

Sun Cities Area Historical Society
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Case # 208

Interview with Alice Messick

September 26, 1991

Date of Birth: November 23, 1909

Place of Birth: Ray, Arizona

Alice Messick and her husband sponsored and promoted the Sun City Angels, a woman's softball team.

Synopsis:

- Mother born in San Diego, early 1890s. Finished 8th grade then taught school for a year.
- Father a Jack-Of-All-Trades. Head janitor in Ray, AZ schools.
- I was eldest of four: had two sisters and one brother.
- Flu epidemic struck when I was 9. Sick kids couldn't attend school. Mother very ill; I tended her. Father had to keep the heating plant going. Daddy got ill too; no one could take over his job, so I got up at 5 a.m. to get steam up. A lot of people died in the epidemic. Funeral homes busy both day and night. Father helped build coffins.
- During Depression my folks did not have money to send me to school, and women then did not work and go to school. I was good with kids, and I worked in Phx for the LaPrads, our AZ Attny General.

- Lived in Ray, AZ (home of the Consolidated Mining Company) until about 17, went into Phoenix to work during the Depression. Picked cotton, waited tables, babysat, and worked at a root beer stand.
- Ray, AZ was a small community, about 3,000. Had number of hills with houses, near Sonora, a Mexican town. Ray was home of Consolidated Mining Company. Company did have houses for rent, but father owned. Mother involved in community through church.
- Hispanics brought in from Mexico during WWI about a mile from Ray. Blacks had their own school as did the Mexicans. Also, a large number of Chinese groceries and laundries.

- What Sun City offered was very appealing. Husband relaxed, tried golf, liked the youth in the Sun City Saints, ages 16 to 25.

- When husband and I moved to Sun City, the Sun City Saints were just getting started. Raymond and I agreed to help make posters and distributed them. After he died, I continued, even offered 2 or 3 to lie with me. Girls were mostly amateur team players from the valley. Didn't get paid. Got uniforms and some money for transportation.
- Eventually I put up money for trophies in competitions. Belonged to the Booster Club, eventually on Board of Booster Club, in charge of year books, score cards, etc.

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SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Alice Messick

Transcribed by Belva J McIntosh in March 2008

This is Melanie Sturgeon and on behalf of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society and the Arizona Historical Foundation I am interviewing Alice Messick, on of the early pioneers of Sun City in her home in Sun City, Arizona and it is September 26, 1991.

STURGEON: Alice, can you tell me the approximate dates and places of your parents birth?

MESSICK: I believe that my mother was born in California in San Diego, probably in 1890 or the early 1890's. I am not sure where my father was born.

STURGEON: What did your father do for a living?

MESSICK: Well, kind of a jack of all trades in a way, but he was head janitor in the Ray school system in Ray Arizona.

STURGEON: Can you tell me some background about yourself. Where were you born and when?

MESSICK: I was born November 23, 1909. I don't know whether I was born at Ray or not – that is where I grew up. I couldn't tell you for sure.

STURGEON: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MESSICK: I had two sisters and one brother. Two sisters are living and one brother is gone.

STURGEON: Were you the oldest?

MESSICK: I was the oldest. Next was a sister, LuDell then my brother Ed, and then my sister Hazel.

STURGEON: Do you know anything about your parent's educational background?

MESSICK: No, I think in those days – I remember my mother saying she graduated from eighth grade, then did teach a year when she was young, which they were allowed to do in those days. When you think of it now you just wonder.

STURGEON: Where did you grow up? You said you grew up in Ray, did you stay there all your young years?

MESSICK: I grew up in Ray until I was about – oh, I guess I graduated about seventeen then I came into Phoenix to go to work and of course that was depression time, which was hard and you really struggled.

STURGEON: And what did you do?

MESSICK: A little bit of everything from picking cotton to waiting on tables to finally ending up working at a root beer stand. I was in charge of the girls. There were eighteen girls working at the Twin Barrels Root Beer Stand. It was the only root beer stand in the valley at that particular time that was not serving illegal alcohol. All of the rest of them were just fronts. But we weren't and because we had programs – just volunteer people coming and singing and playing instruments, we usually had two or three hundred cars on the car lot. So we had about eighteen to twenty girls that worked.

STURGEON: So did people come in to eat?

MESSICK: No, no, no. It was a drive in – root beer stand – where you were served at the car.

