

Flecha Caida and the Old Pueblo - Both Venerable and Still Growing

by

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In 2007, Flecha Caida Ranch Estates will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. In thinking about how the Flechas represent so much that is good about living in Pima County, I thought back to how civilization in the County and in Tucson developed. History is right at our feet, so to speak, as is illustrated in the following footrace through time, gleaned from long years of studying old court and other county records, reading some of the very good books about Tucson and visiting the Historical Society, among other keepers of the past that is so much a part of our lives today. I have always believed that, while Phoenix has followed the Los Angeles model, Tucson has more in common with preservationist aspects of San Francisco. In fact, our surviving relics of man's contribution to the area rival the more celebrated landmarks of New England in age. We may, in fact, have an even longer living history. If you are not a native, think back to what attracted you to Tucson in the first place - and what made you stay. Perhaps it was because you, like many of us, sensed that the people have cared about their community and took care to preserve the best of it.

From the Beginning:

People have lived in the Santa Cruz Valley for thousands of years. No one knows exactly when the first humans arrived to see the broad expanse of land encircled by mountains on all sides, but the signs of Hohokam villages and farms and found all over the valley. These ancestors of the Pima Indians were probably the first to settle here, basing their largest village at the western end of the valley along the shores of the Santa Cruz River. They called their village 'Shuk-son' (the spelling varies depending upon the source), or 'city at the foot of the black mountain' (now called Sentinel Peak or - more popularly - 'A' Mountain). Artifacts of settlements have also been found along the Tanque Verde Creek. All of these small waterways were just that when civilization began. Farms soon dotted the banks of these creeks and life was good for the peaceful tribes, except for the constant vigilance needed to protect themselves against the marauding Apaches who would come from beyond the Rincon Mountains to steal the fruits of their labors.

The Spanish were the next group to arrive in the area - at least they were the first to stay or survive. Small bands of soldiers accompanied such missionaries as Father Kino and others who were converting the natives and building the vast chain of missions in Arizona and California. Our own San Xavier del Bac, built in more or less its present form in the middle of the 18th Century, is a handsome example, as is the mission at Tubac, some miles to the south.

Charged with protecting the missionaries and others seeking gold in the legendary 'Seven Cities of Cibola', the Spanish soldiers took over the area at the foot of the black mountain and built a Presidio in 1775 on the site of a smaller fort built by the Pimas to protect themselves. Many of these friendly Pimas remained in the area, living outside the walls of the fort under the aegis of and providing food for the soldiers and their families. The walls of the Presidio still exist to some extent. Archeological digs have located the remains of the old wall, cutting right through the courtyard of the Old Pima County Courthouse. The next time you go downtown, walk through

and follow the marble strip that runs from south to north and delineates the line of the eastern wall. There is also a recreated section of the wall in the lobby of the Treasurer and Assessor's offices. Some of the old wall also makes up part of the old Meyers House on Main Street north of Alameda, now part of the Tucson Museum of Art.

Some years ago, work being down downtown necessitated digging up Alameda Street from Church Avenue west and archeologists unearthed what was probably the Presidio chapel's cemetery. Some of the bones were found to be Spanish soldiers, and others were likely Pima Indians and even Apaches, either killed in one of several raids on the Presidio or among those who converted and joined the burgeoning community around the Presidio. Other digs have revealed many more treasures of the past - pottery shards, metal objects such as uniform buckles and the foundations of the buildings of an earlier day. During the excavation of the Old Courthouse courtyard, later relics of a previous courthouse were found, including an outhouse.

In 1821, following Mexico's independence from Spain, the Presidio raised a new flag. Many of the formerly Spanish troops changed their allegiance and became citizens of the new nation to the south. Some of these families have stayed on to this day and their names are familiar to all who drive the old streets or look at the names on local schools.

A New Territory and a New State:

Many 'anglos' - so called by most historians - either came to Tucson to establish new lives, or passed through it on their way west. Some stayed here even before the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, in which land that makes up present-day Arizona and New Mexico was bought from the Mexican government. We were then part of Dona County, New Mexico, which split the two states latitudinally into the two counties of the new territory. This jurisdiction is found in some of the earliest records in the county archives. The earliest books of the County Clerk show deaths, marriages, court cases and other entries that make fascinating and often amusing reading. One person, who lived in the farms on the west banks of the Santa Cruz, sued his neighbor because her unfenced cows often had digestive problems near his front door and the aroma offended him. Not surprisingly, the judge ruled that she had to keep them confined.

