



The Official Newsletter of the
**Sun Cities Area
 Historical Society**

Spring 2015 | Volume 24 | Number 1

Performing arts exhibit now open!

The Sun Cities are home to a wide variety of musical and performing arts groups -- and many of them are highlighted and paid tribute in the latest exhibit to open at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum.

The exhibit, which opened this spring, allows visitors to choose from more than 50 performances of six dance clubs and two variety shows with the simple touch of the screen.

The organizations have selected acts they feel were among their best over the years and are included in the museum's newest exhibit.

Dan Seabreeze of Seabreeze Design has combined them into a new, interactive display for the museum.

By simply touching the screen where it says, "Start Here," visitors will see an introduction to the important dance has played in the lives of Sun City and Sun City West residents



over the past 50 years.

After watching the brief introduction, visitors can choose from one of eight groups: Tip Top Dancers, Sun City Poms, Rhythm Tappers, Jazzy Poms, Dancing Arts, Hawaiian Dancers, Sun City Variety Show and Sun City West Variety Show.

In addition to the video clips, there are also panels that describe the history of performing arts in the Sun Cities.

The exhibit was curated by Edson Allen and installed by Hal Lind. It was partially funded by an Arizona Historical Society grant.

Inside our spring newsletter ...

Welcome Visitors



Copenhagen architectural students pay a visit to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum.
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Hometown Heroes



Gone but not forgotten: Sun Cities residents have fond memories of the Sun City Saints women's softball team.
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Spring Cleanup



Museum volunteers lend a hand to keep the facility clean and tidy!
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The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is certified by the Arizona Historical Society



The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the preservation and presentation of the records and artifacts for Sun City, Arizona, (the world's first Active Adult Retirement Community), and its sister city, Sun City West. The Society's headquarters are located in the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, in one of the five original Sun City model homes.

Museum Hours: 1-4 p.m. Monday/Wednesday/Friday Or by appointment Office Manager: Julie Glass

Board of Trustees Bret McKeand President Tim Ericson Secretary Norm Dickson Treasurer Ed Cirillo Past President

Carol Dearen Priscilla Fenner Hal Lind Gail Warmath

Newsletter Editor: Bret McKeand Contributors: Edson Allen, Priscilla Fenner, Barbara Brozman

Layout and composition courtesy of the Sun City Independent

Message from the President

Spring is a very busy time at Del Webb Sun Cities Museum

Spring is a great time to be in Arizona -- and it's also a great time to stop by the only museum in the nation devoted to preserving and promoting the history of Sun City and Sun City West!

If you haven't stopped by lately, I urge you to pay us a visit. And by all means, make sure the museum is on your list of "things to do" when you have friends and relatives in town for a visit.

It's been a one of our busiest springs ever here at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum. A quick update:

Our newest exhibit is one of our best ever! A salute to performing arts organizations in the Sun Cities profiles the many different musical, acting and dancing groups to grace our local stages over the years. You'll see the stories come alive pictures and videotape in a user-friendly, interactive display.

The museum officially earned its rightful place on the prestigious National



Bret McKeand 2015 President, Sun Cities Area Historical Society

Register of Historic Places. The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office notified us of the designation on Feb. 24. A plaque denoting the designation will be installed at the museum.

We experimented with opening the museum on Saturday throughout the month of March -- and the experiment was very successful! March has seen a record attendance at the museum. In February, 370 visitors toured the museum, which was our second best February ever.

Our Speakers Bureau has been busy, too. In 2014

the group gave 15 presentations about local history, reaching 680 individuals -- compared to 16 events in 2013, reaching 535 people.

Special thanks to our volunteer speakers: Ed Allen, David Verble, Connie McMillin and Don Tuffs, and speakers-in-training Yasmina Snider and Ron Smith.

Speaking of volunteers, be sure to mark your calendars for 11:30 a.m. Thursday, April 9 -- our annual Volunteer and Board Party at the museum. Be sure to RSVP with Priscilla.

The recent case of the llamas getting loose in Sun City caught the attention of the national media -- and CBS sent its "Sunday Morning" news crew to the community to see what all the excitement was about. The crew paid a visit to the museum and interviewed Bill Pearson about Sun City and its history. No word yet, when the piece will be aired ... but stay tuned!



