

Spring
2021

Litchfield Legends

A publication of the Litchfield Park Historical Society and Museum

Travels with Edith and Wally

Some of the most valuable information in the LPHS archive are individuals' personal writings such as letters, diaries, and hand-written notes. They not only reflect a place and time, but also the person's feelings. Among our holdings are four travel logs authored by Edith Litchfield Denny, the youngest daughter of Paul and Florence Litchfield and the wife of Wally Denny. They were the last residents in the house on top of the hill behind the museum. Edith writes about their travels during the 1950s and 60s; and she infuses them with the *joie de vivre* and sense of humor that she carried with her throughout her lifetime. Each log is between 35 to 50 pages long, typewritten and single-spaced on onion skin paper. Her observations reflect a world that wasn't as homogenized as today's is; and the reader is enticed into each tale as if he or she was traveling along with Edith and Wally.



Edith and Wally Denny at Rancho La Loma in
Litchfield Park

In This Issue:

- Travels with Edith and Wally
- President's Letter
- Coming in September—Rolling on Rubber
- Past and Present—Volunteer Appreciations
- New to our Collections
- Ride & Seek Event



Edith wrote about a trip to Europe in 1952, *"They say travel is broadening. It certainly is, particularly around the waistline ... We lived off the fat of the land and wore it home."* While waiting in the terminal for their plane flight, she comments, *"The last item Wally has slipped into his hip pocket – the plastic flask from Howard Hyde [Wally's brother-in-law] containing 'snakebite remedy.' ... Suddenly Wally sniffs. He stares. He glares. 'Edith, have you been drinking?' I give an insulted sputter and Wally sniffs surreptitiously at other close by passengers. Suddenly he looks very odd and dashes for the men's room. The plane is called. Wally appears looking sheepish and we board the stratocruiser 'Caribou' in an aura of Scotch. The flask hadn't leaked – it has just squashed when he relaxed on it and his hip is soaked. Our co-travelers look askance, for all he needs is a cherry and a piece of lemon peel to be a perfect Old Fashioned."*

Having arrived in England, Edith relates, *"While Wally is at the Plant, I spend [time] shopping for 'Junk Jewelry' in second-hand stores and get some pieces that look good. (Ed. Note – Had them appraised in Toronto and it ain't junk!).* Days later on their 22nd wedding anniversary, she writes, *"What do you think I do when I get back to the hotel at*

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Letter From the President

I want to begin by sending our congratulations to Matthew Williams on his appointment to City Manager of Litchfield Park. We celebrate Matthew's hard work, determination, and drive and look forward to working with him on future projects.

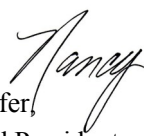


We have a jam-packed issue this month with fabulous articles and exciting upcoming events. Great news, our museum doors are now open on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Masks will be required for all visitors. I am pleased to report that in the short time since reopening, we have had a record numbers of visitors come to tour the museum and enjoy our exhibits. While our doors were closed for a few months, we were still busy working "behind the scenes". Our Education Committee continued our Speaker Series by moving the program online via "ZOOM". Now that restrictions are beginning to lift, we have resumed our presentations at the Church at Litchfield Park. A special thank you to Rev. Dr. Lynne Kammeraad for supporting our partnership to bring this program to the community. If you have signed up to receive our event emails, you will automatically be receiving information on these upcoming talks and other events. The series continues to be available online "real time", or you can enjoy watching the series at your leisure on our "You Tube" account. Our website provides a link to the site. Another behind the scenes project has been our new website! Our web master has done an excellent job redesigning our site and has expanded our online services to provide you with the capability of purchasing event tickets, gift shop items and LPHS memberships through PayPal or charge card. Remember, you can always donate to the LPHS or Heritage Center project online.

