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Silver Bell Historical Society

The Spirit of Silver Bell

Newsletter Fall/Winter 2026



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY JIM HUNTER

THE ENTITLED GENERATION

The Silver Bell-Red Rock Regional Museum grand opening is scheduled for Saturday, November 7, 2026. Stay tuned for more details!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

It seems that every generation considers the one that follows to be entitled. The Greatest Generation (our parents) gave way to the Baby Boomers (that's us), which led to Gen X, Millennials, Gen Y, Gen Z and now Alpha and Beta. It's crazy to think that our great grandkids may never drive their own car or that robots will perform everyday tasks from mowing our lawns to preparing our meals. But history has taught us many things, mainly that human beings need to have purpose in life, and achieving success really only matters if we can add value in the process.

Entitlement can take on many forms. When former residents of Silver Bell are visiting from out of town, one of the first things they want to do is visit our old town or their former homesite. ASARCO hosted a classic car club rally and short presentation at our request. A car was parked on a dirt pullout in front of a road barrier. I conveyed to the security guard, "I bet that I know them." Sure enough, Janice (Nee) Dahler and her family came walking up after sneaking into the old neighborhood, and I invited them to stay for the presentation. ASARCO is understandably concerned about potential injuries and the corresponding liability of these visits. We promised that we would try and notify our Silver Bell Historical Society Members not to do this, wink,wink! But that's a little like promising Carl Elder that we would never sneak into the Silver Bell Pool late at night.

Herein lies our entitlement paradox. As good as ASARCO has been to us in staging our two reunions and allowing visits to Silver Bell with advance notice of at least forty-eight hours, it still feels strange to have limited access and obtain permission to visit the place where we grew up and ran free with unfettered boundaries; the place where we spent our formative years. I can only imagine how Glen Baker and other residents of Old Silver Bell may have felt when the Oxide Pit consumed the remains of their ghost town decades later.

While we can't change our reality, there are ways that we can mitigate our loss of access entitlement. Preserving the rich history of the Silver Bell Mining District through the Silver Bell-Red Rock Regional Museum is one way, and access is unlimited. David Cleaver is taking the lead on the exhibit for our generation's Silver Bell and is contributing a noteworthy article for this newsletter, including asking for artifacts and old photos. It seems odd that while history permeates every corner of the museum, the display needing the most attention is "our Silver Bell." Maybe that's a good thing, since you will now have the opportunity to shape how our story is told.

After dedicating last year's Spring/Summer 2025 newsletter to the museum, we are also back to sharing stories about our friends, who grew up in Silver Bell or those who were influenced by the town. This includes an article by Carol Hunter in this edition. We welcome personal interest stories about growing up in our special town, which keeps the spirit of Silver Bell alive.



When we started the museum process, little did we know the unique opportunities that it would open up.

At a recent Western Short Film Festival, we enjoyed a lovely evening with who else, John Wayne's daughter, Marisa, and his granddaughter who were hosting a viewing of his last film "The Shootist" in the historic Tombstone Arizona theater. Yes, that John Wayne!

Finally, I can't convey enough the effort and dedication of our board members, who are named on the cover sheet of this newsletter. Operating a Historical Society is one thing (newsletters, scholarships, road cleanups, meetings, fund raising, etc.) but doing this in tandem with starting a museum goes to a new level. A simple phone call or email to anyone on our board would be greatly appreciated. Besides, we always enjoy hearing from our Silver Bell friends, the greatest entitlement of them all.

SILVER BELL-RED ROCK REGIONAL MUSEUM

Grand Walk Through – April 25, 2026

Our first unveiling of our start-up museum evolved from an invitation to advertise in the Marana Schools Centennial Celebration brochure to opening our doors in a soft opening of just over 100 people in the community.

Marana Schools Centennial Celebration

It's hard to believe that Marana Schools just celebrated its 1926 founding on April 25, 2026. The town put on quite a display at Marana High School, with numerous food trucks, vendors throughout the gymnasium, and yearbooks/class photos going back decades in the library. Congratulations to the organizers, Kristin Rex, Lynn Nystrom (Thorsrud) and others including MHS, the Town of Marana and 2340 Foundation for putting on an incredible event. The 'Class of 69' erected a canopy to attract classmates and others to stop by and share memories.



If you recall, Marana won state championships in all four major sports that year, football, basketball, baseball, and track, a feat not duplicated in more than fifty years by any high school in Arizona. Ronnie and Brad Hinton, Steve and Carmen Barney, Pete Salazar, Hector Abril, Ray Alexander, Joyce Davidoff, Herb Kai, Paul Harn, Alfred Bourguet, and several Gladdens attended. It was so great to connect with many former classmates and friends. On the prior evening, we gathered for dinner at where else, Lil' Abners.

One of the highlights was meeting Mason and Preston Anway's father. Mason and Preston were both recipients of Dr. Robert M. Hunter, Jr. scholarships awarded through Silver Bell Historical Society. While the Anways were the second farmers to settle in the Marana area, their grandfather was a Silver Bell Miner. The father shared the incredible difference the awards made in Mason's and Preston's lives and how well they are doing. It's nice to know that our scholarship contributors can be assured of making a difference in the lives of others.

We admit, the pressure was on Silver Bell Historical Society. The museum is still several months from being complete, but with many former Silver Bell residents traveling in from out of town for the Marana Centennial celebration, we were excited to open for a day on what we are calling, "The Grand Walk Through," a preview of the soon to be held, "Grand Opening." Our eight lighted display cabinets arrived in time, together with seventy-five artifacts on loan in perpetuity from the Arizona Historical Society, many of which came from Old Silver Bell. Food and beverages were served by Beth Hunter, Drew Hunter and Jordanne Provance, and with little promotion, approximately one hundred guests attended. Hopefully, this is a preview of the success of the museum. A highlight for me was watching our board members and associates, some of whom did not grow up in Silver Bell, excitedly sharing the history of the area and our town. These included our videographer, John Hadwin, Treasurer Janette Hunter, board member Suzette Cleaver, Larry Young, David Cleaver and others. It seems that drinking the Silver Bell Kool Aid is contagious. Good things come to those who wait.

Museums throughout the state have operated for decades but lack anchor exhibits including continuous looping videos depicting the history of the area and a diorama complete with an operating train, depicting the Silver Bell Mining District. By the end of this summer, we will have both. The hard work, lengthy hours and research by John Hadwin of Reelworthy, Quintin Mulari, and Lucy Janssen confirmed these were the right selections and will create a significant draw for museum visitors. Imagine an overlay showing Old Silver Bell, with the image fading into the open pit. The research conducted by John Hadwin alone consumed countless hours and revealed historic treasures well beyond our anticipated scope. Their passion for the project and SBMD carried the day and kept them focused. The diorama landscape is complete and the railroad and buildings will be in soon.



