

Building A Dream: Goldfield Ghost Town

Robert F. "Bob" Schoose was born in River Grove, Illinois on August 23, 1947. Bob and his family moved when he was four years old and he grew up in Southern California. Bob Schoose has been fascinated with prospecting and mining since childhood. After reading books like *Treasure Island*, *Coronado's Children*, and *Yaqui Gold*, he began to pursue his dreams. Much of his young adult life was spent around the Mohave Desert looking through old ghost towns, searching for lost treasure and mining for gold, silver and tungsten.

Bob made his first trip to the Superstition Mountains in 1966 with his friend Art Dunbar. He fell in love with the mountains and the surrounding desert and planned to return someday. Bob did just that in 1970 when he moved to Mesa. Using his own horses he packed supplies into Squaw Box Canyon for the notorious local character Robert Simpson Jacob, known as "Crazy" Jake, between 1973 and 1974. This was an era of uncertainty in the mountains and prospectors carried pistols and rifles to protect themselves. One man died of gunshot wounds while Bob packed for Crazy Jake. This and other things convinced Bob there were better things in life. One of those better things was when he married his wife Lou Ann in 1975. Together they have raised two fine sons and a wonderful daughter.

Early in the 1970's Bob dreamed of someday owning his own ghost town in the desert. Schoose met "Doc" Rosencrans at his cabin on the Apache Trail one day, and this meeting led to an inspiration to build a ghost town. Doc mentioned Goldfield and Schoose remembered stories about an old ghost town that once stood near Superstition Mountain. When he finally found his way out to the site, all that remained of the old settlement was a few concrete foundations, a rickety water tower, a rambling old shack used for a living quarters, and a small metal building.

Bob found out that Hub McErachan owned an old five-acre mill site that most of the territorial camp of Goldfield was located on in the mid-1890's. Bob and Lou Ann fell in love with a dream to rebuild the ghost town of Goldfield. They wanted to bring life to an old ghost town and add mining equipment. There were so many ideas at first it was overwhelming.

Early in 1984 Bob and Lou Ann Schoose purchased the Goldfield mill site from McErachan and started to build their dream. McErachan owned and operated the Feed Bag Restaurant and the Long Horn Saloon in Apache Junction. Hub and Bob got together one day at the Feed Bag Restaurant and made deal, and Bob and Lou Ann now owned the mill site at Goldfield. When Bob told people what he had planned for the site some said he was a dreamer and dream would never happen. But, if you know Bob Schoose, you know he is a very determined man. Once he makes up his mind he usually doesn't change it.

His first construction project on his newly acquired acreage was the building of a mine tunnel from scratch. He started the project in 1985. He did not go underground with his tunnel because of insurance restraints. His entire tunnel and mine were actually created above the ground, but made to appear below the ground. His reconstructed mine cage, tunnel, and stope appeared as real as reality itself.

While constructing the miner's cage, tunnel and stope he also worked on his first snack bar. The mine tunnel and snack bar opened for business in December of 1988. Construction soon began on the photo shop, Blue Nugget, General Store, Mammoth Saloon and the Goldfield Museum. The Blue Nugget opened in 1990, the Mammoth Saloon and Steak House in 1990, and the general store in 1991.

The first major event held at the Mammoth Saloon and Steak House was a D.A.R.E. Charity Night. Officer Steve Greb of the Apache Junction Police Department and members of the Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce worked with Bob to make the event a success.

Bob Schoose has always been community minded even in the beginning. One of Apache Junction's most honored citizen's, Grady Haskins, lived on Bob's property until his death. Grady was Apache Junction first constable and a combat veteran of World War II. Most old timers will remember Grady for his kilts and the bagpipes he generously played for community events and funerals of fallen comrades. Bob provided a place for Grady's trailer and helped Grady on many, many occasions.

Bob and Lou Ann continued to help their adopted community. Such charity organizations as the Goldfield Ghost Riders are based out of Goldfield. Their Ben Johnson Celebration and Poker Ride for charity is a legend. The Schoose have long been a proud sponsor and supporter of this organization.

There is another story about Bob and Lou Ann that needs to be told, and I suppose I am the best one to tell it. Early in 1980 the Superstition Mountain Historical Society was incorporated and between 1980-1984 the society worked at trying to organize a strong and effective board of directors. As a member of the museum board, I contacted Bob Schoose and asked him about a site for the museum at Goldfield. When he first explained the deal we were convinced we could not accept his offer. Under Bob's terms we had to build our own building and the historical society had no funds at the time and could not undertake such a task.

Early in 1989 Schoose started construction of the Goldfield Museum building as planned and Larry Hedrick and I went back to talk to Schoose about the museum. Finally a deal was hammered out between Schoose and the museum board. Bob decided to go ahead and build the building for the historical society and the museum would be required to complete the interior and maintain the building. Our rent would be a percentage of the admission tickets we sold. It was a wonderful deal for our fledging new museum.

It amounted to almost a donation of the building to the museum. We finally had a building thanks to Bob and Lou Ann Schoose. This again revealed their generosity and community spirit. It also revealed their love for the history and legend of Superstition Mountain, Goldfield, the Lost Dutchman Mine, and Arizona.

Goldfield Ghost Town has certainly led the way in preserving the history of the Southwest, Arizona and Superstition Mountain. The efforts and cost the Schoose's have made to haul mining equipment and machinery from all over the Southwest to Goldfield to help preserve the history of mining for future generations of Americans is certainly meritorious.

Bob says, "the building of Goldfield Ghost Town has been a family project since the beginning."

