



JUNE 24



# TOP 1%

DIAMOND CLUB MEMBER 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 & 2024



# HOMESMART

## IT WAS A BUSY MAY WITH 3 WILLO SALES!

# MOST WILLO HOMES SOLD

2020 2021  
2022 2023  
2024



**301 W Cambridge Ave**  
3 BEDS | 2 BATHS | 1,349 SQFT  
SOLD FOR \$685,000



**502 W Monte Vista Rd**  
3 BEDS | 2 BATHS | 2,121 SQFT  
SOLD FOR \$900,000



**62 W Wilshire Dr**  
2 BEDS | 1 BATHS | 1,170 SQFT  
SOLD FOR \$710,000

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# Here Comes Summer!

your neighbors, particularly those closest to you. Let them also know of anyone who might be at your home during your absence. For example, my neighbors know my dog/house sitter, who has been taking care of our home and pets for almost 20 years. They're used to him, his car, etc. Simple things like that can alert our neighbors to something unexpected and keep our homes safe.

Special thanks to Lewis resident Bobbi Ryals, who has taken over the Block Watch Chair position in the last few months; Bobbi has found a Block Captain for over 90% of the blocks in Willo. Those captains help get communication flowing through the neighborhood and alert us all to crimes as they occur in our area.

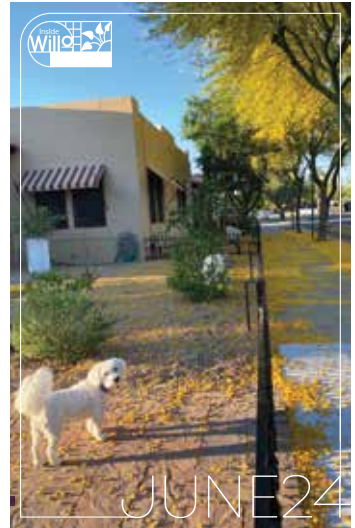
I encourage all of you to get to know the captain on your street and share any information regarding crimes or attempted crimes at your property. For those of us with alleys, I'd also like to encourage homeowners to keep them picked up and trimmed to discourage unauthorized folks from going there.

Enjoy your summers, whatever your plans may be. We'll be back to regular board meetings on September 12th at 6:30 pm and regular delivery of Inside Willo towards the beginning of September. ■

**OUR MONTHLY BOARD** meetings will be taking a break for July and August. Also, this magazine will be taking a break for July and August. We will return to monthly meetings and publication of *Inside Willo* in September. We will, of course, be available to our neighbors should anyone have a question.

Due to the increased attendance at our board meetings, we will be looking for a new meeting place. We aim to find a place close by that is easily accessible for our neighbors. I'm thrilled that more neighbors are getting involved and would love to see attendance continue to grow.

Summer is historically a time to get out of town for many Willo residents. If that's on your agenda, take a moment to share the dates you'll be out of town with



**ON THE COVER:**  
TOU, NICK AND ROBYN'S DOG ON VERNON AVE., PEEKS UP OVER FALLEN PALO VERDE BLOSSOMS AND HELPS WITH BLOCK WATCH.  
COVER PHOTOS BY LARA CERRI (VERNON)

# 1 in 6

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### WILLO WEBSITE

[WWW.WILLOPHX.COM](http://WWW.WILLOPHX.COM) is regularly updated with news, events, & past issues of *Inside Willo*.

### WILLO HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Established in 1986, the WNA Board consists of 13 volunteer positions elected biennially by the membership. WNA is not a Home-owners' Association (HOA); It does not collect dues; Its mission is to preserve Willo's historic designation and community quality. WNA meetings are open, all Willo residents may attend. Bylaws, registration, and agendas are available on [WILLOPHX.COM](http://WILLOPHX.COM).

### INSIDE WILLO MAGAZINE

*Inside Willo* magazine is a communication instrument of the Willo Neighborhood Association (WNA) to share and highlight Home Tour, Block Watch, Kids Club, Zoning, Historic Preservation, WNA Board business and elections, internal committee news, and any City of Phoenix business affecting Willo.

