THE Quarterly

Remembering the Southwest Valley

Three Rivers Historical Society — *Salt • Agua Fria • Gila*

The History of Luke Air Force Base

It all began in 1939. The war was underway in Asia and beginning in Europe. **President Franklin D. Roosevelt** could see that war was imminent. He asked Congress for $300 million to purchase aircraft. In three months, Congress passed an Air Defense Bill that dramatically increased the number of aircraft and personnel. President Roosevelt ordered a schedule of training that would produce 12,000 pilots per year. The Chief of the Air Corp directed a Board of Officers to inspect possible sites for pilot training fields.

The desert northwest of Phoenix seemed to fulfill the requirements for a training base. The officers met with the

City of Phoenix and asked them to purchase the 1440 acres and then lease it to the War Department for $1 per year. Please note, in 1940, City of Phoenix boundaries were Earll Drive on the north, 24th St. on the east, Buckeye Rd. on the south and 27th Ave. on the west. Luke Field would be 20 miles away. Phoenix City Council approved the purchase. On February 15, 1941, **Lt. Col. Ennis Whitehead** arrived from Washington to take over the process of establishing the advanced training field that was referred to as the Litchfield Park Air Base. Del Webb Construction Company received the contract to build the base. Construction began on March 31, 1941. The construction schedule called for the erection of 134 buildings within 75 days. Thirteen AT-6 trainer aircraft were parked at Sky Harbor; the 17 officers and 43

enlisted men were billeted in downtown Phoenix until the construction was completed.

Second Lt. Martin D. Mulligan, an instructor pilot flying one of the AT-6's, made the first landing at the air base. On June 6, 1941, Colonel Whitehead and his staff relocated to the base that was officially named Luke Field in honor of the late **Second Lt. Frank Luke, Jr.**, a Phoenix native and the first aviator to be awarded the Medal of Honor. The following year **Capt. Barry Goldwater** served as director of ground training.

Luke's mission during WWII was to produce graduates who would move on to train to be fighter pilots. Twenty-four of Luke Field's pilots achieved ace status in WWII. Maj. Richard Bong was Luke's most famous graduate; he still ranks as America's all-time ace.

Luke Field was considered miraculous. Raw desert became a bustling air base in less than nine months. A year later, it had doubled in size. In December 1941, Luke's military population totaled 3,434; it peaked in 1942 when 6,255 personnel were assigned. When WWII ended, Luke Field was closed. Luke Field was reactivated on February 1, 1951, as Luke Air Force Base, part of the Air Training Command under the reorganized U.S. Air Force. It remains one of the largest fighter-training bases in the world.

In the 1950's, neither Luke nor the navy base had housing for married men. These families became our neighbors and often life-long friends. They also kept the local teens busy babysitting their children.

In 1953, the USAF Thunderbirds were organized and established at Luke. These highly trained pilots are the Air Force's demonstration team that perform air shows all over the country. The first group of pilots in the Thunderbirds flew the F-84F jets.

Luke AFB Cont'd

Luke became the home of the Naval Operations Support Center in 2012. The NOSC provides operational support for training and administrative services to Navy Reserve Units.

Today, Luke AFB remains a very active fighter pilot training base with 4300 active military and 1300 reserves stationed here. It is home of the 56th Fighter Wing. It has 95 F-35s and 77 F-16s on the base. They also train fighter pilots for our Allies.

When Luke Field was opened in the Forties, it was a driving force in the West Valley, but it wasn't the only one. Goodyear Aircraft and the Naval Air Facility Litchfield also contributed to both the growth and the increased need for services. These military installations brought about an increase in school students and the need to enlarge our schools. The federal government provided the Lanham Act to help finance the new classrooms. The increased electricity demand caused Central Arizona Light & Power Company to expand its system. A gas line was laid to Luke Field and eventually extended to the community.

Transportation was another issue. Goodyear Aircraft had thousands of workers, and both military bases had enlisted men and families that needed to get around. The Phoenix Bus Company provided transportation to and from Luke, GAC, the communities and Phoenix. They started an hourly bus service, but quickly increased it to half-hour schedules.

