

Sun Cities Area Historical Society
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Case # 200

Interview with Dorothy Bell

August 20, 1991

Date of Birth: 1912

Place of Birth: Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Dorothy was an early resident of Sun City, arriving August 31, 1960. She was a secretary with DEVCO for 21 years.

Synopsis:

- Her mother was born in LaCrosse, Wisconsin; father born in Cape Girardeau, Missouri and only went through the 8th grade.
- Moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma at age 4 where family built a home.
- Dad a carpenter; participated in union strikes.
- Mother was a teacher, busy in United Lutheran Church and PTA.
- Married Charles V. McMullin at age 22, after 2 years in university.
- Both worked for Shell Oil, but she quit after married due to Shell's rule that husbands and wives could not work together.
- Husband's health was bad in Denver, so moved to Arizona. AZ weather improved husband's health.
- Heard of Sun City through husband's friend; prices were right; home construction was good; loved all the built-ins; good golf courses; great people; social gatherings; houses were guaranteed for one year.
- Paid cash for our house.
- No hospital when we moved in.
- Had son in high school when we moved here. Sun City allowed him to stay.
- Active in United Church in Sun City.
- Served as hostess in new models
- Del Webb part of community, a lot of events, dedications, remembered people, interacted with them; perceptions of Sun City have not changed, just more expensive.

C-200

20 August 1991

Release Form

This interview agreement is made and entered into this 20th day of August, 1991, by and between Dorothy Bell (herein after called "Interviewee") and Melanie Sturgeon (herein after called "Interviewer".)

I agree to participate in a tape-recorded interview with Interviewer in association with her research on Sun City, this research being done under the supervision of the Arizona State University Graduate Program in Public History.

This agreement relates to any and all materials originating from this interview or subsequent interviews by the Interviewer, namely the tape recordings and the indexes and abstracts of the interview, and any other written materials, including but not limited to notes, transcripts, or any other materials prepared from the tapes.

In consideration of the mutual covenants, conditions, and terms set forth below, the parties hereby agree as follows:

1. Interviewee irrevocably assigns to the Sun City Area Historical Society and the Arizona Historical Foundation, co-owners, all his/her copyright, title, literary property rights, and interest in and to the Interview.
2. By virtue of this assignment, Interviewer and the Sun City Area Historical Society and the Arizona Historical Foundation will have the right to use the interview for research, educational, and other purposes, including possible publication.
3. All materials from the Interview, including but not limited to transcriptions or other finding aids prepared from the tapes, may be copied, reproduced and/or published.
4. Interviewee acknowledges that he/she will receive no remuneration or compensation for either his/her participation in the Interview or for the rights assigned hereunder.
5. Interviewer and the Sun City Area Historical Society and the Arizona Historical Foundation agree to honor any and all reasonable restrictions on the use of the Interview, if any, for the time specified below as follows:

SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dorothy E. Bell

Interview was conducted by Melanie Sturgeon on 20 August 1991
Transcriber—Belva J. McIntosh 9 July 2007

This is Melanie Sturgeon and on behalf of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society I am interviewing Dorothy Bell who was secretary at DEVCO for 21 years, in her home in Peoria, Arizona.

STURGEON: Dorothy, can you tell me the dates and places of your parent's birth and what they did for a living.

BELL: My parents were both born in America. Mother was born in Lacrosse Wisconsin and my father was born in -----Missouri, which is my birthplace. They both died young. My grandfather must have been just about 50 and my grandmother 54 after we had moved to Tulsa.

My parents moved from-----where I was born and my father was a carpenter and my mother was a teacher. We moved to Tulsa where they both stayed and my father built us a home there and her four brothers had moved there before we did and I was four years old at the time. We belonged to the United Lutheran Church and I think I did mention they both died young. I guess I was 22 when I married Charles V. McMullin who was called Mickey. He was with Shell Oil, I was with Shell Oil and at that time in their history whenever a couple was married only one of you could work for Shell Oil so I quit and never went back to work for money until I came to Sun City. My husband had heart trouble and we took early retirement from Shell Oil when they presented a 50 year plan and my husband would be 50 just before we got here which was August 31. Our daughters were married and lived in Colorado where we had been living in Denver. You spoke about where we had lived, we lived in many towns. He was an oil scout and of course we knew a lot of people. He was away from home a lot of the time doing his job. He ended up as head of the entire scouting division for Shell Oil in Denver. After he had been with them less than 30 years we decided his health was too bad in Denver and we moved down here. We joined the United Church. We had to rent a place before our place was ready because when we had purchased we knew we would have to wait. We would have to live in a rental. But we rented on Cherry Hills and at that time they had the groups. Reverend Witt had started them, neighborhood groups and one lady that was the head of this center where I lived

had a meeting shortly after I got here and then I met a lady across the street, she came over because she was the head of friendly services. And of course we never felt like strangers. There was no reason to. We all had the same Lord, the same church. Of course the church had been so involved in getting Sun City off their feet and into personal living. We were all proud of our homes, we were even proud of our rental place. Our sons started in at Peoria High School. He had two more years. He was 17 almost 18 when we got here, he played football and he was no stranger and neither were the people at the school. I can't remember the principals name but he lived in Sun City, went to the United Church. We just loved it. Reverent Witt said to us one Sunday, after our daughter had had her second child, a little girl, in Denver, Colorado. He said do you think your daughter in Colorado would like to have her daughter baptized on Christmas Eve? We said, well we will find out. Of course they were thrilled. His folks were visiting their children here in Sun City at Christmas time and we had a wonderful family reunion and the baptism of Ellie. Now she is married in Denver. So it goes on and on. We have six grandchildren and one great granddaughter who is three months old now.

STURGEON: Can you tell me what your parents did for a living and how much education they had?

BELL: My mother and father both went through the eighth grade. My father was a carpenter and he was busy until later years when they had strikes.

STURGEON: Oh they had strikes, the carpenters had strikes?

