

# THE Quarterly

Remembering the Southwest Valley

Three Rivers Historical Society

Salt • Agua Fria • Gila

## Elliott Freireich Publisher • Race Car Driver

Mr. Freireich offered to tell me his story. We met in his new space. Since moving out of the West Valley View building in Avondale, he has office and workspace at the Flite Center, the former Lockheed Martin property in Goodyear.

Elliott grew up in the East Valley. His father, Burt, worked for the Phoenix Gazette, the evening paper of the Arizona Republic. Burt covered sports for the newspaper and Elliott's fondest memories were accompanying his father to sporting events all over the valley. One time his dad took him into the locker room to meet Ted Williams. What a treat for a young lad! A memory he cherishes. Elliott also accompanied his father in the press box when he covered high school football games at Agua Fria and Tolleson.

In about 1962-63, Burt Freireich and his wife Ursula, purchased a newspaper group that served the West Valley and included the Glendale News and the Westside Enterprise. Eugene Ely, former publisher of the Westside Enterprise, started up a competing paper. Burt soon realized that the deal he had made on the newspaper group wasn't working and they bowed out. The Freireichs had already owned the Sun City News-Sun, which was printed at the Glendale News.

Burt and Ursula moved to Litchfield Park. In 1985 they had sold the News-Sun and wanted a newspaper in Litchfield Park. The senior Freireichs helped their son finance and start the new paper. The first issue of the West Valley View was published in 1986. Elliott and his staff worked hard to expand not only the circulation but also the advertising base. They brought in the other communities of the West Valley. In the late 1980's the Westside Enterprise was sold, and the West Valley View became the source for local news and sports. Its circulation grew from 18,000 in 1986 to 76,000 in 2018.

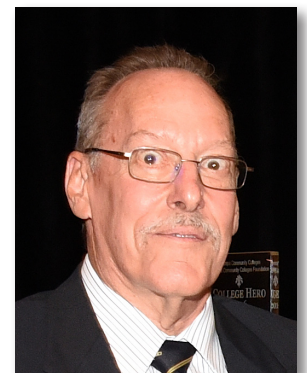


As the newspaper grew, Elliott need more space and decided to build his own plant that would allow him to do his own printing. About the time they had completed pouring the footings the recession began. The circulation remained, and the big company advertisers stayed with him, but many of the small business advertisers could no longer afford ads. Elliott kept the business going and recently sold the newspaper to Times Publications.

Elliott and his parents before him were true journalists. A journalist's core purpose is to research, document, write and present the news in an honest, ethical and unbiased way. His job still requires hard work, ethics, quality writing and a deep desire to tell the truth. He talked of unsolved local cases that still bother him; the killings at the Waddell Buddhist Temple and the train derailment near Tonapah. They bother him because they were unable to find the truth.

Elliott recently leased the West Valley View building on Riley Drive in Avondale. As a result, he needed to clear out the building. He generously donated his bound editions of the West Valley View, the bookcases built to accommodate them and file cabinets full of photos of the West Valley to the Three Rivers Historical Society. We are so very grateful. We will have easy access to research the stories that made the news and photos that are so important in telling the story of our great communities.

About the race car driver. One reason Elliott needed all the space was to house and have work space to keep his wonderful race cars going fast. He is an amateur racer in the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) and National Auto Sports Association (NASA), driving an SRF (Spec Racer Ford) Gen 3 and loves every minute of it!



# Three Rivers Historical Society is 15 Years Old

By Sally Kiko

I somehow missed it. How could that happen? 2018 was our 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

The Three Rivers Historical Society had its inception in 2003. That first year was a busy one recruiting members, writing bylaws and applying for and receiving our 501c(3) non-profit status. I recently came across minutes of a membership meeting held November 16, 2004. Our President was **Jean Stewart-Ruth** and the treasurer was **Don Jones**. In fact, Don reported that we had a balance of \$2,372.49. Pretty good for an organization in its infancy. At that early meeting, **Lenore Semmler** volunteered to be the secretary and served in that capacity through 2006. Other items of interest from that meeting were:

