

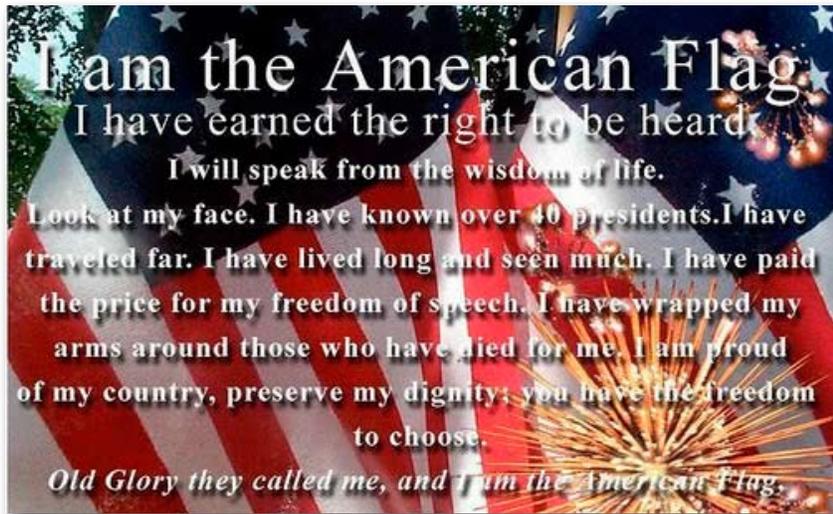


the Quarterly

Remembering the Southwest Valley

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Salt  Agua Fria  Gila
Three Rivers Historical Society



Communities Honor Veterans

Litchfield Park

Years ago a World War II memorial stood proudly on the southeast corner of Litchfield Road and Indian School Road. Erected soon after the end of the war it listed the names of all the men from Litchfield Park that had served their country in WWII. In this small town, there were almost 200 men who went to war. Many years later the memorial was removed because it was in such poor condition.

In 2002, three Litchfield men, Tom Heim, Jim Warkowski, and Bob McMillan started a campaign to build a new memorial to these valiant men. It became a community effort with

contributions coming from all corners to fund the project. Local businessmen supported the memorial with labor and materials. Litchfield Elementary School agreed to the placement of the memorial on the west side of the campus near the flagpole where it could easily be seen.



The memorial was completed and dedication took place on May 19, 2007

Avondale

When Avondale built their Civic Center in 2004, they also created the Veteran's Memorial "Walk of Honor." Dan Davis and Ruth Espinoza, Avondale Employees, were the folks behind the project. The Walk of Honor features a walkway

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paved with bricks that honor American veterans, most of them from Avondale. The walkway is lined on both sides with both memorial benches and the flags of our military services. The American flag and a plaque dedicated to all veterans past, present, and future stand proudly at the head of the walkway. Avondale offered both the benches and the bricks for sale so that Avondale families could honor their veterans. Avondale still has a limited number of bricks available for sale. The bricks sell for \$50, the benches are \$1200 and can be purchased anytime during the year. New bricks are unveiled and dedicated twice a year on Memorial Day and Veterans Day.



Tolleson

Tolleson has a beautiful new Veterans Park. It's big enough to serve the recreational needs of the community. It has playground equipment for the smaller children, lighted ball fields, picnic areas, bathrooms and lots of green grass and trees. The base of the flagpole at the Civic Center has a plaque donated by the Lions Club honoring all of their veterans.



Tolleson's Loss

Tolleson is a town of many veterans, too. They were the sons of the merchant, the farmer, the laborer; they answered the call of our nation to serve. The Vietnam War was particularly hard on this community. Four Tolleson High School buddies went to Vietnam and gave their lives. They were Stanley Goff, Jimmy Messer, Corky O'Brien and Robert Lopez. Stanley's mother in her sorrow wrote a poem about the boys that appeared in the Orien Fifer's column in the Arizona Republic that expressed her pain. It said in part,

*"There was Jimmy and Corky and
Robert and Stan-
They all went to fight in an unfriendly
land.
Each one left his home and his loved
ones behind
And went to the war to serve their time."*

West Coast History isn't as Old as East Coast

Really? How many times have you heard that our area is only a few hundred years old? Well, Jean Stewart-Ruth tells a different story:

The Agua Fria River Valley was part of the Hohokam civilization that was developed some 2000 years ago. They lived in villages and built irrigation canals from the Agua Fria and Gila Rivers to provide irrigation. The later tribes were related to the Pima and Maricopa Indians of the Salt River Valley.

