

**Sun Cities Area Historical Society**  
**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Case # 213**

**Interview with Burt Frierich**

**January 22, 1992**

**Date of Birth:** November 23, 1909

**Place of Birth:** Ray, Arizona

Burt Frierich was the owner, editor, and publisher for the News Sun, the Sun City newspaper, from 1960-1984. Too young to live in Sun City, he and his wife lived in Youngtown. As a newspaperman, he interviewed hundreds of residents and he spoke out on a number of controversial issues in the community.

**Synopsis:**

- Mother born in Chicago; father born in New York and moved to Chicago. All grandparents immigrated from Austro-Hungary.
- Went to Univ. of Illinois, then into Army; served in Arizona guarding German and Italian POWs in winter of '43, then to combat in Germany; Battle of the Bulge; wounded in Remagen Bridge Head (78<sup>th</sup> Division).
- Back to Univ. of Ill. (Journalism); spent 2 years at Illinois State Journal, then sports column in St. Louis; worked at the Phoenix Gazette for 10 years, then bought News Sun in 1960 and ran it until sold in 1984.
  
- Only about 300 residents in Sun City when paper started in 1960; paper ran every other week at first; had an active 'letters to the editor' column.
- Early editorials did not support incorporation; thought we were too young to support incorporation; but as Sun City matured, I changed my viewpoint.
  
- Reported on establishment of churches' very church-going group; recreation centers had community squabbles; controversy established recreation centers as unified groups; those in first group couldn't use second, even though those in second could invite outside friends. The 'Berlin Wall' of Sun City; opposition from 1<sup>st</sup> group since they were not required to pay dues; for merger, 1<sup>st</sup> group had to agree to pay dues; didn't sit well at first.
- Early S.C. still needed helping hand of Del Webb to work out future.
- Sun City Saints baseball team began in 1963/4; lasted a long time and ended up 4<sup>th</sup> in National Championships for 5-6 years running.

- Del Webb Co. was active in organizing clubs; Tom Austin sponsored organization of a number of clubs, establishing the boards himself.
- In later years S.C. upset w/Webb because he supported incorporation; many felt Webb made a mistake in getting involved in local politics.
- In 1960, my wife was in charge of business activities of the News Sun and wrote a column called "The Other Half", geared toward women.
- Some doctors in community put Dr. Stump in one of the original model homes; company also opened clinic.
- School tax issues: Ira Murphy, Superintendent of Peoria Schools (who later became a resident of Sun City), needed taxes to improve school buildings; strong opposition from residents against school taxes. They had already raised their families and did not want to pay for others. State passed law and Sun City withdrew from school district; had to pay a certain amount in lieu of school tax; funds distributed statewide.
- Wife and I lived in Youngtown; too young for Sun City. My paper took stands on political issues. I was Democrat; many S.C. folks were Republican.
- Sun Citians cared for each other; if injured, put card in window and people would come and help you; heard of one woman who did that often because she was lonely and people would come by and chat.
- Volunteers worked on other communities; El Mirage Center; teach English; some in health areas go in and help.
- Major negative change in community was the split of S.C. West from original S.C.

**C-213**

Jan. 22, 1992

Release Form

This interview agreement is made and entered into this 22 day of January, 1992, by and between Burt Freireich (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:

Signed Burt Freireich Date 1/22/92

Interviewee: Burt Freireich (name)  
1118 N. Villa Nueva Drive (address)  
Litchfield Park, Az 85340

Signed Melanie D. Sturgeon Date 22 January 1992

Interviewer Melanie Sturgeon (name)  
1535 E. Hampton Circle (address)  
Mesa, Az 85204

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