Anglos continued to pour into the area, and the names on early plat maps of Tucson and of elected officials present an interesting mix. There were Oury, Tully, Warner, the above mentioned Meyers, and others such as Carrillo, Samaniego, Elias, Bonillas, Ochoa, Laos and Ronstadt. These early community leaders traded off the various County titles in an even mix of anglo and Mexican names for years. (For history buffs, I recommend reading 'Los Tucsonenses', by Thomas E. Sheridan - a fascinating account of the Mexican community in Tucson).

When Arizona was made an official Territory at the height of the Civil War in 1863, it saw its only action in that war at the Battle of Picacho Peak, a relatively small skirmish in which the Confederate troops rather decisively beat the small detachment of Union soldiers. Tucson was very much on the side of the South. Also in this period was the construction of Fort Lowell, then a remote outpost to house the troops that helped guard Tucson. As we all know, many of the buildings comprising the Fort exist today right in Flecha Caida's front yard.

Tucson and its environs continued to grow for the rest of the century. The coming of the Southern Pacific railroad to Tucson in 1880 was one of the most important events of that time. It was during these years that business leaders such as the Steinfelds, the Jacomes, and the Ronstadts began the businesses that marked the true urbanization of the eastern end of Pima County. The University of Arizona was also founded in the 1880's, a sure sign that the city was

truly becoming more urban and sophisticated. Neighborhoods such as Armory Park and 'Snob Hollow' to the west of the old Presidio area were developed. Luckily, some of these lovely old homes stand to this day, such as Manning House on Paseo Redondo, the Rockwell house on Main Street and several others. Walking tours of these areas are available.

Because so many of the old families have remained here, we have a sense of history and tradition that has saved all but a few of the treasures that have disappeared in other communities. There have almost always been members of these families in local government reminding Tucson's citizens of the rich history of the area.

This attitude has nearly always prevailed as we grew, except for a brief period in the early 1970's when some old homes in the Barrio were torn down to build the new Tucson Community Center, relocating some of the city's 'first families'. Such a hue and cry went up that subsequent 'master plans' have usually been sensitive to our history and its importance to those who live here. If not, the planners soon hear about it.

As the Twentieth Century got underway, Tucson became a 'destination' for adventurous travelers. Area ranches began taking in guests, the old El Conquistador Hotel was built (now the site of the El con Mall) and we added a new "C" to the traditional Copper, Cattle, and Cotton that made up our industrial base - Climate. The Arizona Inn was popular with tourists beginning in 1930. To this day, it is a delightful spot for weddings and other celebrations, and a perennial favorite of many visitors. Wild Horse Ranch opened in 1940, a guest ranch near Cortaro Road. The main house was an expansion of an old, stone building that served as a stop on the Butterfield Stage route. For commercial travelers, the Pioneer Hotel on Stone and Pennington downtown was the accommodation of choice. It was built with funds supplied by the Steinfeld family, who owned an upscale department store across the street and who were tragically killed in the fire that engulfed the Pioneer in 1973. Golf became the recreation of choice and many resorts were and are centered on lush golf courses.

Growth continued with careful planning and monitoring. Within the next several years, more than a thousand dwelling units will have been added south of the Flechas and north of Grant Road. Plans to extend Alvernon Way across the Rillito are also underway, eventually replacing the old Dodge Bridge that has stood for so long. A linear park will extend for miles along both banks of the Rillito as well, including what is, for some reason, called a 'wetlands' area where Columbus Boulevard dead ends at the river. Well, maybe occasionally.

The Community Moves Upward:

As the first tall buildings began changing the skyline downtown, other entrepreneurs were eyeing the bajadas of the surrounding mountains. We call these the 'foothills'. Take a look from the valley some time and see how the terrain changes abruptly where homes give way to the Coronado National Forest. Those who ventured up the trails made by coyotes and other wildlife found the breezes lacking in the valley, where the increasing amount of paving reflected the summer heat. They also enjoyed the panoramic views of the growing city, especially as the 'new' electric street lamps lit the valley at night. As we all know, the sunsets are beautiful and many of the ridgelines off daylong view of the changing landscape.

