

Rain delays tradition on Avenue of Flags

ERIN TURNER
DAILY NEWS-SUN

This morning's dreary weather delayed a Sun City West tradition.

For more than 20 years, members of American Legion Mary Ellen Piotrowski Post 94, including Chet Gondek, have raised American flags along the entire stretch of R.H. Johnson Boulevard to honor fallen veterans.

This year, the flag raising will be postponed a day to allow Mother Nature a chance to clear out.

Gondek said the group previously hung the 127 American flags for Memorial Day and left them hanging all summer to honor Flag Day and Independence Day, among other holidays. Because of inclement weather and wind, which caused damage to many flags, the group decided only to leave the flags up for a week at a time this year during each holiday.

"We lost 80 flags last year," said Gondek, an Army veteran and member of Post 94. "Ropes were broke and brackets were broke when we left them up continually. That's why we're not going to do that this year."

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TRADITION

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Gondek said the process of hanging the 127 flags along the 4.2-mile stretch generally takes the group less than an hour.

"We have a number of men, but everyone is getting older. There are not as many as we'd like to have," he said. "It's a bit of work."

Post 94 veterans hang the flags for seven holidays each year. In honor of Memorial Day, the flags will fly for a week before being taken down and re-raised for Flag Day, June 14.

Despite the extra effort required for raising the flags and taking them down several times this year, Gondek said he and fellow veterans feel the process is necessary.

"To me it's more of a thing we should do than anything else," he said. "Maybe because I'm a veteran, and we're more dedicated. We know what it is to serve your country."

"For most of the veterans, I'd say almost all, we served because it was a duty of ours. We celebrate Memorial Day to honor our fallen comrades."

All flags are donated from family members and friends of deceased veterans, who had military burials.

"We ask the people to give

us information about who the flag was from and on the white binding we put the person's name, branch of service, date of death and date of birth," he said. "The flags are burial flags from the caskets."

Gondek said the group has a small fund for supplies, such as rope, but could always use extra money.

Donations can be sent to the flag program at P.O. Box 5447, Sun City West, AZ 85376-5447. More information about Post 94 can be viewed at its Web site at www.nwvva.org/american_legion_post_94.htm.

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THE WESTER
May 6-12, 1993

Airmen Reunite in SCW

The 586th and 587th Bomb Squadrons of WW II's 394th Bomb Group of the 98th Bomb Wing, 9th Bomb Division, 9th Air Force, did not just make a one day visit to Sun City West. Heck, it would have taken a whole day just to name their Air Force outfit. The reunion is a week long, starting May 1st. It is very possible that this is a first for SCW to have 120 people in 60 Del Webb vacation apartments from one organization at one time!

The 586th and 587th ex-GI's know how to celebrate. On Saturday night, May 1st, a welcoming banquet was held and the last night in SCW will

feature a "good bye" banquet, complete with entertainment, etc. All this at the Crestview Banquet Rooms. Get this, you veterans know about reunions I'm sure. Each Squadron had its own hospitality room. Wow! What a good time.

This unique reunion was the brainstorm of J. Guy Ziegler, Maj. USAF-Ret. Ziegler has been the guide for the 586th Sqdn. since its first reunion in NYC in 1948. This is the 40th get together for the 586th, but only the second for the 587th. The former Major thought it would be great fun for two of the four squadrons of the 394th Bombardment Group to meet

one another again. The group had an illustrious career in the ETO (European Theater). The entire Air Force knew them as the "Bridge Busters." And rightly so because they knocked down 55 RR bridges and 10 highway bridges. Also, they put a stop to 43 marshalling yards, 20 gun positions and 19 fuel dumps. Many, many more targets were wiped out.

The 394th Bomb Group was activated in MacDill Field, FL in 1943. On to Boreham, England and in the next almost three years the men, in their B26 Marauders, completed 271 missions with 9036 aircraft sorties. Get this! 13,417 tons of

Story and Photo, Stan Steciak
bombs (I said tons) were dropped on their targets. America is proud of them and SCW should be proud to have had these men in their midst.

To assist Guy Ziegler of Phoenix put this reunion together were Jim Bedwell (bombardier, 586th) from Moon Valley; Art Phillips (pilot, 586th) Moon Valley and Harold Luntz (pilot, 587th) from Mesa. It was a pleasure talking to Guy Ziegler, who was a pilot in the 586th and also author of "Bridge Busters," a book all about the 394th Bomb Group. Ziegler was on hand to greet the visitors as they checked

BRIDGE BUSTERS

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"Bridge Busters" Take Aim on SCW

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into Vacation Headquarters.