FUND RAISING AND IN-KIND DONATIONS

Our fundraising endeavors have been the envy of museums which have operated for a long time. We have been fortunate to make connections and develop relationships with key sources, which have ingrained Silver Bell Historical Society in a broad network. Simply put, fundraising is a grind and takes considerable time and diligence.

Relationships have been established with State Rep. Teresa Martinez, Pinal County Supervisor Jeff McClure, the senior advisor for Congressman Juan Ciscomani, and others. It seems that SBHS board member, Mary Aguirre, knows just about everyone, due in part to her outgoing personality, but also her pioneer ranching family history going back to the 1800's. Numerous letters have been mailed, introducing the museum and inviting participation from Pinal County centers of influence. Funding commitments have been received from:

GRANT AMOUNT	ENTITY
$10,000	Global Innovations, U.S.A.-Corporate Sponsorship-Janette Hunter
$15,000	Pinal County Supervisors Grant
$ 5,000	Kai Family Foundation Grant
$15,000	J. David Lowell Foundation Grant
$45,000	**Total Grants and Corporate Sponsorships**

Funding also came in the form of scholarship donations and in-kind contributions. Recent donations include direct payment for artifacts, an old west wagon, which cost $3,900, brochures totaling nearly $1,000, payment of bills for framing and dividers of more than $5,000, donation of a miner's tent by Bob Hunter, which has been erected, donation of an 1890's era piano for our Glen Baker display, a 1952 Chevy Dually Pickup on loan, which cost $7,900, payment of building rent by Carol Hunter of $700. Including the aggregate scholarships given of $19,000 since inception, Silver Bell Historical Society has received funds or maintains outstanding commitments totaling nearly $75,000 since inception.

For a group which had no location, no artifacts, and no money, SBHS has come a long way, and we're just getting started. This isn't bad for a bunch of Silver Bell kids with a dream.

Continuing in-kind donations can take many forms. Sunbelt Development has agreed to contribute museum landscaping in tandem with the next phase of Red Rock homes to be constructed. Asarco will be remodeling its Discovery Center in Sahuarita in August, and will donate video stations, a mill walk-through entrance, and possibly additional display cases, which we can use. Jim Click recently sold all of his dealerships, and donated the workstations and furnishings from his captive auto financing company and dealership lobby to SBHS. We have the items in storage at the Od Red Rock School.The board is also discussing the sale of commemorative bricks or placards for a tribute wall, concrete/tile bench(s) and brick desert plants walkways to honor our Silver Bell Family members.

One of our current challenges is how to best provide sponsor/donor credit, either at each exhibit, on a placard, or elsewhere. Ideas are welcome.

The next obvious question is how the grants, sponsorships and other funds are being utilized. Our due diligence of other museums revealed some very cool historic buildings with a lot of historic stuff, but no real theme regarding the history of the area, other than books and stories in the gift shop or through a guide. Telling our story meant the creation of videos showcasing the history of the Silver Bell Mining District, as well as the creation of a large diorama, complete with an operating train. Essentially, the SBHS board flipped the typical museum creation on its head by allocating funds for the anchor exhibits first, and then backfilling with the other exhibits and displays. We were fortunate to be able to pay for eight six-foot lighted glass display cabinets and also received 75 artifacts from the Arizona Historical Society. Our major costs have included:

ITEM COST	SUPPLIER
$17,200	Reelworthy-Professional Videos
$ 8,300	Mulari and Janssen-Diorama
$ 7,400	Midtown Artisans-Dividers, Diorama Platform
$ 5,600	Tucson Store Fixtures-Lighted Display Cases
$ 1,800	Window Security Film
$40,300	Total Large Expense Items

Based on progress payments made for the videos and diorama, $3,000 is all that
remains to be paid, indicating that SBHS maintains a reserve and has no outstanding debt.

The downside of this posture is that we could have funded more displays and artifacts if resources had been allocated with the main focus on anchor exhibits first.

The upside is that we now have the anchor exhibits and most of the significant cost items behind us, and can focus on enhancing each exhibit space going forward.

The best news is that we will open a quality museum on November 7th, 2026, which rivals any museum in Southern Arizona of similar size. Simultaneously, the significant draws of our anchor exhibits were manifest in the interest by approximately one hundred visitors during the preliminary open house. But like Walt Disney said, "Disneyland will never be complete." We're already thinking of a 30'X40' awning over the large concrete pad near the front entry, with round tables and chairs for the historical presentations. A 3-D computer model is also under consideration at a reasonable cost. It would be fun to toggle through the Topo overhead and explore the tunnels of the original Silver Bell claims. And so it goes, the only limitation imposed on the Silver Bell-Red Rock Regional Museum is your imagination!

MUSEUM VEHICLES

A recent trend in weddings and corporate events is the conversion of an old barn into a meeting venue. At a wedding in North Carolina for our nephew, the venue provided a rustic "country" feel with a band, dance floor and open bar. An old pickup truck on the grounds served as the primary backdrop for photos. Watching the ladies in gowns and gentlemen in their tuxedos take pictures, it became evident that we needed a truck for the museum. The problem is that old vehicles of all types are expensive, especially at the premier Barrett-Jackson and Mecum auctions. On a trip to Montana, Jim and Janette Hunter came across a 1952 Chevy Dually, which they purchased and placed on loan at the Silver Bell-Red Rock Regional Museum. We have our photo ad prop, and it runs. But the truck needs brakes, so before we can tool around Red Rock or drive in the Marana annual parade, we need some mechanical help.

As for other vehicles, ASARCO has offered to donate a 1960's era Dodge fuel truck. We also have opportunities for a tractor to support the ranching district displays and will be looking for others. And we of course have our bucket list items. These include the original fire truck used in Silver Bell, which Santa rode in to the rec hall to hand out our stockings (where did it go?), a stage coach (Old Silver Bell had a Wells Fargo stop), a train engine and rail cars, and the large haul truck that ASARCO is reserving for us. With potentially seven acres of property at the old school, there is a vast opportunity for walking paths to a wide assortment of outdoor displays, from old west wagons, mining and rail equipment, ranching equipment/artifacts, mine entrance exhibits, etc.



THE MUSEUM GIFT SHOP

When we traveled to San Diego by car, my wife Janette observed that our trip took eight hours, when I told her the drive was only about six hours. I reminded her of the gas and gift shop stopover in Dateland, AZ. There was jewelry, designer flip flops, clothing,books, maps, pottery, and assorted trinkets. If you've had a similar experience, the answer is not to limit your purchases based on the size of your suitcase. Rather, just bring an extra suitcase or large bag.

Space has been allocated in the new Silver Bell-Red Rock Regional Museum for a gift shop. ASARCO will be donating several racks from their Discovery Center Gift Shop when their remodel commences in August 2026, and we will be purchasing some display cases and bookshelves to augment those donated items. There are several reasons why a gift shop makes sense:

1. The shop will be another venue to educate museum visitors about the rich history of the Silver Bell Mining District, as well as provide a keepsake to commemorate their experience and share with others.

