

SUN CITY SHERIFF'S POSSE

On October 30, 1973, the Sun City Posse held its first election of officers. It was held in Social Hall No. 1 of the Lakeview Recreation Center in Sun City, with 40 members present. A Commander, Executive Officer, and two Lieutenants were elected.

The members are those "who came to play but lived to work another day." They work for others—no tasks too great, no tasks too small.

The early years found members patrolling neighborhoods in their private cars, golf carts, and on foot, with a roll of dimes in their pockets to call for assistance from the Sheriff's Office if necessary.

By 1974, the membership had grown to 250 people who cared enough about their fellow man to share their time. Their first uniforms were a white helmet with a Sheriff's emblem and a gold chain with whistle. Later, they wore yellow jumpsuits, and eventually graduated to the regular Sheriff's uniform, which is still worn today.

In 1977, the Posse purchased its own station wagons equipped as emergency vehicles. The Posse was housed in the building at 111th and Peoria, now the home of the Department of Public Safety. In 1989, the Posse moved to their present location at 10861 Sunland Drive. This building has state-of-the-art radio and computer equipment, a garage, training room, briefing room, auditorium, kitchen, reception area, and other offices. All of this is owned by the Posse, and supported through the generosity of the residents and businesses in Sun City, receiving no county, state, or federal funds.

There is an extensive training program of about 150 hours, with no distinction between men and women, as all are trained and work equally. They patrol, train, keep vacation watch records, dispatch, and conduct traffic control, search and rescue, and many clerical duties.

Members who have trained and passed the qualifications as set forth by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, carry guns.

Each member is required to reside in Sun City for at least 10 months a year, and perform at least 23 hours of duty each month. This consists of three seven-hour patrols and a two-hour meeting which is held the first Tuesday of each month.

The Board of Governors consists of 12 elected and 4 appointed members. The Commander is elected, after serving at least one year on the Board, and serves a one-year term. To date, there have been five women Commanders.



To date, the Sun City Posse has received recognition in such publications as The Arizona Republic, Arizona Magazine, National Enquirer, Life Magazine, the F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bulletin, The Phoenix Gazette, The Congressional Record, Daily News-Sun, and The Sun Cities Independent.

In addition to the regular duties, they provide traffic control at various events, including those at the Sun Bowl, a visit from President William Clinton, search-and-rescue missions, assistance to citizens in need of help, and motorists' assistance. In addition, "back-up" is provided for the Sheriff's deputies in circumstances ranging from car accidents to bank robberies.

The Posse is the "eyes and ears" for the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, and abide by their rules and authority.

The most renowned Posse member is President Ronald Reagan, who was made an honorary member of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City in 1993, while in Sun City to visit the organization after hearing about their work.

Sun City West organized a Posse in 1979.

Posse members urge block watch programs

Organization doubles patrols

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

In light of the recent crime wave, some Sun Cities area residents fear they'll be the next victim of a home invasion, robbery, or worse, homicide. Perhaps now, more than ever, seniors want to prevent another tragedy by protecting their neighborhoods.

"The robberies seem to be more and more brazen," said Sun Citian Karen Scheuerman at Monday's Recreation Centers of Sun City member/director exchange, when residents and the board discussed the home invasion/robbery in Sun City early Saturday that left a 51-year-old man visiting from

South Dakota dead. The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office is on the hunt for at least two armed suspects.

"I'd like to know if there's anything we could do as a community," Scheuerman said.

Carl Recker of Sun City also expressed his concern at Monday's meeting. He's currently shopping for a surveillance system to catch suspicious activity on tape after a neighbor recently spotted two unknown men attempting to break into his truck.

"The sheriff's department can't be all over," Recker said. "Crime is going to continue to increase in years to come. We may as well face the facts."

The communities are on high alert with suspects on the loose and MCSO deputies and posse patrols canvassing the area. There have been seven reported home

invasions in the last six months — five in Sun City, one in Peoria and one in Sun City West. Two men were arrested in February in connection with two of the incidents in Sun City and one in Peoria, and authorities have searched for additional suspects.

But residents don't have to cower — the Sun City and Sun City West Posses are advising them to become active with a neighborhood Block Watch or create the program where there isn't one.

There are several hundred Block Watch programs active in Sun City and Sun City West, but participation has tapered off over the years, Posse officials said. Now, there is renewed motivation to promote the programs in every neighborhood.

"There is a new push for Block Watches, very

definitely. The biggest thing with enforcement anywhere is the eyes and the ears," said Jim Demel, commander of the Sun City Posse. "Block watches are very important — they're a method of disseminating information and they get people working together and watching for each other."

Upon request, Posse members from Sun City and Sun

City West will make Block Watch presentations to groups hoping to start one or revamp their old one.

"We're trying to create more where there aren't any, this is the biggest task here. We have a very active group on it right now," Demel said.

Posse members in both communities have doubled their evening and night shifts.

"Our volunteers have been coming in and volunteering to work those late shifts," said Harry Wells, commander of the Sun City West Posse. "They're all concerned."

