



# the Quarterly

Remembering the Southwest Valley

Vol. No. 6 Issue No. 2, April-May-June, 2009

## The Blue Angels

The Blue Angels were formed at the end of World War II, by the order of Chester Nimitz, the Chief of Naval Operations. He wanted a flight demonstration team to keep the public interested in naval aviation. They performed their first flight demonstration at their home base, Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FL in June 1946. They were flying the Grumman F6F Hellcat, led by Lt. Cmdr.

Roy Voris. In 1947, the team introduced the now famous "Diamond Formation."

By the end of the 1940's they were flying their first jet aircraft. The Korean Conflict required their talents be used in the war effort but they reorganized in 1950 and reported to NAS Corpus Christi, Texas flying the Panther, F9F-5. They remained at Corpus Christi until the winter of 1954, relocating to their present home base at NAS Pensacola, Florida. They did their winter training in Key West.

With the start of the Cuban Missile Crisis the base at Key West was needed for military purposes and the Blue Angels wintered at NAS Litchfield, AZ from 1963 to 1965. By this time they were flying the F11F-1 and practiced everyday in the skies over the west valley. At the end of each winter season they would perform their show for the local citizens.

I talked to one of the pilots, Commander Ross, and a mechanic, Len Mosey, who were here with the "Blues" in the '60s. The pilot remembered that they never missed a day flying because the weather was so great. The mechanic remembered that it was a great place because with all the planes in "mothballs," there were plenty of spare parts available. Also that the Enlisted Men's Club had Lucky Lager beer for ten cents a glass!



Crew 1964, Courtesy U. S. Navy

In 1966 they began to winter in El Centro, CA.

In 1974 the Navy Flight Demonstration Team was reorganized as the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron establishing a commanding officer and support officers and further defined the mission supporting the recruitment effort.

Their current aircraft is the F/A-18 Hornet, the first dual-role fighter/attack aircraft now serving our military. In the 2006 show season they performed for more than 15 million spectators. They returned for an air show at the Phoenix/Goodyear Airport that year. My son-in-law is a Naval Aviator and was able to get us VIP seats for the show! I never tire of watching the "Blues."

by Sally Kiko



2006 Blue Angel Team with Gene & Linda Arnold, Ken & Sally Kiko.

Salt  Agua Fria  Gila  
Three Rivers Historical Society



# The Methodist Church in Avondale

A very brief history of the beginnings...

The Avondale Community Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was officially organized in 1937. The Rev. Thomas V. Ludlow was the first minister. Prior to 1937 (as early as 1924) church services were held in the old adobe school house southeast of Central and Western Avenues, east of the present elementary school and diagonally southeast of the present church building.

The closest Methodist Church was in Liberty. Avondale was considered a mission church and was served sporadically by Methodist or Presbyterian ministers. In 1927 Mr. Hinebaugh of the Presbyterian Church and Albert Stewart of the American Sunday School Union helped to organize Sunday School. In 1929 the Rev. W.H. Edwards, minister at Liberty, held church services at various times. In 1931 the Rev. G.W. Western served the Avondale district.



Source: Celebrating 50 - Olan Mills, The Nations Studio, Columbia, S.C.

By 1935 the people of Avondale were ready for a permanent minister. The Rev. Ludlow of Liberty became aware of their plight. Together with Mr. and Mrs. T.C. "Doc" Rhodes, Myrtle Freeman, Carl Swensen (Rosie Brown's father), and the school principal Lattie Coor, it was arranged for Rev. Ludlow to have church services in the school building, which was directly south across the street from the present church building and west of the old adobe building that was being used for church services.

## If You Missed the Tour...



You can get the pictures. About 20 people toured the new Goodyear Ballpark taking pictures of each other in the Cleveland Indians showers, the dug out, home plate and plenty more. Joseph Marihart, Sr. Superintendent from Barton Malow Construction Co. gave us the tour. The facility was ready for the first pitch on February 25th against San Francisco. Michael Jordan, a professional photographer who just happens to be from Cleveland, will share his pictures with you. Go to MJProPix.com and search under Three Rivers Historical Society.



Michael Jordan Photo

Upper left: Gloria King in an Indians' locker. Oh, to be a fly on the wall.  
Upper right: The ZIZ sculpture. Above: Our group of 3RHS tourists.

## You Can Help Record History

### Reporters & Writers Wanted

**SAR** - Did you work on Synthetic Aperture Radar at Goodyear Aerospace? We would like for you to share your experience by writing an article for The Quarterly. Richard O'Donnell mentions in his POW story that the bombardiers were getting training in radar. Was it an important advancement for the USAF?

