

APACHE JUNCTION ELKS

An All American Lodge

The First 50 Years



By Ralph S Henderson

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Excerpts from History of Apache Junction Lodge 2349, 1970-1988

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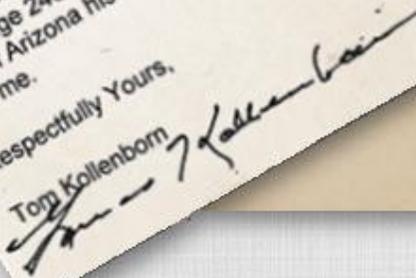
Ralph Henderson:

I want thank you for the opportunity to review the history of the Apache Junction Elk's Lodge 2439 from it origin to the present. I want you to know I read every page and found your work honest and upfront. These pages brought back many memories of old friends and acquaintances. These pages accurately trace the history of one of Apache Junction's finest organizations. This Lodge's role in service to its community is outstanding and reflects the determination of an outstanding membership and wonderful volunteers.

Ralph, you have made me proud to be an Elk and be associated with such fine people. My wife and I are honored to be members of the Apache Junction Elk Lodge 2439. This work needs to be published so it can remain a permanent part of Arizona history and Arizona Elk history. Thank you for sharing this history with me.

Respectfully Yours,

Tom Kollenborn



*Dedicated to the Past and Present Members
of the Apache Junction BPOE No. 2349*

PREFACE

As the Apache Junction BPOE *No. 2349* heads into its 50th year, the following pages (to my knowledge) are the only complete history ever to be compiled that chronicles the Apache Junction Elks, and the many men and women, whom, over the past fifty years, have made the Lodge what it is today. This story was found in the combined records of old manuscripts, past program books, remaining Lodge records, and in the thoughts, memories and opinions of many past and present members who have been a part of the Lodge over the past fifty years.

I hope you enjoy reading the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of the Apache Junction Elks as much as I have enjoyed assembling them for you. In the end, I'm sure you will come to the same conclusion as me: This Lodge has had an amazing journey over the past fifty years. It truly is a unique Lodge, in an unlikely place, that has achieved many remarkable things spanning over five decades. You should feel proud to be an Apache Junction Elk.

Fraternally yours,

Ralph Henderson, Past Exalted Ruler

THE BEGINNING

Shortly following the Arizona State Elks Convention in May of 1965, the Apache Junction Elks Lodge was conceived by Les Walker PER (Past Exalted Ruler) of the Miami (AZ) Elks. Les was the Chairman of the Arizona Elks Association committee on new Lodges for the coming year. Although it was probably more a case of convenience than forethought, Les felt Apache Junction – which was a tiny, desert settlement in the middle of nowhere –, and the nearby small towns of Florence and Coolidge, should have Elks Lodges. Florence is the Pinal County seat, and its neighbor to the south, Coolidge, are both sparsely populated even today. For whatever reasons he had, both Lodges stand as a testament to his good judgment; both Lodges are still around, and both thriving fifty years later.

A longtime Elk and resident of Apache Junction, Russell Rennick was a frequent visitor to the old Miami Elks Lodge (*now Pinal Mountain Elks*). It was inevitable that Les and Russell would become acquainted – and only natural that Les would eventually broach the subject of establishing an Elks Lodge in Apache Junction. Russell was all for it; he had just sold his interests in Apache Land Movie Studio and was well known in the Apache Junction area. So Les Walker contacted Elman Pace (PER) of the Safford Elks; Elman was also a PDDGER (Past District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler) and a member of both the Grand Lodge and Arizona Elks Association Committee on new Lodges. In alliance with each other, Russell, Les and Elman put things in motion to bring Elkdom to small-town Apache Junction.

In October of that year, Les Walker and ER (Exalted Ruler) Orville Vaughn of the Miami Elks Lodge (*who would become the new Lodge sponsor*) held a meeting with Russell Rennick to finalize the petition and paperwork for the Grand Lodge Dispensation to start a new Lodge in Apache Junction. An Apache Junction Elks Association was formed at that meeting with Russell Rennick as President, and Russ Larcombe as Secretary. The petition was presented and approved a few days later at the Fall State Convention in 1965, and the Apache Junction Elks was formed (*although it had not yet been chartered*).

Mostly by word-of-mouth – and articles in the old *Apache Sentinel* –, news quickly spread around town that there was a new Elks Lodge forming in the area and that weekly promotional meetings were being held for anyone interested. The meetings went well, the prospect of a new club coming to town was readily accepted, and, in just a little over two months, it became evident that the required minimum of 200 members would easily be met, and even exceeded.

At the following May State Convention (1966), the new Apache Junction Elks turned in their petition with over 200 names. It was accepted and forwarded to the Grand Lodge for approval, which came in just a few weeks.

The new Lodge had no home yet, so Russ Rennick, George Gross, Kermit Bressner and Bill Burghduff approached the Apache Junction School District about the use of their auditorium for the Institution of a New Lodge Ceremony to be held on the 24th of June, 1966. On the whole, it had only taken seven months from concept to completion to organize the new Lodge. The ceremony was arranged by Joe Lockwood, PER from the Clifton Lodge and the *East District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler* for 1966. Joe, along with Elmer Pace and Les Walker, presided and Apache Junction received its charter; number 2349. Transferring members were admitted on cards of demission after which time the officers of the Miami Lodge, with ER Orville Vaughn presiding, initiated the first class of candidates for the new Lodge. Once everyone had become members, the officers of the Mesa Lodge *No. 1782* took over and ER Francis Marinangel installed the inaugural class of elected officers:

Officers

Russell Rennick as Exalted Ruler
George Gross, Leading Knight
Joseph Jessamine, Loyal Knight
Kermit Bressner, Lecturing Knight
Jack Cragg, Secretary
Fred Powell, Treasurer
Chet Simler, Tiler

Trustees

Ted Price; Fred Harter; Shubert Futh; John Geurts; Jim Vinson

Appointed

Walter Russell (Chaplain); Cliff Benson (Inner Guard); Edward Jensen (Organist); and William Greaves (Esquire)

With these official proceedings out of the way, Apache Junction BPOE *No. 2349* was complete and its jurisdiction covered the territory west to the Bush Highway, south and east to Florence Junction, and north to a point halfway to Payson.

Keynote Speaker was Harold Nimitz (PER) of Winslow Arizona *No. 536*, the 1966 AEA State President. Harold presented gifts to the new Apache Junction Elks on behalf of the other Lodges

in the district. These gifts consisted of contributions to the treasury and equally welcomed contributions to the inventory of Lodge equipment. Following the introduction of distinguished guests – and remarks by Horace R Wisley, Past Grand Exalted Ruler –, the newly installed officers of Apache Junction *No. 2349* closed their first meeting.

With the official ceremonies over, the Brothers joined their Ladies at the Superstition Inn for a Gala reception. Thus was born the Apache Junction Elks *No. 2349*, the newest Lodge in the sparkling Diadem of Elkdom.

BPOE No. 2349

Chartered June 24, 1966



Russell Rennick, Charter, Exalted Ruler
1966-1967



Russell Rennick, 1st ER

Located on the corner of Tomahawk Road and Highway 88, the first home of the new Apache Junction Elks was in a leased building that had once housed a restaurant. Not far from today's Lodge, this restaurant was later to become the Pirates Cove. *(Today, this location is home to Filly's Road House.)* Under Russell Rennick, the new Lodge was very active from the start with the group quickly becoming involved in setting-up their Lodge, increasing their membership count, and establishing their club.



George Gross, Exalted Ruler
1967-1968

Under PER Russell Rennick and ER George Gross, the new Apache Junction Elks Lodge was quite active from the very beginning, promptly becoming involved with community affairs; charitable acts; encouraging youth groups; and sponsoring the Apache Junction observance of Flag Day. The group became involved with the other clubs in the area, as well, observing Memorial Day, and bringing Apache Junction its first Circus. The social club was a big hit in the area, providing entertainment and refreshment to the Brothers, their Ladies and their guests, as well as hosting parties, dinners, and dances. Additionally, they carried this over by hosting and visiting other Lodges in the area. The new Lodge topped the state Elks National Foundations and Centennial Year contributions, and came in sixth nationwide. At the 1968 state convention, the new AJ

(Apache Junction) Lodge took first place in Youth Activities and went on to take home third place in Youth Activities at the Grand Lodge Convention that very same year.



Kermit Bressner, Exalted Ruler – *Past State President*
1968-1969

The Lodge had come a long way in just its first couple of years. Things were moving fast and it wasn't long before they were considered to be the hottest new club in town. Everyone wanted to join the AJ Elks, and – under Kermit Bressner – the Brothers continued to bring in new petitions for membership each month. The members supported the club superbly, not only financially but also with many volunteer hours.



John McAfee, Exalted Ruler
1969-1970

By January 1969, the Lodge was outgrowing its rented facilities and it was becoming apparent that an acceptable lease would not be presented to them when it would come time to renew. With these two things in mind, the decision was made to build a permanent Lodge facility. Propitiously, they were to find state trust land just up the road from their current location, and even more favorable was that they could acquire it with a lease-option; it seemed to be the most opportune place for their new Lodge's home. This original leased site consisted of a fifty-acre



parcel on the north side and thirty acres on the south side of Highway 88 and Lost Dutchman Road. Ten acres of the southern parcel of this lease is where today's Lodge stands. The land was under lease to Dr. Joseph Noto, an Elk from California. Heading up the chairmanship of the building committee, Richard Damiano set out to gain the approval of the Grand Lodge, and to work things out with Dr. Noto. Richard Damiano and PER Kermit Bressner worked out the details and Dr. Noto graciously conveyed his eighty-acre

lease to the Apache Junction Elks. Work began on the new Lodge facilities at the very end of March, in the spring of 1970.



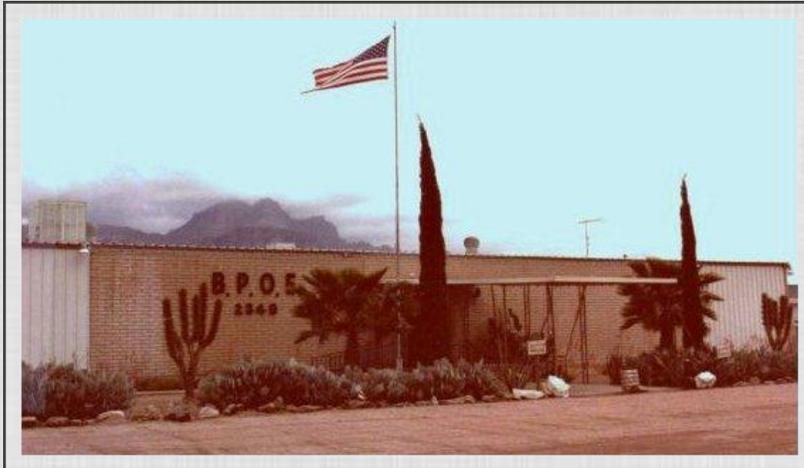
Ivan Troiz, Exalted Ruler
1970-1971

With things winding down at the 'Tomahawk Road' Lodge facility, construction began on the new building in earnest; ER Ivan wanted to be out of their old location as soon as possible to avoid any lease problems with the owners. The call went out for help and soon determined construction was under way. Even though a cement-worker strike brought construction to a complete halt for two months, by October of 1970 the structure was up and usable, standing proudly on the eighty-acre lease they had acquired only six months prior. The thirty acres on the south side of Highway 88 (*where the Lodge stands today*) was immediately fenced. Master plans were drawn-up to incorporate the future expansion of additional rooms when they would become needed, and to develop the additional property on the north side of Highway 88 into an Elks RV Village – complete with cabins and RV spaces for traveling Elks. (*This predestined space was used for deep-pit barbeque, carnivals, and Boy Scout outings for many years.*)



Russell Shaw, Exalted Ruler
1971-1972 Building Dedication

Russell Shaw and the Trustees continued working on the new facility over the course of the summer, and, by the end of the year, the Lodge had moved out of the old facility on Tomahawk Road. Although the new building was well-utilized almost immediately, it was by no-means complete. It hadn't any ceilings, partitions, or paneling, nor was any permanent lighting in place. Russell and the officers decided it was time to have the building dedicated anyway, and plans were soon put into motion to dedicate the building. The Lodge facility at this time consisted of the clubroom – which doubled as a lodge room – and the kitchen and bar, which is still in use today. (*The fireplace would come later.*)



Original Building, circa 1972

On the 12th of March, 1972, the Apache Junction Elks proudly hosted the Honorable Leonard Busch, Past Grand Exalted Ruler, and Dr. Joseph Noto from Monterey, California (the gentleman from whom they had acquired the lease), at the Lodge Dedication Ceremony. AJ Chamber President Bill McDaniels was one of the Keynote Speakers of the day, along with the American

Legion; VFW; Moose Lodge; Jaycees; Lions Club; Rotary Club and Toast Masters.