*Inside Willo* is published monthly and is free of charge. Residents are encouraged to submit articles (125-500 words) by the 10th of each month. Resident business owners are encouraged to advertise in the magazine. The editor retains the right to edit material as needed, attribute the author, and determine when to print submissions or use on Willo social media, [WILLOPHX.COM](http://WILLOPHX.COM), and promotional materials. WNA retains the right to perpetually use all photos, media, and articles. *Inside Willo* does not accept political content or ads. *Inside Willo* is posted on [WILLOPHX.COM](http://WILLOPHX.COM). No copies may be reprinted electronically or otherwise.

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*From the Editor*



# What a Year We've Had so Far!

**HOME TOUR 2024 WAS A** great success; Courtney and Crawford, along with a brigade of volunteers, delivered novel experiences to all who attended. Ticket sales were excellent, and we had a record number of vendors and attendees. Talented musicians played at almost every house and gave spirited performances on the main stage both Saturday and Sunday. The homeowners who opened up their beautiful homes were gracious and welcoming. Together, we all created an unforgettable event we can be proud of!

Thanks to Jonathan, our Happy Hours are better attended

than ever. Valerie has teamed up with other WNA committees and nearby neighborhoods to organize Kids Club events that engage whole families, fostering inclusivity and fun in our community. With Bobbi at the helm, Block Watch is growing more robust. Jeremy is expanding our Willo text service and boosting our social media presence. Dr. Cannon is driving the completion of the 3rd/5th Ave construction project. And Chris, I can't wait to see this year's Luminaria display in December; if we continue this trend, it's bound to be the best one ever!

*Inside Willo* has been con-

sistently successful. Residents have submitted an engaging series of articles and photos. Community advertisements which support the publication, have increased. I am also delighted that Lara will shoot the cover photos for the next several months!

Lastly, I'd like to thank the residents on each street who volunteer to deliver Inside Willo to your doorstep each month. I provide a box of magazines, which they diligently distribute to your door!

I am eagerly anticipating the second half of 2024 and what 2025 has in store for Willo!

Have a great summer! ■

## Calendar

**SATURDAY,  
JUNE 8th**

Willo Block Watch & Kids Club Dusk til Dawn Party and Scavenger Hunt - 7:15:00 PM  
**LOCATION:** Walton Park, corner of Third Ave and Monte Vista  
*See Flyer*

**THURSDAY,  
JUNE 13th**

Willo Neighborhood Association Board Meeting - 6:30pm - 8:00pm;  
**LOCATION:** Oven & Vine - 14 W. Vernon Avenue

**FRIDAY,  
JUNE 28th**

Willo Home Tour

Committee Planning Meeting - 6:00 - 7:00pm  
**LOCATION:** 541 W. Palm Lane

## LOOKING AHEAD

**JULY 26th &  
AUGUST 23rd**  
2025 Willo Home Tour

Committee Summer Planning Meetings, 6:00 - 7:00pm  
**LOCATION:** 541 W. Palm Lane

**THURSDAY,  
SEPT. 12th**

Willo Neighborhood Association Board Meeting - 6:30pm - 8:00pm  
**LOCATION:** TBD



**FRIDAY,  
SEPT. 13th**

Willo Social Event  
**LOCATION:** TBD

*As always, please check WILLOPHX.COM or THE OFFICIAL WILLO HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD FACEBOOK PAGE for the latest updates. ■*

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# So Long, from the Social Committee – For Now!

ARTICLE & PHOTO BY JON ROBERTS (GRANADA)

## AS THE DAYS STRETCHED

into months and the sun dipped lower on the horizon, our community in Willo found a delightful rhythm in the form of monthly happy hours. These gatherings, hosted by generous neighbors all over Willo, continued to be the cornerstone of camaraderie, laughter, and shared experiences that truly embody the spirit of our tight-knit neighborhood.

Each month, a different neighbor graciously opened their doors and hearts to welcome us all in. From the nostalgia of the 1980s to the cozy vibes of winter wonderlands, every happy hour brought a unique theme that added spice to our evenings. Whether we were “camping under the stars” in a backyard or indulging in the warmth of a fiesta, these gatherings became the highlight of each month.