To schedule a Block Watch presentation with a Posse member, call 972-2555 for Sun City or 584-5808 for Sun City West.

Posses elect new leadership

STAFF REPORT

The Sun City Sheriff's Posse elected Leta McCormick as commander for 2004, while its Sun City West counterpart unanimously elected Richard "Dick" Flora for its top post.

McCormick's administrative assistants will be Tom Bruner, elected as executive officer, and Ron Smith, elected as administrative officer. The new posts become effective Jan. 1.

McCormick served as executive officer under Cmdr. Bill Waits this year, and said she is relying on that experience for her new position.

McCormick and her husband retired to Sun City in 1994. She worked as a switchboard operator and cashier for Commonwealth Edison, and as a clerk for Northern Illinois Gas Co.

She has three children and volunteered at her children's school, her local church and a local hospital. McCormick

also has experience as a clerk and a manager in a small meat packing plant in addition to joining her husband in the publishing business.

McCormick was widowed in 1997 and joined the posse in 1998. She worked in the recruiting office and has represented the posse at fun fairs and the organization's open house and has helped with fund-raising.

Flora became a Sun City West Posse member in January 1994 after living in the community six months. Since then, in addition to his regular posse patrols, he has been a recruiting officer, executive officer of administration and served on the board of directors.

Dick's wife of more than 50 years, Wanda, also is a posse member.

Flora served in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1945 to 1947, and also in the California National Guard while attending the University of

California. His unit was activated during the Korean War and he served as a master sergeant in the second battalion of the 160th Infantry Regiment.

After his discharge, Flora began working with Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.'s aviation products division. His career included managerial and operational positions that prepared him for the varied demands of the posse.

McCormick reminds Sun City residents that the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City is always looking for new recruits. To be eligible, a person must be at least 50 years old, be a Sun City resident for 10 months of the year or more, and have a valid Arizona driver's license. No previous experience is necessary. For information, call 972-2555.

For information about joining the Sun City West Sheriff's Posse, call 584-5808.

Posses brace for busy season

ANNUAL MIGRATION:
Residents heading north
encouraged to sign up for
Vacation Watch

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

It's that time of year again: the annual migration to cooler climes.

Which means it's also the time of year Sun City and Sun City West residents flood their respective posses with Vacation Watch requests. But phone calls alone won't ensure the posses will keep watch while residents are away.

"The people who are leaving for vacation and want us to check their houses, they've gotten the impression that all they need to do is call," said 1st Lt. Leta McCormick with the Sun City Sheriff's Posse.

Signing up for the free Vacation Watch service in Sun City or Sun City West isn't difficult by any means, but it does require filling out a request card. "A telephone call just doesn't do it," McCormick said.

"It's a five-minute thing," she said. The cards call for the residents' name, address, phone number and where they can be reached.

Gerry Niedzwiecki, who heads the Sun City West Posse's Vacation Watch, said it's also important people turn the forms in early to give the posse time to make sure the information is complete and entered into a computer before the homeowners leave town.

"If we have any questions afterwards, the people are still there and we can get a hold of them," Niedzwiecki said.

The posses also ask residents to choose a nearby neighbor or friend to hold a copy of their house keys in case there is a problem in the home. "If we see water coming out of the house, we want to be able to go in, and we don't go in ourselves because we don't want to intrude on the privacy of the home," McCormick said.

Niedzwiecki said the keyholder is called upon to lock windows or secure the home in other ways if the posse patrollers notice something isn't locked. In the rare event an intruder is in the home, keyholders won't be called upon.

"At that time we kind of back away. We call our duty officer and he determines we probably need to call a deputy at that time," Niedzwiecki said.

"The next big thing is, when they come back, please call us," she said. "We watch the house until they either call us or we go to their house and ring their doorbell at 5:30 in the morning" when rounds begin.

Not calling can lead to scary misunderstandings. Niedzwiecki experienced that firsthand.

"I went to check the door and the door opened and there was this person. I just about had a heart attack because no one's supposed to be there," she said. "If they come back even for a few days, call us. We don't want any surprises."

While homeowners are out of town, the posses need to know how to contact them in case there is a break-in, storm damage or any other kind of problem at the home.

"We want to know where you're going to be," Niedzwiecki said. Although the keyholders can access the home, the owners may need to make decisions on how to proceed if a problem is discovered.

Niedzwiecki said the Sun City West Posse tries to check homes once a week, but that's not always possible. Still, they are thorough, using golf cars so they can get out easily for inspections.

It helps if homeowners make sure their house numbers aren't obscured by bushes or trees; and that any tripping hazards such as tree-bracing wires or small

steps are marked with colored flags or tape.

"We need to be able to get around the house," Niedzwiecki said. "We don't want to trip and have an accident."

Niedzwiecki said some residences are more susceptible to break-ins than others. These include homes or condominiums with high walls where intruders can't easily be seen, as well as residences with alley access or those on corners or busy streets.

The posses collect newspapers or unsolicited material that are thrown on driveways of homes signed up for Vacation Watch in order to deter break-ins.

