

Branson Tri-Lakes News ENTERTAINMENT

Three original SDC Saloon Show performers reunite

By Tim Church
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In 1973, Silver Dollar City introduced park guests to a winning combination of dancing saloon girls, singing bartenders and laugh out loud comedy, which is still going today as the Silver Dollar Saloon Show.

When Helen Williams, Marty Murray and Walt Fischer were first cast in the early '70s in the all-new saloon production for the 1880s-era theme park, they had no idea they were joining a show that would one day be celebrating its 50th Anniversary and become a must see for all park guests.

On Thursday, July 20, the trio stepped back inside of the nostalgia filled comedy venue at the park, approximately five decades after they did for the very first time.

When Fischer joined the show in 1973, he was cast as the production's first bartender.

"I read an article in the Springfield paper that they were hiring and I came down thinking I would sell postcards or work in a restaurant," Fischer said. "They said, 'Do you sing?' and I was like, 'Well, I was in choir,' and they said, 'Well, you need to go see this guy, George Roscoe.' That led to the next thing and I ended up working here until '78 or '79, I believe, but I wasn't in the saloon every year."

Also joining the original cast was Williams, who was one of the saloon girls when the show opened in 1973.

"When I was a little, little girl I went and visited my cousin in Alaska and my uncle, he was driving us around. I was 10 and we came up to this old saloon and so we went in. I looked at that and said, 'I want to be a saloon girl!' At 10, I wanted to be a saloon girl. So, I was born and raised here, so I came out to Silver Dollar City all the time," Williams said. "I'm a real local. This guy said, 'Our new attraction this year, let me show it to you. It's a saloon.' I said, 'Oh, a saloon! I've always



Photos By Tim Church • tchurch@bransontrilakesnews.com

Current Saloon Girls Sierra Anastasi, Heather Stofa and Mackenzie Godfrey are joined on stage by three original SDC Saloon Show cast members: Marty Murray, a year-two saloon girl, Walt Fischer the original bartender and Helen Williams an original saloon girl.

wanted to be a saloon girl." He said, "Well, they're having auditions up on Main Street." So I went up on Main Street, auditioned and voila. It was my destiny. I'm a wild woman."

Though she did not join the saloon girl family until the second year of the show's running, Murray said she initially came to the theme park hoping to join the staff as a craftswoman.

"I had just been working for the airlines, as a flight attendant for the airlines and had been furloughed. I came home and just wanted to do pottery. I just wanted to come down here in the hills and make pottery," Murray said. "I had an interview and the HR person said while I'm talking about pottery and they go, 'Did anyone ever tell you, you look like a saloon girl?' I'm like, 'I don't know if that's a compliment and said, 'Excuse me?' He goes, 'No, you really do. You look like a saloon girl, we have a saloon show,' He goes, 'Can you sing?' I'm like, 'No, not really.' He goes, 'Can you dance?' I said, 'Not really.' He said, 'Well, you look the part.' Best decision I ever made."

With 14 saloon shows taking place each day, guests of the park were able to come in to see the show just about every hour of the day. The reunited saloon trio

explained each of the shows lasted around 40 minutes back in the day, but they got two shows off per day and were only required to perform in 12 of the 14 shows a day.

Williams said the saloon girls would go around and take orders for drinks and snacks from the saloon patrons before the show started, but once the music began they would have to jump into action.

"We waited on everyone and when wild women started you dropped everything and you ran down the stairs. Sometimes it would be so like you'd just about fall," Williams said. "We worked so unbelievably hard the first five years probably. I don't think people realize how hard we worked. We loved it so much and we enjoyed it."

While looking around the venue and pointing out some of the things that have changed over

the years, such as how they didn't have microphones to use, Murray reflected on being back inside the old theme park saloon.

"This has lots of memories. It's so great that after 50 years it's still here and it still feels wonderful," Murray said. "For years after we were in the saloon, people would come up to me and go, 'Remember when you took your saloon skirt and polished my husband's head?' People remembered you because you were local and you made their day and they were from your area and they so thought it was the coolest thing that they knew someone that was in the saloon."

Williams said she remembered the time they were asked to stay late to perform a special show for former United States Senator John Danforth.

"I don't know if it was first year or second



Former SDC Entertainer Cyndi Strecky (in blue) goes through some of the photos featuring the original Saloon Show cast.



Helen Williams and Marty Murray were two of the first saloon girls to be in the Silver Dollar Saloon Show.