Tucson, like the rest of Arizona, was laid out according to the U.S. Geologic Surveys done, with the baseline being the Gila river south of Phoenix and a '0' east-west division in the center of the state. The divisions are known as sections (a square mile), townships and ranges (comprising 36 square miles). Flecha Caida, for example, is thus legally described as being a Township 13 South

and Range 14 East. Vast tracts of land were open to homesteaders and available for purchase by those who thought this comparative wasteland might have some value.

In the twentieth century, one Tucsonan was particularly astute in buying at least one corner of almost every section surrounding the city, even when there were no streets built. He then went to the half-mile streets and amassed a huge amount of property at very advantageous prices. This was Judge Evo DeConcini, whose son later became a Senator from Arizona and who himself became a Federal judge. The new Federal Courthouse at Congress and Granada is named for him.

Another visionary was John Murphey, who could see the potential of the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains, as did several others who concentrated their purchases in the Ina Road and Oracle Road area, now known as the Casas Adobes area. The Murpheys began developing subdivisions of lots of an acre or more to the east, gradually filling in his holdings as far east as Alvernon Way. This became Catalina Foothills Estates, of which there are now ten sections.

Why the Catalinas? The Tucsons were too 'young' - very little bajada area and facing the rising sun. The reverse was true for the Rincons. The Santa Ritas had some lovely foothills areas but were too close to the burgeoning industrial areas on the south side of the city, as well as the mines being developed and the then Papago Indian Reservation.

The Catalinas were ideal. Lots with spectacular views could be carved along the ridgelines, offering each homeowner an incredible view of the city and the mountains. Here the affluent and comparatively affluent could attain privacy, enjoy the flow of cooler air away from the valley floor and gaze at the ever changing desert and its wildlife.

With an eye toward Tucson's Spanish and Mexican heritage, Murphey teamed up with Josias T. Joesler, a Swiss architect who had come to make his home in Tucson. Joesler designed many of the homes in Catalina Foothills Estates, as well as some commercial properties such as Broadway Village at Broadway and Country Club Road. Joesler homes became so coveted that in the early 1980's one devotee purchased a house near the university off Campbell Avenue that was to be torn down for expansion of the University Medical complex. The house was loaded onto the skids, trees were cut along River Road and power lines moved along the route to the destination, which was just off Alvernon Way about half a mile north of River Road. The entire city followed the progress with baited breath as the house moved by inches toward the targeted site. It made it all the way up Alvernon, managed the turn onto San Simeon Drive and collapsed, crashing onto a property just a few feet short of the waiting pad. It was a sad day for the owner and the valley.

Other well-known people were also snapping up old ranches and large parcels of undeveloped land. Howard Hughes, who was renowned for never sleeping in a bed other than one he owned, purchased a large amount of land that included what is now Flecha Caida No. 3. He built a house at the corner of River Road and Camino Sinuoso and was reputed to have slept there when visiting his Hughes Aircraft facility south of the airport. Another owner was Henry Crown, who had built the Empire State Building. He owned a huge number of acres east of Craycroft Road north of the Rillito.

Life along River road was also changing. The area near Dodge and the big bend was once known as Mormon Farms, small agricultural properties of five acres that were homesteaded. Gradually, as water became more scarce, these properties were bought by Tucsonans as small country estates, complete with stables and other amenities.

Flecha Caida Comes to the Foothills:

It was into this atmosphere in the mid-1950's that John and Mary Bender entered with the idea of developing a more casual subdivision with acre-plus lots. While there was no set style, each home being a custom dwelling, the emphasis was on rural family living, close to town, but with horses and even 'fowl' until County zoning kicked the chickens out of most subdivisions. As it happened, the preponderance of houses were ranch style homes with the mandated minimum of 2,000 square feet, built of the burnt adobe there was so popular in these pre-energy conscious days. John Bender did not want his subdivision to be high profile and removal of vegetation was strictly controlled. Just enough trees, cactus and desert shrub were to be graded to allow for the house and surrounding parking areas. Roads were left unpaved for equestrian use. Few Flecha homes can be seen from the valley, so carefully were they planned to emphasize the desert. As a result, the Flechas have always attracted those who espouse the very values that formed the 'Tucson' lifestyle.

I always found it interesting that John Bender, who had developed Mecedora Estates on the west side and later Skyline Country Club Estates and Skyline Bel Air to the north of Flecha, as well as Bel Air Ranch Estates on the far east side, would come to meetings dressed in his customary attire of green Sears-type work clothes and often a cap with a logo such as 'John Deere' on it. This was typical of the 'reverse snobbery' that characterized him.