Some historians suppose these tribes were destroyed by Apaches. At any rate, when a group of Quakers came in about 1890, they settled on the west bank of the Agua Fria River, just north of the old Yuma Road. They re-dug the canals made by the Indian tribes and irrigated their crops.

A group of Dunkards or River Brethren settled along the river at what is now Buckeye Road. These and others became discouraged and moved away, leaving their adobe houses to collapse.

In 1900 Joseph L. Bates homesteaded land south of Litchfield and sold 160 acres to Joseph A. Hill and his wife. Others came and they all worked together to re-build the Indian canal systems.

An early day settler was William (Billy) Moore who bought property along the west side of the Agua Fria River and eventually started a store and Post Office.

When it Rains...

Sorry, we cannot finish that opening line because of a copyrighted logo. You know the familiar picture: (hint) there is a little girl holding an umbrella over her head. You got it - Morton Salt! With Martin Vaccaro on the camera, Ed King and Gloria King had an interesting visit with Melissa Hadley, Morton Salt Mine Facility Manager.

No doubt you have driven past some huge piles of salt near the corner of Glendale Avenue and Dysart and wondered about the process of getting the salt out of the ground and onto your table. Morton Salt has eight facilities. The salt from the Glendale mine is not used for table salt. Basically the AZ salt is used for the big sellers, water softening and swimming pool pellets. This 100 acre location is a small operation, producing approximately 100,000 tons a year. There are 33 employees and most have worked there for 20 plus years.

In 1952, a discovery was made when Goodyear Farms drilled a well and found the water was very salty. However, they concealed this fact. In the mid 1960's Jerald Grott drilled after he found the original driller for Goodyear Farms and saw the actual logs telling where to drill for salt. In 1968 he drilled the first well, but



there were some problems. In 1969 he drilled a second well and began Southwest Salt Company. In 1974 they began shipping salt. In 1985 Morton acquired the plant.

Morton Salt Company in California and the Bahamas uses sea water to dry in ponds for harvest. Sea water is 17% salt by weight.

Morton in Ontario, mines 1500 feet under the Detroit River...in Glendale they use solution mining. The process is to inject water from two active wells into the cavern then pump the brine (26% sodium chloride by weight) to the surface to dry in lined ponds. They keep a 10 inch build up of salt in the bottom of the ponds to maintain the brine at 26% salt: Then the

sun goes to work.

We asked about the rumor that the ground is sinking in that area due to removal of salt. Melissa never heard of any such thing! She assured us that we would not fall into a sink hole since there are 1,000 feet of soil down to the top of the cavern. The bottom of the cavern is another 2,000 feet lower. No man has been down there. How disappointing, we wanted to see those white walls of salt.

By Gloria King

The "Boondocker"

What on earth is a "Boondocker?" For our communities it is a fun-filled evening with a hayride, dinner, entertainment and dancing. It all started when, Jim King Sr. had a western themed party for his family and friends and thought it might work as a fund raiser for the Estrella Rotary Club. Last November, the Rotary put on their 39th annual Boondocker.

In 1970, the first Rotary Boondocker was held at the King Ranch and was a great success. From the parking area guests enjoyed a hayride on the way to the dining area. Dinner usually featured either a steak fry or barbeque and the entertainment might be mariachis or ex-movie cowboys doing trick roping with their performing horses. And, of course, dancing was under the stars. Remember, in the '70s, our communities didn't have the many restaurants and movie theaters we have now, so this home-grown entertainment and dining experience were quite a treat!

An endeavor this size takes an army of hardworking volunteers to run smoothly and become an annual event. There are tickets to be sold, hay bales to bring in for seating and, a band to hire. They would need a caterer, folks to set-up, clean-up and park the cars. Obviously, the Rotarians weren't afraid of work! The event continued at the King Ranch for 30 years. In 2001, it moved to Duncan farms. It moved again in 2003 to La Loma. Through all the years the community has enjoyed a special evening of fun. One year, Karl Kunasak, a Corporation Commissioner, attended and commented,

"This is the best kept secret in the West Valley!"