As you enjoy reading the *Litchfield Legends*, be sure to take note of our **newsletter sponsors** listed in this and every issue; without their **generous support** we would not be able to bring our publication to you. A special thank you to those who have donated a used vehicle to our **CARS program**. We recently received another generous donation through the program and thank the donor for listing the LPHS as recipient.

Our continuing goal is to bring *exciting events, interesting history*, and a *sense of community* to the residents of Litchfield Park and the greater Southwest Valley.

Enjoy our wonderful Arizona spring weather. See you soon.


Nancy Schafer,
LPHS Board President

SAVE THE DATE: NOVEMBER 27, 2021
MATT CARTSONIS & TOM RHODES
CONCERT



LOCAL BOYS MAKE GREAT MUSIC

Coming in September – *Rolling on Rubber*

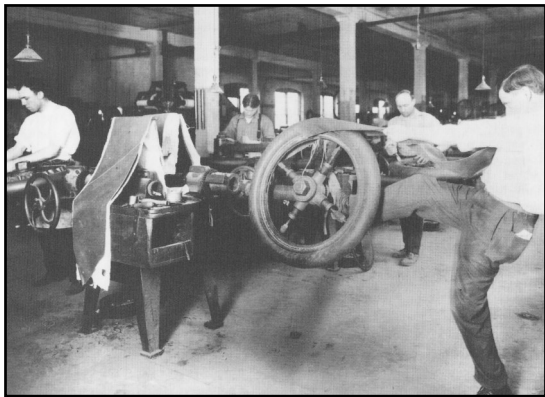
Our upcoming exhibit – ***Rolling on Rubber*** – has been moved back to a September opening due to issues with COVID. It will be an extremely interesting exhibit showcasing the development of the rubber tire. Interesting facts are surfacing in the research for this exhibit. Among them are:

P.W. Litchfield had a drafting table installed in his office in Akron. There he would work late into the night developing new designs for Goodyear's tires. Litchfield was a capable artist – traits he inherited from his father who was a noted photographer and amateur artist in Boston. The museum owns two of Paul Litchfield's drawings that showcase his abilities.

Callused and bandaged hands were common on the tire builders in the Goodyear Co. While they were paid well and were considered the *royalty* of the company, their hands took a beating. Working bare-handed, the stretching and smoothing of each diagonal layer of rubber ply made the skin on their hands so thin that they often bled.

Under Paul Litchfield's leadership, the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. became the leading tire manufacturer in the world. During his tenure at Goodyear, he supervised the purchase and processing of more than one eighth of all the rubber

produced in the world.



Bill Kaufman, a faithful LPHS Lifetime Member and Donor, has underwritten this exhibit. This will be the fifth year in a row that he has financially supported our new exhibits. Bill has also given us many of the artifacts that you see in our museum; and he has written two books that are on sale in our gift shop – “**Liberty, Arizona**” and “**The Migrant Worker.**” Bill drew on his personal knowledge from growing up in Liberty during the 1930s and 40s. His father was a farmer and his mother a teacher at the original Liberty School. A **HUGE THANK YOU** to Bill from all of us.

Past and Present

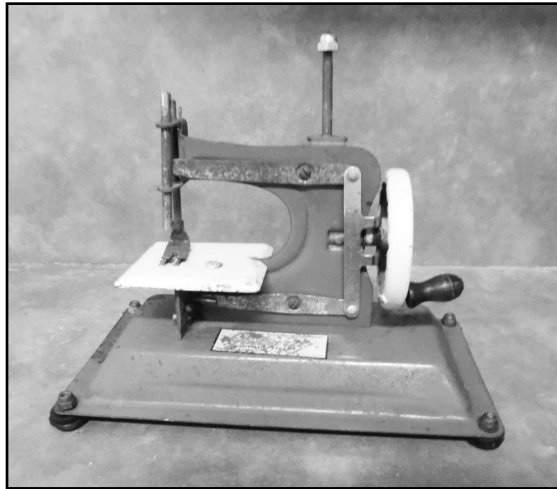
We at the LPHS want to give a **HUGE THANK YOU** to **Barbara Hegarty** for all the work she did as our volunteer Membership Chairman. Barbara faithfully came in once a week over the past six years to write thank-you letters to our members, update our membership files, print labels for our newsletter mailings, and direct our bulk mailings of over 2000 pieces. It was a big job! Barbara requested to step down from her membership duties so that she could devote more volunteer time at her church; but she will continue at the museum helping us with our openings and other events.



