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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



Vol. No 10 Issue No. 1, January, February, March 2013 \* <http://threerivershistoricalsocietyaz.org>

### Centennial Trail News

There has been a lot of activity on Centennial Trail this fall. Hickman Eggs continued to provide us with roll-away dumpsters for the disposal of our brush, Maricopa County Sherriff's Office Chain Gang provided several days of hard work in gathering the brush and loading dumpsters, and the Goodyear/Perryville Teams chipped brush and raked for us.



In November the Desert Edge Agriscience Program came for a work day and plans to help us with the Hohokam garden feature of the trail. Estrella Park personnel have flagged the trail head and will soon clear the area and prepare it to receive the base materials made possible by a grant from the City of Goodyear. A sign has been purchased and is ready to be installed at the trail head.

And, most recently, the two graduate students in the ASU School of Land Scape Design, Jesse Westad and Traci Arellano, presented their first renderings of the trail. The graduate students were enlisted by Trail Committee Chairman, Denise Bates, an ASU Professor. Their next step is to design each exhibit pad, a plant palette for the pads and the trail and plan for the irrigation needs. A public event is being planned for February 14 to celebrate the progress and plant our first tree which will be dedicated to the memory of Ray Shuey, who spent many hours working on the trail. After the long, hot summer months of removing the invasive salt cedar it is exciting to be finally getting into the actual build phase of the trail. We continue to seek grants and donations of materials and money to continue the project.

### A Letter to 3RHS

Dear Three Rivers Historical Society members,

Thank you (and all the volunteers) for your help in the making of the Centennial Trail. Someday it will be a place that kids like me can go to and learn about local history. The volunteers can even look back and say "Hey, I remember when I used to volunteer here." It will be a good memory.

I, as a volunteer myself, see the Centennial Trail as an important historical site where people will be reminded of this area's history. We don't have anything like it nearby, so it is important that we work together to make it happen not just for kids like me, but for future generations! Thank you.

Sincerely,

Claire Bates, age 9

## Three Rivers Historical Society

Remembering the Southwest Valley  
P.O. Box 7251, Goodyear, AZ 85338

Sally Kiko, President

JoAnn Gongaware, 1st V.P.

Ken Wood, 2nd V.P.

Wendy Neely, Secretary

Peggy Jones, Treasurer

Frank Ross, Past President

Mark Pelletier, Lenore Semmler

The Quarterly

Editor: Sally Kiko

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### 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](mailto:kskiko@cox.net)

Salt ≈ Agua Fria ≈ Gila  
Three Rivers Historical Society

## Three Rivers Needs a Treasurer

With the New Year comes new, or in this case, returning officers for this organization. Our nominating committee was able to fill all of the offices with the exception of Treasurer. The current officers all agreed to remain in office another year, including JoAnn Gongaware, First Vice President, who filled a vacancy in that position this fall. However, a few months ago our Treasurer had to resign. Peggy Jones graciously agreed to take over the books until we could find a new Treasurer. Peggy is our archivist and has served the organization in the past as both Vice President and Treasurer. So, we need someone to step forward and give us a hand.

We need someone with bookkeeping or accounting experience and well as computer skills. Non-profit experience would be a real plus. If you are interested in this position, please call Sally Kiko at 623-386-1397 or email [kskiko@cox.net](mailto:kskiko@cox.net).

## Three Rivers Busy This Fall

Your local historical society was busy this fall promoting Three Rivers Historical Society and selling cookbooks to raise funds for our Centennial Trail. First of all we had a yard sale on October 20<sup>th</sup>. We had plenty of volunteers helping to set up on Friday and sell goods on Saturday. The sale was a resounding success; we made \$1000 proving once again that "one man's trash is another man (or woman's) treasure." Thanks to all of you that donated, worked and shopped!

That same day we had a table at the Goodyear GAIN event. Again we called on volunteers to staff the table. We sold cookbooks, talked to people about both the historical society and the Centennial Trail. Our volunteer, Linda Wyman, was approached by a sixth grader expressing interest in writing articles for our newsletter. What a bonus! I hope you'll see her article in the next issue.