"You'd be amazed at the stuff that can accumulate in front of a person's home," Niedzwiecki said.

Randy Koeppen, circulation director for the Daily News-Sun, said subscribers

can call the newspaper to have their subscriptions placed on hold while they are away.

"From the standpoint of safety, having newspapers sitting in driveways is a tip-off that people aren't home," Koeppen said.

Another option, Koeppen said, is Daily News-Sun subscribers can now stop their driveway delivery and sign up for online delivery so they can view the newspaper on a computer exactly as it appears in print no matter where they are in the world.

"What folks can do is if they want to take the paper with them, they can call that 977-8347 and switch their delivery to online delivery," he said.

The greatest volume of Vacation Watch requests occurs from early April through October, Niedzwiecki said.

Tuesday alone, the Sun City West Posse received more than 60 requests.

Neither posse gives out exact numbers because of security concerns, but each encourages residents to get their cards filled out and turned in as early as possible.

"We're happy to do it, but without the proper information we can't," McCormick said.

OVER

VACATION WATCH

SUN CITY

Drop off cards at the Sun City Sheriff's Posse, 10861 Sunland Drive. Cards are available at the posse, as well as the following locations:

- Sun City Fire Station No. 131, 17017 N. 99th Ave.
- Sun City Fire Station No. 132, 11401 N. 99th Ave.
- Sun City Fire Station No. 133, 13013 N. 111th Ave.
- Bell Recreation Center, 16820 N. 99th Ave.
- Fairway Recreation Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave.
- Lakeview Recreation Center, 10626 W. Thunderbird Blvd.
- Marinette Recreation Center, 9860 W. Union Hills Drive.
- Mountain View Recreation Center, 9749 N. 107th Ave.
- Oakmont Recreation Center, 10725 W. Oakmont Ave.
- Sundial Recreation Center, 14801 N. 103rd Ave.
- Sun City Bell Library, 16828 99th Ave.
- Sun City Fairway Library, 10620 Peoria Ave.

For information, call the posse at 972-2555.

SUN CITY WEST

Drop off cards at the Sun City West Posse, 20450 Stardust Blvd. Cards are available at the posse and the following locations:

- Board offices in the R.H. Johnson Recreation Center, 19803 R.H. Johnson Blvd.
- Sun City West Library at the R.H. Johnson Recreation Center.
- Property Owners and Residents Association Office, 13815 Camino del Sol.
- Sun City West Fire Station 101, 19001 N. Camino del Sol.
- Sun City West Fire Station 102, 20622 N. Stardust Blvd.
- Sun City West Fire Station 103, 13431 W. Deer Valley Road.

For information, call the posse at 584-5808.

DAILY NEWS-SUN

To start or stop delivery of your Daily News-Sun newspaper, or to sign up for online delivery, call the circulation department at 977-8347.



JOY LAMBERT-SLAGOWSKI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Gerry Niedzwiecki of the Sun City West Posse uses a golf car for Vacation Watch patrols the community.



JOY LAMBERT-SLAGOWSKI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Betty Jane Peters of the Sun City Posse shows the Vacation Watch forms residents need to fill out before the service kicks in.

Posses patrol for recruits

FILLING VOID: Sun City boosts ranks because of deployed safety personnel

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The war's impact has trickled down to Sun City, where the Sheriff's Posse is seeking recruits to help fill the void left by deployed emergency personnel.

"Part of the reason we're in such need of people is, so many of the firefighters and police have been called up for duty, so that leaves a lot of gaps," said Betty Wood, recruiting lieutenant for the Sun City Sheriff's Posse. "They call us for any extra help or anything they can't do."

The posse is seeking to fill those gaps by bringing new members into the fold.

In Sun City West, new members also are needed, although for different reasons, said Zoe Schreibman, public-information officer for the posse.

"We need many more people because, just as with any organization, our members age and we lose them to attrition," Schreibman said.

In Sun City, posse members must be at least 50, spend at least 10 months of the year in Sun City and hold a valid Arizona driver's license. They are asked to commit to working at least three patrols a month, with various shifts available.

"It's really a very minimal requirement," said Wood. "But most of the people, by the time they do their training and get in, they want to do a lot of things."

Duties Sun City Posse members can help with include Block Watch, Vacation Watch, mall security patrols during holidays and other special occasions,

To VOLUNTEER

- **SUN CITY:** Call Betty Wood at 972-2555.
- **SUN CITY WEST:** Call the recruiting office at 584-5808.

checks on businesses, and various other activities as needed including helping with traffic during ballgames, golf tournaments and other special events.

"Whatever comes up, the posse is there to do it," Wood said.

Earlier this year, the posse contributed 112 hours to the Fiesta Bowl parade. Last summer, 25 posse deputies contributed 905 hours and drove a combined 4,080 miles to help with the Rodeo-Chediski fire in the White Mountains.

In 2002, the Sun City Posse logged 86,310 hours of duty; of those, more than 39,000 were on daily patrols on Sun City's streets.

