

Sun Cities Area Historical Society

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Case # 215

Interview with Mildred Toldrian

February 1, 1992

Place of Birth: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Mildred was an early resident of Sun City West and active in community affairs.

Synopsis:

- Mother born in Michigan; father born in Wisconsin; he was a tailor.
- Grew up in farming community through high school; graduated from a teaching college in Milwaukee.
- Taught one year during the Depression, tutored the wealthy.
- Father a Jack-Of-All-Trades. Head janitor in Ray, AZ schools.
- Alice 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.
- Married June, 1935; 3 children; 6 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren.

- We tried to retire to Florida, then came to AZ. Husband was a mail carrier; he wanted to move to Sun City. One of first to move here. He liked to swim and lawn bowl.

- Looked at Youngtown; lived there until January, 1960, when Sun City had its grand opening. Was impressed with the recreation, and shopping center, but there was no savings and loan.

- Husband died in 1974 and I moved to Sun City West.
- Belonged to several clubs; dance club; woman's club, etc.
- Met future husband in Colorado; he was an engineer/superintendent of a mine in Colorado.

- Married in 1934 in Colorado. I got involved with March of Dimes and had a Girl Scout troop.
- After the war, we moved to Wyoming. I was Chairman of March of Dimes there for 30 years. Didn't work commercially after marriage, but was always involved in community activities. Husband was the boss; boss' wife involved in a number of things. Involved 25 years with State Fair in Wyoming; in charge of number of parades and grandstands. High school girls ushers. Started as volunteer, Governor asked me to take charge.
- Husband owned a garage and car agency in Wyoming.
- Husband was busy in community affairs too; belonged to Chamber, etc. State Senator asked me to write resume to Governor; was appointed the head of the state's 25th anniversary.

- My sister lived in Mesa and we came down to visit. Heard about Sun City, so we began to look for a place.
- When we approached retirement we thought we'd be in Wyoming in the summer and Sun City in the winter, but real estate agent sold our Wyoming house and we had one week to get moved.

- In Sun City, Social Security helped early residents. They could sell old place, come out here and live fairly well with Social Security.

- 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 live 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.

- Was also involved with March of Dimes in Valley for about 4 years.

C-215

Feb. 7, 1992

Release Form

This interview agreement is made and entered into this 7th day of February, 1992, by and between Mildred Toldrian (herein after called "Interviewee") and Melanie I. 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 Mildred Toldrian Date February 7, 1992

Interviewee: Mildred Toldrian (name)
13223 Maplewood Dr. (address)
Sun City West 85375

Signed Melanie J. Sturgeon Date 7 February 1992

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

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SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mildred Toldrien

Interviewed 7 February 1992 by Melanie Sturgeon

Transcribed by Belva McIntosh 16 June 2007

This is Melanie Sturgeon on behalf of the Sun Cities Area Historical Association and the Arizona Foundation, I am interviewing Mildred Toldrien in her home in Sun City West. Mildred was an early resident of Sun City and has been involved in the community for many years. This is February 7, 1992.

STURGEON: Mildred, can you tell me something about your parents?

TOLDRIEN: My father was born in Wisconsin and my mother was born in Michigan. They were married May 4, 1904 and my father was a tailor and my mother helped him with all the sewing in the shop. They had a very small farm. They had nine acres with cows and pigs and chickens and that sort of thing. I grew up in a farming community. I graduated from a little High School and then I went on to Milwaukee where I graduated from State Teacher's College. After a period of time I met my husband and we were married June 1, 1935. He worked as a mail carrier in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Of course I stayed home and took care of my children. I had three children. I now have six grand children and two great grand children. When it was time to think about retirement we decided we had better start looking around. So the first Easter vacation we piled up the kids and went out to Florida because my husband thought he would love to retire in Florida, because so many of his friends had retired down there. I had been out to Arizona previously, on a job back in my early years and I said now next year we will go out to Arizona. So we came out to Arizona and Youngtown had just been started, so we looked at the homes there and thought they looked pretty nice, so we decided when he retired we would come out and we lived in a John Long home to begin with, and it was very, very nice. All of a sudden we discovered they were building a retirement section out on the desert and we started looking at it and on January 1, 1960, they had the grand opening. We didn't go out that day but we saw in the newspaper all the people flocking to see it and the reports were wonderful so he said, come on, let's go out and take a look at that place. So we did. And we were quite impressed, because they had nine holes of golf, they had the shuffleboard and they had the carpenter shop, they had a nice recreation center and they had all sorts of rooms for people to come out and form clubs, I mean come out to live and

then form clubs. So we looked around and they had five model homes and one two-bedroom apartment and a one bedroom apartment. But the nice thing of it was that they had a shopping center which included a Laundromat, barber shop, beauty shop, Safeway store, drug store and a TG&Y. But the strange part of it all, when I tell this to other people, they hardly believe me. They did not have a bank, they did not have a savings and loan. We had to go in to either Peoria or Glendale, but all went all, and we had no Post Office but we would have rural delivery. Then Del Webb decided that he would rather have people get their mail out there so it was all brought down to a little building down there and we all went down and collected our mail every day. This was a great opportunity for us to meet all the residents of Sun City. Gosh, I missed something.

STURGEON: Don't worry about that. Before we talk about Sun City anymore may I ask you a few questions about when you were growing up. You never did tell me where you were born.

