



[Return to article](#) | [Return to Valley Society](#)

Desert celebrities of all ranks take to the fetes

Betty Francis
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Not all of our celebrities-in-residence are actors, singers or authors. Last week we honored our celebrity banker, **Bill Powers**, who was named Distinguished Citizen of 2005 by the Boy Scouts of America during a fundraiser at Indian Wells Country Club.

Several of Powers' friends roasted and toasted him on stage. **Stu Bailey**, an employee of the Pacific Western Bank headed by Powers said, "Bill loves to dress up. He's worn every costume in Geraldine's Costume shop and a few from his wife's closet."

Attorney **Jack FitzGerald** claimed Bill makes his assistant hum "Hail to the Chief" when he walks into the office.

Powers and his wife of 43 years, **Anita**, were accompanied by a gaggle of grandchildren who were moving so fast I couldn't get an accurate count. Their priest, **The Rev. Howard Lincoln**, said, "Comparing the appearance of Bill and Anita would be like **Bo Derek** marrying **Wally Cox**."

Jim "Fitz" Fitzgerald emceed the program which included the soundtrack of **Tim Blixseth's** "Heart of America" and composer **Michael Masser** playing "The Greatest Love Of All," plus a charming medley of patriotic songs by 11-year-old Boy Scout **Sandy Reed**, grandson of philanthropist **Sheri Auen**.

Congresswoman **Mary Bono** was honorary chair with **Richard** and **Jan Oliphant** as the hands-on co-chairs. Major assistance came from **Jim** and **Gail Gray**, **Sharon French**, **Mary Ann Wong**, **Abby Mozoras** and **Judy Vossler**.

Dennis James tourney

The most fun we had last week was at the Dennis James Golf Classic benefiting United Cerebral Palsy. This is one of those rare events, built on a bedrock of love and loyalty, that never falters, despite the death of its beloved founder in 1997, just a year after he started it.

Comic and country singer **Gary Mule Deer** had guests literally screaming with laughter with lines like:

On his golf game: "Thanks to titanium and modern golf technology, I've added 40 yards to my slice."

On living in the Black Hills of North Dakota: "My mom's cooking was so bad, the flies chipped in to get the screen repaired."

"Did you hear about the Siamese-twins who moved to London so the other one could drive for a while?"

Between jokes and clowning with emcee "Fitz" Fitzgerald, Deer delivered a spine-tingling program of **Johnny Cash** songs.

Among the dozens of celebrity players enjoying the show were **Monty Hall**, **Hal Linden**, **Johnny Lujack** and **Peter Marshall**.



Del Francis, Special to The Desert Sun
Celebrity Christmas tree donors Carol Channing, (from left) Gloria Greer and Ruta Lee at the fifth annual "Stroll Down Christmas Tree Lane" benefiting ACT for MS.

Adding to the excitement was a surprise announcement that the **Atwood** family (owners of Desert Lexus) was giving \$25,000 to United Cerebral Palsy in addition to their already-major support of the event.

James' widow, the pretty, peppy, perky **Micki James**, was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of her 300 guests, and the generosity of sponsors like honorary chair **Beverly Rogers**, and the H.N. and Frances C. Berger Foundation.

Mission Hills Country Club provided an outstanding fillet mignon dinner and well-organized service. Why can't they all be this good?

Information: 321-8184.

Sinatra season

"Songs of The Season" benefiting the Barbara Sinatra Children's Center, was magnificent this year. The Caballeros Gay Men's Chorus - 75 tuxedos strong - performed a program of traditional holiday music plus some of their popular standards.

But it was the creative, inventive arrangements and sly humor injected by artistic director **Alan Scott** that made this luncheon event so enchanting.

The Caballeros will perform at the McCallum Theatre Dec. 17 and 18, and I predict that everyone attending the luncheon will be there, begging for more.

BSCC executive director **Susan Reynolds** thanked co-chairs **Carole Craine** and **Connie Schivarelli** and Affiliates president **Jan Garson**. She also introduced high-fashion designers **Fe** and **Kamran Zandi**, who will produce the fashion show for the Sinatra Celebrity Golf Invitational in February.

The savvy Reynolds knows when to speak and when to let the music do the talking. Bravo! Children's Center information: 773-1636.

Getting to know COD

One of my favorite fundraisers, College of the Desert's "Getting To Know You," continues to bring money-givers, money-needers, teachers and students together in the most wonderful way.

Teachers and students create trade-show type booths showing how far they stretch every dollar that supporters contribute. And they display wish-lists for things like computer software, an astronomy camera and dual-language teaching aids. The child-care division needs teddy bears.

This year's event included a dinner at Indian Wells Country Club, a laughter-packed live auction conducted by auction expert **Jay Fiske**, and dancing to the Johnny Meza Trio featuring **Lola Rossi**.

Co-chairs **Marylynn Fraedrick**, **Gen Geer**, **Alice Martin** and **Birgit Moller** said the event raised an estimated \$140,000. To be on the mailing list, call 773-2561.

Celebrity bargain

Pound-for-pound, last week's "Stroll Down Christmas Tree Lane," benefiting ACT for MS, probably delivers more celebrities per dollar (\$50 admission) than any other local event.

Celebrities like co-hosts **Jack Jones** and **Carol Channing** either decorated a tree or approved one created by professional designers like C Group Interiors.

Daniel Wright and **Tim Clark** of Wright Design decorated and donated six fabulous trees, which brought up to \$13,000 at auction.

Among the two-dozen celebrities joining Jones and Channing were **Tippi Hedron**, **Joel Douglas** (representing the **Kirk Douglas** family) and author **Andrew Neiderman**.

Co-chairs **Gloria Greer** and **Betty Barker**, along with ACT for MS president **Richard DeSantis**, emphasized that all the money raised goes for practical needs - like physical therapy and air-conditioning bills - for local multiple sclerosis patients.

Information: 773-9806.

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