand people volunteered to be contestants in this latest edition of the top-rated Japanese show, a crew member said, and the whole thing is carefully calculated to embarrass. It's a tradition in America, home of "Truth or Consequences," but a fairly new and wildly popular concept among people who had been thought to value personal dignity.

Seventy members of the cast and crew of Nippon TV and Alternate Currents, Nippon's New York City associate, were in Sun City on Tuesday filming the series of 90-minute shows that will be aired in November and December. A heavy shroud of secrecy hung over the proceedings. Questions and locations had leaked out in the past, an Alternate Currents representative said darkly.

Before Sun City, the crew was in Las Vegas. They were off to El Paso on Wednesday.

The set Tuesday was arranged overlooking View Point Lake, a stone's throw from Lakeview Recreation Center on Thunderbird Boulevard.

Talks started back in April, said Marge Mustard, a representative of the Northwest Chamber of Commerce. Then four crew members turned up to survey the site and make plans.

Childhood and current photos were requested of 24 Sun City residents months ago to form the second half of the quiz contestants would face. On Tuesday, the field was narrowed to 10.

Excellent hosts

Norma Silvers of Sun City, who had just been matched to her life-sized childhood picture, said the visitors had been first-rate hosts, supplying plenty of cool water and fruit juice for residents who were helping play the game. "They've absolutely bent over backwards," she said.

And so did the Poms, who didn't even flinch when it was revealed that dancing with them would be the booby prize.

It's actually the penalty game, said Judy Brady, bilingual director of that portion of the program. She explained the format: The loser (always called simply "the loser" until the Poms took pity and named him Suzie) was off being made up and costumed; they'd bring him in, catching the Poms in rehearsal, tell him he'd have to earn a spot by doing the splits, which of course he wouldn't be able to do. Then there would be a brief rehearsal and film at 5 p.m. on Lakeview's bowling green.

The Poms had a noon call for rehearsals. But television, like movies, films at a measured pace. It was 4 p.m. before the loser made his bows to the Poms.

Harlan, matchbook-cover/cheat sheet in hand, said something like *Dozo yoroshiku*, or good morning,

and made her own bow, touching forehead to her rigid knees. The loser's jaw dropped a bit and he tried again, coming closer.

Then Harlan dropped into an alarming split, as is her wont, and the loser followed suit.

The program director's jaw dropped a lot; he ordered a retake, to make sure they wouldn't miss the precious moment.

Pat Vick was designated the loser's tutor, and after just a couple of "one-more-times," Suzie was hoofing gamely along.

Poms flew, legs flashed; a break was called. The loser had to pick up pom bits scattered over the floor, then scurry over to serve colas and juice to the Poms. "It's part of his job, to pick up the mess," said the slick young master of ceremonies, ordering the loser to get to it.

"Suzie did better than I did that time," Pom Thelma Ward said.

Poms business manager Alverta Diez-Hettinger was worried for another reason. "I already spend all my waking hours on the phone," she said, recalling the group's busiest year since its organization in 1979. "I wore out one answering machine, and the new one didn't have enough room for all the messages so now I have an even bigger one."

But the calls keep coming: Pat Vick will fly to New York to appear on "The Maury Povich Show" at 3 p.m. Friday on KTSP-TV, Channel 10, the CBS affiliate, and next week the whole troupe will head for Oak Park, Ill., where they'll appear at a sock hop and then in a halftime performance at the big game: That's Oak Park vs. River Forest High School.

"There's just no end to what we get involved in," Pom Pat Cross said.

Twenty-eight thousand people volunteered to be contestants in this latest edition of the top-rated Japanese show.

To the bowling green

By 5 p.m., the Poms, Suzie and all the crew and hangers-on were finished with rehearsals, and the show moved outside to the bowling green.

The Poms, one more time, swung into their routine. Perhaps one too many times, as it turned out.

Harlan, 77, may have turned 82 flips during one Fiesta Bowl Parade, as she gleefully reported later, but five hours of splits and handstands in rehearsals are a bit much. She faltered, and almost fell out of a shoulder stand, but recovered quickly and finished the routine, smiling along with all the rest.

Suzie's smile was, by then, a bit fixed. After filming the finale of this segment, Suzie would pick up his bag and be bound, not for the bus, but for home. All the way home. Alone.

See, the trip's the thing, said Judy Brady, penalty game director. The winners get to keep traveling until there's just one.

A few years ago, she said, the big winner got, as a grand prize, an island off Nova Scotia that could be seen only at low tide.

"There's a sort of ceiling on winnings in Japan, so the prize is always a joke," she said.

Sun City Pom flips over France

By BRITT KENNERLY
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — When Sun City Pom member Foofie Harlan says she flipped over France, she's not talking about her love for the city — she's referring to handsprings.

Harlan has returned from a trip to Paris where she and Jack Sorenson, commander of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City, appeared on French entertainer Michel Drucker's talk show.

"The Poms and one of the members of the Posse were featured in Le Figaro, a popular French magazine, in September," Harlan said. "The article fascinated the French. When they saw the article, they just couldn't believe it."

The article included photos of 100-pound Harlan standing beside a bus stop pole, touching her right ankle to her forehead, and a female member of the Sun City Sheriff's Posse making her rounds.

What they "couldn't believe,"

Harlan said, was that "old people" in Sun City are "carrying guns, being sheriff, doing the splits."

The producers of Drucker's talk show, including production director Claude Gagniere, were taken by the photos, too.

Gagniere came to the Valley in November, choosing Harlan and Sorenson, residents of Sun City, to appear on French TV just before Christmas.

"Boy, did Jack take Paris by storm," she said. "He's 6 feet 3 inches tall and wears a big Stetson, cowboy boots and a bola tie he made of a big kachina. It was cold, and as he walked down the streets of Paris with his hands shoved in his pockets, people would stop and say, 'Look at the American cowboy.' Little children wanted his autograph."

Once they were actually on the set of Drucker's show, the treatment was equally impressive.

Harlan opened the show by entering to the strains of "Stars and Stripes Forever."

"They had arranged for eight pom-pom girls to accompany me," she said. "We did a few steps together on this big platform, and then they took me up to the host. He said, 'This is Foofie,' and I put my foot on his shoulder. He drew me close, and we both leaned back and looked at the audience. The look on his face was so cute."

Harlan then told the crowd her age — she's 76 — and was asked if she is retired.

"I said, 'Yes, one day a week I don't do anything,'" she said. Then I got back on the platform and did four kicks, two cartwheels, a handspring and the splits."

The audience, Harlan said, went wild when she did the splits.

"I thought the roof was going to fall down," she said. "These people thought my splits were

out of this world. None of the young girls accompanying me could do them."

