



the Quarterly

Remembering the Southwest Valley

Vol. No. 9 Issue No. 1, January, February, March, 2012 • <http://threerivershistoricalsocietyaz.org>.

Salt ≈ Agua Fria ≈ Gila
Three Rivers Historical Society



Happy 100th Birthday Arizona

The 48th state to join the Union, Arizona became a state on February 14, 1912. Nicknamed the Baby State, it was the last of the lower forty-eight to become a state and the first to allow women the vote. The very first Arizona State Legislature gave women voting rights eight years before the rest of the country.

The Arizona State Flag was adopted in 1917. Designed by Charles W. Harris in 1910, the early Spanish explorers are represented by the red and gold colors. The thirteen red and white stripes of the American flag are mirrored in the thirteen red and gold rays. A copper star in the middle signifies the most historically important industry of the state and the rising star of the newest state. The upper part of the flag represents the rays of an Arizona sunset. The first state flag was sewn by the wife of Senator Carl Hayden, Nancy Hayden.

The state tree is the Palo Verde; the state gem is Turquoise. The state flower is the saguaro cactus blossom and the state bird is the cactus wren. Arizona, the sixth largest state in the Union, is 393 miles long and 338 miles wide. At 12,670 feet, Mt. Humphreys in the San Francisco Peaks is our highest point and the Hopi settlement of Oraibi is believed to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in America.



A New Breed of Livestock Comes to Cashion

In the 1890's the ostrich replaced the cows on some ranches. The cattle industry had fallen on hard times with overgrazing of the open range and the arrival of homesteaders. About that time women began wearing a variety of very fashionable hats that featured ostrich feathers. The increased demand by the fashion industry created a new opportunity, and a few decided to try their luck at ostrich farming.

A ranch in Cashion called the Pan-American Ostrich Farm began raising ostriches for their feathers. At that time there were five other similar operations in the Salt River Valley. In "Arizona, a Cavalcade of History", Marshall Trimble reports that in the first shipment of birds to Arizona, only two ostriches survived. But, as luck would have it, one was a male and one a female. Another rancher bought 21 pairs of breeding birds for \$16,000 and was able to double his money when he sold the chicks. The feathers which sold for \$75 per pound were shipped back



east to the hat makers. Their eggs were also harvested, for incubation and for eating. One ostrich egg equals about 33 hen eggs. Some tried roasting the meat, but it was pretty stringy.

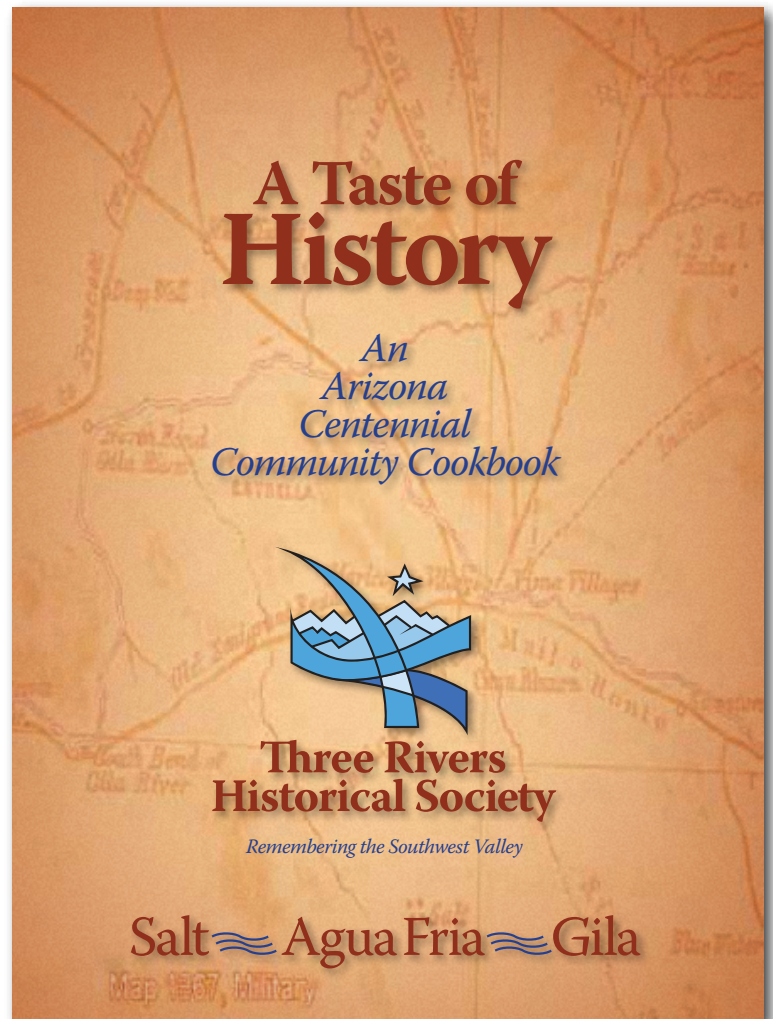
Busting broncos must have been easier than handling ostriches. An adult bird stands eight feet tall and can weigh 300 pounds. They can be mean and ornery when provoked, and don't try to chase them down; they can run 60 miles an hour. When shipping the birds it was best to put hoods over their heads to prevent them from escaping. In other words, ostriches were not that easy to raise.

