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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sunday, April 2, is Joe Soliz Day at The Hermosa Inn

PARADISE VALLEY - Everyone knows about the charm of Hermosa Inn, an authentic hacienda resort of adobe buildings, courtyards and fireplaces set on 6-1/2 prime acres in the heart of Paradise Valley, just blocks from the bustling Camelback corridor.

Owners Fred and Jennifer Unger bought the circa 1935 estate in 1992 and renovated it in the same charming style created by its original owner and builder, artist Lon Megargee.

Under current management (Mike Gildersleeve has been general manager since Feb 2004), the property has experienced dynamic growth.

There are many reasons for this success: 35 elegant guest rooms, the critically acclaimed Artful American cuisine offered in Lon's, the inn's signature restaurant, and breathtaking views of Camelback Mountain.

But there is another big reason that Hermosa Inn is a destination property for locals and visitors from around the globe.

Joe Soliz (pronounced SOE-lees).

For almost 22 years, Joe has been the resort's landscape artist.

He retired twice, from the U.S. Army and the construction trade.

Now 80 years old, Soliz and one assistant keep the grounds looking like Monet's garden.

Soliz paints with color, planting and nurturing beds of petunias, nasturtiums, alyssum, geraniums, and dozens of other flowers in vivid reds, yellows, purples, pinks, blues, always with plenty of white as accent.

Everything on the property--the rose gardens, large pots of flowers on the dining patio facing Camelback Mountain's Praying Monk, grassy areas around each of the 35 casitas, desert trees, even the large, lush cactus garden—are Joe's handiwork.

Thousands of flowers are planted annually at Hermosa Inn. The flower beds are changed three times a year, with hundreds of new flowers carefully placed after Mother's Day, and again in September and January.

The Ungers "inherited" Joe in 1992. "We were delighted to find that he came with the property," said Jennifer Unger. "We continue to be impressed by not only his artistry but by his work ethic and gentle nature. He has a real gift and takes great pride in his work."

Joe's garden creations are often studied by competitors, according to resort staffers. Spies from other properties are sometimes spotted at Hermosa Inn.

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“They can look but we discourage them taking photos of our distinctive ‘Hermosa style,’” said general manager Mike Gildersleeve. Incidentally, it was Gildersleeve’s idea to elevate the flower beds. They are now bermed up a foot or so. This means watering can only be done by hand, not by soaking, adding to the cost of maintenance.

Maintaining such flower gardens, rose beds, trees, shrubs and cactus is a significant expenditure, but the owners and management would not have it any other way.

“This sets us apart,” said Gildersleeve. “We have people tell us they come here because of our food, our flowers, and our view of Camelback Mountain.”

In 2004, the Ungers gave a brunch to celebrate Joe’s 20th anniversary with the resort. Joe’s wife, three daughters, two of their sons, and other family members joined with Hermosa Inn staff.

“My family was real happy,” said Soliz. “It was special for me, too.”

This year, he and his wife plan to spend Joe Soliz Day at the Sunday Jazz Brunch on April 2nd. Lon’s Sunday brunch takes place each Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Soliz was born at Kyrene in 1925 and lived in Coolidge for many years, picking and chopping cotton as a young man. He has lived in Phoenix since 1975, working heavy construction since retiring from the U.S. Army.

Joe is a modest man, crediting God with his garden artistry.

Does Soliz garden at home? He laughs. “All I do is mow the lawn.”

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