

SUN CITY

PROGRESS STORY

September 1, 1979

Only two decades ago the area 12 miles northwest of Phoenix, Arizona, was largely uninhabited. Instead of people, there flourished thousands of acres of cotton and lettuce.

Today the area is the site of Arizona's seventh largest city--Sun City--the world's premiere resort-retirement community and the place some 48,000 persons proudly call home.

The nearly 20-year span in between has been characterized by a commitment that active retirement lends immeasurable quality to one's after-50 years. It's also been characterized by growth, growth so phenomenal, in fact, that sometime during the next 12 months the last house in Sun City will be occupied. The sister-community of Sun City West welcomed its first residents October 16, 1978.

Sun City was the brainchild of the late Del E. Webb, who had parlayed a hammer and saw into a multi-million dollar corporation with interests ranging from construction and land development to hotel operations and property management.

Knowing that persons of retirement-age were more interested in the present than in promises, Webb had built a complete recreation center, a golf course, a shopping center and a hotel with restaurant before the first home was even sold.

The community was an immediate success. During the first week-end of the January, 1960, opening, 272 homes were sold. Thousands of visitors flocked in to see what this new city had to offer America's retirees.

At year-end home sales totaled 1,301 and the community had a population of 2,500. By 1965 the population had risen to 8,000 and it jumped to 15,000 by 1970.

Community facilities have kept pace with this rapid growth. Sun City now has six recreation centers, with the construction of a seventh expected to be completed this summer.

In planning new recreation complexes, several things are taken into consideration. Population growth and frequency of use of existing facilities point up certain needs. The wishes of the residents, determined through surveys, also are used in rec centers planning.

The first recreation center had a swimming pool, shuffleboard courts, a lawn bowling green, arts and crafts studios, meeting and card rooms and an auditorium.

The later complexes include many of these facilities, and have added bowling lanes, miniature golf courses, exercise rooms, weaving rooms, pool and billiard areas, therapy baths, tennis, ping pong, bocci ball, lakes for boating and fishing and a picnic area with scenic waterfall, cabanas and barbecues.

Sundial Recreation Center features Arizona's largest indoor swimming pool, its first indoor, air-conditioned shuffleboard courts and its only synthetic-surfaced lawn bowling green.

Bell Recreation Center has a 40,000-volume library and the community's first handball, racquetball and volleyball courts.

Residents pay only \$40 per person per year for use of all recreational facilities. The only exception is bowling at Lakeview and Bell Lanes, where a minimal line rate is charged.

Sun City is truly a golfer's paradise. There are 11 courses in the community, 10 of them 18-hole layouts. Three of these are private country clubs and two are par-60 executive courses. The area's 11th course, a 9-hole lay-out, opened for play this winter.

For the green thumbs, Sun City has its Agricultural Gardens, where gardeners can farm a 20 x 40-foot plot with water provided.

The community also has its own baseball-softball stadium. During the spring, Sun City Stadium is training headquarters for the American League Milwaukee Brewers. Then in late spring and summer it becomes the home of the renowned Sun City Saints women's amateur softball team.

Six miles north of town is Heading Ranch, where Sun Citians can take advantage of a trap and skeet range and small bore rifle, pistol and archery ranges. A desert picnic area for residents also has been constructed on the property, with cabanas, tables and benches, a large dance floor, barbecues and running water.

A few miles to the west is Magma of Sun City, a wild game hunting preserve where sportsmen can hunt pheasant and chukar using game dogs.

But Sun City is more than facilities--it's people. People living their retirement years in an active, healthful manner.

Accordingly, Sun Citians have formed more than 300 clubs and organizations. Among these are Sun City's Rhythm Ramblers Band, an all-resident, musical group boasting 19 active members. It plays for Chuckwagon Dinners. Several other resident bands provide music for the Saturday night dances. Other musical groups include the Women's Chorus, Male Chorus, Handbell Ringers, Organ Club, dance bands and Musicians Club.

Dancing is a favorite community pastime and various clubs feature square, round continental and ballroom dancing.

The Sun City Players, a thespian group, stages several plays a year.

Card clubs range from bridge and pinochle to euchre, cribbage and whist. Sun City's Rose and Garden Club conducts one of the finest rose shows in the West.

The Sun City Camera Club and Rockhounds visit Arizona's scenic wonders, as do members of the Power Riders motorcycle club and the Horse and Carriage Club.

Many of the clubs are charity oriented. For example, the Sun City Puppet Club, a group of 38 women who sew and sell, has raised and donated more than \$170,000 to children's charities in the Phoenix area.

No list of clubs would be complete without mention of the many service, fraternal, patriotic and church organizations within the community, several of which are the largest and most active in the state.