By the end of the First World War the hats went out of fashion. Some think that the advent of the automobile contributed to their demise, too. It's hard to keep a big hat on your head decorated with large feathers in an open car. Ostrich farms began selling their birds at rock bottom prices to try to minimize their losses.

Coming Soon! "A Taste of History"

Some hardworking volunteers led by Linda Wyman and Sally Kiko have been busy collecting, typing and proof-reading approximately 200 recipes from our friends and neighbors to put into The Taste of History cookbook. They have created a custom cookbook for our area. The cover shows our Three Rivers Historical Society logo, there is a page about our centennial trail and another about the history of our organization. The divider pages between recipe categories feature local historic photos on one side with the story on the other side. Additional hours were spent calling on businesses to obtain advertisements to pay for the "extras" that make this cookbook uniquely ours.

And, now after months of preparation the cookbook will be available in February just in time for Arizona's Centennial. We will have a limited number of books, so purchase yours now. The cookbooks will be available at Three Rivers Historical Society meetings or you can call Linda at 623-935-7887 or Sally at 623-386-1397. As Ken Wood said when we were collecting the recipes, "...this is a once in a hundred year project. This will be a fun book to pass on to family and friends." And, of course, the proceeds will go to fund our Centennial Trail in Estrella Mountain Regional Park.



Roosevelt Dam: Reliable Water Changes the Salt River Valley

The earliest settlers in the Salt River Valley recognized the farming potential of this fertile valley. The prehistoric Hohokam left behind extensive canals, evidence of their success in farming the land. In fact, many of the remnants of the Hohokam canals near the Salt River were utilized by Jack Swilling's irrigation company in 1867. However, the Salt River would flood one year and be reduced to a trickle the next.



Jack Swilling

of the Tonto Creek and the Salt River was chosen as a site for a dam to control flooding and store the excess water for dry years. However, nothing came of this until Congress passed the Hansbrough-Newlands Act, the National Reclamation Act, in 1902. The act authorized and funded five irrigation projects in the West, the Milk River Project in Montana, the Newlands Project in Nevada, the Sweetwater Project in Wyoming, the Gunnison Project in Colorado, and the Salt River Project in Arizona. The Arizona dam was the first completed. These projects had the full support of President Theodore Roosevelt who felt that these great water storage projects were too large for private efforts and "it is right for the national government to make the streams and rivers of the arid regions useful by engineering works for water storage..."

Before beginning construction, the federal government wanted a guaranteed plan for repayment. The government wouldn't deal with individuals so valley leaders such as Dwight Heard, William J. Murphy, Benjamin Fowler, and John Orme convinced about 4000 landowners to use their land as collateral. These landowners united to become the Salt River Valley Water Users Association, now known as Salt River Project (SRP). This association would manage this huge operation and be responsible for repaying the government.

The construction contract was awarded to John M. O'Rourke Construction Company of Denver. Before the actual dam could be built many other projects had to be completed. A 500 foot



Roosevelt Dam, 1916

As early as 1889, a dam site at the junction

tunnel was excavated for the diversion of the water. A town named Roosevelt was built to accommodate the businesses and shopkeepers that would support the workers. This town would later be moved when the completed dam submerged the area. Government Hill was a community built for the government engineers and employees. The O'Rourke Company had a community for their employees. Various work camps housed the workers close to the outlying facilities; the Apache laborers had six or more camps. The Apache built their own traditional homes, wickiups, of bent wood and brush, 10-12 feet in diameter and usually covered with buckskin or heavy cloth.