Jack Cragg, Exalted Ruler
1972-1973

Having officially moved into the new building, new ER Jack Cragg and the officers had their hands full convincing the membership that the Lodge should move slowly so as not to go into debt. However, some improvements were able to be made throughout the year, including a used furnace and a new, commercial-sized evaporative cooler for the lodge room. In the kitchen, a new ice-machine and more shelving was installed, along with the completion of other kitchen improvements. A speed-gun was installed at the bar and a new portable gas grill was donated by the now active PER Association via their outside steak 'fries'. Permanent lighting was also installed both inside and outside, and plans got underway to add the 30 x 60 Fireplace Room and bar.

On the Lodge side, the mandatory Grand Lodge programs were in full swing and Richard Damiano Jr. did an outstanding job with the Little League, Campfire Girls, Children's Halloween Party and Children's Christmas Party. To everyone's delight, that year's Santa Claus was to arrive by helicopter!

In the club, good friends, good fellowship and good food were the norm. It was getting very busy around the club, so Barney Bower – one of the charter members and the owner of the Western Auto Store in AJ – proposed setting-up an Elk's band. Barney knew several retired musicians in the area who he soon got together to practice, and, at the 1973 Installation of Officers night,

Barney showed up with a thirteen-piece Dixieland band! ER Jack named them the “*Over the Hill Gang*” and, as a group, they would continue to play in the area for many years to come.



Harold Thompson, Exalted Ruler
1973-1974 VIP Room Started

It was probably no coincidence that the manager of the First National Bank in Apache Junction, Harold Thompson, took the reins of the Lodge this year. Upon taking over as ER, Harold found the Lodge embroiled in a nasty, ongoing lawsuit with the Accitellie’s (who had held the lease on the original Lodge location on Tomahawk Road). The Lodge failed to prevail in the suit and the ensuing judgment caused quite a lot of commotion for the rest of the year. ER Harold provided a temporary loan through the bank and spent the remainder of his term paying it back. All the legal wrangling consumed much of Harold’s and the Trustee’s time that year, and some of the other programs – such as the Fireplace Room – had to take a backseat for a few months. For the first time since the group had formed, the Lodge was not very active in all the State and Grand Lodge programs. The Trustees did, however, manage to pay off the judgment quickly and make some improvements to the facility, including installing the original glass partition and some new drapes in the yet-unfinished VIP Room (*now the lower portion of the club*).



Mike Currier, Exalted Ruler
1974-1975

Mike Currier started his year off as ER with the Lodge still in quite a bit of turmoil following the court-judgment of the previous year, and the resulting money problems that had also hounded them all that year. However, the Trustees had done a good job of managing the expenses and getting everything paid-off. Unfortunately, there was a lot of ‘infighting’ among the officers that had been occurring, and that did not have a positive impact on the Lodge or club. Lodge programs, again, were run at a minimum, and the club’s business suffered even more from all the

disagreements going on. By the end of 1975, many negative politics were going on that would spill over into the following year.

It was not a good year for the Lodge.



Dennis Fulcher, Exalted Ruler
1975-1976

From the beginning, Dennis Fulcher started out his year with serious contentions happening between the officers and the membership. The problems of the past couple of years finally reached the boiling point. Many officers resigned, some changed chairs, and the whole situation caused so much turmoil that it was difficult just to keep things together. This split in the Lodge immediately became evident in the club and its lack of activities and revenue. With no one coming into the club to eat or drink, the club suffered some severe losses. Lodge activities also suffered, and it was to be another difficult year for the Apache Junction Elks. By the end of the year, the Grand Lodge had become involved in the situation; the club was in financial trouble and the Grand Lodge gave the Lodge one chance to get back on their feet as they headed into their tenth year.



Richard Damiano, Exalted Ruler
1976-1977

With the Lodge in big trouble – not only financially, but also with the Arizona Elks and the Grand Lodge – past Trustee Damiano was summoned to run for ER and take over the situation. Richard, who was well-liked around the town, was also quite respected in the Lodge. He, along with the Trustees, immediately put into force many new, money-saving ideas, and, before too long, he had the club running smoothly again. Within about six months, the Trustees had paid all the past-due bills (totaling a little over \$8,000) and the Lodge's first major crisis was over. Once everything was financially sound, Richard activated the building committee again and plans were made to complete the 30 x 60 VIP/Fireplace Room with fireplace and bar (*which still stands today*), and

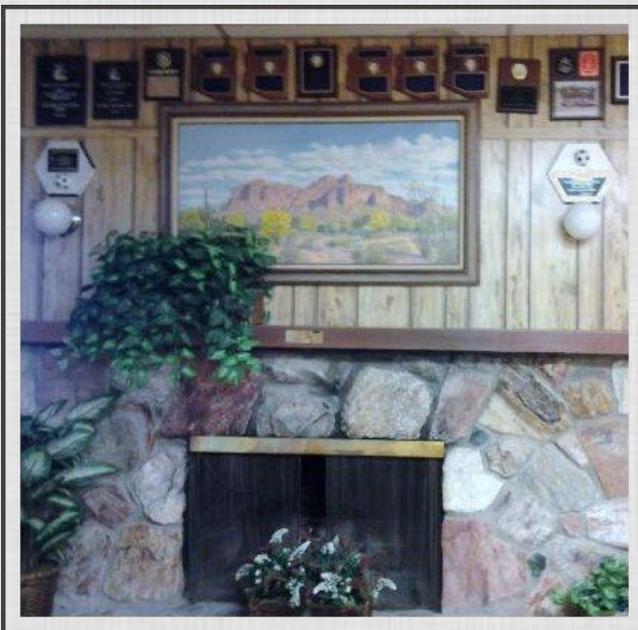
the dining room with restrooms and a bar. Under Richard's leadership, and with everyone now getting along, the club and kitchen went on to net the largest profit of any year so far. At year's end, they turned over \$25,000 to the Lodge.



Richard Damiano, Exalted Ruler

1977-1978 Dining Room and Fireplace Room Completed

With things going so smoothly, Richard was asked to serve as Exalted Ruler for a second term,



Donated by Ned Cross, this original F.A. Olsen painting adorned the fireplace at the initial Tomahawk location

and was easily elected. During this year, the dining room, bar and restrooms were to be favorably completed. Although the bar was replaced in 2007, the dining room remains much the same today, and – thanks to a very large contribution by one of the members – the Fireplace room was finally completed. At last, with all the construction finished, the Ladies Auxiliary finally set about making it home. They donated the carpet, furniture and a large chandelier for the club, along with the tables and chairs. The Auxiliary had raised a lot of money over the past eleven years and had been waiting to spend it on the Lodge and club facilities. The club, again, had a tremendous year, showing over \$30,000 profit. The Lodge was back on track and won the state award for membership that year.

ELKS TRIVIA: The original name of the BPOE was the 'Jolly Corks' – a solitary social-club which turned 'private-club' simply as a way to elude the laws in New York City which governed the opening hours for 'public' taverns.



Ray Galley, Exalted Ruler
1978-1979

Ray Galley was a retired man and a very dedicated Elk – and Ray had genuinely caught the volunteer bug. He was enthusiastic over the success the Lodge had over the past two years, and he set out to make it even better. And what a great job he did! The AJ Elks excelled in everything that year, plus all the Lodge activities were expanded. The Lodge raised money for the Little League Dugouts and purchased a snow-cone machine for their concession stand. Ray set an all-time record for that time, with the final club audit showing over \$43,000 for the year. *(Following Ray's death in 1983, his widow would donate a black piano in his memory. This piano, used for many years to comprise "Tony's Piano Bar", is still owned by the Lodge today.)*



George Dodson, Exalted Ruler
1979-1980

George Dodson's year was a fun year for everyone. Like Ray before him, he was a very dedicated Elk with a huge following of volunteers. These volunteers did a great job of keeping the expenses down – and the excitement up – around the club *at all times*. The Apache Junction Elks had put a couple of very good years behind them since their previous problems of just a couple of years before, and the atmosphere around the club was excellent. The AJ Elks were, once again, the 'place to be' in town for good times, good food and great fellowship. The Auxiliary was growing, as well, and played a huge part in Apache Junction taking home the State Trophy for the largest net gain in membership that year. The Lodge had increased its membership by over 120 new people, bringing the membership to 800 members by year's end.

ELKS TRIVIA: In 1923, the Green Bay Elks Lodge held a benefit to raise money for the Green Bay "Packers" Football Club. An attendance of more than 400 at a local Elks Club held the Green Bay Packers' first stock drive; hence, the club was transformed into a nonprofit entity – the Green Bay Packers Corporation.



Jim Rowan, Exalted Ruler – *PDDGER*
1980-1981

Jim Rowan was a very likeable man, well known and respected around town. He had come out of the Damiano class of officers, along with George Dodson and Ray Galley. All of them got along great and worked well together. Between them, they provided several years of good leadership for the Lodge. They were great at Ritual and excelled at fundraising, community awareness, and just about everything else that they became involved with. Jim was no exception. Under him, the club flourished even more and the volunteers were putting out more Friday-night meals than ever before. The live-entertainment was a big hit, as well, and the Lodge was successfully entertaining a lot of out-of-town Elks. Jim did a great job making people think he personally was hosting them. Membership continued to soar, and Jim would go on to serve the Grand Lodge as a District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler.



Harold Propp, Exalted Ruler
1981-1982

Harold Propp took over after Jim Rowan. Like Jim, he too was a very popular ER (*so much so, that he would return four years later to serve as ER once again*). Harold maintained the statuesque really well, and, as usual, Apache Junction Elks excelled with all their youth activities and community events. Harold was a very personable man; he got along well with everyone in the Lodge and club, as did his Leading Knight, John Forsberg. Together they expanded all the youth programs, and laid plans and raised funds for the AJ Ball Park lighting project (*which would occur the following year*). Without a doubt, Harold set the stage for Apache Junction's most successful year to come. When he turned the Lodge over to John Forsberg at the end of his rule, all the charity balls, dances, Friday-night meals, and club profits had set a new record for the Lodge.



John Forsberg, Exalted Ruler
1982-1983 'Lodge of the Year'

Little did John Forsberg realize that when his friend Kermit Bressner signed him up in the Apache Junction Elks, he would become the Exalted Ruler the same year Kermit would serve as President of the Arizona State Elks Association. *(Kermit Bressner and Bob Phillips are the only two Apache Junction Elks to serve as State President over the past fifty years.)*

John's year was a busy one; under his rule, all the Lodge programs ran smoothly and with great success. John, again, got a Boy Scout Troop going and helped the Campfire Girls to become established; the Children's Christmas that year was one of the best ever.