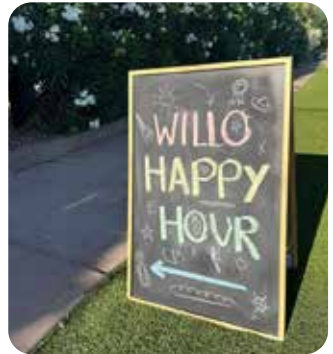
But what truly made these happy hours special was not just the themes or the meticulously crafted decorations—it was the sense of community that blossomed within those walls. Neighbors brought more than just food and drinks; they brought stories, laughter, and

a genuine desire to connect. Each shared dish was a testament to the bonds we were forging, one conversation at a time.

As the Willo Social Committee Chair, I am overwhelmed with gratitude to witness the magic of these gatherings unfold. Seeing neighbors transform into friends and witnessing the social fabric of our community grow stronger with each passing month has been an absolute joy. It’s moments like these that remind me of the power of coming together and building something greater than ourselves.

As we bid adieu to our monthly rendezvous for now, let us not mourn the end but celebrate the memories we’ve created and the friendships we’ve nurtured. While we take a break from our official gatherings, rest assured that we will return in September with fresh energy and exciting new ideas to further enrich our community.

So, to all our wonderful neighbors who opened their homes and hearts, shared their stories and laughter, and made these happy hours truly unforgettable—thank you. Here’s to the past, the present, and the future adventures that await us in Willo. Cheers to community, friendship, and the beautiful tapestry we weave together ■





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# Another Possible Demolition of a Landmark Property

BY TRICIA AMATO (LEWIS)

## LAST MONTH, I WROTE

about an iconic house threatened with demolition and told you about the “victory” that resulted from hundreds of Phoenixians voicing their concerns about the need to conserve it. This month, I will introduce you to yet another iconic property under threat of demolition—The Mystery Castle.

The Mystery Castle was built by hand by a man named Boyce Gulley for his daughter Mary Lou. Boyce came to Arizona from Seattle in the 1930s because he had tuberculosis and was advised that the desert climate would help his condition. While here, he decided to build a castle using local and inexpensive materials, including stone, adobe, auto parts, old telephone poles, and railroad tracks. It is said to be held together by a mixture of cement, calcium, and goat’s milk. The house has 18 rooms, including a cantina, chapel, and dungeon, and many unique features such as turrets, a cantilevered staircase, 13 fireplaces, and several patios and decks.

Gulley died in 1945 before finishing the Castle or relocating his wife and daughter to Phoenix. Mary Lou was 22 years old at the time of her father’s death when she and her mother inherited and eventually moved into the large mansion. At this time, the house had no electricity or plumbing (it was added in the



1990s), but it did have many secret cubbies filled with surprises from Boyce. These included gold nuggets, money, jewelry, and other special items that he hid for his daughter to find. A 1948 Life Magazine article entitled “Life Visits a Mystery Castle” gave the house its name. In 1992, it was designated a Phoenix Point of Pride. Mary Lou and her mother opened the house to tours early on, and as Phoenix grew, the Castle — situated at the very end of 7th Street, at the base of South Mountain — became a well-known destination.

Mary Lou died in 2010, and the Castle is currently owned by the Mystery Castle Foundation, a non-profit organization. Unfortunately, vandalism in 2022 caused over \$100,000 in damage and has closed the Castle to tours. The non-profit doesn’t have deep pockets, and the city is concerned that the property is unsafe and is asking the Foundation to either fix it or tear it

down. The Foundation did apply for a demolition permit and is currently in the “one-year stay period,” giving interested parties time to find a solution to the site’s problems.

One interested party may be the Kohler Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Kohler Company. The Kohler Foundation is committed to the preservation of artistic buildings, environments, and installations, especially those of little-known or self-taught artists. They toured the property recently and expressed interest in this unique and very special place in Phoenix. While nothing official has been agreed upon, they will present a possible Mystery Castle preservation effort to their board in June. ■

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*Tricia is a City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Commissioner. Visit [phoenix.gov/pdd/historic-preservation](http://phoenix.gov/pdd/historic-preservation) for information regarding historic guidelines and approvals. Reach Tricia at [amatotricia@gmail.com](mailto:amatotricia@gmail.com).*



*Tales of Tails* By Bobbi Ryals // Design by Tricia Amato (Lewis)

# Thank You to the Dogs of Willo and Fans Who Made 12 Months of "Tales of Tails" a Success!

This page is dedicated to Lola Martin  
February 2007 - July 2023



**ROS COE**

Hola,  
mi nombre es  
Rosco y amo a  
todos los  
perros

**MOOSE**



What's a  
cat doing on a  
dog page? Stop  
judging! My life  
has been  
hard.



