

The Quarterly

Remembering the Southwest Valley

Three Rivers Historical Society

Salt • Agua Fria • Gila

Billy Moore Days 1954-2018

Sally Kiko

The “Tri-Cities,” Avondale, Goodyear and Litchfield Park, as we were called in those days, with the support and dedication of the “Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce,” began a long-standing tradition of celebrating the founder of Coldwater (Avondale), Billy Moore. In 2005 the City of Avondale became the sponsor of the celebration.

Most municipalities honor an upstanding citizen or a successful businessman, but our earliest settler was a rascal and a reprobate! Billy Moore’s history is a bit sketchy. After the Civil War he spent some time with a Missouri gang called the Quantrill’s Raiders, a guerilla band. He drifted west, spent some time in Tombstone and settled near a ranch called Avondale on the west bank of the Agua Fria River. A well was dug that provided cold water; a perfect place for his stage stop, general store and saloon. He served as postmaster of Coldwater until it was discovered that he was dispensing moonshine as well as the mail. He died in 1932 at the age of 92 and is buried in Greenwood Memory Lawn Cemetery. The annual celebration called Billy Moore Days is held on the third weekend in October. Its been an annual occurrence since 1954, except for the lean years of 2009 to 2016 when civic funds were tight.

I remember the early Billy Moore Days when all the merchants and town folks were encouraged to



participate. The men entered the beard growing contest, the store clerks wore western wear and the school bands practiced marching to prepare for the parade. The civic organizations and school organizations entered a float in the parade. The challenge was to find a farmer that had a flatbed trailer to spare during cotton picking season, and then it was “all hands on deck” to get it decorated and ready for the parade. Back in the 1950’s, Billy Moore Days had a beauty contest, the winner becoming a contestant in the Miss Maricopa County contest. Some years there were street dances; There always was a carnival and food vendors.

Some of the features of the celebration have changed but it remains a weekend of fun, good food and a parade.

It’s also an opportunity to meet and visit with old friends or make new ones.

Don’t miss Billy Moore Days 2018! It will be held **October 18th through October 21st**. The activities will be found on Western Avenue.





Burrowing Owls

I hope you have had the opportunity to see the diminutive burrowing owl. I have regularly seen them along side the road that borders the east side of the RV park on West Van Buren west of Cotton Lane.

Burrowing owls are small raptors, only slightly larger than a robin. They live and nest in underground burrows created by other burrowing animals such as prairie dogs, ground squirrels or other rodents. They eat mice, other small rodents and insects. They are active during the daytime which allows us to see and enjoy them.

Males and females are about the same size and color. They measure about 7.5 – 11 inches long with a wingspan of 20 – 24 inches. They weigh in at 5-89 ounces.

The female lays an egg once every day or two during the spring until she has a clutch of 3-12 eggs. She then incubates them for 3-4 weeks while the male brings her food. After hatching, both parents feed the chicks. The chicks fledge in 4-5 weeks and are accomplished flyers by 6 weeks. The chicks are demanding children, fighting among themselves to be feed first or to gain the attention of the parents. Their early attempts at flight can be quite comical as they strengthen their wings. It begins close to



the burrow entrance where they stretch their legs, do quick sprints and perform some wild wing gyrations. Finally, they spread their wings and achieve flight even though it may look ragged and not quite graceful.

The burrowing owl is a threatened species largely because of development reaching farther into the desert and grasslands. If these little creatures are present in an area scheduled for development, the developer can have them captured and relocated to a safer area that has had burrows created for them. They adapt very well to this relocation.

Historical Happy Hour at Roman's Oasis



On June 19th, 3RHS members and friends met at Roman's Oasis for an Historical Happy Hour. What fun! We saw folks that we hadn't seen for awhile and met new folks that came out to have a beverage, nosh on appetizers and see what 3RHS is all about. I think they found that we weren't dry and stuffy; we were fun, friendly and willing to share with them the story of Roman's Oasis and how it came to be several rooms cobbled together. Owner Myra Curtis told us about her father's love for the bar and its customers. She told of him adding rooms to the original building as the business grew. She then went table to table showing the photo of the tree in the kitchen! Where else would you find that?

Myra also shared the news that with the 303 Freeway expansion Roman's will have to move. They hope to recreate the flavor and warmth of the current building. We wish them luck on the new facility and thank them for their warm hospitality. We look forward to helping them celebrate the opening of their new building.