Plaque from old
Elks Field Concession Stand

The big project for the year was installing new field-lighting at the Superstition Mountain Elementary athletic field. Fred Hiller and his crew installed the new lighting at a cost of about \$7,000 – all paid for by the AJ Elks. The Peewee League presented the Lodge with a plaque and renamed the field "Elks Field" in front of the whole town at the dedication ceremony. *(This plaque resides in the Heritage Room today.)*

Improvement projects for the year were many. Bob Williams and Carole Benehofer donated the back-bar mirror with the etched elk head *(still in use today)* and Ernie Nitzen built and donated the Oak-and-Turquoise Elks National Foundation Board that stands today in the entryway. Finally completed, the new dining and lodge room insulation made cooling so much better, and three-hundred stack-chairs – along with fifty round banquet tables – were newly purchased for the dining room area.

A special dinner and dance was held to purchase a "Jaws of Life" for the AJ Fire Department, which was presented to the Fire Department at the Law and Order Banquet later that year. Bob Corbin, Attorney General of Arizona – and a longtime friend of the Lodge –, spoke at the banquet.

With everything going on that year the club's net profit was good and the pantry was stocked. However, there wasn't a lot of money left in the bank after purchasing the building materials for the big project to follow in a few months. Still, the Lodge had signed on another fifty-six members and brought home the prestigious "Lodge of the Year" award.



Ed Aldrich, Exalted Ruler
1983-1984

Ed Aldrich started out his year as ER with a huge construction project already on the books to enlarge the exterior of the Lodge. It was a project that he had worked on, alongside PER John Forsberg and the trustees, for several months before he took office. Getting approval from the Grand Lodge to proceed had taken several months. This was a big project and would be one of the last for several years. It created the look the Lodge has today with the arched exterior. The project also extended the building another thirty feet, creating the lodge room portion of the hall currently in use today. Also expanded was the east side of the building to create the breezeway, and the dishwashing room was enlarged.

With the entire place tore-up all year, everyone must have decided it would be a good time to attend the National Convention (to be held in Hawaii that year). Apache Junction showed up with a contingency of *sixty-one* Apache Junction Elks, by far the most of any Lodge in the state.

Another first ever for the Lodge came from the Ritual Team. They received their first-ever recognition as being the most improved team in the state.



Exterior Construction, 1983

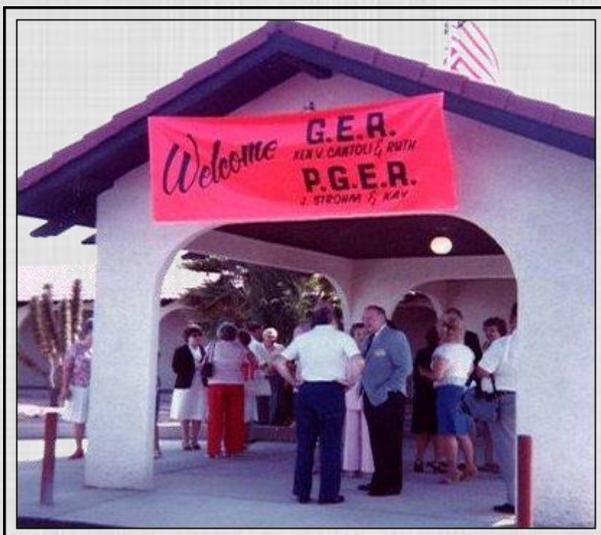
By the end of Ed Aldrich's year, the Lodge had numerous awards, a virtually new building, a very busy club, and many extremely happy Elks.

 **Theo G Matthews, Exalted Ruler**
1984-1985

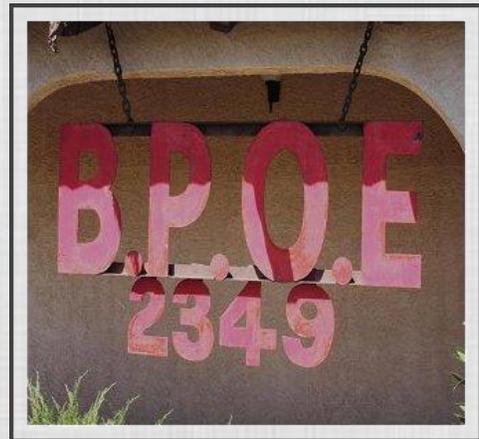
Theo Mathews took over entertaining some very important Elk guests. The exterior construction was finally complete and the Apache Junction Lodge was quite the showpiece for Elksdom. Grand Exalted Ruler Ken Cantoli, along with Past Grand Exalted Ruler Strohm and their Ladies, paid a personal visit to the Lodge on the 13th of May for the Grand Opening. The social scene and festivities were really in high gear.

Under Theo, the Lodge was very active in all the Grand Lodge and Arizona Elks programs. The club did a great job hosting the many charity events, balls, and fundraisers for the year.

The Ladies Auxiliary was very active in the Lodge, hosting a



Visit from Ken Cantoli,
Grand Exalted Ruler, 1984



Original Lodge sign now hangs on
the west-end of the building

great Harvest Ball and installing a jewelry case showcasing all types of Ladies' Elk memorabilia. The case became a popular item around the Lodge, provided a lot of Elks "bling" and raised thousands of dollars for the Ladies over the years. *(Today, this case resides in the Lodge's entryway.)*

More-and-more with each new year, the Apache Junction Elks Lodge was becoming recognized as one of Apache Junction's most active organizations in town, and a favorite of the winter visitors.

At the annual Law and Order Banquet, Todd Vandriel was presented with "Firefighter of the Year"; William Keats DPS "Officer of the Year";

and Glen Durkin “AJPD Officer of the Year”. The Lodge signed up many new members that year and finished the year with a new record membership of **1,178** members on the roster.



Dan Horne, Exalted Ruler
1985-1986

During Dan Horne’s year as ER, the Lodge was able to both financially – and with willing manpower and ideas – make an impact in the Apache Junction community. The Lodge became connected to just about everything that was going on in the community. Under Dan’s rule, the Lodge became even more involved with the youth in the area – hosting an Academic Awards Banquet in 1986. The Lodge was awarded the “Top Local Youth Supporter” in Apache Junction that year, and received plenty of press for all their accomplishments with Soccer Shoot; Hoop Shoot; Drug Awareness; Red Ribbon Week; Americanism; Scholarships and overall support of the AJ School District.

As involved in youth as the Lodge was, they also became very involved with the annual Apache Junction Rodeo, staffing the gates and helping with the overall promotion and production of the event.

Seeing a big need for senior services in the area, the Lodge again ameliorated by hosting a Thursday afternoon dance each week for the AJ Senior Club: these dances became a weekly event in the Lodge for another fifteen years. Additionally, the Lodge fielded a senior softball team in the Golden Age Softball League – defeating the Monte Vista team for the State Trophy.

**ELKS HANDLE
RODEO GATE**

Elks will be on hand to take care of the Rodeo Gates during the Lost Dutchman Days' events. However, if you don't see any antlers, don't be alarmed. Most of the Elks will be disguised as humans and they will identify themselves as members of Apache Junction Elks Lodge #2349.

No matter how you discover them, they will be hard at work. Chairman of the Rodeo Gate Duane Ries says, "They will be selling tickets, parking cars, and whatever else it takes to keep things going as smooth as possible." They'll also be serving refreshments and lunch to the workers.

But finding your way to get into the Rodeo grounds is no problem this year as there will be two gates open. One of the Rodeo Gates is on Meridian, just north of Brown Road. The other Rodeo Gate is on Brown Road, just west of Meridian.

Apache Junction Sentinel 1985

Elks win Golden Ages award

The Elks Lodge Golden Ages softball team showed what they were made of March 16 when they played five games in a row to beat an undefeated Monte Vista twice for the championship.

That night, Roadhaven RV Park hosted the season-ending banquet where awards were presented.

They were:
 Most Valuable Player — Barney Everidge (Elks)
 Golden Glove — Dick Meyers (Elks)
 League Sportsmanship — Countryside's team

1st Place Tournament: Elks Lodge
 2nd Place Tournament: Monte Vista RV Park

3rd Place Tournament: American Legion

1st Place League: Elks Lodge

2nd Place League: Monte Vista RV Park

••

The all star team was composed of Joe Matlick, catcher; Barney Everidge, first base; Cub Schillinger, second

base; Tex Deichelborer, third base; Dale Krueger, short-stop; Poody Doreing, Vic Pearson, Don Lenart and Mickey Dukich, outfield and Ted Matthews, pitcher.



Apache Junction Independent 1985

The Lodge ended the year winning many Arizona State Elks awards, and gaining another ninety new members; raising the bar again, this trend would continue at Apache Junction Elks Lodge No. 2349 for many years.



Harold Propp, Exalted Ruler

1986-1987

Lodge 20th Anniversary, AJ Commanders Council formed



Charter members at 20th Anniversary party

Harold Propp's second turn being ER also coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Lodge. By now, most of the original plans had already been achieved, and the hard work of developing and financing the property was completed. Apache Junction No. 2349 was about as busy as it had ever been with all the different activities it had going on. To celebrate, Harold held a very formal 20th year Charter Member Night to recognize the many original and early members that had put so many hours and money into the Lodge. The Ladies

obviously had a lot to do with the affair, and the Arizona Secretary of State, Rose Mofford, was the Keynote Speaker.

Youth activities continued to expand even more with the Lodge hosting and financing the local community Halloween Carnival. The highlight was a citywide costume contest with the Lodge

providing prizes and candy for all that participated (about 600 children). At Christmastime, Harold also expanded the Children's Christmas Party by having Santa arrive via Fire Truck for the first time

1986 was also the year Harold – along with the leaders of the American Legion; VFW; D.A.V.; Am-Vets and the AJ Elks – got together to form the *Commanders Council*. The council coordinated all the local organizations' involvement in the local Memorial Day observance, the hanging of flags at the cemetery, the Veteran's Day parade and other local ceremonies. With everyone on the same agenda – and the local club rivalries put to rest –, the *Avenue of Flags* was added to the program. While the actual name of this group exists only in memory today, these events still continue to this day, with each of the original clubs taking their turn coordinating the events on a rotating basis.

Apache Junction has one of the most impressive Veterans Day observances of any city in the valley. The traveling trophy still resides in the Heritage Room every six years as the Lodge takes its turn hosting the events.

Harold finished his year adding another 117 new members, bringing the Lodge membership up to **1,285**.

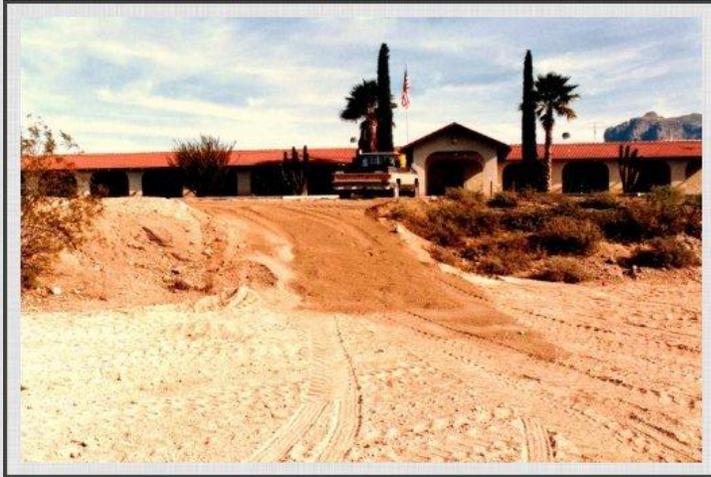


Duane Ries, Exalted Ruler

1987-1988 Lower Parking Lot Completed

With most programs being annual occurrences each year, Duane's year commenced as usual. These annual events – which the AJ Elks were becoming known for – were drawing new applicants on a daily basis. The charitable work, fun times and sociable atmosphere made the AJ Elks the place-to-belong. Being, by far, the largest and most impressive in the area, it became evident that the Lodge facility was in dire need of more parking to accommodate the burgeoning winter crowd and their RV's. Soon, a project was launched to enlarge the lower property into additional parking; it was a huge undertaking with many volunteer hours and donated equipment, but over the course of about six months the lower parking lot was completed, and remains in this completed form today. Additionally, with all the dinners being served in the hall each week, the dishwashing room was once again expanded to its present-day size.