Danish students visit the museum

A group of students from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture in Copenhagen recently visited Sun City as part of a tour of California and Arizona studying urbanism, societal change and aging. During their visit to the community on Feb. 26, the group stopped for a tour of the museum.

Museum is a place to find -- and hear about -- history!

You never know who is going to walk through the door of 10801 W. Oakmont Drive.

Once it was a retired Navy admiral and his distinguished looking brother, the admiral's Phoenix host. They were here because they had been raised in Lizard Acres and wanted to see the Sun City West display in the Freeman Room.

Their guide showed them the copy of the news story about their family with the two little boys who were raised on the feed lot located in Lizard Acres. The article is attached to the metal replica of the Lizard Acres sign, which can still be found on Grand Avenue en route to Sun City West.

One time a granddaughter of the original residents from Colorado to occupy the smallest of the first five model homes, discovered her grandparents' house was now a museum and came in to check us out.

Many times she had visited these grandparents and the others on the far side of the golf course, sometimes running back and forth in the evening when there were no golfers about.

Once, however, she and her siblings were brought home by the law because they were found out after curfew.

Sometimes it could be a journalist from Korea or a delegation from Japan learning about life for seniors in America. One recent Saturday it was young architecture students from Denmark who had booked a tour with Trustee Gail Warmath.

Recently, a visitor said that as a child she had been in Sun City during the January 1960 opening days. She said her father moonlighted on weekends driving a semi-truck to California and returning with tall palm trees that were planted all over the brand new Sun City.

On April 25, Docent Toni Ashby hit pay dirt. A man and wife from Phoenix came in with a gentleman from Sun City. David Ward of Phoenix remarked to Toni that he had worked for Del Webb at his Phoenix office in the Tower. He said his office on the 16th floor was right under Del's on the 17th



The story of Sun City West's early beginnings -- then known as Lizard Acres -- is told on story boards at the museum.

floor.

"Instead of me talking to you, it should be you talking to me," exclaimed Toni.

And that's exactly what happened. She learned that David had worked for Del from 1965 to 1973, working his way up to head of International Construction for the Webb Corp. (Projects like a hospital in Costa Rica; hotel, bridge and schools in Honduras.) Toni then showed them the notebook containing all the projects listed in The Webb Spinner, which includes a page on these international projects.

David and his wife Judy said they were socially involved with Del and his second wife, Toni, and that when Del phoned them at home their children called him "Uncle Del."

The other gentleman in the party from Sun City had worked for Honeywell and knew David and Judy from his association with the Webb Corp.

"I was the troubleshooter for Del when there were problems with air conditioners during construction and operation of casinos he built in Vegas," he said.

David said that the reason he left the company in 1973 was because many employees knew Del was ill (cancer), but kept it as quiet as possible. The last six months were particularly difficult for Del and his employees.

"I didn't know what might happen to the company and my job if he died," said David.

Del Webb died in 1974.

Volunteers honored April 9 with 'hearty picnic lunch'

Barbecue sliders, Rags' awesome western beans, potato salad and slaw will be served to volunteers and board members at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, April 9, at the annual volunteer event titled "Spring Thing" this year.

"The board enjoyed Rags' (of Youngtown) Barbecue at its December party, so we will be serving it to the volunteers this spring on the McMillin Terrace," said Pris Fenner, chair of

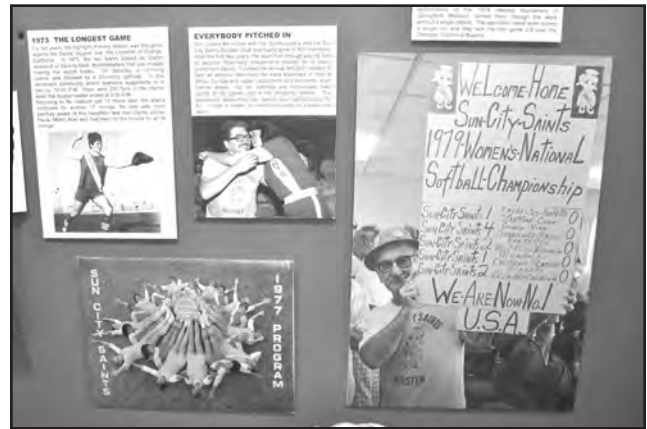
the annual event, which is billed as a "hearty picnic lunch."

Board President Bret McKeand will chat with the group, and Gail Warmath will discuss the process by which many guides have become docents.