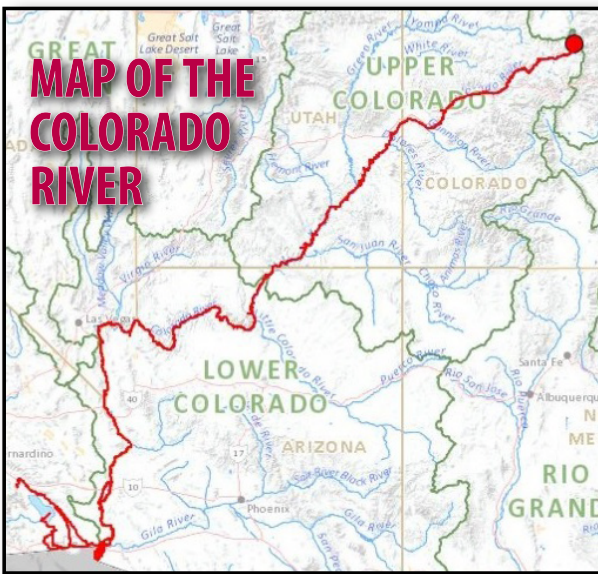
Whiskey's for Drinkin' Water's for Fightin' Over

A look at Western Water Wars, in Four Parts

- Part 1 - The "Almost Shooting War" with California
- Part 2 - Arizona vs. California
- Part 3 - A period of cooperation
- Part 4 - A New War on the Horizon

Prologue

The Southwestern United States is dry. Hopelessly dry. Entire rivers in the west have moved, split, channeled, and dammed to accommodate Western population movements. The Southwest, with its unpredictable weather and susceptibility to drought, has always shown an ever-increasing appetite for additional water resources. In the early 1900s, California and Arizona were getting thirsty, and both looked greedily to the Colorado River on their shared borders.



The "Almost Shooting War" with California

Part 1

In 1922, representatives California, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and Wyoming tried to decide how to divide the Colorado River Water. Los Angeles, in particular, via its highly aggressive Metropolitan Water District, wanted to corral the lion's share of the river in order to continue to feed its expanding population growth (1). The agreement reached, titled the Colorado River Compact, divided the river into the "Upper Basin" consisting of Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico; and the "Lower Basin", including the states of Arizona, Nevada, and California.

The Compact allocated 37% of the available river water to Arizona, 58% to California, and 3% to Nevada, the state with the smallest population. In a show of protest over how meager its share, Arizona refused to sign the Compact. It passed into law as the Boulder Canyon Project of 1928, and became known as the "Law of the River."

Arizona watched as the desert city of Los Angeles bloomed with palm trees, golf courses, and growth, all due to its aggressive water policies. Arizona had relatively no agribusiness and no cities anywhere near the size of Los Angeles. In 1930, the population of Phoenix was about 48,000, Tucson, 32,500. Los Angeles stood at 124,000 (2). With its limited allocation from the Compact, Arizona would never be able to experience California's growth; Arizona politicians and businesses were certain California was going to go after more than its allocated share of 58%.

In 1934, the Arizona premonition turned out to be true, as California's Metropolitan Water District convinced the Bureau of Reclamation to begin building Parker Dam about 150 miles downstream from Hoover Dam. Recognizing that the dam was a ploy by California to grab more and more of the river's water, then-Governor Benjamin Moeur took action by calling up the Arizona Guard to defend Arizona's river bank to prevent construction activities. Major Pomeroy of the Guard was tasked with the job of preserving Arizona's "sacred soil and water", employing a river crossing raft, dubbed the "Arizona Navy," (3) to patrol the river and set up machine gun emplacements to defend the state against the Bureau's construction workers. It's not clear that anyone was shot, nor would they have been.

After a two-month standoff, the California construction crews began building a trestle bridge over the river. Moeur immediately declared martial law and sent more troops to defend the state "at any cost" (4). Before any shots were fired, Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, intervened. The construction crews were sent away, as was the Arizona Guard. The fight continued, however, at the Courthouse.

In 1935, Ickes sued Arizona in the Supreme Court for interference with the dam construction. The Court, however, sided with Arizona because it had not signed the Compact, and therefore, had every right to stop construction on its land. This case became the first in a series between the two states.

Today, Parker Dam stands fully constructed, impounding Colorado River water in modern Lake Havasu, because Arizona was able to trade construction permission for its own massive water projects.

Western States tended to style their names after minerals: California, the Golden State; Nevada, the Silver State; Arizona, the Copper State. In 1934 it became clear that the only resource that mattered in the West was water.

Note: This story and much of its information came from Marc Reisner's book, "*Cadillac Desert*", written in 1986 but still relevant today.

1. The Metropolitan Water District's tactics were highlighted in the movie "Chinatown," although regarding a different water source.
2. Worldpopulationreview.com
3. New York Times, April 8, 1934
4. Los Angeles Times, March 10, 1934

Litchfield and 3 Rivers Collaborate on “Swaggies” Display

The Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce contacted the local historical societies and asked them to develop a photographic display of the West Valley, homing in on the year 1958. That was the year that the Chamber was established, and they wanted us to help them celebrate their 60th Anniversary at their annual awards dinner, now called the “Swaggies.”

It’s interesting to note a couple of the milestones in the West Valley in 1958. Agua Fria Union High School was ending its second school year on their new campus, uniting the teens of Avondale, Goodyear and Litchfield Park for the first time. The A.J. Bayless Shopping Center opened and had the first air-conditioned mall in Arizona.