STURGEON: How long did you keep doing this then?

MESSICK: Probably a year. Then I went to California and worked at different places and just went from place to place working. I met my husband in Colorado. When we got together we found that we had crossed paths several times during the previous year, it was odd that we would just meet in Colorado.

STURGEON: What did he do for a living?

MESSICK: He was in the mining business as an engineer. Well it was gold mining. He was superintendent of Minnesota Mines in Colorado.

STURGEON: How did he get from California up to Colorado?

MESSICK: That has been so long ago I just don't remember. It was just another job that you were going to. I don't think in those days they didn't travel as much as they do now so that if you did go anywhere it had to be by bus because there were no planes.

STURGEON: Was this still during the depression?

MESSICK: Yes, I think my husband and I were married in 1934 in Colorado. That is when I got involved in the March of Dimes. In Colorado I had a Girl Scout group and it came up that Roosevelt was having birthday balls for the polio patients. The girls wanted to do something to raise some money. So in our little mining town they decided let's have a dance. Those days you made box lunches real pretty and they were auctioned off. So we thought we were real good for a little old mining town, we sent three hundred dollars in that year. That was the first year of the thing to do with the March of Dimes. I just stayed in there and every year we would do something. When we moved after the war to Wyoming I became chapter chairman there for

twenty-five or thirty years. I have a forty year pin from the March of Dimes. I spent all those years as a volunteer. I enjoyed every minute of it.

STURGEON: After you were married did you work?

MESSICK: No. I was always involved in community activities and of course my husband – it seemed like after I was married my husband was always the boss wherever we were and the boss's wife was always asked to do a lot of things that you don't ordinarily do. But I enjoyed it and we didn't have any children and most everything was done for children.

STURGEON: Besides the March of Dimes and the Girl Scouts what were you doing?

MESSICK: I was involved for the twenty five years we had the state fair in the home town in Wyoming. I was in charge of the state fair parades and also the grandstand, which involved – I also had high school girls as the ushers for the grand stand. So that kept me involved with youth. They were needing help and since I had been involved with the volunteers in the Lions and different groups they wanted to know if I would like to take charge of this with the state fair. At first it was the grand stand then they said we don't have anyone to run the state fair parade, how about you taking it over. You get so involved you don't realize that one thing is on top of the other yet they are all going at the same time. So I was real busy.

STURGEON: When you think about the town you grew up in, Ray, how would you describe it as a community? Was it real small? About how large do you think it was?

MESSICK: It was a small community. Probably around 3,000, there was town site and Boyd Hill and Hercules Hill and I am talking about where all the houses were. Then there was Sonora which was a little Hispanic town a mile away from the actual city of Ray. This was a company town with the Ray Consolidated Copper Company. They owned all the land. You could own your own home but you rented the land for a dollar and a half for three months. This included your garbage haul and your water and all of that, which was reasonable. The company did have some houses built that they rented for ten or twelve dollars a month for those who didn't build their own. My father built the one we lived in.

STURGEON: Since you were so busy in the community was your mother as busy as you in the community?

MESSICK: I think she was through the church because I remember going to - in those days the women always made their hats – and the church would have these big bazaars and it would always be hats for sale that they had worked on for three or four months. There would be the spring hats for Easter and the fall hats for winter. That is what I remember that my mother did. She always kept her hands busy in all kinds of handiwork.

STURGEON: I know in some mining towns they had lots of ethnic groups besides Hispanics. Did you have any other ethnic groups with you like Poles or -----?

MESSICK: Oh, I suppose there were. Maybe I grew up with not – there was a separation of course from the Hispanics, but they were brought in from Mexico during the war. So they had to build a place for them to live. That was the only place they could live which was about a mile up a canyon from Ray which developed into their community. I guess I didn't have that ethnic really – now they did have a little school. We had a real small group of negroes and they had their own school until high school just like the Hispanics had their own school, then for high school they all came into Ray. I think the only ethnic group that I can remember – of course I know there were other groups, but so many things were Chinese. We had Chinese groceries and Chinese launderers. In those days you had a butcher shop and a place where you bought your vegetables and another place where you bought the dry staples. I mean they were separate, you didn't go to one store and buy everything. It seemed like I, being the oldest one in the family, did all the shopping. I get to thinking about it I think I have been old all my life. When I was nine years old, that is when the flu epidemic hit, and if somebody in your family had flu you couldn't go to school – they wouldn't allow it. But Daddy was the janitor for all the schools so he had to see that the heat from the heating plant kept going. Mother got down so I had to stay home with nobody to help – she was pregnant with my youngest sister, and my oldest sis she went out of her head and had convulsions and I was the one that brought her out of all those. Daddy got down and there wasn't a sole to take over his job at the heating plant which was just about a half a block from our house. So who did that? Up at five in the morning to get the steam built up. I don't think I could do it now but I look back and I can see me going up there. Daddy had told me – of course I had been with him a few times. He told me how to do it and what to look for, but at nine years old that was a lot of responsibility. But there was no one the company could even get. I think I grew up because I had all that responsibility.