**Sharolyn Hohman** was looking for people to serve as president and vice president for 2005. **Beverly Francis** passed out business cards she had made for the organization. 3RHS had a float in the Billy Moore Days Parade and won 1<sup>st</sup> Place in the civic float category. **Peggy Jones** brought DVD interviews of pioneers in the area. A letter was sent to the owner of the **Phoenix Trotting Park** to obtain some memorabilia to add to our collection. **Frank Ross** and **Patty Rudolph** joined the Society.



for all to enjoy. We continue to publish a newsletter that has transitioned from a mimeographed synopsis of accomplishments and future events to a full color newsletter with articles and photos of local and state history. We now have a website that has all the back issues of the newsletter and are on Facebook and LinkedIn.

We continue to present guest speakers with interesting stories to tell. We have increased attendance by often moving the meeting time to 5:00 PM for the convenience of our members and guests.

Some things have not changed since the establishment of the organization. We still endeavor to grow our membership and strive to interest younger people in our local history. Fund raising to cover our expenses is an ongoing effort. Just as Sharolyn Hohman was seeking people to serve as officers in 2004, we still have that need and hope people will consider serving the organization by serving as an officer or board member. Can you help?

“We’ve come a long way baby.” From those early days we’ve grown in members, archival collection and our contribution to the communities we serve. We strive to get our historical photo display out in the community

## The Stranger

A few years after I was born, my dad met a stranger who was new to our small town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer and soon invited him to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted—and was around from then on.

As I grew up, I never questioned his place in my family. In my young mind, he had a special niche. My parents were complementary instructors; Mom taught me good from evil and Dad taught me to obey. But the stranger . . . he was our storyteller. He would keep us spellbound for hours on end with adventures, mysteries, and comedies.

If I wanted to know anything about politics, history or science, he always knew the answers about the past, understood the present and even seemed able to predict the future! He took my family to the first major league ball game. He made me laugh and he made me cry. The stranger never stopped talking, but Dad didn’t seem to mind. Sometimes, Mom would get up quietly while the rest of us were shushing each other to listen to what he had to say, and she would go to the kitchen for peace and quiet. (I wonder now if she ever prayed for the stranger to leave.)



Dad ruled our household with certain moral convictions, but the stranger never felt obligated to honor them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our home, not from us, our friends or any visitors. Our long-time visitor, however, got away with four-letter words that burned my ears and made my dad squirm and my mother blush. My dad didn’t permit the liberal use of alcohol, but the stranger encouraged us to try it on a regular basis. He made cigarettes look cool, cigars manly and pipes distinguished. He talked freely (much too freely!) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive and generally embarrassing.

I now know that my early concepts about relationships were influenced strongly by the stranger. Time after time, he opposed the values of my parents, yet he was seldom rebuked . . . and never was asked to leave.

More than fifty years have passed since the stranger moved in with our family. He has blended right in and is not nearly as fascinating as he was at first. Still, if you could walk into my parents’ den today, you would still find him sitting over in his corner, waiting for someone to listen to him talk and watch him draw his pictures.

His name? We just called him “TV.” He has a wife now, and we call her “Computer.” Their first child is “Cell Phone.” The second child is “iPod.” Just a few years ago a grandchild was born. We call him “iPad.”



# An Early Sheep Ranching Family: The Espils

Barbara Jaquay

Sheep raising has been a viable industry in Arizona since the 1860s when sheep ranchers began to bring their sheep into the state from New Mexico for the summer grazing and those in California needed nutritious grasses after periods of drought in their state. Sheep had been moved across Arizona from New Mexico to supply food to the miners after the discovery of gold in 1849. Returning breeding stock to New Mexico, the men recognized the grazing potential of the tall lush grasses and thus returned with their flocks. Herders, needed for this 24/7 occupation, came from the area of the Pyrenees known as Basque Country; some came from Mexico. Many of these herders' names are lost, but one name that has a connection to northern Arizona and the west side of the Salt River Valley is **Jean Pierre (Pete) Espil**.

