


The Quarterly

Remembering the Southwest Valley

Three Rivers Historical Society

Salt • Agua Fria • Gila

The Bracero Program in the West Valley

Labor shortages were endemic country wide during WWII. Farmers were especially affected by the war. Not only were there increased needs for food production, but many farmers' sons joined the military. The war effort had drafted most of the seasonal workers that farmers usually relied on, particularly during planting and harvesting seasons. The factories producing military machines and munitions were paying excellent wages and started utilizing large numbers of women. Despite recruiting efforts, the labor needs could not be met.

In mid-1943, the WLA, Women's Land Army, was formed to supply female workers for agriculture. The WLS achieved only modest success. Most of the women working on farms were the farmers' wives and daughters.

The U.S. and Mexico entered an agreement on August 4, 1942, to allow temporary workers to migrate to the U.S. to aid farmers. It was called the Mexican Farm Labor Program but was soon referred to as the Bracero Program. Bracero means "one who works with his arms." The agreement guaranteed decent living conditions, sanitation, adequate shelter and food. It stipulated a minimum wage of 30 cents an hour. It also stated that these workers would not be subject to discrimination. The program lasted 22 years and offered contracts for 5 billion braceros in 24 states.

Locally, labor shortages were filled by both braceros and POWs. Many of the POWs held in local camps worked in the fields. Obviously, most were not trained to do farm labor and some resented doing manual labor. Others were just grateful to get out of the camps for the day and have something to occupy their time. The braceros that worked in the Valley were either housed in camps on the farmer's land or at more centralized labor camps. One such camp was located on the northeast corner of Van Buren and Dysart Rd.

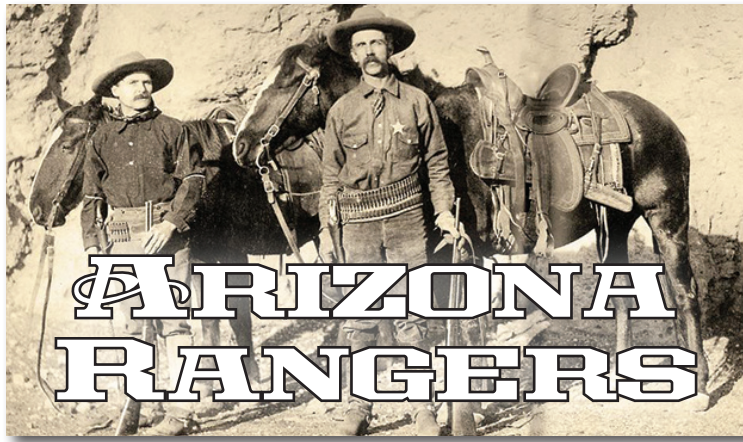
The Bracero Program was controversial in its time. Desperate for work, the Mexican nationals were willing to take arduous jobs at low wages. U.S. farm workers worried that the braceros would compete for jobs and lower wages. However, safeguards were in place to protect both Mexican and domestic workers. One provision was for free transportation back to Mexico at the end of the contract. Employers could only hire braceros in areas of certified domestic labor shortage and could not use them as strike breakers.



The bracero program ended in 1964 and left behind significant struggles for the U.S. government and Mexican government. Braceros working in the U.S. from 1942 to 1948 had a mandatory 10% deduction from their wages for savings accounts which they were to receive upon their return to Mexico. Many who did farm labor never received their savings while those

who worked on the railroad did receive their savings. Today, an ex-bracero can receive up to \$3500 as compensation for the 10% savings only by supplying check stubs or contracts proving they were a part of the program during 1942-1948. It is estimated that, with accumulated interest, \$500 million is owed to ex-braceros, who continue to fight for the money owed them.

Many of the braceros were Catholic. At the local farm labor camp, the local priest would say a Mass at the camp for them. He would drive into the camp and make a couple of turns around the camp ringing a bell to let them know that Mass would be available. Setting up a portable altar under the shade of a tree, he would start Mass and give these hard workers an opportunity to worship as they were accustomed to in their homeland. ❖



Much like the Texas Rangers, the Arizona Rangers were a group of men who committed themselves to a life of public service. The Arizona Rangers were established in 1860 by the Provisional Territorial Government. A few of the re-established Arizona Rangers were at the Tres Rios event where Three Rivers Historical Society had a booth. It was fun to hear their stories and they directed me to their website for their history.

The Arizona Rangers have a long history, beginning in territorial days. Their first task was to protect against Apache raids and to protect the mining camps of Pinos Altos and Mesilla. As you may know, both of those towns were in southern New Mexico. However, in territorial days, New Mexico and Arizona were one territory.