2. Revenues from the gift shop will provide support operations, including rent and utilities. Between the gift shop and visitor donations/fees, we hope to cover the small overhead of the museum, meaning that grant funding in the future can be allocated exclusively to new museum exhibits or augmenting new ones.

3. We are in the early stages of designing the museum gift shop. The original consideration was to house a small gift shop area in the main museum with a couple of racks for historic books, jewelry, and other collectables. This would take away exhibit display space and create some difficulty in managing the inventory by comingling museum visitors and gift shop patrons. There is approximately a 12'X12' room across the museum breezeway, which Red Rock School has offered for the gift shop, and it's perfect. Preliminary due diligence in speaking with other museums is that small mine toys like Tonka trucks, jewelry, copper coins with veteran insignias, Indian pottery and ceramics best serve the gift shop patrons. More research needs to be conducted, but it's entirely possible that a gift shop would go a long way to defray the operating costs.

But since SBHS maintains a history of going above and beyond, we are already visiting other gift shops for ideas and suggestions on operating best practices. Who knows, a dedicated gift shop web page and online ordering may be in our future. Ideas for items to carry in the gift shop are welcome.

MUSEUM VISITOR FEES

Silver Bell Historical Society is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit. But like any corporate entity, we have bills to pay and growth objectives. One of the downsides, is that unlike other museums, which derive funds from a municipality or are housed in a city or county owned historic building, we are completely independent. Since our occupancy overhead is minimal, that is mostly good. We can set our own course and destiny. And you couldn't ask for a better or more supportive landlord than the Red Rock School District, superintendent Peter Dwyer and business manager Cathy Shull.

In researching other museums, we found that some maintain reserves as high as $60,000. This would not be a bad objective for SBHS, to maintain a liquidity reserve for future projects. Who knows, there may also be a documentary in our future. Based on the rich history of the Silver Bell Mining District, maybe Hollywood will come calling.

MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

Your Local Museum: Why You Are a Valuable Source by David Cleaver

The Silver Bell – Red Rock Regional Museum will be far more than just a dusty old building filled with forgotten artifacts; we expect it to be a vibrant, beating heart of our beloved Silver Bell, dedicated to preserving, interpreting, and celebrating the unique stories and heritage that define where we lived. We are envisioning this to be an indispensable anchor in an ever-changing world, offering a tangible connection to the past, vital educational opportunities for all ages, and fostering a strong sense of local identity and pride.

Let's focus on our name: THE SILVER BELL – RED ROCK REGIONAL MUSEUM.

According to the International Council of Museums, "A MUSEUM is a not-for-profit, permanent institution heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing."

Our museum's vision is to concentrate on quite a vast area in both Pima and Pinal Counties, from the SILVER BELL MOUNTAINS in the south to the fast-growing village of RED ROCK in the north. This region was, and is, the location of settlements such as Pelton, Atlas Camp (which became BS&K), Sasco, RED ROCK, the first town of SILVER BELL, or "Old SILVER BELL," and the second SILVER BELL. These villages were established as early as 1880. Only RED ROCK survives today. Of course, before the white man entered the region, the Tohono O'Odham people lived in the area.

RED ROCK was a crucial transportation location for the mines of the SILVER BELL MOUNTAINS. The railroad came to RED ROCK in 1880. Between 1880 and about 1903, horse-drawn and ox-drawn wagons carried people and ore to and from SILVER BELL. The 21-mile long Arizona Southern Railroad was built in 1903 which ran from RED ROCK to Sasco, a smelting town of 625 people, to Old SILVER BELL, a town which fluctuated with populations hovering around 1200 people.

In 1879, the SILVER BELL MINING DISTRICT was formed, and hundreds of mining claims were registered in Pima County. The earliest of these were the Blue Coat and Old Boot Mines. The Old Boot is pretty much the granddaddy of all the SILVER BELL mines. All of the ore from these mines, except for the ASARCO mine at "modern" SILVER BELL, made its way through RED ROCK.

You notice that I've listed names in BOLD. My point is to show how relevant our museum's name is for the definition of museums I listed earlier. Now, I'd like you to insert your name in the following blank line:_____.
Now imagine it is written in BOLD type. Why? Well, because a museum needs people to make it successful. Without YOU, there would only be about a dozen of us wearily attempting to build a monument to this REGION. Quite frankly, its a lot of work and sometimes seems impossible. But hey, we've come a long way, but with YOUR help, we can goso much further!

I'm the chairperson for the committee working on the Modern Silver Bell exhibits. We have already received many artifacts from Old Silver Bell and a few from our time, but we are in desperate need of artifacts, photographs, and stories relating to the town of Silver Bell, roughly from 1952 to 1984.

.We have a section of mailboxes from the first post office at Silver Bell. That's so cool! The Cleaver's; mailbox was #86. These had combination locks. I've racked my brain trying to remember the combination, but it's been way too many years. This is a great start. We need more!

I'm wanting to build an exhibit featuring our father's hard hats, lunch buckets, thermoses, etc. I have my dad's ASARCO hard hat. I'm including a paragraph about his work history at the mine, and a photo of my family from back in the day. This exhibit should include your family. Do you have something of your dad's (and possibly your mom's) that you could give to the museum? A family photo from the time period, along with a paragraph about your family's time at Silver Bell. Think of the history we can preserve of an entire community! For a long time, my dad's hard hat sat in a closet. Now, it can be preserved forever and others can know about him, my family, and so many families that lived in a place that's been wiped off the face of the earth. Can you help?
Will YOU help?

Perhaps you are holding on to something from Silver Bell. Maybe you even have something from Old Silver Bell, or even BS&K. I'm brainstorming ideas like boy scouts, girl scouts, church softball/baseball teams, the old Avra Bell Market, the post office, the barber shop, the Texaco station. It doesn't matter how small or large the artifact. If is from the region, it qualifies! Photographs of the times and events are awesome additions to our museum. We want to be in a position to have to expand. And we can expand if we need to.

If you're a Red Rock resident, please know that we're thinking of how to display the history of your fair community. Let us know if you have something of interest to contribute. For a few years after the 2019 Grand Silver Bell Reunion, we sought locations for our museum. Please recall that we had absolutely no money to start with. We had a challenge from one of the Pima County Supervisors to build a museum like the one in Ajo. Well, we went to Ajo. We're going to have an even better museum than Ajo has, and Ajo still has people. We do have YOU!
We couldn't have been more shocked and surprised when the Red Rock Elementary School District heard our appeal and granted our request to rent the old, closed Red Rock School. It's like history is coming around to our side. Of course, Red Rock should be the location of our museum. The only remaining building that stands today of the history of the region from 1880 to the present is a mile away from our museum: the old Red Rock train depot.