TOLDRIEN: Oh, I was born in Wisconsin. It was a little town called Denmark, Wisconsin. And way back then we had a population of 750 people. I was born on the outskirts because, like I said, we were down in the farming community.

STURGEON: So, did you stay there until you went away?

TOLDRIEN: I stayed there until after I graduated from High School. And then I came to Milwaukee and went to the State Teacher's College there.

STURGEON: And I forget, did you tell me that you taught after you were finished?

TOLDRIEN: I taught one year after I finished and then we were in the depression and it was very difficult to get a job and this was at a little country school and I just thought I would get away, so I went to Milwaukee and then I started working as a tutor with children of the wealthy people of the area. So that was when I came out to Arizona for the first time. They had six children and they had trunks loads of books. Down near Oracle Arizona, which is not too far from Tucson, and we were here for two and a half months and I tutored the children during that time.

STURGEON: Was that during the summer or the winter?

TOLDRIEN: It was during the winter. We came out here the end of January and we were here until May. It was great and I just loved it out here. I thought some

day I am coming back. In the meantime I got married and had my family. So it took me a long time but I got back.

STURGEON: What did your husband do for a living?

TOLDRIEN: He was a mail carrier.

STURGEON: Did he stay with the Post Office until he retired?

TOLDRIEN: Yes, he did. And when it was time for him to retire he retired and we came out here.

STURGEON: When you were first married you were right in the middle of the depression weren't you? In 1935 – was it hard for your family during the depression?

TOLDRIEN: Well, my husband had a job which helped. I don't think it was as hard for our family as it was for some others. But you know back in those days they didn't give money for relief. If you needed help you could go and if they had lots of oatmeal or flour or sugar or whatever they had, you would get that. And for the children they would get shoes and clothing, but nothing like this giving money for relief. We never had to go for relief we always managed.

STURGEON: Did you have neighbors or friends who had a real hard time then? Do you remember?

TOLDRIEN: I know my sister-in-law and brother-in-law had a hard time. We helped them out quite a bit. Back then everybody helped everybody else in the family. If somebody had problems we would all kind of pitch in and help. Those of us who had a little more would help.

STURGEON: Were they in Milwaukee with you?

TOLDRIEN: My parents were not but the rest of the family were. You see, my parents had this little farm so they always had plenty of food. They always had a big garden and they had meat. So they really didn't have it that bad. They could take care of themselves. I think the people in the cities that had no outlet to grow food or anything like that, I think they are the ones that really had the hardest times. But it was terrible, just terrible. I hope we never get into anything like that again.

STURGEON: Do you remember when they started talking about Social Security in the 1930's? They were debating it in congress, did you ever think about whether that was a good thing or whether it would help you in later years?

TOLDRIEN: Well, yes, after I was married and my children were all in school I decided to go out and get a part time job. I started at the Oster Manufacturing Company. I worked in the payroll department and there we had to deduct for social security and things. I just sort of wondered if it was really going to work out to be a good thing but I guess it has. Of course this was way before Medicare. That came much later.

STURGEON: Did it help your father at all when he retired?

TOLDRIEN: Oh no, he never worked under Social Security. He was self employed. He had his little farm.

STURGEON: Did he just keep working until he got really old than?

TOLDRIEN: Yes, my father died at 91 and I would say he worked up until at last 85 or 86.

My mother lived to 97 and she worked up until that time too. I was very fortunate having healthy parents. I am hoping I will be healthy too. So far so good.

STURGEON: So you used to go down to Florida after you retired?

TOLDRIEN: No we went down one time. We went to see how we would like it and I did not like Florida because it is so humid. I just didn't like it at all. I just couldn't wait to get back to Arizona. I was spoiled because I knew what Arizona was like.

STURGEON: So you came out here to Arizona several times, is that right?

TOLDRIEN: We came out to see it that one year and the next year we moved out.

STURGEON: Had you ever thought about moving to a place like Sun City where there were just older people?

TOLDRIEN: When we came here Sun City had not been started. We came Labor Day of 1958. And this did not start until January 1, 1960. But as I look I really do believe that we just felt we wanted the warm weather. I was so tired of the dampness back in Milwaukee. Arizona is a beautiful state but I just don't care for that damp weather and the cold. When I was growing up I walked two miles to high school in that bitter cold – 20 degrees below and a north wind blowing. I had enough of that – don't want anymore of that.

STURGEON: Well, when you were thinking about retiring were you concerned about the later years in your life and if you would be able to take care of one another?

TOLDRIEN: No that thought never entered my head because both of us were well. We didn't come out here because we were sick. I think if we had come out here being sick I think then we might have been concerned. But, no, that thought never entered my head.

STURGEON: How old was your husband when he retired?

TOLDRIEN: He was 58.

STURGEON: So he retired early.

TOLDRIEN: And I am glad he did, because he had twelve wonderful years of retirement before he got sick. He died in '74 and that's how come I moved out to Sun City West. I wanted something different.

STURGEON: What was there about Sun City, aside from the fact that it was in Arizona that really appealed to you when you came out and looked at it.