There will also be a drawing of volunteers only for a restaurant gift card. The volunteer needs not be present to win.



The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum presently has an exhibit honoring the Sun City Saints. The exhibit features press clippings, an actual jersey worn by the team, as well as a fan signed by team members. Above, Joe Davisson, president of the booster club, celebrates the team's national championship with members of the Sun City Poms. (Photos: Del Webb Sun Cities Museum)



TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME!

Memories of the Sun City Saints still shared, cherished

By P. Atwood Fenner

While Sun City was always a community for seniors who wanted an active lifestyle, it also soon had what every other little town, and city of any size in America, had ... a ballpark where the thwaaak of wood against stuffed leather brought spectators out to shout and eat peanuts and crackerjack.

The first ball "park" here was bleachers set up on the north side of the first shopping center on the west side at Grand and 107th in 1962. A senior softball team of 15 men played there, and a year later it was moved slightly westward where they slipped on gravel and weeds with sand burrs. The backstop was two by fours and poultry netting. It was called Webb Field.

When a woman's fast pitch softball team, transplants from Phoenix, arrived, the merchants in the Grand Center ran a contest in the News-Sun to find them a name: The Saints. And in 1965 DEVCO built the men and women a better ball park in an alfalfa field on 108th Avenue (which later became site of The Suntowner Restaurant later China City- now an RV dealer)

There was now a high chain-link fence and backstop from first to third bases. Rye or Bermuda grass (in season) gave the players better footing. And finally restrooms, a snack bar and three drinking fountains made it more pleasant for the fans. And admission of \$1.50 was charged. And though a beer company put up and had a large advertisement on a large tally board, no beer was sold



Saints' fan Donna McCombie, now a Youngtown resident, loves to reminisce about "our girls," - the young baseball athletes who occasionally spent the night in the home she and her husband Darel shared in Sun City.

there yet.

The teams' dressing room was the white frame 10-ft by 10-ft building that had once been a home sales information center and later a refreshment stand manned by some of Sun City's first housewives who served lemonade to visitors of the first model homes.

(This building is now the Sundome Jr, probably the smallest theater in Arizona, where the Museum shows the Sun City promotion film shown nationwide on TV in the 60's. The tiny building is attached to the southwest side of the model home which is the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum.)

By winter of 1966-67 a women's winter softball league was organized, and the first regular team for the Saints began in 1967. A Saints Booster Club was organized. Attendance was

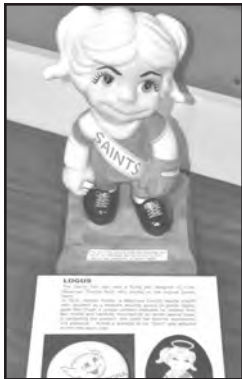
good, and the Saints helped raise funds for Boswell Hospital construction by donating all gate receipts from one of their big games with Tucson. They raised \$1,100.

Soon the Saints took over operation of the concessions first managed by a local restaurant. Now hot dogs were 30 cents, soft drinks, 15 cents and peanuts were five cents. (What, no Crackerjack?)

And the Boosters were busy getting 2,000 signatures to petition DEVCO to proceed with plans to build a stadium on 12 ½ acres north of the tracks at 111th Avenue and Grand.

In 1971 Del Webb built a real sunken stadium, and practice field - with player amenities. Here Youngtown and Sun City folks walked and crossed Grand Avenued into the seats from the top and occupied the south end of the ball park, sitting with their backs to the sun.

The Sun City Poms, appeared in 1979 to cheer on "our girls." They were coached by Corrine and Ray Leslie, retired dance teachers. With an average age of 69, these ladies brought national attention to the first active retirement community of Sun City, Ariz. (And they are still doing this.)



Saints' mascot.

The Sun City Stadium was operated by the Del Webb Corp. It was secretary Margaret (Peg) Chittenden's job to leave her office in the area's first office building at Coggins and 103rd Avenue and meet the beer truck at the ball park at 10 a.m. Here she unlocked the gate for the truck and saw that the beer was properly iced down for the fans later in the day.

Also later in the day Margaret dispensed sodas to thirsty fans. Members of Sun City's first Lions

Club, who managed the concessions, gave her the title of "honorary lioness."