On October 21<sup>st</sup> a number of us attended the Grand Opening of Litchfield Park Historical Society's Museum. What a fine job they have done in creating a place to view the pictures, artifacts and stories of the early days in Litchfield Park.

Saturday, October 27<sup>th</sup> had volunteers working both the Tres Rios Festival and the Pebble Creek Art Festival. Again we sold cookbooks and visited with people about the trail and the historical society.

In November, we showcased some of our historic photos and memorabilia at the Avondale event "All About Giving." This event was planned to allow the non-profits in our communities to demonstrate what they do for the community. You can see by this list of activities that there is more going on than our monthly meetings. And, that we can always use more people who are willing to lend a hand!

## Liberty School

### Responds to Victims of Dust Bowl

In the 1930's a period of severe drought and huge and unrelenting dust storms that stripped the High Plains of top soil and wiped out not only the farmers but the local merchants and businessmen who supplied them. The Dust bowl affected 100,000,000 acres centered on the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma and parts of New Mexico, Colorado and Kansas. The dust spawned a new disease, "dust pneumonia." After years of crops that failed, farm foreclosures, and no way of feeding their families 2.5 million people moved out of the plain states; many of them hoped to make it to California where it was said that jobs were plentiful.



They left with little more than the clothes on their backs, an old car or truck and headed out looking for work. They stopped along the way to do what farm labor they could find to be able to purchase food and gas to continue the journey. The lucky ones might have a tent or a tarp to provide some shelter and cooking was done on a campfire. Many of these families came through Arizona, stopping, at least for a time in our communities. Their plight inspired local men and women to help these families.

These migrant families wanted the same things for their children that we want for ours. So wherever they stopped for a spell they would send their children to school. One of those schools was Liberty Elementary School, a small country school between Phoenix and Buckeye. At the time, Art Mercer was the superintendent and he tells of 40 new students showing up for school one morning. Most of the children arrived without breakfast and had no money for lunch, ten cents at that time. Mercer set out to help these children entrusted to him. He used proceeds from the lunch program to buy corn and beans. The community of Buckeye donated \$25 and local people helped, too. One lady set out 5 gallons of milk each morning and the school bus picked it up along with the kids. Another donated cracked eggs that couldn't be sold. Remember, this is in the middle of the Great Depression, none of the families were doing all that well! By spring of 1938, this small country school was providing as many of 128 free lunches a day. This was not a federally funded program; this was grassroots, families helping other families. Mr. Mercer saw a problem and with the help of the local community provided a solution.



## From Marinette to Sun City

In the early years of the 1900s, a businessman and adventurer from Marinette, Wisconsin came to the Salt River Valley and was impressed by the growth and the potential of the region. R. P. Davie purchased or leased thousands of acres between the Agua Fria and the New Rivers. He developed a deep well pumping system to irrigate his acreage. He then followed the lead of the founders of Peoria and laid out a town site named for his home town.

He envisioned a city of hardworking farmers and tradesmen that would use the good soil, water rights and good climate to make a prosperous community. The Marinette, Arizona Post Office was established in 1912. However, Davie made a serious mistake in 1918 when he decided to grow sugar beets and lost heavily. In 1920 he sold his holdings to Southwest Cotton Company for one million dollars and the town of Marinette became a company compound. The affairs of Marinette were administered from Litchfield Park, seat of the Goodyear Cotton empire.

In 1936 J. G. Boswell Company purchased the Marinette Ranch from Goodyear. Under Boswell, the ranch continued to flourish. As machines replaced men, the town was no longer needed and was planted in cotton and lettuce. At the time, it was one of the nation's most prosperous plantations. By 1960, all that was left of the town was the sign on the Santa Fe right-of-way bearing the name, Marinette.