The Wigwam also played a part in the war effort. It was closed to the public during the war years. During that time, officers from both Luke and the navy base were housed at the resort. The golf course remained open as a courtesy to the military.

Today the private sector continues to support Luke AFB's presence. Public land buffers have been provided around the base to reduce conflict. Luke is an asset to the local communities and contribute $2.4 billion per year to the local economy.

Who Remembers "Duck and Cover?"

I recently came across this photo and my first reaction was, "You've got to be kidding!"

Many of us remember the Fifties and the "Cold War". After WWII, the U.S. was a world leader and was committed to protecting democratic nations from the Soviet communist superpower. The political stance made us a possible target. The Federal Civil Defense Administration was created by President Truman in response to the Soviet Union's successful development on a nuclear bomb.

This agency was tasked with developing protocols to minimize the effects of a nuclear strike on our civilian population and mitigate the immediate emergency conditions following such an attack. The tactic most remembered was the "Duck and Cover" awareness campaign. As school children we had air raid drills and were instructed to take cover under our desks. As a more mature person and perhaps a bit wiser, I find it a bit laughable that we thought this would help if there was a nuclear attack! We had seen television footage of the area around nuclear bomb tests

In the 1950's, the CONELRAD broadcast system went on the air and allowed continuous broadcast of civil defense information to the public. In 1953, President Eisenhower's administration encouraged citizens to build shelters to avoid the fallout from a nuclear blast.

I know of one local citizen who built a shelter, **Willard Tolman.** We also learned that when Fred Scott was cleaning out the old Cecil's Hideaway on Dysart Road, he found rations, water and a Geiger counter in the basement business. It would have been the only basement in town at that time.

We may mock this now, but in the Fifties the Cold War was very real, and the danger of a nuclear attack was on our minds.

"Operation Haylift-Snowbound," 1949

The winter of 1949 was very severe across the nation and here in Arizona, especially in the northern part of the state. Starting in November 1948, and continuing into January of 1949, one blizzard after another blanketed the Rocky Mountains and the upper Great Plains. Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and northern Arizona were affected. Along with the snow came incessant cold and howling winds. On the range, with their feed buried in deep snow, thousands of dead cattle and sheep were found. Whole herds and flocks that survived were weak and starving, having been without food and water for weeks.

These historic storms left more than 100 inches of snow in Nebraska, and it snowed as far south as Austin and San Antonio, Texas. The winds in Wyoming reached 88 miles an hour, leaving drifts up to 15 feet high. Here in Arizona, the Navajo and Hopi were isolated by the snow and needed not only feed for the animals, but food and medical supplies for their people.

The state and federal governments began the organization and funding of *"Operation Haylift."* The Air Force led the way, deploying up to 43 C-82A Packets, known as Flying Boxcars, from McChord, WA, and Grenville, SC, to drop hay to thousands of stranded cattle. The C-47, known as the Skytrain, was also used. The flights took off from a number of bases, but Naval Air Station Fallon in Nevada, Lowry AFB in Colorado, and Kearney AFB in Nebraska did the bulk of the work. **General Major Mark W. Clark** coordinated "Operation Haylift." The goal was to save approximately 35,000 head of cattle and 100,000 sheep that were marooned by the storms.

The operation was hazardous. The engines of the planes had to be warmed with hot air before flight. The planes flew over rugged mountains, then they flew low (from 150-200 feet above ground) to get the feed close to the animals, and the airmen, muffled and goggled worked in the freezing wind and flying chaff to kick the bales of hay out of the open doors. Each crew had a local civilian to act as spotter, helping the plane deliver the hay to the ranches. There were also several "kickers," both airmen and civilians that kicked the hay out of the open doors. These men were strapped to the bulkhead to keep them from going out the door, too. Once

dropped, the hay was ready for the livestock to eat; the tightly pressed bales usually burst like bombs when they hit the ground, leaving loose alfalfa for the animals. The hay lift continued from January 23 until February 17, 1949.