BELL: Yes, then there were people called scabs who would go in and work. But he never did, he stayed right with the union. He always held an office with the union. Mother taught school. Back in those years if you had a good brain you were used. It just seemed like they were both busy all the time in the church. Mother was always baking something to take. She was the president of the ladies aid in Tulsa for many years. Dad was on the council so it just seemed like our life – I was the only child for seventeen years. My brother was seventeen years younger than me. They had had a little girl but she died five years before I was born. So I was raised as an only child and he pretty much was raised as an only child.

STURGEON: You mentioned that your parents died young. How young were they when they died?

BELL: My dad was 50 and my mother was 54. Oh, no I am thinking of my grandparents. My Dad was seventy and my mother was 76, so that makes a difference there. It was the grandparents that were so young.

STURGEON: But your mother was born in Wisconsin?

BELL: Lacrosse

STURGEON: When were you born?

BELL: 1912

STURGEON: You were born in Missouri. You moved to Tulsa when you were four. Can you tell me a little bit more about your children. Let me ask you about your husband first. How well educated was he?

BELL: He had two years at Tulsa University.

STURGEON: Ok, then he worked for Shell Oil and what did he do there?

BELL: He was the head of the----- . We moved a lot. I don't think you want to know all those places.

STURGEON: Can you tell me a little about your children then.

BELL: Our oldest girl is Jean. She went through high school and immediately went to work for the public schools in Denver. After she was in the public school system for a while, one of the girls from our church, she was a lady, she asked her if she would come to work for her attorney and she did. She stayed with him until she was married. Then her husband had two more years at Fort Collins and she got into another attorney's office there. Her husband Erroll Ryland finished his schooling there and went to work for the Highway Department in Colorado. They had a little boy just as soon as daddy graduated. They were with us for a little while. Six months probably. They moved to Durango with the highway department. Then they moved to another town, Montrose, Colorado. That was about 1980 I would say, he was still with the highway department. And Malcolm Forbes went to the highway department and asked if they had somebody that could run his ranches for him and they suggested Errol and he decided the minute he met him and he is still with him. And my daughter is the office manager industry branches he has. One in Warsaw, Missouri and one in Phoenix. So they are gone

a lot. And they had two children. Howie and Ellen. So we are real proud of them. Then we had Betty two years after Jeanie; she had two years at Greeley Colorado College. She married Ken Larson who had his degree from there, he got his Master's. He taught in Colorado at different spots for years. And he just retired the end of the year. So they are living in Denver. They have two sons, Steve and Scott. Steve is busy with some construction firm in Denver. Scott is a journalist in Alaska. Chuck, our youngest boy, our youngest child I must say, our only boy, lives in Dallas, Texas in a suburb there and he and his wife are both real estate agents with the Abby-Holiday Real Estate Company and have their own -----group and love it. They have two boys in college right now. Charles the third is just about to graduate and he has several lines that he is happy in. Photography, taking wedding pictures and such, and Tad has two more years and he is in a different university. So they are all busy, busy, busy.

STURGEON: You didn't tell me about your background. Did you graduate from college or high school?

BELL: High School in Tulsa. And I went right to work for Crane Plumbing Company.

STURGEON: And what were you doing there?

BELL: I was a secretary. Then I went to Shell Oil as a secretary. I was there about three years and got married. So we lived happily ever after.

STURGEON: Did that cause any resentment among the women who had to quit because their husbands were working there? Or was that just a rule?

BELL: No, that was a rule. And in that day and age I never heard of anybody that was resentful. Because we were all ready to have kids. I was 22 when I married him and we had Jeanie three years later, and then Betty in two years, and Chuck in five years so I was busy for the next twenty years.

STURGEON: Now you told me you were in Missouri until you were four. Do you remember anything about the town that you lived in?

BELL: By the fact that we had so many vacations back there because my father's two sisters lived there with their families, and his mother lived to 84, she was there, these aunts were just like another mother you know. And one year my father didn't have work here so there was a lot of work back in Missouri. We went back

there for six months. I went to school there. That was fun. My cousin was a teacher in music at the college. We just had a lot of fun. I made a lot of friends. The church was always open for us you know.

STURGEON: So this was a college town?

BELL: A normal, they called it a normal, a teaching school. All my cousins graduated from there. My girl cousins. I have two of them left, they are still living in -----But I haven't been back for quite a while.

STURGEON: Was that a small town? Were there lots of farmers who lived around?

BELL: Yes, and a brick factory that I passed every morning. We lived with my father's oldest sister and her daughter and it was just down the road into town. We would hear them fire up in the middle of the night if we happened to wake up. And it is still quite a memory to go by there and see that red flying from those bricks. Then stacking them up you know. Then in the afternoon go back home and see all that they did in one day by hand practically. So it was quite interesting. Of course when you are active in a church everything is easy. You have ready-made friends and you all are worshiping the same Lord and you don't have the discontent because that is the center of your life.

STURGEON: So your parents were always involved in the church and in the community in Tulsa. Were you ever involved in the community itself like the PTO, PTA, or any committees in the town that you can remember?

BELL: My dad wasn't, but mother was. She was free in the day time, went to PTA and tried to keep track of me I guess.

STURGEON: Now when you moved to Tulsa did you live right in town? Was it a large city back then?

BELL: We lived right in town. It was not a large city back then. We lived a mile and a half from town so that's not very big then.

STURGEON: How do you describe that as a community? Was it an industrial community with Shell Oil or was it---

BELL: Well, it was an oil center. At that time there weren't so many oil wells near Tulsa but still real close – Myrtlesville and----

STURGEON: I can remember driving through Tulsa and seeing oil pumps right by the capitol building.

BELL: Yes, later those all came in. That was after I was married or right before I guess. You are always so involved with your own work you don't think much of what kind of a town it is.

STURGEON: What kind of a neighborhood did you live in?

BELL: It was a regular residential.

STURGEON: Were there people of different ethnic groups there that you were aware of? What kind of groups?