The Lodge continued to expand its service to the community; donating space for the AJ Postal



Lower parking lot under construction 1987

Test and Hiring Seminars, hosting weekly senior dances and participating in the *National Celebration of Citizenship* and *Bells Across America*.

1987-1988 also became the first for some new Lodge traditions. The PER Recognition Party became an annual event for many years, and the bar staff – along with the Ladies Auxiliary – began the traditional Christmas Eve ‘Tom & Jerry’ Party. The Ladies, who had a very active group (that was

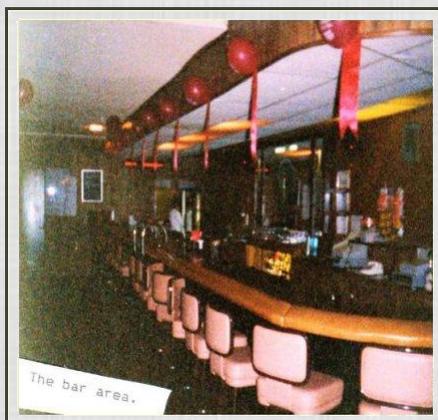
growing in number each month), hosted their first Ladies’ Fashion Show and Luncheon that year; this event was to become a yearly highlight for the Ladies.

Duane’s successes really set the stage for Apache Junction Elks most successful year ever to come, leaving incoming ER Marvin Hanshaw with **1,416** members, some well-trained officers and a very active Lodge.



Marvin Hanshaw, Exalted Ruler

1988-1989 ‘All American Lodge’, Heritage Room Dedicated



Main bar 1988

Marvin Hanshaw began his tenure as ER with **1,416** members and things going about as good as they can get for an Elks Lodge, or any type of group for that matter. PER Duane Ries had left the Lodge on such a high-note that all Marvin had to do was merely keep things going in an upward direction. Marvin, like his predecessor, was also a great motivator and did a superb job of keeping things focused. His seasoned officers stepped up the youth programs even more, and there was very little else happening around Apache Junction that the Lodge was not involved with or participating in. The ease of parking, courtesy of the

previous year, made Friday night dining and dancing a huge hit around the whole area. The Ladies Harvest Ball, Sweetheart Ball and Fashion Show kept the formal aspect of the club constantly buzzing, and the pomp and ceremony displayed by the men was impressive. Apache Junction No. 2349 was truly one of the premier Lodges in Elkdom now, and was hosting close to an additional 4,000 winter Elks. *The place was most enjoyable and delightfully packed.*



All American Lodge, 1988-89

In a touching ceremony, Betty Rennick dedicated the Heritage Room *in memory of* her late husband, Russell Rennick, the first Exalted Ruler of the Lodge. For their outstanding work with Youth Activities; Hoop Shoot; Soccer Shoot; Drug Awareness; Scholarships; Veterans Service Commission; Police and Firemen Recognition; Scouting Sponsorships; Little League Sponsorships; Sunshine Acres and the Boy's and Girl's Club; Apache Junction No. 2349 won just about every award offered by both the Grand Lodge *and* Arizona Elks. That year, for the very first time, they were to be recognized as an **"ALL AMERICAN LODGE"** in Division V.



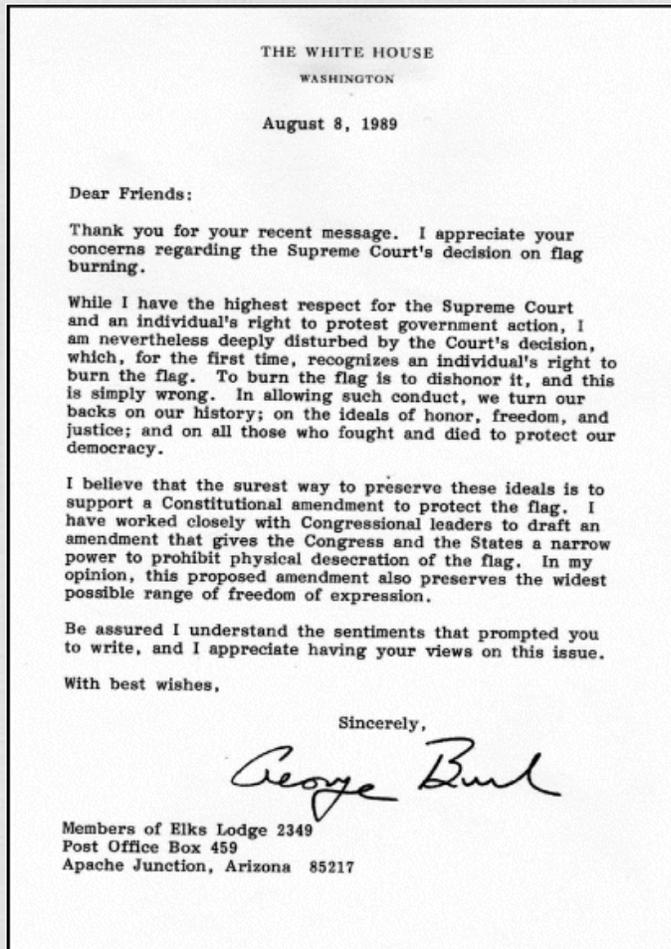
John McElroy, Exalted Ruler
1989-1990

John McElroy began his year with 1,501 members. Having to supervene the two previous ER's was most difficult, as they were a tough act to follow. Subsequently, John's legacy probably suffers less notoriety than it should rightfully have been given – entwined as it was with the successes of the previous years. In reality, though, John did a great job of maintaining the energy level in the club and expanding the scope of the Lodge programs even more.

The Lodge held several successful projects that year, especially regarding the VA Hospital, where his crew volunteered over 1,228 man-hours, drove over 4,112 miles and donated over \$6,489.

In other Americanism programs over the year, the Lodge donated over \$4,500 additional dollars. Not to be outdone, the Youth Committee hosted an Easter Egg Hunt that attracted over 650 children from the community. Steve Grebb was named "Police Officer of the Year" at the annual Law Enforcement Banquet.

To top off the year, the Lodge composed a letter to then-President George Bush, condemning any type of flag desecration and received a nice letter back from President Bush.



Under John's tenure, the first Annual Math Bee was established (*although it would carry over into the following year*). Sponsored by the AJ Elks and AJUSD, for many years the Annual Math Bee was held at the Lodge – until it finally outgrew the facilities. The 'Math Bee' still continues today through the Apache Junction School District.

The other major achievement to come out of John's year was winning – not only the Arizona Elks award for ENF (Elks National Foundation) – but also the Grand Lodges ENF Per Capita award for DIVISION V.

When John's year was over, the Lodge had added 121 new members bringing the membership to 1,622.



ELKS TRIVIA: On Sept. 8, 1946, the Elks Memorial was re-dedicated in Chicago, and the man who pulled the American Flag aloft that day was Brother John "Jack" Bradley of Appleton, WI. If the name sounds familiar to you, it is because he was also one of the marines who raised the American Flag at Mt. Suribachi in Iwo Jima.



Roger L Kuketz, Exalted Ruler
1990-1991 Officer Stations Donated

AJ Winners Named in Local Elks' Math Bee

The first annual Apache Junction Unified School District Math Bee for grades two, three and four was held on April 18 at the local Elks Lodge. The purpose of this event was to celebrate student academic success in mathematics.

Each of our elementary schools diligently worked throughout the year on having their students memorize mathematical facts. Skills of students were tested through competitions in classrooms. Classroom winners then went on to individual school competitions, prior to the district competition.

The Apache Junction Elks Lodge #43 not only sponsored this event, but hosted over 200 spectators and participants. The event was "a great success", said Dr. Barry Sutter, Director of Curriculum of the Apache Junction Unified School District. Plans are being made for the continuation and possible expansion of the Math Bee to include other grade levels and districts.

The 1990 winners were as follows:

Grade:	Student Name:	School:	Placement:
2	Emilia Sanchez	GCES	First
	Tim Johns	GCES	Second
	Heather Baugher	SMES	Third
	Kincaid Murray	GCES	Fourth
3	Kourtenay Cisterna	GCES	First
	Leana Trujillo	GCES	Second
	Julia Moor	GCES	Third
	Christina LeBlanc	GCES	Fourth
4	Michelle Erickson	SMES	First
	Jeri Ann Bryant	GCES	Second
	Nathan Macias	SMES	Third
	Teresa Garcia	DVES	Fourth

Apache Junction Independent 1990

Roger Kuketz began his year hosting the first Apache Junction Unified School District Math Bee for grades two, three and four as soon as he took office. Having worked out the details with Dr. Barry Sutter – along with John McElroy the previous year –, the event was a huge success that hosted over 200 children. Immediately, plans were made with Barry for the continuation of the event, possibly expanding it to other grade levels, and maybe other school districts. The Math Bee continues today within the district; although originally an Apache Junction Elks program, it outgrew the Elks facilities in 2002.

Apache Junction really excelled in all the youth programs during Roger’s year, and, with Burt McDermott as the Youth Activity Chairman, the Lodge took top state and national honors. Awards for Student of the Month; Drug Awareness; Special Olympics; Boy Scouts; Hoop Shoot; Children’s Christmas Party; Math Bee; Youth Academic Banquet; Americanism; Pop Warner Football and Little League were received. Under Burt, the scholarship program was greatly expanded and a long-term relationship would begin with Dr. Barry Sutter, the future Superintendent of the A.J. School District.

Among the Lodge improvements for the year, Nadine McAfee donated the officer stations *in memory of* her husband, PER John McAfee (1969-1970); these officer stations are still in use today.



Jay Hartley, Exalted Ruler
1991-1992



Decorating the arches for Red Ribbon Week won awards and became a tradition for many years

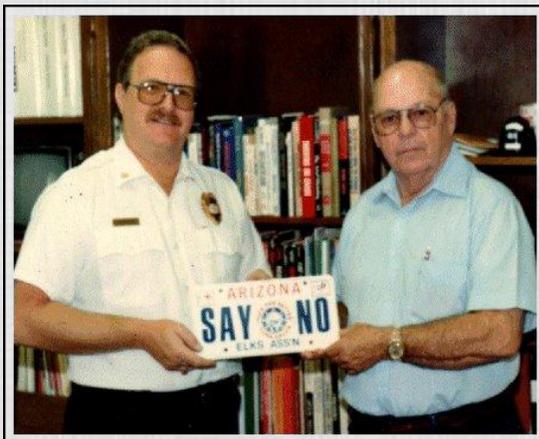
Having been left with a membership now at 1,726, Jay Hartley had more members than anyone ever dreamed of for a small town of about 5,000 people in a place called Apache Junction. The Lodge had about all the continuous activity it could handle, as well, and the winter Elks continued to mob the club each winter with their RV's and attendance. The club had become so successful that it quickly became too busy to manage with just its volunteers, so Maureen Skow, a member of the Buckhorn Lodge, was hired on as the new club manager.

Apache Junction PER Duane Ries was appointed District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler that year. A huge presence, the Ladies Auxiliary donated over \$4,000 from their bake sales, luncheons, fashion shows and raffles to the Elks Major Projects. They were a very organized group that



was far more

adept at fundraising than the men were. In fact, many of the Lodge's successes over the years were a direct result of the Auxiliaries' blessings and involvement.