A road had to be constructed from Mesa to the dam so that supplies could be transported to the site. This road was built by laborers, many of them Apaches. It was later named the Apache Trail and was named the first State Historical Road in 1987. A temporary power plant was built in 1905 that used fuel oil to produce electricity. The next year a power canal was completed that allowed them to use water to power the turbine engine and a 950 kilowatt generator. A cement mill was built of bricks made on site. It was a three level mill built on a steep canyon wall which allowed gravity to transport the limestone and clay to the mixer.

The men that constructed Roosevelt Dam were diverse and O'Rourke had labor divisions based on ethnicity. The African-Americans from the south, using shovels, pickaxes, and sledgehammers excavated tons of sand and rock. Italian stonemasons cut and lay the outer masonry walls, aided by the Germans and Scots. Mexican workers chopped wood and freighted supplies. Many Italians and Central Europeans were unskilled laborers. Most Anglos of American ancestry were the

continued on page 7



Red-Tailed Hawk, photo by Jonathon Abel

Letter to the Editor

I just saw your excellent Quarterly and website via my good friend and your energetic supporter, Ken Wood!

I was led to send you something you may wish to share with your readership.

This red-tailed hawk has hunted our family farm for years...nesting in the big cottonwoods down on the corner of the place near Indian School and Cotton Lane. I like to go out in the crops by myself in the early morning and just be calm and enjoy the cool sunrise...offer thanks in my way, for the more than half century my family has cared for this land...and remember the long, hot days of my youth on the end of a shovel out in those fields...or guiding a dusty, hammering tractor through the rows of cotton or sugar beets, red potatoes, lettuce and more cotton. I sat resting under this hawk's towering cottonwoods as an 8 year-old kid and as years passed ate a good many sack lunches in the deep shade before restarting the field machines for the afternoon. The day started at 4:00AM and you really wanted to get as much done as you could before the sun laid its hot hand on your shoulder...and the workday didn't always end at sundown.

Old memories that maybe don't really count for much, these days...but we're a 6 generation West Valley farm family and wouldn't feel right living anywhere else. We're Arizonans...children of the Great Sonoran Desert.

And my timeless old friend rose off his perch to greet the day with me just as I photographed him. I see his strength and his fierce resolve and I am heartened... Thanks for all you efforts preserving the fascinating history of the Three Rivers...

Jonathon Abel, for the Abel Family Farm

P.S. We were membership card number 700 at the Wigwam Country Club!

First Drive-through Bank Teller for Goodyear

The year was 1956, and I had just graduated from Buckeye Union High School. I thought I wanted to become a nurse so I applied for and was accepted by the St. Joseph School of Nursing in Phoenix. I enjoyed it at first but, after being there for about a year my interest in a nursing career changed. I returned home to my folk's house on 5th Avenue East in Buckeye. I began working at Buckeye Union High School helping my Mom, Irene Hunter Makin, who was the only secretary at BUHS at that time. I handled money transactions and bookkeeping and also helped answer students' questions.



Sharon Wood

After working at the high school for 5 or 6 months, I applied for a job at the First National Bank of Arizona, built in 1953 on Western Avenue in Goodyear. I got the job and started to learn banking procedures. After a short period of time the bank manager, Bob Keck, asked me to become a teller. Then with only a short period of time to get banking experience as a teller, Mr. Keck assigned me to be the teller at the newly added Drive-thru Window! He said it would be the first DRIVE-THRU WINDOW

Centennial Trail Groundbreaking, February 14

Archaeological survey has been completed!

The Three Rivers Historical Society, Maricopa County Department of Parks and Recreation and the West Valley Arts Council invite you to the groundbreaking ceremony of the Centennial Trail at Estrella Mountain Regional Park Nature Center on our state's one-hundredth birthday Tuesday, February 14, 2012 from 9:30 am to 12:00. The ceremony will take place at 10:00am. Estrella Mountain Regional Park will be hosting their own Centennial Celebration with their *100 Miles of Hiking* contest at 9am. This groundbreaking will also be an official event of the Arizona SciTech Festival. There will be exhibits, refreshments, tours of the site, information about ways to get involved, how to "Adopt a Node", and a chance to buy our "The Taste of History" cookbook.