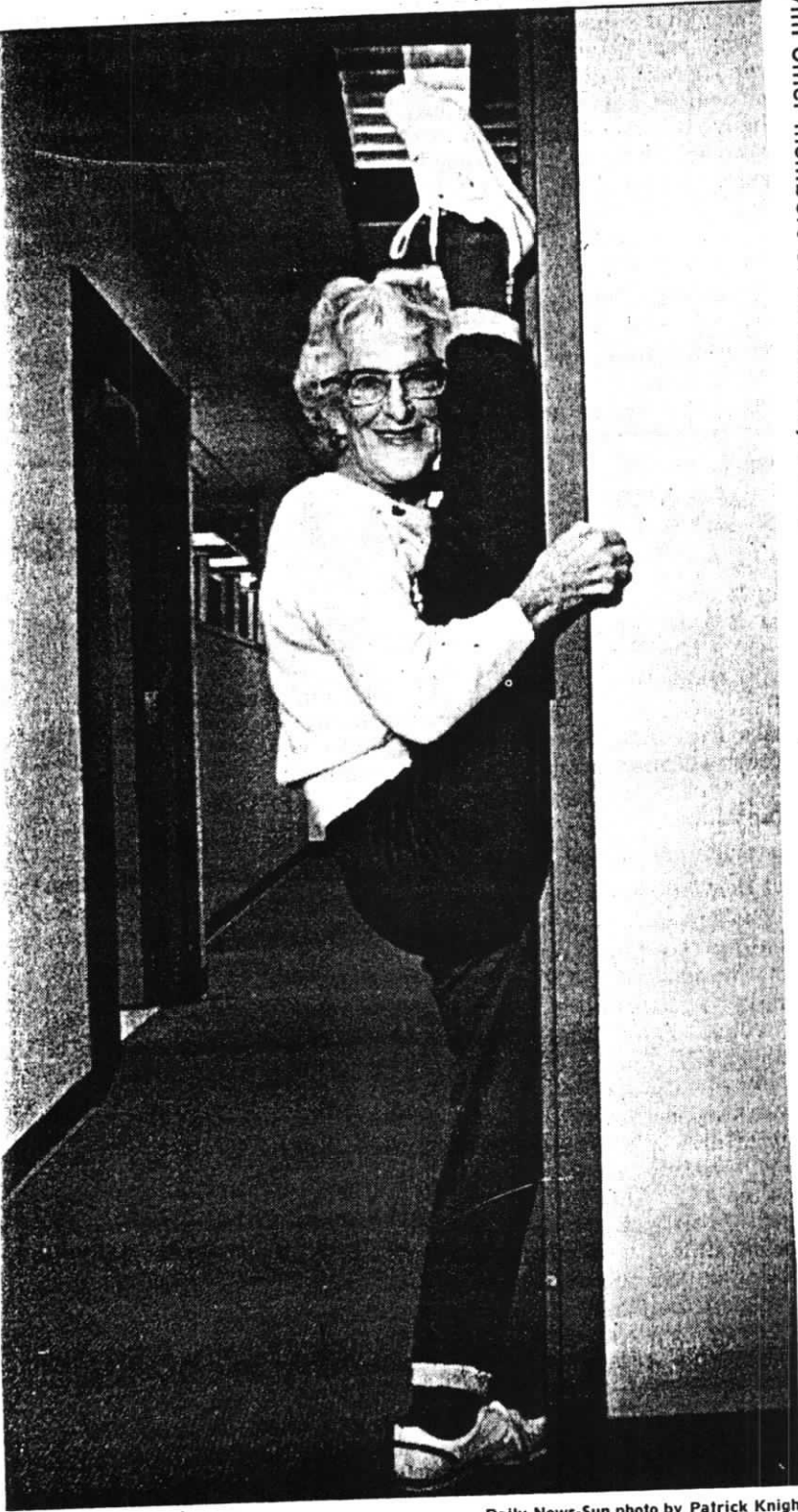
Harlan and the host danced off stage as ballroom dancers from around the world danced, and then danced back in after the ballroom performers finished their act.

"We then came on with Jack Sorenson," she said. "They did more talking with him than with me. He explained how the Sun City Posse operates, how it's staffed by volunteers and funded by private citizens. He was great."

Does Harlan, who said she exercises regularly but had no formal dance training other than ballroom dancing with husband Bud, enjoy the brush with fame she is experiencing?

"I'm not Mitzi Gaynor or Ginger Rogers," she said. "I'm just a flash in the pan. Most people don't think I'm grown up yet. But I have plenty of time for that. I got my gray hair from old age, not worry."

OVER



Daily News-Sun photo by Patrick Knight

SMASH HIT — Sun Citian Foofie Harlan demonstrates one of the side-splitting poses that set Paris on its ear last month.



Daily News-Sun photo by Frances Guarino

C'EST FOOFIE — Foofie Harlan, fourth from left, marches with other members of the Sun City Poms, an athletic troupe of senior dancers that is attracting international attention. The average age in the group is 74.



Daily News-Sun photo by Frances Guarino

C'EST FOOFIE — Foofie Harlan, fourth from left, marches with other members of the Sun City Poms, an athletic troupe of senior dancers that is attracting international attention. The average age in the group is 74.



Daily News-Sun photo by Patrick Knight

SMASH HIT — Sun Citian Foofie Harlan demonstrates one of the side-splitting poses that set Paris on its ear last month.

Sun City Poms drill team gets international attention

By Julia Jones
Staff writer

SUN CITY — Just how did that picture of the Sun City Poms end up in *Life* magazine, anyway?

According to a couple of Poms members, the team couldn't have been more surprised if their picture had appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone*.

"Some French people came out suddenly last summer and took about 10 pictures," said Natalie Alderson, who handles publicity for the 19-member Poms, a drill team with routines featuring the same kind of pompons familiar from high school days.

"It was the middle of this past summer, and the crew — the photographer's name was Frank Fournier — came out and did a piece that we understood was for their magazine, *Le Figaro*.

"We didn't know they were coming, in the first place," Alderson said, "so there were only eight of us here. And then when this came out in *Life*, we were just as surprised as anyone else."

Fame and national exposure is nothing new to the Poms, though, said Alverta

"ABC News called from Los Angeles, too. They want to come out and tape some of our work right after Thanksgiving, and we've just finished taping for Art Linkletter's new show."

Alverta Diez-Hettinger
Sun City Poms business manager

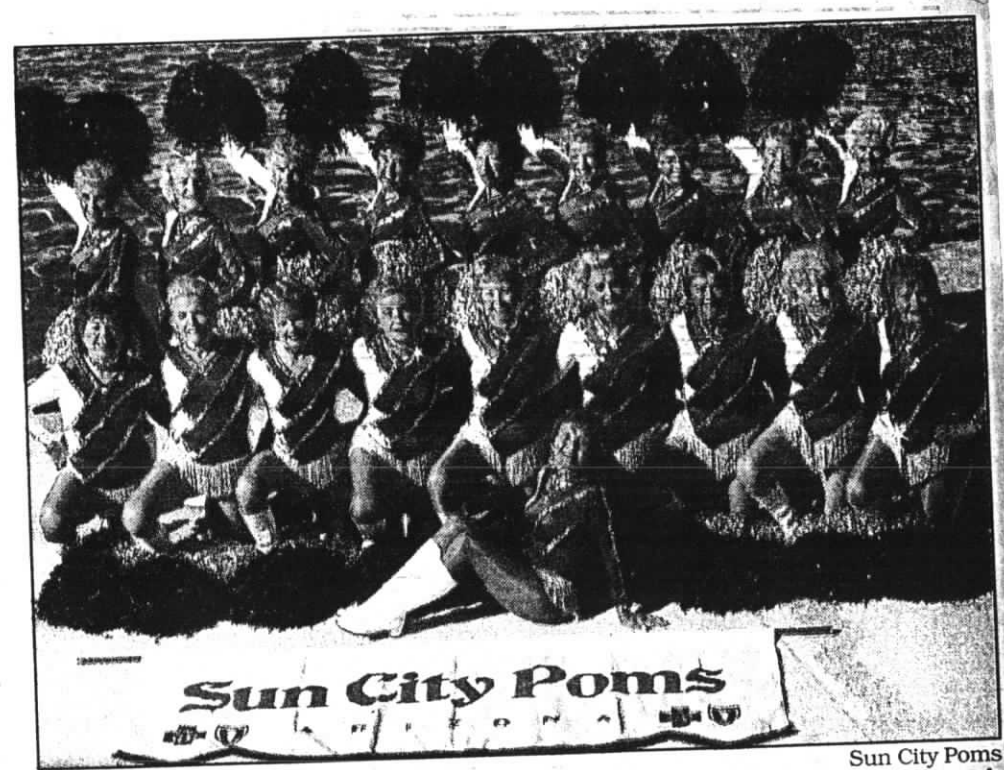
Diez-Hettinger, who as business manager leads the group.

They've been on many national and syndicated television shows and have made numerous appearances on fields of athletic endeavor and in parades.

They will march in the Fiesta Bowl Parade in December for the ninth time.

Now, their fame is going transatlantic.