**LOLA**

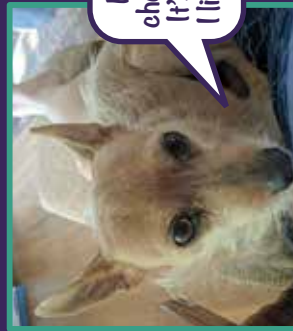


**BEN**

I'm a star! My mom  
fell in love with my  
blue toenails.



My split  
"dogsonality"  
is what makes  
me charming.



Night  
cheese?!  
It's what  
I live for!



**DENTER**



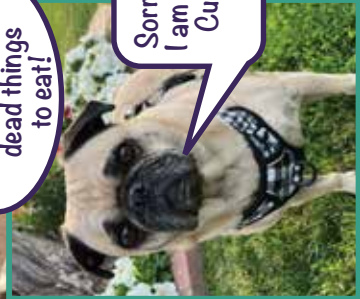
I would like to be paid in lamb chops for my babysitting gig.

**GYPSY**



Hey Max, let's go find some dead things to eat!

**PANCHO  
VILLA**



Sorry, Sir Panchito, I am busy watching Curious George right now.

**MAX**

**PRESTON**



**FRANNIE**

Art, you look more like Marty Feldman than I do!

**PEANUT**



I don't like that hat, take it off! Grrrr!



**ART**

That deserves a big toot, Frankie!

**WINNIE**



We're plotting to decorate the backyard with marigold flowers!

Oh Yeah!

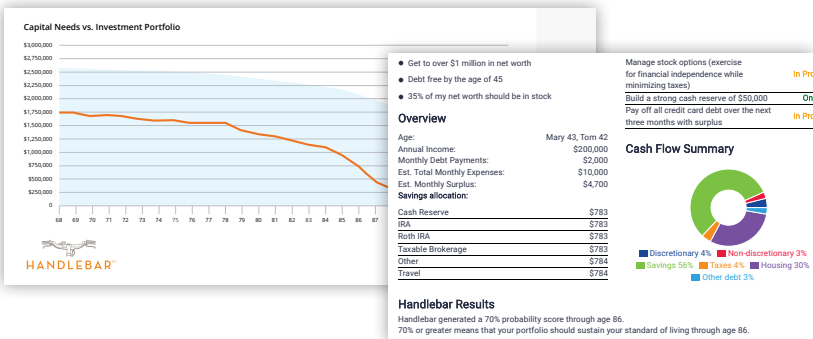
**ELLA**

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# May Block Watch News

BY BOBBI RYALS (LEWIS)

## WE HAD A VERY SUCCESSFUL

Willo Block Watch relaunch meeting with the Block Watch Captains from each block on Saturday, April 27th, at Walton Park. Captains were given “Important Numbers” magnets for every household, and some blocks received alley signs; the remaining blocks will get signs in July when we receive more grant funding. We also heard from our Community Action Officer, Ben Harris, about the Alley Gates Program and Phoenix Neighborhood Patrol. Here are links to both programs so you can learn more:

▶ <https://www.phoenix.gov/nrdsite/Pages/Gated-Alley-Program.aspx>

▶ <https://www.phoenix.gov/police/resources-information/neighborhood-patrol>

If you still have questions after reading the information, please feel free to reach out to your captains.

I'm happy to announce the formation of a Block Watch (BW) Committee with the following members: Lisa Burkstaller (300 block Vernon), Dan Masters (500 block Vernon), Aaron Montañó-Searles (100 block Edgemont), and Susan Slonaker (100 block Holly). I'm so grateful to have these incredible people helping me get Block Watch back on track after the pandemic. Note: I am thrilled to report that we only have two blocks without captains; hopefully, we will be at 100% by next month. Thank you, captains!!!

## Our NEW captains are:

- ▶ Keith Aldridge; 100 block of Granada
- ▶ Theresa Jorgensen; 300 & 500 blocks of Granada
- ▶ Patty Gough; 500 block of Encanto
- ▶ Mike Carson; 100 block of Virginia
- ▶ Frank Rampulla; 500 block of Wilshire

## We NEED Captains on:

- ▶ 300 block of Holly
- ▶ 300 block of Cypress

## Crime report:

▶ On May 10th, around noon, there was an attempted break-in in the 100 block of Almeria. The alarm system went off, and police were notified. The police arrived and arrested the suspect, who had an outstanding felony warrant.

