

Museum celebrates Sun City founder's 125th birthday

Oral history video debuts



(SCOTT TYNES/INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA)

Lauren Burgoyne Hollick, of Mojo Inspired Media, introduces the debut video in an oral history project at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum during a May 17 celebration for the founder's 125th birthday.

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By Scott Tynes | Independent Newsmedia

Sun City celebrated the 125th birthday of its founder May 17 at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum with the debut of an oral history video series. The event also commemorated the 50th anniversary of his death on July 4, 1974.

“The museum has really evolved over the years,” said Brett McKeand, museum director.

“The Living History Project: A Collection of Timeless Stories” debuted its first video featuring former Sundome Center for the Performing Arts Director Don Tuffs, who was also president of the Sun Cities Historical Society for many years.

Tuffs worked for Webb for nearly 20 years, was present for the opening of Sun City West in 1978 and served as the Sundome manager until it was transferred to Arizona State University in 1984.

“It was an honor to be the guinea pig for the program. It was a lot of fun,” Tuffs said. “My wife told me this morning she guessed I was old enough to finally be in a museum.”

The video concentrates on Tuffs’ stories of the origins and life of the Sundome, which opened in September 1980 with the Lawrence Welk Show as its opening show. The show filled the more than 7,000 seats in what was then the largest indoor theater in the Valley. It won Best Celebrity Lecture Series in 1981 with a lineup that featured former President Gerald Ford, whom Tuffs met and shares that story in the video. Another story shared features Helmut Schmidt, chancellor of West Germany from 1974 to 1982.

Lauren Burgoyne Hollick, chief creative officer for Mojo Inspired Media, the third party who is producing the video series through a Del Webb Foundation grant, said working with Tuffs was a great experience.

“These stories Don tells are just legendary,” she said. “We chose to only keep in the stories that really moved Don. He had so much great material. It was fun to edit.”

The video was edited by Julian Ybarra, she said, in about 10 days. The next video, featuring Ed Allen, will focus on the history of the house hosting the museum, which is one of the first built when Webb founded Sun City in 1960. Originally the Kentworth model, it had 860 sq. ft. and sold for \$8,600. A golf course lot was \$1,250 additional, and A/C as a \$600 option. The MacDonalds, who lived there for nearly 24 years, added a bedroom, second bathroom and Arizona room across the back.

McKeand said the second video should be released in about a month.

Jerry Svendsen, founder and former publisher of Sun Life Magazine, will be the featured storyteller for the third video.

The “Living History Project” videos will join the rotation of historical videos in the Sundome Jr. Theater at the museum.