The Centennial Trail will be a half mile loop trail that will follow an old braid of the Gila River. The "old braid" will run with water from the aquifer directly below the site. Historical and educational features such as exhibit nodes, benches, descriptive kiosks, and public art relevant to the trail's concept and environment will be installed. These features will describe and depict the geologic history of the Estrella Mountains, explain the history of the Hohokam people and their culture, provide information on the first explorers and settlers of the region, discuss important historical events, and track the the effect of agriculture, industry and war on the economy of the Three Rivers Region to 2012.

The primary desired outcome for the Centennial Trail project is to provide visitors to the Park an enhanced experience along a trail that is easily accessible, ADA compliant and one that highlights the importance of the region to its diverse inhabitants as well as depicting the natural features that are still visible and undisturbed today. As a result of the project, the history of the region will be visually and materially accessible, not in a museum as a display, but on the actual land where so much of it happened.

The Centennial Trail is expected to endure based on the permanent nature of the trail, its location next to the Park's Nature Center, and the fact that Estrella Mountain Regional Park is a permanent part of the county's system.

Entrance to the Park on February 14 until noon, is FREE by mentioning "Three Rivers Historical Society". For more information call Ed Buonvecchio, 623-556-7988, or visit our web site and visit the Arizona SciTech website at: <http://azscitechfest.asu.edu/azscitechfest>.

Annual Renewal of Membership

Each January is the time for annual renewal of membership dues for everyone except Lifetime Members. To reduce costs and related processing, this year the Board of Directors is eliminating the invoice that was mailed at the end of each December. Instead, we ask that you mail your check to our P.O. Box 7251 in Goodyear, AZ 85338 or bring it to the January or February meeting. Your cancelled check will be your receipt for 2012 membership. A sales receipt can also be sent to you if you include your current e-mail address. Please write on the check the category of 2012 membership fee for which you are making payment.

The annual membership fees for 2012 are shown below, and are the same as for 2011.

Student \$5	Single \$15	Family \$25	Business/Professional \$45
Contributor \$100	Benefactor \$250	Lifetime \$500	

If your business must receive a formal invoice before payment of the annual membership fee can be made, please let our Treasurer know in writing. He will send you one. His e-mail address is Ray.Shuey@gmail.com or you may reach him through our P.O. Box 7251. Include your e-mail address and let him know if it would be okay to receive the invoice electronically to cut down on mailing costs.

Thank you for your continuing participation and support of our organization. The Board of Directors and fellow members appreciate it!

West of Phoenix, perhaps Arizona. In my mind, I was trying to imagine what a job like this would entail. I had never seen a drive-thru bank window anywhere. But with help from Barbara Ludlow and some others, I soon settled into my new position and I was enjoying the new challenge. The window was located in the back of the bank building so cars had to drive around the building to my window. It is all enclosed now, but the outline of the window is still visible.

I had not worked at the drive-thru window very long when I noticed a new face using my window rather often. It turned out to be Ken Wood, my future husband. After his many deposits and withdrawals at my drive-thru window, Ken and I were married in the Buckeye Community Church in Buckeye, AZ in November of 1959.



Sharon and Ken Wood

My employment at the Goodyear Branch of First National Bank of Arizona came to an end due to the bank's 6-month pregnancy policy. So, I had to leave. I submitted my resignation as Goodyear's First Drive-Thru Bank Teller and became a First Time Mom! We were blessed three months later with our first child, Steve. Back in those days my Mom always said that being a mom was the most important job a woman could ever have.

Ken and I are the proud parents of 3 children, 7 grandchildren, and 2 great grandchildren.

Submitted by: Sharon Makin Wood

Flight Officer Gene Autry

You ask, is there a local connection here? Well, of course there is! Gene Autry spent time at Luke Air Force Base during WWII. In fact, his CBS radio show, "Melody Ranch" was often broadcast from Luke AFB while he was stationed there.

Gene was born on September 29, 1907, in Tioga, Texas. He was first billed as "Oklahoma's Yodeling Cowboy" in 1929 and signed a recording contract with Columbia Records that same year. He debuted in movies in 1934, starring in 93 movies throughout his career. He has written or co-written over 300 songs and made 640 recordings. His most popular song was his "Melody Ranch" theme song, "Back in the Saddle Again." He was the first performer to sell out Madison Square Garden.