For cultural entertainment, Sun Citians need look no farther than their own backyards. The Sun City Symphony Orchestra performs five concerts each season. The community's Fine Arts Series brings in top musicians from around the world and its Lecture Series presents well-known celebrities and newsmakers.

One of the area's top attractions is the Sun Bowl, a 7,500-seat capacity outdoor amphitheater. A winter-season Celebrity Series presents such stars as Liberace, Guy Lombardo, Jimmy Durante, Lawrence Welk and his Champagne Music Makers, Roberta Peters, Carol Lawrence, Burl Ives, Roger Williams and Al Hirt to overflowing Sun Bowl crowds.

Interspersed with the headliner shows are free events and concerts, which keep the Sun Bowl busy throughout the year.

Almost every religious denomination is represented in Sun City and more than 25 congregations meet in their own houses of worship or in community halls.

The community also has one of the finest medical facilities in the country in the Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital. It features modern circular patient wings with centrally located nurses stations providing

visual monitoring and quick access to every room. The hospital is designed for expansion to 400 rooms. With the recent completion of a third nursing tower--a \$10 million project--Boswell now has a complement of 261 beds.

There are also seven medical buildings in town, with the largest, Lakeview Medical Arts Center, having more than 100,000 square feet of office space for doctors, dentists, laboratories, pharmacies, x-ray offices and other medical technicians.

Sun Valley Lodge, the community's first nursing and health care facility, was founded by United Church of Sun City. The new Beverly Manor Convalescent Center, a 195-bed care facility, features three 65-bed wings, two for skilled nursing and one for personal care.

Augmenting the excellent medical services available is Sunshine Service, an organization supported by local charities and directed by Rev. Duane Thistlethwaite. This unique institution loans sick-room equipment and supplies to residents at no cost. The Sunshine Service warehouse has everything from hospital beds, bed pans and exercise equipment to crutches, splints and wheelchairs. There is even a supply of children's beds, chairs and playpens to help out when grandchildren are visiting. Additional services include arranging sick room and hospital visitations, locating nursing aid or a companion, and even arranging emergency loans.

Bordering Viewpoint Lake, one of two lakes in Sun City, is the Lakes Club, a private dining facility with membership limited to Sun City residents and local business people. It features a large dining room overlooking the lake, a comfortable cocktail lounge and a 500-seat capacity banquet room.

Sun City is the home of more than 350 commercial businesses and professional offices, most of them located in the community's six large shopping centers. Construction is scheduled to begin soon on a seventh.

To accommodate visitors, the King's Inn hotel has 100 modern rooms, a swimming pool, Old English dining room, large coffee shop, cocktail lounge and bar.

The Inn also maintains a series of rental apartments that supplement Sun City's Visitor's Vacation Special Plan. Designed to provide prospective buyers with a sampling of Sun City living, the Vacation offers a one week stay (two weeks during the summer) in a comfortable, furnished apartment for \$150. The package includes two rounds of golf, a breakfast and Sun City tour, a Chuckwagon Dinner and guest activity card for use of community recreational facilities.

Sun City West Model Homes border Willowcreek Golf Course. On display are 21 different floor plans featuring four distinctive modes of living. These include single-family homes, duplexes and garden apartments. Base prices for living units range from \$52,990 to \$101,990.

Sun City's financial institutions include 30 branch banks and savings and loan companies and five brokerage houses.

To maintain the beauty and uncluttered cleanliness of the city, a fenced trailer compound has been provided for storage of campers, motor homes, boats and trailers.

When Sun City's 8,900-acre master plan is completed in 1979 it is estimated that the community will have a population of 48,500. The first phase of Sun City West will cover 5,700 acres, with a projected population of 32,500.

The developer of Sun City and Sun City West is the Del E. Webb Development Co., a subsidiary of the Del E. Webb Corporation. The Development Company President is John W. Meeker. He is assisted by Executive Vice-President Joe Aubin.

The company administrative offices are located in Bell Plaza, 17220 Boswell Bouleyard.

Del E. Webb was 75 when he passed away July 4, 1974, leaving an international building, development and management corporation as a lasting monument to his creative genius. Mr. Webb's building achievements range from Madison Square Garden in New York to the Kuilima Hotel in Hawaii, but he often said the one in which he took the greatest pride and satisfaction was Sun City. His pride was justified.

The editor of Arizona Highways Magazine, Joseph Stacey, said in his June, 1974 issue: "We see in Sun City, Arizona, a festival of diverse interests of civic, commercial, social, patriotic and aesthetic endeavors and accomplishments unmatched in promise and performance anywhere in the world."

"Sun City is one of the most wonderful things that has happened in the United States of America. And in a world of beautiful places and wonderful things, that's something very special."