STURGEON: Now did you live in the middle of town or the outskirts of town?

MESSICK: Oh we lived about two blocks from where the main part of town was. Across the street was some businesses. In a little town you had a little bit here and a little bit there. We were along a creek and things were built on both sides of the creek. It was an interesting time. It was during the war, first world war. You couldn't get a lot of things at the grocery store. We made a lot of things.

STURGEON: Did you have a lot of people in town die from that influenza?

MESSICK: Yes. I think that was what was wrong with Daddy was that he was helping the mortician because almost day and night they were going by with bodies. Daddy helped build just the raw coffins and then would help load the bodies up on the wagon. I don't know who dug the graves, but they would take them out to the cemetery. Years later my husband and I were on a plane and sitting next to us on the plane was a gentlemen and we got to talking and he said that he was in charge of the Ray open pit mine. I said, oh that was where I used to live. I want one question answered. The cemetery there, you dug around it, it is just a mound sitting out there in this great big open pit. I said what are you going to do with it? He said why do you want to know and I said because my Dad is buried there. Then he got real interested and he said well we are going to have a memorial cemetery built just for all those people. But he said there are so many graves there and we don't have any names and we don't know anything about them, we can't understand what happened. I said well, I think I can tell you and he said what do you

mean? I said well they were dropping like flies during the flu epidemic and they were taking them out there day and night. I know how much work there was since daddy was helping. I said, they probably didn't even have names for half of the people or maybe two thirds of the ones they buried there. They were workers that come in, it was during the war and they would come in from all over the country to work in the mines. He said oh, we are sure happy to know that, because we just didn't know what we were going to do. So he took all the information about Daddy and when they had their big deal they called and wrote to me and wanted to know if any of the family could be there. My one sis and I could go. So we were there for the services. So it is just gradually over the years and watching this area grow from nothing to what it is now.

STURGEON: You mentioned that you went to work because it was the depression, do you remember what it was like in Ray during the depression, why you left?

MESSICK: There really wasn't much up there for a person to do. The folks didn't have money to send me to school. If it had been now I could have worked and gone to school but in those days women didn't work and go to school. It just wasn't one of those things. So you just had to work and make your own living. I came down here and since I helped raise the two sisters and brother I was pretty good with kids. So I went to work for the LaPratt's. He was the attorney general for the State of Arizona at that time. They had three boys and a girl. A.T. was the oldest and Lauren and Janice and baby Paul. They called him baby Paul because he was the baby. So I had the four children that I took care of for the LaPratts for quite a while. Then I went on to other things. One thing leads to another.

STURGEON: Do you remember what working conditions were like for your father during the depression? Was he able to keep working?

MESSICK: Well, it was a little rough. I know one time that he came into Phoenix looking but I don't think evidently because he went back to Ray, that he got anything. It was just one of those things. He kept his job but in the summer time and then there was a period there where they were just giving script. The whole state was just on script.

STURGEON: Did your Dad ever get involved in like the WPA programs or anything like that?

MESSICK: No

STURGEON: Do you remember any relatives moving in with you during the depression to kind of get together? Do you remember when your father retired was he able to get any kind of pension from the state?

MESSICK: No relatives moved in with us. I really don't know that much about when he retired or what he got.

STURGEON: Did he retire – like now at age 60 or 65 or did he keep working until he was much older than that?

MESSICK: No, let's see. He got sick and I think because of his health he had to retire and I think he was probably in his early 50's when he died. He had cancer.

STURGEON: Do you remember when it was really hard during the depression and they were debating about social security and they finally passed the act? Do you remember how people felt about that?