In case you aren't familiar with the Estrella Rotary Club they are a service organization that was chartered into Rotary International in 1967. Their primary goal is to serve the surrounding communities while building goodwill and friendships. Their fundraising provides scholarships, supports many local youth activities, and international charities.



Seated left to right: Luke base commander's wife, Gloria King, Anne Hyde, Carol Thornton, Jim King

Rosemary Remembers

Goodyear's first Dentist and Jeweler

Reading the Goodyear book made me think about my father, Jim King. I remember in the mid '50's Dad said Goodyear and Avondale did not have a dentist. Litchfield Park had Dr. McMillan, but Dad felt that the community was ready for another professional.

Thus Dad built a small office that was located east of the bank on Western Avenue in Goodyear. Western was our "Main Street." Bowman's Drugstore was there on the corner and Abraham's Market next door. Next were the Goodyear Post Office, the Airline Restaurant, my Dad's Goodale Hardware and Variety Store and then the First National Bank. This was the street that should include a dentist office, he thought. So he built one.

Next I recall meeting Dr. Barry Holman and his young family. Dr. Holman had just graduated from Baylor University and he thought the Goodyear area would be a nice place to raise his family. Dr. Holman agreed to lease the newly built office.

When Dr. Holman was ready to move into the office, he decided that the space was too large and that he would not be able to afford the lease. Then Dad decided to partition the space in half and the dentist could move into smaller quarters.

About this same time another young family moved into Goodyear. It was Tom Bulfer who was a jeweler. The problem was solved since Mr. Bulfer agreed to lease the remaining space. Tom stayed in that office until A.J. Bayless built a new shopping center on Litchfield Road. My father also moved into a space at the Bayless Shopping Center and he called it King's Department Store. My brothers and I had jobs there - as did many other people in the area. Ladies purchased patterns and fabric, men bought work boots and jeans. Before long Dad added more stock, including refrigerators and air conditioners. He wanted to help people avoid long trips to Phoenix to buy necessary items. He was a visionary and very community minded.

I love this book. It is bringing back such wonderful memories. My husband, Mike, can't put the book down and we want more copies. I remember the wonderful teacher, Mrs. Stanton and her little girl, Sally...and now Sally is an author of this historical book!

Rosemary (King) Harbushka wrote to us from CA after reading the new book, *Goodyear Images*.



Past President Gloria King and President Bill Arnold

sierraestrella.com

'This site is about Arizona's the Sierra Estrella mountains and the Old Maricopa area. Although almost unknown, these are easily the most historic mountains in Arizona. This would be perfectly understandable if they were located 40 miles south of Benson or in the remote areas of Navajo country. The fact is the Sierra Estrellas are right next to downtown Phoenix, yet are ignored in maps, tourist guides, articles and newspapers. There are hundreds of books on trails, hikes and climbs that mention Camelback, the Superstitions, Squaw Peak, Hole in the Rock, four Peaks, and so on, but absolutely nothing on the Estrellas - which is fine by me.

Yet, up until the twentieth Century, the only mountains that really mattered in what was to become Phoenix were the Estrellas. For thousands of years, they have stood as a barrier, or rather, something to go around or avoid. They are not friendly, nor are they small. From south to north they run 22 plus miles of hard, dry rock, isolated from the Sonoran plains below. Even in the 21st Century, access to the Estrellas is difficult and visitors are few.

From space, the Estrellas are the most visible object in all of the Phoenix area. In fact, all other mountains are absolutely unrecognizable, just formless blurs lost in the plains and mountains of Arizona. Likewise, the cartography of the region is fascinating. Map makers had a very difficult time understanding the basic geography of the region.

The Indians called them Komate, a name lost in time. To Father Kino, over 300 years ago, they were San Jose de Cumar. They were the only mountains specifically mentioned in the Valley of the Sun. A few decades later, Garces and Manje came through and describe the bighorn sheep and monsters inhabiting the area. After becoming part of the US, A.B. Grey explores the region and records the use of the term 'Estrellas' for the first time, doubtless based on the name already in common use at the stageline station on the plain below, and passed to

Map 1867, Mills
Continued on page 5

Martha Washington Visits 3RHS

person to person by the tens of thousands of 49ers on their way to the California. As the pioneers gathered around the campfires at Maricopa Wells, they were told the next leg of the journey would be the worst of the trip - if they took the shorter road south of the Estrellas, instead of following the Gila River north around the bend and back south. This trip, known as the "Jornada de las Estrellas", was to be made, as the Spanish name implies, "under the stars" to avoid the heat of the 40 mile desert. As they camped in the plains below the Estrellas among the Pima and Maricopa villages, they heard terrible stories of Aztec kings and warriors, of bloody battles among the tribes, of monsters lurking in the night, of lost mines and buried treasures, and of course, of men, women and animals suffering and dying on the cruel trail they were about to traverse. The harsh geography and ancient legends are the essence of the Estrellas.