TOLDRIEN: The first day when we came out we looked around and everything was just great. Everything was there for us. So the next morning my husband said lets go out and take a look at it again. You must understand that at this time I was living in a house that John Long built on 62nd Avenue, and I liked it. It was a nice little house and I didn't think I would ever move out of it. We got out to Sun City and we looked at the houses and all and all of a sudden my husband said, let's buy out here. I looked at him - I was always the one going, he was not – he was just always – anything I wanted to do, fine. He never seemed to suggest anything like that. I looked at him and I said, what did you say? And he said let's buy out here. I said do you want to and he said don't you? And I said yes, but coming from you

I am so surprised. So then we decided which house we liked of the five model homes, then we went to get a salesman. Well people were standing in line. You could hardly get a salesman. Finally, all you did was put a pin on the map on the lot you wanted and the house you wanted. We put down, I can't remember, a \$100 deposit or a \$500 deposit. They said they would call us within thirty days to sign your sales agreement and if you changed your mind, no problem, you would get your check back. Of course, we would go out just about every day and look things over and we knew we weren't going to want our money back. It was great.

STURGEON: Before you moved in were you worried at all about moving into a place with no community yet or –

TOLDRIEN: No. That thought never entered my mind either. We had every thing there. We knew – well the swimming pool was there. We did come out and swim before we ever moved in because that was available before our homes were available. No, I just never had those feelings. I thought this was going to be great and it was.

STURGEON: Did you ever expect it to get as big as it got?

TOLDRIEN: No and Del Webb didn't either, because I talked to his mother-in-law one day. We were at the Laundromat and we were talking about it. She said his plan was to have Sun City go from Grand Avenue to Peoria, and 103rd to 111th. That was going to be Sun City. His reason for building Sun City was that so many poorer people could not afford country club living and the wealthy could. So he was going to build a community where people who maybe had social security and not much else could come and live in a community like that. That was the reason he started Sun City. When people first moved in I know there were quite a number who all they had was social security. It was a lot different then; the homes were a lot cheaper. Of the five models, ours was the third one. Like one and two were the cheaper, then four and five. We added a little bit of extra concrete to the back of ours and our house was only around \$9900. So you see that is quite a bit of difference. That way we were able to pay cash for ours, because after all I felt we were retired we ought to have \$10000 cash in order to retire. But a lot of people who didn't and I know there were a lot of people on social security. And there were some wealthier too. I heard there were some millionaires there but I didn't know who they were. Everybody was so friendly and nice. I didn't know who the really wealthy people were because they sure didn't act it.

STURGEON: When did you move in to Sun City then?

TOLDRIEN: We moved in June 20, 1960.

STURGEON: So you were one of the very first.

TOLDRIEN: The very first person that moved in moved in the end of April 1960. So it was right at the beginning.

STURGEON: So there weren't very many of you when you first moved in.

TOLDRIEN: No, there weren't that many, but oh, they started moving in fast. Of course there were no clubs so we all had to get together and start organizing clubs. The first club that was organized was a craft club and that was formed July 4 1960. And we just got together and people could knit, crochet or sew. We had one gal who was real good at sewing and she would fit things for us. It was just like a little fun club. And you know that club, they added a sewing club and they combined, but that club is still going after all these years. They meet on Thursday mornings and it is still going. I think that is quite a record.

STURGEON: Had you been active in clubs in Milwaukee?

TOLDRIEN: No. I really didn't have time because I had my family. My husband and I did things together.

STURGEON: So this was something new to you to come out to Sun City and get involved in a lot of different clubs. Were you involved in clubs when you lived in the John Long house?

TOLDRIEN: No, there weren't any clubs there. The people living there – there were children, and a lot of people working. It was not a retirement community. When this started we came out here it was entirely different and it was a lot of fun. Del Webb used to come out here in the early years and when he came out and had the opportunity to meet with the people he would notify the PR department and they would notify the club president and they would be the welcoming committee and the Del Webb Company would furnish the refreshments. He was just like one of the group. He was a very nice, very friendly man, very humble and he just loved Sun City; that was his baby.

STURGEON: Did you remember Tom Austin?

TOLDRIEN: Yes.

STURGEON: Do you remember him organizing the clubs?

TOLDRIEN: Yes, we would go to him if you had an idea for a club and then he would set up a date and they would put a notice in the newspaper that anyone interested in this type of a club to come down to the Community Center on such and such a day at such and such a time for the purpose of organizing a club.

STURGEON: And when you organized a club how did you decide who was going to be in charge, or did you?

TOLDRIEN: Oh, then they would elect a president, vice-president and treasurer and we were on our way.

STURGEON: And how many clubs did you get involved with when you first came?

TOLDRIEN: Oh, well when lawn bowling started I was in on that. But that didn't start though until I think October of that year. The area was there for the lawn bowling green but they did not have it ready until I think it was October. I am a charter member of that club, or I was I should say. Then of course we went swimming every day. They had a swimming club that we belonged to and then they had a Ladies Rhythm Class. Pauline Shepherd was the teacher of that. I joined that and I loved it. That was really great. I danced the part of a man because there were so many women whose husbands danced so I was in big demand. She taught us all sorts of dances. Now that club is still going because when Pauline couldn't do it any more then Kay Sexton took it over and I noticed in the paper she is still running it.

STURGEON: Were you involved in the women's club or any of those?

TOLDRIEN: I helped form the Federated Women's Club. Now that had to disband here about two years ago because the people who were in it were getting so old and couldn't do it anymore. So it finally disbanded. Now that was organized back in – I think it was '61 before that organized.

STURGEON: Why did you organize that group?