And it was at this concession stand that Darel McCombie always bought cold beer when he and his wife Donna attended the Saints' games. Darel was a Royals fan from when he and Donna lived near Kansas City, Missouri, and she supported her home state's Nebraska Sooners when they played in the Fiesta Bowl.

The McCombies had moved to Sun City in 1979 to get



Margaret "Peg" Chittenden worked for the Del Webb Corp. back in the 1970s and was often asked to assist the concessions operations at Sun City Stadium. Margaret now lives in Youngtown and serves on the Youngtown Town Council.

away from the winter snow in Missouri. He worked as general manager of Bromm Chevrolet in Wickenburg for 14 years.

It was in their home at 9819 W. Silverbell Drive, off Santa Fe and 99th Avenues, that they sometimes "put up" many of the young members of the Saints team. Others stayed overnight occasionally at the motels on Grand Avenue; and some with other fans who affectionately called them "our girls."

"Darel thought that a young pretty girl has no business out on the highway at night. And when the girls had played a double-header or a tournament that lasted until late in the evening, it was just too late for them to be driving home to the East Valley," said Donna.

She referred particularly to Gail Peters, who played in Sun City when a senior in high school in Apache Junction and then as she attended the University of Arizona in Tucson. Gail was the most frequent overnight guest, but at times there might be three Saints staying over; Gail in the guestroom and the others on pallets in the living room. One of them later won a scholarship to USC to play ball, she recalls.

Donna kept in touch with Gail until it was time for her to go off to medical school. She explained that Gail had played on a boys' little league team and had a really fast ball pitch. She remembers once when a male team played the Saints, they thought they had it made until Gail struck the first three players out. Finally the men got to work, but the Saints won the game anyway.

"The crowds really loved the Saints," said Donna. She and Darel owned a miniature bat which was signed by all the girls after they won a National Championship. They also had a signed ball from a tourney in New Zealand and Australia. And Darel had caught another signed ball at one of their games. They donated these signed pieces to the Museum for the Saints' exhibit.

She and Darel had hardly ever missed a Saints game. In 1979 the Saints won the League Championship, however, the League disbanded the next year. But the Saints still drew teams from Canada, Hawaii, Florida and Indiana. The players began to retire making way for younger women. By 1985 only one of the original Saints was still in uniform, catcher Marilyn Rau.

They were gone, but not forgotten, especially by the McCombies who had practically adopted several of them. After all these years Donna remembers the Saints quite poignantly. She remembers how they played ball, what colleges they went off to, the one who became an EMT and worked in a local fire station and what some of them ate for breakfast following the sleepovers at her house.

And now the Sun City Stadium is also gone, replaced by rental apartments on the top and at the bottom of a road dropping steeply down into the space where eager athletes of both sexes once played ball, and shouting fans devoured hotdogs, soda, beer and nuts.



Unlock the _____ Mystery _____ of History

The past comes to life at the only museum in the nation devoted to the world's very first active adult retirement communities! Located in the first of five model homes built in Sun City, the museum offers a living tribute to the history of Sun City and Sun City West, and to the enduring spirit of those who pioneered an exciting new lifestyle!

Become a Member!

Show your support for the museum and its efforts to preserve our community's unique heritage!

- Copper Circle \$15
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RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

Former Ventura Historical Society docent is a new museum guide

Yasmina Snider and her husband, Jess, love to take road trips. The former California residents had been to Oregon and Nevada, when a trip to Arizona's Sedona and the Grand Canyon made Yasmina feel that "the beauty of those two places was so spiritual, it was as if it was hallowed ground."

They decided to move to Arizona, where eventually Yasmina and Jess settled in Phase One of Sun City.

Yasmina glowingly admits that her neighbors are "the best neighbors I've ever had. The people here care about each other. They're so giving."

Opportunities for fun were a priority for Yasmina in her new surroundings, so she soon found herself joining a dance class, the Ceramics Club and the Computer Club. She also likes the activities at her church. She enjoys singing but confesses that she "won't be singing any solos, though it's a lot of fun, and I enjoy it."

It was at a church social hour that

Docent Yasmina Snider demonstrates how to use the equipment, which displays the new Performing Arts Dance Clubs of Sun City and Sun City West.

Story by
Barbara
Brozman



Yasmina met Del Webb Museum Volunteer Coordinator Pris Fenner. When Pris mentioned that the museum needed volunteer guides, Yasmina said she'd been a docent at the Ventura County Historical Society and that she loves history.