The posse has more than 100 members, but given the shift in other departments' resources, more volunteers are needed.

"It's just with some of the sheriff's deputies and firefighters having been called up for active duty, it leaves gaps," Wood said.

Volunteers can work various shifts. Training in traffic and other aspects of duties is provided, and new classes are forming.

The Sun City West Posse patrols more than 1,000 miles a day, 365 days a year, Schreibman said.

"The posse is always looking for men and women to serve in the posse. We are the eyes and ears and heart of Sun City West," she said. "The personnel and the equipment that are out on the road taking care of most emergencies with the help of the police and fire

From A1

department make this one of the safest communities in the country."

Sun City West's posse has fewer than 200 members but would like between 200 and 250 to help cover shifts when people are ill or on vacation, Schreibman said. "It's a good crowd of people because they're well trained," she said.

New recruits take more than 100 hours of training in law and legal issues, CPR, defensive driving, dispatching and vacation watch, she said.

"It's not something that's taught lightly. We have trained instructors who also train other posses such as Westbrook Village. We are a training facility," Schreibman said.

Katy O'Grady can be reached at 876-2514 or kogrady@aztrib.com.

SUN CITY SHERIFF'S POSSE

10861 Sunland Drive

Individuals interested in becoming Sun City Posse members must:

- Be at least 50 years old.
- Live in Sun City 10 months out of each year.
- Have a valid Arizona driver's license.
- Be willing to work three shifts per month and attend the monthly general membership meeting.
- Be in reasonably good health.

For information about joining the Sun City Posse, call 972-2555.

SUN CITY WEST SHERIFF'S POSSE

20450 Stardust Blvd.

Individuals interested in becoming Sun City West Posse members must:

- Be full-time residents.
- Have an Arizona license.
- Volunteer 20 hours a month, including three shifts and one general membership meeting per month.

For information about joining the Sun City West Posse, call the recruiting officer at 584-5808.

See POSSE, A5

Daily News-Sun • Monday, Feb. 14, 2000

Deputies pedal wares

WHEELS: Patrols from District 3 will include bike group

GINGER SCOTT-EIDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Marcopa County Sheriff's deputies are turning in their V-8 engines for a set of pedals.

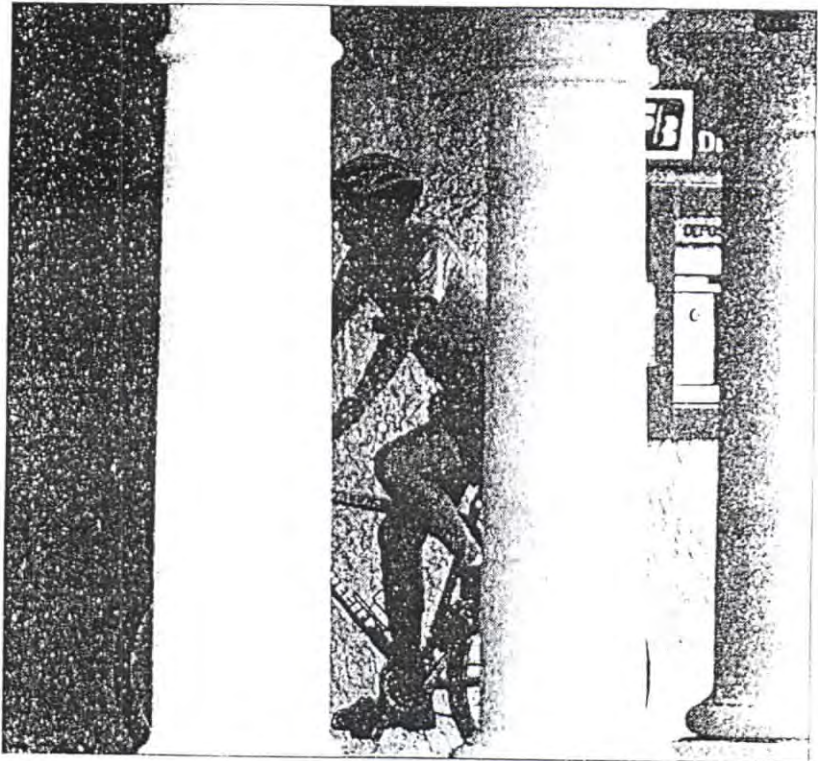
For the first time since 1996, Sheriff's deputies from the District 3 substation, which serves the Sun Cities, are hitting the streets on bicycles in an effort to provide more personal safety to residents of the Sun Cities.

Their first shift was Saturday in Sun City West.

"It's patrolling and being with the citizens," said Sgt. Chuck Siemens, who is heading up the bicycle patrolling unit. "It's a little easier to do that type of policing. Just being on a bicycle, it's easier to stop and talk with people."

The Sheriff's Office has had the bikes since 1996, but the bike program was cancelled during administration changes, Siemens said. The current program has seven bikes that were donated to the Sheriff's Office from the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City, Lakeview Rotary Club and Golden Spoke Cycle Shop.