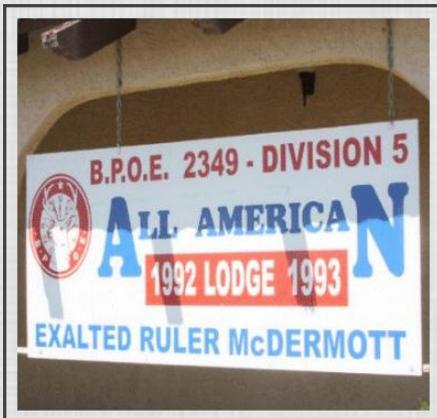
Future ER, Ernie Heaton, presents AJPD with Elk Drug Awareness license plates for patrol cars

The Lodge, again, won just about every award available that year for their work in Americanism Essays; Scholarships; Drug Awareness; Soccer Shoot; Hoop Shoot; Red Ribbon Week; Police and Firemen recognition; and Veterans programs. Lodge programs were so successful that the Apache Junction Police Department even requested

permission to use the A.J. Elks Anti-Drug License Plates for their patrol cars. Also that year, the Lodge presented Bob Tripp (owner of the local Dairy Queen) with a “Distinguished Citizen” award. Jay Hartley would go on to serve the Elks for many more years on various levels of leadership.



Burt Mc Dermott, Exalted Ruler
1992-1993 ‘All American Lodge’



All American Lodge, 1992-93

Burt McDermott started his year with 1,770 members. Burt was a very likable ER with a huge following of volunteers. He and his officers, like their predecessors, had their hands full managing the business of the Lodge, club and facilities. It was becoming apparent that another lease with the State Land Trust was going to become too expensive. The purchase price of the entire eighty acres was going to be too cost-prohibitive, so the trustees had the ten-acre parcel (*where the Lodge is today*) surveyed for a future offer to purchase.

Burt and his crew continued the Apache Junction dominance over the Arizona Elks and Grand Lodge programs, and the Ladies’ events were more successful than ever. Burt, himself, set up Tuesday nights as *Family Night*, but – with the average age of the Lodge members to be around *eighty* –, there were few, if any, families that ever attended. However, Burt developed quite a following among all the winter Elks and their guests for his famous pork chops on Tuesday nights.

At year's end, Apache Junction Elks had raised over \$40,000 for charity and \$12,000 for the Youth of Apache Junction. The Lodge had completed all the necessary programs required to enter the *All American Lodge* competition and Apache Junction No. 2349 – for the second time – was awarded Elkdom’s top honor at the National Convention of 1993; **All American Lodge**. Burt left office with the Lodge membership at 1,826.

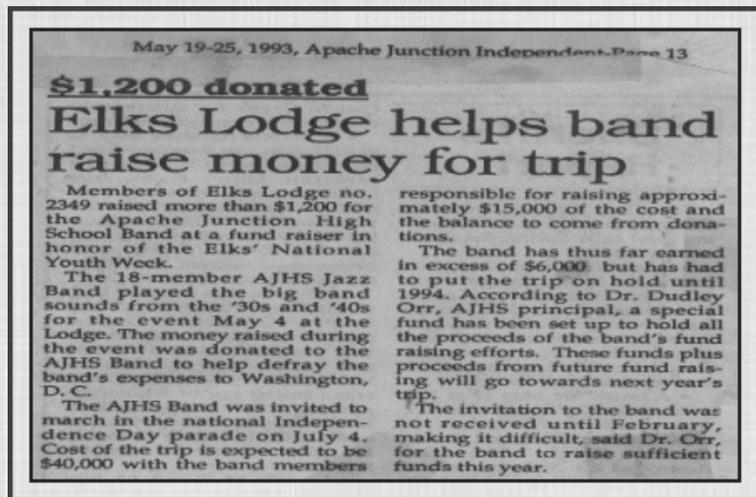
ELKS TRIVIA: On April 18, 1906, the great San Francisco Earthquake took place and the B.P.O.E. set up a tent city for refugees before the U.S. Government did.



Ernie Heaton, Exalted Ruler
1993-1994

Ernie Heaton, like Burt McDermott, was also very well-liked around the Lodge. He had an impressive following of volunteers, committee people and a great social interaction going on in the club when he took over. Apache Junction No. 2349 had established a continuous line of leadership over the years and Ernie knew exactly what he was doing when he took over. Consequently, Ernie had no problem when it came to expanding the Apache Junction Elks and their social programs. Former Apache Junction PER Duane Ries was appointed District Deputy, and the Apache Junction Lodge was about as high profile as any in Elkdom on the Local, State and Grand Lodge level.

Departing some from past traditions, Apache Junction No. 2349 sponsored Bilye Miller in the 1993 Miss Teen America Pageant; although this did not become an annual thing for the Lodge, everyone got behind Bilye and had a lot of fun with it that year. Another first for the Lodge under Ernie would be to host a Big Band Dance for youth week using the AJHS Jazz Band. *(With the huge WWII-generation membership, 'Big Band' was very popular.)* The formal affair was a huge success and well-attended. It won many awards, received a lot of press, and collected over \$1,200 – which was promptly donated to the music department at the school. Ed Kennelly, Youth Chairman that year, also set a new scholarship record awarding nine scholarships totaling \$3,100. These were scholarships from just the AJ Lodge alone, and not from ENF or Arizona Elks scholarships. That year, Peter Rios, Rachel Charlton, and Chris Moar won the Math Bee.



Apache Junction High School Band charity dance

Ernie completed his term awarding Dr. Thomas Johnson “Citizen of the Year”, and Rick Salmon “Police Officer of the Year”; John McCarthy received the “Firefighter of the Year” award.



Richard Grossman, Exalted Ruler 1994-1995

Richard Grossman was a quirky little man very much out of character from past leaders of the Lodge. Being just a little over five feet tall, Richard would affectionately become known as the “Little Elf”, a character he devised for the Children's Christmas Party. He was a welcome change from his more formal predecessors; Richard signed everything with his motto “SMILE”. He was very much involved in Elk Ritual and continued to serve as coach and promoter of Lodge participation throughout his Elk career. Richard’s clowning around came at a perfect time in the history of the Lodge – a time to finally just sit back and enjoy all the years of hard work and the ‘much-needed, serious demeanor’ that came with that hard work; all the committees, chairman and auxiliary members thrived under him.



Richard Grossman
“The Little Elf”

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Organizations

982-7799

The Apache Junction Elks Lodge #2349 installed Richard Grossman as the new exalted ruler of their 1,900 member lodge. Mr. Grossman succeeded Ernest Heaton as the principal officer. Other officers installed in the ceremony held March 19 were Richard Jepson, esteemed leading knight; Ed Kennelly, esteemed loyal knight; Arne Hoselton, esteemed lecturing knight; Sidney Wonnacott, secretary; Gregory Oféksak, treasurer; Ed Houston, five-year trustee; LeRoy Skow, tiler; Robert Hoskins, inner guard; Bernie Hamm, esquire; Chris Beatty, chaplain and Tony Pasco, organist. District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler William McKee was in charge of the installation team, which included Leroy Lewis, Kelly

Haddad, Dean Bentz, Jack Wharter, John McElroy, Bert McDermott, Jay Hartley, Jim Denton, Larry McMillan and Bob Beam. Past Grand Exalted Ruler Marvin Lewis also attended the ceremony.



On the serious side of Richard, though, was one that produced a

year worthy of any. Apache Junction hosted the District Clinic, and Richard’s ‘Law and Order Banquet’ featured local personality and Justice of the Peace, Corwin Brundrett, as the Keynote Speaker. In front of a huge assembly of Elks at the banquet, Todd Vandriel was awarded the “Firefighter of the Year”; Don Mauldin “Police Officer of the Year”; and Robert Nelson was awarded the “Elk of the Year.”

PER from Boulder (Colorado) Bob Phillips chaired the Elks National Foundation, and the Trustees presented an offer to purchase the ten-acre parcel

where the Lodge presently sits today. *(It was initially refused by the state and would run into the following year's business to complete.)*

Richard ended his year with 2,035 members – and thousands of winter Elks from around the country who called Apache Junction ‘home’.



Richard Jepson, Exalted Ruler

1995-1996 Property Purchased, First Women Members Accepted

Richard ‘Dick’ Jepson, like Richard Grossman, was very active in Elks Ritual – and he was also very good at it. Following his tenure as ER, he continued for years to coach AJ Elks Ritual teams and serve as Secretary following Sydney Wonnacott’s retirement. A very personable ER with his own following, Dick was very much involved with the balls, parties and other social aspects of the Lodge, and had established himself as a great presence to represent the Lodge in the community. However, Dick’s recognition lies more for having completed the land purchase that the Lodge had been working on prior to his rule. The State Land Trust had been very difficult to deal with, and, finally, after coming up with an acceptable offer, ownership of the 9.9 acres that the Lodge sits on today was successfully transferred over to the Apache Junction Elks.

During his tenure, Dick also dealt with the biggest change in Elkdom since their very conception – *the admittance of female members*. The Grand Lodge, under pressure from the ACLU, voted to accept women members, and Dick’s future wife, Kathy, became the first female member of the Lodge. *(She would later go on to serve as the first female Exalted Ruler.)*

David Navarre served as the Club Manager that year and the club seemed to fair well, however, there were many problems with missing money and allegations of other misconduct around town. He soon became a fugitive-at-large, along with much of the Lodge’s money; the incident caused a lot of finger-pointing, accusations and blame assessed by everyone in the Lodge. The Trustees took a lot of heat for this, and Wayne Burkam finished out the year as Club Manager until Maureen Skow could be ‘rehired’ for her second stint as Club Manager.

In spite of this unfortunate incident, Dick was a very progressive leader and would become a great champion of a new, younger leadership and helping out the younger members in the following years.

Above all other years, probably the single and most impressive event of Dick's term was the Drug Awareness Poster Contest. Gene Hays (*affectionately known as Gabby Hays*) was the Youth Activity chairperson when the posters were collected for the judging; and it was here that Gene found he had an astounding 2,595 posters to judge. With special thanks to the Ladies Auxiliary, each-and-every one of those posters was judged, graded and either accepted or eliminated, one-by-one, until the winners were picked. Apache Junction No. 2349, by far, had the most impressive youth program it had ever put together. The Lodge won the State Americanism, Community Image and Youth Activity Contest at the State Convention, and Grand Lodge Awards for its youth program. At the end of his tenure, Dick Jepson would turn the reins over to Ed Kennelly with 175 new members under his rule, bringing the membership total up to **2,210** for the Apache Junction Elks.



Ed Kennelly, Exalted Ruler
1996-1997 'Lodge of the Year'

Under Ed Kennelly, Maureen Skow had returned as club manager. Maureen was a great club manager; her membership in the Buckhorn Elks was probably influential to her effectiveness in her years at Apache Junction.

PER Jim Rowan was appointed District Deputy for that year and Dick Jepson accepted the position of Vice Chair for the East District Drug Awareness program. Ed appointed Dale Rolle to head-up the youth activities and the Lodge put on a great Red Ribbon Week (with the Lodge arches once again decorated with big, red ribbons) and a very successful local Halloween Carnival. Under Ed's year the Lodge tried some new activities related to youth fund raising, the most popular being a "Fun Bus" to Apache Gold Casino in Globe (put together by PER Richard Grossman). The poster contest was another big success that year with Casey Springer winning K-2, Sierra Nagle 3-4, Chris Wannamaker 5-6, and Lisette Sorenson 7-8. Eddie Basha spoke at the Law and Order Banquet and the Veterans Service Committee had a great year as well, delivering 220 books, 1,221 magazines and 76 table games to the VA Hospital. The Lodge won the "Grand Lodge" award for being number-one in Americanism.

ELKS TRIVIA: The Elks once beat the Boston Red Sox
(led by Cy Young) 2-0 in a lively game of baseball.



Robert Hoskins, Exalted Ruler
1997-1998 'Lodge of the Year'

Bob Hoskins was probably one of the most popular ER's to serve the Lodge. Bob was a likable man with very few political issues among the membership or the officers. He had some very popular causes and was a huge champion supporter of the Arizona Elks acquiring the Neonatology Center (*now known as the Steele Center*) in Tucson as a state project. Bob was on their Board of Directors and worked tirelessly to promote the center. Today, the Arizona Elks are one of the Steele Center Foundation's *Endowed Chairs*.

