

The Dysart Question

- Peoria High School was built in 1922 as a school to accommodate the students west of Glendale High School
- As a result of this students from surrounding communities that were developed in those times came to school in Peoria. Thus, communities like El Mirage, Surprise, and Whitman sent high school students to Peoria up until 1963 when Dysart High School was built for underclassmen.
- Whitman continued to send students to Peoria High School until the district began sending them to Centennial and other high schools in the district in the 1990s.
- In 1965 Peoria High School began varsity sports against the Dysart Demons. It became a rivalry between the schools.
- In 1966 Dysart had their first graduating class in May of that year.
- Some of the names of families that came to Peoria during that time up until the 1965 – 1966 school year were:

The Brisby family
The Calzada family
The Garcia family
The Justice family
The Leon family
The Reems family
The Rosales family
The Smith family
The Villanueva family
The Wheat family
The Williams family

Sun City Versus the Peoria School District

- Much of your property taxes go to fund school districts and the needs of the school districts.
- If schools want to build more buildings or other facilities then they must go out and sell bonds to get the money for the district.
- Bonds are based on the assessed valuation of the district and you only can solicit bonds at the rate of 10 percent of the assessed valuation of the district.
- In 1960 Peoria was a huge district without a large population. It went from the area of Sun City in the west to Glendale in the east and from Glendale Avenue on the South to Lake Pleasant in the North.
- With the construction of Sun City on 97th Avenue and Grand in 1960, the valuation went up and this would allow the district to pass more bonds if they needed to build more schools.
- Well, there were very few students coming out of Sun City and its sister city Youngtown at the time, so there was no need for more schools.
- Problem was that there was a huge influx of migrant students that were coming into the district from Mexico and some of the areas in Glendale and Peoria began to grow.
- So the sixties became a period of growth and the new students needed to be accommodated in new schools.
- The Superintendent at the time was Ira Murphy and he called for a bond election in 1960, which barely passed. In 1962 a bond election failed and in 1963 a bond election barely passed. Most of the votes from Sun City were

against the bond issues, while the people from Glendale and Peoria voted for the bonds.

- By 1968 the district had grown to the point that there were double sessions and some classes were being held in churches. The problem was that Sun City voters outnumbered voters in the rest of the district. Many of the people in Sun City had no kids and did not want their taxes raised.
- In February of 1969, the district had a bond election which failed. Not wanting to give up the district put out a huge amount of publicity and as a result, the bond election of April 1969 passed but only with the help of almost every vote from Glendale and Peoria.
- In 1971 the district managed to pass a new bond issue with the help of all Peoria voters as all three Sun City precincts and Youngtown voted against it. This bond issue provided for a new elementary school, which was named for Ira Murphy.
- In 1972 and 1973 there were bond elections for new elementary schools and a new high school. This was to be where Cactus High School is today. Again, both failed even though the issue drew national publicity from “60 Minutes” and the New York Times.
- There were double sessions and sometimes triple sessions in elementary schools and the high school which was built for 450 kids now had over 1,100 kids.
- Without bond elections, the district had to rent portables and lease buildings to survive. Frustration boiled over to the point that some teachers and students after losing another bond election draped a bus in black paper and drove it through Sun City as a form of protest.

The Solution:

- Sun City and Youngtown continued to grow as did the student population of the Peoria School District, so something had to be done to solve the problem.
- The district had tried everything including electing members of Sun City to the school board, promoting their cause in Sun City clubs, and getting advisory committees from Sun City to endorse the bond issues. Still, nothing worked.
- Finally, Ira Murphy (the superintendent) and Melvin Huber the principal and future superintendent of the district decided to try to get Sun City out of the district.
- The district went the route of getting a petition to try to get Sun City to have its own district. Unfortunately, the Maricopa County Superintendent rejected the idea.
- Not to be deterred, the district went to the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors and with a little bit of persuasion, Sun City became their own school district.
- The solution was great for Sun City since they formed their own school district with no schools. Any kids from that were shipped out to Peoria and they paid, but very little for that.
- The solution for Peoria was good because they could pass bond elections, BUT now they also had 100 million dollars less in valuation as a district, which limited their bonding capacity.
- Today they are fine but if you have noticed they haven't passed their last three bond elections, partly because of the retirement people in the northern part of the district.