My name is John Arthur. My Arizona and Sierra Estrella roots go way back. As a kid my family would always camp in the Estrellas, and my Dad (now 80) is one of the few people left from the Old Times, before World War 2. My earliest memories are of the "80" ranch down in Maricopa. We had a small cotton farm right in front of the Circle K on the Maricopa road, just south of the Mobile cutoff. Even in my 50 years or so, much has changed. I would have never thought that "civilization" would arrive at the Estrellas.'

The above words were excerpted with permission from author John Arthur's incredibly interesting website about the history surrounding the Sierra Estrella Mountains. Almost anything you want to know, and things you do not know that you want to know about these rugged and historic mountains can be found at: www.sierraestrella.com

Did you Know...

that before the 1930's the Valley of the Sun was known as the Salt River Valley? Apparently real estate developers and politicians decided that "Valley of the Sun" had a better ring to it. Must be they were a lot smarter back then.

Have you ever wondered where Sarival Road got its name? [Salt River Valley!](#)



Pictured: Celeste Crouch and Barbara Dienes (as Martha)

On January 19, 2010, Three Rivers Historical Society members were treated to a rare display of White House china. Replicas of the originals may be purchased locally, but only through representatives Celeste Crouch and Barbara Dienes who are members of the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge. The Phoenix area chapter sponsors programs to ensure that our society continually renews and reaffirms the principles and practices that were established by our Forefathers.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower was the first Honorary President of the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, but as far as we can determine, he did not have his own china design when he became the 34th U.S. President. President George Washington's design featured an "M" in the center of the plate...presumably for Martha. However, Martha preferred to use her own china so she stored the newly created White House china. President John F. and Mrs. Kennedy used Lincoln's china for State Dinners.

History of the White House differs in many ways from our local history, but pride and honor are all across the USA! This presentation was inspiring and many questions were asked by our members. Thanks Barbara and Celeste for sharing your knowledge of the Presidents, First Ladies and the White House.

Why History Matters

Some people think that history is boring and does not count for very much. But the minute you begin to forget your own history is the time you begin to lose you culture. Once you lose your history it can be very hard to get it back and other cultures will reclaim your heritage and rewrite your history for you.

Dilze'e Apache historian Vincent Randall, Clarksdale, AZ

Have You Seen Our Website?

We have a great website up and running. Visit threerivershistoricalsocietyaz.org and see what our webmaster, Mark Pelletier, has accomplished.

The website includes: *Who We Are, Our Meetings, Society Newsletters, How to Join, and Contact us.* Under the heading *Newsletters* you can click and download the last several issues of "The Quarterly." Under *How to Join*, you can click on "Membership Flyer" and download a copy of our brochure. There is even a link to register for our email list.