In 1950, Autry broke into television when he produced and starred in "The Gene Autry Show." Over the next five years he produced 91 half-hour shows. Later he owned radio stations such as KMPC, and television station KTLA. Locally he was part owner of KOOL, in Phoenix and KOLD in Tucson. In 1961 he acquired the American League California Angels professional baseball team. He was the Vice President of the American League until his death in 1998.

In a career that spanned 70 years Autry had many achievements. He was the only entertainer to have all five stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, one each for Television, Motion Pictures, Radio, Recording and Live Performance. He has been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, The National Cowboy Hall of Fame, and the National Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame. And, he fulfilled one

of his dreams when he opened the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum in 1988.

However, in the midst of this busy and profitable career, and against the wishes of his studio he enlisted in the Army Air Corp in 1942. His induction was held on July 26, 1942 during a live broadcast of his radio show, "Melody Ranch." After basic training at Santa Ana Army Air Base and further training at Luke Army Air Base and Thunderbird Field he attended flight training at Love Field, Texas. On June 21, 1944 Autry received his service pilot wings and was promoted to Flight Officer. He was assigned to the 91st Ferrying Squadron of the 555th Army Air Base Unit, Air Transport Command at Love Field. He served in the unit until October 1945. He was qualified to fly the AT-6s, 7s, and 11s, as well as the C-104s and 109s. He flew in Africa and in the China-Burma-India Theater. It is rumored that he was the only serviceman authorized to wear cowboy boots on duty.

Autry's radio show "Melody Ranch" was reduced from 30 to 15 minutes during his time in the service and was renamed "Sergeant Gene Autry." He enthusiastically participated in War Bond Rallies and

recruiting drives. At the end of the war he transferred to the Special Services and took USO Troupes to the south Pacific. He was discharged in 1946. For his service he was awarded the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal.

Thanks to Dennis DeFrain for the idea and his research assistance



Historic Bell Returns to St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School recently opened their expanded school campus. The project, totaling 36,000 square feet, added a pair of two-story classroom buildings. The new buildings mirror the original mission-style classroom buildings. The two wings are joined with a gated wall. The additional classrooms allowed St. Thomas to double its enrollment in pre-school and have a second classroom through second grade.

The new, gated wall has a large opening above the gate, a perfect place to hang the historic bell that had been a part of the old St. Thomas Aquinas Mission Church completed in 1923. It is unclear when the bell was installed in the old church, but it was cast in St. Louis in 1924. Somehow Dr. and Ebie Saba ended up with the bell when the old mission church was sold and they returned it to a place of honor at the parish school. The expansion was dedicated on September 16 by Bishop Olmsted and Auxiliary Bishop Nevares. As the gate was opened the historic bell rang again as it had for many years from the old mission church.



Continued from page 3

engineers, supervisors, shop owners and skilled workers. The average unskilled worker was paid \$2.50 per day. A skilled worker might earn up to \$5 per day and the highest paid engineers made \$12 per day.

The first stone was laid on September 20, 1906. Heavy rains caused flooding in February, 1908 and halted construction for a week. Flooding occurred again in August and December, 1908. The dam was completed in February, 1911 at a cost of ten million dollars. The Roosevelt Dam was dedicated on March 18, 1911 by former President T. Roosevelt. Eleanor Roosevelt and his daughter Ethel accompanied him. They arrived by train at the Santa Fe Depot in Phoenix and drove in a caravan of cars to the dam.



First stone laid, September 20 1906

At the time of the dedication the water level behind the dam was about 115 feet. On April 15, 1915 the water level hit the high water mark of 225 feet with 1,367,305 acre feet in the reservoir. Water began to flow over the spillways; a short ceremony marked the occasion. Men were positioned to catch the first water over the spillway in bottles. One of these bottles was used to christen the USS Arizona on June 15, 1915.

The 1976 failure of the Teton Dam in Idaho prompted the Bureau of Reclamation to inspect all federal dams. As a result, the Reclamation Safety Act of 1978 was passed which approved modifications to Roosevelt Dam. A concrete overlay that was compatible with the masonry was designed. Over the next several years the dam was raised 77 feet for a total height of 357 feet.