Five miles southwest of Marinette one could find a sign on the Luke AFB railroad spur bearing the name "Webb." Webb, Arizona was a construction camp established in 1941, when, Del Webb, a young builder from Phoenix was awarded the contract to construct Luke Air Base. While busy building the base he was learning the art of community development. This had a profound influence on the history of Marinette. In 1959, Boswell released cotton acreage to Del Webb to build a motel, shopping center, recreational complex, medical clinic, golf course and model homes. Orders were taken for four hundred homes and apartments in the first month, January, 1960. Thus, Sun City, Arizona-America's Most Famous Resort-Retirement Community was born.

Sun City is a unique real estate development. Webb had invested two million dollars in amenities before he sold his first home. His goal was to fuse the proper elements into a living, self-animating community. Sun City is a product of private enterprise developed almost entirely without federal funds or other public involvement. As a retirement community it didn't have to deal with some of the problems other new communities face such as the need for job opportunities, transportation for job commuting, or educational facilities for children.

The success of Sun City began a trend of active retirement communities built expressly for those over 50. The Webb Company went on to build other Sun Cities in other states as well as Sun City West and Sun City Grand. Other developers, learning from his success have built communities like our own Pebble Creek, where retirees enjoy life, actively pursue their hobbies and use their many talents to serve their larger communities.

By the way, Del Webb was the builder of the Goodyear Subdivision, the first housing in Historic Goodyear.

Source: *Arizona Highways*, June 1974

excitement; not for Ken going to high school, but because of their love of attending ball games and practices, including all home and away games, wherever Litchfield teams traveled. This continued on for 8 high school years (four for Ken and four for son, Pug). By this time young daughter Margaret was getting active in her own school activities. So, many other school kids were already calling Ronald and Jewel their own "Team Mom & Dad" because they could always be found along the sidelines or in the bleachers. The 40's were good and happy years.

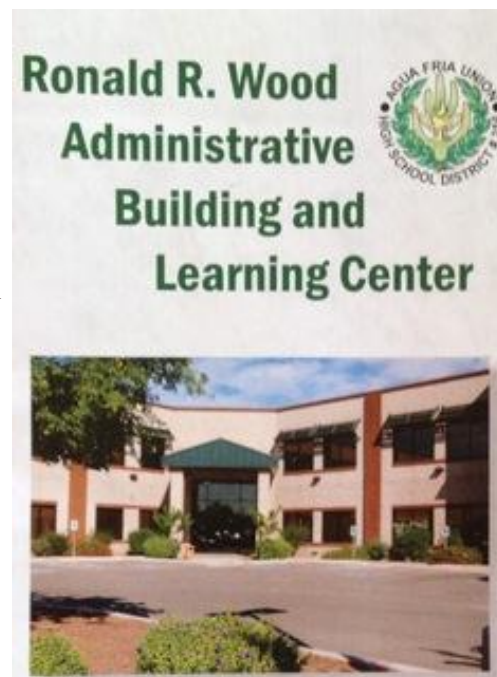
The year was 1956, and the word was getting around that something must be done as Litchfield High School; it was bursting at the seams. A few community leaders gathered at the Litchfield School and it was decided that another high school must be built to accommodate the growth in the communities. Ronald met along with about a dozen others from the communities. It was decided that a new high school should be built in the geographic population center of the three communities and its name was to be Agua Fria HIGH SCHOOL. Ronald was elected to the first governing board and that love affair was to last for 36 years which turned out to be the second longest tenure on record for an Arizona school board member. Those were great years for Ron and Jewel as they became completely engulfed with all of the schools kids and their activities. A long time janitor at AFUHS knew his work was always cut out for him after each school board meeting as on that day a shovel would be needed along with brooms and dust mops. Ronald almost always came to the meetings with very muddy farm shoes. These school activities and the farm were his first love, but a story about Ronald wouldn't be complete without telling of his love of hunting & the great outdoors.