Deputies will take a shift on the bicycles during days that the district is fully staffed with squad car officers, Siemens said.



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sgt. Chuck Siemens patrols in front of a bank in Sun City West Saturday morning.

Three deputies participated in Saturday's bike patrolling shift. However, the days and number of deputies patrolling will vary depending on who is available.

Siemens said he thinks the addition of the bike patrolling program will help deter a lot of neighborhood crimes.

"We'll be increasing our presence," he said. "Mostly, this has a deterrent effect. You're a little more sneaky when you're on a bike."

Ginger Scott-Eiden can be reached by e-mail at Ginger.Scott-Eiden@thomnews.com or by calling 876-2522.

Posse parking tickets invalid, expert claims

By DAVID MILLER
Staff writer

Sept. 8, 1997

A plan by the Sun City Sheriff's Posse to ticket drivers illegally using handicapped parking is against the law, says a parking enforcement expert.

Law enforcement officials, however, strongly disagree, and other city officials are unsure if the tickets will stand up in court.

The posse plan smacks of "incredible arrogance" and defies Arizona law, which prevents sheriff's deputies from giving tickets on private property in unincorporated areas like Sun City, according to Sandra Cauthron, coordinator for the Phoenix Parking Administration Program.

The posse plans to begin writing tickets in October, said posse commander John Evans.

But Cauthron, who was called in recently to help upgrade handicapped parking at Sun City recreation centers, said the move will result in the tickets being bounced out of court.

"The county can't go on private property to enforce handicapped parking. They don't have the jurisdiction," said Cauthron, who performs parking enforcement inspections for the Arizona Attorney General's Office.

Cauthron said Arizona Revised Statute 28-884 allows local governments to empower "specialists" to

cite parking scofflaws.

But the law doesn't apply to private property in unincorporated areas. In fact, she said, full-fledged sheriff's officers can't even ticket on Sun City private property.

Yet the posse is intent on starting the program and letting the courts sort out the issue, she said.

"It's very clear," Cauthron said. "(The posse and I) looked at the law together. The recreation centers want enforcement, but (the posse) can't do it."

Cauthron, who heads a parking enforcement program through the Phoenix Fire Department, said she recently met with Sun City officials to determine if local handicapped parking is up to code.

On her advice, 93 new signs were ordered for the recreation centers and parking spaces widened for side-loading vans, at a cost of \$5,200.

And while Cauthron praises the Sun City effort, she said it still doesn't give the posse the authority to write tickets.

"I want them to be able to do it, but let's do it by law," she said. An effort to change the law four years ago met with defeat.

Meanwhile, the posse has gotten the green light from the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office to sign tickets, and has even received training from that office, which gives police coverage to unincorporated Sun City, Evans said.

► See Opinions vary, A5

◀ From A1

He dismisses Cauthron's claims.

"She said I shouldn't do it (write tickets). I said, 'I don't work for you, I work for the sheriff's department.'"

Evans added that the best way to test the plan is to begin targeting drivers.

"She said they (the tickets) are going to bounce. If that happens, we'll see what happens," he said.

A Maricopa County official echoed Evans' comments.

"I think she's incorrect," said Sgt. J.D. Smaltz, with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

"At this point nobody has told us it's legally wrong," said Smaltz, who has been training posse members to write tickets. "If somebody has a question about the legality of this, that's the American system. Let them take it to court."

An official with the court that will review posse tickets, however, is not so sure about the parking plan.

"No determination has been made" on whether the posse has the authority to levy parking fines in Sun City, said Peoria Justice of the Peace Lex E. Anderson.

The plan has been put on hold pending a review by the Arizona Attorney General's Office, he said. He's also waiting on word from the county attorney.

An attorney general's spokesperson who consulted with Sun City officials on upgrading handicapped parking said she was aware of the case but couldn't comment on it.

"We can't give out any information," said Geraldine Del Prado, assistant attorney

But Anderson said other communities have faced similar questions and had no problem empowering citizens to pen parking tickets.

In fact, a nearby city has been doing it for three decades.

According to police Sgt. Gil Melendez, the city of Glendale has been using police aides for parking enforcement since 1963.

Another local agency, the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City West, only recently began writing handicapped parking tickets, under the same jurisdiction as the Sun City Posse.

A Wickenburg official, Judge Joseph A. Lizarraga, said he's reviewed two handicapped parking tickets from Sun City West and thrown them both out.

That's not because of jurisdiction questions, however.

Both drivers had legal authority to park in handicapped slots but hadn't installed proper license plates, he said. Both got a break from the judge.

As for the Recreation Centers of Sun City, officials want to bring fines against parking violators but don't want to get caught up in the fray.

"I'm not going to get into that," said Maryann Goodrich, secretary to Recreation Centers General Manager Jim Warfield.

Goodrich worked with Cauthron on bringing the recreation centers up to parking code, and believes all should now be in order.

The new governor said she would probably announce her candidacy for a full term within several weeks.