BELL: Well, different religions. I remember one lady had her business in her home just through the block from us and my mother was a good seamstress but she didn't like telling the people what they should be getting and so forth so Mrs. Martin hired my mother to do all the sewing and if she had to do any fitting mother didn't mind that and she was always easy to get acquainted with and every thing. She made all of my clothes. She made practically everything in my wedding and my wedding party.

STURGEON: Were there any –like – were you in one of those neighborhoods where you might have had a lot of Germans or a lot of Russians. It was a segregated neighborhood.

BELL: It sure was.

STURGEON: Did you have any Mexicans or black people or Indians? Pretty much just a white middle class – would you say it was a middle class neighborhood?

BELL: Yes, very much so. Everybody was working. The wives weren't working, anyway away from home.

STURGEON: They might have done things like your mother, sewing at home.

BELL: Yes a few of them.

STURGEON: Ok, now, do you remember about the depression when you were growing up? What do you remember about it?

BELL: Well mostly I couldn't get married because my Dad didn't have any income. But they had been frugal through their lives and had bank accounts so we held out for an extra year you know. In 1932 we married.

STURGEON: Right in the beginning or the early years of the depression.

BELL: On my folks date, September 12th, it was their wedding day too.

STURGEON: Do you remember anything else about the depression? Like when you were first married what was it like?

BELL: He was working for Shell Oil in a filling station at a very busy intersection. He was the manager and we had a good income. We were living in a duplex which my grandmother had owned. Of course rents were cheap. We were across the street from a big park and we would go out and play tennis or whatever was going on you know, band concerts and things like that. Then when you are in a church you are always busy. You have all the bazaars and everything. My mother was always in them and there was no excuse for me to say no and I always said yes. And Volunteer Circle and then in two years we were transferred to Shawnee Oklahoma and that is where he came into the-----of the business. Very shortly then we had Jeanie and we had to move out of that apartment because they wouldn't allow children. At that time in life it was odd wasn't it? But it was a nice apartment but it wasn't big enough for a baby. But there was two bedrooms fortunately, so we moved and got another place. You are so involved with the church. Our bridge group was all from the church. At that time we joined the Presbyterian Church because there wasn't a Lutheran Church. But we found out that don't make much difference. Through all those moves that we have made we just - my Dad's instruction to me when we was transferred to Shawnee, he said Sister, come on home, I want to talk to you. We lived seven blocks from each other. So I went down, Mickey had a company car and I had our car. He said you know what the first thing you have to do when you get into Shawnee is go to church, that first Sunday. He said, I don't care where you go, but be sure that you make your contact at church. He said every time Mickey was transferred he said oh that is good. You might not want to go but don't act like it. So I found out after

about fifteen moves just what he meant. We moved about that many times. You know before you move what you are going to do and there is no question.

STURGEON: So it isn't hard to get to know people. You don't ever feel afraid when you move into a new city because you know you will find friends. That is wonderful, really wonderful.

BELL: Yes, and you are with the man you love and you've got your first child so it wasn't any trouble. And we went to Centralia, Illinois which is may seventy miles from cape -----, just across the river. All my aunts were there and everything so it was just like a homecoming. Then we got sent over to Evansville, Indiana – oh – we had Betty in Centralia and then we were two and a half years, then we went to Centralia, Illinois and we had Chuck. So then we looked at each other and we said, Ok even when we transfer we don't need another baby. So we thought three was about enough to tag along all over the world where we were going. From Evansville we went back to Centralia for two and half years. See he was the head of the department and that always makes you know everybody in your department, so when there is something comes up, the company has a party, or somebody has a party, you are included. So you never feel left out and you are busy all day with the children. Then we went to Wichita Kansas and we became Lutherans again because there was a United Lutheran church there. From Denver we went to Ardmore, Oklahoma. There we went to Methodist church. Where we couldn't find a Lutheran church we would find another one. Now that time Jeanie was a sophomore in high school, Betty was a ninth grader and Chuck was a fifth grader I guess or something, fourth grader. So we thoroughly enjoyed it and so many nice things happen to you, so many good friends. And those friends follow you. Your Christmas list gets longer and longer you know. And I still get a few letters from friends. Of course some of them have passed on and their children haven't kept up. But my kids haven't kept up either. So then we went to Denver and stayed there about twelve years. And then we transferred ourselves out here.

STURGEON: So you have always been involved in something wherever you have gone. Did you ever get involved in community activities besides the church?

BELL: Well naturally Mickey did. Yes. And with the children and school and athletics and clubs you just naturally are. It fell to me to be more active in PTA than Mickey because he was gone so much and his health just didn't ----He had poor health for quite a number of years but nothing as serious as his heart. So it was just getting too many times in the hospital and the altitude was too much and all this that and the other so very fortunately Shell Oil came out with a program for

anybody that had thirty years and were fifty years old, they could retire. They didn't have to stay the full time, so we did.

STURGEON: So what year did he retire then?

BELL: 1961 when we moved here. See his birthday was in July. So that worked out just fine.

STURGEON: During the depression was your father retired or was he still working or did he have a hard time finding a job?

BELL: No they didn't retire in those days. It didn't make any difference how old you were in the company, and he still had the secretary's job in the union. There was a group in our church, two brothers, owned a small factory where carpenters worked so they kept after him, but they didn't belong to the union, so that hurt my father pretty much. He turned it down about four times. So the fifth time he saw that Mickey and I wanted to get married but wouldn't do it because he wasn't employed, so that is how it worked out that he was working and he stayed with them until he had a stroke. About two years before he died. So it worked out some way or other.

STURGEON: So he was still working in his seventies then.

BELL: He was seventy I guess when he had to quit. In about two years then he passed away.

STURGEON: Do you remember when the Social Security Act was passed? Did you feel like that was helpful? Would it be helpful to your father or to your family?

BELL: Well yes, I thought it would be good for them.

STURGEON: Did you know what the Social Security Act was going to do in the future?

BELL: No

STURGEON: What did you think it was going to do for you?

BELL: That we would have a retirement fund.

STURGEON: Was your father able to take advantage of that?

