

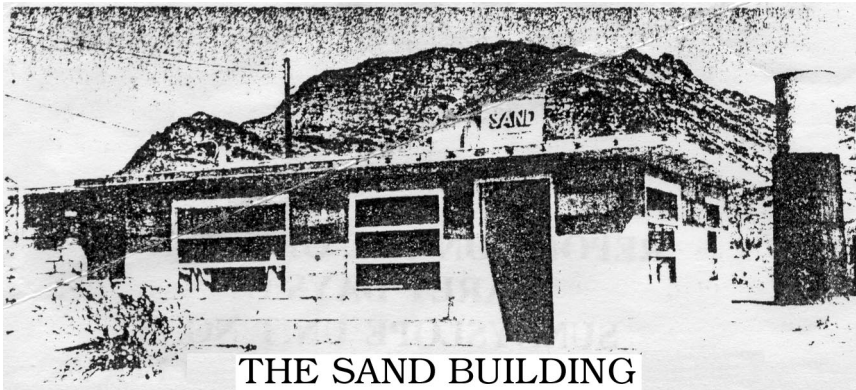


REPORT ON THE ORIGIN AND
EARLY DAYS OF
SUNNYSLOPE UNIT NO. 75
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA

AND A FEW REFERENCES TO
THE HISTORY OF THE
NATIONAL AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

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1994
Reprinted 2003



This was the complete printing and publishing plant where Charles and Lillian Stough published their first newspaper, SAND, from 1946 to 1949. This building was constructed of fireproof perlite blocks manufactured in Sunnyslope. The water tank at the right held the water supply hauled by the Editors from a local gas station.

When SAND was sold in 1949, this building became the home of Sunnyslope Post 75, The American Legion. It is now (1994) the Post's poolroom, enclosed by later construction. It is located at 10625 N. Cave Creek Rd. (Cave Creek Road and Peoria Ave. just north of SAGE PRESS).

In its first year at this location, Post 75 was also dependent on that water tank, and later, on other sources. Privately owned water companies served an area farther north and another area on the West Side of Cave Creek Road. Not until shortly before the entire area became a part of Phoenix (April, 1959) did it enjoy the luxury of running water.

EARLY DAYS OF SUNNYSLOPE UNIT NO. 75 THE AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Go back, in your imagination, to 1949. What community did we have here? Sunnyslope was a separate, unincorporated community. Phoenix was several miles away. It would be ten years – 1959 – before Sunnyslope would be a part of Phoenix. For fire protection we had a newly established private fire-fighting business on Central Avenue. If you had paid for the service in advance, you were protected. Fair enough. For police protection we had the part-time service of one Maricopa County Deputy Sheriff.

Dunlap, the main street, ended at about Third Avenue, where it met the Arizona Canal. Peoria Avenue east of Cave Creek Road was a private driveway. There was nothing but desert out there back of the wash – and it was beautiful.

But Sunnyslope was alive with new post World War II business development. People were coming out to higher and drier Sunnyslope. Many of them were veterans who had been stationed in this area during the war; new tract homes were replacing cottages and tents and empty desert. And all manner of organizations were coming into being: business, fraternal societies, women's clubs, the V.F.W., and of course, The American Legion and Auxiliary.

That Deputy Sheriff I just mentioned was a 300 pounder named (what else!) "Tiny" – Chatten, a public-spirited young man who helped organize a boys' club, and who was also elected temporary commander of Sunnyslope American Legion Post when it was being organized in late 1940s. Then the powers-that-be transferred him to another part of the county – and that was that.

When Sunnyslope Unit 75 was organized in 1949, the charter was held open until 1950. Meetings were held in what is now the poolroom. Post meetings were also held there because, you see that was the only meeting room there was. A tiny adjoining room at the north end housed the bar. Post and Unit usually met on separate nights – obviously – or they would have been sitting on one another's' laps.

The Grand Opening of the Post home was held on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1949, and the weather was so mild that we danced outdoors on the patio and members often congregated into the wee hours, long after the bar closed.

The room where the Auxiliary now meets – John Batten Memorial Hall – was built in the early 1950s. Batten was a member of Post 75 and a local real estate man. The other hall, where the bar now is, was built about ten years later and it was occupied by the close of 1964. So much for buildings.

From the very first, Sunnyslope 75 Auxiliary won many honors at Department Conventions in many phases of activity – Americanism, Veterans Affairs, Hospital work, Community service and the rest.