▶ On May 3rd, an unhoused man was reportedly sleeping in the drainage basin (property of the Fairfield Inn) at 1st Ave and Wilshire. There was drug paraphernalia on site, and he was reportedly banging on the wall, which is adjacent to the guesthouse next door. Since becoming aware of this as an ongoing problem, I have contacted our Community Action Officer, Ben Harris. Since reporting it, the man has not been seen in the area.

▶ On April 19th, an incident of bias graffiti was reported on the 300-block alley between Encanto and Vernon. “Bias graffiti” refers to a tag that negatively targets a particular group of people, e.g.,

race, sexuality, or religion. If any residents have alley video of this incident, please forward it to willoblockwatch@gmail.com. The incident has already been reported to Phoenix PD and Graffiti Busters.

▶ We continue to have illegal dumping in our alleys. Please remind your landscapers to bag grass clippings and either haul them to the dump or agree to allow them to dispose of the waste in your personal trash bin.

▶ The sheer volume of yard waste being dumped in some Willo alleys is the equivalent of a full day's worth of work! Alley cameras catch license plates, and residents are calling in the illegal dumping. You may also want to mention that urinating in the alleys is illegal, and this is also being caught on security cameras. Reiterate that it is especially disturbing for the BW chair to view!

▶ On May 2nd, multiple large alley trash bins overturned from Wilshire down to Almeria. The suspect was caught on security video, and the case was turned over to Phoenix PD. ■

**Remember to report crimes and suspicious activity to the police and share it with your BW captain. Let's keep Willo safe!**

**Emergency: 9-1-1**

**Crime Stop (Non-emergency):**

**602-262-6151**

**Graffiti: 602-534-4444**

**Illegal dumping: 602-262-6251**

# WILLO NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION: WHY ARE WE HERE AND WHAT DO WE DO?

BY NIKKI ARMSTRONG (GRANADA)

## **IF YOU ARE A NEW RESIDENT**

of the Willo Historic District, you may not know much about the Willo Neighborhood Association and its Board of Directors; however, if you have visited the neighborhood website, WILLOPHX.COM, you may have learned a lot. The website contains links to both the Bylaws that govern the neighborhood association, and the Willo neighborhood's official Conservation Plan. Both these documents make for interesting reading if you want to learn more about the neighborhood itself and the association.

## **HISTORY AND MEMBERSHIP**

The Willo Neighborhood Conservation Plan created a Special Conservation District for our neighborhood when it was approved by the Phoenix City Council in 1986. The neighborhood association exists to "promote and support" this plan, as stated in the bylaws. The bylaws also dictate the rules establishing our 13-member board. They provide other details regarding neighborhood association meetings, financials, and membership. Membership in the association is not automatic when you move into the neighborhood,

and membership is not required to receive Inside Willo, attend association meetings, or go to neighborhood functions like happy hours. Membership is required to vote, though, and it is required for all individuals running for and serving on the board. Membership is "opt-in," meaning that residents must indicate that they would like to become a member of the Willo Neighborhood Association. This can be done by using either the online membership opt-in form or the paper opt-in form, the link can be found at the end of this article. Membership must be renewed annually to be valid. All memberships expire on December 31 and should be renewed each year in January, or whenever a new resident wants to establish membership during the year when they begin residence in Willo. According to the bylaws, membership is open to any member who resides in the conservation plan's boundaries, and who is of voting age (18), including renters. Membership is limited to four members per household.

## **MONEY AND MEETINGS**

The Willo Neighborhood Association is a 501(c)(6) non-profit

organization whose budget plan runs from May 1 – April 30 each year. In the spring, the following year's annual budget is presented and approved by the board no later than the April meeting. Each month thereafter when a meeting occurs, the Treasurer prepares a report with an update on the budget, which is then reviewed by the board and generally approved. Neighborhood association meetings happen each month, generally on the second Thursday evening, with the exception of July and August when the association does not meet. Typical agenda items at the meetings include reports from our Phoenix Police Department's Community Action Officer, updates on zoning issues in and around Willo, various requests from neighbors for the board to address a question or concern, and updates from committees. Unfortunately, attendance at monthly neighborhood association meetings is often low, although spirited discussion often occurs. If you haven't done so, consider attending a neighborhood association meeting. The meetings are both through ZOOM and in-person. The ZOOM link and meeting location is post-



ed on the neighborhood Facebook page and willophx.com. Perhaps you will be inspired to run for a board position in the next election or volunteer on a committee.