BELL: I guess it really hadn't got started then. It must have started shortly after he died.

STURGEON: It was passed in 1936. So had he died by then?

BELL: Yes.

STURGEON: So your parents were quite elderly when they had you then?

BELL: Yes, not really. I think mother was twenty five and he was twelve years older than she was.

STURGEON: So the Social Security Act didn't help them.

BELL: No, not at all.

STURGEON: Do you remember anyone else in your family who was helped by the Social Security Act around when it started? Can you think of anyone you knew who would have received any benefits right at the beginning?

BELL: My two younger uncles may have.

STURGEON: When you were approaching retirement age and you knew that he was going to take advantage of that thirty rule what were your plans for the future?

BELL: Well we had Chuck over his two years at ASU and I knew that I would have to get some kind of work. Mickey was planning on playing a lot of golf. But we had a Providence Fund. I don't know if you have heard of the Providence Fund with Shell Oil. If you wanted to when you went to work for them and you put in ten percent and they put in ten percent. But you could draw it out if you had to and there were times when I would say to Mickey I think it is time for us to use that. About the best answer that I could get was none. The first time he said, now Dorothy we don't know what the future has got for us so let's just leave that in tact and so we did. So when we came out here we had that and we still got it. So we put it in the bank, so the funny thing was that we had sense enough to do that. Because your severance pay wasn't that great, but we didn't lose our health benefits. He wasn't in the hospital here after being two years, each year he would be in the hospital about five times in Denver with his heart. Then out here he

never was in the hospital until he died and then just two days. So that says something good for Sun City and we are thankful. Now I had a hysterectomy in '64 and Shell Oil paid for that. But then when Mickey passed away I wasn't entitled to any more, but by that time I had Social Security. That seems so funny to think back to those things. But I never needed it, fortunately. But it just seemed like if you have to think back about it that you were born at the right time to get in on that.

STURGEON: When you were thinking of retiring were you concerned about your economic security or were you pretty much –

BELL: Well with that Provident Fund, that was a good bag log, thirty years.

STURGEON: So you weren't looking ten, twenty years into the future wondering what you were going to do?

BELL: No. But we felt like if we were intelligent enough to see it that we both should work, so Mickey worked for a hardware company that was here in Sun City and it is right where the new King's Inn is and I can't think of the name of it. What was the name of that man, he owned it and Mickey was a good sales person and a good golfer, he had a three handicap when he died. So we had friends and friends and more friends. I went to work for TG&Y. I don't know if you have heard of that. They are out now. There was that all American, anyhow I worked there three days a week. In the meantime, see we got here August 31st and my mother died October first in Tulsa, and my dad was gone, so I wasn't working then, but when I got home Mickey said, well, no rest for you tomorrow, you go to work. They are all just like friends, you know, your bosses. I was in the notions and when you took your house, that's another thing with some guys, they have you come in the office and talk to the – and this makes me think we interviewed the social secretary for Tom Austin. He was the head of all the activities. There office was on, by that time it was on Peoria Avenue, next to where Safeway is now, where the Christian Science reading room is now. They asked many questions, like you are asking, like what can you do, can you play the piano, I'm a secretary, this that and the other, how many kids. Still got one. He is eighteen. Well, how did he get in here. Well the salesman sold us a house because he was going to be eighteen the following March. Anyhow, I went to work for TG&Y the first of October and the next thing I knew here comes his secretary and she says, Hi there Dorothy. And I says Hi, what can I do for you and she says come to work. No I couldn't do that. My brother-in-law got me this job here. He lives in Oklahoma City ----- She said, Dorothy, I said I can't do that to our superintendent here.

She said you just let Mr. Miller take care of that, he is Mr. Webb's head office man here in Sun City. She said please come for an interview. Mr. Miller is planning on talking to you tomorrow. Well I didn't have to work that day and I said OK. This is so unusual to turn down a job you have been on six weeks. I said it means so much to our kids getting the rest of their education. So he had four years and he was going down there the next year to ASU. So I went in and talked to Mr. Miller and went to work for them the next Monday. You know they just have a way with them, they can persuade anybody. But I worked for Ida Sandler who was the head of the closing department and she lived in Phoenix. She wasn't old enough to live out here. Well at that point I was 49 years old, but Mickey was 50 and one of you had to be 50. So I enjoyed the job very very much. There was a lot of bookkeeping and there was lot of meeting of newcomers. They would come to your desk and pay for their house. You made a lot of acquaintances. My boss said, Dorothy you have invited everybody you have worked with to-----and I said well they are lonely. Some of them would come over, and some of them we would meet in church. It is so wonderful now. I am a volunteer over at the Sun Valley Lodge which our church built. And I was a volunteer the day it opened. But it just seemed to me that I meet so many people that remember me because I took their money. That's the way it goes.

STURGEON: You had lived in Denver about twelve years before you retired. How did you first hear about Sun City?

BELL: A friend of Mickey's who was playing golf with him, he was with another oil company in Denver. They were in some kind of a tournament and he said Mickey I just got back from Sun City, Arizona. It is a new retirement outfit down there. And Mickey said are you retired? He said no, but I think you should. So he gave him all this material and we looked it over and our daughter lived down in, oh some place in Colorado, Montrose I guess. So Mickey said well let's go down to Montrose and see the kids and drive over to Sun City and look it over. And of course the altitude was the thing that he needed here in this area. So we bought a house, no we didn't buy it right that minute because Chuck was still in the ninth grade. First part of June and we had Chuck with us and you meet so many people, you know you are going around the property. We sat down and Chuck was with us that morning. We stayed at King's Inn and this couple were so delightful and he was in the oil business from Denver. He knew a lot of the people that Mickey knew and they had a daughter and a son-in-law and they just invited us to come home with them. Finally they just looked at Chuck and said do you want to go swimming, and land, he just about fell in. Well, we said if people are that nice here we can buy a house here too. So we did. We moved in October of 1961. But

we arrived about August of '61 and joined church about three weeks later. That was when we were renting.