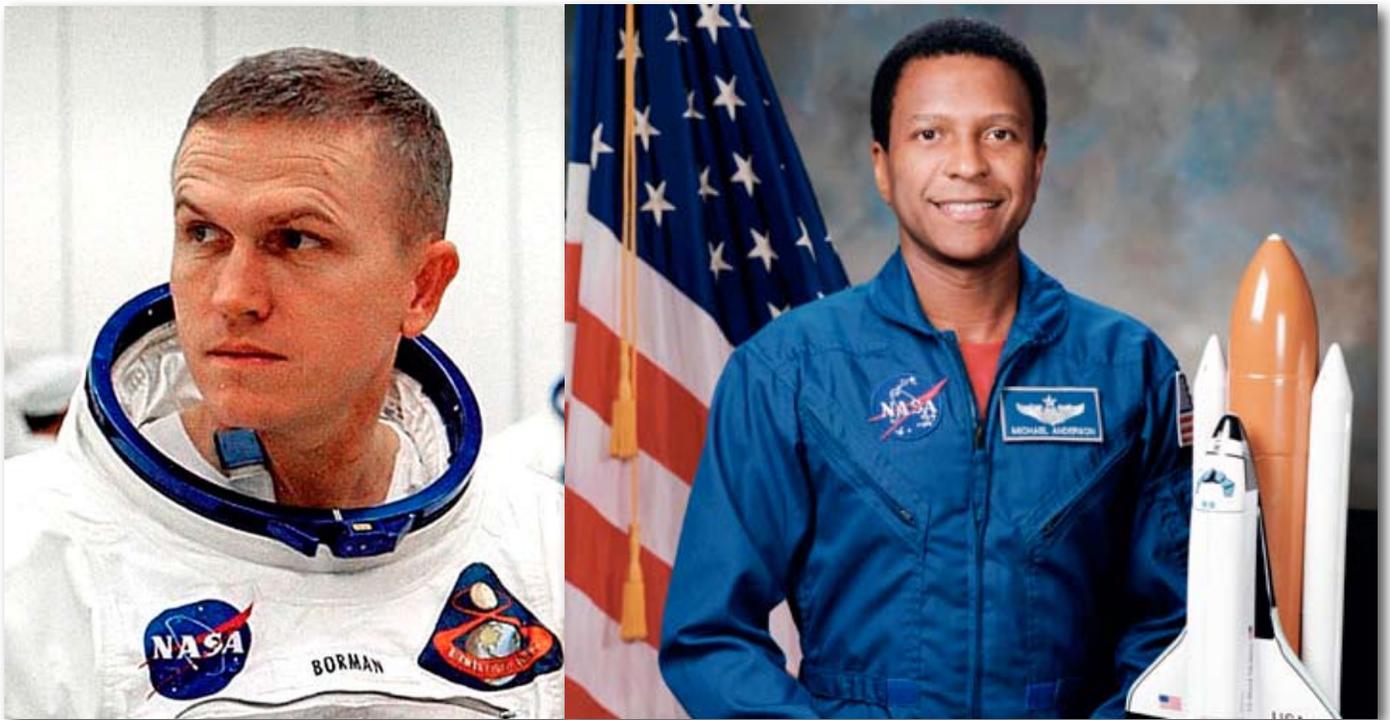
Our plan for 2010 is to expand the site, adding many of our historical photographs and articles. The graphics are great! Thanks, Mark, for a job well done!

Astronauts in the West Valley?

Did you know that our great communities were once the home of men who went on to become astronauts? It's true!

In the mid 1950s, Frank Borman, then an officer in the Air Force, was a flight instructor at Luke AFB and resided on Santa Cruz Drive in Historic Goodyear. Borman was born in Gary, Indiana, and raised in Tucson, AZ. After serving at Luke he became a test pilot and later taught at West Point. He was selected by NASA and served on the Gemini 6 and the Gemini 7, 1965 Space Orbital Rendezvous. He was commander of the Apollo 8, the first manned lunar orbital mission in 1968. He went on to become CEO of Eastern Airlines. Borman was awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor and has been inducted into both the International Aerospace Hall of Fame and the U. S. Astronaut Hall of Fame.

Michael Anderson, born in Plattsburgh, New York, lived in Avondale and attended Avondale Elementary School in the third grade. In December 1994, Anderson was selected by NASA. He served on the *Endeavour*, the 1998 *Mir* docking mission. His second mission was aboard the 2003 Columbia that tragically ended when the Space Shuttle and crew perished during entry, 16 minutes before scheduled landing. He had taken an Avondale Elementary School T-shirt with him into space. In his honor, Avondale Elementary School District renamed the original school campus on Western Avenue Michael Anderson School. Anderson was posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor.



Were You in the West Valley during WWII ?

In 1939, President Roosevelt asked Congress to appropriate \$300 million to buy aircraft for the Army. Congress responded to Roosevelt's request within 3 months, passing an Air Defense bill which provided 3,125 new aircraft and more than 48,000 people. The War was already underway in Asia and starting in Europe. President Roosevelt wanted 12,000 pilots trained per year. An inspection of possible sites for pilot training fields proved good news for our area.

WWII was growing-up years for this community! Luke Field and Goodyear Aircraft Corp. brought developments, challenges, and progress. From 1941 – 1946 changes were made that exist to this day. People quickly moved into the area to fill newly created jobs, and many are still living here.