So now you know, or you'd better know, that the Silver Bell - Red Rock Regional Museum is for real. And the fact that you are reading this proves that you are real. So get real! Please consider how you can contribute to our cause. You might also be interested in helping us by volunteering with building maintenance. Of course, we always accept donations of money. We have applied for grants and have received a few. We are not fully funded, and can use any contribution. Perhaps you have ideas about museum displays. We'd love to hear from you!!! Contact Museum@silverbellaz.com for more information.

SOUTHERN ARIZONA HISTORICAL CORRIDOR

When the Town of Marana created the position for a Cultural and Heritage Specialist, this prompted the vision for a historical corridor to include the Silver Bell-Red Rock Regional Museum. Little did we know where this would lead. A chance encounter with eighty something year old “Twink” Monrad, along with her two friends occurred on the back road behind Silver Bell on the way to Red Rock. It was a real “Thelma and Louise” moment, except this wasn’t a movie. It turns out that Twink, her friend Pat Tully and their spouses would cookout in the Siver Bell Mountains around 1970, and explore for artifacts, often using a metal detector. Pat Tully is a descendent of the Tully-Ochoa partnership, which provided freighting to the mines near Pelton and Silver Bell during the 1800’s and were pioneers in developing some of the first claims in the area. Twink donated several items to our museum, including a pristine key and tag from Hotel Rockland Room 21, which served the smelter town of SASCO. It also turned out that she serves on the board of the Pusch House aka Oro Valley Museum at Steam Pump Ranch in Oro Valley.



This museum is part of a group coordinating the development of a historical corridor, which will include more than twenty-five museums e.g. Empire Ranch, Oracle, San Manuel, The Discovery Center at Sahuarita, etc. Day trippers from Tucson, Phoenix, Casa Grande and out of state visitors to Southern Arizona can enjoy seeing several smaller museums in a single day, along with restaurant recommendations. The historical corridor will be promoted through a website, a map currently under development, brochures placed at each museum and at Tucson resorts and visitor centers to advertise each participant. We not only expect to be a participant in the historical corridor, but hope to be an integral part of its development and expansion.

The funny thing is that our drive along the old county road was delayed for several weeks due to weather, and concerns regarding the depth of the Santa Cruz River, which we needed to cross near Red Rock. Were the delays the result of fate? Imagine how a chance encounter on the back road near Old Silver Bell would result in Silver Bell-Red Rock Regional Museum participating in a grand historical corridor.

LANDOWNERS OF SASCO HISTORICAL SITE

Well maybe. A large data center project is being proposed by Vermaland, west of Red Rock on 3,400 acres. The project will preserve more than 900 acres for native habitat and wildlife corridors. The developer has carved out one acre to donate to Silver Bell Historical Society, which includes what is commonly known as the Rockland Hotel Ruins, within view of the Sasco Smelter. The volcanic rock and mortared walls are more likely part of one of the Rockland outbuildings. However, this will provide some unique opportunities for preservation of this segment of the Silver Bell Mining District. As an example, a sign with a QR code would enable a visitor to access the site to reveal what the location looked like over a hundred years ago. This could also serve as a gateway to the district as well as Ironwood Forest National Monument. The land will also add to the SBHS balance sheet, and this asset could provide additional leverage in grant funding. The land donation could transfer in 2027, if the rezoning is successful.

PIMA COUNTY ADOPT-A-ROADWAY CLEANUP

Larry Young continues to lead the charge through the involvement of SBHS in the Pima County Adopt-a-Highway program. Participation in the program has paid dividends, including signage along Avra Valley Road (both sides), our enhanced profile in Southern Arizona, and inclusion of our volunteer work program on all grant and private foundation funding requests. But the most important benefit of our efforts in the program is the clean roadway leading to our former hometown.





The eight-mile stretch, starting at the El Paso Natural Gas Pumping Station ,where our Pima County Roadway Sign is installed, and continuing to the ASARCO guard shack has been cleaned up one section at a time, and is now 100% finished. Larry is often assisted in this endeavor by Scott Hunter. Larry's efforts include coordinating the date and time for the road cleanup, marking the cleanup boundary for the day, passing out large trash bags, and trash retrieval tongs, obtaining volunteer signatures, and filing reports with the County.

The program requires a minimum of one cleanup every six months. Even though the road has been fully cleaned up, trash tends to accumulate, so the work will continue. The road is well traveled by area visitors, ASARCO employees and vendors, indicating that work will never be finished. However, since the years long efforts have resulted in full coverage of the assigned area, future cleanups will be less tedious, and maybe a lunch will follow for a reward.

Volunteers are welcome and may contact Larry directly or respond to any board member or via our Society email. Thank you again, Larry, for making a difference through the Adopt-a-Highway program.

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

SBHS 2026-27 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS – Dr. Robert M. Hunter, Jr.

The SBHS Board of Directors met at their board meeting on August 22, 2026 and awarded four (4) $1,000 Dr. Robert M. Hunter, Jr. Scholarships to the following applicants: Katelynne Hendrickson, Kristina Morris, Aurora Madera,
Sara Edmonds

These scholarships were funded by donations made by Board members: Carol Hunter $500, Janette M. Hunter $1,000, Richard L. and Diane M. Stephens $1,500 along with Ms. Marjorie A. Vinson, a retired Army Registered Nurse, who made a special $1,000 donation to fund Sara Edmonds scholarship.

As of the release date of this newsletter, Silver Bell Historical Society has donated $19,000 to descendants of Silver Bell Miners under the "Dr. Robert M. Hunter, Jr. Scholarship Fund." Bob Hunter was the driving force behind the creation and management of the scholarship, and the reason it was named in his honor. Bob's statement, "Don't just prepare for college, prepare for life," permeates the SBHS scholarship philosophy. With the untimely passing of our dear brother and husband, Bob's wife Carol has picked up the mantle and is carrying the scholarship forward.

NEW SBHS 2027-28 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM – The Juan, Bea, Frank, and Mike Sanchez Trade School Scholarship

A commitment by SBHS Board Member, Mike Sanchez, to fund a $1,500 Trade School Scholarship program this fall also dovetails with the vast expansion of trade jobs in the U.S. and the need for a capable and educated trade force, as well as the SBHS philosophy leaning in this direction. With much of the focus of SBHS on the museum opening, thank you Mike for your timely donation in your family's honor. The Juan, Bea, Frank, and Mike Sanchez Trade School Scholarship will provide an opportunity to direct a donation to recipients who will make this a career choice. The board will work to formally codify a trade scholarship directive in the Sanchez family name. Ultimately, the focus of the scholarship follows the quality of the recipient. All eligible applicants are reviewed by the scholarship committee and recommendations are then presented to the entire board for a vote. This is all predicated on the availability of resources in the Scholarship Fund.

NEWS FROM OUR RECENT SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS 2025-26

For the 2025-26 school year, we awarded five $1000 scholarships. The following were the recipients: Aurora Madero, Mason Anway, Kristina Morris, Heather Sutton and Elizabeth Arnett. In keeping with tradition, we follow up with our recipients to see how their journey is progressing. The following winners responded.