He was born in Bagnères-de-Bigorre, Hautes Pyrenees, French Basque country. Pete never knew his correct birth year, although 1870 is the most likely. Sometime in the late 1870s or early 1880s, Pete and his cousin, Martin, not being the oldest sons and thus not eligible to inherit, boarded a cargo ship to the United States, most likely working their way across the ocean, but, it has also been said that they were stowaways! Arriving into New Orleans, allowed them to use their French, for they knew few English words



Pete Espil, Jr, Jean Pierre Pete Espil, Louie Espil, wool buyer late 1940's

and those were "fried eggs and ham." Having to endure many meals of fried eggs and ham, he never ate them again once his English improved.

From New Orleans, the two young men took the Santa Fe Railroad to Los Angeles and then by stagecoach to Sacramento. Martin had secured a sheep herder job prior to leaving France and Pete had hopes of also securing a job. Wet weather in the Sacramento area was not to Pete's liking, he headed south to Long Beach doing unknown work. Later he worked with the sheep herding outfit, Miller and Lux Land and Livestock Company, back near Sacramento. A gambling man, Mr. Lux lost the wages of the sheep herders in a card game. So, after seven years of work, Pete

had experience, and a \$20 gold piece.

Pete boarded an eastbound train in 1891; he got as far as Flagstaff, an environment with mountains like his France. He worked for **Hugh Campbell**, a banker and sheep rancher. Once again Pete lost his wages when Campbell stole them and the bank's money. Pete made out better than in California though as the bank asked if he would run Campbell's sheep until they could be sold, they would pay him with the lamb crop; the Espil Sheep Company was born.



In 1899, Pete became a naturalized citizen in San Francisco. Citizenship was necessary to be able to secure summer range for his 2,000 sheep with the U.S. Forest Service. Pete secured 175,000 acres with a 99-year lease in 1902. A cabin for living quarters and headquarters was built near Reese Tank, north of Humphreys Peaks. Water was an important commodity for any livestock operation, a metal water tank was first built at Pat Springs with more added as his flock grew. Land was purchased near Lockett Meadow in the foothills on the western side of the San Francisco Peaks. A home was converted out of the Deadman Ranger Station purchased for his growing family for Pete married **Isidora Aristoy**, a Spaniard, in 1913; they had two sons, **M. P. (Pete), Jr.** (1917) and **A. L. (Louie)** (1922), and daughter, **Dora** (1920).



Pete continued to grow his operation adding more ewes and land. In the 1930s questions were raised about Pete's citizenship. But a few things happened between 1899 and the 1930s. The San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 and the fire which raged on for days destroyed most of the town along with court records. At a Flagstaff saloon, Pete told his friend of his trouble and unbeknownst to them, the conversation was overheard. An unscrupulous rancher pounced on this unfortunate

circumstance and a court battle ensued for years as investigators were hired to find the three witnesses to his citizenship and at a cost of \$10,000. Espil lost part of his ranch, but as his granddaughter said, he never made an issue of the loss he suffered continuing to work with those who tried to steal from him.



Espil's ewes on Goodyear Farms alfalfa fields

encroachment of houses and businesses and the traffic congestion limited their movement. Converting to cattle in 1977, they still ran feeder lambs as part of the winter operations on Goodyear Farms. Many governmental regulations led to the Espil's selling their ranch and livestock in August 1986. Among these


Espil with his sons working along-side of him, became one of the largest and most efficient sheep operations within the state basing his operations in Litchfield. In 1936, he began to lease winter grazing land from the Goodyear Farms. He bred his 8,000 Rambouillet ewes with one of the best purebred rams, Burton bucks. The lambs outweighed other lambs in Arizona and when sold, fetch a higher price.

When Pete, Sr. passed away in 1959, the two sons shared in the responsibilities of running the company. More land was added. They continued to lease winter pastures from Goodyear Farms. Trucking was used instead of trailing the sheep as the

were the restrictions on defending sheep from predators; i.e., coyotes, as poisons had been outlawed. Labor laws changed, and knowledgeable sheep workers could not be easily found. The importation of cheaper meat and wool imports from Australia and New Zealand resulted in prices falling. Louie stated that profits had been going down over the years and they were lucky to receive a six to eight percent profit. Profits had been as high as 20 to 25 percent. Today, only three families continue to raise sheep in large flocks in the state of Arizona, the Auzas (both father and son have separate outfits) and the Manterolas.



