

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

Closure of printing press marks milestone

Tracy Conrad Special to Palm Springs Desert Sun
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Last week, the printing presses stopped running at The Desert Sun newspaper building on Gene Autry Trail, as the paper's owner, Gannett decided to print the paper in Arizona. The decision to move the printing operations out of town represents an important milestone, just as the arrival of the newspaper's presses in the desert marked the recognition of Palm Springs as an internationally known destination.

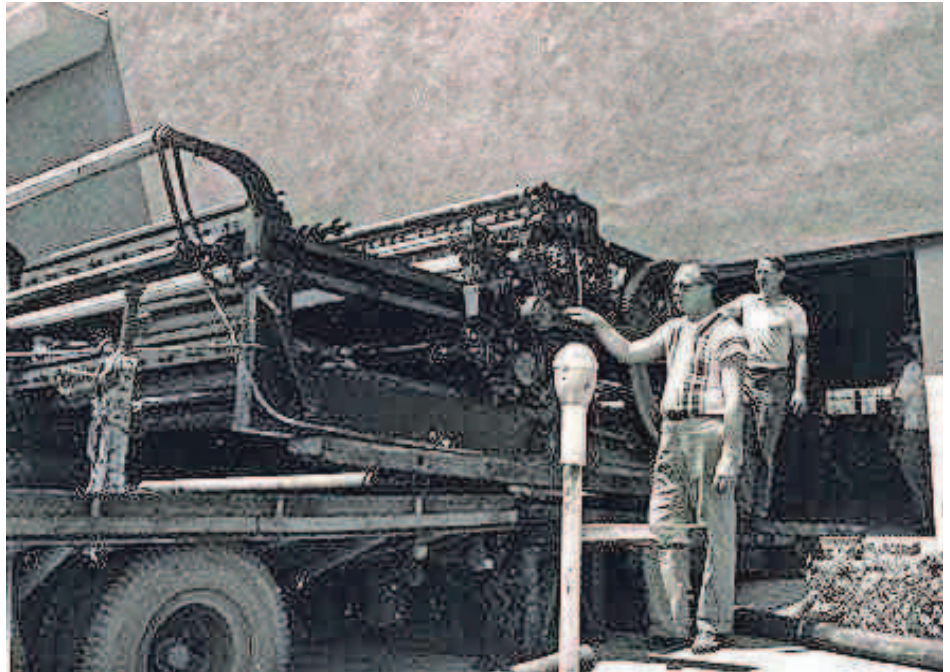
The Desert Sun launched in 1927 and was originally printed in Banning. The four-page paper published once per week and devoted an entire page to the local desert news with the first issue appearing in the heat of summer. Larry Bohannon chronicled the history of The Desert Sun in an eloquent and exhaustive article for its 90th birthday in 2017, putting the paper's existence in context.

He noted, when "the first issue of The Desert Sun was published Aug. 5, 1927, the United States was less than a decade removed from World War I, the Great Depression was on the horizon and Prohibition was the law of the land. The newspaper debuted the same year Charles Lindbergh completed the first non-stop trans-Atlantic flight, the 'Jazz Singer' premiered as the first feature film 'talkie' – signaling the end of the silent film era – and Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig led the New York Yankees to a World Series title."

"Also arriving on the desert scene in 1927 was horseman Frank Bogert, who would become famous as the 'Cowboy Mayor' of Palm Springs. His name appeared in the pages of The Desert Sun at least as early as 1936 when he was hosting rodeos and working as publicity manager for the El Mirador Hotel. His promotion of this little village – which grew to become a tourism Mecca – put Palm Springs on the map. Frank's civic work is well-chronicled in The Desert Sun, with hundreds of stories published throughout the decades, all the way until his death, at the age of 99 in 2009."

As Palm Springs grew older and more famous, it became evident a single page of newsprint was not sufficient to cover the popular tourist destination, signaling its growing importance. The paper and the town would not only require their own newspaper, but their own printing presses.

The first Desert Sun office in Palm Springs was located at 359 N. Palm Canyon Drive. Editorial and office work were done at this location while the mechanical side of the newspaper, the make-up and printing, were still produced in Banning. The first office was opportunely located adjacent to the first City Hall and two



The Desert Sun printing press is shown as it was being moved into The Town and Country Center at 174 North Indian Ave. in Palm Springs in 1947. COURTESY OF THE PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

doors down from the fire and police stations, and just across the street from the nascent Chamber of Commerce. Important local news was conveniently encircling the newspaper office.

By 1947, increased demand allowed for the installation of printing presses at the new offices at 174 N. Indian Avenue in The Town and Country Center designed by Paul Williams and A. Quincy Jones. The addition of the newspaper offices made the mixed-use center a truly busy place. The plant at The Center was "modern in every respect, with vastly improved service to readers, advertisers, and the public in general." Its new offices were cooled by fancy new refrigeration technology. Located in the center of town, distribution was much easier than hauling papers from Banning.

Soon the operation would get its very own building, dubbed appropriately The Sun Center. The paper

thrived alongside KDES Radio, Santos Catering and Bakery, Bonnie's Electric, a Sears catalog store and Harold's Appliances, owned by actor Harold Lloyd. The Sun Center received a Desert Beautiful Award for commercial buildings in 1965, representing the best of modern design (the large space devoted to printing the paper is now occupied by Revivals).

In 1989, the peripatetic paper and presses would change address again to Gene Autry Trail, where the offices remain today, more than thirty years later. It is from this spot that the presses were shut down for good last week, marking an important event in the history of the paper and the desert communities it serves.

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