Hunting and fishing ranked right up there with family, church, and teaching his kids the safety and respect of firearms. He started Ken, Pug and Margaret at a very early age and by the time they were each about 5 years old they were good marksmen. His love of the outdoors carried on with his farming friends and neighbors. As the fall season approached, hunting season was soon to follow resulting in a large migration of Westside farmers heading to the hills. Over the years his family garnered many firsts in their search for big game. In 1941 Ronald took the largest buck taken in Arizona that year and was awarded a nice hunting rifle. Many other trophies were collected by him and his family. In 1953 the first legal Big Horn Sheep season opened and Ronald, going by himself bagged a ram, packed it out alone and checked it in at the Salome checking-in-location. He will forever be known as the very first hunter to ever legally take a trophy Bighorn Sheep, the rarest big game animal on the North American Continent. But that isn't the end of the Wood family bighorn sheep accomplishments. Come November of 1958, on Thanksgiving Day, sixteen-year-old daughter Margaret bagged a magnificent ram that set the state record for three years in the Eagle Tail Mountains. Margaret continued her quest hunting sheep and by the time she was twenty-one had completed the Bighorn Sheep 'Grand Slam', all four species in North America, including Desert, Dall, Stone and Rocky Mountain. In total the Ron Wood family has bagged seven rams which runs four generations deep, and Ronald was with all seven family members when they connected.

On December 8, 2010, AFHS honored Ronald by naming the new administration building, **The Ronald R Wood Administrative Building & Learning Center**. He gave 36 years of thoughtful and steadfast service as a member of the Agua Fria Governing Board. An Arizona native and successful farmer in the Goodyear area, he provided guidance and support to develop a strong agricultural/vocational program in the district. The schools benefited from his generous donations of his equipment and his knowledge to discuss various projects. Mr. Wood supported the math and music departments and continues to provide annual scholarships to deserving students. He was an advocate of athletic activities which he viewed as a valuable tool for the growth and development of young people. He and his wife, Jewel, generously donated a press box for the football stadium, which honors his name to this day.

In appreciation for his many years of community service he has received numerous awards, among them the American Legion 'Citation of Appreciation', Kiwanis 'Citizen of the Year' and FFA's 'Outstanding Service Award.' In 1975 and 1992, his name was placed on the Arizona School Boards Associations 'Honor Roll.' In 1986 the National Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association named Mr. Wood the 'AVATA Agribusiness man of the year. In 1988 the National FFA awarded him the 'Honorary American Farmer Degree,' and in 2008 Ronald was posthumously inducted into the Arizona Farming and Ranching Hall of Fame.

By Ken Wood



## Ronald R. Wood A Man Who Loved the Soil & His Community



The year was 1921, our soldiers were returning home from World War 1, jobs were very hard to find, but 25 miles SE of Parker Arizona word had gotten around that a new Copper/Gold ore vein had been located and the small mining community called Swansea, Arizona was hiring again. Ronald's dad heard the news and being the gambler that he was decided he would roll the dice & move his small dairy herd (17 cows) from his home in Chandler to supply milk, cream & butter to the thirsty/hungry miners and their families. But first he had to make arrangements with the 'Arizona & Swansea Railroad' to get his herd there, set up holding corrals, cream separator, buy quart milk bottles, arrange for hay and grain and take his ten year old son Ronald out of Chandler 5th grade & send him along with Ron's cousin and the cows to their new home near the banks of The Bill Williams River.

Ronald quickly fell in love with Swansea. He still had to help his dad milk and care for their cows before and after school. He loved his new teacher and their little one room school house plus his new found friends. One of them was an 18 year old Indian boy named Geronimo, who was still attending grammar school in that one room school house. He quickly took a liking to Ron, calling him 'Indian Ronnie'. That was OK with 'Indian Ronnie' because he soon found out that Geronimo could carry 2 bales of hay at the same time while he and his dad milked the cows and separated the milk/cream for the mining families to bring their quart bottles over to refill them each day. All Geronimo wanted was to drink his daily fill of the fresh warm Guernsey milk. But as with most every, thing sooner or later things had to change, the price of copper/gold had fallen and water had slowly began to fill the mine shafts. Management decided to shut down the Swansea Mining Co. So, back to Chandler they went to continue their dairying; Ronald's mom, dad and their cows, back to where his dad, Ronald, and me too, were born.