TOLDRIEN: Well, I tell you. I had never been a federated club woman, but so many people had and they wanted one and they talked to the district officers and they came out and organized a club. I thought well, I've never been in one, I might as well go, I can always join and if I don't like it I can always drop out. It was really nice. Membership at one time was around 360 people. But then it kept dwindling, down and down as people got older. And now they have a club over there now but that is just a woman's club that is not a federated club. I never joined that. But I understand it is very nice. Then I joined the swimming club. Then the sewing club – it is hard to think back to all these things.

STURGEON: Did your husband join any groups?

TOLDRIEN: All he was interested in was swimming and lawn bowling. Those were his two clubs that he really enjoyed. Oh, whenever we would have a meeting of things going on in the community, I don't even remember what they called that club anymore, but you know that room was packed full of people. You couldn't get anymore in, so then they would sit out on the patio. They piped the meeting out there so people could hear it. The community spirit was something you wouldn't believe. Just wonderful. I treasure those years.

STURGEON: I understand that Reverend Witt and some other groups sort of came around and organized the neighborhood into groups; do you remember any of that?

TOLDRIEN: Yeah, the groups that they organized were called colonies. And they were like for a block – anyone in that block could be in that colony, and they would meet in the homes, they took turns, and they would have coffee and sweets. But it was a way of getting acquainted. It was nice. They formed that all over – I guess there is still some of that going. But they have new members. New people have moved in and other people have died off. So I don't think they are all the original people. But he and his wife did a lot for the community, to get them together. He was a real organizer.

STURGEON: I understand his wife baked thousands of cookies. I have heard that several times.

TOLDRIEN: Yes, she was a lovely person. She was in our Federated Women's Club as well.

STURGEON: Do you ever remember DEVCO sending around any surveys in the early days of the community asking questions about the house and if there is anything you would like to change?

TOLDRIEN: Oh yes, they had surveys every now and then. I know one time they built a home and they put in all sorts of new things. The people who were living there were supposed to go through and you had a questionnaire to fill out about what you liked about these new things and what you didn't like. I can remember that very plainly because there was a step down like into a solarium and I know I put down, for older people, please no steps. Somebody is going to fall. And every year in January, that was the birthday and they would have a big bash. Oh, I can remember back, they would have cake, and there would be a capsule in the cake and inside the capsule was something that you would win. I know I won fifteen gallons of gas one time. You know, different things that they had. Then of course for Mother's Day they always had the strawberry festival, ice cream with fresh strawberries. For Father's Day they would have a Root Beer Bust. And of course everybody came out for all these things. The community spirit was something that I don't think you can understand unless you lived it because it was just fabulous.

STURGEON: When did you see that starting to change?

TOLDRIEN: Well, I don't know. I think it was always more or less there. But we were getting bigger and bigger and bigger. Somehow when you get big you lose some of that friendliness – not that's not right, I shouldn't say they weren't friendly, because they were. But once you get big, you are getting so big you are just kind of growing away from each other.

STURGEON: Perhaps you lose some of the intimacy that you had.

TOLDRIEN: Yes. Because when I would go down to the grocery store in those early years, sometimes I would be gone 2 ½ hours. You would get down there and you talk to people and talk to people, and you just never get away. This is something as you get bigger and bigger you are meeting new people. So many of my very good friends died off and I am meeting new people. I remember when Boswell Hospital opened. That was a big grand affair too. Whenever they would have big doings like this the Del Webb Company would always furnish refreshments. They were always thinking about what they could do to make the people happy. And this was really worth a lot to the people in the community. Every time a store would open or something everybody was there for the grand

opening. And I will never forget when the first bank opened, they had a real big grand opening. So it was a lot of fun. I have really many, many happy memories of it. I am so glad I was there at the beginning of it to see it develop.

STURGEON: When they built the hospital I have heard two stories. One is that Del Webb thought it would be a good thing to have and the other story is that the people in the community felt they needed a hospital. Do you know which of those is true? Maybe they are both true.

TOLDRIEN: I think they are both true. I think they really felt they needed a hospital and I think Del Webb thought it was a good idea too. I know there were so many people who wanted to go through it at the grand opening that they could only take so many through and the others could come back the next day.

STURGEON: They raised a lot of money didn't they – the people in Sun City?

TOLDRIEN: Yes, they did. And a lot of memorials have gone into it. They formed the Sun Health Auxiliary and they have done a lot. I just joined with them a year and a half ago and I am one of them too, and they really do a lot of things.

STURGEON: Do you remember meeting Tom Breen or any of the other Del Webb staff? Did he ever talk about he felt about retirement communities or why he started it?

TOLDRIEN: I think it was on the 25th anniversary they were talking about it and they said on New Years Eve before they opened they were all so worried and upset because they just didn't know if it was going to go over or not. Here all this money was invested. And the next day when they saw these cars all coming out there and they couldn't believe it. And the first day they sold a lot of homes too. I think Del Webb's idea of doing something for people who didn't have much money and giving them country club living was really a beautiful dream. Before he started he sent questionnaires to everybody in Youngtown asking them what they liked about Youngtown, which was a retirement community and what they didn't like. And on the basis of that he had better ideas of what to have in Sun City. And one was they didn't have a shopping center or a recreation center. They had very, very little in that way. I think this is why he built the recreation center and got everything started.

STURGEON:: Did you have a lot of interaction with the people in Youngtown the first few years you were out there?

TOLDRIEN: Yes, quite a few people from Youngtown moved to Sun City. Sold over there and moved over. And we did have a lot of people from Youngtown come over as guests and use our swimming pool. I think there were good feelings between Youngtown and Sun City. I never felt there was any friction of any kind between the two of us. I met a lot of very lovely people from there.