STURGEON: So when you bought the house you had looked at the models and everything so you knew what you were buying.

BELL: Yes.

STURGEON: What was it about Sun City that you thought was so good, aside from people being friendly? It was just a little town wasn't it?

BELL: It was. The fact that the prices were right and the construction of the homes was right and the honesty, any question you asked them, it was explained to you and it was in print, you didn't have to believe it or not believe them. Everybody at the United Church, everybody you met there, the hostesses you know and everybody that you just walked up to and said hello, we are new here too. We are thinking about buying a house. That's all you needed to say. John Cox was our salesman, and it was just fun. They were having coffees and things for you to come to. Jerry Svendsen went to work, maybe two days before I did for Del Webb, so we were the youngest in the company. Of course Jerry was a lot younger than me. He was just so friendly with everybody. And if he would have a problem he would say, Hey Dorothy, come on back to the office, and he would say, what does that mean. I'd say, you tell me. We were like one big family. The sales force was across the street, the secretarial line up was over here and the color department. The Vice President's office was in the other side of the building. It was just your home. That's all I can say. And when you moved in your neighbors were moving in too. It was just like you were brothers and sisters.

STURGEON: About how big was Sun City when you moved in?

BELL: Well, it was built, see, our first – the house Mickey and I bought was on Canterbury Drive, close to 111th, and that was called unit 2 and everything was built toward Grand Ave before and then they were finishing over, when you crossed 107th, over to 99th, they were finishing over there and they were starting on that section of part 2. It just kept adding to itself. We couldn't keep enough houses ahead of us.

STURGEON: When you were thinking about moving to Sun City did the active retirement of the advertising, because I know Webb did that a lot, did that influence to move here, the golf courses, the swimming pools and everything else?

BELL: I suspect that it did because the golf courses were so important to Mickey and he was an ace swimmer in University and in High School and he loved it. And of course our son did too. Well we were so delighted in our church. And of course when we moved out here we said, we are going to go into Phoenix and be Lutheran. There was no Lutheran church here. Well after about two Sundays of driving in to church, that is a drive down there to that big Lutheran church, I can't even remember what street it was on. But they were so friendly and so delightful and the minister had been in Denver at one time. We felt like, until we met Reverent Witt, that we would make the effort to get in to town. So we told him and he is so delightful, he is never critical of anybody. But he is just a helper, helper, helper, and the Lord knew who he picked. They told him, when he said he wanted a church out here that he was too old. He was about 50. Anyhow he made such a success and he made sure that the people in the neighborhood knew we were new and all that kind of stuff. It happened that when he came to visit that Mickey was home and I was home and it just worked out. We said, my it sounds wonderful, so we went to church the next Sunday, and Chuck went with us and of course everybody was, oh you've got a young boy and of course we weren't supposed to have anybody younger than eighteen. So we would go into our little song and dance and tell them yes it was OK. Then an article came out in the paper about Chuck living here, which was very helpful you know. The whole community was happy with him. Of course he was a friendly boy and he had Christ in his heart so he didn't undo him. But I think about the movies that they have arranged down at Town Hall in Peoria, see that was built when we moved here in Unit2. They even had big community dinners, pot luck and things like that for everybody in Unit 1 and Unit2. So it just seemed like it was made to order. And like the government part of it, I think 50% of the people were glad that it was our government. No we didn't have a governor, no we didn't have this and no we didn't have that, but at the time I think Phoenix took us in too. And of course with Del Webb's business and his good ideas it worked out, so we never had any questions. But as far as joining the individual clubs, by that time I was working for Webb and I didn't have time. But I did volunteer when the Lodge was open because I could work on Saturdays. The church also had a group out in Dysart that I was a volunteer for. So it worked out for us.

STURGEON: Could you just briefly go over just one more time, you kind of talked a little about some of the reasons you came out here but tell me again why you decided to come out here?

BELL: First and foremost was the fact that Mickey's health was so bad in Denver. Then it didn't make any difference to me where we moved to because I knew that what the Doctor's were saying in Denver about his health. So that it was a god-send to come. And we had such a good doctor here, his name was Dr. Dysler. We both loved him and he and Mickey played golf and it just seemed like everything was just built in. Talk to most any body who came here early they felt the same way. You didn't have to be a golfer to enjoy Sun City. You had everything else. The dance club, now we joined the dance club but that wasn't something that was good for Mickey. But we could go and watch and enjoy it. So it just worked out.

STURGEON: When you came here, we talked about it a little bit earlier, there was a community basically here. I mean as far as people around and activities and clubs. Now did the people in Sun City start those clubs or was that Del Webb that started the clubs?

BELL: Well, Tom Austin was the head of activities and anything that he touched was wonderful. He was Mr. Smiles and his secretary Kay was the same way. I think one advantage that all of us had was that when they said no young people in this community they meant it. But they would let you have your grand kids you know, you could take them in swimming and everything. I think that everything just going the way it was people, if you didn't want to go nobody was going to make you, if you wanted to go fine. If there was dues in the club, like in the lapidary and so forth, why it was such small dues. The sewing club and everything like that. It was just built for retirees. And we were practically a group of people that were about all the same age. Some were in their 80's, I can't ever remember anybody in their 90's and they all - if they didn't have kids, when yours visited they wanted to have them. Most of them had children. I have never heard anybody say that their kids didn't want them to move her. Cause they were taking such good care of us I guess.

STURGEON: Has Sun City been everything you thought it was going to be when you came out here, or are you pleased with your experiences?

BELL: Yes. You know if anything happened in our house in that first year, if we found anything wrong, all you had to do was call that secretary and she would get somebody out to fix it. And it didn't cost you anything. See that was guaranteed for a year. I never will forget one morning I was getting ready to go to work. I was doing the dishes and I looked up and one of the tiles was in backwards. So I called her the next day and so it was back in right. So you just have --her name was Irene, that secretary, and she was working out of that little first office that Del

Webb to speak of. The Historical Society is adding it to that building. It was just wonderful. You had no worries. It was wonderful. Back home, in all the towns I lived in if anything went wrong I had to see to it. We got the plumber and so forth and pay for it. But that first year you didn't pay for a thing.