MESSICK: No. That was after I was married and I do know that Raymond and his Dad were talking and Raymond said well Dad you will get a little pension but I probably won't. I can remember Dad saying that well it won't be very much but it might help. I remember it was around twenty five or twenty six dollars a month when they first started out. But in those days that was quite a bit of money. A dime would buy an awful lot.

STURGEON: Do you think that, when you look back over time do you think social security was a good thing?

MESSICK: I think so. Well I think in its time it helped people. I am thinking of the early days here when the people came out here and their social security was what, about \$200 or maybe less and they could sell their little place wherever they were and they come out here and they could buy and live cheaper. It sounded very good. But who would ever guess that everything would just go up, up, up. You don't really realize that so if you were completely dependent on social security, which when I say I am just on social security and it's not enough, well it isn't. But what Raymond left when he passed away, I have had to have a new roof, I have had to have a new stove and refrigerator, washer and dryer and a lot of things to keep the place up. That all just takes money that you had to pull out of savings. Then you have the car breaks down and so on. There are so many things that happen. When Raymond and I moved here – we had been so used to working for community projects and everything and the Sun City Saints were just getting started. They were playing on a dirt field. They were making their own posters on poster paper. But here they are working and trying to play ball and everything. It was hard for them to get their posters out to all the business places and we were to a game and Raymond is talking and said well, we will help you make them and put them out. After I lost him I stayed right in there with the team. It is funny how one thing just pulls right through to the other.

STURGEON: When you were living in Wyoming did you stay in the same town and what kind of a town was it?

MESSICK: Ranching town. They did have coal and there was uranium there which they brought out in the last few years after we had gone. There is a coal field that goes clear across into Canada through all those states. So about anyplace you dig you can get coal down about ten or fifteen feet.

STURGEON: You said your husband was involved in community activities too. Was he as busy as you?

MESSICK: Well in a way. I mean when you own your own business you are busy. But then he was made chairman of this and chairman of that. Trouble is that when he got to be chairman

of something, who did the work? I did. Of course he belonged to the Chamber but I was doing the Chamber work. He would get appointed to these different things so he gets on the board and they decide it is coming up the 75th anniversary of the town so who gets appointed as the chairman of the anniversary but Alice Messick. She can do it she has got the time. So then I put on and made a real big success of it. One of our state senators said well now let's see, in three years the state is going to have their anniversary. I already talked to the Governor and you got to write a letter. I said what do you mean I got to write a letter. Well everything you are involved in and so forth and so on. And I said oh no and he said oh yes, so I was forced in to writing to the Governor my resume and then I get appointed to the state's anniversary for their 75th. But I did a real bang-up job on that too. We bought a town that was one of the first communities in the state that had been in private hands and was being torn down piece by piece but was really a part of the early history of the Wyoming territory. So we wanted to see it preserved and we had a little money left over from our anniversary so we just up and bought it.

STURGEON: So when you moved up to Wyoming your husband wasn't working for a company anymore, he went up there to start his own business?

MESSICK: Yes. He was a mechanic in the garage. He finally built his own garage and gradually added a car agency. You just expand and don't stand still really.

STURGEON: When you and he were approaching retirement age what were some of the things you were concerned about as you looked into the future?

MESSICK: Of course we thought we would keep our place and be out somewhere during the winter months. Raymond came home one day and he said, honey, when I retire we are going to leave period, whether we come back even a little bit in the summer I don't know. I said how come? He said, well they have got me down for Mayor and going to run me for the legislature and they want me to do this and this and I am tired. He has worked all his life. He really had and had no really vacation time. When he was in the mine we would go someplace, get a telephone call and they were having problems and we would have to stop whatever we were going and go back, even in your own business. He said if we stay here they are going to have me too involved and I am not going to be able to say no. So that is why we took off looking for a place with the idea that we would be down here about eight or nine months of the year and back up there maybe a couple or three. But we had a friend who was in the real estate business and when we came down here and we knew we were going back so Del and my sister bought our car for one of their daughters who was needing transportation. So Charles said well I will fly down and pick you up and drive you back to Wyoming. So after he got us in the air, he said I have sold your house. I said Charles, nobody told you to do that. He said well but I did and you have got just a week to move out when you get home. So many years in a place. I just practically flipped and he said well, yes, I know you bought a place in Sun City, which was a little place, it wasn't this one it was a little one. But he said you will be down there all winter and up here you will have to have the heat going and you will be worrying about if the water breaks or if the power goes off so you don't have any heat and all of this will happen. He said you can get rid of the place up here and when you come up in the summertime you can rent a motel room a lot cheaper than you can keep your housing going all winter, which made sense. So we said OK but oh boy was that rough getting out of there in one week.