In Barbara's place, the LPHS is fortunate to **WELCOME Susan Sweeden** as our new Membership Chairman. Susan lives in Goodyear and was recently named **Goodyear's 2020 Citizen of the Year**. She was chosen by Mayor Georgia Lord to honor her for her over 800 hours of volunteer service to Goodyear's You Are Not Alone and Police Service Programs. In addition to taking over Membership Chairman duties for the LPHS, Susan oversees our Constant Contact records and assists Archivist Judy Cook in completing the work on an AHS grant the Society received last summer. The goal of the grant is to place four more of our collections in archival order: The P.W. Litchfield Collection, the Wally and Edith Denny Collection, the *Rancho La Loma* Collection, and the LPHS Audio-Visual Collection. **Please join us in welcoming Susan to our volunteer staff!**

New to our Collections

The LPHS is pleased to announce several new items to our collections. As a result of our newsletter request for children's toys, we were delighted to receive a child's sewing machine from **LPHS Founder Celeste Crouch**. This toy was manufactured by the Gateway Engineering Co. which was established in 1937 in Chicago. We believe it dates from 1946-1950. During the twenty-year



period between the disruption of WWII and the turmoil of the 1960s, much of American life was focused on family matters, faith, and community. Most mothers were still at home, children ran safely outdoors in packs until the sun began to set, and the only distracting devices were the TV and radio – all controlled strictly by parents. During that time children often received toys that reflected something about the adult world – hence the sewing machine and the doll-sized dishes we received from **museum docent Carol Eddy and her twin sister Barbara**. These delightful dishes were crafted in a pastel Fiesta Ware pattern – replicas of the very popular adult Fiesta Ware that graced many a table during this time period.



In addition to the children's toys, the museum has received several pieces of **Monterey style furniture from John and Pamela Denny Blackford**. Two of the pieces once graced Paul Litchfield's office on top of the hill. During the 1930s, Litchfield bought this style of furniture to fill the cottages on the top of the hill and the rooms at The Wigwam. In the attached photo, you will see the small bookcase and table that now reside in our collection. Monterey style furniture was manufactured between 1929 to 1942 in Los Angeles. The two pieces in Litchfield's office date from the Middle Period – 1932. Inspired by Spanish Revival architecture and Hollywood movies that glorified the Old West, the furniture is characterized by a worn look, a color palette of green, red, yellow, and brown, festive hand-painted flowers, rounded edges, with metal and leather accents. The bookcase is a treasure. It has a painted yellow, crackle surface, colorful hand-painted flowers, and orange-painted wrought iron strips on the edge of the shelves. Burnt into the back is the signature horseshoe emblem that identifies the furniture as Monterey. Underneath the horseshoe is stamped the word MONTEREY.

We **THANK** all three of our donors for entrusting the LPHS with their treasures. They have enriched our collections and broadened our understanding of the history we are preserving in our museum.



Ride & Seek



Saturday, April 24

7 am - 5 pm

Bicycle Scavenger Hunt

&

Free Bike Safety Rodeo

Conducted by the Goodyear Fire Dept
& Phoenix Children's Hospital

9 am - 12 pm



Ride & Seek Event Brings Together History, Cycling, and Outdoor Fun

Whether you're a history buff, enjoy the challenge of hunting for clues, or just like being outside, the Litchfield Park Ride & Seek event is just for you! On **Saturday, April 24** the Litchfield Park Historical Society will host a self-paced bicycle scavenger hunt through the quiet streets of Litchfield Park while offering an opportunity to learn a bit of local history and support the LPHS Museum.