STURGEON: You said the house prices were pretty reasonable, were they lower than most new houses where you lived before or were they pretty comparable?

BELL: Well, it seemed lower. Of course we hadn't shopped in twelve years to buy a house. We were in Denver and bought one when we got there. So that we felt that we got more than a bargain. I am trying to think what that house was on Canterbury – it was two bedrooms, two baths, with refrigeration, a single carport, we were on a corner. I think it was \$9250. We would never have been able to buy anything like that in Denver at that price. Of course it was brick, those big bricks, I always want to call them adobe because they kept the heat out and really helped you. Slump block I think. We were just fortunate. Now Mickey didn't stay in the hardware business very long because a fellow came into town and came to the hardware store and talked to Mickey, somebody must have told him to talk to Mickey, that Mickey was helpful to people about what to plant. He loved that, so he went to work for this stone company, yard maintenance and everything. He was their planner, he planned yards for them. He loved it. Course we made a lot of friends that way too. A lot of people still say to me I remember your first husband.

STURGEON: Are you still living in the first home you bought? Why did you move?

BELL: No I'm not. Cause I married Bob Bell after Mickey died.

STURGEON: Is this where you moved after you got married to Bob Bell?

BELL: No, we moved into his house, down on 110th Ave, right off of Mountain View. Is this the time to tell you how I met Bob? Well he came to our church, United Church. He and his wife had been here previously about the first of the year. Let's see, I married Bob in '68, so it was '66 he got into Sun City. He bought that house over the phone because he knew the salesman, he had been here. His wife had diabetes all their married life, which was almost fifty years. See Bob was twelve years older than me. So we got married on April 24, 1968. Anyhow Mickey died 12th October, buried the 16th, 1966. She died three weeks later in St. Louis. Of course we had never met each other. I was working for Webb but he

wasn't in our part of the office, he was in the sales office. But she couldn't afford to move, she was sick, she didn't want to leave all her family back in St. Louis. Bob was born in St. Louis and he was ready to move. Then she died in '66 and he bought the house down here in '67, the first part of the year and moved here in July. So his last instructions from all his nieces and nephews were don't go out there and get a wealthy widow. I always tell him he didn't. But we met in church through a couple who knew Mickey and I real well, the White's, they both have passed away. Ralph and Corrine White, he was the mediator at our church. So we finally got together, they got us introduced and the first thing I said to Bob when we met at a covered dish dinner - everybody at the party that morning, Corinne spoke up, that was the morning I met him. Who all is coming to the potluck Tuesday night? Everybody had an excuse and I said I just can't get there; I don't get out of work until five, and so on and so on. So when I got home that Tuesday night I thought to myself go buy a pie and go. So I did and when I went in the door Reverent Witt was saying, if you've got two places by you hold your hand and I almost turned around and walked home and I thought who wants just one person. I still was a widow and feeling sorry, you know, but these two women I knew were standing up clear on the other side of the church, not at their table but at the table next and there was three plates already setting down there but this one was empty. So I put my things down there and I said where are the people that are here and they said they went in to see Bowman Chapel. So when I looked up I saw Bob and his neighbors and that is where they sat. So when the meeting was over we went down to buy a book from the speaker of that evening and it was about 8:30 I expect. His neighbors had gone on home and he had bought chicken and brought that. Anyhow we went down there and bought our books and this lady filled them out and the date and everything, and as we walked away he said shall we go get a cup of coffee. I looked him at him and I said, you know what I have to go to work in the morning - no. I'm not going anyplace. So he kept trying to get a hold of me and finally Corrine called me and then he didn't call. He left town. He went to California to visit some relatives and I thought well that was a dud. But I was working on Sunday across the street from the sales office and I went across the street for something to the sales office and Corrine yelled at me, they were having postage stamp review or something. She said, where have you been? I said, Corrine, you know where I have been and she said well Bob is back home, he had to go to California. I said, so that is the excuse. So she got us together, he called that night and we talked for an hour and a half, and the next night was a movie. So he invited me to see the movie and he said something to the effect what could we do Tuesday night. I said well let's wait and see how we get along. So he never looked his age, never, never, even when he died. He was 90 when he died, but we just hit it off. Anyway that Sunday night I wrote a long letter to my kids and made

copies, and I said, now what does your Mother do when she says goodbye to her date. Does she kiss him or push him out the door. Anyway my kids were very, very pleased because I was lonely, I wasn't sad, I knew where he was. My Mother had told me there are two things you can do when you have your baby you can scream and yell all you want to, when your husband dies you can scream and yell all you want to, but you don't have to, and I didn't either time. It sure pays off to let the Lord take care of you. Anyhow we got married the next year after he moved here, March 24 1968 and he died in '90 and that made for 22 years. That is unusual.

STURGEON: What kind of interactions did you have with Del Webb, did you ever meet him?

BELL: Oh yes, he was so much a part of this community. Every time they had a dedication or anything he was here. He would come through the sales office because we were doing a bustling business. I was in the resale end of everything. I was what Jean would call the escrow agent. If anything came up in new sales and the girl had to go on vacation I would take care of their end of it. But well for a long time I stayed over there in that first office in Unit 2 and then they sent me to resale. I was new sales and then transferred to resale's because that girl was getting married and it must have been the same story, she couldn't work, or she was going over to new sales to work and then she married one of the salesman. Anyway they put me up there on Grand Avenue in that first resale office and I really enjoyed, it, really loved it and did the whole 21 years. I told Bob when we got married I had worked for a year. But it was so simple he loved to cook, gourmet cook, that when I got done eating my dinner at night I would wash up and clean up and Saturday's we would clean up. He was just made to order.

STURGEON: Did Del Webb have a lot of interaction with the people in the community?