The cost of the modification ran 430 million dollars and increased water storage 20%, 1,802,202 acre feet. Even though water storage and flood control were the primary functions of the dam, the dam contributed more than any other dam in Arizona to the settlement of Central Arizona and large-scale irrigation. Hydroelectric power has been an important product of the Roosevelt Dam. In addition, a wonderful recreation area has been available for all to use.

With the success of Roosevelt Dam the construction of other dams followed. In 1923 Mormon Flat Dam was built on the Salt River, followed by Horse Mesa in 1924 and Stewart Mountain Dam in 1928. Bartlett and Horseshoe were built on the Verde River. As our population expands and drought continues to be a problem, once again we are faced with the problem of finding sufficient water to sustain growth and provide for the future.

The Beginnings of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

The rumblings of WWII brought Goodyear Aircraft and the Litchfield Naval Air Facility to the area that soon became the Town of Goodyear. Both of these facilities brought an influx of workers from other parts of the country.



In 1946, my uncle, Ed Darnell, his wife, Melva, and two children moved into housing on Litchfield Road across the street from Goodyear Aircraft. At the end of the war, my dad was laid off from Grumman. My Aunt Melva persuaded my parents to come to Arizona. My aunt loved the climate and felt sure dad would find work here. So in 1949, my family moved to Goodyear from New York. I was eight, my sisters were ages six and three. At school I was teased unmercifully about my New York accent!

As we became acquainted in the town we found other families that were Lutherans, too. One was the Dory Snydals who had come from Iceland. Dory worked for the Town of Goodyear and lived here with his wife, Disa and six kids. By reaching out, we found several other families in the area that became the nucleus of a congregation.

This small group of Lutheran families began meeting at the Boy Scout Lodge for Sunday worship. Pastor Damrow came to serve this small congregation that became the founding members of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church. The names of some of the founding families included the Cecil Reinch, William Newman, Walter Bensburg, Snydal, Darnell, Terkelson, Gilbertson, and Johnson.

By the time that I was twelve years old there were several kids who needed Confirmation instruction. Pastor Damrow conducted the classes on Saturday mornings and we became the first class to receive Confirmation. At about this time our congregation had outgrown the Boy Scout Lodge. We purchased land on Litchfield Road across from Westwood Manor now called Park Shadows. The men of the congregation who had building skills were asked to help in the construction of the church building and the attached parsonage.

In 1956, with construction completed, the building was dedicated and the first services were held under the leadership of Pastor Albert F. Gerstmann. In 1959, my husband Ken and I were married in our church by Pastor Daugs. Pastor Daugs, although an older gentleman who suffered with arthritis, had been convinced to come to lead our church. We had all hoped that the heat would ease his pain and it did.

Fast forward to 2010 and Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, under the leadership of Pastor Jeffrey Gallen, added the Open Arms Center to their campus. The center is used primarily for community outreach. On Mondays and Tuesdays of each week we provide food, clothing, furniture and appliances to working families and the unemployed to help meet their basic needs.

By Lenore Semmler

January, February, March 2012

Yes, I want to join Three Rivers Historical Society!



- Student \$5*
- Family \$25*
- Contributor \$100*
- Lifetime \$500
- Single \$15*
- Business/Professional \$45*
- Benefactor \$250*
- * Yearly Fee

Join _____ Renew _____ Call me to volunteer _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ (Evening) _____

Cell _____ e-mail _____

Check enclosed in the amount of \$ _____
A receipt will be issued to you.

Make out your check and mail to:

Three Rivers Historical Society,
P.O. Box 7251, Goodyear, AZ 85338

Three Rivers Historical Society is a 501 (c) 3
non-profit organization



Three Rivers Historical Society

Remembering the Southwest Valley

P.O. Box 7251, Goodyear, AZ 85338

Board of Directors

Frank Ross, President
Peggy Jones, 1st V.P.
Ed King, 2nd V.P.
Sally Kiko, Secretary
Ray Shuey, Treasurer
Bill Arnold, Past President
Mark Pelletier
Lenore Semmler
Ed Buonvecchio

The Quarterly

Editor: Sally Kiko

Graphics Editor: Ed Buonvecchio

3RHS Meetings

We meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 3pm, at Goodyear City Hall, 190 North Litchfield Road, Suite 117, Goodyear, Arizona. Notices of date, location and guest speaker are e-mailed. Be sure we have your correct address. E-mail Sally at: kskiko@cox.net