Baylor's Confederate Army arrived in Mesilla and declared the Territory of Arizona as Confederate Territory in 1862. He eventually saw the need for the Rangers and established three companies for the defense of the Arizona Territory. One company was sent to Tucson to defend the western section of the territory. When the Confederates were driven out of Arizona, the plans for the Arizona Rangers were put off for years.

By the 1880s, Arizona was having Indian wars, border crimes and killings, making Arizona a difficult place to live. When Governor Frederick A. Tritle took office, he authorized the formation of the 1st Company of the Arizona Rangers in Tombstone. John H. Jackson was Captain and they were there to combat both outlaws and hostile Indians. Even though the Rangers were contributing to a more peaceful existence for the early settlers, Governor Tritle was unable to get them funded by the Territorial Legislature.

Finally, in 1901, the legislature approved funding for the Arizona Rangers. Fourteen men staffed the organization. The captain was hired at \$120 per month; a sergeant earned \$75 and each private was paid \$55. Their mission was to deal with infestations of outlaws, mainly rustlers, in the sparsely populated territory. The Rangers were an elite, well trained agency. They rode the best horses and were equipped with modern weapons.

Burton C. Mossman of Bisbee became the

first captain of the Arizona Rangers. He had previously been the manager of the two million-acre Aztec Land and Cattle Company, also known as the Hash Knife outfit.

The second Captain was Thomas Rynning. Under his leadership, the first badges were issued. They were solid silver five-pointed ball-tipped stars, lettered in blue enamel with engravings etched in blue. They have become valuable collectibles.

The Rangers increased their number to twenty-six in 1903, drawing many from the Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders. They were skilled horsemen, marksmen and trackers. In addition to dealing with rustlers and other outlaws, the Rangers were called in to deal with several large strikes at mines in Arizona.

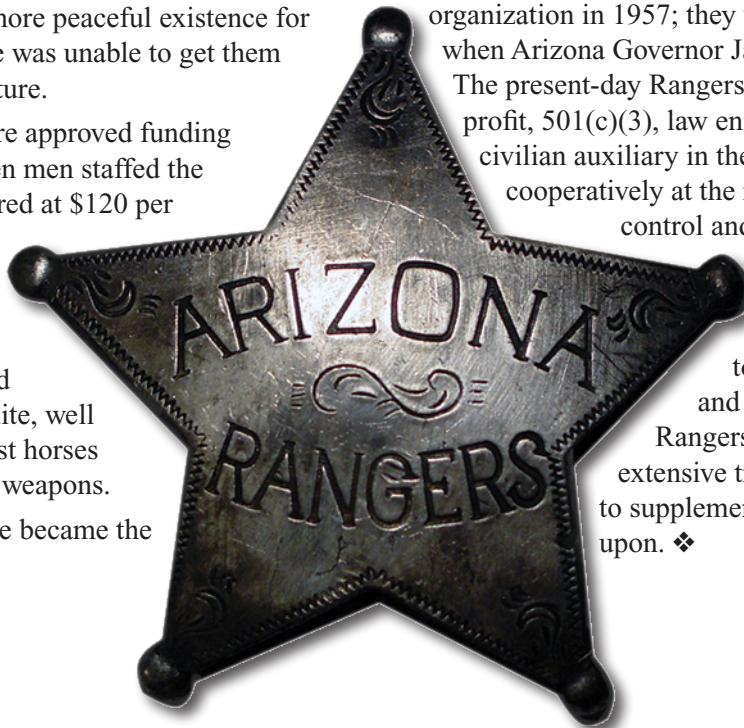
Harry C. Wheeler became the third and last captain of the Rangers. Having held every rank possible in the organization, he was known for his iron will and absolute honesty. He was the best field officer and administrator.

The legislative act that established the Rangers was repealed in February 1909. During the seven and a half years of its existence, 107 men served. They were extremely capable men whose exploits were extensively reported by the newspapers of the day. Many of the former Rangers stayed in law enforcement. In 1955, the State of Arizona authorized a \$100 monthly pension for former Rangers still living in Arizona. Five men qualified.

A few of the surviving Rangers re-established the organization in 1957; they were officially recognized in 2002 when Arizona Governor Jan Hull signed legislative Act 41.

The present-day Rangers are an unpaid, all volunteer, non-profit, 501(c)(3), law enforcement support and assistance civilian auxiliary in the State of Arizona who work cooperatively at the request of and under the direction, control and supervision of established law enforcement officials.

They provide youth support and community service; they work to preserve the tradition, honor and history of the 1901-1909 Arizona Rangers. Today's Rangers receive extensive training and are well prepared to supplement law enforcement when called upon. ❖



Three Rivers Takes Advantage of New Display Opportunities



Your local historical society has capitalized on new display opportunities afforded them by the cities of Goodyear and Avondale and West Valley National Bank. Both Avondale and Goodyear City Halls have offered space for us to display some of our treasures in cases in their lobbies. West Valley National Bank is allowing us to set up a photographic display in their lobby.