Meanwhile, on the ground, the 5th Army led "Operation Snowbound." **Major General Lewis A. Pick** directed the Army's most extensive rescue operations here at home. Most roads, highways and even train tracks were blocked by snow. The weasels and bulldozers of the Fifth Army worked for 23 days to open 87,073 miles of road, free 152,196 people from snowbound homes and transport the sick and injured to medical care. And this was just in the state of Nebraska!

Locally, the operation was focused on helping the northern part of the state. Luke AFB, Sky Harbor Airport and Naval Air Facility Litchfield all took part in the relief effort. The officers, enlisted men and civilian personnel of the navy base assisted in airlifting 871 tons of hay to stranded livestock. In addition, two and a half tons of foodstuffs were dropped to isolated families on the reservations. The hay, food and medical supplies were loaded into the planes in a staging area that was inside the fence on the southwest corner of Western Avenue and Litchfield Road where the town's people could watch. In 1949, there was no building on that corner. A total of 171 flights were made from Naval Air Facility Litchfield during "Operation Haylift" without a single problem.

Thanks to our Armed Forces for a monumental rescue effort.

Thank You to Our Lifetime Members!

The following are our lifetime members; some joined when our organization was just starting out, others more recently. We are so grateful to each one of you!

Joey Arnold
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Anyone can be a Lifetime Member for a $500 payment and never pay dues again. A tip of the sombrero to you!

The Methodist Church in Avondale

The Avondale Community Methodist Episcopal Church, South was officially organized in 1937. Rev. Thomas V. Ludlow served as the first minister. As early as 1924, church services were held in the old adobe schoolhouse that was located near the southeast corner of Western and Central Avenues.

The closest Methodist Church at that time was in Liberty, about ten miles west. Avondale was considered a mission church and was served sporadically by Methodist or Presbyterian ministers. In 1927, Mr. Hinebaugh of the Presbyterian Church and Albert Stewart of the American Sunday School Union, helped to organize Sunday School. In 1929, the Rev. W. H. Edwards, minister at the Liberty Church, held services at various times.

By 1935, the people of Avondale were ready for a permanent minister. The Rev, Ludlow of Liberty became aware of their plight and agreed to become their pastor. Together with Mr. and Mrs. T.C. "Doc" Rhodes, Myrtle Freeman, Carl Swenson (Rose Brown's father), and Avondale School Principal, Lattie Coor, it was arranged for Rev. Ludlow to have church services in the school building.

Services continued to be held in the school until enough funds were raised to build a church. The building was erected in 1942 and many local citizens helped in the construction. The building still serves the community as Christ Community United Methodist Church.

From Stagecoach to Spacecraft

Thank you to all of you who attended the Grand Opening of the view exhibit at the Litchfield Park Historical Museum on October 20th. This exhibit was done by Three Rivers Historical Svociety and tells the history of Avondale and Goodyear. If you missed the grand opening, do not despair. The museum is open every Wednesday through Friday from 10 AM to 4 PM. It is located on the northwest corner of Camelback and Litchfield Roads. Admission is free; however, donations are happily accepted. They also have a great gift shop.

Elton Roy "Tony" Schneider

Gathering photos and family histories from the families of our early settlers for the exhibit at the Litchfield Museum was so much fun. It also served another purpose; it gave me new stories to put in "The Quarterly".

Tony Schneider's story started in 1930 when he left Minnesota for warmer winters in Arizona. His daughter, Vicki Velasquez, told me his story. That first winter here he bought a homestead property on what is now the Carefree Highway. He stayed at the Phoenix YMCA until his home was built on the homestead. He worked as a pharmacist at various drugstores in Phoenix. For the first six years he divided his time between Arizona and Minnesota.

In 1939, now a full-time Arizonan, he bought his first drugstore in Avondale. It was located on Western Avenue about a block west of what is now Dysart Road. That drugstore had a liquor license which he retained. About six years later the building burned down. He rebuilt on the property, adding another building to house a grocery store.

Sometime in the Forties, Tony and Richard Rhodes purchased the John Combs' home and his wife's business, Mamie's Beauty Salon. The John Combs house was the big white house that still stands on the south side of Western Avenue next to the Avondale Liquor Store. The liquor store was the former beauty salon.