Three Rivers Historical Society is a group of volunteers who look

back at the WWII years and realize the need for preservation of our interesting local heritage. We would enjoy, and appreciate, your recollections of the past. Please write or phone us to share your story. We have received many emails and phone calls saying that reading *The Quarterly* helps them recall great memories. If we don't do it – who will?

Also, volunteers are needed and very welcome to help with meetings and special events! We especially want your help for our Annual Heritage Dinner in October! This is going to be a dinner with a fantastic surprise guest speaker and some great special music...not to mention the delicious food!

We will see you at our regular September 21st meeting with former mayor of Goodyear and Litchfield Park, Charlie Salem sharing his many experiences in our community.

Avondale Native – Frank Ross

While many of us call the West Valley our home, few of us can say we are natives. Frank Ross, a local attorney, is one who can make that claim. His father, Guadalupe Figueroa Ross was born in La Colorada, Sonora, Mexico in 1909. Guadalupe and his mother moved to Phoenix in about 1921 while his father and brothers remained in Mexico. Guadalupe was the youngest and came to the United States because of political unrest in Mexico. Guadalupe attended grade school in Phoenix but did not have the opportunity to go to high school. Instead he started working for Goodyear Farms (Southwest Cotton Company) in the early 1920s.



Frank's mother, Gladys Lela Rodgers was born in Mena, Arkansas in 1911. She along with her parents and 5 siblings moved to the Buckeye area when she was quite young. Later, her father went to work for Goodyear Farms and they moved to Camp 52 where Guadalupe and his mother lived. When she was old enough she worked at the Litchfield Post Office and that is where she met Guadalupe. Gladys and Mrs. Clarino, Alma Clarino's mother, were the only graduates of Litchfield High School the year they graduated. Frank admits that he has never checked on the accuracy of that but states, "Moms don't make up stuff."

After they were married, his dad worked at Serrano's Market and his mom worked at the Post Office in Coldwater/Avondale. In 1943 they bought Billy Moore's house on Lateral 27 (Dysart Rd.). The house came with 30 acres which his father farmed. Later, while still farming, he owned grocery stores near the labor camps during the Bracero program.

The Agua Fria River was a favorite playground for the kids of Avondale. In 1928, the Waddell Dam stopped the flow of the Agua Fria and created Lake Pleasant. However, the river would occasionally flood after a heavy rain. With the flooding the

animals that lived in the river bottom would flee to higher ground. This, of course, was an excellent opportunity for Frank and his buddies, Carroll and Kelly Holly, Neil Henderson and Willie Perkins, to go catch the snakes and gila monsters and such!

He remembers Fred Brunk setting up a tent to show movies prior to the construction of the Avon Theater at Central and Western Ave.

His father, wanting him to know what "real" work was, had him chop and pick cotton. Of course, there was always work to be done on his father's farm. When he was fourteen he worked for Jack Rayner loading potatoes. Once, as a young lad, he was driving a tractor and ran the front end of it into a house. He was so afraid of what his father would say and do!

Frank attended Avondale Elementary School and Tolleson High School where he played football (eleven men in those days), basketball and track. He did not complete his education at Tolleson High but did graduate from an adult high school in San Diego. He went on to attend the University of Arizona in Tucson obtaining his BA in 1966 and his JD in 1969. He worked for a law firm in Tucson for one year after graduation. He moved to Phoenix in 1970 and worked for the Public Defender's office for six months. The next year he opened his own office and within a few years opened a branch office in Avondale. From 1975 until 2000 he was Avondale City Attorney and from 1973 to 2000 he was the prosecutor.

Frank and Kay met in 1970 and married in 1981. He has two children by a previous marriage, three grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. His son and his family live in the area, his daughter in Colorado.

Seven Sons from the Same Family Serve Their Country

In 1927, Tomas and Justita Aragon and three sons moved from New Mexico to Avondale, Arizona. As the years went by the family grew to 13 children, nine sons and four daughters. During WWII, five of the older boys were in the war at the same time and all returned home to their family. Four of the boys, Andy, Abe, Mauricio, and Alonzo (Al), all served in the Army seeing action in North Africa and Europe. Mauricio was wounded four times earning the Purple Heart and gaining a battlefield commission. He also distinguished himself in the capture of two German soldiers. Andy and Alonzo received wounds but were able to return to the front. Abe was a medic and escaped injury. Lino, the youngest of the brothers to serve in WWII, broke tradition and joined the Navy. He saw action in the Pacific theater including Tarawa, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. Their mother, Justita, attributed the safe return of five sons from WWII to her almost constant prayers for their safety.