Bob's year was also the beginning of a new era for the Apache Junction Elks. Bob, like Richard (Dick) Jepson, was very aware of the coming crisis in the Lodge; the average age of the Apache Junction Elk was about *eighty-two* now and without newer, 'younger' members, the Lodge would be in trouble in just a few years. Under Bob's leadership, younger recruitment began to happen. Although the Lodge was acutely aware of the benefits these newer, younger members brought to the Lodge, it created a rift in the Lodge that would go on for several years. The older members made it quite clear that they had built the Lodge and were not ready to release their control of it – *even though they were no longer bringing any new memberships into the Lodge, themselves*. Unfortunately, for the next few years there would be much resentment displayed against any new members by the old guard.



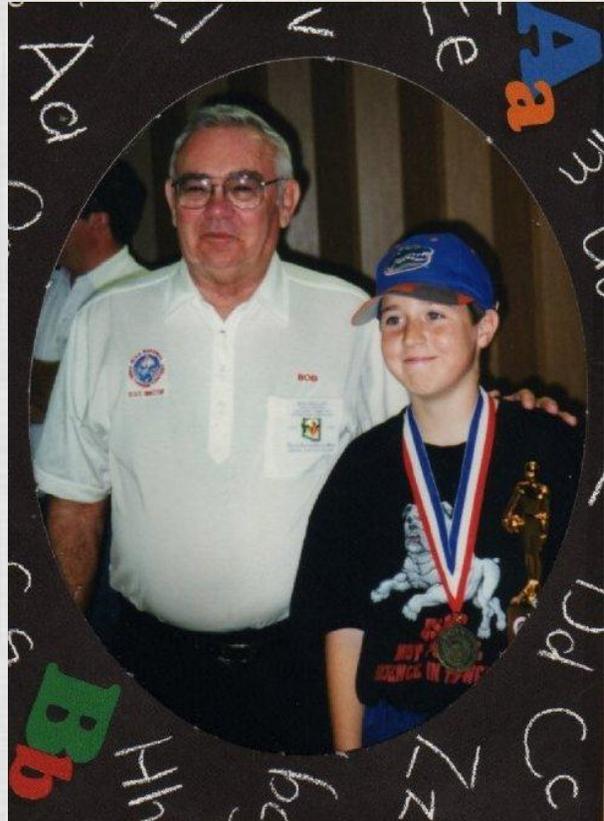
Dale Rolle, Exalted Ruler
1998-1999

Dale Rolle had been very active in all aspects of the Lodge for several years before he became ER. Dale, also a supporter of younger membership, brought Joe Bellis on board as the Lecturing Knight and appointed Ed Houston as his House Committee Chairman. Dale and his House Committee began the year by hiring Peter Fresco as the Club Manager to replace Maureen Skow, who had retired. However – and unfortunately – Peter just never displayed the management skills his resume had indicated, and, by the end of summer, Tom Boggs was asked to take over the job as Club Manager. Tom was a retired NFL referee – with no food or beverage experience – and thus made for a very interesting choice as Club Manager, to say the least. However, the

club was just overflowing with local and visiting members every Friday evening – with a long waiting-list and with the dining room serving well-over 1,000 meals. For entertainment, “Tony” played at the piano bar every Friday night, and local member musicians, such as present-day Mayor Johnny Insalaco, Trustee Royce Hilton, and ‘Patch & Hopper’, all played in the dining room almost every Friday night.

Dale’s committee chairpersons were all past masters at the Youth Activities, Veteran and Americanism programs, and had an outstanding year. Dale closed out his year with **2,416** members; this would be the highest membership total Apache Junction No. 2349 would ever achieve (*up to the date of this writing*). ‘Father Time’ was now in control as the average Lodge member was now in his or her *eighties*. Subsequently, the Lodge would begin a steady decline; one it has never completely recovered from to this day. No one foresaw the ravages age would play on the members and the Lodge in the upcoming years.

Sadly, Dale passed away the last few weeks of his term and Bob Hoskins would assume the role of Exalted Ruler for the remainder of the year. This would mark one of the final years where Lodge officers would actually go through all the chairs prior to becoming ER. With the advanced age of the membership – and no younger members being brought into the chairs –, leadership would be difficult to maintain on a consistent basis from now on.



Bob Phillips, State Hoop Shoot Director, and Jim McCormick 10-11 year boys 3rd place winner from Gold Canyon. He was the youngest of 3 McCormick boys who participated in the Hoop Shoot Program.

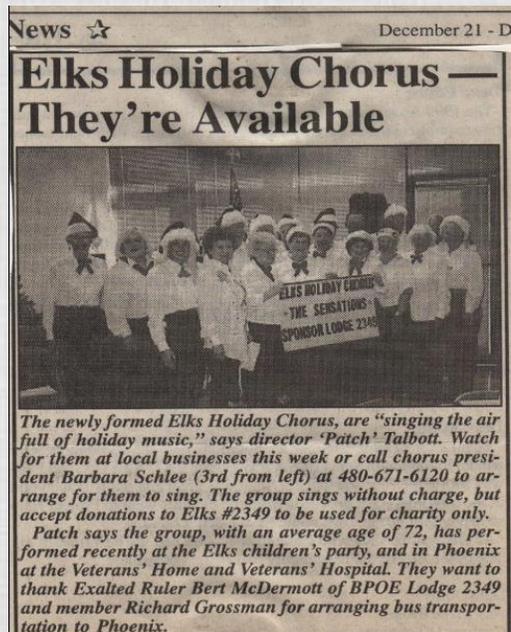
Elks Care - Elks Share

ELKS TRIVIA: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a member of the Poughkeepsie, NY, Lodge No. 275



**Burt McDermott, Exalted Ruler
1999-2000 'Lodge of the Year'**

Following the death of Dale Rolle, and no one really prepared to run for ER, Burt McDermott was drafted for his second-turn as ER (having been an *All American Lodge* ER a few years back). This time he would not take the top honors – however, Apache Junction No. 2349 was awarded the State “Lodge of the Year” again. Burt still had a tremendous following of volunteers that were involved in everything. He resurrected his Pork Chop ‘family night’ and members of the Lodge formed a singing group called the Sensations. The Sensations performed around the area at the various Senior Centers over the Christmas Holiday, as well as the weekly afternoon Senior Center dances, held every Tuesday at the Lodge. They were actually quite good and they went on to perform all over the state.



The ‘Sensations’, a singing group formed by members of the lodge

Joe Bellis moved up into the Loyal Knight position, and Burt recruited Bill Knapp as his Lecturing Knight. Bill chaired the annual Math Bee for the school district and, as usual, The Hoop Shoot, Soccer Shoot and Red Ribbon Week were award winners

Paul Gomez was awarded the “Firefighter of the Year” and Pat Wagner was the “Police Officer of the Year”; Rene Lesieutra was awarded the “Citizen of the Year”.

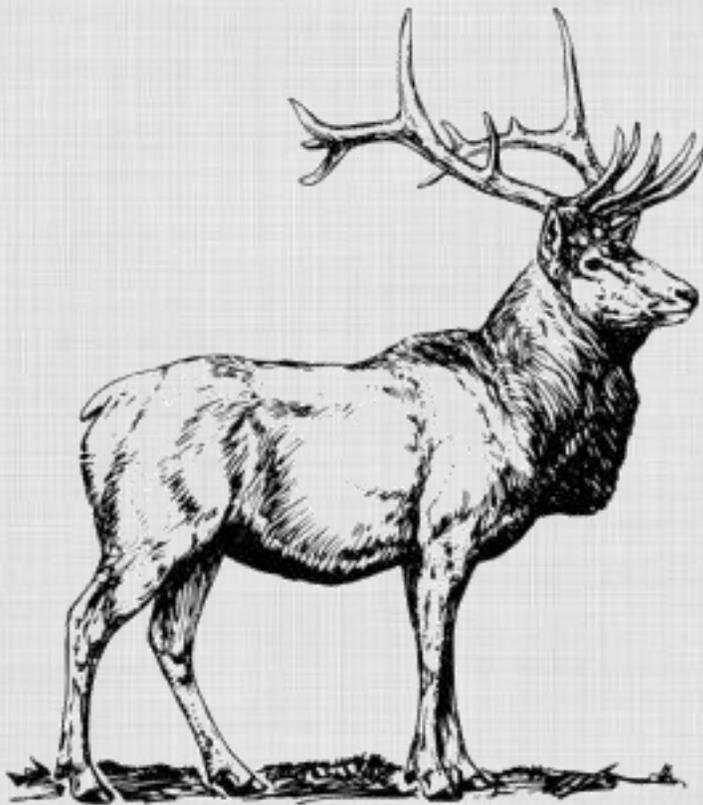
Burt finished his second stint as ER with 1,824 members, and the Arizona Elks “Lodge of the Year” award.

ELKS TRIVIA: At one time, the Elks had a very active youth branch for young men called the ‘Antlers’. Unfortunately, WWII ended the ‘Antlers’ in its heyday as too many of the country’s young men left to serve their country.



Richard Keiss, Exalted Ruler
2000-2001

Richard Keiss, starting his year with **1,824** members, was a very short man with a noticeable swagger; Richard very much enjoyed the notoriety of being the ER. He and his wife, Sophie, were very popular with the members – as well as the Auxiliary – and did volumes for the Lodge under his tenure as ER. Richard Anderson had been recruited to replace Sydney Wonnacott as Secretary;



Sydney was about 91 when he retired, and was truly the “Grand Old Man” of the Lodge. Richard Anderson, on-the-other-hand, was the previous Secretary at the Buckhorn Elks and was not very well-received by the AJ members; Dick Jepson then stepped-up and agreed to take over the Secretary position and served in that capacity until his death.

That year, too, Wendy Graham was hired on as the club manager; Wendy did a great job for the club and ran it more like the membership had become accustomed to in the past under Maureen Skow’s management.

Prior to his election, Richard realized he had a severe problem with upcoming officers to fill the positions. He set out

to recruit some new talent for his officer core and recruited Ralph Henderson to serve as Lecturing Knight. With Bill Knapp moving up to the Loyal Knight position, Joe Bellis became the Leading Knight. Richard also recruited Ovid Bond to serve on the Trustees – along with Rick Shuttlesworth, another younger member. Richard then appointed Ralph to serve on the House Committee, along with David Stanfel. Working with PER, Dick Jepson, Joe and Ralph proposed building a patio off the bar and sold memorial plaques to cover the costs; the patio ended up being a great addition to the club. Friday Nights reached an all-time high, with over 1,100 meals being served by the volunteers on Friday night, and the additional Sunday Jam Sessions, chaired by Corky Adair, were also a big hit.

The newer members began to bring in their own friends and there was a group of about 40 active, young people getting involved in all facets of the Lodge. Apache Junction was very 'western' then (*as it still is today*), and most of the newer members were local and very much western in their dress, whereas the older WWII generation were much more formal. The proposal soon came on the Lodge floor to allow cowboy hats in the club and, after a great deal of heated debate, the motion passed and the longtime tradition of 'no hats' in the club ended. This marked the first vote the newer Elks had ever prevailed in, and the older members did not comfortably accept neither the change, nor being out-voiced.

That year, the Ritual team – coached by Dick Jepson – went on to win the East District competition for the first time in several years, and awards were also won for outstanding Americanism, Youth, and Veterans programs.

Richard Keiss finished his term with a full complement of plaques, awards and thank-you cards, and even the Ladies Auxiliary donated the ceiling over the bar in-his-name. Richard left the Lodge with 2,042 members; his year had been a great success.



Joe Bellis, Exalted Ruler

2001-2002 Wayne Burkam Windows Installed

Having been through all the officer chairs, Joe Bellis was the first of the newer younger members to catch the approval and limited support of the old guard, although he did cater to them a great deal. Joe brought even more young talent to the floor with the addition of Kathy Jepson as Lecturing Knight. Up to now, there had been no women in the officer core; Kathy was the first, and it was to be yet another first for Kathy, as well (*previously, Kathy was the first female Elk to be admitted membership into the club, and she would go on to become the first female Exalted Ruler*).