STURGEON: So how did you hear about Sun City when you first heard about it?

MESSICK: I think we knew that there was Sun City here and of course my sisters, or my sister living here in Mesa. Then we had some friends that came down here that we knew about. So we knew about Sun City. But when we left up there Raymond said oh we will look around New Mexico and California and Arizona. But as quick as my husband made up his mind I knew that he was going to stop in Arizona after it all happened. I can look back and see that he wasn't going to go to New Mexico or California that it was going to be here. My sis said I just thought you would never move to Arizona. I didn't push it – I would like it, but I was real happy when that is what he decided to do.

STURGEON: How did you end up in Sun City?

MESSICK: We called these friends and they took us around. They had a whole list of places to show us, properties, and since we weren't interested in a bigger one, we saw one on Alabama that we bought, just the second house on the corner of Alabama and 107th. We bought that and that was where we moved in '71 or '72.

STURGEON: So Sun City had been in place about eleven years when you got here.

MESSICK: Yes but there wasn't anything North of Grand. I'll tell what happened to me when we first bought our little house. We had to go get the water turned on you know go to the water place. I said well where is it because everything was on Grand. They said well you just go across the rail road cross on this dirt road and you just go up that dirt road and you will see the water building, where you go in and they will take care of you. I thought that is funny to have it way up there when the town is down here. So I drove across the railroad tracks and kept a going and kept a going and kept a going. I said I think we must have made a mistake and about that time I looked up ahead and there was a building sitting off on the left hand side of the road. I turned off there and I jumped out and went in and I said is this the water place. Well yes. I said I don't know why the heck it is way out here in the country when things are down there. I think it is terrible. And she said why honey this will be the center of Sun City before too long and I said Ha, Ha, Ha. And that is exactly the way I answered her. I was so disgusted when you couldn't see anything but just desert. I think there had been some plants where they had some fields out there but it was just open. All of a sudden they started building the lakes and all that.

STURGEON: When you were thinking of moving what was it about Sun City was appealing as opposed to moving to Mesa or some other place?

MESSICK: I think what they had to offer. My husband had never played golf – he never had time – he couldn't see any sense of men going out there and hitting that little white ball. He worked all the time. He was usually down at the business at five in the morning and maybe home at eight at night. So he didn't have time for relaxation like that. But I had played in Douglas and I thought well rather than having him underfoot all the time I can get him started playing golf. Well, he said I don't think so, but I got him started. He really enjoyed it.

STURGEON: You had mentioned the baseball team. Had you been interested in baseball before?

MESSICK: I had always been interested in baseball. Daddy was very interested in baseball. Mother hated it. So I always went with Daddy to all the ball games we had on dirt fields up there at Ray. Anywhere there was baseball I would always go. Really never to any big league games. You could listen to them on the radio then finally you could get them on TV. So I have always been interested. But I think it was the youth in the Sun City Saints that really got us going.

STURGEON: Could you explain just exactly what kind of a team this was – what the age groups were and what they did etc?

MESSICK: The girls were, I would say, age sixteen up into about twenty five. They all enjoyed playing ball. They all had to work in order to play ball. They were dedicated ball players. Because you can't work eight hours a day and then go out and play ball unless you are dedicated. They had games away from here. In fact after my husband passed away I usually had two or three girls living here because that would save them rent. They had to work to get their scholarships for the fall or money to go to school or whatever they were doing.

STURGEON: So where did the girls come from that were on the team?

MESSICK: Well, mostly around the valley, from high schools and colleges.

STURGEON: And was it a professional team you had here?

MESSICK: I wouldn't say they were professional because they were all amateurs. We did belong to the league in California which was really not professional but they are so good they are almost, but they weren't considered professional, because if you are an amateur you are an amateur. They didn't get paid. The only thing they got paid for, they got their uniforms and when they had these trips there was usually money to pay for the transportation and places to stay.