And so it was that Ronald met his future wife, Jewel Moses, at a hot dog roast at a friend's house and before long they were married. A year later they had a little baby boy, Ken, (hey that's me). In 1934, Ronald moved his new wife and baby to Litchfield Park where he went to work for JG Boswell Cotton Co. as a foreman, running the cotton seed oil meal compress. During that time the Boswell Company had acquires about 15,000 acres in Marionette, later to become Sun City. Boswell recognized Ronald's hard work and talent and in 1935 they moved him up to become ranch manager of their large cotton acreage holdings. Things were going well and Colonel Boswell realized that eventually Ronald wanted own his own farm, so with a little backing from Boswell, he purchased 360 acres in Avondale He farmed it while he continued to manage the Marionette ranch until 1940 when he devoted full time to developing his new salty, alkali ranch in Avondale.

In 1938 while he was managing JG Boswell's cotton ranch in Marionette he built a new home on his Avondale ranch and continued to live there almost 50 years until they built their new home in Litchfield Park. The 40's were busy years for Ron and Jewel, raising 3 kids, tilling the soil, neighbors helping neighbors farm, and working hard to pay off the farm loan. Sixteen hour days were common but he loved hard work. His neighbors called him the hardest worker they knew but hard work deserves playing hard too. He found his fun and temporary escape from the farm in many ways, but what he liked best was camping with the family. That's the way he introduced them to his love of hunting and fishing, which eventually became so contagious that it would carry on his love of the outdoors with all three kids, and on to four of his great grandsons.

Church was very important with Ron and Jewel. Most Sundays found the family at the Litchfield Park Community Church. Often when Mr. Litchfield was in town one could find Mr. Litchfield and Ronald along with Ken McMicken outside in the church yard talking farming. The 40's and the farm consumed he and Jewel; if any of his friends wanted to talk to him they knew he would be down on the farm and not in the coffee shop. With no home phone until 1946 they had to go to the farm to talk. Jewel did her fair share and more. Besides keeping the home and family going, she took great delight in selling fresh milk and eggs to her regular friends and customers. In 1946 son Ken entered high school and that brought on a whole wave of (con't pg 6)

