

A Bright Idea Grows Into Something Big

Article Contributed
By Martha Everett
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Proud Residents Brag That Sungate Is Perfect for Families

By JANE ERWIN
Of the World Staff

About 25 years ago, the late developer Jim Nuckolls planned a subdivision that was to become the prototype for many other Tulsa neighborhoods.

He created Sungate — one of the largest single developments in Tulsa homebuilding history when it was announced in 1963. Sungate also was the first major residential project in town with:

- Underground telephone and electric wires.
- A neighborhood association.
- A patrol service that watched houses and collected mail when owners were out of town and assisted in such emergencies as dead car batteries, lost children or cats stuck in trees.

The neighborhood's boundaries are 51st Street on the north, Sheridan Road on the west, 57th Street on the south and 74th East Avenue on the east — with the exception of The Farm shopping center, on the southeast corner of 51st and Sheridan.

Media reported intense bidding for the land, which sold for \$750,000, tying a price-per-acre, all-time record for residential land in the city.

Nuckolls announced the 180-acre Sungate at a champagne dinner in January 1963 at Southern Hills Country Club, according to news clips. In attendance were builders invited to participate in the development.

Other partners of the \$17 million project were Bob Zschach, of Tulsa Ready Mix Concrete Co.; Henry Shorbridge, of World Concrete Co.; and builders Ramon L. King and Lloyd M. Creekmore.

Improved lots cost up to \$6,000 and the houses ranged from \$22,500 to \$45,000.

Nine model houses in the 5500 block of South 67th East Avenue were in the Fall Parade of Homes in 1963. By early 1964, more than 50 houses were under construction or sold.

Andrew and Roberta McCarthy have lived in Sungate longer than any of their neighbors. They'll celebrate 24 years in their custom-built house at the end of the year.

"We liked the location," said Roberta McCarthy. "The streets weren't finished when our house was done. We parked in Woodland View and walked over a few lots between two houses. We used to hear a lot of jokes that Sungate was too far away from town to visit."

Jody Jurries and Jeannine Abbott echoed the thought.

"My friends called it the boondocks," added Jurries.

"Sungate wasn't in the city limits," explained Abbott, whose family was the 31st to move into the neighborhood. "There was a time when the kids could have gone out in the middle of Sheridan or 51st to play jacks and not be disturbed. Brown Airport was on the northeast corner of 51st and Sheridan. The boys used to have bike races on the runways."

Recalled McCarthy, "At one time there were 78 kids on one block, then we had practically none. Now more families are moving back in."

Children are mentioned frequently by residents, for several reasons. Two Tulsa public schools — Salk Elementary and Byrd Middle — are located in Sungate; both were built after the neighborhood started. Children carry on a neighborhood tradition — a Fourth of July parade. And the neighborhood swimming pool and park area naturally attract many kids.

Children were one reason the Neil Pittman family moved to Sungate four years ago.

"We wanted to get into a neighborhood with good schools. We liked the pool and the fact there were more kids here," said Pittman, the father of two.

"We're seeing more families moving in. Houses sold well this summer, although prices are depressed."

"This was a great place to raise a family," said Jurries, who has lived in Sungate almost 23 years.

"The pool is lovely. I believe each home was assessed \$100 for the pool, that was included in the price of the house. It's been wonderful for the kids and for house guests."

While many agree the pool is wonderful, Pittman notes it is also one big responsibility. He is serving Sungate as president of the neighborhood association. Previously, he was on the board for two years. "It can almost be a full-time job, especially in the summer," he noted.

The organization's board recently spent a lot of time searching for a liability insurance policy for the pool, which features a high diving board.

The association has 563 available memberships. Included in a membership are a security patrol, use of the pool, maintenance of common grounds and a part-time secretary for the association.

While Pittman and other residents are pleased the developer created the Sungate association, they decry the fact he did not make membership mandatory in the covenants. Only about half of the residents maintain memberships.

Neighbors also shared another organization, the Sungate Garden Club. Abbott was a charter member of the group, which was organized in 1965. McCarthy also was a member.

"We tried to beautify the pool area," said Abbott. "We bought, planted and cared for shrubbery around the pool, then the children just trampled the shrubbery."

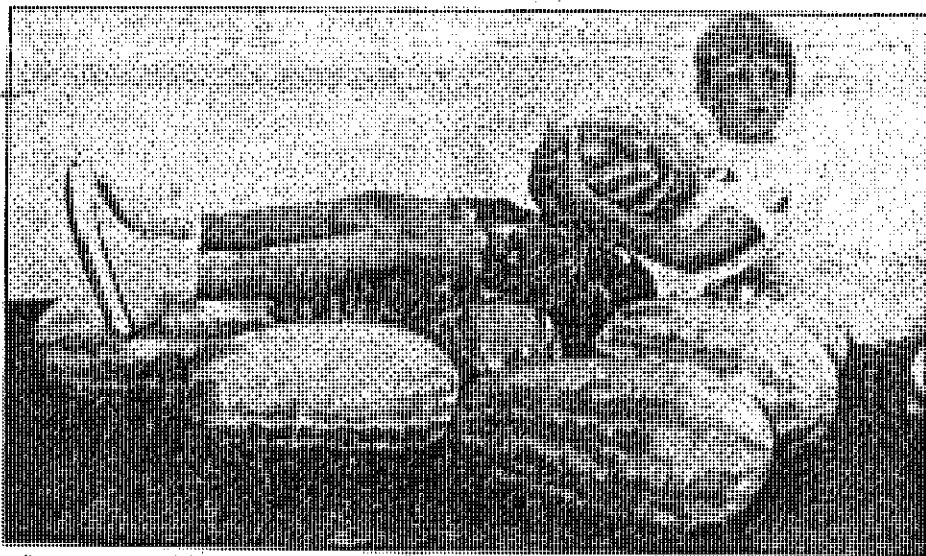
The group also planted trees at Salk Elementary School. It awarded a horticulture scholarship to Oklahoma State University and contributed to the Garden Council's scholarship fund.

In fact, a wild cherry tree helped attract Abbott to her Sungate home.

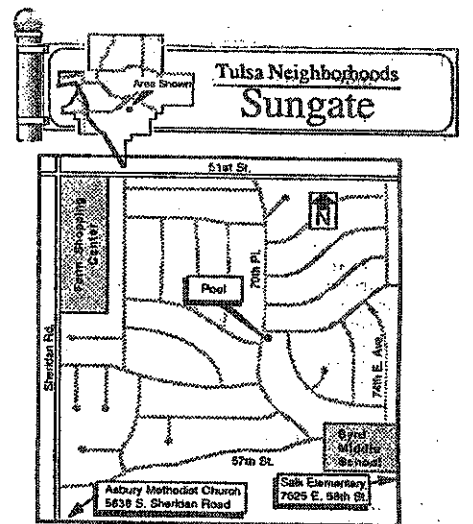
"The underground wiring and the sidewalks attracted us to the neighborhood, because we had three children," she said. "There was a large wild cherry tree on one lot, and that's the one we chose. I told the builder if he hurt that tree during construction the deal was off. When they graded my backyard, the grader took out a few fence sections, but didn't touch my tree."



Neil Pittman, president of the Sungate Homeowners' Association, had his two children in his thoughts when his family chose the neighborhood.



A go-kart ride had over some Sungate-area youngsters in a photo shot during the summer.



World Staff Photos by Rabbit Hare
And John D. Farguena



The Jurries, Abbott and McCarthy ladies remember when other Tulsans called Sungate "the boondocks."

From left: Jeannine Abbott, Andrew McCarthy, Jody Jurries and Roberta McCarthy