



MEET DOUG WALKER: THE RESORTS INTERNET & PHONE GURU

By

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If you've been at The Resort for a while, the odds are that you've met Doug Walker. He's the guy with the flat-top haircut, likely to be wearing something with the San Diego Chargers logo, and he's working to improve your TV and internet service.



Doug shares a laugh with park owner Al LaCanne

Given all the changes to the television and internet at The Resort, I visited with Doug to talk about how he can help make the transition. But first, let's get to know Doug...

Not only was he wearing a Chargers shirt when I met him, but his email address is chargerfan4@cox.net. How did that happen? "I'm San Diego born and raised," he replied. "My dad was a Marine drill instructor at the MCRD, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, in San Diego."

Doug, however, did not grow up planning to follow in his father's footsteps; no, he became a surfer and fell into that laid-back culture. So it isn't surprising that as a teen he clashed with dad and left home to live with his brother near San Francisco. That's where he saw an ad for temporary work at a ski resort in Sun Valley, Idaho, installing cables for the television provider for two weeks. He said, "I came for two weeks and stayed 11 years." Then, he revised that: "It was 11 years, but 12 winters." That was plenty.

In 1986, when he read that the Phoenix economy was on a run, he and his wife packed up and moved. Within a week he'd landed a job with the cable company in Scottsdale. That organization was eventually replaced by Cox cable, and that's where he remained until he took an early retirement package in 2011.

Doug was content to work in the field for Cox, but during one on the corporate downsizing, all employees were told they had to reapply for their jobs. Doug did the reapply thing, but also applied for a Team Leader position. He says, "I still remember that there were 221 applicants for 24 positions, and I got one of them."

As for his retirement, he was ahead of his time, or at least ahead of his peer group. By retiring in his early fifties, he soon found himself bored. "None of my friends had retired," he recalled, "and there's only so much golf and fishing you can do." While I'm sure there are people reading this who would disagree with that last statement, Doug found himself picking up contract work for Cox and others. Along the way Doug met someone from the management team for The Resort and Silveridge, and Doug soon found himself working with the system coming into the parks.

It wasn't long till residents were asking for his help. Doug guesses that by now he's worked with a hundred or more residents at Silveridge and double that number at The Resort.

His work for residents includes everything from "the green box" by the street, into and inside the residence. Sometimes he needs to repair the cable itself, but often the task is setting up the equipment. "For instance, if someone gets a new TV, I'll go in and do the set-up, including the DVD or VCR player. And more and more, it's setting up the router and modem so residents can get wi-fi."

He adds, "I love it when someone can see how great the picture can be and watch them light up."

Now, in addition to his work on the park's existing system, and with residents, he's heading the effort to bring the new fiber optic line coming in from his old colleagues at Cox. Starting this month, we'll be getting monthly updates on the progress of the new HD TV service, and the new first-rate internet. But before we get that update...

One last thing: There's that throwback hairstyle of his, the flattop. I guessed that he wore it as a tribute to his drill instructor father. "Kinda," he said, then added, "but if you see me, it may not be there. I shave it all off every so often. As I tell my wife, I like to get a new crop up there."

DOUG'S MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT: APRIL

"I'm already getting lots of compliments on how much clearer the TV picture is."

For those of you spending the summer at The Resort, the first change you'll see is in the quality of the TV picture.

While the current TV signal is still the old analog version and not the new HD one, Doug's work to prepare the park for the transition has already enhanced the TV signal. As Doug says, "After the meeting with residents and the vote, Al [that's Al LaCanne, park owner] gave the go ahead to spend additional money, beyond the original budget, to do a retrofit throughout the park. When we're done, virtually everything above ground will be brand new and top-of-the-line."

Doug explained that the system that runs through The Resort consists of 22 amplifiers and 222 taps/splitters. There's an amplifier every 1200-1400 feet of underground cable to boost the signal, and there are also taps (also known as splitters) and each one connects three or four homes to the main cable.

Photos of the work Doug has been doing:





The next big jump in TV picture quality will come when Cox Cable completes their work connecting the HD signal to The Resort. Their schedule calls for that to be completed mid-May, but Doug's own estimation – (remember, he spent many years working for Cox)— is for late May or early June. Once Cox connections work is finished, the switchover will take place and the new HD service, with over 60 channels will spring to life.

As for the new internet service, that service will come next, after the television work, and won't be available till this summer. More on that in next month's progress report.