Having just completed the new patio under his chairmanship, Joe – along with Ralph Henderson and Rick Shuttlesworth – put together a *From Russia With Love* concert out on the new patio. The concert starred Gearman Torchanov, a Russian refugee who taught for many years at the Russian Conservatory of Music. Complete with wine and waiters, this Black Tie - Carnegie Hall type of concert was quite the success. With the hauntingly beautiful Superstition Mountains serving as backdrop, this perfect evening raised \$2,000 for the relief fund. With this huge success to set the tone for the remainder of the year, the Lodge went on to raise and donate over \$1,000 for the WWII Memorial and win the top awards for the division. The Sweetheart Ball was changed from the former 'big band affair' to the Swinging Sweetheart Ball, and there was a lot of discussion amongst the Auxiliary about the non-married members' girlfriends wanting to get involved.

By this time the original Auxiliary members were getting older, full membership in the Lodge was available to anyone, and they were having a difficult time getting participation. The newer women in the Lodge wanted to join the actual Lodge more than just having membership in the Auxiliary. However, the one exception to this was that from the girlfriends of the single men – who just wanted to participate *somehow*. The Lodge was not sure how to handle this situation, but one thing was for sure – their group was changing.

That year, Elizabeth Stanfel completed the nature walk for her Girl Scout ‘Gold Project’ (*this trail is still in existence today*) and the etched-glass windows that adorn the south-end of the lounge were installed; these etched-glass windows were a lovely donation made by the wife of Wayne Burkam, and dedicated *in his memory*. Gene Coryell, DDGER presented the Lodge with the first two Cornerstone Plaques for contributing over \$50,000 to the Elks National Foundation, Apache Junction was one of only three Lodges in the state to achieve this award at that time.

Joe wrapped up his year with a visit from State President Manny Rodriguez by calling on Ralph Henderson and Rick Shuttlesworth to put on another concert by Gearman for ENF, this time in the dining hall. Not only did President Manny attend this second concert, but also the DDGER and several other State dignitaries attended, as well. Again, the event was a vast achievement, raising over \$2,000 for ENF. Joe’s year ended a huge success.



Bill Knapp, Exalted Ruler

2002-2003 Lodge annexed into Apache Junction

Going into the elections of 2002, it was a foregone conclusion among the younger members that they had enough votes to elect Rick Shuttlesworth as ER and Ralph Henderson would follow the next year. Things would go on with newer, younger leadership from then on. They saw Bill Knapp as a micromanager, and things had gone great under Joe with a good mix of young and old Elks working together; it soon became apparent, however, that the old-guard was not ready to step down. In the true Elk fashion that had made Apache Junction *No. 2349* such a successful Lodge over the years, the old-guard canvassed every longtime member that could get out of their house, and even offered transportation to the elections. It was an impressive display of loyalty, over 150 members showed up to vote that night. When the votes were tallied, the old-guard had prevailed by fourteen votes; Bill Knapp had defeated Rick Shuttlesworth for ER and Ralph Smith had defeated Ralph Henderson at Leading Knight. The split that followed was immediate. For all the support Bill had generated for the election, *not one person ever returned to help him out*.

Having regained control of the Lodge (in his eyes), Bill made some very disingenuous decisions that would end up defining his term. Bill's new House Committee Chairman, new transfer member Brian Sturdavant, immediately relieved Wendy Graham from her Club Manager duties and fired Tina Koler, a long-time popular bartender, replacing her with his own wife. They still viewed Ralph Henderson as someone who might become a future ER and expelled him from the club for the coming year. Future ER Byron "Hux" Russell was also denied transferring into the Lodge, and the resignations of Ovid Bond and Rick Shuttlesworth from the Trustees began a mass exodus of both new and older faces to the nearby Buckhorn Lodge. That mass exodus would total over 60 members.

Bill Knapp soon became a one-man band, with the exception of Kathy Jepson at Loyal Knight. Luckily, Kathy had developed her own following and was able to accomplish a lot during her year at Loyal Knight. One of the highlights of the year was her Flag Day Ceremony, which Kathy opened up to the public that year.

Although Duane Reiss did most of the negotiations with the city, Bill Knapp will probably be most remembered as the ER who petitioned to have the Lodge annexed into the City Limits of Apache Junction.



Kathy Jepson, Exalted Ruler
2003-2004 First Woman ER

Kathy Jepson, who was the first female member of the Lodge and the first female in the officer core (as Lecturing Knight), was now the first and only (*to the date of this writing*) woman to serve as Exalted Ruler. It became evident that Leading Knight, Ralph Smith, along with the other older officers, would not be able to continue. Kathy had a good year as Loyal Knight, and, therefore, she was easily elected to the ER position. With most of the younger members gone, and the older members having difficulty participating anymore, Kathy had a challenging year filling all the positions.

Denny Walter, a new member of only a year, took over the job of House Committee Chairman and Bar Manager; he did a wonderful job keeping the club going smoothly. The Lodge was really starting to suffer without the younger members patronizing the club, and the older members were getting too old to support the Lodge or the club anymore. Denny Walter set about the task of getting more young people to join and former members to return; this endeavor was helped by the fact that he was a well-known person around the area and had many friends.

The Ladies Auxiliary had never really got along with Kathy Jepson over the years. Kathy was very adamant about women joining the Lodge rather than the auxiliary, and the older women who made-up the Auxiliary just didn't want to join the Lodge. However, the Auxiliary continued to raise money that year, and purchased the patio's sliding-glass doors.

PER Dick Jepson – Kathy's husband –, ran the youth programs that year and the Lodge hosted the Blue and Gold Banquet for Pack 638, as well as their Pine Wood Derby. Richard Gonzales was the *Americanism Essay* winner for the year. Jim Harbinson, an Elk from Pinal Mountain Lodge in Globe, donated the large elk head hanging in the club today.



Elk head donated by Jim Harbinson



Bob Phillips, Exalted Ruler, DDGER, PSP
2004-2005

Following Kathy's year as ER there was no one in line to take on the office of Exalted Ruler. PER Roger Kuketz, came back into the scene after several years and volunteered to take the office.

A Past Exalted Ruler back in 1990-1991, he agreed to accept the job with the blessings of the PER's. John Shields accepted the position of Leading Knight and Denny Walters moved onto the Trustees.

Things didn't work out for Roger for some reason, and, after returning from the National Convention in July, he promptly resigned the ER position after collecting his travel allowance.



Roger Kuketz was the first ER to ever resign the ER position in the Lodge's history and his resignation caused some bad feelings among the Lodge members. Bob Phillips, a PER from Colorado, stepped-in to fill his remaining term and is listed as the ER of record for that year. It didn't take Bob very long to get things back to normal, and soon he had things up-and-going once again.

Although it would be their last year, the Ladies Auxiliary was still meeting at this time; Bob's wife, Jackie, served as their president even though there were very few active members still left in the group. PER Kathy Jepson took over the management of the club, however she and the Auxiliary just did not get along, and by the end of the year the Ladies were about ready to call it quits.

Linda VonStein hosted her first of many Children's Christmas programs, a program she still chairs to this day. The Lodge began its involvement with the Lost Dutchman Days; Fireman and Veterans programs were done very well; and Dr. Barry Sutter was selected "Citizen of the Year". ER Bob did a terrific job under the circumstances and finished up with a great year. He would go on to serve as Grand Lodge District Deputy, State Vice President, and State President.



John Shields, Exalted Ruler
2005-2006

John Shields took over with a membership of **1,318**. John will probably be remembered most for having the cool-deck club floor installed shortly after he took over, and also for being ER during the last year of the Ladies Auxiliary. The Auxiliary was getting older, their numbers fewer, and the newer prospects were joining the Lodge. The Ladies had been discussing disbanding for some time, and actually decided to close-up shop a few months prior; however, it happened on John's watch. Since the inception of the Lodge, the Auxiliary had been a great tradition within the Lodge, contributing generously to its successes over the years. It obviously created quite a commotion when they decided to disband. In spite of this startling announcement, things continued on a positive note for the rest of the year. The Lodge, like always, put up great numbers for Youth Activities; Drug Awareness; Hoop Shoot; Soccer Shoot; Police and Firemen Recognition and Veterans.

Denny Walter took over as the Chairman of the Trustees; Tom Kain and Doug VonStein joined him on the board, along with longtime Trustee Royce Hilton.



ELKS TRIVIA: The choice of the 'Elk' mascot won out over the choice of the 'Buffalo' as a mascot by just one single vote. Hence the reason why all of you members out there are not 'buffaloes'.



Denny Walter, Exalted Ruler
2006-2007, 2007-2008

Denny Walter took over the job of ER following a meeting with the PER's on the situation of the Lodge. Denny hadn't actually been through any of the chairs, was *not proficient* in the Elk Rituals, and had no real interest in all the Ritual memorizing that had been stressed so heavily previously. However, with his military background, plus the popularity he enjoyed around town and the club – along with the excellent job he had done at everything before – he assumed the office of Exalted Ruler with everyone's blessing. Denny would become the catalyst for the changes the Lodge needed to make, and he also served as the beginning foundation of the Lodge that so many enjoy today. Working in the "grey area" – as he put it – new local residents began to join and previous members began to return.



Ralph Rentzel, Punk, and Bob Zelnick at Punk's retirement party. 'Punk' had served as the Lodge custodian for 23 years.



April 15, 2007, Horseshoe Tournament raised over \$8,000

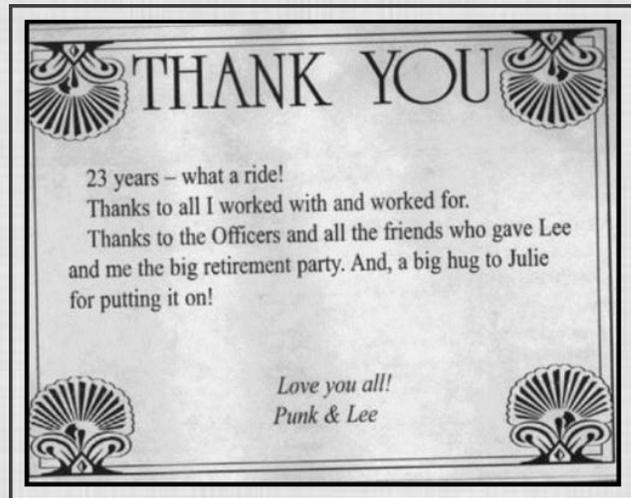
It was to be the start of a new era in the Apache Junction Elks; Denny was just what the Lodge needed at the time. Allen Ross re-upholstered the bar top, and Julie Engle was hired as a new – and badly needed – Bar Manager. Attendance and revenue quickly picked-up and there was a new energy spreading through the Lodge. Casey Prunty and Ken Hoover hosted a huge horseshoe tournament that year raising over \$8,000. This tournament was the first big undertaking the Lodge had tried in several years – other than the growing Lost Dutchman Days Brat party.

By now, Bob Phillips was the State Vice President, and he presented the Lodge with the third

Cornerstone Plaque for contributions over \$75,000 to ENF. Denny ended his first term with 1,128 members – many of them new and local Elks.

(2007-2008) Denny Walter again served a second term as ER. Denny and his officers had a very popular second term. Bob Phillips was now the State President, which was a huge sense of pride for the Lodge.

Casey Prunty, again, chaired the project of the year. The old bar in the dining hall was about ready to collapse with age and Casey – a master carpenter and cabinetmaker, himself – designed and built the oak bar that the Lodge uses today. Linda VonStein continued to improve on her Children's Christmas Programs. By the end of March 2008, membership was at 1,194.



Jeff Hodder, Exalted Ruler
2008-2009

Jeff Hodder took over from Denny Walter with things going great again around the Lodge and club. He was a very 'hands-on' personality who had been involved in just about everything in the Lodge for the past few years. Jeff was a very likeable guy, but who, like Denny, did not have a lot of years of Elk training prior to taking on the position of ER. However, Jeff and his officers quickly got very involved with Ritual again. Although his personality was very different from Denny Walter's, Jeff did have his own following and so he, too, accomplished much during his year. One of his first achievements was to immediately retile the bathrooms, and Eleanor Brodie (owner of Arizona Shade) donated the awning that stands over the patio today.