STURGEON: I understand there were some real strong feelings in Sun City in the early days when they were talking about incorporation. Can you tell me what you remember about that?

TOLDRIEN: Well now back in early, I don't know if it was '63 or '64 they started talking about incorporation. Del Webb had told us that it would be a good idea, that it would benefit our community a lot if we were incorporated. But then you know, there are always some people who say, if we incorporate we are going to have graft and this sort of thing. Some people came from cities where they did have a lot of graft, and I guess they felt it would be the same way here, but I never thought it was because I favored incorporation. But when they voted, that was back in 1964 we were still a very small community and because there were some of the people who were against it and said, oh your taxes are going up, it is going to cost you a lot of money and you are going to get bosses and people that are going to run the place. It wasn't very good because people were afraid, I think they were afraid. People coming from say, like Chicago or New York or some of these places where they do have a lot of crime and a lot of graft and I think they felt that this is exactly what we would have and I don't think we would. But when they had the vote of course it didn't go through, but really it didn't fail by a bit majority either. Of course, they never had another vote, I mean that is the only vote for incorporation in Sun City.

STURGEON: Why do you think they only did it once?

TOLDRIEN: I don't know. There was talk about them doing it another time but they never did. Of course now they are trying and it is going to be very interesting to see what happens.

STURGEON: Do you remember any of the discussions they had about the school taxes with Peoria and having to be involved in school districts – when they didn't feel that they should.

TOLDRIEN: There was a lot of controversy about that. I know my husband and I felt that education was very important as our children all had good educations, and he and I did. And we just felt that education was needed so we did vote for the school taxes. Of course they kept falling through. A lot of people I guess didn't feel the same way. And then I believe the Peoria district decided they would like to get rid of us because we would always vote down all these bond issues, then of course we were put out of the Peoria district. However we do pay school taxes. Lot of people say we don't, but we do. If you look on your tax bill we do pay school taxes.

STURGEON: You pay it to the state though don't you?

TOLDRIEN: Yes, but it benefits all the children of Arizona. I mean it isn't that we aren't doing something.

STURGEON: Did you ever get involved in any of the groups that went outside the community?

TOLDRIEN: Our Federated Women's Club decided that we were going to have some programs, welfare programs, and we started out with an infant layette program. When a mother would have a baby we would bring out a layette which of course consisted of the diapers and we had little sacs. We had one woman who made all the little sacs and they were the most adorable little things you ever want to see. She had a little embroidery on them and everything. Oh they were so pretty. So it was a complete set. I mean a complete layette for the new mothers. I did go out quite a few times with some of the girls and they were so happy to get them. They were just so happy. Then we started one year we had a "Dress a Living Doll". We made clothes, one woman made shirts for boys and we bought blue jeans. I think she must have made thirty or forty shirts. Many of us, I know I made lots of dresses and stuff and some women were knitting sweaters. And then before Christmas the parents would come, get coupons from the county I think it was, now I think it was the Salvation Party that handles a lot of that. I think the last time I worked on it the Salvation Army did it. They would give these people a slip and on this slip was the number of children and the ages and they would bring it to us and we would outfit them and they could pick out what they liked. So that was quite a nice program that we enjoyed. I think we helped a lot of people that way. Then we had a Cancer Dressing Club where we made cancer dressings out of old sheets. I was involved in an awful lot of things like that. We really did - oh - we would collect food for people that didn't have it. So I was involved in quite a few of those things back in the early years. Oh and I worked on the committee that

TOLDRIEN: I stayed in that same house until I moved out here to Sun City West. I moved out here October 29, 1978. But I was in that same house all those years. It was a nice location and I liked the house but I thought it would be good for me to get away from the sadness of my husbands death. It has been good for me to come out here. I picked up all my good memories and brought them along. Sometimes I almost feel like he is here with me.

STURGEON: Do you remember when they went across Grand Avenue and started building Phase II? Do you remember any conflicts they had over the rec centers?

TOLDRIEN: Well, to begin with we had the first rec center which was the Community Center and is now called Oakmont, I believe. Then they started the Town Hall section which is now called Fairway and then beyond that of course is Mountain View. However when we were in our center we allowed any of the people to use our center. But the Town Hall people, some of them, felt that their center was better than ours and we were all paying about the same so there was no reason why we should come up there. However we kept letting them come down to us. There was friction there. It was kind of too bad but I think it was just personality conflicts. Then when they started across the highway, the Town Hall section would have liked to have included that in theirs, but of course they couldn't jump over us. Jerry Svendson, who has really done a lot for Sun City community got started on it and worked on unifying the whole center. Now they are all one and we can use any facility over the entire Sun City area. And it was Jerry Svendson who really did a tremendous job getting it organized. You have to remember when Del Webb started he didn't know what was going to happen. The first year we were there we didn't pay any dues or anything. We did monitor the swimming pool. We would take turns doing it. Then all of a sudden they decided they would have to put a charge on it. But at least the first whole year we didn't pay any rec center fees. You see they were learning by doing. By the time they got across the highway and started building they had some pretty good set rules.

STURGEON: I understand that probably around 1965 that the number of people moving to Sun city dropped dramatically and didn't really come back up until around 1968. Do you remember that?

TOLDRIEN: I didn't know that. You mean you got that information from the population of Sun City each year? I wasn't aware of that.

