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End of Era: Tucsonans share beloved memories amid closure of Old Tucson Studios

By Anthony Victor Reyes

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TUCSON (KVOA) - Since 1960, people from across the globe would visit Old Tucson Studios for the opportunity to be transported to a new world.

From experiencing the enticement of a classic shoot out at high noon to being chased down by a chain-saw wielding maniac at the dead of night, the former Columbia Pictures facility soon became a must-visit for anyone who decided to stop by the Old

Pueblo.

But on Tuesday, the visits officially came to a halt after Old Tucson Studios announced that the park will remain closed indefinitely due to the impact of COVID-19.

Shortly after the news broke about the Tucson staple, several News 4 Tucson viewers shared their memories gathered since Old Tucson Studios opened its doors more than eight decades ago.

From first dates to spending time with a loved one who is no longer around, these memories at Old Tucson were all ones they held close to their hearts.

Marie Cahn

When I was 18 yrs. old, I wanted to own my own horse, a cattle ranch was my dream back in 1964. I had graduated from high school in 1963. I put my German Sheppard, my accordion and 2 suitcases of stuff in the trunk of a 1954 Oldsmobile, and left New Jersey.

I can't believe I had the guts to attempt such an undertaking. About a week later, I arrived in Tucson.

Started looking for a horse and found one. A 15-year-old Palomino. I was in love. Then I found a job, in the steno pool at Transamerica Title Company. I was living my dream!

I started my adventure and took my first ride, which led me to Old Tucson.

I then had the good fortune to meet the person that would make all the difference in my weekly visits to Old Tucson. She was in high school, age 14, And we became the best friends ever. Wendy Lee and I still communicate via messenger. I am now 74 yrs old and still have a picture on my wall of my 2nd horse.

She informed today and sent a newspaper clip of the story. I remember High Chaparral being filmed there.

When we went to Old Tucson, we dressed in complete western gear. They would let us in for free because we enhanced the experience for tourist. It wasn't unusual for people to blow their car horns, so they could take our picture.

These are the best memories! We even rode in rodeo parades during the rodeo week the town had each year. Still makes me smile.

Well dear friend, maybe it will only be closed until we get a hold on the COVID thing. Thank you for years of fun, and it is still a viable place. Hey guys, we have grandchildren who could use a good healthy experience!

Jeannie Tucker

Old Tucson Studios are closing... makes me so sad. I worked as an actor on many, many episodes of Little House On The Prairie and also Father Murphy. We filmed all over Old Tucson Studios. Those were wonderful days there. Michael Landon was a terrific man as was Victor French. My early mornings were spent in wardrobe and make-up with Melissa Gilbert and the cast. All of us were so happy working at Old Tucson.

I also did a Tucson Water commercial there, was set choreographer shooting a commercial for a national brand barbecue sauce... We had 50 extras dancing to 1800's fiddle music there in the street on a stage. We filmed part of the Stephen King movie "Desperation" there as well. Over the years, there were so many good times had while working there.

It is very sad seeing Old Tucson close. My family used to go and watch the filming there during the early 70's... all the gunfights and saloon gals too.

Thank you for the wonderful memories...

Hannah Parr

I am so heartbroken. Old Tucson is a place where I have had some of my best memories. From class field trips in elementary school, outings with family from out of town & Nightfall. I have gone to Nightfall every year on my birthday since I can

remember. I am sad, you are sad & I am sure the owners & people who work there are sad. I hope a miracle happens and it doesn't permanently close!

Toryn Bentlage

My wife, Breann and I got married at Old Tucson on March 19, 2016. We will sure miss it!!

Kim Moody

This is where my husband and I had our first date. It's a true shame that we're losing this iconic place.

Julio El Sasquatcho Gonzalez

My wife, God bless her soul, took me some years back for my birthday and my brother and sister took me last year to the Halloween Nightfall to distract me after losing my wife to a distracted driver. Many, many beautiful wonderful memories growing up and last two moments glad it was there. Going to sorely miss it.

Peggy Nicosia

When we first moved out here in 1959, my parents and my grandparents had an antique shop in Old Tucson. I spent my days there playing and my sister spent her days on a mule train. I can barely remember it because it was a very long time ago, but it probably was a good time in our lives. I remember driving out there on the huckleberry roads. My grandpa used to call the dips huckleberries. That's my memory of Old Tucson and I'm very very sad that it's being closed

Alan Emmanuel Moreno Villaseñor

My mom, Paty M Villaseñor-Navarro used to work there. Her building was the one that was burned in the 95 fire. She was also an extra in Tombstone.

At this time, Pima County said it "will assume responsibility for the attraction on Sept. 14 and will begin working on a new plan for the park's future."

If you would like to share a memory with News 4 Tucson, leave a comment on our Old Tucson's post or email digitalnewsteam@kvoa.com.



Creeps Wanted: Auditions set for return of Nightfall at Old Tucson

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