The former airmen and wives were from all over the U.S. Marilyn and Bill Morse traveled here from Ocala, FL. Bill was a bombardier in the 586th. When he had to work (that's what Bill said), he was maintenance director at Colby College for Women in New Hampshire. Those Air Force guys always got the good jobs. Pat and Jim Custer came here from Dayton, OH and were excited to be in SCW. Jim was a pilot in the 586th and followed up with 19 years AF service. Jim is editor of the organization's bulletin "Bridge Busters." His working life was spent in sales management.

Visiting with the re-unioners indicated that they are happy group and enjoyed being in SCW, even if only for a week. Ziegler said the original commander of the 586th was (then) Capt. Joseph M. Silk (dec.). The Commander of the

587th was (then) Capt. Robert E. Keating. Ziegler said he certainly wants to thank Linda Powers, Webb's Vacation Special

coordinator for her able, professional assistance. And a thank you to The Wester for the article.



Guy Ziegler, the Number One "Guy" at the 586th and 587th Bomb Sqdn. Reunion held the attention of (left to right) Sidney Kite (586th radio operator), Hanford, CA; Bill Bover (586th radioman), Memphis, TN; Wade Cooper and Marie (radioman), Cary, NC. Marion and Elizabeth Rhew, also of Cary, NC, said Marion's and infantryman and "Just along for the ride".
Photo, Stan Steciak



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35¢

5 miles of flags

Dedication set for Monday in SCW

Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY WEST — For the first time in 1990, flags will fly along the community's Memorial Boulevard of Flags on Monday.

The Presidents Day program will see the dedication of the Boulevard of Flags, made up of more than 200 burial flags of U.S. veterans.

The program also will include unveiling of the Veterans Memorial.

The flags will line about five miles of R.H. Johnson Boulevard beginning at Bell Road. The program begins at 11 a.m. at the R.H. Johnson Recreation Center, 19803 N. R.H. Johnson Blvd., but the Arizona National Guard Army Band will begin playing at 10:30 a.m. The event is free and open to the public.

"This is the dedication of the completion of this project," said Lloyd Kilmer, program chairman and commander of American Legion Post 94 in Sun City West.

Post 94 started the Boulevard of Flags in 1987 as a way to memorialize deceased veterans, using the burial flags that are given to the veterans' survivors.

The Veterans Memorial, which Kilmer said "looks like a large pulpit you would see in a church," will be unveiled and dedicated. The 3-foot by 5-foot memorial has three plaques: one that notes the memorial's placement by Post 94, another that "pays tribute to those families who gave us these flags and (a third that) honors our departed comrades in arms," Kilmer said.

The program of events will include:

- Post 94 Color Guard's posting of the colors under the direction of Sgt. Al Gazvoda;
- Luke Air Force Base commander Brig. Gen. Daniel Sherlock's presentation of the colors to the Luke Flag Raising Team;
- the invocation from Harry Wineinger, chaplain of the Arizona Department of the American Legion;

- the welcome presentation, given by Ted Martinson, commander of the Arizona Department of the American Legion;

- an introduction from Nick Bacon, town manager of Surprise and a Vietnam War recipient of the Medal of Honor;

- presentation of the Memorial Boulevard of Flags, Dick Mastin, vice president for Del Webb Communities Inc., developer of Sun City West;

- presentations from Mrs. Jerry Blayne, widow of a past Legion commander, of her late husband's honor flag; past commanders, the American Legion Memorial Wreath and from the Royal British Legionnaires, the Wreath of Friendship;

- the Boulevard of Flags Veterans Memorial Dedication Address, by U.S. Navy Rear Adm. David Oliver, and

- a salute to deceased veterans, led by the U.S. Marine Corps Rifle Squad, under the command of Staff Sgt. J.T. Carter.

The Arizona National Guard Army Band will play Taps, Legion Post 94's Color Guard will retrieve the colors and Larry Shayne, chaplain of Post 94, will deliver the benediction.

The Cactus Squadron Flight Team will fly over during the program. The Valley-based squadron flies four World War II-era AT-6 fighter trainers.

PMS 2-17-90

Kilmer cuts teeth on patriotic pride

By BRET McKEAND
Sun Cities Independent

Ask Lloyd Kilmer what his favorite colors are and, without a doubt, red, white and blue will be at the top of his list.

In an era when its popular and even fashionable to wave the flag, Mr. Kilmer has been doing it for years because, to him, the flag is more than just a national symbol.

"I'm no Johnny-come-lately when it comes to this flag-waving business," says the Sun City West resident.