Participants will have from **7 AM – 5 PM** to complete the scavenger hunt which consists of three loops of varying lengths. Riders can choose to bike anywhere from two to twelve miles after checking in at the corner Old Litchfield Rd and Wigwam Blvd to pick up maps and clues. Registration is available online at www.LPHSMuseum.org until April 23rd or in-person on the day of the event. The cost is **\$25 per family** and **\$15 per individual**. All scavenger hunt participants will be entered into a drawing for gift cards to local businesses.

The event also includes a **free bike rodeo** from **9 AM - 12 PM** in the north parking lot of Litchfield Elementary School at 255 W. Wigwam Blvd. Safety professionals from the Goodyear Fire Department and Phoenix Children's Hospital will be on site to teach bike and pedestrian safety through a bike rodeo obstacle course and check helmets for proper fit. Bring your bike, scooter, or skateboard and helmet!

Scavenger hunt riders are also strongly encouraged to bring a water bottle, wear helmets, and follow Arizona cycling laws. Social distancing protocols at the date of the event will be observed.

All proceeds go toward the funding of the Litchfield Park Historical Society Museum's exhibits and programs.

For more information, visit www.LPHSMuseum.org

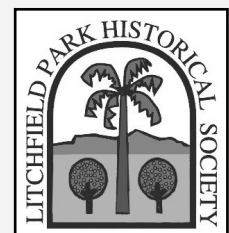
What: Litchfield Park Ride & Seek and Bike Safety Rodeo

When: April 24, 2021

Scavenger Hunt 7 AM – 5 PM

Bike Safety Rodeo 9 AM – 12 PM

Where: Southeast corner of Old Litchfield Rd and Wigwam Blvd



2 A.M. with my beloved husband of 22 years? I wash his nylon shirts! That's LOVE!"

During a stay in Stockholm at the Grand Hotel, Edith comments on the accommodations. *"Our room? Oh, come now, not a room. Heck, I think they moved the King out so we could have it. Eighteen-foot ceilings and the bedroom measures 25' by 32'. No, that doesn't include the entrance hall, the dressing room or the 15' by 22' bath. Gilt furniture, tables, couches, desks, flowers ... It is too elegant to feel legal."* And about one of the restaurants they visit, Edith writes, *"Riche's is one of the loveliest places I've ever seen. Large and beautifully ornate with deep red velvet drapes and huge crystal chandeliers. Exquisite music of violin and piano playing all fine classics. ... We learn the art of skolling with champagne. It's practically a ritual. A lady never touches her glass unless she is skolled. A gentleman never drinks without skolling a lady or another man. The host must skol everybody. No one but the host and the honored guest must skol the hostess. This is the procedure."*

While in Denmark, she comments, *"Wivacs has many beautiful tapestries and paintings. I ask Mrs. Steffenson if they are all old. She says 'These are,' but explains the tragedy of this beautiful spot. During the occupation, a German officer was shot and in retaliation, the Germans burnt Wivacs, the showplace of the city. They burnt it complete with all its tapestries, masterpieces, and exquisite furniture while the Danes stood by and watched. So, at the end of the war, the government gave first priority to the rebuilding and redecorating of Wivacs as close to the original as possible and made available rare paintings for its walls. The reasons for this, the morale of the people and the tourist dollar, the greater being the morale, for its destruction hurt deeply and lastingly."*