"Another French outfit — i-o Production Inc. — has interviewed one of our members, Foofie Harlan. They've come to film our rehearsal, and they've offered her a trip to Paris with the head of the Sheriff's Posse to discuss retirement lifestyles on French television Dec. 18,"



Sun City Poms

The Sun City Poms drill team recently has received attention from a French magazine and television crews and had its picture in *Life* magazine.

Diez-Hettinger said. (Harlan, 75, stands out from other Poms by virtue of her back flip.)

"ABC News called from Los Angeles, too," Diez-Hettinger said. "They want to

come out and tape some of our work right after Thanksgiving, and we've just finished taping for Art Linkletter's new show, "Introduction/Billboard," that'll be

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POM

From Page 1

aired in December."

Just as when it made its first appearance at a community softball game in 1979, the corps can field a team of 19 members. That number includes two men to tend to sound equipment and handle announcing duties. In addition, two women serve as vocalists when the Poms produce a full stage show.

"In that group, we've got 23 children, 77 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren," Diez-Hettinger said.

"I don't think we're doing too bad, all things considered. Our ages range from 83 to 61, and I'm the one that's 83; the average is about 72," Alderson said.

"We've been doing this almost 11 years, longer than most of us were in high school and college."

The company was founded by Corinne Leslie, 88, now retired.

"She and her husband were retired entertainers, and when they came to Sun City, they decided to give dancing classes," Diez-Hettinger said.

"We all signed up, for exercise, and then the news media picked us up because we did some routines during a Sun City Saints game. 'Real People' (television show) caught us first, so we were wined

and dined all over Los Angeles during the filming of that show. It just took off from there.

"We had no idea this thing would take over our lives. Most of us had never danced before and never even held a pompon. We don't get paid for this, although sometimes we'll get a donation toward our costume fund, and if the appearance is out of town, we'll accept travel expense money, so I guess that makes us semi-pros."

At the beginning, the Poms' corporate sponsor was Del Webb Corp. For the past three years, Blue Cross/Blue Shield has had that distinction, and the Poms' various publications have carried that corporate signature.

"Publicity always means more bookings, though. I can't tell you how many shows we've done just this month — eight or more, I'm sure. I can tell you we're tired," Diez-Hettinger said.

"I have seven or eight great-grandchildren already, I go to exercise class three times a week, dance class on Tuesdays, aerobics three times, we have rehearsal on Saturdays and Sundays, I do the wash. We're all volunteers in other areas, and some of us have husbands. And my 91-year-old mother

is here, too, so all of that takes time."

The schedule has meant improvement for the Poms, Diez-Hettinger said:

"We're healthier and we have better stamina. We change our routines occasionally. We have eight now, each with a costume change, and we've snatched some of the moves from teams we see at the high school and college homecomings we're invited to. Of course, we're not going to do those four-high things because no one wants to get on top."

Other similar teams have sprung up here and there.

"There are all kinds of other teams," Alderson says, "but we think most are dance groups. It's all right; we can't take every booking anyway. We just take what we do best."

One thing that has changed is their name.

"We've changed it about four times," Diez-Hettinger says. "We were the Pom Poms, and then someone said no, the right way was Pom Pon, and then someone else said that *that* was another name for ladies of the evening. We certainly don't need that, at our age, so we're just Poms now."

10th anniversary Sun City Poms perform in heat to honor founder

By Betty Latty
Gazette correspondent

Sunday's 10th anniversary performance of the Sun City Poms by Leslie in hundred-degree-plus temperatures seemed light-years away from their first freezing non-performance at a Sun City Saints softball game in 1979.

Then, the fledgling pom squad got a big chill while waiting to make their debut between a double-header at Sun City Stadium.

The temperatures kept dropping, and the Poms, in their scanty outfits, got even colder. Around midnight, everyone gave up and went home. The Poms returned the next night, introducing a dance group that would attract international attention.

Sunday's celebration at the Sun Bowl also was a salute to Poms' founder, director and mentor Corinne Leslie.

In the audience was Lee Nugent of Vancouver, B.C., a former Pom who flew down for the anniversary show.

Between Poms' specialities, Sun City's Lucy Hays offered songs from the '20s; there was music by the combo Ocotillo Seven; and baritone Gerry Spencer dedicated a version of "Because of You" to Leslie.

The music Sunday was highly superior to that which preceded those early ball games, said

Audrey Moore, one of the original Poms. "They had this scratchy, oldest record ever of Kate Smith singing 'The Star Spangled Banner'," she said. "I complained so much about it they gave me the job of singing the national anthem before we performed."

The pom squad, which has had several name changes over the years, was created by Leslie and her husband, Ray, now deceased. They drew members from dance classes they taught in Sun City after retiring as professional dancers.

The troupe was sponsored for several years by the then-Del E. Webb Development Co. Its sponsor now is Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Arizona.

Two men are "unofficial" members of the Poms. Randall Biddle is sound systems manager and half of the banner-carrying team that precedes the women in parades. The other half is Art Tabbert, master of ceremonies and "Voice of the Poms." Art is married to one of the dancers, Lucile.

Biddle and Tabbert take in stride their travels cross-country with 18 women; on occasion they have found no separate dressing rooms available, so quarters are shared and the male Poms have become adept in snapping snaps and zipping zippers for their female colleagues.

Sunday's performance brought a lot of memories. "We have had



Gerri Parker, Gloria Trudeau, Natalie Alderson, June Mold and Vera Kraker get tips on toe pointing from Poms director Corinne Leslie.

funny times and disastrous ones," said director Leslie, who turns 87 in June. "I have made a few falls, but never broke a bone. And one girl slipped in a store and broke her ankle."

"Foofie (Harlan) is the funniest thing. Once we were performing at Lakes Club and Foofie discovered that, the night before, she brought home from another gig, the wrong boots. Size 9½, and both for the same foot. She did the show in them."

Harlan is famous for doing the splits, as is Leslie, actions that reportedly once evoked consternation from then-first lady Nancy Reagan.

Then there were a few times

when the prancing Poms' sequined chokers came unfastened and fell to the floor. To avoid possible accidents, the chokers now are fastened with a cord to the costume. They have loosened from throats a few times since, and the Poms have exited high-stepping with chokers dangling.

"I have learned a lot," Leslie said. "When we started, I expected the girls to be professionals, because I was. But they were not as experienced, and I came to know I was being too strict, and they were doing their best."

Evie Hartman studied dance with the Leslies before the Poms were created, as did Gene Sonnenleiter, who took dance

lessons from Corinne for five years before becoming a charter Pom.

Hartman recalled an early morning event at Phoenix Civic Plaza when she needed to make especially quick costume changes. "Their phone lines had gone down, although I didn't know it, and I tore into a room halfway in a change when I saw this young phone repairman under a table. I don't know who frightened whom the most."

In one of the Poms' recent appearances in Milwaukee's annual summer festival parades, "Two of the girls forgot their white boots, so they ran out and bought white knee-high stockings

OVER See ■ Poms, Page B



Members of the Sun City Poms do one of their show formations.