STURGEON: So Sun City sponsored the team?

MESSICK: Yes.

STURGEON: And how much more did you get involved other than just putting posters up?

MESSICK: Well, eventually after my husband passed away I put up - for their memorial day – they always had a memorial day – bringing in teams anyway – competition. So I put up money for trophies for that. I belonged to the Booster Club and eventually got on the board of the Booster Club which gets you more involved in the operation which is raising money. I was in charge in putting out the year books, getting the ads and all that and the score cards. So it entailed a lot of work.

STURGEON: What else were you involved in?

a place about ten or twelve blocks south of here and I think they were in a bind to get money so they could finish up on that one. They had us down for dinner and gee whiz, there is a block wall all the way around their house, one of those with atriums in the front, you don't have any ---and they only had one little window about like this from their dining room that went out to the street on 103rd and you are blocked out of everything because they had this great wall around the back. Anyway we were down there for dinner that night she said, oh I don't know why we sold. I feel so hemmed in, I can't even see out except in the backyard. I never could understand that either because this is a much better plan.

STURGEON: When you first came here were you able to pay cash for your house?

MESSICK: Oh yes, we paid for everything when we moved down here. That is where a lot of our retirement money went you know.

STURGEON: When you were here the first couple of years was DEVCO still sending around surveys to the people who lived in their homes about the Sun City community?

MESSICK: Personally I don't remembering answering or going through anything like that unless my husband did it.

STURGEON: Did you ever have any interactions with anyone from the Del Webb Company?

MESSICK: Not personally.

STURGEON: By the time you were here were the recreation centers and committees and organizations pretty well set up?

MESSICK: Well of course there was Oakmont and Fairway and Mountain View I think were the three when we moved here. So they were pretty well set up and operating. I don't know if they had all the activities that they ended up with but at least they were active. We were swimmers so that is the thing we were involved was just the swimming, not any of the others even though I paint. Raymond said why don't you joint one of their painting classes? I said I will go around and check. I came home and said I don't think I am better than anybody, but I don't think these teachers can teach me anything. He said why? I said, well I had an awful good teacher, but these teachers, those that I watched, and I watched two or three, they had their board up here and all these people sitting here with their boards and they would say now take your brush and take this color and do this. So everybody was doing the same thing. You can't look exactly like the teachers, but it is so similar and you are not learning. At least that is not the way I was taught. The teacher I took from you brought your paint and you brought your boards and he said now paint a picture. I said what do you mean paint a picture? He said well paint what you would like. Just go ahead and start painting. What he wanted to know was what you could do and he wanted everybody to have their own style and not be copying everybody. Well I started out and I had perfect perspective, so he didn't have to work with me on perspective but he said the sky is not always blue, the water is not always blue, the ground is not always brown, the tree trunks are not always brown, telling you all these things to get your mind working so you would pick up colors, the color reflection is different on everything. That is the way I was taught

and I went to all these places so I didn't join anything. They weren't doing anything I was interested in. I painted after I came down here.

STURGEON: Did you or your husband get involved in the Home Owners Association?

MESSICK: I think we belonged but I don't think we went to meetings or anything like that. Raymond had had enough meetings and he wanted to just relax.

STURGEON: When you were here were they still debating back and forth whether they should incorporate Sun City? And what were some of the arguments you were hearing about that? Were there some that felt you should and some that you shouldn't?

MESSICK: Oh yes. Just about the same as they are arguing now. I think when you moved here it was to get away from all of that hooray. Why mess it up when you have something is very, very good and is working? It also works in a lot of other places they don't want you to know about. Larger communities than this too, but I think we are doing just fine the way we are and I think we were back then. One thing I think that people will try, now when we moved into Alabama we had two little poodles. I wanted to have a fenced yard so I could just turn them out because they were used to being out in the yard. I went to every one of my neighbors and asked if it would bother them if we put up a chain link fence in the back yard and they said no that is fine, which we did. Well, none of them had pets, but the one lady next door, she said I just want you to know what is going on. They are coming around with petitions to get rid of all animals. All dogs and all cats. They are going to take it into the Health Department because they say it is a health hazard, these animals. But she said I don't think they are going to get very far with it. Well, the people that had – now we never did sign because nobody ever came to us but I know the people next door signed, wherever it was they were signing petitions. When it went down to the county health department, the people who wanted to get rid of all the animals, not only the dogs and cats but the rabbits and everything else that run around here, they had about twelve hundred signatures and the other people had something like three thousand or thirty five hundred signatures. So of course the health department just threw it out because it was so ridiculous. People try it every once in a while. I just don't understand. What would we gain by incorporation that we don't have now? We would still have to pay for some of the things that we are paying for now, plus, I don't care what they say, you have got to have a building for a police station and you have got to have a jail, got to have all of these things. Oh, but we will get lots of money from the county. Have they been listening to how much they have been cut off to go to all these communities, how many communities have had to put out a deal to raise taxes in their community. I hope that it gets defeated. Meredyth is getting out a petition to get it on the ballot in November. They defeated it in Sun City West this last spring and I hope it is defeated here.