The sight of the American flag flying high and mighty above the breeze -- especially on holidays -- has become a common sight in Sun City West, thanks to the work of Mr. Kilmer and his compatriots at the American Legion.

As commander of the Sun City West American Legion, Post 94, it was Mr. Kilmer who came up with the idea for the community's "Boulevard of Flags" and, thus, creating the title of "Flag City, U.S.A." for the retirement community.

The project, which involves raising more than 250 American flags along Johnson, Meeker and Stardust boulevards on six different national holidays, has created statewide and national attention for Sun City West.

In addition, last year Mr. Kilmer was awarded the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge's highest national award for patriotism in recognition of his

involvement with the Boulevard of Flags.

This year a similar award will go to the entire American Legion post for its continued sponsorship of the project.

"It's like winning the Oscar two years in a row," says Mr. Kilmer.

Born and raised in Nebraska, the heartland of America, Mr. Kilmer has learned to appreciate the flag -- and what it stands for -- the hard way.

While defending his country during World War II, the Sun City West resident was taken prisoner by the Germans and spent more than a year in a prisoner of war camp.

A first lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force, Mr. Kilmer and his crew were shot down over Amsterdam, Holland, in 1944.

"We sustained heavy damage. Believe me, it's not like you see in the movies," he says.

"We couldn't bail out because the Germans would just as soon shoot you in your parachute as they would their plane."

Miraculously, the entire crew of 10 walked away from the wreckage "without even a scratch." The Germans were waiting, however, and all were captured.

A year later, Mr. Kilmer and his crew were "liberated" by Gen. Patton.

After the war, Mr. Kilmer became involved in a number of different occupations: real estate, finance and eventually ran for public office.

It wasn't until 36 years after his military stint that he had

Germans of the whereabouts of one of Mr. Kilmer's crewmen, leading to the American's capture.

Mr. Kilmer had held a private grudge against the local citizens all these years.

"As it turned out, the eyewitnesses told me their fellow Hollanders actually assassinated this person.

"They killed one of their own for turning on us."

Mr. Kilmer toured an Amsterdam museum that contained an exhibit detailing the crash. He was shown archive photographs of the plane after it went down, newspaper accounts of the incident and, as he prepared to leave, was even given a small piece of metal from his aircraft to take home with him as souvenir.

Upon returning to the States, Mr. Kilmer reunited with the seven remaining members of the crew to share his experiences.

Moving to Sun City West three years ago, Mr. Kilmer brought with him his fierce desire to serve his community.

It was on the Fourth of July, 1986, that he decided to tour his new community and take in the sights.

The first thing he noticed:

The absence of Old Glory flying in the breeze.

"Even the public buildings weren't flying the flag," he recalls.

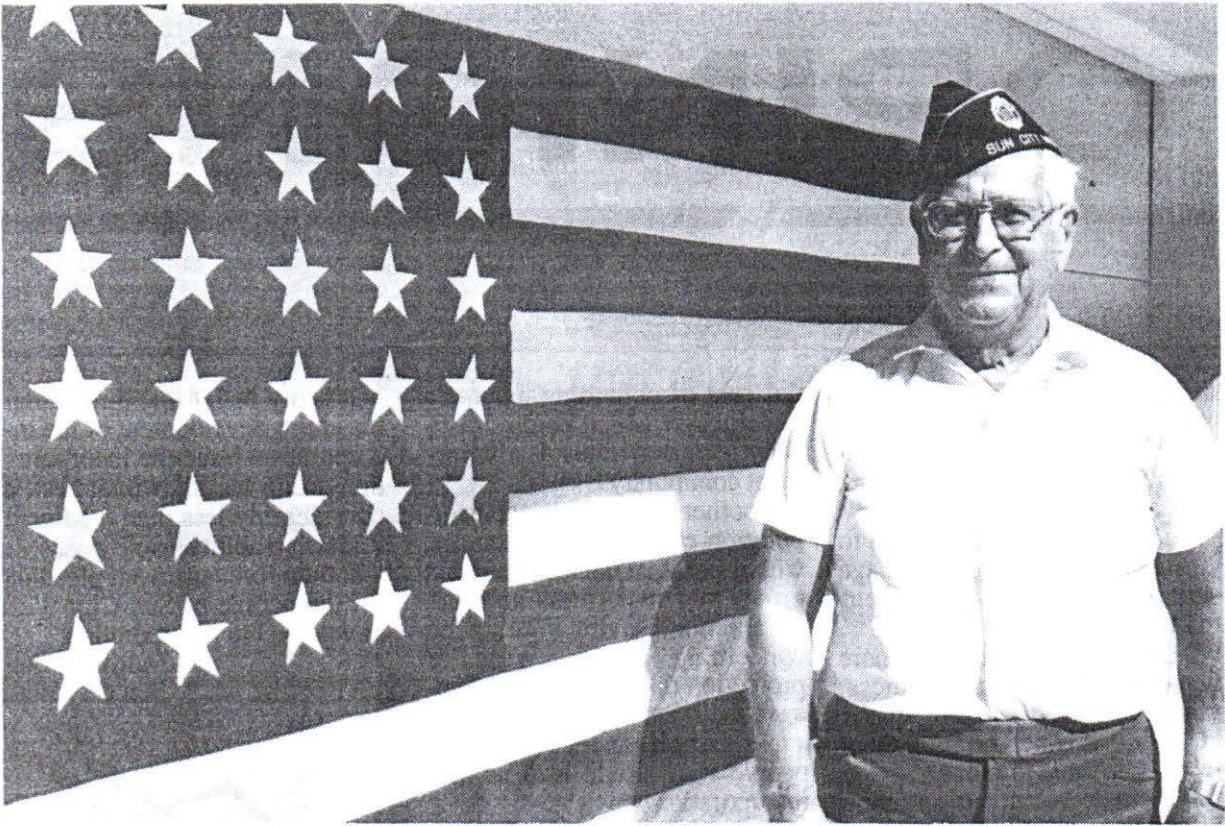
He decided to take action.