The first sales office was built at 5000 East River Road, just across from where the Hughes house would be built. Sales, with lots starting at about \$600 an acre, were brisk. The son of the owner of Wild Horse Ranch mentioned earlier, was a sales representative for Coolidge Moore Realty. On my first visit to Tucson - and Wild Horse - in 1960, he urged me to buy a lot as an investment - quoting a price of under \$1,000. As a new York-based working girl, there was little extra left in my budget for such investments, a fact I've often lamented. Eight years later, brochures listed lot prices as priced from \$4,500. Now, some are listed for more than 40 times that amount.

When Flecha Caida was first developed starting in 1956, the only way to reach it was via the old Dodge bridge, or by traversing the bed of the Rillito on Swan - not always feasible. Craycroft Road ended south of the river and continued on the other side as a dirt and then gravel road. There was virtually nothing east of Craycroft and River Road itself was a rural street. People are still fighting to keep it that way.

These subdivisions in the foothills, as well as others in the city itself, were built with recorded plat maps and a set of Conditions, Covenants and Restrictions, or in the case of Flecha Caida, Conditions, Reservations and Restrictions. However, they are commonly called CC&R's, or CCR's. Although some of the earlier neighborhoods were quite exclusionary, by the time Flecha Caida was developed the objectionable clauses in such documents had been rendered unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Even so, producing the right mix of do's and don'ts was a learning experience. The CCR's for Catalina Foothills Estates No. 1, for example, failed to include an automatic renewal clause, which was quickly remedied in the subsequent CFE developments. This caused a major upheaval in that subdivision when they expired. John Bender learned from that experience. His great regret was that he did not make membership in the Homeowners Association mandatory in any of the Flechas, an omission that was quickly corrected in later projects. The other major problem was failing to include a mechanism for amending the CRR's which could have eliminated the first omission.

While lots were being sold, in an amazingly short time for nearly 560 of them, John Bender kept a fairly tight rein on the development, granting variances and signing off on plans. He also ran the Flecha Caida Water Company, which had its headquarters in the office at 5000 East River. Until the City of Tucson bought the water company and began providing city water to the Flechas, the man who read the meters also served as the inspector for violations to the CRR's.

A somewhat informal Homeowners Association was formed in 1968, acting principally in an advisory and social capacity. I understand that Board meetings and even the Annual Meetings were more like cocktail parties. Dues at this time were \$5.00 per year. By this time, all the lots had been sold and the 'plank-owners' were all in place. Soon afterward the office (by that time relocated to a lot on Swan Road) was closed down.

Early agenda items show that Board members seemed preoccupied with annexation by the City and a dispute with Tucson Gas and Electric Company over transmission lines. There were standing committees to deal with these two perceived problems. These items still arise on occasion.

Most of the CCR infractions discussed were minor ones, stemming from the owners not reading the restrictions, much like today's topics - real estate signs, mailboxes and the like. Meetings, however were often very spirited.

Although I have never been able to get anyone to tell me who the two parties were, it seems that one heated discussion at an Annual Meeting, held at the Skyline Country Club, degenerated into an actual fist fight in the bar after the meeting was over. I have also been unable to determine the cause of the dispute. I'm happy to say that by the time I became President, things had become less physical.

On to the Millennium:

By 1970, with lots sold (and some resold), John and Mary Bender deeded the reversionary interest in the ten Flechas over to FCHOA, giving control to the Association and its Board.

Although no longer in charge and more or less retired, John remained on the Board until about 1980 as a resident of Flecha No. 2 on Camino Arenosa and a valued source for information. With the new formalization of duties and purpose, two items of business early in the days of Association responsibility were the hiring of a consulting architect or firm, and establishing a relationship with an attorney. Most Board members were busy people without the time or necessary expertise in these areas. also, this was the beginning of the so-called Age of Litigation. There were new state statutes and county zoning regulations, new building materials and a looming energy crisis.

There were two major lawsuits in the early 1970's. In one, a family built a two-story home which blocked the city views of those to the north. After a lengthy battle in which the owner and his builder traded accusations about who was supposed to submit the plans, the matter was settled with the homeowner paying a sizable sum to the Association for legal fees. As it turned out, the blockage was mainly of downtown and the 'view' had already begun to move to the east.