BELL: Oh yes. Very close, very close. And he remembered people. Same way when he walked through the office he knew you. It was nothing for him to lay his arm on your shoulder and say you are sure doing good work or something nice like your sales are sure going good in resale. By that time if people couldn't adjust in six months they would give up. Then we would sell their house for them.

STURGEON: Were there a lot of people that had a hard time adjusting?

BELL: Well, I would say no. I don't think there were ten percent. If they lost their mate, that was a little different story. But if they were ever going to adjust, they had already adjusted and the women stayed or the men stayed. And I still find that true. And their kids liked it because you are well taken care of or your neighbors you know. But Del Webb never missed a function at the sales office. We had a lot of functions for employees, introducing new models and things like you know. Somebody would be playing the organ and you could dance and so on and so forth. There was food. It was always hilarious.

STURGEON: They did this when they opened new models?

BELL: For the office bunch and the construction workers.

STURGEON: They opened new models quite often, didn't they?

BELL: Oh yes, we had a lot of turnovers. And I started to tell you that first day I went to work Jack Miller went down the hall and yelled come on we are going to have a little talk back here. It was mostly for my good because I was brand new. The key man was there and the superintendent of construction and the people in the office. We just shut down for a little bit. And he said, Dorothy do you see that big map? That is Sun City, Arizona. And my land it looked like it went forever you know, and it came out Union Hills and Beardsley Road. It was already planned. The lots were numbered and everything. He said you know what, we will be across Grand Avenue before we know it. And sure enough we were. I wouldn't believe it. I laughed, but I hadn't been there working and seen how the houses sold.

STURGEON: It was phenomenal, wasn't it, the way they sold. It was unbelievable.

BELL: You just cannot believe it. But when you realize that – Youngtown was the first and they had started a good thing and along comes Del Webb and he wanted to make people happy and he did.

STURGEON: Do you think your perceptions of Sun City have changed through the years or do you still look at it the same way?

BELL: I still look at it the same way. They have gotten more expensive but as people age and they got to be fifty they had more money.

STURGEON: Why did they have more money?

BELL: Because salaries were different. And because they knew what their project was going to be, they wanted to come to Sun City. Grandma and Grandpa might be here and many of them were. So their children came out here too when they got old enough. Both of the girls have been talking about moving out here, but their plans change. Errol and Jeanie are still in the ranch and the four boys are in charge of all that now, you know. So they won't be leaving Forbes for a couple of years. They are all golfers, their Dad saw to that, swimmers and golfers, he taught them those things and the boy too. No I don't see very much difference.

STURAGEON: When you bought your first house how were you able to finance the house?

BELL: We paid cash for it.

STURGEON: So you didn't have to worry about house payments.

BELL: That was really nice, especially with a kid ready for school. Didn't cost hardly anything to put him through school, when you think about it you know. But it just worked out perfect. The Lord sure knew what he was doing with us.

STURGEON: Were you involved in any of the planning stages for any of the other parts of Sun City?

BELL: Maybe I would be a hostess if they were short on hostesses; they would call us girls out.

STURGEON: What would you do if you were being a hostess?

BELL: Well, as people came through the model you were in you greeted them and you showed them around if they wanted to ask any questions, that is what you were there for, to answer their questions. What is the future going to be, you know, naturally what you think about when you move here. Course, we never dreamed that it would leap.

STURGEON: You never really got involved in the government of this at all.

BELL: No.

STURGEON: Were you ever in there when they organized different clubs or groups?

BELL: No, because we both were working.

STURGEON: Do you think that Sun City, when they were organizing these clubs and things you were involved in and things you have done in places you lived before, was it just sort of a continuation, or were they already here? Did you join things after they had been organized in other words.

BELL: Yes, because see Unit 1 was already done, the church was done, the big church wasn't. We helped on that a lot. But Mickey might have, of course, because he was involved in the main group, because they had breakfasts and he had to be there and Bob was very active in that. But I couldn't join the circle, but there were neighborhood meetings I could attend.

STURGEON: What did they do in the neighborhood meetings?

BELL: Mostly just get acquainted – how many kids have you got – where did you come from – do you like to sew or so forth. So then when you would meet them at the church or a covered dish supper you weren't a stranger. Oh, this is my husband and this must be yours and so on and so forth. It just made it easy.

STURGEON: Well after you retired it sounds like you were a very busy person. You must be doing lots and lots of things.

BELL: Bob and I, I retired in '82, October, and by the end of that month he was sick. He was in the hospital, and he never got over – he had prostrate and in about a year or two years they said it was cancer. So it was just like the Lord leading us through each detail, Mickey and Bob's lives and mine, that it wasn't slam-bang. I was here to help both of them. When Mickey was only in the hospital two days when he passed away from a heart seizure. And that was so different and then in Denver he was in five times and we were in and out in and out. I had the three kids to help through too you know. But I was there to help and that's what I was here to help Bob. I had told him I couldn't marry him, well why, I said I just can't stand to see another man die. So he stopped the car and he said, see here, I watched my wife die and he said if I could do that, work and take care of her at night then when she got real bad I had to retire. I said, Bob, I can't do it. So after a couple more sessions like that I said OK. I'll do it, well when. I said oh April 24. He had been in St Louis and I had really missed him, so I knew that this was more than just a