AURORA MADERO – SCHOLARSHIP 2025 - 2026

Aurora Madero was one of the five scholarship recipients for 2025-2026. Her grandmother is Kerry Ecrote. Aurora's interest is Animation and she has a strong art background. Aurora is excited to be finishing her final year. She secured a Fellowship in the Center for Religious Conflict at Arizona State University. In the Spring she will start working on her short film. She is leaning toward a scientific, futuristic theme. Wishing her success.

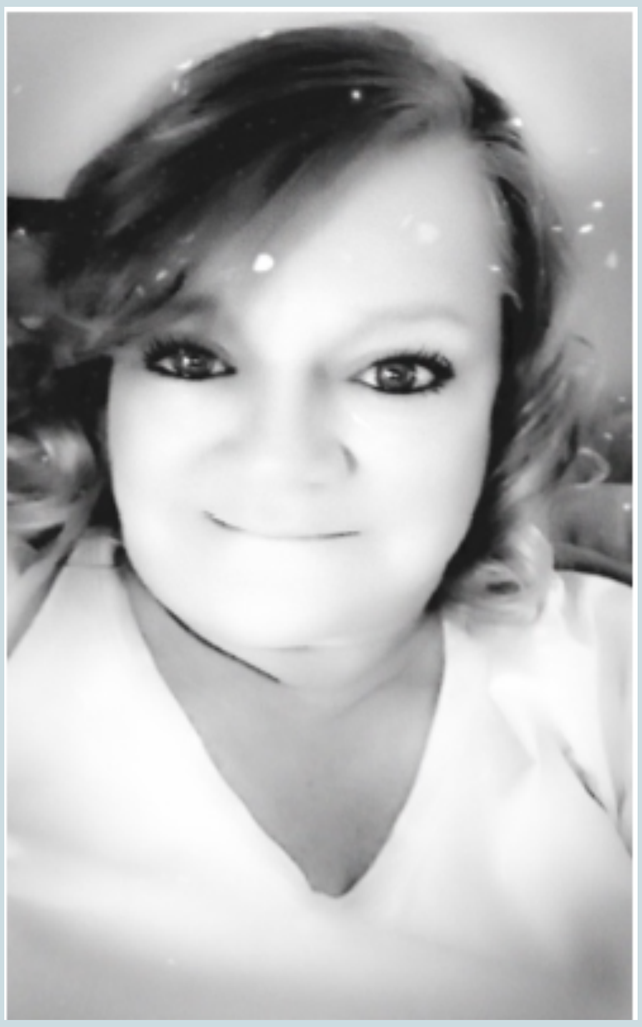


MASON ANWAY- SCHOLARSHIP 2025 - 2026



Mason Anway, descendant of Norman Chadburn responded. He has received our scholarship twice and is very interested in checking out the museum. He has been living in Florida and working at Disneyworld as a concierge/front desk. He will be finishing his degree in Finance the beginning of August and returning to Arizona. He is very grateful to the Historical Society for the scholarships. They helped him fulfill his dream in education. Mason looks forward to visiting the museum with his family. We hope Mason will take an active roll with the museum as she settles into his career.

KRISTINA MORRIS – SCHOLARSHIP 2025 - 2026



Kristina Morris, Daughter of Michael Garneres, graduated with honors in her Associate Degree from Pima Medical Institute, Tucson in May. She returned July 9th to start her Bachelor Degree and will graduate February 2028 in Hospital Administration. She shared it has been a struggle at times juggling work, school, and helping to raise her 1 yr old grandson. Busy people always get things done. And her dream is to run the treatment center where she currently works, or to have her own center. Kristina sets goals and works to achieve them. An inspiration, Kristina thanked the Historical Society and is excited about the Museum. She looks forward to visiting the Museum and give back. She loved Silver Bell. A volunteer like Kristina would be awesome!

HEATHER SUTTON - SCHOLARSHIP 2025- 2026

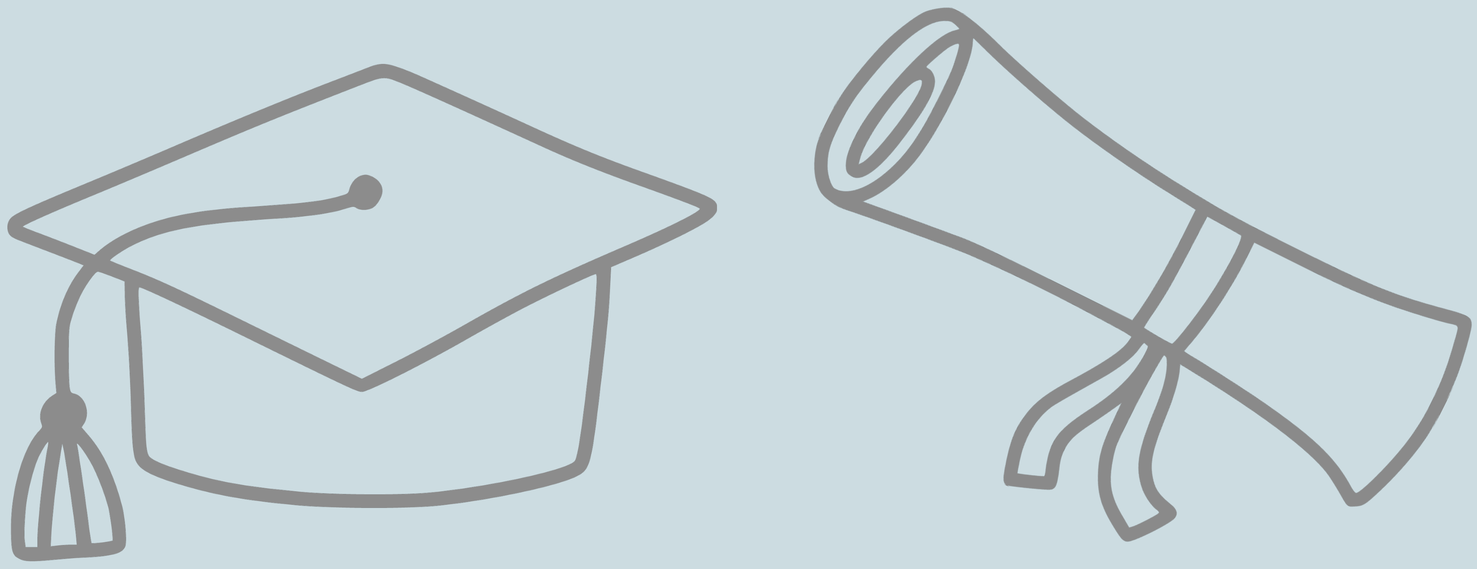


Heather Sutton, Daughter of Michael Sutton, completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree in July 2025. She resides in Washington State and is working at a local hospital. She also works at a Nursing Facility several days a month. Heather shared she is truly enjoying her career as a nurse. The care she provides not only impacts my patients positively, but also myself.