The other case involved a property fronting on Dead Man's Curve on River Road. The owner wanted to put a huge wall around the property and build a house on the lot. Although the minutes of the Board meetings do not show any details, this dispute went on for a long time and ended with a denial of approval for the wall and the house. FCHOA also terminated its arrangement

with the architectural firm that reviewed the plans and there was some litigation with them. A new architect, who had left this firm, was hired and life went on. However, many of the plans that had been processed by the old firm mysteriously disappeared.

Another landmark event occurred in 1974, at the height of the energy crisis and rising utility costs. It was voted by ballots distributed ahead of the Annual Meeting to waive enforcement of some of the CRR's relating to energy use. No longer would new owners be mandated to use burnt adobe, brick or other masonry, and if they wished to change from refrigeration to evaporative coolers, these could be placed on the roof. Both these waivers required, and still do, the advance approval of the Board. White roofs were also permitted under the same conditions. My own house was built of frame and stucco, and had two coolers and solar hot water panels on the roof (along with an 80-gallon water heater), screened by a 42-inch stucco wall, constructed to look like an area with higher ceilings. The house was built in 1978 and was typical of construction at the time.

Early Board minutes are often sketchy, but one year in the early seventies the Recording Secretary noted a complaint about a group of people running about their property unclothed. The complaint was registered by a clergyman, who was outraged. Unfortunately, the minutes do not describe the disposition of this case. I wish the secretary had gone into a bit more detail.

Most of the 1970's agenda items are much like those of today, with some incidents of drama. There was an ongoing battle with Pima county during the time Heatherwood Hills was built just north of Flecha No. 8 and south of No. 6. Since many of the streets were continuations of those in Flecha Caida, trucks were roaring up and down all day long. I lost two headlights from being passed by dump trucks carrying - and spilling - gravel and rocks. Finally, an agreement was reached with the County to close Cardenal, Cazador, Gacela and Arco until construction was complete upslope. Unfortunately for me, Camino del Celador, where I lived, became the shortcut of choice. These roads were not paved at the time.

In the early 1980's FCHOA became a part of several coalitions to preserve the foothills. The first was when more than 20,000 signatures were gathered to protest the original plans for La Paloma, which would have drastically changed the character of the upper bajada. The County listened and sharply reduced the density and height of buildings, as well as alleviating seasonal flooding down slope by making retention basins out of the water hazards on the golf course.

In the mid-eighties, another crisis loomed when the County decided to straighten Dead Man's Curve and make a straight shot four-lane road east to Craycroft. This would have destroyed at least four very upscale homes on the south side of River, as well as causing some very difficult ingress and egress problems for everyone. We joined with several small subdivisions to fight this, with the help from those far west of this area, who were members of a group whose slogan was "Keep River road Kinky". Again we prevailed and the curve was eventually modified, using a lot in Flecha Caida (the very one that the one-time owner wanted to wall in).

This, however, was not done until after a long succession of accidents (usually on Friday nights) and one in particular. The scion of a noted family of St. Louis brewers was giving a ride home to a young waitress from one of the local watering holes where he had spent the evening. His Porsche skidded off the road at the top of Dead Man's Curve, shot onto the vacant lot and she was thrown from the car and killed. He got out, walked all the way home to his apartment near First Avenue and River, allegedly unaware of her fate. Nevertheless, the family attorneys quickly whisked him out of town. He did not finish the year at the University, nor has he ever returned to the state, at least not publicly.

Another major event was the widening and re-contouring of Swan Road in the mid-1980's. Since additional lanes were being added, as well as the modification of the roadbed to eliminate blind hills, this meant some major changes for residents along the roadway. This project was one of the first to use 'fake rocks' to shore up the resulting cliffs along the right-of-way. It also meant driveways had to be moved from Swan onto Calle del Pantera and Camino Esplendor. The project, as well, involved the purchase of portions of some lots on the west side of the road to redirect Calle Bendita to exit onto a newly aligned Calle Barril. One plus, for most people, was that the County paved most of the through roads in the Flechas east of Swan to use during the lengthy construction period. This, along with the Dead Man's Curve project, was a period of unprecedented cooperation from Pima County. An interesting connection was made when we learned that one of those whose driveway had to be moved also owned a lot just to the north of Calle del Pantera, which built a retention basin and ended most of the flood prone tendencies of this neighborhood.