**FUN AND WORK**

The biggest event in Willo each year is the Home Tour, which happens every February. Other fun things brought to you by the neigh-

borhood association are Kids Club events that focus on our youngest residents (and their parents), the monthly neighborhood happy hours and other events organized by the Social Committee, the holiday luminaria lining every street at the end of December, Block Watch, and this and every issue of *Inside Willo* magazine that is hand-deliv-

ered to your door by volunteers... the list goes on and on.

All of these fun things involve work to create them, so the neighbors who get together to organize are appreciated. If you have questions about any of these events, please come to a neighborhood association meeting, or contact your favorite board member. ■

**HELPFUL LINKS ON WILLOPHX.COM**

**WILLO NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION BYLAWS:**

[https://willophx.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Willo-Bylaws-2021-Approved-6\\_10\\_21.pdf](https://willophx.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Willo-Bylaws-2021-Approved-6_10_21.pdf)

**WILLO NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION PLAN:**

<https://willophx.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/willo-conservation-plan.pdf>

**ONLINE MEMBERSHIP OPT-IN FORM:**

<https://willophx.com/membership-opt-in-form/>

*Kids Club*

# Willo Kids Club Events Coming Up

Kids Club will join forces with Block Watch for one more event this month! A flyer with all the details is included in this issue. Also, please look for information on Facebook and Instagram.

BY VALERIE LANE (LEWIS)

**PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS**

parents of Willo kids: we need your help for our upcoming fiscal year of 2024/2025. We have a number of exciting events planned, and we believe that with your involvement, we can make them even more special. We will be working closely with Block Watch for our big Halloween event in October, and we would be delighted to see parent and grandparent

involvement in this event as well. Your contribution, no matter how big or small, will make a difference. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you are interested in volunteering or planning any additional events.

**Here are some events to plan for the following year:**

► *Kids Gym at Trifit Wellness-* August or September

► *Halloween Extravaganza* - TBD, but most likely October 26th, 2024

► *Bike Ride with Phoenix Spokes People* - December (Please note this is not a WKC event, but we love joining in and helping to promote it)

► *Willo Home Tour*

*Booth-* February 16th, 2025

► *Spring Fling in the Park* - April 13th, 2025 ■





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# SAFETY FIRST: Must-Know Pool Safety Tips

BY SARAH BRADLEY (WILSHIRE) //  
ADAPTED FROM SRP

**THE WARM WEATHER HAS** arrived, and pool season is officially open! In Arizona, drowning is sadly the number one cause of death for children aged one through four, and you must take safety measures around the water seriously.

## 1 ASSIGN A WATER WATCHER

Have a capable adult or certified lifeguard assigned to watch the water. Rotate or move locations every 15 to 20 minutes to avoid watching fatigue.

Ask water watchers to put away all distractions, such as electronic devices and books.

Water watchers should scan the bottom and keep count of everyone in the group, not just children.

## 2 CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Enclose your pool with a self-closing, self-locking fence, retractable cover, or net with 4" or less openings.

When near a pool, lock gates each time someone enters or exits. Never prop a gate open.

Move outdoor furniture inside the fence to prevent children from using it to climb over.

When not using the pool, remove any toys from the area that might attract kids.

Lock doors and windows and secure dog doors that lead to pools.



## 3 BECOME WATER SAFE

Learn how to perform CPR on infants, children, and adults. Knowing can save lives.

Teach all kids to swim at an appropriate age and remember that it's NEVER too late for adults to learn how to swim.

Don't depend on floating toys; they are not designed to save lives.

## 4 KNOW THE POOL RULES

No Diving in the Shallow End- Only dive in designated areas, and never dive into an above-ground pool. Diving injuries can have a lifetime of consequences.

No Roughhousing - Drowning accidents can occur during rough play in the pool, especially with young children. No jumping on each other in the pool or holding

anyone underwater.