Tim Koors, *The Phoenix Gazette*

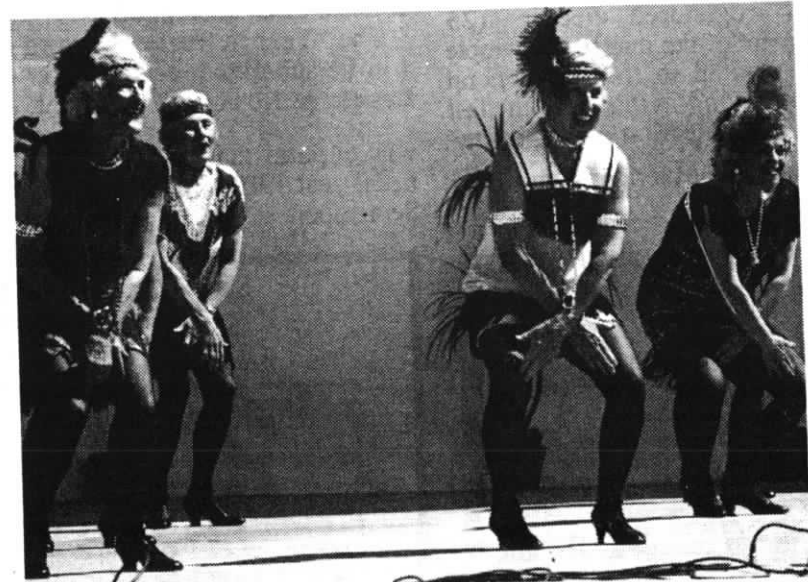
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Sun City Poms celebrate anniversary



The Sun City Poms celebrated their 10th anniversary with a free concert May 7 at the Sun Bowl. The group, founded by Corrine Leslie, entertained the large throng with several dance and tap routines. Musical entertainment was provided by The Ocotillo Seven and soloist Lucy Hays, left. County Supervisor Carole Carpenter presented Mrs. Leslie with an award on behalf of the county Board of Supervisors, calling the Poms "true ambassadors" of the Sun Cities.

Photos By Bret McKeand/Independent



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DAILY NEWS - SUN
May 2, 1990

Poms co-founder to retire

May 2/90

By JACQUE PAPPAS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Her career was star-studded and full of glitter.

And her retirement hasn't changed much. Since Corinne Leslie left a life of show business and moved to Sun City in 1971, her time has been spent nurturing a group of seniors into local celebrities.

Leslie, who formed the Sun City Poms with her late husband, Ray, is retiring as director of the world renowned group after 11 years of dedication.

"This is one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. My years working with the Poms were some of the most gratifying years of my life," Leslie said. "I came to Sun City to retire, but I simply continued doing what I had been doing and loved doing for the past 70 years. I have wanted to do many other things available here in Sun City, but never could find time for them. It's time for me to redirect my energies."

Leslie is by no way retiring from the Poms because she's lost the spunk and talent of her career as a professional dancer. The soon-to-be-88-year-old can still do the splits and dance up a storm.

Leslie's dancing career started when she went off to college.

"After the third day in class I decided I would rather be dancing. My parents couldn't believe it when they found out I was in dancing school rather than college," Leslie said. "But I figure I went to college with all of the years I went to dancing school and studied for months."

Leslie joined Madam Rasch's Ballet and toured throughout Europe with a group of toe dancers.

After two years she joined Maria Gambarelli, a prima ballerina of the times. Leslie danced at the opening of Radio City Music Hall and helped Gambarelli choreograph the closing act at the Chinese Theater in Hollywood.

About six years later, Leslie fell in love with the man who happened to be her tap dance teacher.

She, Ray and another dancer toured the world as a trio with a tap, ballet and acrobatic show.

Leslie was featured in lively costumes on the same bills as Greta Garbo and Al Jolson. Her home is filled with plaques and trophies from her career.

"We never had a fight," Leslie said of her late husband. "When we got off stage we would always count to 10 before we said anything. Other performers always tore into each other when they got off stage, but our counting to 10 always worked."

"I loved performing," Leslie said. "The minute I got on stage I was a different person."

Leslie said she gave up show business to give her daughter "a real home."

She and her husband opened five dancing schools in California before moving to Sun City.

Soon after they arrived in the retirement community, Del Webb Corp. officials asked them to be on a local television talk show.

"That started it. The phone began ringing and soon enough we started teaching danc-

ing classes around here," Leslie said. "That was the start of the first senior citizen dance classes in the world."

Leslie's husband taught a group of seniors he called the "Scintillating Sisters of Swing."

The group performed at the Sun Bowl and eventually developed into what is known now as the Sun City Poms.

"The Sun City Saints (a women's fast-pitch softball team) weren't getting the crowds and we were trying to get more people at the games. One night we performed and the crowd never stopped applauding," she said.

Since then the Poms have received international recognition from a spot on the TV show "Real People" to articles in magazines in Paris and London.

"I think what the Poms have done for people is make them realize that they are never too old to start new things," Leslie said. "The Sun City Saints are supposed to start up again in June and it will be nice to sit in the stands and watch the Poms perform."

Sun Citians Alverta Diez-Hettinger, business manager, and Natalie Alderson, communications coordinator for the Poms, will continue coordinating the 18 women and two men who make up the dance and acrobatic group.

"We were the original group," Alderson said. "Other have followed in our footsteps and there are all sorts of dancers in the area now. We are going to try to keep the Poms going as they have been for 11 years."



Daily News-Sun photo by Stephen Cherek

STEPPING OUT — Corinne Leslie holds one of the costumes she wore in a dance number performed with the Sun City Poms.

Retired dancer's Sun Cities PomPoms

Continued from page 11

Leslies were told to go ahead and try it.

Corrine created the PomPom routines and Ray taught the dancing.

Their first appearance is something Corrine will never forget.

"The way the ball park is laid out you couldn't just walk out to home plate where we were going to perform. You had to go all the way around and come in across the field. You were in front of the crowd almost all the way. The first night we performed you never heard such an ovation and screaming and yelling. By the next game the following week not only was attendance up, but 'Real People' had heard about us and were there too."

The Leslie's Sun City PomPoms were well on their way to national prominence.

National recognition was something that the Leslies knew well.

Corrine had studied dancing in Chicago and New York, training in ballet. She danced at the opening of the Radio City Music Hall and with the Michael Mordkin Russian Ballet and the Albertina Rasch Ballet in the United States and Europe.

While she was on the road Corrine began to hear people talking about a young man in New York who was teaching a new way of dancing, using the whole body. She began to take an interest in tap and



Corrine and the Sun Cities PomPoms show First Lady Nancy Reagan a copy of their 1985 calendar while in New York City to appear at a fundraiser for the President's Council for Physical Fitness.

went to Ray for lessons.

"I never got rid of him," she recalls. Ray and Corrine, with their partner Miriam Morgan, formed a tap/ballet trio. Calling themselves "The Three Canadians," "The New Yorkers," and later "The Leslies" they danced around the world.

In 1936 Corrine married her dancing partner and they honeymooned dancing across Eastern South America. That engagement lasted a year.

It was while they were working in Hollywood that Corrine studied tap with the great Bill Robinson, an experience she'll always remember.

During those years in Hollywood the Leslies taught dance and did choreography. Looking back now Corrine says the senior citizens she is working with are really better dancers than some of the young performers she worked with while doing choreography.

Corrine and the Sun Cities PomPoms celebrate their eighth anniversary in April. Together they

have captured the hearts of the nation. The ladies in the group range in age from 61 to 85 and have appeared on all of the major talk shows on television, took first place in the 1986 Fiesta Bowl Parade, appear annually at the Milwaukee Summer Festival, have performed at Queen Victoria Day in Victoria, Canada, and are in constant demand around Arizona.

Ray passed away three years ago, but Corrine continues to keep the group together.

"I still do high kicks, splits and acrobatics, and one of the women who is 72 also does the splits."

It was because of this ability that Bob Hope recommended them to appear at the annual fund raiser for the President's Council for Physical Fitness in New York in 1985. Hope had performed with the PomPoms at the Sundome Center for the Performing Arts in Sun City West and was very impressed with them. The highlight of the visit to New York came when they met Nancy Reagan.

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RAH, RAH

Let's hear it for the boys: Pom Pom men come out of hiding

By A.J. FLICK
Staff Writer

Forget the saying, "Behind every successful man is a woman"—it just doesn't apply to the Sun Cities Pom Poms. That is, unless you reverse it.

The pom pom squad has had a lot of coverage in the media since it was formed six years ago, most recently when Nancy Reagan honored the troupe.

But two members of the celebrated entertainment group have had to settle for just a smidgen of the glory.

They're both charter members of the group, yet are often overlooked as bona fide Pom Poms.

The unsung Sun Citians are easy to spot—they're usually in front and don't show as much leg as the others.