HIGHLIGHTS? In the later years, one stands out: dedication of the Eternal Flame at Veterans Memorial Cemetery in 1981. Originally it was our intention to present this gift to Post 75, but continued uncertainty about construction plans for Cave Creek Road made that course impractical; and so the Post joined with the Auxiliary in giving the Eternal Flame to the Veterans Memorial Cemetery only a few miles north of the Post on Cave Creek Road. This project finally came into being with the considerable help of Shadow Mountain Mortuary and its owner, Lee Scott, who donated the plaque and the monument that holds the flame and who paid for the upkeep year by year.

You may have noticed by now that no names of Auxiliary members have been mentioned in this narrative. Many special members could be named; but the fact is that we all share the credit for the Unit's accomplishments, as well as the blame for our failures. So we will let it go at that.

THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Arizona has had two National Presidents of The American Legion Auxiliary: Wilma Hoyle, deceased, one of the very first National Presidents; and Maxine Chilton, of Superior, who is still active in Auxiliary affairs.

A Women's Auxiliary was authorized at the first National Legion Convention in 1919. Within a year 11,000 members had been signed up in 45 states. Then came the Departments – Minnesota first – and the first American Legion Auxiliary Convention was held in 1921 in Kansas City where The American Legion Convention was also held. By that time there were Departments in 42 states and the Territory of Hawaii. The name *American Legion Auxiliary* was then adopted. A steady increase in membership and program participation occurred throughout the years with the exception of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In those depression days aid to the unemployed veterans of World War I was a major concern. The "Bonus Bill" was introduced in Congress. Page 331 of the huge Columbia Encyclopedia of 1975 tells about the bonus marchers:

"... bonus ... term applied to payments to former servicemen in addition to regular pensions and insurance. Veterans of World War I lobbied to obtain a bonus for their military service. In 1924 each veteran received an adjusted compensation certificate entitling him to a payment overaging \$1,00 to be made in 1945. In 1932, 15,000 unemployed veterans formed the 'Bonus Expeditionary Force' or 'Bonus Marchers' and marched to Washington to demand *immediate* payment of the certificates ... They demanded passage of a bill introduced by Representative Wright Patman of Texas providing for immediate payment ... They camped in vacant government buildings and in open fields made available by police superintendent Pellham D. Glassford. The veterans conducted themselves in a peaceful and orderly way, but when the Senate defeated the Patman bill, June 17, 1932, the marchers refused to return home. On July 28

President Herbert Hoover ordered the army, under the command of Douglas MacArthur, to evict them forcibly. MacArthur had their camps set on fire, and the Army drove the veterans from the city ...”

Ah, but that was not the end of it. Let me tell you the rest – the happier chapter of the story. I will never forget it, for I was there. I was secretary to Congressman Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota, who was one of the co-authors of the Patman Bill during the 74th Congress of 1935-36. The committee handling the bill refused to report it out. And so, following the rules of the House, Congressman Patman and other members signed a petition to discharge the committee from consideration of the bonus bill and bring it immediately before the House.

According to the rules, the names of a MAJORITY of the House had to be on that petition to discharge the committee and place the bill immediately before the House itself. A majority, as you know from your parliamentary rules, is “more than half”. “More than half” of 435 members is 218. After time the bill was passed by both House and Senate. It went to President Roosevelt and he vetoed it – goodness knows why – but they passed it over his veto and there was a big celebration, not only by members of The American Legion and Auxiliary but by all veterans’ groups, including those unemployed veterans of the Bonus Expeditionary Force.

During that second bonus march my Congressman’s office was virtually a headquarters for those unemployed veterans. I met the representatives of other organizations as well; but the only individual veteran I can never forget was the one who spent an hour or so in the Congressman’s office, telling me of his troubles – and then, before the victory came, he committed suicide.

A bright aspect, however, was that the second Bonus Expeditionary Force – instead of being run out of town – was treated as an honored guest. A huge tent camp was set up for the veterans just across the Potomac. Facilities were provided; chow was served. And I had the experience of having a dinner at that camp, sitting at one of the long tables with my Congressman, who, of course, was an honored guest.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

With the advent of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and later conflicts, membership requirements for The American Legion Auxiliary expanded to read as they do today. They are all outlined for you in your Unit Handbook. The Unit is still the basic, most important part of the Auxiliary.



MEMBERS OF POST AND UNIT 75 PREPARE THE
AUXILIARY'S FLOTE FOR VETERANS DAY
PARADE IN SUNNYSLOPE, 1954.