Posse Only a Gleam in Macicak's Eye

Story,
Stan Steciak

Del Webb Corporation had a banner year in 1978. That's the year homes started going up in SCW. There was no need for a Posse a la Sun City. An alert and hard working County Sheriff, Jerry Hill, had the foresight that one day SCW would need an organization that he called "The eyes and ears of the Sheriff".

Sheriff Hill knew John Macicak from the Sun City Posse. He also knew John was getting ready to move to Sun City West. Jerry leaned on Macicak and convinced him to work at establishing a

Sun City West Posse. John and Rose moved here in November 1978.

John Macicak went looking for interested people. He walked through his new neighborhood. He found Walter Holda digging around in his new yard. John convinced him to join. John said, "I told him the Posse was better work than leaning on a shovel". Then John and Wally searched through the new construction area recruiting Posse people. An early member was Helen Brown. She helped tremendously.

Before organizing legally
POSSE TAKES SHAPE
Continued on C4

1978 Posse Begins to Take Shape

Continued from Page C1

in 1979, the make-shift Posse went on patrol in their own cars. John said they had 18 members. Records indicate that the SCW Posse was incorporated by the Arizona Corporation Commission on June 15, 1979.

No doubt. Macicak, Holda and Brown had many helpers to make the

Posse what it is today. But, they were certainly the movers and shakers and deserve a 'tip of your hat'. For your information, stories will be featured weekly in The Wester telling about a different SCW Posse year until SCW's 14th anniversary will be celebrated, 14 weeks from now.

'They give people a sense of security'

Posses keep eyes and ears open to serve Sun Cities

By Pamela Manson
The Arizona Republic

They call themselves the eyes and ears of the sheriff.

Several hundred Sun City and Sun City West residents put in thousands of hours each year in local posses, working to make the retirement communities secure and to free sheriff's deputies for more-pressing duties.

And they do it at no cost to the taxpayer. "They're very good for the community," sheriff's Sgt. Mark Nelson said. "They give people a sense of security."

The posses are crime-prevention groups of volunteer deputies operating under the guidance of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. Posse members go through at least 80 hours of training in patrol procedures, first aid, traffic

control, communications and other duties. Some volunteers take additional hours of training that qualify them to carry guns.

Once they have completed their training, posse members perform many of the duties of sworn officers. They patrol the streets of Sun City and Sun City West looking for suspicious activity, handle traffic-control duties and participate in search-and-rescue missions.

They also answer emergency medical calls, keep an eye on the homes of those on vacation and check up on residents when, for example, they fail to appear for a regular club meeting.

Posse members in the retirement communities are available throughout the week, whereas volunteers with other posses frequently are at their regular jobs, Nelson said.

— See POSSES, page B3

POSSES, from page B1

"We hit them here for help in the week," he said. "They're unique in that aspect."

The work of the posse members frequently lacks drama, but it adds to the sense of caring in the community.

Posse member Herbert Cahill went to the residence of a Sun City woman when she failed to meet a friend one morning. He was at the woman's house five minutes after a posse dispatcher received a call from the worried friend.

The woman was there, safe and sound, having decided to go to church that morning.

For Dick Schiefelbein, those types of "humanitarian" acts bring him the most satisfaction as a member of the Sun City Posse.

For example, in an emergency, some residents are too distraught to know what to do, said Schiefelbein, executive officer of operations.

"Sometimes, they're so emotional," he said. "We'll make the call to relatives for them. We'll drive them to

the hospital. We'll lock their front door before we leave."

Schiefelbein added that Sun City and Sun City West residents sometimes feel more comfortable talking to posse members, who are closer to them in age, than to most regular deputies, who are younger.

Richard Baikie, commander of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City West, said search-and-rescue missions are an important part of the work. When mentally confused people wander away from home, it is imperative that they be found quickly, he said.

The posses grew from groups of residents patrolling the streets in their own cars in the 1970s to organizations that are almost indistinguishable from professional police agencies.

The posses operate out of modern buildings equipped with state-of-the-art communications equipment. Members wear uniforms and patrol in marked cars. With forces totaling 170 to 200 members each, the posses are larger than many Valley police forces.

All of the members work for free. Jack Goodrich, executive officer of

the Sun City Posse, said that members are required to work 20 hours a month, or 240 hours a year, but that a few put in as many as 2,000 a year.

Baikie said that each year the posses each put in about \$1 million worth of work. That doesn't count the cost of the posse headquarters, patrol cars, equipment and uniforms. Those are paid for with contributions made during fund drives each fall.