**Local People Who Became Famous** - If you knew them "way back when" we want to read about it. Send a photo if you have one.

## Coming Attractions

- Bill Van Zanten will be guest speaker on April 21, 2009. Bill grew up in Tolleson, joined the Marines and wrote "Don't Bunch Up", one Marine's story.
- Celeste Crouch will give a Power Point presentation, Historic Litchfield Park, Small Town, Global Impact, on May 19, 2009. She has many photos that go up to 1950. Come - Enjoy - Bring a friend!

## Happy Birthday Tolleson

Located on the west end of the Salt River Valley, Tolleson was founded in 1912 by Walter G. and Alethea H. Tolleson, and was incorporated in 1929.

Happy 80th Anniversary!

At this time there are no Birthday Party plans, according to City Clerk, Chris Hagan. "John Paul Lopez, Assistant City Manager, organized the 75th Anniversary Celebration," she said.

### How we grew...

Population: 1940-1,731 • 1950-3,042  
1990-4,434 • Today-6,498

Area 1929: 6 sq miles  
Area now: 6 sq miles  
Elevation: 976 feet

Sales Tax 1991: 2% = \$1,098,996  
Sales Tax 2008: 2.5% = \$6,800,000

"Tolleson" continued on next column





We believe there has been only one logo for Tolleson. Any updates have resulted in the clean, colored version above.

### ***Tolleson: A brief history...***

Due to the ill health of their eldest son, the Tolleson family migrated to Arizona from South Carolina in 1908. In 1910 they purchased a 160-acre ranch at the intersection of 91st Avenue and Van Buren Street for \$16,000. The old "Ten Mile Store" on the southwest corner, the first stagecoach stop en route to Yuma in earlier days, was re-opened by Mr. Tolleson.

Mr. Tolleson chartered a train from the Arizona Eastern Railway on the Buckeye Short Line, provided free transportation, free lunches for prospective buyers, and gave away five dollar gold pieces to those holding lucky numbers. An auctioneer conducting lot sales sold 80 lots at an average price of \$50 per lot that day. Later that year a general merchandise store, which included the first post office, was completed at Monroe Street and 91st Drive. A rural route was established by Leon Tolleson, the first postmaster.

The town's first church, the Christian Church, was established in 1914, holding services in the store. To institute schools, soon after the founding of the town, Mr. Tolleson contributed five additional acres each to the elementary and high schools after their purchase of five acres.

During the 1930's Tolleson, like other communities across the nation, struggled wearily through the Great Depression. Beginning with the 40's, however, agriculture in the area began a dramatic recovery and was an economic boom to the city. By the 1950's, Tolleson had become known as the "Vegetable Center of the World." (*Excerpts from City of Tolleson 75th anniversary book*)

# A Short History of Estrella Rotary Club

*Established 1967*

The idea of forming a Rotary Club on the west side of Phoenix began with a meeting between District Governor Don Smith of District 549 and Cecil H. Miller of the Maryvale Rotary Club. Cecil was a Special Representative of the District Governor as well as President of the Maryvale Club.

Cecil was directed to locate men who had been past Rotarians or would be good prospective members. He met first with Harold Porter and Bill Tainter. Following meetings included Mel Compton and Jerry Human, also past Rotarians. Each man was assigned to contact qualified men and ask them to participate in a dinner to better understand the functions of Rotary.

March 7, 1967, around twenty guests and five active members met at the Sundowner Motel in Goodyear. Cecil presided at this meeting and with the help of Rotarians from Sun City, explained the functions and expectations of Rotary International. Art Mathis, Bill Craig and Past District Governor Jim Rooney agreed with Cecil to meet the following week at a luncheon to further discuss the achievements of Rotary to the new members. It was also agreed to make this a Tuesday noon meeting lasting approximately two hours. The Sundowner Motel agreed to reserve every Tuesday for the luncheon meetings.

In May, Cecil asked Harold Porter, Bill Tainter, Jerry Human and Bob McMillan to serve on a committee to elect officers. They met at the home of Jerry Human and names were submitted for new officers. They agreed to nominate Jerry Human as President, Bob McMillan as Vice President, Harold Porter as Secretary and Clint Davis as Treasurer. Mel Compton, Jim King and Bill Tainter were chosen to serve as Directors. The slate was presented and approved at the following meeting, unofficially forming the Estrella Rotary Club.

Bylaws, rules, and regulations were set up by the officers and directors. It was a unanimous vote to name the tri-city club the Estrella Rotary Club. Territorial limits of the club were: Northern Avenue to the north, Agua Fria River to the east, south to Highway 80 and west to Perryville Road.