## Litchfield Park Historical Society Museum

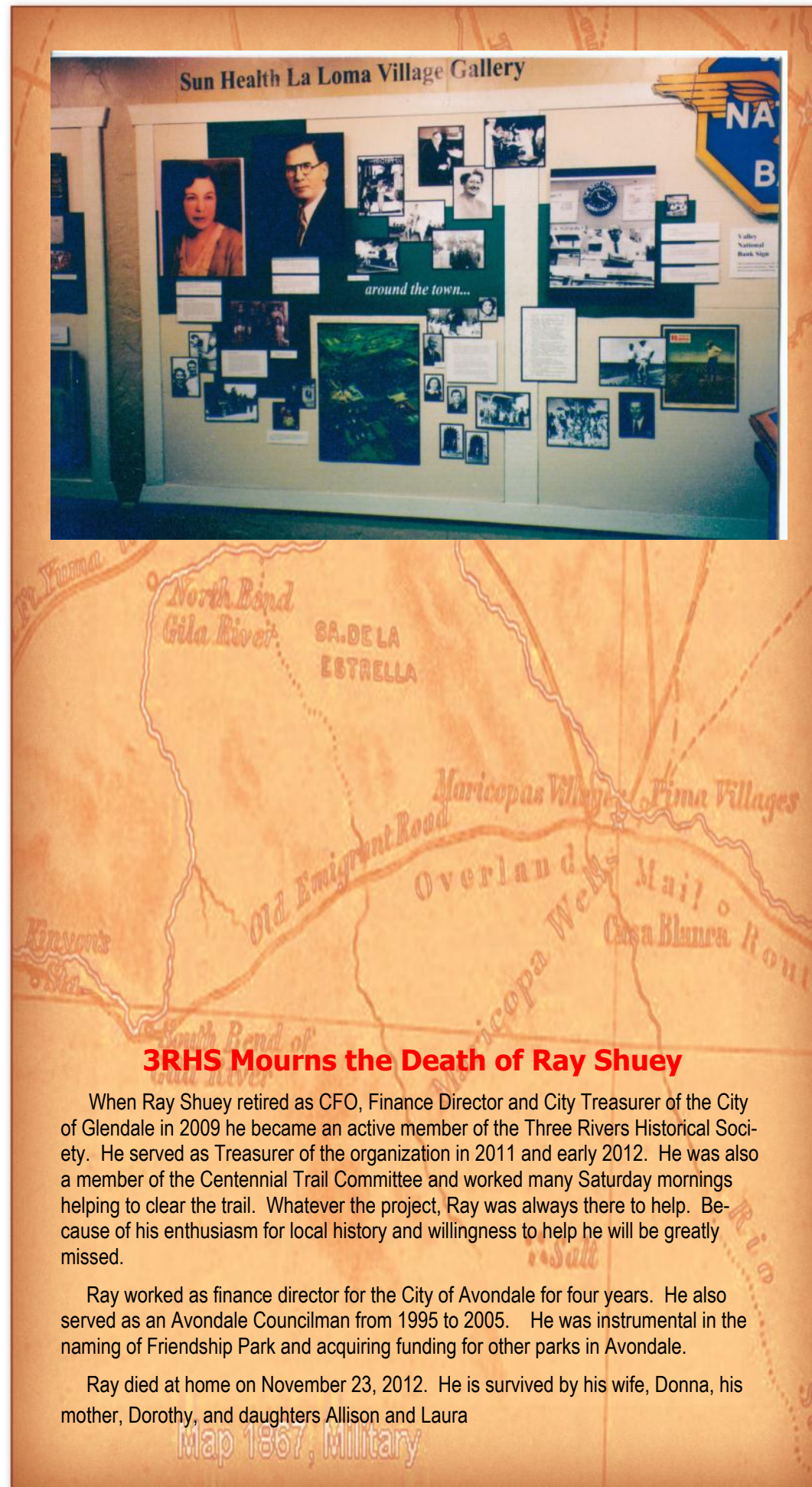
Much like fraternal twins born of the same parents, the cities of Goodyear and Litchfield Park have matured, reside in adjoining neighborhoods, and have developed their separate identities. But their common sources (the Southwest Cotton Co., Goodyear Farms, Goodyear Aircraft and Goodyear Aerospace) left lasting impressions on the individual communities and helped to form their character. All four original entities were subsidiaries of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. of Akron, Ohio; and each of the four businesses had a different purpose. The Litchfield Park Historical Society and The Three Rivers Historical Society (sister organizations) were formed in the early years of this century and have set about as their missions the preservation of this extraordinary history of the Southwest Valley.

The Litchfield Park Historical Society (LPHS) has now established a museum dedicated to this unique history. Opened to the public on October 21<sup>st</sup> of 2012, the museum currently houses five exhibits. Three are of a semi-permanent nature. They are: **Early FAMILIES of Litchfield Park 1916-1959**, **MEDICINE in Litchfield Park**, and **Southwest Cotton Co. and Goodyear Farms**. The first exhibit showcases the families that lived and worked on what was then known of as Litchfield Ranch, an area encompassing most of what we now know call present-day Goodyear and Litchfield Park. There are photos from the early years of *Rancho La Loma* (the Arizona home of Paul Litchfield and his family), Mexican-American and Anglo-American families who resided in the camps (company homes built for the employees of Litchfield Ranch), and those families who lived and worked in the town of Litchfield Park. It also includes a small display of photos and artifacts from Goodyear Aircraft and Goodyear Aerospace. The second exhibit contains a collection of medical equipment from Dr. Robert Hilton's practice (Litchfield Park's fourth doctor), Dr. George McMillan's practice (Litchfield Park's first dentist), and an assortment of medicine bottles and equipment from the early years of the town's existence. Included are photos of a hospital built in 1917/18 and the town's drugstore. The third exhibit tells the story of the Southwest Cotton Co. and its successor, Goodyear Farms (an experimental farm).