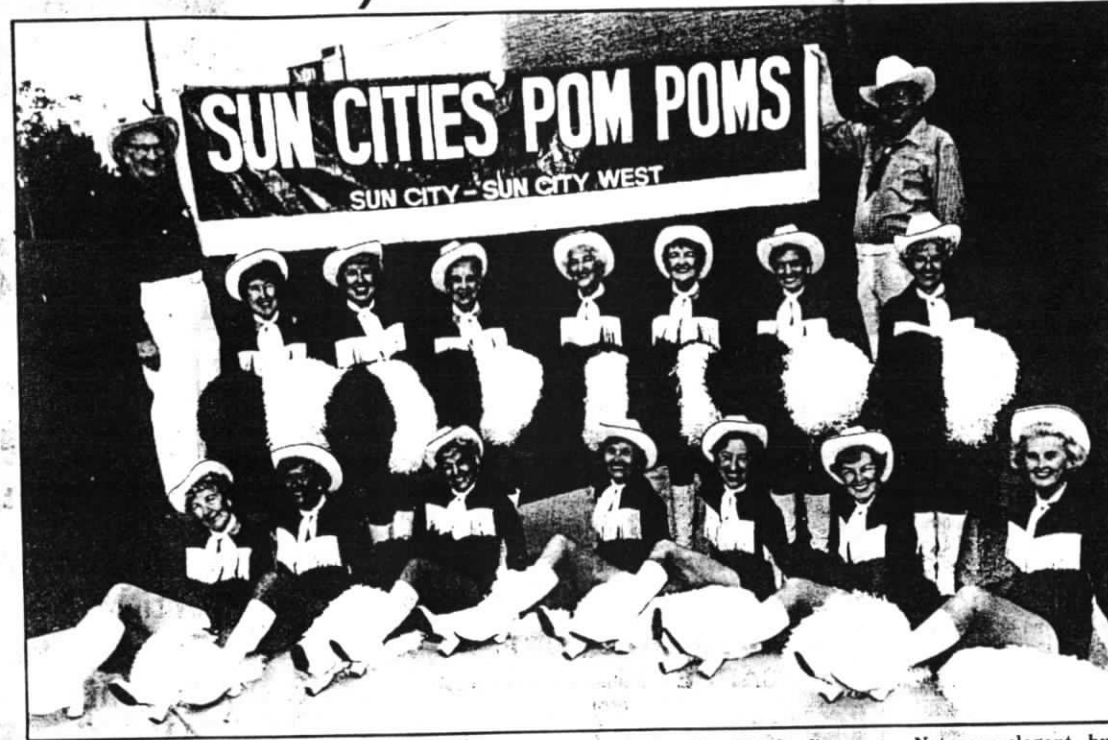
But let it be known that upon occasion, Randall Bittle Jr. and Art Tabbert do get a chance to stand at the edge of the spotlight.

Last May, when the Sun Cities Pom Poms were honored by Mrs. Reagan in New York for the Council on Physical Fitness, the men were included in the introduction.

"That's one of the few times we got announced," Bittle said.

"Yeah, and 17 Secret Service men noted it in their diary at the same time," Tabbert quipped.

The men may joke about losing out on some of the fame bestowed on their



group but are quick to point out some of the advantages.

"Two men get to travel with 16 women—what could be better than that?" Bittle inquired. "We're really only 32. We just look 70 from traveling with all those women."

So they joke about that, too.

Actually, when the men aren't cutting in on a dance with the ladies, they are

performing other tasks just as meaningful.

Tabbert, an ex-IRS employee from St. Louis, serves as emcee. Bittle, who worked with Social Security in Cherry Hill, N.J., is the group's soundman.

They met in a local tap dance class in 1978.

Two years later, they joined the newly organized Pom Poms. The squad banded together mainly as entertainment for sporting

events at Sun City Stadium.

At the very start, Bittle encountered the first of many glitches in his sound system.

"I've had more headaches with the music," he sighed.

While the squad has since updated its sound system, the debut performances were a bit rudimentary with Bittle placing a microphone in front of an ordinary cassette player.

Not very elegant, but it worked. Sometimes.

"Most times, it would blast the people up in the stands. So I used to have my girlfriend go to the top of the stands," Bittle recalled.

A thumbs up or thumbs down let him know how loud the sound was.

"It always seemed that either the girls didn't hear the music or the people in the stands would be blast-

ed."

Now when the group plays to a big auditorium, Bittle's first task is to seek out the sound engineer who is usually positioned out in the middle of the audience.

"It's my job to go out there and start the tape and then run like hell to the stage to do the number," he said.

Emcee Tabbert has found himself in a few predicaments also. As master of ceremonies, he must keep the audience entertained while the ladies change costumes.

"So I tell a few stories," he said. "A lot of times I'm right in the middle of a good one and the girls are ready to go on. So I ask the audience, 'Do you want to see the girls or do you want me to finish?' The men ask to hear the story, but the women want to dance, so I let them."

And they have been in a few scrapes together.

Traveling with a troupe of women, the accommodations seldom include little amenities for men—like dressing rooms, for instance.

"We've dressed in more men's rooms than you'll ever see," Bittle said.

Before one appearance at a zoo, the men went seeking a makeshift dressing room. Ignoring advice from a friendly zookeeper, the men chose what they thought was a suitable sub-

* Pom Poms, All

OVER



Randall Bittle Jr., left, poses with his partner, Art Tabbert. In addition to carrying the banner, the men help with emcee and sound system chores. (News-Sun photo by M.J. Hoppes)

*Pom Poms

—From A10

stitute for a dressing room.

Unfortunately, so did a few dozen snakes.

When they're not getting into trouble, the men are charged with the duty of carrying the pom pom banner in parades.

The walking is sometimes strenuous, but nothing they can't handle, the 70-year-olds claimed.

Tabbert said neither follows any special exercise program to keep up with the energetic ladies: "They take us as we are."

His partner added, "You'd be surprised when you think about walking 2½, 3 miles in a parade. It probably seems like it would take forever."

"But when we come out and people see the banner, the audience just comes alive and they start to yell and holler and clap," he said.

"The next thing you know, the parade is over."

With a chuckle, he added: "I guess people think after the age of 70, to do all those guys do is something to clap for."

Bittle said watching the Pom Poms, who range in age from the 60s to the 80s, inspires the men to keep going.

"We figure if the women can do that, we can at least walk down the street."

The gentlemen also take the stage with the women in a lively Swiss-German clogging dance.

Tabbert pairs up with his wife, Lucile, who is an original Pom Pommer also. Bittle, a bachelor, doesn't exactly have to scrounge for partners.

"Randy—he's run through three or four partners," Tabbert said. "They all want to dance with Randy."

Both men had nothing but praise for their fellow performers.

"They're a great bunch of gals," Bittle said. "A lot of fun. We're like one big family. Like I said before, two men with 16 women, that's pretty hard to beat. Look at all the things we get to do—go to New York, Canada, Milwaukee."

Both said they enjoy their parts in the scheme of the things—even if they do miss out on some of the glory.

In fact, neither is included in the 1985 Pom Pom calendar.

"Oh well," Tabbert sighed, looking at October's women dressed



The entire squad of the Sun Cities' Pom Poms gathers around Nancy Reagan. The group was honored in New York by the Council on Physical Fitness. Randall Bittle Jr. and Art Tabbert take their places in the rear. Tabbert's wife, Lucile, is pictured third from the left in the back row. The men have been in the group since it started, but have kept a low profile until now.

EXTRA

El Mirage
Peoria
Surprise

Sun City
Sun City West
Youngtown

Monday, April 22, 1985 1W-A

PUBLISHED MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY

Retirees warn against cuts

Sun City unionists tell Reagan not to tinker with Social Security

By JIM WALSH
Northwest Valley Bureau

SUN CITY — Retired union workers say they will fight changes in Social Security endorsed by President Reagan, a fellow senior citizen.