Mackenzie Godfrey and Heather Stofa pose under the celebratory signage for the Saloon Show's 50th Anniversary.

year," Williams said, "But we had a special show after hours for Senator Danforth and that was cool. I even got to dance with him."

To help get the saloon show off the ground, Fischer added they would also host after hours performances for members of the media to help promote the new show.

"In '73 we used to have press parties for TV and newspapers and stay open afterwards," Fischer said. "They would do a little buffet on the counter and then they'd take it away and they'd do the show."

While at the saloon, Murray and Williams took to the stage to showcase some of their original saloon girl

dance moves. Admitting they're not able to do the can-can dance like they were once able to, they showcased their remembrance of a dance they had not performed in a handful of decades. The two ladies were soon joined on stage by three of the current saloon girls, Mackenzie Godfrey, Heather Stofa and Sierra Anastasi, where they showed off their can-can dance routine for 2023.

Stofa, who has been a saloon girl for the last five years, shared how much of a privilege it was to share the stage for a moment with two of SDC's original saloon girls and compared it to a "Dancing with the Stars" opportunity.

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The former cast and the current cast members of the Silver Dollar Saloon Show pose underneath the signage celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Silver Dollar City show.



After Helen and Marty show-off their routine from the original show, Saloon Girls Sierra Anastasi, Mackenzie Godfrey and Heather Stofa display their can-can dance routine.

SALOON from 1B

"It's quite an honor. Seeing their can-can, like them saying theirs was twice as long as ours and I feel like I'm dying when we do our 45 second can-can," Stolfa said with a laugh. Godfrey, a saloon girl for the past three years, echoed Stolfa's Dancing with the Stars analogy.

"They did 12 shows a day and we only do five and we're so tired by the end of the day," Godfrey said. "It's awesome to be a part of a little bit of the history of the saloon. It's like playing our part. It's been going on for so long and it's really cool."

Anastasi, the newest member of the saloon girl family, shared what

it was like getting to witness the trio's reunion at the venue.

"I love that they're still friends. It sounds like it's always been a big happy family and I feel like that's what it is now," Anastasi said. "This is my first year, but I know if I come back in 30 years, I'll get the same warm welcome as we're giving them. Yeah, it's really cool to be a part of something big like that."

Though legacy is something they often hear about, Godfrey shared it was pretty amazing to get to see and hear about the saloon's legacy in person. "Just hearing their stories, it doesn't seem

much different than it is now. Honestly a lot has remained true," Godfrey said. "We still do a lot of the same musical numbers. We all still serve. We're all still running around like crazy as soon as those doors open. While I'm sure there's a lot of differences, it's cool to see how much has stayed the same over the years."

The trio, along with friend and fellow former SDC entertainer Cyndi Strecky, brought photos, as well, to the saloon to share and look over. In many of the photos, the trio were quick to spot themselves as well as name all of those standing around them in group shots.



Photos By Tim Church • tchurch@bransontrilakesnews.com

Marty Murray had the chance to be a part of the show once again as two of the Silver Dollar Saloon Show's cast members pulled her back into the spotlight for a bit.

In the theme park's 60 plus year history, many of the buildings and facilities at SDC have seen multiple shows come through them or been used for various purposes, but that's not the case for the saloon show. Williams confirmed the building where the saloon show is today is the same building where they performed their show. She added the building itself was never used for anything but the saloon show, because it was constructed specially to house the production.

"They even had all the stuff for a Carry Nation Show," Williams said. "It was a Carry Nation Show from the get-go." "Carry Nation was the one that was against prohibition," Murray said. "You know, drinking and drinking, sas-sas."

Just as it is today, everything taking place at the theme park has to have a theme and its theme has to be a part of the 1880s-era time period, thus why Carrie Nation was selected to be the central enter-

tainment element of the show.

Looking back, Fischer said he can even remember when they brought the new bar into the saloon to install it.

"We were in rehearsals and they were still working in the building. It was a beautiful piece of wood and they distressed it. They came in and chopped on it and they recorded when they beat the bar to make it look old," Fischer said. "They recorded it and used some of those sound effects in the Carry Nation raid, because the girls had rubber hatchets and stuff and it would sound like they were actually chopping."

Coming up in the middle of August, SDC will be hosting an official reunion for the 100 plus people who have been a part of the saloon show cast over the years. The reunion will celebrate the 50th Anniversary, as well as give former castmates the chance to reunite and reminisce on the good ole 1880's days.