passing fancy and that he was a believer and had been all his life and I was and my kids were, they never could have any kids because of that diabetes. But he helped raise three nephews and my kids think he set the moon so Ok. The minute he passed away they were right here, all three of them. My son's wife could come. The two husbands couldn't. But when you got kids that see good in a man and so we had, I had these good friends of mine from Centralia over for dinner one night and I had my boss, Ida Sandler, and we were going to announce when we were going to get married and Bob was there of course. So we were having a good time, we had eaten and so we said well now we will tell you why you are here. And just like that the phone rang, so I took it and it was my son and he and his wife and their little boy lived in ----- Illinois. So we were talking and I said, well wait a minute Chuck, you are in for some fun. I said Bob and I were going to be married. Ooooooh Mother. I was just laughing you know and I said Bob come on and talk to your son-in-law. And they were so proud of each other. It was just like that and has been ever since. Then night before we got we got married we were taking the minister and his wife to dinner at King's Inn. Chuck was a busboy there and every body in town knew him. One group even took him out to a dedication of a new USS Arizona, because their son had been on that and they lost him in the war. They took Chuck. Things like that just kept happening. But anyhow, the night before we got married my son-in-law Ken called and he said is Bob there. I said yes we are just getting ready to go out to that dinner Ken. He said well let me talk to him. And he said to him, you've got 8 hours and 22 minutes to get out of this family. Bob just laughed, he was used to him by this time. Of course his kids were always acting silly too. So he said, can't take your plan, Ken and hung up. And I said what was that all about and he told us. But it has been fun. Lot of fun. And to the very end Bob was a gentle, patient. And I was so thankful I could take care of him because he didn't want to go to a nursing home. But the last six weeks, let's see, he was in the hospital for a month and he was down at Camelot for two weeks, but that is all. And I took care of that too. It just was right.

STURGEON: When you first came here they didn't have a hospital here in Sun City, did they?

BELL: No. And that is when I had my operation and I had to go down to Northern, West Hospital, which Dr. Dysler was in and part of. But by the time Mickey died it was built. So it was real nice. Youngtown hospital was built, that is where he built. Then Bob worked on the subscription for Boswell. That is how they raised the money; they went around and got subscriptions. He did real good. I just gave my brain to the society that is doing Alzheimer's and building a big building. Boswell Hospital is doing that. Sun Health is doing that. I don't know,

one of my kids said to me, how come you are giving your brain, it isn't any good. I said that is just the reason, they know it is good.

STURGEON: I understand that it was actually the people in Sun City that organized the hospital? The people in the community wanted a hospital.

BELL: Yes. One of the fellows from our church. I can't think of his name, Bill Chapman got it started. He was president of the board and so forth and the man who is the head of the hospital now, he came in and they all worked together. Of course the building was built by then. In fact this friend of mine, Bernice Wallace and I were talking the other day, we were up at Furr's eating lunch and as we walked out she said can you remember when there were only two sections to that hospital. I said I sure can. But everything worked out.

STURGEON: Let me just ask you, did you ever take part in the surveys they did as people were coming into Sun City to the model homes?

BELL: Only very, very rarely, because if I had to be on duty as a helper when it was open house, because maybe they didn't have enough hostesses that day or something, or somebody couldn't come and they would yell for us girls to come over, but the salesmen did that survey. They are the ones that did the survey.

STURGEON: What about the first year you lived here, when I was researching Sun City it said that they surveyed the residents of Sun City, the first couple of years they would survey, was that the salesmen or was that the social director that did that?

BELL: That was the social director. They knew what kind of people they were dealing with.

STURGEON: Did you have any friends that moved out after you did? Did you ever tell them anything about Sun City?

BELL: Yes. When they questioned us we told them about it. This one good friend from Centralia, Illinois, they owned a big grocery store and he was a wonderful butcher and they were so friendly and they were Methodists. She still belongs to the first Methodist church that was ever built. When they came in and I heard their name of course I went and got to them and talked to them over at the sales office. We must have had an intercom or some such or maybe somebody came in and said they knew us, that is probably what happened. So because they

knew we were moving, no we didn't move from there, we moved here from Denver. Anyhow Amos and Helen, I got them in my office and we had a good talk and they wanted an apartment and would they like this and would they like that, they got on a golf course, cause they were both golfers, and she is still a golfer, and he was a golfer too until he died. But we were just like relatives you know. Then a couple from Denver, the Banks, Helen and Ed, they moved in and we met them right away. I suspect that it was at the office that somebody came and said oh I saw a friend of yours today. The sales group, then they said, sell a house for me. So we did, got them over to eat and things like that. We are just bosom buddies and they loved it, the other couple too. So when Mickey died they were all there, when the kids got married they were all there. Just one of those things.

STURGEON: Why did you decide to move out here?

BELL: Oh, well Bob bought that house down on 110th and this is the first time I wondered why he didn't buy a mobile home if he wanted one so bad. Anyhow we had company, his and her company after we got married you know, and he had an extra bedroom built on his house, he knew company was coming, I guess. He had a three bedroom, so one of these couples on my side was so enthusiastic my aunt said to me, why can't we all live together. So I just looked at her and said well we don't have any plans like that. Luckily she said, well then I am going to buy a house just like this. Anyhow I said to Bob you know I doubt if they will buy, they haven't got the money to do it. And if you really mean you want a mobile home now is the time to do it. We have way too much company. We enjoyed it but it was always up to him, poor guy, cause I was working. So I always laugh when I say, he had this lot picked out, not this lot, this park and he had this mobile home picked out, so he took me to other places first you know on the weekends. I bet we looked at six parks and of course looked at mobile homes in places and then he took me down to Van's and showed me this and of course this just hit me, it's home. It was carpeted and draped and everything. It just seemed like the right thing for us. Two bedrooms and two baths. I said where will we put it. He said well there is one more park and it is close to where you are working. By that time I was working up here at Del Webb's last office on Del Webb and Bell Road. No it wasn't, I was down, I guess I was up there on, right across Del Webb where that office was. Anyhow we looked the lots and Bob picked out one on ----and for some unknown reason I said do you have corner lots for sale. And he said yes we have a real nice one. This is it. And as soon as Bob saw it, I said to Bob, I have often wondered why people didn't take advantage of a corner lot. They can sit their mobile home different and have their driveway, so that is what he did. So it just worked out. Everybody was so nice around here. This was all built then and it

is built in more since we have been here. In 22 years it is bound to. We have lived here for 22 years. He died June 8 of last year. So it is 23 years now that I have lived here. I tell Bernice I have lived here longer than any other house I have ever lived in.

STURGEON: So you moved in here shortly after you were married then?

BELL: We were married in '68, yeah three years. We moved here in '71 it was two years.

STURGEON: And never was sorry that we moved. Well we (end of tape)