NEW LIFE IN THE EIGHTIES

It was the new board elected in 1980 that began to transition FCHOA to its role as a positive force, not only within the subdivision but in the foothills area and the County. The first order of business being the low membership, the Board looked for ways to expand participation of Flecha residents. The first of these efforts was the creation of THE ARROW, the more or less quarterly publication that has become a vital means of keeping the homeowners informed and in touch. While there may not be one hundred percent readership, comments suggest that most people at least glance at it.

New committees were formed to deal with matters related to the exploding development of the foothills and of transportation. Another positive move was the result of a tragic event when a house burned to the ground because Rural Metro firefighters could not find the right street. A large portion of the treasury went toward renovating the street signs and using reflective lettering on these and the standard mailboxes to increase visibility at night.

Another early move was to convince the County to close off the streets leading north from River Road during the development of Heatherwood Hills, which lies to the north of Flecha #5. The comfort and safety of those living on the "four streets", as the project was called, was vastly increased then trucks had to take alternate routes, one of which was built by Wood Brothers to create a construction entrance to the new subdivision.

Formation of the new committees and new attitudes did not occur a moment too soon. Early in 1983, then District One Supervisor Conrad Joyner and County Transportation Director Chuck Huckleberry approached the Board about paving all of Flecha's roads. With maintenance of the dirt roads becoming more and more difficult as buried utilities were constantly exposed and ruptured, the idea appealed to most residents surveyed. A single improvement district, something of a departure from the usual smaller ones, was about to be formed and the County offered minimal cost because of government EPA grants and some materials available from other projects. Plans were underway when the floods in the fall of 1983 put everything on hold as the County had to rebuild bridges and roads, as well as create retention basins and other methods of controlling the flow of water downhill.

The next major event was the development of La Paloma Resort entering the community to the north and west of the Flechas. Relations with other area homeowners' groups proved to be of great value during this time. After talking with Supervisors and other groups and seeing the

drastic zoning and building code changes proposed by La Paloma, FCHOA joined with others to form the Foothills Coalition, which eventually caused major modifications to the original designs for the resort. Thousands of signatures were collected and hundreds of residents attended hearings and meetings, eventually forcing the developers to decrease density, limit building heights to one story above ridge lines and create retention basins for flood control from the water hazards on the golf course. The result has been an attractive and unobtrusive addition to the foothills landscape. During this time, following the problems caused by the floods, FCHOA was instrumental in influencing a new ordinance regarding septic tanks. When county health officials proposed that septic tanks be cleaned out every three years, many residents of communities above the valley were alarmed. While everyone agreed that leaching fields should not be close to water resources, there seemed no problem with systems several hundred feet above the water table. The Board wrote a letter to the Supervisors and health officials recommending that, apart from areas subject to sheet flooding, septic systems are cleaned only as needed or upon sale of the property, similar to the law requiring termite inspection as part of sales. This was adopted unanimously and FCHOA was thanked for its solution to the problem.

Meanwhile, the paving project languished and nothing was done. The next chapter in the saga was the widening of Swan Road from Fort Lowell north to Sunrise, which involved some major changes in the Flechas. Several major problems existed: the roadway needed to be modified in grade to improve sight lines; Calle Barril would present a problem with its then offset egress off Swan; lowering one of the major hills would mean moving several driveways off Swan to other streets.

The Board worked with County design engineers and an excellent solution was reached on each of these problems. Property owners paid nothing for their new driveways, others were compensated for property taken to create a feeder road west of Swan, and the County donated a number of plants to re-landscape many properties. A postscript involved one homeowner involved in the driveway moving who also owned a lot just to the north of Calle del Pantera, one of the streets flooded in 1983. The Board suggested to Chuck Huckelberry that he give this individual some additional planting—and a fair price—for the lot, which is now a retention basin. Thus, Pantera no longer presents a flooding problem, nor do several other areas protected by the retention basins at La Paloma.

As work on Swan was progressing, another problem surfaced after a fatal accident on River Road at Dead Man's Curve. The County asked a private engineering firm to design a solution to the constant problems on this section of road, which resulted in a plan to create four lanes and a new right of way right through a number of homes to the south of River Road. FCHOA again joined a coalition with these homeowners and others concerned about the threat of making River into a major east-west artery at great expense. The result was an acceptable modification by County engineers to straighten the curve and add turnout lanes, as well as the limiting of the right of way at Craycroft to prevent a major arterial at that location.