His idea was to line an entire street with American flags; to encourage his fellow residents to display their pride in their flag and country.

The first project saw the installation of 92 flags along R.H. Johnson Boulevard, from Bell Road to Meeker.

The flags were donated by

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***PROUD OF OLD GLORY.** Lloyd Kilmer, commander of the American Legion Post in Sun City West, flies the Stars and Stripes every chance he gets. A former Air Force pilot and World War II prisoner of war, it was Mr. Kilmer who came up with the idea of the Boulevard of Flags in Sun City West, an idea that earned him the Freedoms Foundation's George Washington Honor Medal in 1988.*

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Profile

Portraits Of Our Residents

the opportunity to once again visit Europe and relive his POW ordeal.

Upon a visit to Amsterdam, Mr. Kilmer came in contact with a historical society attempting to gather information about their country's involvement in World War II.

This group, he came to find out, knew more about his crash than he did.

"They took me out to the actual crash site. They knew everything about the crash," he recalls.

And, as unbelievable as it sounds, the group introduced Mr. Kilmer to three people

who were eyewitnesses to the crash.

It was well-known at the time that the people of Holland were "fiercely loyal" to the United States and extremely anti-German.

At the time of the crash, however, it was a local resident who alerted the

Veterans memorial unveiled

By TIFFANY MEANS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY WEST — Even when flags aren't flying on R.H. Johnson Boulevard, a new, permanent monument will reflect the patriotic spirit of Sun City West.

The Boulevard of Flags Veterans Memorial was unveiled at the R.H. Johnson Recreation Center, 19803 N. R.H. Johnson Blvd., during a program led by Lloyd Kilmer, commander of the American Legion Post 94 of Sun City West.

About 200 people attended the ceremony.

The 3-foot by 5-foot monument displays three plaques that cite the memorial's placement by Post 94, honor families who have contributed flags, and honor veterans.

The flag project, begun in 1987, lines R.H. Johnson Boulevard with the burial flags of veterans. The flags are flown during patriotic and veterans holidays, such as Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and Veterans Day.

Kilmer came up with the idea of the monument more than a year ago and worked on the project with Sun City West developer Del Webb Communities Inc., which donated the memorial.

Opening ceremonies included the posting of the colors by Post 94 and the raising of the colors by the Luke Air Force Base Flag Raising Team.

Two flybys executed by the Cactus Squadron Flight Team, featuring four World War II AT-6 fighter trainers, corresponded with the singing of the national anthem. The flights were a tribute to America's prisoners

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Daily News-Sun photo by Stephen Cherek

MEMORIAL — Members of the Royal British Legionnaires, from left, Jack McGuire, Len Gowan and Peter Chubb, stand at attention while the Cactus Squadron Flight Team of World War II flies overhead.

Flags fly in SCW

—From A1

of war, those missing in action, their families, and the memory of all who have served in the armed forces.

Rear Adm. David R. Oliver Jr., talked about the importance of remembering America's veterans.

"We have persevered and fought for the concept of liberty and freedom," Oliver said. "For those who gave all, those who served, and those who are left behind, it is marvelous to see the 1990s, to see throughout the world countries recognizing our ideals."

"By holding the line, and keeping the concept of freedom alive, hundreds have an example to aspire to."