STURGEON: It dropped and they were only selling about 500 houses a year after about 1965 and then in 1968 and 1969 it shot way up again. Did you or your husband get involved in the Sun City Home Owners association at all?

TOLDRIEN: Oh yes, we belonged to the Home Owners association.

STURGEON: Why did they organize that group?

TOLDRIEN: Well we weren't incorporated and you couldn't work as a city so any problems that came up you would work through them. For instance if there was anything about the water, or if there was anything you thought ought to be corrected you worked through them.

STURGEON: But the Home Owners Association was started by Sun City Residents wasn't it?

TOLDRIEN: Yes it was.

STURGEON: And how did they decide who was going to be in charge of that? Did you vote on that too?

TOLDRIEN: I think what really happened was that certain people got together and maybe with a little help from the Webb Company formed the Home Owner's Association and then invited all of us to join. I don't think it was 100% but I know many, many people joined. Then you could bring your problems there and every year they would vote for new officers. So then you had an opportunity of selecting who you would want. The first ones that were selected I have a feeling they were appointed. I really don't know. I know we had a chance to vote every year then on the officers.

STURGEON: And what about the Rec centers, who ran the Rec centers?

TOLDRIEN: I think we had officers there too, sure we did. They were elected officers. I think we voted them in every year. I think they are doing that now too. But how the first ones got in I really don't know.

STURGEON: Would you tell me something about Sun City West? You decided to move out here in 1978?

TOLDRIEN: I was alone over there and I thought well, I wanted to do something different. I liked the house I had there, it was a nice location and it was comfortable but I wanted to get out of it. I looked all around Sun City thinking well maybe I could find a lot here I would like. But I didn't find anything that I liked as well as what I had. So when they decided about Sun City West I thought, that's pretty good. I'll try that. So then in September I believe of 1977 we could sign a letter of intent, I don't think we picked out the house then, but we signed, but after a certain length of time, after they had the lots laid out you could come in and pick out a lot. I think they suggested you pick out three lots, for first, second and third choice. Then if you couldn't get the first you could get the second. I happened to get the one I picked out. I moved out here October 20, 1978. The first people moved in just up the street the week before me. There were so many empty homes around here. You see what happened was people were going to make a lot of money. They would buy homes and think they could sell them and make money. Back in Sun City, back in the early years, as soon as a new section of homes was opened, lots of people would buy and sell the house ahead. I never did that, but so many people did. They would buy and make money on their houses. Well, it just seemed that some people must have thought this would happen here, I don't know. They bought homes and a lot of them I think got stuck, some of them maybe made money. As soon as the Del Webb Company had all these orders they put on extra shifts and extra shifts so of course they couldn't compete with the Del Webb Company, but it happened that this being the first section we – well it was a couple of years before we got all our new neighbors in here. A lot of the homes were speculation homes. So it would be like a home here and a home there, so there weren't that many people on our street. But unfortunately when we moved out here we didn't have a swimming pool, we didn't have a Rec center, we didn't have a shopping center. We had Crestview and all activities were held there and the golf course up there was the only golf course that was finished. This is not the way Del Webb started over in Sun City. Before he ever let you move into a section it was completely ready for you. I mean you had your shopping, you had everything you needed. But not out here. It was different. But we had banks. Oh boy, did we have banks. We had banker's row out here instead of Johnson Boulevard. And they had so many apartments for vacationers. I really think they started Sun City West wrong. But it got along alright afterwards. People worked and got the thing going and we had a big community spirit out here.

STURGEON: So was it like the early days at Sun City? A fun community spirit I mean.

TOLDRIEN: No it wasn't because in the early days of Sun City everything was there and all you had to go was get out and start organizing. It was very sad for people who came here, who gave up every thing where they came from. They came here, you didn't have a store to go to, you didn't have - no club activities, you didn't have anything - there wasn't anything here. Of course with me, I had friends over in Sun City. It wasn't bad at all - I knew my way around. But I think it was rather sad. I think I would almost have given up if that had been me at that time. But anyway it developed into - Jerry Svendson had done something. He asked me one day what I thought a tour of Phoenix. I said that would be great - it would give the people something to do. So they rented a bus and didn't charge the people anything. Took them out to Mountain Shadows, because they owned it at that time. We had beautiful French pastries and oh it was a nice trip. But they dropped a bomb shell when they said you will do it and I said I had never done anything like that in my life. And they said you know Phoenix, and I said well yes after a fashion. They said will you try it. And I felt so sorry for the people here that I said OK I will try it. It was kind of frustrating but we had a lot of fun. I must have done about eight or nine of those. People were enjoying it and kept asking for more and more so they took us to Lake Powell. Of course the people paid a little but they were subsidized very nicely. I must have done about four trips to Lake Powell. We went to San Diego, we went to Sahara, we traveled all around. We went to Nogales, to Laughlin. So that I think got the people going and they were happy about it and they got to know people and started to play cards in their homes. They would have little parties. After all that got started it seemed to work a little better. Then when they got the Safeway; store here, I can't remember when that came. It was quite a while after, we had to go into Sun City to shop. Then we had that terrible rain storm. A new bridge went down.

STURGEON: And you were isolated.

TOLDRIEN: Yeah! Really oh I am telling you we were really pioneers out here. But we did got a lot of places and then when they built Crestview then they had different parties, we had a Hawaiian party one night for residents. Anything they charged to us all a minimum charge. We would subsidize it. I know they had a Spanish party and they had style shows. They started dancing. And finally they got the swimming pool and the Rec center, finally got the shopping and then everything was more like a normal way of life.