"The message is very clear: stop tampering with our Social Security," said Larry Spitz, president of the Union Club of Sun City.

Last week, the club launched a letter-writing and telephone campaign in hopes of persuading Congress to reject the administration's proposed 2 percent cap in cost-of-living increases for Social Security. The drive is part of a national campaign by the National Council of Senior Citizens, a Washington lobbying group.

The cap, which Reagan maintains is not a reduction in benefits, is part of the administration's plans for reducing further increases in the mounting federal deficit.

"They're not going to balance the budget on the backs of the elderly," Spitz said, coupling the proposed Social Security changes with recent changes in Medicare that he charged "are shoveling people out of hospitals prematurely."



Doin' the Big Apple

The Sun Cities Pom Poms perform one of their routines at the New York Hilton

hotel during the National Fitness Foundation Award Dinner held last

Monday. Among the celebrity spectators was first lady Nancy Reagan.

AP

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Sierra City
The Pom Poms' 1985 calendar.



Pom Poms

1985

POM POMS

*'We're going to die with
our boots on'*

By **JULIE WESSEL**
Staff Writer

With music booming and pompons swishing, those high-stepping ladies in red look more like high school cheerleaders at a homecoming game than a retirement-age pompon squad at an early-morning practice.

Just what does it take for a grandmother to be able to move like this?

TRY ENERGY, enthusiasm, dedication, practice and time.

At least that is what three of the 16 Sun Cities' Pom Poms say it takes to get out and perform every Saturday night for the Sun City Saints' games plus some weekday evenings and road trips for other groups.

What keeps them going?

"The response we get when we go out and perform," answered Geri Parker, 70. "We always get a standing ovation. That really gets our adrenalin going."

THE THREE WOMEN'S faces light up as they tell about their performances and the "unbelievable" audience responses.

"It's terrific," said Regina "Gene" Sonnenleiter, 72.

"We all love it, of course," Mrs. Parker said. "Kids go crazy when they see us doing this."

The women practice twice a week for three hours a day, starting at 7:30 a.m.

THE GROUP PERFORMS an average of six to eight times a

month, said its director, Corinne Leslie, who celebrated her 82nd birthday this month.

Aside from their practices and performances, the women do some exercising at home, but none of them has a set exercise program to keep fit.

Mrs. Leslie stays active at home on her trampoline and she also uses dumbbell weights.

Mrs. Sonnenlieter said she also has a small trampoline and Mrs. Parker practices her cartwheels during the week.

DO ANY OF THEM stick to a strict diet to stay in shape?

"I don't have to diet," Mrs. Leslie said matter-of-factly, but quickly added that she doesn't eat anything made with white flour, sugar or salt.

She also avoids eating red meat and sticks to a diet of fish and chicken.

"I don't diet. I eat plenty," she said with a laugh, "but those foods just aren't good for you."

"**I JUST TRY** to eat a balanced diet," Mrs. Sonnenleiter added.

Mrs. Parker said she does not have to diet to stay thin and only one member of the group sticks to an actual diet.

Watching the Pom Poms do their kicks and turns, their headstands and cartwheels, their sharply choreographed formations, one would guess that these were the original Dallas Cowboy

Cheerleaders.

It is hard to believe that none of them was a cheerleader or pompon girl in school.

"THERE WAS NO such thing as a pompon group when I was in school," Mrs. Leslie said.

"I never even thought of being a cheerleader," Mrs. Parker said.

Mrs. Sonnenleiter was in charge of a cheerleading squad when she taught physical education at Taft High School in Chicago, but she never participated in a squad as a teen.

However, some of the ladies have daughters and granddaughters who were cheerleaders or on drill teams.

"IT RUBBED off on us," Mrs. Sonnenleiter said.

All three described themselves as athletic.

"I was always interested in anything that was active," said Mrs. Sonnenleiter, who was not only a physical education teacher at Taft, but also taught dancing and swimming at DePaul University in Chicago for three years.

Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Leslie also were active in sports during their school days.

AS THE THREE women sat together chatting about their upcoming performance in the Milwaukee Second Annual City of Festivals Parade, they seem more like sisters than just friends.

OVER

"It's more like a family," said Mrs. Sonnenleiter.

"We get along beautifully," said Mrs. Leslie. "I'd never have made it without them."

"It's very important because of the relationship among the girls," said Mrs. Sonnenleiter. "We're closer than any other group we are in."

THE WOMEN CARE about each other, worry when someone is sick and are willing to help each other at any time, she added.

They also enjoy support from their families, especially their grandchildren.

"They're so proud of me," Mrs. Parker said, confessing that her two granddaughters carry pictures of the group around with them and show them off regularly.

Mrs. Leslie admitted that her grandson also carries a picture around with him, telling everyone about his famous performing grandmother.

MRS. SONNENLEITER said her grandchildren put posters of the group up on their walls and enjoy telling people about them.

If there were any drawbacks to being in the group, it would be

*** Pom Poms, B4**

* Pom Poms face tough agenda

—From B3

the amount of time the practices and performances take away from other things, Mrs. Leslie said.

"Sometimes I wish we didn't have as many shows," she said, because they take away time for the sports she loves.

"It requires much more time for me than it does for the girls," Mrs. Leslie said.

AS THE DIRECTOR of the group, she looks for music, thinks up and works out routines, takes care of the costumes and helps arrange and coordinate the performances.

She, and her late husband, Ray, were professional dancers and had a dance school in California where they taught jazz, tap and ballet.

Leslie also helped with the Pom Poms and served as the group's emcee until he became ill five years ago, Mrs. Leslie said.

Mrs. Sonnenleiter said there are some days when she doesn't think she can do it anymore, "but then I look at Corinne ... she is an inspiration. I can't be sorry for myself. I have to go ahead and do it."

THE WOMEN said they never dreamed they would be doing this in retirement, al-

though Mrs. Sonnenleiter said she and her husband came to Sun City for an active lifestyle.

For Mrs. Leslie, it's more of a routine.

"I've done this all of my life. I wanted to retire," she said. She would have no problem finding other things to do if the group stopped performing, she said.

But for Mrs. Parker, the Pom Poms keep her retirement jumping.

"I REALLY DIDN'T want to retire. Retirement is boring if you don't get into something. It's nice to be a part of the group," Mrs. Parker said.

How long are they going to keep this up?

"Forever," Mrs. Sonnenleiter said. "We're going to die with our boots on."

"Until we drop out one at a time," Mrs. Parker added.

BUT FOR NOW the 16 Pom Poms, whose ages range from 60 to 82, are still standing—legs kicking to the right and left in unison, counting the beats to each step, keeping up with the music, concentrating on every move and turn and twist.

"Sometimes I think I'll give it up," said Mrs. Leslie, "and then I think, this is my family."

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Director Corinne Leslie demonstrates a new routine as granddaughter Shawna Sarles, 8, watches. Shawna occasionally performs with the group.

(News-Sun photos by Jim Painter)

Sun Cities' Pom Poms are silhouetted against the early morning light while practicing in the Sun Bowl.





Director Corinne Leslie demonstrates a new routine as grand-daughter Shawna Sarles, 8, watches. Shawna occasionally performs with the group.