We were informed that each new member would be inducted into Rotary International on June 17, 1967. This charter night would also involve two other clubs; South Mountain and Tempe East Rotary Club, making this the second time in 62 years of Rotary that three clubs were chartered within one district at one time.

Arizona Governor, Jack Williams, welcomed the new clubs at the Thunderbird Room of the Hotel Westward Ho, Phoenix, AZ. D.D. Monroe, Past President of Rotary International, gave the Rotary Address. The Estrella Rotary Club charter was introduced by Cecil Miller and accepted by President Jerry Human.

New members inducted on this charter night were:

Don Ansel, Malcolm Bartlett, Robert Charnetsky, M.D., Mel Compton, Clint Davis, Warren Hart, Jerry Human, J.B. Jefferies, Jim King, Ray Kloesen, Charles Lakin, Richard Logan, Jim Martin, O.D., Robert McMillan, D.D.S., Harold Porter, Wally Presnuyk, Don Rielender, Roy Don Rhodes, Al Schonberg, Howard Sterns, Bill Tainter, Bill Walker.

Source: Condensed excerpts from Estrella Rotary History, 1981



*Jerry Human, 1967  
first president of Estrella  
Rotary Club*

# POWs Over Here, Over There

## German POWs here...

Nearly 400,000 German POWs were brought to the United States during WWII. HistoryNet records The Not-So-Great Escape from Papago Park in Phoenix. A fascinating story of ingenuity that failed.

Only about one in four prisoners in Compound 1 were gainfully employed picking cotton and doing other chores, earning eighty cents a day in canteen credits, not US dollars. The Geneva Convention exempted officers and noncoms from work detail, allowing them to sleep late and spend their days plotting ways to get beyond the wire fences: sometimes just to look around and then return to their compound.

Ken Wood tells about his father, Ronald R. Wood, who was one of a number of farmers in the Avondale-Goodyear area employing German POWs in the latter stage of WWII. "Because our young men were off fighting to protect our country, these prisoners were a welcome sight to our farming community. In the 40's, cotton and citrus at harvest time were the big labor demanding crops. I remember Dad coming in for supper and telling Mom, 'It looks like now we're going to have our cotton harvested before the rains begin.' Mom was so happy she gave each of us kids a second helping of Jello pudding that evening!

"The best I can remember, we had about 40 or 50 German POWs working on our ranch and most were bussed in from Papago Park in East Phoenix: although some were housed on the West Side. My sister, Margaret, was only 3 or 4 years old, but my brother Pug, and I were intrigued to see men who only a few months ago were fighting our troops – and now they were working for my Dad! Pug, being the curious boy, infiltrated the working German crew while they were picking cotton and before long made friends with many of them.

"Pug and I developed a special relationship with one prisoner. He was assigned to oversee the others so we called him 'The Guard.' His name was Franz L. Grutchmen. It wasn't long before Franz noticed that every evening we had to go down the lane almost a half mile and herd the cows back to the barn to milk them. It was the custom to run cattle on the dirt ditch to keep weeds under control. Franz had a great love for milk and he noticed we drove the cows past the fields they were working in about the same time each evening. Soon he was waiting for us with his mess kit to fill it up 2 or 3 times with rich, warm milk.

"They told us they weren't against Americans as the hard-core Nazis soldiers were, but they were forced into the military against their will. Franz and I communicated a number of times by mail after he returned home to Germany."

## American POWs there...

Richard O'Donnell from Pebble Creek, tells about being a POW in Germany. He does not like to talk about it. In fact his wife, Glo, said she didn't know that he had been a POW until about three years after they were married when she overheard him talking with another POW. Richard would rather play tennis.

O'Donnell joined the Army Air Corps on Sept. 17, 1942. He became a navigator on a B-17, assigned to a bomb group in England in the 8th Air Force and flew missions over Europe. "We got there just before D Day but we didn't get to participate because we weren't checked out. We started flying shortly after."

His plane was shot down. "We had to bail out and got captured. We were spread around Germany." When first captured, O'Donnell was by himself. "The crew was eventually rounded up and I was put together with three of the gunners. We did not see the pilot or co-pilot. A couple of gunners were killed. We were marched to a town eleven miles away and incarcerated in the local courthouse. They put us in a conference room and at night they put us in something like a dog pen with a guard

outside. They didn't feed us because we didn't have ration cards. The harnesses on our parachutes had an escape kit attached and the guards allowed us to have the food that was in there.