The plan is to change out the displays every few months to keep them interesting. We will also rotate displays between sites. We could really use some help in doing this. Is this something you'd be interested in doing? The second question is, do you have any old items, keepsakes, programs or photos that remind us of our beginnings; of earlier times? We are always accepting such items into our archives. ❖

Early Memories— Jo Ann Beck Gongaware

By Jo Ann Gongaware

My earliest memories are of living in the small house on my Uncle Al Belluzzi's farm off Cotton Lane. Those memories start when I was 5 years old. As I was walking back to our house from Uncle Al's, I had to cross a small wooden bridge over the ditch. As I was crossing, a pack of wild dogs came tearing out from the dry ditch. I don't remember how many dogs there were, but they knocked me face down in the dirt and were growling and biting me all over. My uncle came out and ran at them and frightened them away. He then picked me up and carried me to the house, so my mother could clean the bites and doctor them. This was 1946, and people didn't go to the doctor unless there was a dire wound. I had a fear of dogs for years!

Another memory I have from that age is one of falling off a cotton trailer with the sides off and hitting my head on a plow! I jumped up and ran for the house screaming and crying for Mama. She did take me to the doctor that time; head wounds bleed a lot. I received two stitches in the back of my head and still have a scar from that fall. Needless to say, I am a bit clumsy!



Not all my memories are of falls and such. I spent many hours playing outside with my sisters Karlene and Kathie, and cousins Aliene, Marge and Allen. There is a freedom for children in the country that city raised children didn't have. We wondered all over the farm, at least as far as Yuma Road and down to Cotton Lane. My older sister Starr was tasked with caring for the younger kids, especially our baby brother Darrell. Our cousin Joy watched over the Belluzzi kids. Well, they were supposed to, but they had their own interests too. I got into trouble occasionally, like crawling through a line of wooden rowbucks. Rowbucks were put in the ditch when they irrigated the fields of cotton or cattle feed. They could slide boards in the middle of the rowbuck to raise the water level. We were not supposed to play on or near them because snakes and black widow spiders might be in there, but my brother Bill dared me to crawl through. So I did! I got a switching for that!

We would sometimes walk to DeRosier's Grocery store on Yuma Road when we had a nickel that we had earned doing chores. A nickel would buy a big pickle from the pickle jar they kept by the cash register. I loved those pickles! We also swam in the ditches and played where the pump spewed cool, clear water. I have many happy memories of our time living on Uncle Al's farm. ❖

T. C. “Doc” Rhodes

Trancy Clarenton “Doc” Rhodes first came to Arizona in 1924. He was born in North Carolina, but raised in Texas. In 1919, he married Lou Ella Griffith; “Doc” and his wife arrived in Glendale in 1924. It wasn’t long before they found land to settle east of Buckeye. There they established their home and first farm. “Doc” and Lou Ella had five children; Bill; Richard; Gerald (1925-1927); Marge; and Earl.

As a farmer, “Doc” was viewed by fellow farmers as a leader using the latest farming techniques. He was also a businessman owning, among other things, a Chevron station on the northwest corner of Western Ave. and Central in Avondale. As a community leader, he served on the Avondale Elementary School Board for 32 years and was a charter member of the Tri-City Chamber of Commerce (now the Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce). He was active in Kiwanis, the Wigwam Golf Course and the Boy Scouts. Following WWII, when many families struggled for the bare necessities, “Doc” was known by all as a very generous person.

“Doc” was first elected to the Arizona House of Representatives in 1951 and served until 1966. He was Chairman of the Education, State Government and County Affairs Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. He was most interested in agriculture and tax matters and was responsible for introducing much legislation in those areas.



His sons Bill and Earl followed him into politics. Bill first served in the Maritime Service, the Merchant Marines and the U.S. Army. He served as President of the Maricopa County Farm Bureau and Secretary/Treasurer of the Arizona Cotton Growers Association. He also served as President of the Tri-City Chamber of Commerce. He was active in the Loyal Order of Moose and Kiwanis Club. In 1962, he was elected to serve as Lt. Governor of District 8 of the Southwest District of Kiwanis International.

Bill was elected to the Arizona Senate in 1964, starting his term in 1965. His promising political career ended with his sudden death on June 21, 1965. He was survived by his wife and three children.

Few first term senators in the history of the state distinguished themselves as did Senator Rhodes. His competence and ability, his determination and sincerity were recognized by his peers, leading to important committee assignments such as the Standing Committee of Appropriations, Counties, and Municipalities, Enrolling and Engrossing, Finance and Revenue, Highways and Bridges, Livestock and Public Lands and Rules. In addition, he was appointed the Chairman of the Agriculture and Irrigation committee and as Vice-Chairman of the Suffrage and Elections Committee.