This career path also benefits me spiritually as I feel that it deepens my connection with God. Thank you for reaching out to me.

ELIZABETH ARNETT - SCHOLARSHIP 2025- 2026

Elizabeth Arnett, granddaughter of Larry Young is continuing her program of study and working also at the hospital several nights a week. Her interest still is in Fashion Design. Upon completion of her program she will have to test for a license. She is grateful for the assistance from the Historical Society. It is rewarding to help these individuals in their journey. Our descendants are the lifeline to keeping the memory of Silver Bell alive. The Society wants to award scholarships for college and Trade schools. Young people but even adults returning to learn a trade or new skill are welcome to apply.



SILVER BELL MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

LEILA J. "LEE" MCCONNAUGHEY



LEILA J. "LEE" MCCONNAUGHEY WAS BORN ON JUNE 14, 1934 AND PASSED AWAY AT HER DAUGHTER'S HOME IN LANCASTER, KS ON APRIL 13, 2026, JUST TWO MONTHS SHORT OF HER 92 ND BIRTHDAY.

WE'VE HONORED MANY PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN SILVER BELL AND MADE AN IMPACT ON ALL OUR LIVES. LEE ACHIEVED THE RARE STATUS OF "LEGACY" BASED ON HER LOVE AND PASSION FOR ALL THINGS SILVER BELL, BUT ALSO HER KINDNESS AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY AND MARANA SCHOOLS, WHERE SHE WORKED AS ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY FOR MARANA GRADE SCHOOL FOR OVER 25 YEARS. LEE'S INFLUENCE WAS NOTEWORTHY, NOT ONLY IN HER MANY ACHIEVEMENTS TO STREAMLINE OPERATIONS AT THE SCHOOL, BUT ALSO IN THE LIFELONG FRIENDSHIPS THAT SHE DEVELOPED WITH HER CO-WORKERS AND PEERS. AS STATED BY DAUGHTER PHYLLIS, "MOM LOVED PEOPLE." IN MANY WAYS, WE WERE HER ADOPTED KIDS. LEE BALANCED A BUSY WORK SCHEDULE WITH LEADERSHIP ROLES IN CUB SCOUTS AND GIRL SCOUTS.

LEE WAS BORN IN EVEREST, KS AND GRADUATED FROM ATCHISON COUNTY COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL IN 1951. SHE MARRIED CONRAD MCCONNAUGHEY AND LATER CAME TO SILVER BELL, WHERE THEY RAISED THEIR TWO CHILDREN, MIKE AND PHYLLIS, WHO SPENT THEIR FORMATIVE YEARS IN OUR SPECIAL TOWN AND WERE BOTH ACTIVE IN SPORTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES. MIKE WAS A STARTER IN FOOTBALL AND ON THE WRESTLING TEAM AND PHYLLIS WAS ON THE CHEER SQUAD. THEY RETURNED TO THEIR HOME STATE IN KANSAS IN 1999. CONRAD PASSED AWAY IN 2010. SON MICHAEL ALSO PASSED, BUT NOT BEFORE THE FAMILY ENJOYED RETURNING TO SILVER BELL IN 2019 FOR THE MEGA-REUNION TO WITNESS THE UNVEILING OF THE TOWN MONUMENT, DESSERT SOCIAL, MINE TOUR, AND DINNER AT LIL' ABNERS.

THE MCCONNAUGHEY'S ROUTE TO SILVER BELL WAS FORTUITOUS. THEIR NEW HOME IN KANSAS BURNED DOWN ON NEW YEARS EVE. LOOKING FOR A FRESH START, LEE'S BROTHER, BRIAN BEHLER HAD SERVED A TOUR OF DUTY IN THE U.S. ARMY AT FT. HUACHUCA AND WAS THEN LIVING IN MARANA. BASED ON THESE FAMILY TIES IN ARIZONA, COUPLED WITH LEE'S ASTHMA AND DESIRE TO BE IN A DRIER CLIMATE, THEY DECIDED TO GIVE ARIZONA A TRY. THE FAMILY INITIALLY LIVED IN TUCSON, NEAR SALPOINTE HIGH SCHOOL, WHERE CONRAD WAS A BREAD TRUCK DRIVER. HE WAS THEN ABLE TO GET A POSITION WITH ASARCO. PHYLLIS REMEMBERS VISITS FROM PAUL PRATER AT THEIR TUCSON HOME. THEY JOINED THE WAITING LIST FOR A SILVER BELL HOUSE, WHICH OPENED UP AND FACILITATED THEIR MOVE TO OUR HOME TOWN.

AFTER RETURNING TO KANSAS, LEE WAS ACTIVE AS A MEMBER OF THE EVEREST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, EVEREST LIONS CLUB, PEG, AND THE CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP. SHE ENJOYED SEWING AND CRAFTS, CROSSWORDS, AND JIGSAW PUZZLES. HER FAVORITE THING WAS SPENDING TIME WITH HER GRANDCHILDREN AND GREAT GRANDCHILDREN AND FAMILY. HER KINDNESS AND POSITIVITY WERE CONTAGIOUS, AND LEE ALWAYS ENJOYED A PERSONAL CALL TO SHARE MEMORIES ABOUT SILVER BELL AND TO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR THE SOCIETY AND EFFORTS TO PRESERVE OUR HISTORY. SHE WILL BE GREATLY MISSED.

Silver Bell Family Spotlight

Several of our past newsletters have included profiles of Silver Bell families, including the Youngs, Bustamantes, Bourguets, etc. While we will continue to include family profiles in future editions, we would like more input directly from our readers. Silver Bell maintains such a rich history and family legacy. Simply selecting a family to profile by one of the board members limits the opportunity to fully showcase the range of stories we can all share.

First, the board will be improving and enhancing our Website, Facebook, and other social media options, as well as consolidating some information rather than having to search multiple venues for information. At our ages, technology can sometimes be perceived as the enemy. We would like to flip this perception on its head by developing user-friendly access to our social media venues. Also, as our presence continues to expand throughout the newly formed historical corridor, we will attract members and associates well beyond the original Silver Bell Family. But rest assured, our stories of growing up in Silver Bell are uniquely ours. Take time to visit the website and Facebook pages to peruse the many stories and articles. These communication venues will be enhanced in the near future to bolster our exchanges.

John, the friendly wild donkey who had free run of the old and new houses and central ball park areas in our town, could have only been appreciated by those who saw and interacted with him. Going forward, we will be pulling several stories from our sites to be included in the newsletters. We would also appreciate articles, stories, and family profiles submitted by you. You don't need to be a Tom Clancy or Doris Kearns-Goodwin. In fact, a few paragraphs with some old photos are preferred in your own words. Just reach out to any board member or submit to our email, call us, write a letter, etc. As much as our Silver Bell family will diminish through the loss of our members, especially legacy members like Lee McConnaughey, our history will live on through your shared stories.