(News-Sun photos by Jim Painter)



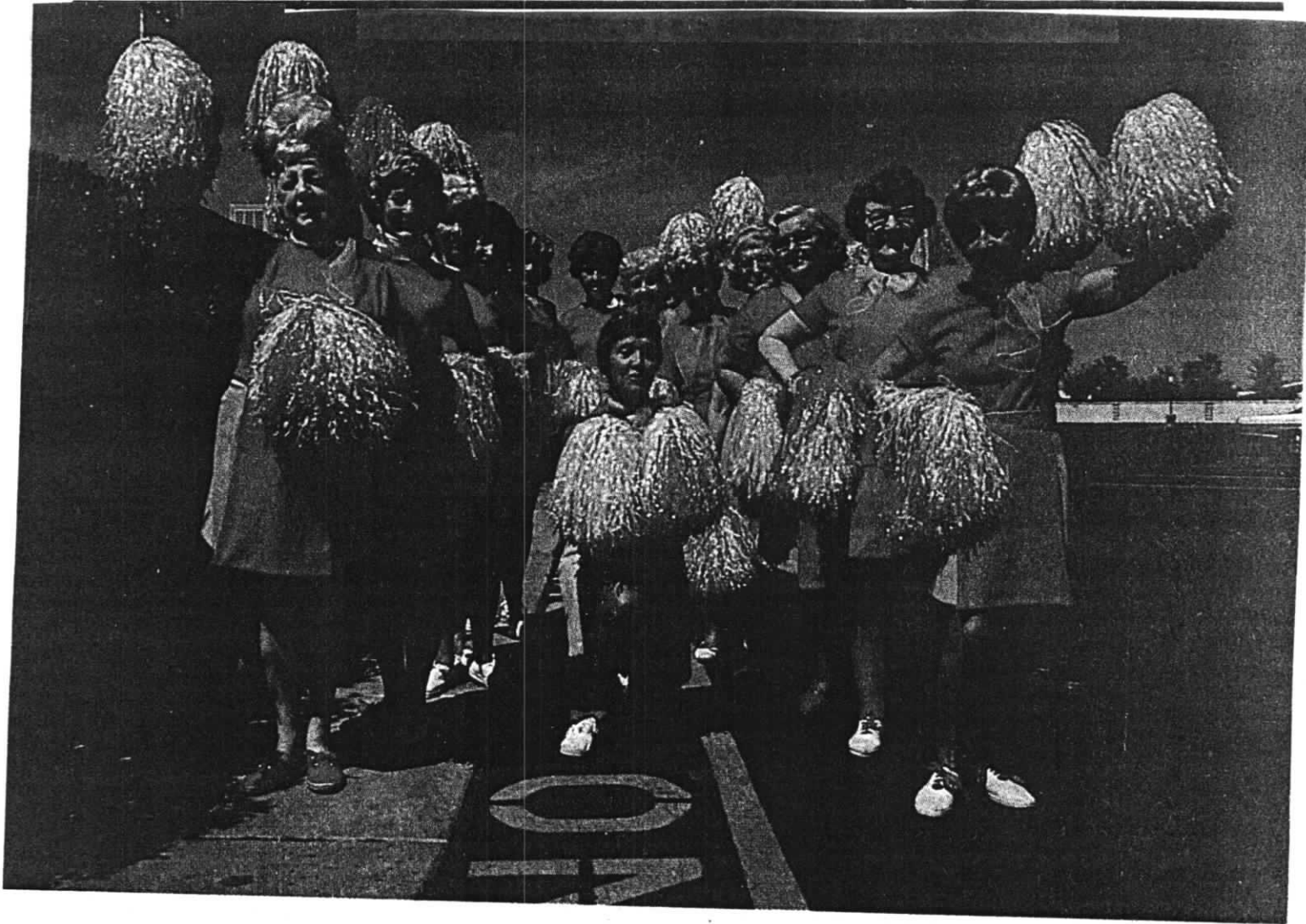
Sun Cities' Pom Poms are silhouetted against the early morning light while practicing in the Sun Bowl.

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NEWS-SUN

Vol. XXII, 260 Wednesday, May 23, 1979 Sun City, Arizona

POM POMS



Shakers, movers

Now Sun City Saints have their own pom pom squad, just like the Dallas Cowboys and the L.A. Rams. The Leslie Pom Pom Squad will perform at Saints home games and, naturally, one of their special numbers will be "When the Saints Come Marching In." They'll also feature some disco numbers, by popular demand. In the center is Corinne Leslie, director, and

from left, Frances Buckholz, Terry Jones, Dottie Peabody, Lucille Tabbert, Terry Naujokas, Gerri Parker, Regina Sonnenleiter, Helen Sisko, Foofie Harlan, Pat Hilton, Natalie Alderson and Betty Huff. Other members are Bea Pederson, Helen Franke, Alexis Decelles, Bess Lockhart and June Mold. More pictures, story on page 4B.

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC Wednesday, July 27, 1983 NW

Pom Pom granny praises the Lord

SUN CITY — Foofie Harlan wears dress pins with the message, "Praise the Lord."

A small plaque above her mailbox here says "Praise the Lord," and her golf cart, naturally, beams the sign, "Praise the Lord."

"Praise the Lord at all times," said the exuberant Foofie during a recent interview.

She said she feels sorry for atheists, and wonders who they thank "for the beauty of the world, for everything good."

Foofie — she said prefers to be called by her nickname because that is what her mother called her — is well-known here as member of Leslie's Sun Cities Pom Poms, a squad of 16 trained, high-stepping, high-kicking dancers.

The Pom Poms have made numerous local appearances and at Sun City Saints games and have received international media exposure.

In Foofie's role in the Poms routine, she turns flips, walks on her hands and does the splits, all with speed and precision.

That's a feat in itself — considering the lithe 100-pounder is 68.

Foofie, however, disclaims any starring role.

"We are a team, and we all work together," she said. "A pitcher would not be any good without a catcher."

The Poms are an outgrowth of Corinne Leslie's dance classes.

Leslie began coaching Poms performances to help bolster the Saints' home games — Foofie joined the dance class in April 1977.

The Poms made their debut nationally in June 1977 on the *Real People* television program.



Foofie Harlan, a member of Leslie's Sun Cities Pom Poms, says, "I will be doing a back flip before I'm 70." She's 68 now.

Thelma Heatwole
Special for The Republic

Roy Cosway
Republic photographs

"We just grew like Topsy afterwards," Foofie said.

Since then, the Poms have appeared on *Good Morning America*, *PM Magazine*, telethons, *Hour Magazine* and have been written about in foreign magazines and newspapers in numerous newspapers throughout the United States.

The Poms have a variety of routines, including a 45-minute dance show that features Latin and Hawaiian dances and tap dancing.

Concerning the "Praise the Lord" pins, Foofie says she is a born-again Christian.

"The pins are not a part of my Poms costume," Foofie said, "but praising the Lord is part of my life."

She said her born-again experience occurred after she and her husband, Cleon, moved here in 1973.

Foofie said she had always been afraid of water more than knee deep.

However, she said when Cleon made a decision to be baptized by a retired Baptist minister in a pond at his desert location near here, she decided to be baptized, too.

"They pushed me down into the water to be baptized, and when I came up I wasn't afraid of the water," she said.