STURGEON: Now was Sun City West opened by a new group of Del Webb executives?

TOLDRIEN: Oh no, it was the same Del Webb Company.

STURGEON: Right, but were they new executives.

TOLDRIEN: No, I think Meeker was out here and he was with Del Webb always. And Don Tufts was out here and Jerry was out here. There were people from there. And of course new people coming in all the time too.

STURGEON: Did you have an equivalent of a Reverend Witt here in Sun City West?

TOLDRIEN: Well, Reverend Witt came out here and organized a church out here as an interim pastor. Then other churches formed. They tried to get one church for all the different Protestants rather than have so many churches, but it didn't seem to work cause we sure have a lot of churches here. But I was quite amazed back in the early years of Sun City West how many Catholics there are out here. There are a tremendous amount and they have a beautiful church up on 128th.

STURGEON: So you didn't have somebody like him coming around organizing colonies and things.

TOLDRIEN: No, no we didn't have that. He just came out as an interim pastor.

STURGEON: Were there a number of people here who had come from Sun City?

TOLDRIEN: and lived out here? Yes. There are quite a few people out here who lived in Sun City previously. There are people who lived in Sun City for just a couple of years then they found this and they moved out here. Of course both Sun Cities are wonderful communities. If my husband were alive I might still be in Sun City. Cause I am not the type that moves often.

STURGEON: Do you have a Home Owner's Association here in Sun City West?

TOLDRIEN: Yes, PORA. PORA stands for Property Owners and Residents Association. We handle a lot of affairs through that. Right now they are working very hard on a Post Office for out here and I hope we get it. We are such a big community I think we are entitled to have our own Post Office.

STURGEON: You mean you don't have a Post Office?

TOLDRIEN: No, it all comes through Sun City. We have a little contract station over here. I was in there yesterday and we were lined up all the way out to the street waiting to get help. We have one contract station in all Sun City West.

STURGEON: How big is Sun City West?

TOLDRIEN: Well it is over 20,000, I don't know the exact figure but it is over 20,000.

STURGEON: Is it expected to get as big as Sun City?

TOLDRIEN: I don't know. Del Webb is adding on more land further north-west, I believe it is. So there will be more coming and it being so successful and they get more land I wouldn't be surprised if they keep on building up. As they build out they will build new centers and probably another golf course I imagine. A lot of people out here play golf, I don't. I've never really wanted to learn to play golf. But I think it is fine if they do.

STURGEON: So they built the one Rec center, do have they have two Rec centers here now or three?

TOLDRIEN: We have three. Now one thing, over in Sun City when they have a Rec center they have everything there. They have silver craft and lapidary and ceramics and all that. Now here each center is different, now the one on 128th and Beardsley, which is called the Beardsley Center, they have card playing over there and they have I think photography is over there and china painting and that sort of thing. They have a big swimming pool over, now that pool is indoor. The first center up here is the R.H. Johnson Center. It has a swimming pool, oh, I didn't tell you over at Beardsley they also have an exercise room and a hot pool and a swimming pool. Then they have a park where they can have picnics. Now the Johnson pool they have Bocce, they have tennis too, lawn bowling, shuffleboard and they have the bowling alley up here. They are going to have one bowling alley and they have billiards. The craft clubs that are there are the ceramics and a railroad club there, and they have lapidary, silver craft and weaving and sewing. Then at the Kuentz Center they also have the swimming pool there, and they have the exercise room and therapy pool and they have a softball diamond up there, and also metal craft and carpentry. The art club is up there and they have a computer club meeting there and the crafts. They have basketry. Just about everything you can imagine. But you see all of that is in one center. You don't get that in every center. That is all up in that center. Then they have a woman's club up there.

They have their own club room, and the men have their own clubroom but theirs is at Beardsley. 'Right up across from the Kuentz Center they have a Community Center Room where you can have meetings and things. The Interfaith have their room there. Now the Interfaith you can bring your sick person and they can spend the day there and you pay a certain amount and they get their hot food at noon. Now they have branches throughout Sun City. The Posse have their office up there. And also the Lending Hands. The Lending Hands we have equipment for sick people. We have hospital beds, wheel chairs, anytime of hospital equipment that you need. You can rent it or go up and get it free of charge, however when you bring it back they like it if you would give a donation because it is all private donations. They also have a thrift shop there which is run by the Sun Health Auxiliary, which is of course Boswell and Del Webb. They made a lot of money there and all the money that comes into the Sun Health Auxiliary goes to different types of medical equipment for the hospital. I think last year they gave \$300,000. They have a little gift shop in the hospital and they get a lot of money there too.

STURGEON: Are the people in Sun City West thinking about incorporating ?

TOLDRIEN: They had a vote about two years ago and it failed by not to big a margin. But here was the same thing, I noticed, the same thing as back in Sun City. People were afraid we were going to have our taxes raised, we were going to have politicians that were crooked like maybe where they came from. They don't realize this is a retirement community and as far as jails and that sort of thing, we don't have crime here like that. But people just don't understand that, they say oh yes, we heard this before and then what happens is we get it. I think that is what has killed it. It is going to be very interesting to see what happens in Sun City.

STURGEON: You sound like you are very involved in the community here also, what kind of things are you doing?