Earl, “Butch” Rhodes served on the Avondale Elementary School Board. He served as Avondale’s City Magistrate for 34 years. ❖

Summer Hiatus – Exciting Kick-Off

As is our custom, we will not be having meetings and guest speakers in the months of July and August.

On September 18th, we will kick-off the new year with an exciting program. It will be an evening program held in the former Lockheed Martin Complex in Goodyear. Our guest speaker will be the developer, **D.J. Burton**. He has graciously given the board members a tour and outlined his vision for the property. He has agreed to give our members and guests a Power Point preview of his plans for this unique property. You will see that he values the history of the old buildings and the contributions made by the workers in the all-out war effort during WWII. I hope you will put it on your calendar now and reserve the evening to get a glimpse of his plans for this property.



Born in the 1930's and early 40's, we exist as a very special age cohort. We are the Silent Generation.

We are the smallest number of children born since the early 1900s. We are the «last ones.»

We are the last generation, climbing out of the Depression, who can remember the winds of war and the impact of a world at war, which rattled the structure of our daily lives for years.

We are the last to remember ration books for everything from meat to gas to sugar to shoes and to stoves.

We saved tin foil and poured used fat into tin cans for reuse later.

We saw cars up on blocks because tires weren't available.

We are the last to see the gold stars in the front windows of our grieving neighbors whose sons died in the War.

We saw the “boys home from the war” build their little houses.

We are the last generation who spent childhood without television; instead, we imagined what we heard on the radio.

As we all like to brag, with no TV, we spent our childhood “playing outside”.

We did play outside, and we did play on our own.

There was no little league; there was no city playground for kids.

The lack of television in our early years meant, for most of us, that we had little real understanding of what the outside world was like.

On Saturday afternoons, the movies gave us newsreels of the war sandwiched in between westerns and cartoons.

Telephones were one to a house, very often shared (party lines) and hung on the wall.

Computers were called calculators, they only added and were hand cranked; typewriters were driven by pounding fingers, throwing the carriage, and changing the ribbon.

The “internet” and “GOOGLE” were words that did not exist.



Newspapers and magazines were written for adults and the news was broadcast on our table radio in the evening by Gabriel Heatter. Radio news programs lasted only 15 minutes.

We read and collected comic books and traded them with friends.

We are the last group who *had* to find out for ourselves.

Consulting an encyclopedia at the library was a common occurrence.

The G.I. Bill gave returning veterans the means to get an education and spurred colleges to grow.

VA loans fanned a housing boom.

Pent up demand coupled with new installment payment plans put factories to work.

New highways would bring new cars, jobs and mobility.

Families rarely had more than one car.

The radio network expanded from 3 stations to thousands of stations.

We weren't neglected, but we kids weren't today's all-consuming family focus.

Depression poverty was still deep rooted; by today's standards all of us were poor.

Polio was still acrippler. Most kids had tonsils removed around 5 years of age.

At 6 years of age kids got smallpox vaccinations and had hideous scabs on their arms.

The Korean War was a dark period in the early 50s and by mid-decade school children were ducking under desks for air-raid drills.

Russia built the “Iron Curtain” and China became Red China.

Eisenhower sent the first “advisers” to Vietnam.

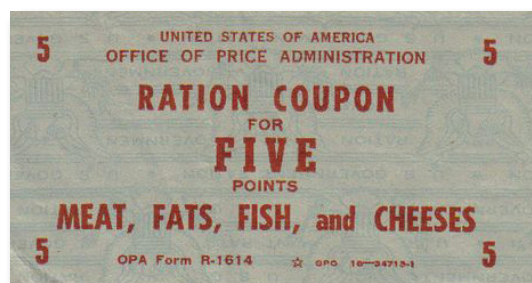
We are the last generation to experience an interlude when there were no threats to our homeland.

We came of age in the 40's and 50's. The war was over and the Cold War, Islamic terrorism, “global warming”, and perpetual economic insecurity had yet to haunt life with unease.

Only our generation can remember both a time of great war, and a time when our world was secure and full of bright promise and plenty.

We have lived through both.

We grew up at the best possible time, a time when the world was getting better. not worse.





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The Quarterly

Editors: Sally Kiko and Diane Fekete

Graphic Design: Ron Talley

Printed by: BMD Printing

Three Rivers Society Meetings

We meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 3pm at the Goodyear Library, 14455 W. Van Buren, Goodyear.

Notice of date, location and guest speaker are emailed.

Be sure we have your correct address. Email Sally:

kdkiko@cox.net



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