These were some of the major battles of the eighties, which ended with a constantly growing membership, Boards with the experience and enthusiasm to take on big projects and a well-managed organization.

ON TO THE NINETIES - FCHOA FOLLOWS THE TREND

Some have called the Nineties the "Age of Litigation", and FCHOA has been no exception to this term. As the coffers filled through increased membership, the Board was able to take a number of homeowners to task for their non-compliance with the CR&R's. There had been a few suits

during the Seventies and Eighties, but the incidence of ignoring deed restrictions grew as the new decade began.

The first of these, which actually went to court, involved a former board member who needed to sell his home, and erected a large and unattractive sign in his front yard. Since the member had not only been actively involved in the periodic inspections of Flecha properties but was a practicing attorney, his defense of not being aware of the regulation prohibiting signs did not sit well with the judge. FCHOA won the suit, needless to say.

The next grew from an extraordinary number of calls and letters regarding two homes being built by a builder which not only had many violations in citing and unauthorized construction of walls and patios, but were painted a stark, glaring white. Both sets of plans contained clear markings as to either an approved desert paint color or an instruction to submit samples of the color. One, in which the builder had moved the markings for the footings after his neighbor left for the summer, was so close to the lot line that the neighbor could not see his TV screen without closing the draperies. This case also went to court, with the same judge giving the same opinion. The judgment not only went completely in favor of FCHOA, but the defendant had to pay all the Association's legal fees. The result of this was the purchase of a sophisticated new computer system with voice messaging and fax capability, which immediately began to prove itself both in dependable communication and in saving money on such items as stationery and an answering service.

While these two cases took a tremendous amount of time and effort on the part of the Board, most violation cases were resolved without proceeding to litigation. Often, despite frequent letters to the title companies and the Board of Realtors, new owners were not even aware that the CR&R's existed. Others had been told by anxious real estate agents that they were not enforced. This was quickly corrected.

Although much of the time is spent in policing the subdivision, the Board tries to do what it can to make life more comfortable and pleasant for the homeowners. There are some who, usually because of a misunderstanding of the deed restrictions or being thwarted in something they want to do, become angry with the Association. However, their homes are being supported in value because of the Association's vigilance and willingness to take action.

Over a period of time, THE ARROW has included surveys and questionnaires about issues confronting either the Flechas or the foothills in general. Response has always been good. Some things have been a problem to accomplish. After a fairly good start in the Eighties, the Neighborhood Watch program fell into inactivity because of a lack of volunteers. There are attempts to revive this. Despite another attempt to revive the paving project in the early Nineties by starting with just a few streets in Flechas #1 and #2, this was not accomplished because some of the long time owners on Flecha Drive became convinced that paving would turn their street into an Indianapolis Speedway, so many roads remain dangerous, dusty and unsafe.

On the plus side, membership by 1995 was at an all time high, with well over 200 households on the roster. But perhaps the most positive accomplishment of the time since that new Board with its new attitude took office in 1980 was that FCHOA became a respected voice in the Tucson Metropolitan area. That respect continued as the Twentieth Century drew to a close as Flecha Caida continued to be a desirable location for new families and home values continued to rise. Despite the dozens of new subdivisions being developed, the large lots and the protection of proven CR&R's drew a new generation of families to Flecha Caida Ranch Estates.

FLECHA ENTERS THE NEW MILLENNIUM

While respect for the past and its values remains intact, Flecha Caida Homeowners Association prepared for the birth of a new century by joining the world of cyberspace with enthusiasm. Adding to the convenience of voice mail on the computer, this invaluable resource was further upgraded by going online. This has resulted in rapid research of the Assessor's property records and other sources of information, as well as the ability to improve communication via E-mail. With all board members online, the distribution of minutes of meetings and other items has resulted in an amazing savings in postage and time. This website is another innovation that has resulted in being even more accessible.

A major undertaking, although a slow one, was the formation of a Road Safety committee, which pursued the reduction of speed on some of Flecha's major streets. Working with the county via a special program, Calle Barril was the first target, since it was judged the most dangerous street.

Meanwhile, the FCHOA Board continues to monitor the subdivision, publish THE ARROW to keep residents up to date and to approve new homes on the few remaining lots as well as numerous remodeling projects. A number of other goals have been set for the new century, but the old ones of keeping the traditions of Flecha Caida Ranch Estates have not diminished. As someone once said, "The more things change, the more they remain the same."