Edith with her Cessna 180

On a trip to Italy in 1956, Edith comments on the Roman Colosseum at night. *"We emerge into a dark alley to discover a watery moon probing the Colosseum. So we walk over. We can show you our sunlit pictures ... but they'll never portray that eerie hour of agelessness. Sibilant soaring of bats, wraiths of martyrs, shadow of the 'thumbs down' gesture of death, the FEEL of a lion's roar. Sibelius must have heard it when he wrote 'Valse Triste,' that hour when stones speak, and the past is NOW."* After a visit to a catacomb, Edith observes, *"We descend into the very bowels of the earth. ... We came*

here because its depths sheltered for two centuries the bones of St. Peter and St. Paul, because of the stark cave which held Thanksgiving services for those Christians who escaped death by a mere whimsical upthrust gesture of Nero's thumb, and because even below the catacombs there are two pagan temples holding ashes of pre-Israelite Etruscans ... The chill dank air

which pervades our own very bones is the reason why those ancient bones have been preserved." And having completed a visit to the Vatican, she remarks, *"There are more fig leaves in the Vatican Museum than on all five trees at La Loma put together."*

Wally was born to be a pilot; and Edith was afraid of flying. However, because she wanted to spend more time with Wally, Edith learned to fly. They flew a small plane all over the world; and the LPHS has a framed world map with all of their trips lined out in different colored pens to commemorate them. In 1959 they flew a trip of 20,000 miles landing in 17 countries, overflying an additional 6 countries, and were airborne for 115 hours. They dealt in 11 different currencies and 3 different languages. On this trip, they were forced to land at the mouth of the Amazon due to weather. Edith writes, *"After takeoff, we flew down the coast ... This part of Brazil ... is swamp and jungle*

Continued on Page 7

with a few isolated settlements such as a small radio station and emergency airstrip at Amapa, used as a blimp base by the U.S. Navy in World War II. ... we crossed it on course ... As we approached the mouth of the Amazon the sky turned dark and we realized we couldn't possibly reach Belem. We had been flying low over the jungle trying to maintain ground contact ... we found a hole in the clouds and circled to 9,000 feet. I held the plane in a tight circle in the one clear spot while Wally reeled out the HF antenna. No contact. We tried all frequencies ... No answer. And our little hole was closing rapidly. There was only one thing to do – turn back to the emergency strip at Amapa and hope we could make it. By now we were completely surrounded by huge black clouds so did a tight spiral down to 1,000 feet to find the dark muddy river and the jungle below us. We headed north again until we could pick up the Amapa signal and home in on it. Rain and thunderstorms all around – and at last the airstrip. We circled once and touched down on a weed grown, cracked but blessedly solid piece of ancient runway. We were down and we were safe. There were a few barrack type buildings about 500 yards from the strip. So we taxied back opposite them and cut the engines. From nowhere appeared a crew of about 5 men and 10 boys, practically naked in the steaming heat. ... We stepped out and the group came over all smiles.” Forced to stay the night, Wally and Edith found themselves in primitive conditions with people who couldn't speak the same language. However, at the end of the time there, Edith remarks, “we had a wonderful time. We taught them English, they taught us Portuguese.” Before taking off the next day, Edith writes, “The Commandator kissed Wally on both cheeks, shook hands with me, stood back and saluted as we crawled into the plane. We took off from Amapa with the entire population, all twenty of them, waving.” Unfortunately, during their stay, Edith received a serious insect bite on her arm that later required significant medical attention.

Several years later, the couple took a trip to Russia. Edith writes, “There were NO smiles, NO laughter for the whole 5 ½ days we were in Russia, anyplace. It is hard to describe the effect that has on a person. You find yourself beginning to feel chilly inside.”



These are only a few of the many interesting passages in these logs; and they take hours to read. But they are endlessly fascinating. At some time in the future, it would be wonderful for the LPHS to publish them, and share with the public the *Travels of Edith and Wally*.

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January 1 – December 31, 2021 membership year

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Annual Membership Dues ☐ Single Adult \$25 ☐ Family \$35 ☐ Business/Professional \$60
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I would like to make an additional Special Donation of: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other _____

Thank you! Please make your check payable to: **Litchfield Park Historical Society**
PO Box 1936, Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

Would you be interested in volunteering for our organization? ☐ Yes

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