Julia Zaucha, Sun City West, had a personal reason to attend the ceremony.

"It was 45 years ago, on Dec. 2, 1944, that my brother was killed (in service). His body is in Belgium, but his flag is one of the flags hanging on the (R.H. Johnson) Boulevard," Zaucha said.

Mildred Blayne added yet another flag — commemorating her husband, Jerry Blayne — to the more than 200 already displayed.

A Marine Corps rifle squad presented an additional veterans salute and the Arizona National Guard Army band performed throughout the ceremony.

uesday, Feb. 20

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VETERANS

Northwest Valley Life

FLAG CITY U.S.A.

*122 Old Glories to fly on
Feb. 20*

*Hats off!
Along the street there comes
A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums,
A flash of color beneath the sky:
Hats off!
The flag is passing by!*

THE FLAG GOES BY
Henry Holcomb Bennett
1863-1924

Truly, Sun City West will be "Flag City, U.S.A." on President's Day, Feb. 20, when at least 122 ripple and snap in the breeze for 4½ miles on light poles on either side of Meeker Boulevard from R. H. Johnson to Stardust Avenue.

It will be a 76-trombones kind of day, a George M. Cohan kind of morning at 11 a.m., when Old Glory measuring 15 feet by 25 feet is hoisted up a flag pole in front of the Sports Pavilion at Johnson Recreation Center.

This flag-raising ceremony will kick off an hour of activity sponsored by American Legion Post 94 of Sun City West as part of its award-winning Flag City, U.S.A. project. Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce is co-operating in the project.

Jets most likely will rocket overhead, a military band will play, and speakers will remember those who gave their youth and their lives in service to their country.

Initiated in 1987 with 92 flags on light poles along the boulevard, the ceremony this year will include at least another 30 donated flags 5 feet by 9½ feet which at one time or another were draped over the caskets of veterans who fell in battles fought in the Spanish American War in 1898, World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

"Families in six communities have stepped forward to donate the additional 30 flags," said Lloyd Kilmer, a member of American Legion Post 94 and an organizer

by Jerry Eaton



COINCIDING WITH the poem, "The Flag Goes By," is this World War I painting, "Duty Calls," a possession of the family of the editor of Sun Cities Life magazine for more than 70 years. "Duty Calls" depicts the patriotism of the "Flag City, U.S.A." program in Sun City West.

of Flag City, U.S.A. "The flags have 48, 49, 50 stars, and represent 12 different family relationships, including father, son, daughter, uncle, and cousin. The donations represent a tremendous outpouring of patriotism and sentiment."

The new row of flags will be called the Memorial Boulevard of Flags. Kilmer explained that when a veteran is killed in action or dies later, a burial flag often is draped on top of the casket. Before burial, the flag is traditionally folded into a triangle and is presented to surviving family members.

"Unfortunately, these flags are often kept in a cedar chest or carefully wrapped and placed on the top shelf of a closet never to be used again," he said. "In time, the flag and memories fade."

Flag City, U.S.A. will get these flags back into circulation so that they can continue to honor veterans. The 30 donated flags will unfurl in the breeze, along with 92 others which were flown over the U.S. Capitol and were purchased through community donations.

Valley National Bank donated the 15 × 25-foot flag that will be raised to start ceremonies on President's

as a bomber pilot in World War II in Europe. Shot down on the 16th mission, he spent a year in a prisoner of war camp in Germany before being liberated in 1945.

He commended another former POW, Sen. John McCain, a Vietnam War veteran, for assisting in a project to have American flags flown over the U.S. Capitol before donation to American Legion Post 94.

Kilmer and the other 170-plus members of American Legion Post 94 became involved in Flag City, U.S.A. in an effort to "... glorify the flag and create positive images for the community and the Legion Post," he said.

Following a career in the financial sector and real estate, Kilmer retired to Sun City West two years ago. Some 15 million Americans served in World War II and around 4,500 of them live in Sun City West, Kilmer said. Around 25 percent of the population of the Sun Cities—15,000 persons—are veterans, he estimated.

Day in Sun City West. This flag was flown over Luke Air Force Base and then retired before being presented to the Sun City West community.

The Boulevard of Flags program occurs on five other occasions each year in addition to President's Day, including Veteran's Day, Flag Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day.

Last Veteran's Day, Nov. 11, Kilmer received the American Freedom Foundation's 1988 George Washington Honor Medal for excellence in individual achievement in "Americanism and patriotism." A week later, another presentation was made in Phoenix.

"The award represents community achievement—not individual effort," said Kilmer, who flew 16 missions