A City Girl's opinion of Silver Bell by Carol Conley Hunter

My name is Carol Hunter, formerly Carol Conley. I grew up in a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania called Springfield, (Delaware County). In the 1970's it had a population of 29.000 residents. The history of Springfield dates back to the late 1600's and was settled by the Quakers. A prominent Quaker back then was William Penn. Springfield was known as a farming Community. By the 19th century, it was becoming more industrialized. There were many creeks in the area which helped develop power thereby leading to the erection of Mills. Because of the numerous creeks and streams, the town got its name, Springfield. Springfield had a lot of wooded area, big trees and beautiful parks.

In the 1970's, the community vibe was post World War II neighborhoods. My parents grew up in the Philadelphia area and in 1950 they purchased and moved into a three bedroom, 2 bath with full basement. It was 1955 sq ft, Cape Cod style and separate 2 car garage they added later with large front and back yards. Lots of grass and Azalea plants that my great Uncle sold. It was located in Springfield. Back in the day, you usually grew up in one home. The house was located across the street from my Father's Mother, Sister and her husband. So we had grandparents close by. I had two older brothers, and one younger. We walked to all of our schools.

Growing up, my family camped all over the United States during summer vacations. We also traveled to Canada. I was lucky to travel abroad my junior and Senior year to Europe, Spain and Portugal with my Mother. My father was an Electrical Engineer with Philadelphia Electric Company and my Mother went back to work when my younger brother and I were in middle school. She worked mostly administrative with doctors. We were all encouraged to go to college.

My oldest brother went to Indiana, My second brother attended University of Pennsylvania and then Columbia for Law. Being independent and starting to work part time at 14 yrs, and helping to run the house with my Mom I was interested in selecting a college out West. I primarily looked at Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. My interest was in the culture of the American Indian,
and Anthropology. I graduated in 1973 and was accepted at the University of Arizona. I think I was the only student in my graduating class attending a
school so far away. My parents were very supportive, My youngest brother eventually attended the University of Washington State. My parents separated but never divorced.

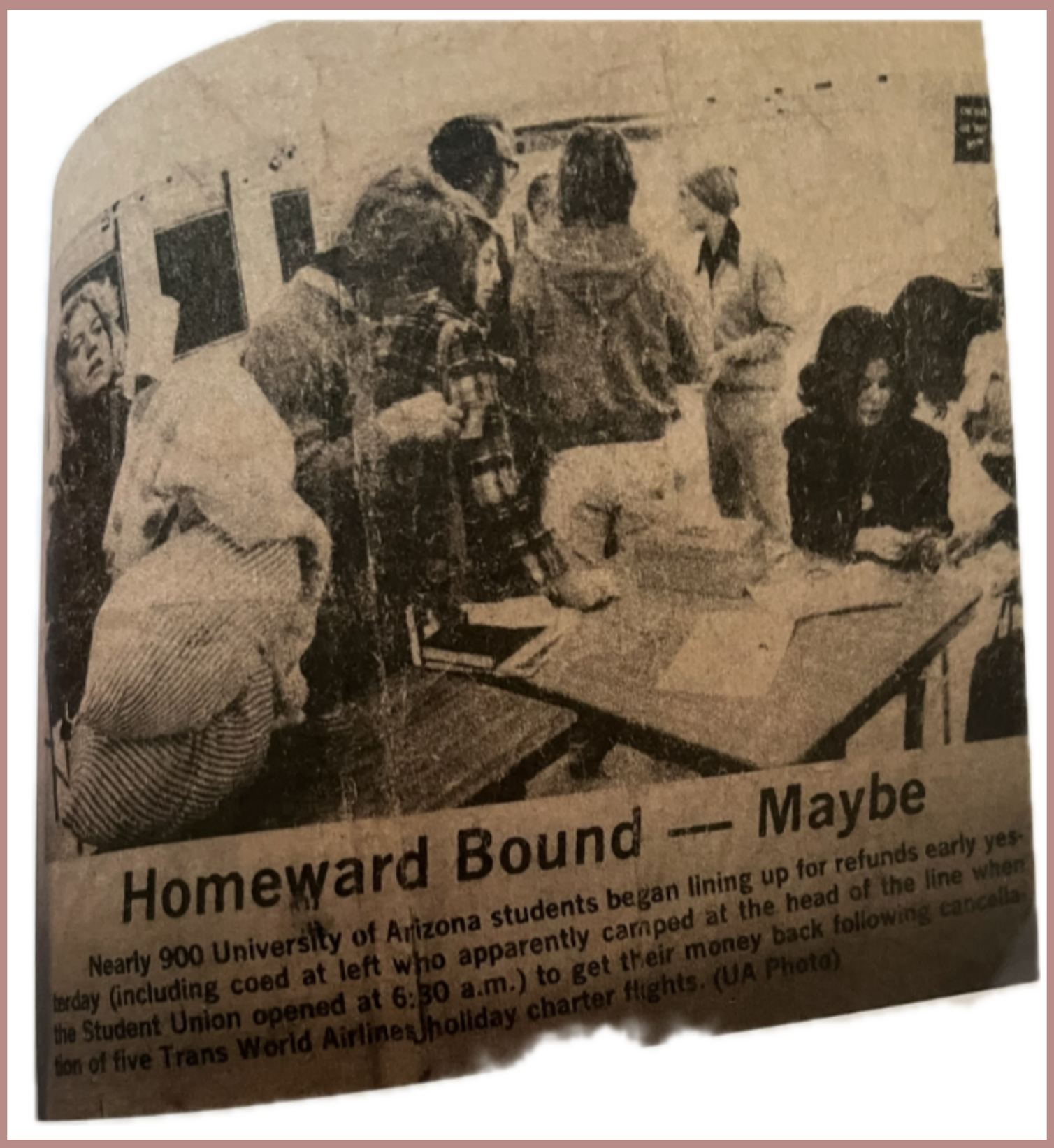
I arrived in Tucson early August, 1973. Moved in to my dorm room. My roommate was from Phoenix. I really had no idea what to expect. Tucson was hot, dry, brown, few trees, incredible mountains and lovely sunsets and lots of cactus that I had never seen before, The one thing I missed was the ocean and beach time. Growing up outside of Philadelphia, we frequented the New Jersey beaches. Beaches out west were southern Califoria or Mexico. but definitely not like the East coast beaches. I jumped right in to my classes and got involved in clubs such as the Concert Committee, Anthropology club, and the Garbage Project. The Garbage Project was thru the Anthropology Department and by the second year, it was featured on the cover of Time Magazine. The Garbage Project analyzed people's garbage and we characterized behaviors, and discovered patterns of consumption. Differences between what people reported in questionnaires did not align with what was found in their waste bin.