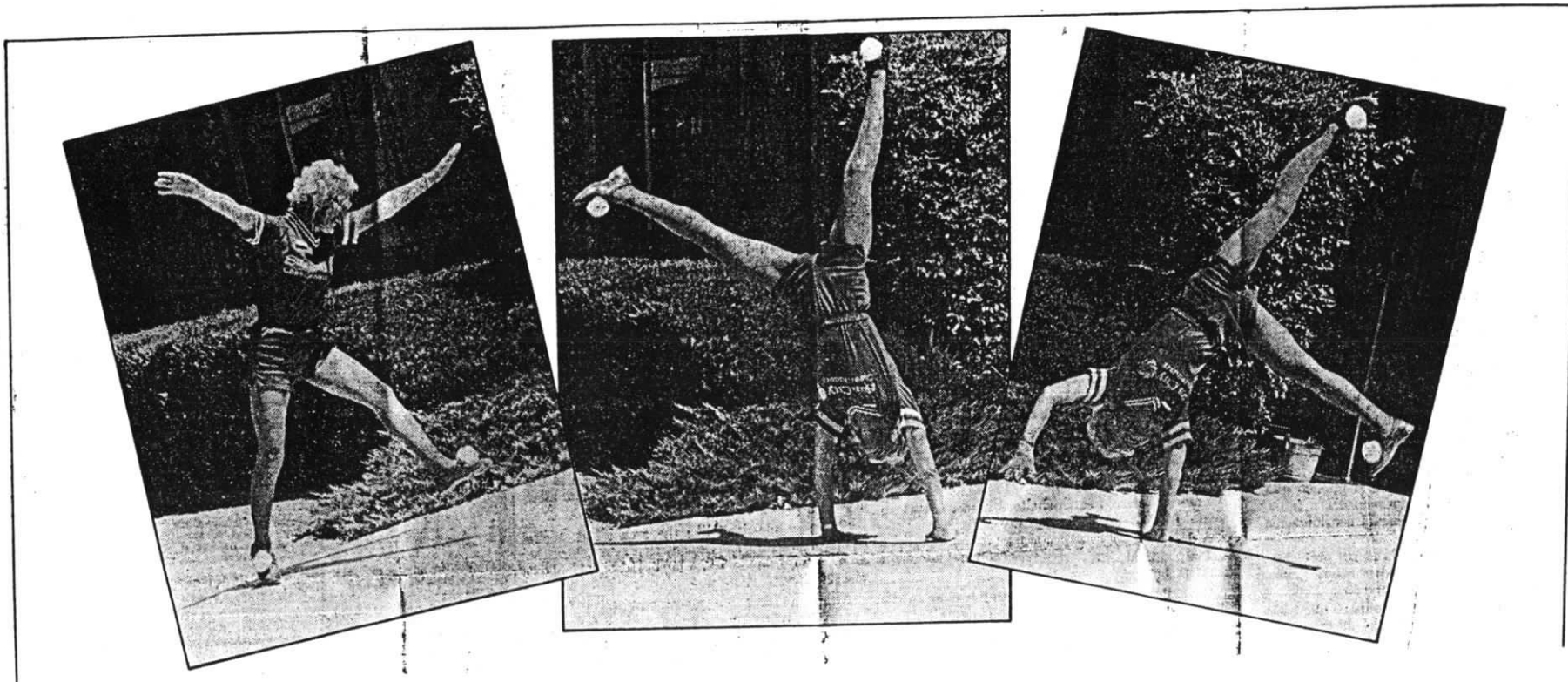
Foofie said she took swimming lessons and since has been in diving exhibitions in aquatic shows.

"I'm still not a good swimmer," she said. "But I'm not afraid of water. Praise the Lord."

Although Foofie said she is Catholic, she attends the El Mirage Bible Chapel with Cleon.

And she said she and her husband devote

OVER — Grandma, Extra 4



Grandma

Continued from Extra 1

a day a week to the Meals on Wheels program here.

Foofie said she also writes on Braille machines to help the blind, and each week serves as an assistant conductor at two exercise classes.

Foofie said she has given her "Praise the Lord" testimony, adding a touch of her showmanship, at a seminar attended by 3,500 people at the Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Okla.

"I don't just say the testimony," she said.

The Harlans first met when they arrived for a dinner at a San Francisco home, riding motorcycles. They married in 1951, and from 1953-54, they toured the country on their motorcycles, she said.

One stop was at the Picture Rock Ranch, then a dude ranch near Tucson, where they worked for a time — as a maid and butler.

Foofie, a grandmother, did post office work for years and still works a day a week in a contract postal station here.

The Poms are in summer recess now, but the agile Foofie said she has another goal in mind.

"I will be doing a back flip before I'm 70," she vowed.



Today

High steppin'

Sun City Pom Pons bask in national fame

By Thelma Heatwole
Special for The Republic

SUN CITY — Tremendous, unbelievable, very gratifying.

That's how Regina Sonnenleiter describes the impact of television and national recognition on the Sun City Pom Pon Squad.

"We have heard from people all over the country," said Ms. Sonnenleiter, a former physical-education teacher. "They saw us on the 'Real People' television program or read about us in the National Enquirer. I just can't believe it.

"Most people say they are delighted with what we are doing. They think it is wonderful that we have such pep and enthusiasm. The thing is to keep active and keep doing things.

"I never dreamed of anything like this. I did it because I thought it was fun and good exercise."

Ms. Sonnenleiter is one of the 20-

member Pom Pon squad, average age 64 (except for one 34-year-old member). The high-stepping squad made its debut a year ago at a performance between a double-header game of the Sun City Saints baseball team. They appeared on television last year and there was a brief repeat of their appearance last week.

Every Monday morning, the silver-haired sisters of swing, members of the Ray and Corinne Leslie dance class, practice at the Sun Bowl. Mrs. Leslie, 77, is the boss.

"The girls say this is one of the most important things that ever happened to them," she said. "All their lives they watched other people doing things like this. Now, they are doing it themselves."

Squad member Gerri Parker considers the reaction to television exposure terrific.

"You get lots of recognition," she said. "People call you a celebrity.

Out-of-state people who have seen us on television want to see the Pom Pons in person when they visit Sun City.

"We just work our heads off no matter how long it takes. I want to be good enough so we will not be ashamed to be out there doing our thing."

Foofie Harlan, lean and limber, works at the post office.

She is one of the acrobats in the production and can turn a cartwheel quick as a flash.

"I meet people from behind the post-office window and they say, 'Where have I seen you before?'" she said. "Someone else adds that I was on 'Real People.' It's hard to be modest and say, 'Oh, that's nothing,' because it isn't nothing. If you were a movie star since childhood, it is nothing. But wait until you are 65

Pom Pons, B2

YOUTH TRAINING — Phoenix Rotary Club 100, American Humanics Inc. and Arizona State University are sponsoring a new college program to train professional youth leaders. **B2.**

POISON PANIC — The greatest danger in poisonous snake and insect bites may be, for most adults, the danger of fear itself, a Tucson safety expert advises. **B3.**

LOSING FAITH — A couple that hosted President Carter in July says U.S. leaders are out of touch. **B4.**

BOOK "INACCURATE" — U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens says "The Brethren" is an inaccurate portrayal of the court. **B6.**

MONEY LINE — Every Monday, Americans wait to invest \$10,000 or more in Treasury bills at the steepest interest rate in history. **B7.**

Pom Pons

Continued from B1

and all of a sudden somebody sees you — it's fun."

Natalie Alderson's daughter keeps a scrapbook on her mother's Pom Pon career. It is entitled, "My Mother — The Star in the Second Half" (of her life).

"When we went to California to make our appearance on 'Real People,' they treated us like real stars," Mrs. Alderson said. "Outside my wedding and birth of my children, that was the most wonderful weekend of my life. They (the producers) treated us so beautifully."

Now that it is "play ball" season, it's spring-training time again for the Sun City squad. Mrs. Leslie belts out the count in voice and hand claps. She suffered an ankle injury when she became so intent directing the squad she

walked off the high stage at the Sun Bowl and fell.

Her husband said he plays second fiddle at Pom Pon rehearsals. He is the "music man," providing the right recorded music on time. The Leslies, professional dance teachers, have been a dance team 50 years.

"We are now considered the oldest dance team still dancing in America," he said. "No one has contested the claim."

Leslie said he is the teacher and supplier of steps. His wife is the choreographer and producer.

The Pom Pons were organized to boost the Saints team.

"Ray and I were going to the studio one Saturday morning," Mrs. Leslie said. "I suggested we give the girls some disco. They just went mad about it. I said you girls are as good as the Texas Cowgirls. How about being Pom Pon Girls for the Saints. The girls yelled. They wanted to do it."

She suggested the idea to the Saints and their booster club.

"They agreed with tongue in cheek," she said.

At the initial performance, there were visiting members of young ball teams present. Some snickered when they heard about the senior Pom Pons. But when the performance drew big applause, the younger folks joined in. Later they asked for autographs.

The Pom Pons perform once a month at three Sun City nursing homes. Already this year, they have appeared at a Broadway store and at the "Hello Phoenix" production in the Phoenix Civic Auditorium. They will present six performances in one day at the Thunderbird High School.

This year the gals wear red-and-gold blouses and short uniforms accented with yellow scarves and white tennis shoes with red pompon bows.