Two other exhibitions --- **A Company Town: Litchfield Park from 1916-1959** and **Early Mexican-American Life in Litchfield Park** --- are filled with artifacts and photos from the first 43 years of Litchfield Park's existence. One can also see an hour-long DVD presentation showcasing many of the early Mexican-American employees and their descendents who worked for Goodyear Farms. Both exhibits portray what life was like during the early years when living in Arizona was difficult, then move through the Depression and World War II into the pleasant years of the 1950's. These two exhibits will be replaced with two new ones in the spring of 2013. They will be an historic quilt show and an exhibit on *Tierra Verde* (a planned community).

We hope that all of you will come often and bring your family and friends to see our current and future exhibitions. The museum is open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sundays from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. (Labor Day through Memorial Day, and by appointment). It is located on the northwest corner of Camelback and Litchfield Roads and it is **FREE** to the public. Special tours may be arranged by calling **623-535-4414**.

*By Judy Cook*  
*Vice President, Litchfield Park Historical Society*



### 3RHS Mourns the Death of Ray Shuey

When Ray Shuey retired as CFO, Finance Director and City Treasurer of the City of Glendale in 2009 he became an active member of the Three Rivers Historical Society. He served as Treasurer of the organization in 2011 and early 2012. He was also a member of the Centennial Trail Committee and worked many Saturday mornings helping to clear the trail. Whatever the project, Ray was always there to help. Because of his enthusiasm for local history and willingness to help he will be greatly missed.

Ray worked as finance director for the City of Avondale for four years. He also served as an Avondale Councilman from 1995 to 2005. He was instrumental in the naming of Friendship Park and acquiring funding for other parks in Avondale.

Ray died at home on November 23, 2012. He is survived by his wife, Donna, his mother, Dorothy, and daughters Allison and Laura

## Our Family Car – 1940 Studebaker, Businessman's Coupe

My folks were thrilled when a relative provided them with a black 1940 Studebaker Businessman's Coupe. After all, WWII was raging, folks were short of money and the auto industry was now producing personnel carriers, tanks, etc.

You may have never seen a businessman's coupe so I'll explain. There was no backseat! The trunk of the car was open to the passenger space because there wasn't a backseat to close it off. However, there was a wooden ledge where a backseat would have been in a sedan. And that was where my sister and I rode for the next twelve years. When the family decided to move from Ohio to Goodyear, my father scrimped and saved gas rations until he had enough to make the trip. With gas rations in hand, he packed up the little Studebaker and headed for Arizona.

Now, back in 1945, the word "freeway" wasn't even in the dictionary, so off he goes merrily along the highways and byways between Ohio and Arizona. That is until he encountered Salt River Canyon! Wait, you say, that's not so bad. Well go back to 1945 when it was a two lane road, one lane going in each direction and no guardrails. Highway engineering has come a long way in making travel safer and less scary. Dad always said the reason no one ever left Arizona was because they would have to drive back through Salt River Canyon! Soon my dad found work and a house so Mother, my sister and I came to Goodyear by train. We arrived at the old Litchfield Depot!

So now we are all together, living on Buena Vista in Goodyear. Times remained tough so our family transportation was still the Studebaker Coupe! My sister and I sat on the wooden ledge no matter where we were going, to church in our Sunday best or down to Abraham's for groceries. It's a wonder we even lived to such a ripe old age with no car seat, no booster seat, and no seat belts! We were even allowed to sit in the front seat. In case of a sudden stop my mother could whip that right arm across my chest before my back ever thought of moving away from the seat back.

As the Studebaker aged maintenance became a problem. The gas gauge quit working so Mother kept a yard stick in the garage. She'd remove the gas cap and put the yard stick down into the tank to see if she had enough gas for that particular trip. It doesn't sound very scientific, but it worked for her. Our mechanic and neighbor, Jack Fowler, worked diligently to keep the Studebaker going but finally told her that he could no longer get parts for it and she should think about a newer car. So in 1956, just in time for my sister to get her first driver's license, we replaced the

Studebaker with a green 1949 Ford. Wow! It had a back seat! What a luxury.

*By Sally Kiko*