Needing more room for his growing clientele, he moved his drugstore to 100 E. Western Ave. That property was not deeded to sell liquor, so he moved the liquor business to the former Mamie's Beauty Salon. When the Avon Theater closed in 1954, Tony, his brother Art and Richard Rhodes purchased the property. The remodeled theater became Moe's Food Fair; it was later purchased by Mr. Jeffries and renamed Jeff's Food Fair. In 1964, he built a larger building next to Jeff's Food Fair. He operated Schneider's Drug at that location until his retirement in 1976.

At one time, Tony sponsored a local ladies softball team, the "Pepperettes". One of the players was the lovely Lila Aragon. In 1949, Lila became Mrs. Schneider. The Schneiders had six children; Jan, Larry, Jacque, Vicki, Cynthia and Duke.

Mr. Schneider was a member and past president of the Arizona Pharmacy Board. He was active in Kiwanis, served on the Avondale City Council and on the local Chamber of Commerce Board. He died on September 17, 1999. He left a community made up of not only customers, but friends as well.

Monopoly Goes To War

"Monopoly was the perfect accomplice. The German Army allowed humanitarian groups to distribute many innocuous items to imprisoned soldiers, including games. Monopoly was too innocent to be suspicious and was the ideal size for a top-secret escape kit that could help POW's to escape from German war camps. The British Secret Service conspired with the U.K. manufacturer to stuff a compass, small metal tools such as files and a map into cut-out compartments in the Mon opoly board itself. The game box was big enough to hold both the game and everything else they needed to get to prisoners of war.

The map was the most important part of the kit. It couldn't be paper because it was fragile and cumbersome and rustled when moved or folded. Silk was the material chosen for military maps. They wouldn't tear or dissolve in water as easily as paper. It was light enough to stuff into a boot or cigarette pack; they wouldn't rustle and attract the attention of an enemy guard.

The British Secret Service found the one British company that had mastered the technique of printing on silk. John Waddington, Ltd., a printer and board game manufacturer who held the U.K. licensee for the Parker Brothers' game Monopoly. He had experience printing on silk: for theater programs and for the royalty. Mr. Waddington formed a small division of the company that first printed silk maps for the military and later embedded escape kits in hundreds of Monopoly games.

Before leaving for missions, British airmen were told that if they were captured, they should look for escape maps and kits in Monopoly boards. They were told that "special edition" Monopoly sets would be marked with a red dot on the free parking space. Real bank notes were hidden under the fake money.

Six different maps that corresponded with regions surrounding the six different German camps were printed. To tag each board game secretly, a period was added after different locations on the board. A period after "Mayfair", for example, meant that game was intended for Norway, Sweden and Germany. A period after "Marylebone Station" meant it was destined for Italy. London streets replaced Atlantic City streets in the original American version.

MP officer Christopher Clayton Hutton is credited with hatching the plan. While others helped implement the plan, he was the first with the idea to get maps into camps concealed in board games. Not wanting to compromise the Red Cross, the Secret Service created fake charity groups to smuggle the games into the German camps.

Christopher C. Hutton got his job with the Secret Service not because of his resume that included journalist, public relations for Hollywood and stunt pilot for the Royal Air Force. It was his obsession with magic, illusion and escapologists. He invented boots with a hollow heel that could conceal a knife, map, compass and file, a telescope disguised as a cigarette lighter and a compass so small that it could be hidden on the back of a button. The Germans figured all of these out. but never suspected the Monopoly game.

After the war, everything was destroyed. All the "special edition" games are gone but their legacy is a source of pride for the makers of Monopoly, past and present. Victor Watson, former chairman of the company, had the opportunity to meet a few of the former POW's who used Waddington's maps to escape from prisoner of war camp at Colditz Castle near Germany. He was excited to meet them and hear their stories. It's impossible to know how many prisoners escaped with the aid of the hidden maps. About 35,000 Allied prisoners returned to Allied lines before the end of the war. It is estimated that 10,000 of them used the Monopoly maps.

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We meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 5pm.
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