What fun we had! Each society looked back into their archives to find photos of local businesses, events and people. We then checked to make sure we had no duplications and began mounting and preparing them for display. We also pooled our ProPanel display boards so that we had a large area to tell the story of the area served by the Chamber back in 1958.

The morning of June 15th arrived. Workers arrived with the display panels, photos and labels. We decided on a general plan and started mounting the photos on the panels. Of course, there were some adjustments to make; moving photos around and rearranging them until we had the look we wanted.

In the evening, representatives from each society were there to visit with people, explain photos and reminisce. When the cocktail hour ended, the Chamber members and guests went into the dining room. The photos were quickly boxed up and the panels dismantled and carried away. Even though the display lasted only one evening it was fun to create the display and even better to watch Chamber members recognize a photo that brought back memories.

Thank You, Brian Day and Family

Three Rivers Historical Society, like most other non-profits, rely heavily on the donated time and talent of their members and others in the community. About ten years ago, **Gloria King** teamed up with **Ed Buonvecchio**, a graphic artist, and produced the colorful and informative newsletter, *The Quarterly*. Our newsletter featured interesting articles and news about 3RHS. Later, **Sally Kiko** became the editor. In 2012, our graphic artist and layout person, Ed Buonvecchio, moved to Maine and we began scrambling to find someone to do the layout for us.

The Board made several inquiries to no avail. Finally, Sally asked our printer, **Brian Day** if he knew anybody that could perform that service for us. Yes, he did. And his wife, **Beatrice**, added another task to her list of things to do. Over the intervening years not only Beatrice, but daughter, **Jessica** and Brian all have lent a hand to the task.

Our sincere gratitude to Brian, Beatrice and Jessica Day for donating their time and talent to our organizations newsletter for so many years!

We recently had the good fortune of meeting Graphic Designer **Ron Talley** who offered to take over the task of layout and graphic design.

interesting thoughts

After the game, the King and the pawn go into the same box.

Old Italian proverb

Wood burns faster when you have to cut and chop it yourself.

Harrison Ford

If life were fair, Elvis would still be alive today and all the impersonators would be dead.

Johnny Carson

The first piece of luggage on the carousel never belongs to anyone.

George Roberts.

As I hurtled through space, one thought kept crossing my mind - every part of this rocket was supplied by the lowest bidder.

John Glenn

Balloon Girls



Evelyn Burk, Lupe Bedoya, Lucy Moreno and Thelma Crawford gained the title of “Balloon Girls” from their work with the former Goodyear Aircraft Corporation located in Goodyear, AZ. The Aircraft Corporation employees were famous for making Goodyear Blimps. The same equipment and technical knowledge used to make blimps was easily converted into making the popular character balloons that flew in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parades. Several famous character balloons were made here in Goodyear, starting with Popeye, the featured balloon in the 1957 Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

The Balloon Girls have fond memories of creating the 56-foot-tall Popeye, whose pipe held 80 pounds of imaginary tobacco. He reigned in five parades before he was honored with a retirement party in New York’s Central Park. After Popeye came the Happy Dragon in 1960, Bullwinkle in 1961, Donald Duck in 1962 and Dino the Dinosaur in 1963. Their favorite was Donald Duck but the easiest to make was Dino the Dinosaur as his body was almost one large, solid piece. After 1963, this division of Goodyear was sold to a company in Rockport, Georgia.

Lupe remembers the many hours spent working on Popeye. He was made from a pattern or template and each separate piece had to be cut, sewn or glued, then painted. After the pieces were glued, they had to dry and shrink before he was assembled. Lucy could not wait to see Popeye finished and flying in the parade. Thelma

remembers the fun creating this famous character and was very excited to see him in the parade. She said it took many hours to attach all the sections. Evelyn ran the huge sewing machine which she affectionately called the “Union Special.” The Balloon Girls helped bring joy to the millions who watched the Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade, which has become an American treasure. They felt immense gratitude for their contribution to this famous American Thanksgiving tradition.

The parade was started by Macy’s in 1924 at the request of their employees who had experienced big parades in their home countries. Macy’s originally used live animals in the parades. After learning the children were frightened by the animals, the large character balloons were introduced. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company was asked to make the balloons since they had successfully made blimps and dirigibles. The balloons were released after the first parades. They landed in faraway places; there were many interesting stories of where they were found. Macy’s began tethering the balloons, so they could appear in five or more parades.

Goodyear Aircraft, later named Goodyear Aerospace, was sold to Loral Corporation, which has then become Lockheed Martin. The building stands empty where the Balloon Girls worked. But, they remember the many long, hard-working hours they spent there creating these masterpieces for Macy’s parades. The memories they have of their participation are permanently instilled in their hearts and minds. Enjoyable memories will remain with every child and adult who saw the balloons float down the street.

The story of Popeye and the Balloon Girls was made into a DVD by the Litchfield Park Historical Society. It has been featured on the local cable channel 11. It was filmed in the original hanger where the Popeye balloon was built and features our local Balloon Girls.

This article is a reprint. It was first featured in the October, November, December 2009 issue of The Quarterly.



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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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