STURGEON: What about the school tax issues, were you ever involved in that?

MESSICK: No, because we really do pay school taxes. We are paying for colleges and different areas of school. I think the whole hooray was that if we get incorporated you have got to have a school, state law says that. If you are a community, yes, you have got to have one, that is why we voted it down before. We didn't want the school.

STURGEON: Where would the kids come from anyway?

MESSICK: Well, there are certain kids here that they pick up to go to school. I do know that they have laws but some people do have some kids around here. I don't know how long they are allowed. One year I know a woman came to the swimming pool one day she had a baby. But she went swimming and the baby was in a buggy. I thought oh well, her daughter or somebody must be visiting. She was reluctant to talk about it at first but she said no, her husband told her daughter that if she had that baby he would leave. She had the baby and she just brought the baby to me and said it is yours and if you don't want it I am going to throw it away. She said, it is my grandchild, what do you do? So she stayed here about two years, I think, or three with that baby and all of a sudden she was no longer in Sun City so I imagine she moved some place else. So those things do happen and I think the idea of kids here is that not that you don't like kids and you love them but they get to screaming and yelling and scooting and you are too old to take that anymore. I know, I go to my sis's and she is almost pulling her hair out because of her grandkids and I can see, they slam the door, she will say let the door close quietly and wham it will go and they are screaming and yelling.

STURGEON: How have your perceptions of Sun City changed over time as you lived here and watched it?

MESSICK: I don't know that it has changed. I like what has happened. They keep saying that south of Grand are the old people. Let me give you a little hint. The old people are now north of Grand because the old people South of Grand are dying off and younger people are buying their property. So we are becoming the younger element, or will eventually, as against those on the north side. It is just going to work back and forth that way.

STURGEON: Do you think the older people in the first areas that moved in are having a harder time now that the cost of living is going up so high?

MESSICK: I think some of them are having a real rough time and I think a lot of people don't know it, if you did know it you would be really upset over some of the things that they talk about. Helping these people down in Africa and all these countries and send so much money to take care of these poor starving people and kids. I said you have got it right here. I have always, all my life, would rather give it to somebody I know or the area than just to give it and not know where it is going. I know there are times when I have helped people, but you don't want to be thanked for it, you know, you just do it, and people do it for you sometimes. I have got very good people who do nice things for me.

STURGEON: Have your own ideas about financial security changed as you have gotten older?

MESSICK: Not really. I was never a clothes horse, or keeping up with the Joneses in other words, so that has never bothered me. After my husband retired we did quite a bit of traveling which was good for him and I am glad he had it for the simple reason that he had worked hard all of his life and really had not had good vacations where he was completely away. So we went to Hawaii three or four times and we went to Fiji and we went to Tahiti and took trips like that. And yet again we didn't splurge. It seemed like, we talked about it, it seemed like young folks

always gravitated towards Raymond and I. It was very unusual, in a way, when you are on trips to have younger people want to be with you. It happened on one trip we made to Hawaii. We arrived at this place the same day a newlywed did from Frisco. So they came over the next day and said do you mind if we eat with you folks, you seem to eat about the same time we do. No, we said, that is fine. One of those places – a Med Center – where you get your meals and everything, Club Med. They said what are you going to do today? Oh, we were going to do so and so. That sounds like fun. Mind if we go along? And here these kids were, I would say twenty five and this trip his Dad had given them as a wedding gift and that was the wedding night trip as they left right after the wedding. They spent the whole two weeks with us, everywhere we went, everything we did, they wanted to be with us. In fact when we got home and they got home they sent us the nicest letter thanking us for allowing them to be with us and having such a great time on their honeymoon. So that is when we got to wondering, why does this happen? But maybe it was because we had a younger outlook on a lot of things, I don't know.