Drains and Covers - Never play near drains or suction. Entrapments occur when someone or something becomes stuck to these drains or suction and pose a serious danger to young children who are too small to break away. If you are a pool owner, inspect your drains and covers regularly to ensure proper function.

Never Swim Alone - No one should swim alone, and children should never be left unsupervised in a pool, even if they are proven accomplished swimmers. Drowning accidents are vastly more likely to occur when the victim is alone or unsupervised.

Walk, Don't Run - Slipping can lead to serious injuries or falling and slipping into the water unconscious. ■



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525 W Granada Rd	ACTIVE	\$1,180,000
309 W Encanto	ACTIVE	\$1,190,000
345 W Wilshire	ACTIVE	\$1,195,000
73 W Lewis	ACTIVE	\$1,600,000
62 W Wilshire	PENDING	\$650,000
505 W Edgemont	PENDING	\$699,000
139 W Coronado	PENDING	\$1,225,000

329 W Lewis	SOLD	\$590,000
542 W Cypress	SOLD	\$618,900
38 W Edgemont	SOLD	\$695,000
518 W Holly	SOLD	\$710,000
502 W Monte Vista	SOLD	\$900,000

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# Gene Nance and His Irresistible Invitation to Willo Residents

BY JANICE O'ROURKE (CYPRESS)

**GENE NANCE HAS LIVED** in the same house on Palm Lane for 75 years! His mother brought him here in 1945 when he was in the 3rd grade so he could go to Kenilworth Elementary School. When he got ready for high school, there was a brand-new school for people north of McDowell, so Gene got to go to North High, where he studied with the children of prominent Phoenix merchants of the time. His schoolmates were from the families of the Goldwaters, Koricks, Diamonds, and Rosensweigs, all owning large stores downtown.

North High was considered “way out” of town in the forties. Gene recounts a story about St. Joseph’s Hospital and its move from downtown. People were incredulous that it was built at its current location. They were heard to complain, “Why did they put it out there so far? How are the sick people even going to be able to get there!”

Gene said the Willo neighborhood has had its ups and downs, but it has always been a friendly place, close to everything, and his house is comfortable and cool. It was one of the first ones in the neighborhood to have air conditioning installed in 1949. Most houses had evaporation coolers using hose water and a fan blowing damp fiber on the roof to keep it somewhat cool.

Gene served in the Army in the Korean War and was the thrifty guy in the battalion who always

had money when other soldiers (or even officers) needed a loan. He said he made a lot of money on the other soldier’s self-imposed usury-level interest. (He’d loan someone \$10 and ask what the guy would pay him on payday—\$15 was



the standard response and he’d say okay.) Gene is still the thrifty guy and was always the voice of frugality on the Willo Neighborhood Board for over 20 years.

After being discharged from the Army in California, Gene returned to Phoenix and the bungalow on Palm Lane. He got a job managing the Party Time Liquor Store at the corner of Osborne and 7th Ave. When the owner tried to move into the Basha’s (now Sprouts) plaza across the street, they wouldn’t rent to a liquor store because the local grocery giant wanted to retain the competitive advantage relative to alcohol sales.

Gene frequented many local eateries, including one of the

first Bob’s Big Boy restaurants in Arizona at the corner of Central and Thomas and the Golden Drumstick down the block. However, his favorite haunt was Durant’s. Jack Durant was always holding court at the bar, and liquid libations lubricated the negotiations of State Senators, local political leaders, and legislators for policy affecting people throughout the state. He ate there almost every day for lunch. It was a hearty fare of salad, entrée, vegetables, and dessert for 99 cents. Unfortunately, following the COVID-19 pandemic, Durant’s is no longer open for lunch.

The destruction of a good number of the big mansions on Central Ave. which started to encroach on the smaller homes in Willo was alarming to Gene and many other Willo residents in the 80s. That is why he worked to recruit his neighbors on Palm Lane to sign the petition to make Willo an Historic Preservation District.

Today, Gene continues to serve the people of Phoenix. He rides his bicycle each day to the Salvation Army Senior Center, where he helps the cook package up meals for seniors who need them. He’s the oldest person there, but he offers his helping hand 5 days a week to others in need.

Gene also has extended a standing invitation to any Willo resident to join him for wine on his porch any afternoon. He supplies the wine—you just bring the company! Who can resist? ■

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