Could this be your next sweater?

Please note:  
 Barbara Jaquay, author of "Where Have all the Sheep Gone?" will be our guest speaker in February.

## Upcoming Speakers for 3RHS

We're thrilled to present the interesting speakers we have for the first quarter of 2019.

### January 15th

**Ryan Lantz** • Ryan is the Manager of Arizona Operations for the Cleveland Indians. A graduate of Ohio State University he is responsible for all activities here in Goodyear, including Spring Training, the Rookie League, Fall Instructional League and others. He will be speaking on the history of the Cleveland Indians.

### February 19th

**Dr. Barbara Jaquay** • Barbara has a PhD in historical geography from Texas A&M University. She is the author of "Where Have all the Sheep Gone?" the full story of ranchers and shepherders in the state of Arizona. (See her article in this issue of *The Quarterly*.)

### March 19th

**Donna Kafer** • Donna is the Chaplain to the State Legislature. Her father worked at the Litchfield Naval Air Facility in Goodyear. She will share photos and memories of the years he worked at the Navy base.

### April 16th

**Leah Harrison** • Leah Harrison works at the Salt River Project. She will tell the history of SRP.



# Arizona v. California

By David Meese  
Part 2 of 4

## “Whiskey’s for Drinking Water’s for Fightin’ Over”

In response to a Bureau of Reclamation attempt to construct Parker Dam on the Colorado River, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes filed suit to force Arizona to accept construction on her side of the river. Ickes’ suit wasn’t the first shot in the water war, however. On October 13, 1930, Arizona sued the Secretary of the Interior and the states of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming, charging the Bureau of Reclamation with the invasion of its quasi-sovereign rights; an additional purpose was to create a reservoir behind Parker Dam, a dam designed to enhance California’s share of the river water under the Colorado River Compact of 1922. The Supreme Court ruled against Arizona, but in a carefully worded decision written by Justice Louis Brandeis, it warned California and the other states that the Court would not look favorably on any action by those states to up their share under the Compact.

Arizona vs. California became a series of Supreme Court cases stretching from that original suit in 1931 through 2000, as the Court amended various decrees eight times, including the defining case that determined conclusively each constituent’s share of the river. By this time, Mexico and various Colorado Indian tribes had joined the fray. The defining case was filed in 1952 and wasn’t decided until eleven years later, becoming the longest running case in Supreme Court history.

Mark Wilmer was a Phoenix attorney and founding partner, along with Frank Snell, of Snell and Wilmer, now one of the largest law firms in the Southwest and still a significant player in the Southwest’s water law debates.



The trial before a Special Master in San Francisco, took two years, involved over 300 witnesses, and thousands of exhibits. Arizona’s case was not going well. The governor convened a small group of influential politicians who decided that Wilmer might be the best choice to carry the state’s banner. Arizona’s argument to that point didn’t seem to have much weight with the Master. A little more than a year into the trial, Wilmer shocked the Court and everyone following the case by scrapping its previous legal argument and making a dramatic shift in strategy; he based his new argument on the 1928 Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928, effectively allocated Arizona’s share of the river. Wilmer’s straightforwardness and folksy charm played well with the Master and the momentum of the case shifted dramatically in Arizona’s favor.

Arizona went on to win the case, securing the necessary allocation of water to convince Congress to authorize and fund the State’s ambitious Central Arizona Project.

You won’t see Mark Wilmer’s name on government buildings or libraries, nor freeways or airports bearing his name. There is a water pumping station on the river that bears his name. You will find reference to his extraordinary achievement in some Arizona history writings. Because of what he was able to do, he is probably one of the most important people in Arizona history, and is largely responsible for securing Arizona’s future.

Note: This story and much of its information came from the United States Bureau of Reclamation.



US Dept of Interior

Paker Dam in 1939



Mobilus In Mobili/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0

Paker Dam Today



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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](mailto:kdkiko@cox.net)



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