Andy, the oldest stayed in Avondale and helped his father with the family businesses. Abe returned from the war and became a boilermaker, taking his trade to Hawaii. Mauricio, upon his

return also stayed in Avondale and worked at the Grocery store and the Avondale Liquor Store. Alonzo took advantage of the G.I. Bill, attended college majoring in education. He was a teacher and coach at Avondale Elementary and Peoria School Districts.

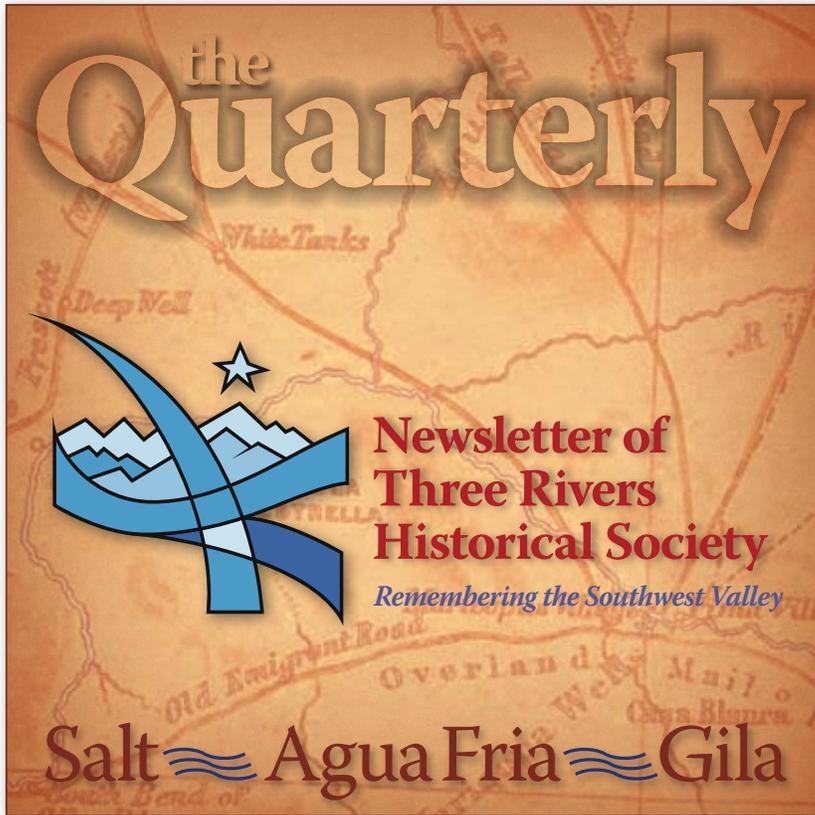
Lino, the youngest of the boys who went to war, returned to pursue an education. He, too, took advantage of the G.I. Bill. After graduating from college he worked for Rockwell International as a quality control engineer and was part of the Apollo space program. He was thrilled to watch the Apollo lift off, knowing that he had been a part of its development.

After WWII two more Aragon sons joined the military. Tony went into the Army where he learned to be a mechanic. When he was discharged he worked for the mines near Tucson. Pat followed in Lino's footsteps and joined the Navy. Like Al, he used the G.I. Bill to get a college degree. As a teacher, he worked at both Avondale Elementary School and Phoenix Union High School.

(Some information taken from an article in the November 10, 2004 edition of *The Southwest Valley Sun*, by Nancy Brandt)

July, August, September 2010

Yes, I want to join Three Rivers Historical Society!



- Student \$5*
- Family \$25*
- Contributor \$100*
- Lifetime \$500
- Single \$15*
- Business/Professional \$45*
- Benefactor \$250*
- * *Yearly Fee*

Join _____ Renew _____ Call me to volunteer _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ (Evening) _____

Cell _____ e-mail _____

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
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Three Rivers Historical Society

Remembering the Southwest Valley

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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

There will be no meetings July or August. Meetings will resume September 21, 2010 at the above location.