STURGEON: Is there anything about Sun City that I haven't asked you that you think would be interesting to know?

MESSICK: I don't know. One time, of course Welk used to come down here to the Sun Bowl. I think the first time that we were here and they were here and we were up on Grand Avenue, which was a shopping center area and I guess we weren't paying attention to the people who were passing us when pretty soon I felt a tap on my shoulder and somebody said how come you aren't saying hello to us. We looked and it was some of the Welk men, you know, that sing and dance and play. I said, Oh, Hello and we had a chat. They just wanted to know why we weren't saying hello to them. We said well we weren't trying to ignore you or anything we just didn't see you because we weren't looking. A lot of things just happen and somebody says well they didn't speak to us and they just didn't see them.

STURGEON: Do you think Sun City is as friendly as it was when you first came here?

MESSICK: I don't know. I think just certain people are. I am thinking about church. You have some people that are real friendly and some that aren't. I think you find that everywhere. You have warm people and cold people. I guess I am not out enough to really give a good answer to that. However I have my favorite place to eat in Sun City again. We used to go down to a Mexican place on Peoria and then it left and now there is a Mexican place in the Smith's Shopping Center. The cook there is the cook that used to be at El Charro at Nino's. About the second or third day they were open I was there and got to talking to them and it seems like I am part of their family now. They have just kind of accepted me that way. And I have taken a lot of people there and those people have taken people. Maybe it is a friendship – and the grandkids, the little kids, they see me coming and they come and grab me and it makes you feel good when you are welcomed like that.

STURGEON: When you moved here did any of your friends move down here over the years from Wyoming and other places you lived?

MESSICK: No, the people that lived next door to us, and we were friends for years and years, the bank president. They moved down here. Fact they bought just a little rent place to be down here for a couple of months. Then they sold that and bought a little bigger place, a condo, a small one. And than they decided they would sell that and get a little bigger place, which they did, and then he retired. So they were down here winter time and back up there in the summer time. He is still involved in the bank even though he is retired, when all the people in the bank take vacation he substitutes for them because he likes to.

STURGEON: Did you have to sell your business when you moved down here – you sold the house then did you sell the business?

MESSICK: We had already sold the business when we retired. But we hadn't sold the house because they owned their own place and had a ranch besides. But, Cecil, the bank president would tell my friends down here, yes whenever she got involved in anything I would always be the treasurer for whatever she was in. I said that is true – who better to have it than the bank president. You never did say no and he said how could I.?

STURGEON: Did you get involved in fund raising down here with the baseball team?

MESSICK: Yes, with the Saints. That was my last big effort for fund raising. That takes a lot of effort to go out and get ads for score card book and for your year book. It is not only just getting the ad in it is gong back and getting it checked and getting it right back to the right place. It is a lot of work to it. That is all freebee. You are doing it because you want to and then you end up once or twice where somebody refuses to pay for their ad. Some want to see it in print before they will pay and that is kind of bad too.

STURGEON: Is there anything else you can think of that you would like to say?

MESSICK: I don't know that I can say that I haven't enjoyed my years. It has been twenty years and I have thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. I haven't been swimming this year but I enjoy it when I do go swimming. It was everything we hoped it would be when we moved down here. As you can tell with all those trophies, if you have seen them out there. I had them in my storage area that I couldn't even get into for all those years before they could take them down there. Trophies for the Sun Cities Saints team.

STURGEON: Is the team still playing?

MESSICK: Well, we tried last year and then that all went kaput, the other people had the place, so Gerald was our manager and he has had the team this year and it is just called the Saints. They played over around the Phoenix and Mesa area. There is no place out here for them to play. It costs, we tried it last year with the Saints, and when they are invited to these tournaments it will cost you twelve hundred to fifteen hundred bucks. It is hard to raise that kind of money. So I think if they could get a place to play here where it could be permanent where you could pick up a lot of people to be members it might pay. Cause people did enjoy the young folks.

STURGEON: Well, thank you very much for your information.

MESSICK: Well, thank you for taking your time to be here. I don't know if I have given you anything that you wanted or not.