◀ *Richard O'Donnell WWII crew in front of plane. Richard was Navigator (front row on right), 8th Air Force, 3rd Division, 4th Wing, 447th Group, 709th Squadron*

One of the gunners had a broken leg, close to a compound fracture, and they couldn't provide medical service. They let us take the morphine from our kits and we were able to control his pain somewhat. Finally, the German Air Force picked us up. Then enlisted men and officers were separated. This was the last I saw of the gunners. I was given part of a loaf of bread and a hunk of Bologna.

"I was taken by bus and train to an interrogation center just outside Frankfurt, put in solitary and left for awhile. Occasionally we heard someone screaming, 'Don't do this and don't do that ... or, I want to talk.' It was all staged. After a few days I was taken to a formal interrogator. Behind the desk was this fellow right out of Hollywood – Neat uniform, dagger, sword, everything. He spoke beautiful English. The interrogator asked me where the bombardier was, and called him by name. Name, rank and serial number...that's all I would give him. We went through his little game for a while then he said, 'I'll tell you where he is. He was shot down before you. But, that's where he made his mistake because I knew the bombardier was safe in the States. Prior to our trip overseas, the bombardiers were taken off the crews for



some special radar training.”

Eventually O'Donnell was transferred to a POW camp where he stayed for nine months. They had a clandestine radio that provided news of the outside world. O'Donnell said they would see low flying aircraft all heading west so we knew something was up. “Then one morning, we woke up and the guards were nowhere to be seen. The Russian Army was advancing and the Germans did not want to be captured.

“Some of our POWs, the smart ones, left to join the Allied Army. The rest of us stayed and roamed the countryside. Several days later the Russian Army arrived and instead of releasing the prisoners, put us back in the prison camp and put guards in the towers. They would not allow allied planes to come into the

airport to fly us out. They threatened to shoot down any allied planes. But, they did bring in a Russian group of entertainers and put on a show for the prisoners.

“After negotiations, the Russians finally agreed to repatriate the prisoners by marching them to Brandenburg and then providing transportation to Russia. This was not acceptable and the ranking Colonel came running over to my barracks as the men were being lined up. They had athletic equipment and he told them to grab baseball bats and break through the fences. Many escaped. Eventually the Russians allowed C-47s to come in for the prisoners. We went to Camp Lucky Strike...it was time to see Paris.”

## POWS Appreciated American Better Half

During the second world war, a prisoner of war camp was maintained at the intersection of Van Buren and Citrus Lane. Since there was such a shortage of manpower, These prisoners were required ot work in the fields either picking or hoeing cotton. Our family lived about one mile from this camp. Each day as we waited for the bus these prisoners would be driven by on flatbed trucks to the fields. We would wave to them as they passed by. The Germans were very stoic and would not respond to us at all but the Italians would wave and yell greetings to us. One day these pictures were thrown out to us by the Italians. One seemed to depict me waving to them and the other ones were apparently pictures of their homeland.

One night some Italian prisoners escaped and came down to our farm. Our Dad was at the front door with a 22 rifle trained on these prisoners while we kids were trying to crane our necks out the window to have a look at them!! They obviously were not out to hurt us but to see what American home life was all about. Years later a very wealthy German industrialist returned to see this camp where he had been a prisoner. I wonder if he ever thought of the little kids watching him go by on those trailers???

*by Beverly Wootton Francis*



*Upper left: drawn by Italian prisoner, donated by Beverly Wootton Francis*

*Upper right: drawn by German prisoner, Bud hauling prisoners to pick cotton, donated by Jo Ann Beck Gongaware*

*Lower left & lower right: drawn by Italian prisoners of their homeland, donated by Beverly Wootton Francis*

## Monthly Meetings

Three rivers Historical Society meets on the third Tuesday of each month at Goodyear Financial Building, Room 117, at 250 N. Litchfield Road, Goodyear, AZ. Notices of date, location and guest speakers are generally e-mailed. If you are computer-free, we will send your copy of the Quarterly and monthly announcements the good old fashioned way...U.S.Postal Service. Please share your copy with friends.

Be sure we have your correct address. E-mail Sally at kskiko@cox.net.

## Oral History Project Needs You



Everyone has a story and we will help you reminisce. We have the means through a fun and informal video format to help you record your memories for your family and community. We can interview you at a location of your choice and with more than one individual; so invite a few family members and friends for a trip through memory lane. Call Lenore at 623-536-1597 to arrange an appointment for an interview. We have a sense of urgency to record oral histories before it is too late.

**Do you remember  
the WWII Posters?  
We'll feature more in  
future issues.**



**Yes, I want to join  
Three Rivers  
Historical Society!**

- Student \$5\*
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**Three Rivers  
Historical Society**

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