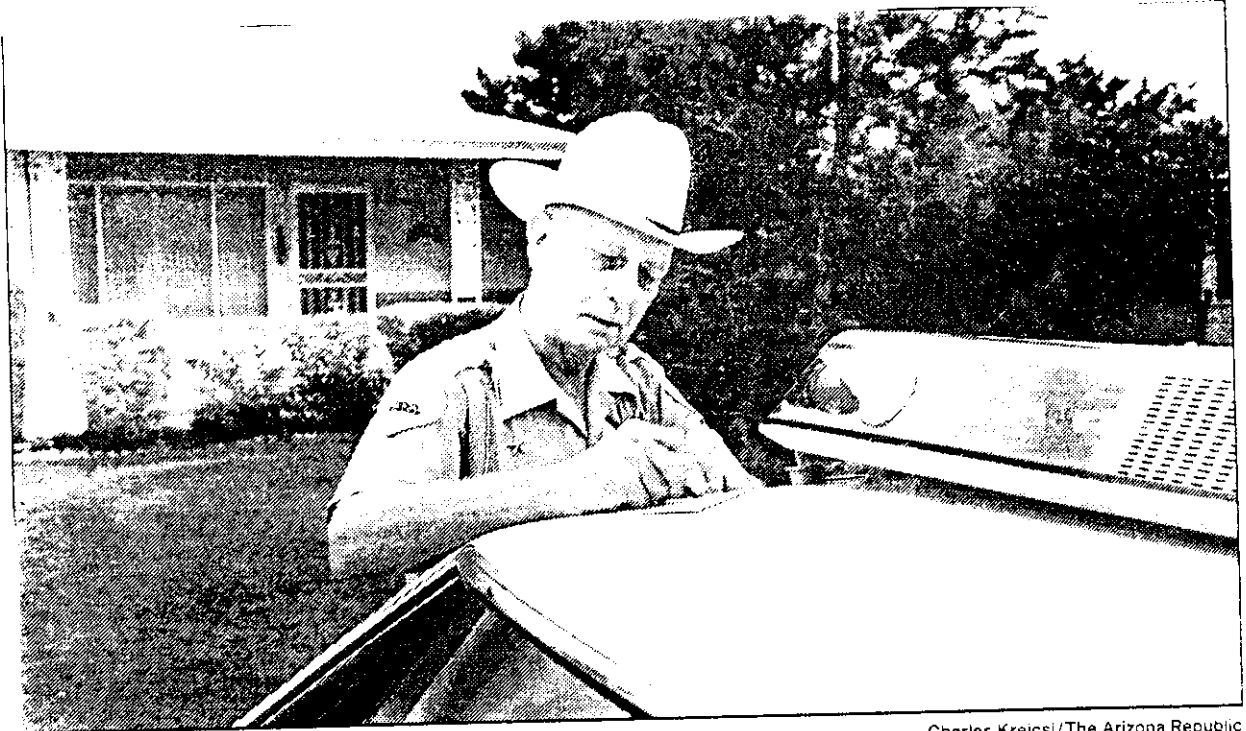
Goodrich emphasized that posse members only augment regular law-enforcement officers, freeing them for other work.

When posse members see something suspicious or observe a crime, they radio the Sheriff's Office. Direct intervention by posse members is discouraged.

Schiefelbein said posse members have the time to do things a regular deputy could not.

"If we see a garage door open at night, we'll call the resident on the phone to tell him," he said.

"We'll warn him about the possibility of having something stolen out of there."



Charles Krejcsi/The Arizona Republic

Herbert Cahill, a Sun City Posse member, fills out a report after checking a vacant home during his patrol. Cahill made sure doors and windows were locked, looked for water leaks and picked up the newspaper.

Our vigilant protectors

The Sun Cities Posse



Photo by Dillman Putz

By Nancy L. Brandt

SUN CITY WEST Posse Commander Bob Laird (left) and Sun City Posse Commander Al Dunn check out a lead.

One evening, a couple of possemen found a lady in the middle of the street, decked out in a bright red evening gown, directing traffic. She had obviously been imbibing a little too much. It took a lot of persuasion on the part of the possemen to get her out of the street so that she would not be injured—while her irate husband (who had apparently been to the same party) argued that they were spoiling her fun.

More often than not, the missions performed by the Posses of Sun City and Sun City West are of greater import to the communities they serve. Operating under the auspices of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, Posse members are lauded as "our eyes and ears in the Sun Cities" by Sheriff Dick Godbehere. He goes on to explain that "there are approximately eight possemen on the road for every two deputies out there."

The nearly 400 men and women of the two Sheriff's Posses have become so familiar to the residents that they are often taken for granted. They are always available to handle traffic control, search and rescue, vacation watch, and crime prevention. These people aren't paid to be there—they are there because they care about their communities.

Each member of the Sun City Posse is required to donate a minimum of 20 hours a month; the Sun City West Posse 18 hours. In 1987, Sun City's approximately 200 Posse members contributed over 70,000 man hours to the county; the same year, the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City West donated more than 60,000 man hours.

The dollar value represented is astronomical.

Both Posses have several husband and wife teams. Sun City West's immediate past commander, Burke Stout, and wife Mary Jane, are examples. For the Stouts the Posse was a factor in their move to Sun City West. They liked the security it provided and wanted to be a part of the organization.

Although she and her husband often work together, Mary Jane has no qualms about being on her own on patrol. "We never feel isolated. There are always other patrol cars in the area, and if we need a deputy they are usually there within three minutes."

In addition to patrolling, Mary Jane assists Robert Schirmer with the publication of the Posse paper, *The Scanner*.