As one thing always seems to lead to another, Yasmina now spends many of her Mondays from 1 to 4 p.m. as a

guide at the Del Webb Museum. She's been a guide only since last fall and is still "learning the ropes."

Yasmina says one of the things she likes best is the fact that in volunteering only three hours once-a-week at the museum, she can meet people from "all over the country."

Dearen enthusiastic about her new landscape team; group weeds monthly with friendly 'green' mixture

A monthly work session will find the new Landscape Team at work on the grounds of the Museum.

Trustee Carolyn Dearen is very enthusiastic about her team of volunteers: Toni Ashby, Betsy Harris and Joyce Kirkham.

Their first session Feb. 24 found the team weeding, trimming and checking to see if there was transplanting necessary.

"We are very green at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum," says Carolyn.

She added that her team uses only a "green" solution of vinegar, salt water and detergent to kill weeds.

Docents, from left, Betsy Harris, Toni Ashby and Joyce Kirkham clean up the backyard and refuse from trimming the bushes and cleaning up the fallen oranges.



Sun Cities Area Historical Society/
Del Webb Sun Cities Museum
10801 Oakmont Drive
Sun City, AZ 85351

One is never too old to play softball in the Sun Cities

Since 1979, anybody in Sun City -- who ever played baseball, or wanted to but never had the chance -- could still try-out and play in RCSC Senior Softball Club. Today the games are at Sun Bowl Field in Sun City or Liberty Field in Sun City West. And the two communities now field over 400 players.

One Sun City player, over age 90, plays in two leagues: The 70s Softball and the National leagues. He rotates as pitcher, catcher or first baseman.

There are now three slow-pitch softball leagues with varying ability levels. These are mixed teams (men and women) who play daily (except Wed.) from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The field is closed Wednesdays for maintenance.

Players are invited to join anytime and uniforms are provided. First year membership is \$75, followed by \$25 annually.

Co-Ed teams play Fridays from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Players must be 70 years old or older for the 70s Softball league.

And the Hot Flashes and the Flames, the two women's teams, play on Saturdays, November through March and are looking for more players to fill these teams.

When you join the club, you're invited to attend two rookie practices of the Green Team before getting a team assignment in the "American, Central or National League." These rookie practices are from 8:30 to 10:30 on

Mondays.

Special events include The Sixteen-Inch Softball Tournament this March during which no gloves are used with wooden bats. Other events include the Cardiac Kids and Cancer Survivors games and one for Mighty Mites (5 ft., 6 inches or under). And there are an annual Veterans Day Game for veterans and first responders as well as food and toy drives. The club has its own Angels in the Outfield organization as well.

And even if you prefer to be a spectator, you can watch someone playing ball every day except Wednesday and Sunday at Sunbowl Field. There are restrooms. Coffee and donuts are available in the morning, and spectators can bring in coolers.

For more information: www.azsrsoftball.com; Joe: 623-977-7827 or McSoftball@prodigy.net; cell: 410-279-3741.

In Sun City West, the games are played on Liberty Field. And the senior slow-pitch players use the same 12-inch softball as in Sun City. The season begins in October and ends around April 9 with Summer Leagues to begin soon after that.

The Central League is between the more recreational National League and the more advanced American League as above. Each plays two days per week but not on weekends. The play alternates between Sun Bowl and

Liberty fields, built in 1989 (and previously the Kuentz Field).

Open practices, tournaments or Green Team play on Saturday. For information: Gordon Kinkead at 623-584-1264 or www.azsrsoftball.com.

A seventh team has been added to the Coed League whose season ends April 3 with a 1-pitch tournament. To play in October, call Barb Waddell at 623-975-1781 soon.

The Hot Flashes (Women's Softball) play at Liberty Field on most Saturdays, but the season ends this month. For Fall play, call Carol Bowden at 623-337-5131.

Club members who are 70 or older make six teams which alternate playing between the two Sun Cities on Saturday morning. A person may join at any time. Contact Jack Harrison at 623-556-4845.

The 36 teams average 11 to 12 players in Sun City West. They generally include four outfielders and a rover. There is a \$100 membership fee the first year and \$25 per year after that. Fees include a uniform, and the club helps members to get a bat, glove and softball shoes.

Many special events are also scheduled for these players. The emphasis is on fun and comraderie in these games, much like playing at a summer camp is for the great grandchildren of these players.