

Written by Written by Kathy Shayna Shocket

"The AZ Insider" with Kathy Shayna Shocket: Get the inside scoop on Arizona's social scene and celebrity news.



This week: Behind the scenes of a who's who history making evening.

When **John Dawson** rolled out the red carpet for Scottsdale Plaza Resort's 25th anniversary party, (450 people for a sit-down gourmet dinner and dancing) the guest list for the private party swelled with VIPs and power players who have shaped Scottsdale's history.

John himself has been a key player in the growth of Scottsdale and the Valley. And the strong relationships he has built over the years were reflected in the ambiance of the celebration. In fact, so many people wanted their chance to mingle one-on-one with him that a reception line spontaneously took shape. I tried to capture that "Godfather-like" line as guests, such as restaurateur **Don Carson** who is pictured above (the owner of the well-known Scottsdale restaurant Don & Charlie's), waited patiently to chat with John before, during and after dinner.



SCVB's Rachel Sacco, Scottsdale Mayor Jim Lane and wife Joanne

The distinguished invitation-only list for the spectacular affair (produced by the creative **Sallie Sargent** of Spectacular Productions and the staff of the Dawson Companies and the Scottsdale Plaza Resort, many of whom have been with the Dawson Companies for over 25 years) boasted corporate executives, philanthropists, entrepreneurs, developers and political heavyweights.



Goldwater Institute's Darcy Olsen with John Dawson

The list of Scottsdale's VIPs included the Mayor of Scottsdale **Jim Lane** and the powerhouse of the Scottsdale and Convention Visitors Bureau, **Rachel Sacco**. By the way, when Rachel and her husband Joe were married in 1984, some of her out of town guests stayed at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort. She's one of the many people who have personally seen the resort's tremendous growth.



US Airways' C.A. Howlett, philanthropist Gay Wray, and Edwin

John Dawson and his Dawson Companies which has operated the resort since 1976, completed its \$30 million expansion in 1986, which included the addition of Remington's Steakhouse and Lounge. Partygoers toasted the 25 year celebration with the finest of Champagne.

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Real Estate Developer Geoffrey Edmunds and wife Jane

Many of the guests who turned out for the anniversary party have served with John on various community boards and committees. For example, he's a Life Member of the Fiesta Bowl committee and the Fiesta Bowl teams stay at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort. (This year the BCS Championship team will be at the resort as well.)

Vestar's Lee Hanley and wife Nancy

John's also a Life Director of the National Association of Home Builders and is currently on the board of directors of the Goldwater Institute. The Institute's CEO, **Darcy Olsen** spoke to guests about John's accomplishments. **Pam Donner**, formerly of the Dawson Companies, also spoke about the major renovation for which the company served as its own general contractor.



Philanthropists Bob and Karen Hobbs

The popular **Dennis Rowland** and the Extreme Decibel Big Band performed for the 25th anniversary party. (Dennis who played with the Count Bassie Orchestra in the 70's is a well-known Valley performer.) The jazzy band lured so many partygoers to the dance floor, that half the room was either dancing, or in the "reception line" waiting to chat with John.



Paradise Valley Police Chief John Bennett, and PV Councilman Vernon Parker

There were also several Paradise Valley officials on the guest list, including the Paradise Valley Mayor, **Scott LeMarr**.



John Dawson and family and friends

John's granddaughter, **Emerald Dawson** sang, bringing tear's to the guest of honor's eyes. Yes, it was a historical evening for the 35-year-old locally owned resort. Cheers to the locally owned landmark in excellence!

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Kathy Shayna Shocket is a Phoenix based writer. If you have a good item for The AZ Insider, you can email her at redcarpetgirl@aol.com.