Sun City West's current commander, Robert Laird, hails from New Jersey where he owned an auto repair shop for 30 years. It was at a newcomer's get-together that Laird met posseman Bob Keller, last year's Posseman of the Year and the namesake for the new Posse auditorium. Keller introduced him to the organization and it didn't take long before he, too, was a member.

"It's been an education," says Laird of his newfound second career. "Being a commander keeps me busier than when I owned my own business."

For Lt. Marion Buscemi, the Posse filled a need in her life at a time when she needed it most. "I was living in Florida and my husband died. My world was wrapped up in my home and church, and suddenly

everything I knew was gone. I didn't handle being alone very well. I was on my way to Lake Havasu when I stopped for three nights in Sun City and fell in love with it. I didn't go any further.

"I'm 71, soon to be 72. Last year I put in 941 hours with the Posse. Women can do the work. If they are interested, they should come down and apply."

Of course, the Posses are always looking for people to join their ranks. To join, you must be a permanent resident and in good health.

Newly elected Sun City Posse Commander Al Dunn came from Wisconsin where he was a tool and die maker. Upon retirement in 1982 he moved to Sun City. "As a retirement activity I wanted something in the field of community relations. Then I met Posse Lieutenant Cleo Kirkpatrick. After hearing his description of Posse activities, I was convinced this is what I was looking for. The Posses get involved in a variety of situations, from life threatening, to community threatening, to comic, to mostly routine."

Commander Dunn, like most Posse members, finds his greatest reward in the success of a medical call. "I was on duty one afternoon when a call came in from a concerned resident who hadn't seen one of his neighbors for a couple of days and was worried. When I got there, both doors and the windows were open but the screens were locked. When I heard a gurgling sound coming from the bedroom I called a deputy and we went in through the window. The man was lying beside

his bed where he had fallen after having a stroke. We got the medics; they worked on him and got him to the hospital, where he recovered. The medic told me later that if he hadn't been found he would have died within a few hours. That's all the reward you need—to know that you've helped save a life."

Dunn recalled another interesting incident. "A couple of years ago we ran a cat burglar out of the area. He was a pretty smart operator. He would park his car in an unused carport then walk up the alley, trying doors along the way. He never forced entry or hurt anyone. He always entered through an unlocked door. Upon finding one, he'd go in and help himself. We finally ran him out of this area and he was picked up in another retirement community. If people would just remember to lock their doors and windows, it would make it harder for guys like that to operate."

"We had an unusual incident at Viewpoint Lake," relates longtime Sun City Posseman Earl Root. "It was kind of amusing. We got word that a woman was being attacked by a swan. Sure enough, when we arrived we found the huge bird running at this lady, hitting her with its wings. My guess is it was merely protecting a nearby nest. The swan went its way unmolested." (In other words, no arrests were made.)

The Sun City Posse's 1987 Commander, Warren Roeger, laughs when he thinks of a call he went on a while back. "I was on patrol and was having some back

Continued on page 24

Cataract surgeons from around the world attended this man's symposiums.



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Photo by Dillman Putz

SUN CITY WEST Posse member Robert Lavell at the communications keyboard.

problems at the time. I was called out to help a man who had fallen out of bed and broken his hip. The paramedics wanted to give him a shot to relieve his pain, but they couldn't find a vein in his arm, so they gave him nitrous oxide (laughing gas) instead. The gas must have dispersed into the air, because by the time I got out of there I had no pain in my back at all."

Roeger talks of another incident. "Awhile back, there was a bad fire at an apartment complex in Sun

City. The fire started in one unit—I think it was caused by lightning—and it spread to a second unit. There were six or eight altogether. We arrived there shortly after the fire department and stayed 'round the clock to protect the burned-out units until the residents were able to return for their possessions."

A sampling of the diverse services the Posses have performed at the Sheriff's request—just in 1987—include: blocking off Dysart Road because of a gas leak; traffic control during the Open House at Luke Air Force Base; and security and traffic patrol at the scene of two railroad derailments occurring about a week apart.

Because of the work of the Sheriff's Posses of Sun City and Sun City West, the crime rate in these two communities is far below average. Not only are the numbers lower, but the nature of the crimes is also less violent.

In all their years of service, despite all the man hours logged, no Sun City or Sun City West Posse member has ever found the need to draw a firearm.

And one final footnote: the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City has a famous member—the President of the United States. President Ronald Reagan was made an honorary member (the only one) in 1983 when he visited Posse headquarters. The Sun City Posse was picked as the outstanding representative of volunteerism across America. **RL**



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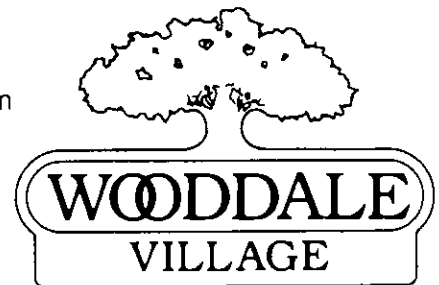
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