"What would be inter-

esting to know is if any other generations like the '70s stayed in touch like we did the 50 years we have," Murray said. "I went out and lived around the world, but I always stayed in touch with everybody."

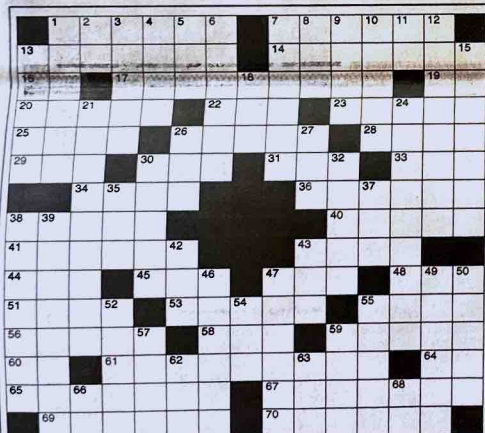
Folks planning to head out to SDC this season can also take part in some of the anniversary celebration fun as the saloon show "Frontier Follies 50th Celebration" is celebrating 50 years of rollicking laughs and tomfoolery with a new show for 2023.

Currently, the theme park is hosting their Summer Nights festival, which celebrates the final 16 days of summer. Now through Sunday, July 30, park guests can enjoy a variety of limited-time entertainment, rides into the night with extended late night ride hours and nightly fireworks. Park hours for Summer Nights are 9:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

For additional information on the saloon show, other fun opportunities at the city or ticket reservations visit silverdollarcity.com.



Two of the original SDC Saloon Girls, Helen Williams and Marty Murray, showcase that they still got it for the current line-up of saloon girls while on stage.



CLUES ACROSS

1. Bonus materials
7. Formal names
13. Free from restraints
14. One who scrapes away
16. Type of device
17. Skin cancers
19. The Show Me State
20. Plastic glasses
22. Red-brown sea bream
23. Small (Fr.)
25. Flightless Australian birds
26. High IQ group
28. Stiff structures
29. Revolutions per minute
30. Where a bachelor lives
31. Licensed for Wall Street
33. A place to park
34. Energy, style and enthusiasm
36. An important creed in Catholic Church
38. 18-year astronomical period
40. Furies
41. Removes from the record
43. Noted child psychiatrist
44. Feline
45. High schoolers' test
47. Not happy
48. They —
51. On top
53. Precious stones unit of weight
55. Moved quickly
56. Seagulls
58. A seed with hooks or teeth
59. Partner to "cohed"
60. Exclamation of surprise
61. Most unpleasant
64. Organization help service members
65. Type of cocktail
67. Humorous criticisms
69. Went through and organized
70. Wakes up

CLUES DOWN

1. Settle in tents
2. Big
3. Books
4. Masses of eggs in fish
5. Language
6. Not standing
7. Chinese philosophy
8. Computer giant
9. A device to catch
10. Emits coherent radiation
11. Actor O'Neill
12. Smallest interval in western music
13. Not lower
15. Revolves
18. Leavened bread
21. Number above the line in a fraction
24. Cable
26. Adult male
27. Airborne (abbr.)
30. Bullfighting maneuvers
32. Broadcast
35. — Angeles
37. Vehicle
38. Not religious
39. North American peoples
42. A baglike structure
43. Body art (slang)
46. Picked for a role
47. Actress Tomel
49. Former hoopster "Big Country"
50. Icelandic poems
52. More pleasant
54. It can add flavor to meat
55. Self-immolation by fire rituals
57. Expression of annoyance
59. — Spumante (Italian wine)
62. Consumed
63. Body part
68. Thus
69. In reply (abbr.)



The first Silver Dollar Saloon Show Bartender Walt Fischer shares a look at some photographs taken from his time with the show in the 1970's with the current cast.

SUDOKU



Here's How It Works: Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Level: Intermediate

SOLUTION FOR JULY 22 EDITION

ALABAMA	PAINT	WHITE
GUAVA	SUNSHINE	RED
UNDERSTAND	WEATHER	RED
ATTE	MAK	CAKES
MAK	PERATE	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK
MAK	MAK	MAK

SOLUTION FOR JULY 22 EDITION

3	2	1	5	6	4	8	9	7
9	4	6	7	2	8	5	1	3
8	7	5	9	3	1	2	4	6
5	9	4	3	7	2	1	8	6
6	3	2	8	1	9	7	5	4
1	8	7	6	4	5	9	3	2
2	6	3	1	5	7	4	8	9
4	5	8	2	9	3	6	7	1
7	1	9	4	8	6	3	2	5