The program initiated in 1973, so I was a part of its early beginnings and to this day it has expanded to other cities and has helped to analyze people's consumption, landfill degradation (showing that paper degrades very slowly) and that people will waste less expensive food in times of recession, because they tend to over buy products on sale and let them expire.
(https:/en.wikipedia.orgwiki/Tucson_Garbage_Project)
It was neat to be a part of something that was unique and "an out of the box" idea.

During my first semester, I became familiar with a lot of the area around campus and some of the highlights of Tucson. Sabino Canyon, Tucson National Park, the Desert Museum, and the Sorority/ Fraternity scene. I was not interested in pledging but in order for the Concert committee to grow on the University campus, getting their support was helpful in helping musical acts to be invited. to the U of A. Over the years it was fun to be involved with bringing concerts and entertainment to Tucson. The likes of (Bill Cosby, George Carlin, The Eagles, Randy Newman, and more.)

In December of 1973, a girl in my dorm wrestled some girls, including me, to host a Christmas party at the Arizona Youth Corrections facility on North Oracle Rd near Catalina. It still resides there today. Part of a Psychology project, to help out in the community. Little did I know that I would cross paths with Bob Hunter, who was a counselor and U of A student at that time. Bob's group of kids picked me out of the group to share a dance with him despite the fact that he was not feeling well. A young, quiet guy, who I assumed was one of the delinquents was actually, Bob. Needless to say, the evening was a success for my friend and she aced her project for reaching out to a community that received some holiday cheer. We all know girls tend to have an interest in bad boys! ha ha.

A week later, many students were planning their trips home for Christmas break, I was trying to fly home to Philadelphia via Trans World Airlines. Many students including me camped out at the Student Union to protestan airline strike inhibiting


Homeward Bound — Maybe

Nearly 900 University of Arizona students began lining up for refunds early yesterday (including coed at left who apparently camped at the head of the line when the Student Union opened at 6:30 a.m.) to get their money back following cancellation of five Trans World Airlines holiday charter flights. (UA Photo)

students to make it home for the holidays.Our protest got the attention of our country. My photo landed on the front page of the Daily star holding my pillow and a sleeping bag.

That particular weekend, Bob headed home to Silver Bell for Christmas break and one of the first things he saw when walking into his home was the paper on their coffee table with my photo!

What are the chances. Of course he was intrigued and I think he was determined to search me out once school resumed.

Upon returning to school in January, school and committee obligations kept me busy. The Concert Committee had big plans. U of A was ready to unveil McKale Center and we were determined to bring in a big name entertainer.We also held event in Bear Down gym and Centennial Hall. While distributing flyers on campus, our paths crossed several times.

The first time, I did not remember our meeting at the Youth Center. With no cell phones, living in dorms, connecting was a lot harder. A chance meeting one evening in the Student Union, Bob decided to invite me to go out with him and his roommate and another girl. He suggested Gentle Ben's and I said yes. The evening was a success. Bob would tell me later that his heart skipped some beats when I reached under the table to hold his hand. Our relationship began.



Bob had a heavy schedule working on a double degree and working full time as a counselor at the Youth Center. Scheduling date became tricky. Bob was a well-liked counselor and his boys respected him. He treated them to some very special outings and continually promised if their behavior warranted trips to the drag races, ball games and more.

there were several times, Bob arranged to pick me up on campus to join him whichwas risky but love prevailed and his boys never told on him.

As our relationship grew, his Mom and brothers were curious about this girl that had Bob smitten. He decided to invite me to join him on a trip up to Silver Bell for the weekend. His Mom promised to make his favorite Spaghetti and meatballs and he promised to take me hiking on SawTooth Mountain.

The trip to Silver Bell was approximately 45 minutes from campus. Bob had a 1970 white Beetle bug that he was running into the ground but could handle the commuting. Throughout the years, there were several times he would have to run alongside and pop the clutch but it lasted till after I graduated in 1976.

Bob was excited for our weekend excursion and shared with me a bit about his town. Three of his brothers still lived at the house and one brother was married to his high school sweetheart and lived in town. Bob was the smartest student in his high school and was Salutatorian. He did not date a lot during high school and being the oldest, his brothers were ready to give him a hard time. Bob shared with me, the commute he and his brothers had for many years to get to school and when they played sports, there was a bus that took them home. He explained to me that Silver Bell was part of the Copper Mine which is still operating today. It housed close to a thousand people.

When he was five, his Dad who had been a State Policeman in West Virginia opted to move to Arizona and offer a better life for the family. Bob was the oldest, followed by Jimmy, two twin brothers Tommy and Timmy, and last Scotty.His twin brothers were my age. They did not attend the University. They worked at the mine and were looking at other opportunities. Scotty was ten years younger than Bob. Over the several years while dating Bob, or Bobby as he was called, I observed their very special relationship. His Mother who was devoted to her sons would finagle ways to include Scotty in our adventures to prevent Bob and I from having too much time alone. She was very clever but welcoming.

Upon arriving the first night of my weekend excursion, the town was pitch black. Walking into their home, candles were lit. Both Tom and Tim tried to tell me they lived without electricity but assured me the weekend would be okay. Their Father was working the night shift so this allowed more freedom for the boys. Spaghetti was a hit and his Mom always added bay leaves to her sauce. Something I was not familiar with and Tom tried to make me believe it was grass, (pot). Bob took his brother's teasing in stride. Being raised with brothers, I felt at home and it was one of many weekends we spent in Silver Bell. Their home was small, 900 square ft. 3 bedrooms but only one bath. The boys were housed in one room with double bunk beds and earlier in their lives, their Dad's Mom, Nanny lived with them in the extra bedroom before moving down to Tucson. They had a covered patio with a mini pool table, a covered area for their family car and a fenced yard with desert all around.

Daylight, the next day, provided me the first glimpse of the mine. Nestled around many other homes, Bob drove me around to see the ball fields, the recreation center, the tennis courts, the apartments and the swimming pool. There was a company grocery store where Bob worked for several years. I was amazed at what this little town had to offer



Their rent for the house was minimal and they had free utilities. Many families were three or more kids. The downside was a long ride into town for doctors, school, or movies and entertainment. by the time kids were graduating, they were ready to fly the nest and head to Tucson. But I couldsee the advantages of raising a family and having the freedom to let your kids play outdoors and experience wide open spaces. Silver Bell was a lot different than growing up in Springfield, Pennsylvania. I loved going up there on the weekends during college. My first two years living in a college dorm was stifling.

I grew to love the sunsets, walks in the desert, learning about the cactus, and feeling a part of a family. I got to experience life in Silver Bell. Enjoyed the pool, played tennis, hiked Saw Tooth Mountain, camped in the back yard, worked on my cooking skills with his Mom and bantered with his brothers. Hearing the Siren and learning what it meant. To me, Silver Bell was a mini-Utopia. Safe.