TOLDRIEN: Well, I give a lot of time at Del Webb Hospital as a volunteer. Prior to that we had our AARP and we have a chapter out here and I was a co-chairman. I did over 130 tours in 8 ½ years. I set them up, collected the money and escorted them and did the whole bit. So that occupied most of my free time. I do a lot of walking out here, which is good for me and I enjoy it. I go swimming a lot in the summer. Seem I am awfully involved, there is always something going on.

STURGEON: Do your children live around here?

TOLDRIEN: I have a daughter living in Spokane Washington and I have a son and his family and a daughter living in Rush, California, which is right across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. They do get here quite often. And I get there a lot too.

STURGEON: Are they thinking of retiring here when they -

TOLDRIEN: I don't know. My daughter and her husband talk about it, they come down here and they like it, but they just aren't committing them selves yet. But they love to come down here.

STURGEON: Did anyone else in your family come out here and retire?

TOLDRIEN: No

STURGEON: Did your parents ever come out and see you?

TOLDRIEN: Not here, but my mother and father came to visit us in Sun City. We had driven up to see them in Wisconsin and they drove back with us and I sent them back home on a plane. They loved it. They were with me for a month.

STURGEON: But they didn't want to come out to retire.

TOLDRIEN: No. I would have liked for them to come out and spend a winter with me but they said no we are so used to Wisconsin, they lived there all their lives, that was home. So I think at their ages it was just a little too hard to try to make a change.

STURGEON: Did any of your friends move out here because you wrote back and said this is great?

TOLDRIEN: No, no they didn't. They would come out a visit but they - I don't have any friends who retired - oh I'll take that back - I have two friends that retired here, I forgot that. Our children grew up together, years and years ago, and I have two friends, one in Sun City and one in Belaire Estates, it is out in Peoria, she is in the retirement section. We get together real often.

STURGEON: This is back to Sun City, I had forgotten to ask you this. I remember reading that in the early days in Sun City they had a survey asking people in Sun City if they would like

a trailer court. They were overwhelmingly voted down. Do you remember that? Why did the people vote against that?

TOLDRIEN: I guess they felt it might cheapen the community. Because at that time you know – now a lot of the mobile homes have gotten to be really like a home, but at that time I don't think they were and still if you put mobile homes here I don't think it would look as nice as all the homes. One thing nice about it you don't have to have all the same kind of home all together. You could have an expensive home next to a cheaper house and so that makes it look more like a community too. I'll never forget back in Sun City when we chose the colors for our houses. I was the first one in my block to choose a color so I chose pale green. Now if people on either side of me wanted green they couldn't have it. They wanted different colors. They didn't want the colors right next to each other to be the same. And also when they had laid out the Sun City they had the type of trees you should plant in your front yards to make it look real coordinated and they had olive trees for the front of my house and I said there is no way I will put an olive tree in front of my house, I don't like them. I only want fruit trees. You didn't have to and there were very few people who did, but they had laid out the entire landscaping for the whole area.

STURGEON: Did they do the same thing here?

TOLDRIEN: No, I don't think so. I never heard of it. They probably didn't do it because it didn't work out. And very interesting, the first homes that were built in Sun City we didn't have street lights. We used to go out at night and it was so dark. Of course in these communities people go to bed by nine o'clock. But when they started building the second area, which was the Town Hall area they put in lights there and they went around and ask if we would like lights and of course we all went for it so we got lights. But I think it is very interesting how Sun City got started – it was very successful.

STURGEON: Yes, it certainly was. Mildred, have your perceptions of Sun City West changed in the thirteen years you have lived here?

TOLDRIEN: I don't really think it has. Of course you are meeting more people and people are bringing in ideas in different areas. Like we have in our craft club people will bring in different crafts that they have made and they teach it to us. I think people are very helpful out here. They seem to want to share, which is good. It has been fun all the years I have lived here. I've loved every minute of it.

STURGEON: Can you just sort of sum up your experiences just briefly, in both cities and just what it is that has pleased you so much about living in both of these communities?

TOLDRIEN: Well, I think the thing that I have liked the most are the people. I have met so many fine people. I have made many friendships and I have liked the activities. You can't begin to take part in all the activities you enjoy, but you can choose, and there is always something going on. I live alone but I am never lonely because there is always something to do to take up your time. Both communities are quite similar. They have different clubs in Sun City than we have out here but there is always something going on. One thing I didn't tell you, they have a theater here and we have a group that puts on shows and they are really professional. Every year we have a talent show in the fall of the year. They do a much better job than lots of the professionals that come out here. The end of March they are having another talent show but that is going to be Sun City and Sun City West. The two are combining which I think is good. It is going to be held at the Sundome. I am glad we are getting together because I suppose there is some friction here and there but you can't live any where unless there is a little friction. People are different. Some people can find something they don't like and grumble but on the whole I don't find many people out here grumbling. They are happy. The weather has something to do with it. We can be outdoors a lot. To go back to Wisconsin where I grew up in the winter time you get outside but you hustle up and get back in.

STURGEON: Can you think of anything that we might have missed that you would like to talk about?

TOLDRIEN: Well, not really. I think we have covered it very well. But I would like to say that I certainly feel very privileged to think that I was out here all these years and that I am a pioneer of Sun City and Sun City West.

STURGEON: Thank you very much, Mildred, for all the time you have spent talking about your experiences.

TOLDRIEN: It has been a pleasure working with you.