Toward the end of his year as ER, Jeff was at odds with his new Secretary Ronnie Griffith, who had been brought in from Chandler to replace John Shields. Ronnie – and her PER husband Jim – caused a lot of turmoil over Jeff serving as ER and janitor at the same time, and over the purchase of a badly needed air-conditioner for the club area. The Griffiths caused many problems for Jeff, his House Committee, and the Trustees over the year. Unfortunately, Jeff would feel the need to leave the Lodge following his term as ER, transferring to the Buckhorn Elks where he served another two years as ER in that Lodge.



Jim Griffith Exalted Ruler
2009-2010, 2010-2011

(2009-2010) the next two years would be a huge glitch in the history of the Lodge. With PER Jeff Hodder and many of his supporters having left the Lodge with some hurt feelings, there were not many candidates for Exalted Ruler. PER from New York, Jim Griffith, husband of Secretary Ronnie Griffith, assumed the office of Exalted Ruler unopposed. Jim Griffith and his wife, Ronnie, had not been in the Lodge very long; they were not liked, nor well-received, and enjoyed very little support or following. Needless to say, their tenure was not a good one. Due to many complaints by the previous members (who had by then become members at the Mesa/Buckhorn Elks 2646), the Arizona State Elks Association, and the Grand Lodge were all starting to get involved. There were many questions beginning to surface regarding propriety – dealing with everything from Lodge statutes, to Lodge finances and budgeting. The Apache Junction Elks Lodge was now under investigation by the Grand Lodge.

(2010-2011) amid the misgivings of many, Jim Griffith assumed the position of Exalted Ruler for a second term unopposed. The officers did a great job under the circumstances and set about to do their best for the good of the Lodge. Rebel Wampler continued to serve as Leading Knight and Ginny Judd stayed on as Loyal Knight. The Trustees convinced Hux Russell to take over as Trustee Chairman after a few months, and Hux talked Ralph Henderson into joining Royce Hilton, Lori Wampler and Greg Gille on the Trustee Board. Germaine Gross – a past DDGER serving as treasurer – retired with some health problems, and Jeannine Daniel was recruited to take over as Treasurer. Thanks to these officers, the Lodge came through with a very good year.



By March of 2011, the Grand Lodge Special Investigator had found sufficient cause to set up a Grand Forum to hear the many complaints filed against the Griffiths, and concerned members and officers were working with the Grand Lodge to get Apache Junction back on track.

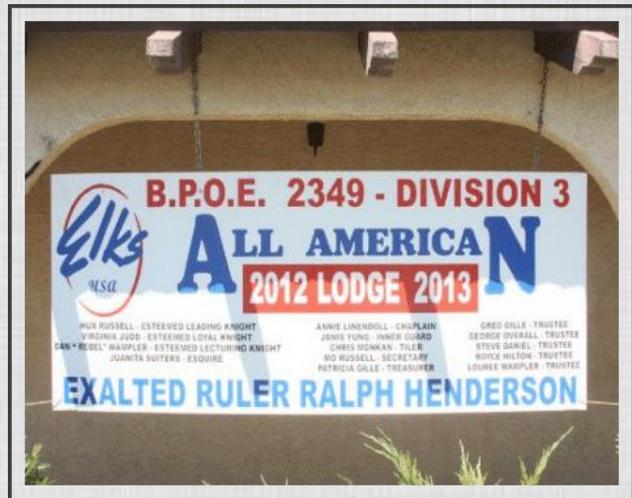
ELKS TRIVIA: From 1950 to 1952 the members of the B.P.O.E. supplied 600,000 pints of blood for our GI's serving in Korea.



Ralph Henderson, Exalted Ruler
2011-2012, 2012-2013 'All American Lodge', 'Lodge of the Year'

(2011-2012) having spent several years in the officer ranks and chairmanship, previous-members approached Ralph Henderson to take over as ER to get No. 2349 back on track; Ralph agreed under the promise that everyone would continue on with him. Hux Russel moved over from Chairman of the Trustees to Leading Knight, Ginny Judd remained as the Loyal Knight, Rebel Wampler switched from Leading Knight to Lecturing Knight, and Jeannine Daniel continued on as Treasurer. Lori Wampler took control of the house committee and Cindy Pierson was hired to run the Club. By June of that year (under executive order), the Grand Exalted Ruler placed Jim and Ronnie Griffith on suspension for numerous Elk violations; eventually they were to be expelled from the order completely.

With this unpleasant business out of the way, Steve Daniel joined the Trustees and Mo Russell took over as Secretary. With everything in place, this truly dedicated group of officers stuck together for two terms. Membership immediately began to grow, previous members began to re-instate, and new local residents began to join (*Apache Junction Elks No. 2349 ended up approving over 120 new memberships that year*). They immediately went to work on making the club and grounds a nicer environment by replacing the old sign,



resurfacing the parking lot, adding new lighting in the club, adding Pull Tabs and replacing much of the old soffit around the building: most of all, they brought with them a new attitude. By year's end, the club, under the management of Cindy Pierson, was again a fun and busy place for the members and turned \$45,000+ over to the Lodge. For the first time in many years, the Lodge took first place in Community Image, Americanism, and Lodge Publication, and Pattie Gille took third in the nation in the ENF Chairperson's Challenge, raising over \$7,000. The Lodge was successful at obtaining several ENF grants that year, and felt they should be a serious contender for the "All American Lodge" award. They exited 2012 with over \$120,000 in restricted funds, and enough savings and operating capital to start the 2012-2013 term debt free. Everyone had a renewed desire to keep things rolling – as they had come a long way from having to borrow money to pay bills just the year previous.

(2012-2013) Ralph Henderson again served as ER and things continued improving with a new roof, new televisions and the remodel of the bar (by moving the Wayne Burkam memorial windows back thirty feet). With all the new members – and many winter visitors coming back – the club was seriously overwhelmed and additional seating was badly needed.

Pattie Gille moved from Chaplain to take over as Treasurer, and George Overall joined the Trustees. Jeannine Daniel continued to produce her award-winning newsletter, took over the Veterans Committee, and was appointed to become the new Grant Coordinator for the Lodge. The House Committee continued to improve on the club, adding another \$55,000 to the bottom-line by the end of 2013.

The Lodge finally showed a *plus* in membership for the first time since PER Denny Walter, adding another 128 new people. Once again, Pattie Gille placed in the top ten in the National ENF Challenge and began the task of bringing the past contributor records up to date. The Lodge ended the year by winning the top Community Activities and Americanism awards; “Lodge of the Year”; most-new memberships; and was proudly awarded the status of **All American Lodge** for the first time in over twenty years. The all-improved Apache Junction Lodge donated over \$92,000 to its charities that year and left another \$120,000+ in the treasury for 2013-2014.

Ralph’s motto, “*It’s so nice to be nice*” had been a success.



Byron (Hux) Russell, Exalted Ruler

2013-2014, 2014-2015 ‘All American Lodge’, ‘Lodge of the Year’

(2013-2014) Byron “Hux” Russell, who had served as Leading Knight over the past two years, easily took over as ER, with a new paragon of officers. PER Beth Ann Plank was elected Leading Knight, Dennis Mack as Loyal Knight, and PER Jackie Koerber as Lecturing Knight; Robin Williams was appointed Innerguard, Annie Linendall stayed the Chaplain and Juanita Suiters continued on as the Esquire. Ralph Henderson was appointed as Head of the House Committee and Greg Gille became the Trustee Chairman. Hux was truly the “Favorite Son” around town, with a very large following of supporters within the Lodge and among the other groups in the area, as well. These other community groups proved to be a great source of new memberships and future leadership.

Hux was very committed to a “*if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it*” policy and set about to keep things at the statuesque. Although some of his new officers did not support this philosophy, this approach served the Lodge well. Things were going about as well as they can go in large groups, and new member applications were a common weekly occurrence. Like Ralph Henderson before him, Hux was



convinced the ambience in the club was the key to success in the Lodge. Hux felt that through the camaraderie and friendships formed in the club came the nucleolus to pay the bills, sign up new members, and to fuel the many Lodge programs, local events and fundraising activities needed to keep the Lodge growing. During Hux's 2013-2014 tenure the Lodge raised over \$91,000 for charity, continued to sign on new memberships and took home top honors for best Lodge *Bulletin*; Community Image; Hoop Shoot; Soccer Shoot; and Membership Growth. The Lodge was also recognized as one of the top two

"Lodge of the Year" recipients at the State Convention, with enough membership to move back into Division IV. The Lodge probably would have been a strong contender for "All American Lodge" for the second year in a row had it not been for a mix-up on the state level (via submission to the Grand Lodge). At year's end, March 31st, the club turned over to the Trustees over \$60,000, the membership rolls stood at 702, and the Lodge had over \$180,000 in the bank in designated restricted funds, charity funds and operating capital.

(2014-2015) Hux's second year as Exalted Ruler began with an overwhelming show of support for his second term. Dennis Mack moved-up to Leading Knight, Robert Cooper was elected Loyal Knight, and Robin Williams became the Lecturing Knight. Robert Cooper had a great year with his Americanism programs and Rob Carr stepped up the Scholarship program with a State Winner and three Apache Junction Scholarships funded by the PER's. Gay Haywood ran her 'always great' Soccer Shoot and Hoop Shoot programs, and Linda VonStein chaired her popular Children's Shopping Spree and Christmas Party. Don and Ray Tienien took over the Veterans Committee Chairmanship and hosted several Veterans trips to the Diamondbacks, along with hosting the annual Veterans Christmas Party; they were exceedingly in the news around town for their Veterans support. Dennis Mack successfully applied for all the Grand Lodge *grant programs* the Lodge was eligible for, and received around \$8,000 to fund several Lodge programs such as the New Honor Guard uniforms for the AJ Police Department, the Special Olympic Sock Hop, and the newly established Apache Junction 4-H. The club continued to get busier each month while hosting a record-number of winter visitors. Some of the highlights for the year included a gift by one of Apache Junction's charter members, *Francis*



Splichal, of over \$3.5 million from his estate to the Arizona Major Projects, and the 2014 Grand Opening of the new RV Campground. For his efforts in building the campground and recruiting over thirty new members, “Big Ed” VanSant was awarded “Elk of the Year”, and both Ed and Hux accepted Grand Lodge watches for recruitment. Apache Junction took top state honors in Community Image, Membership Gain, and “Lodge of the Year” – and, for the second time in three years, the **“All American Lodge”** award for Division IV. (*Apache Junction is one of only a few Lodges to become an “All American Lodge” in three separate divisions, III, IV, V*). Membership was now at 729, with over 20 new members to start out the Lodge’s 50th year and with over \$220,000 in the bank.

“A Lodge is not a weed that springs up anywhere, unwanted, and lasts but a season. A Lodge is a flower in a community, a flower that is wisely conceived, its seed germinated in brotherly love, tenderly nurtured in fertile soil, blossoming in public esteem, and perpetuating itself by its good deeds.”

~Excerpt: The History of Apache Junction
Lodge No. 2349, B.P.O.E.



Dennis Mack, Exalted Ruler

2015-2016 Patio Remodeled, Old Bill Dedicated

Dennis Mack brought the Lodge into its Golden Anniversary year serving as its 50th Exalted Ruler with the Lodge celebrating its 49th birthday on June 24, 2015. Dennis was a very capable person, well known in the Apache Junction community and was well thought of by many of the newer members (who had only just recently joined under Ralph and Hux). Dennis had done a great job as Loyal Knight and Leading Knight, and, like PER Denny Walter, Dennis presented an impressive retired-military record and years of leadership experience. What he lacked in Elk tenure, he made up for by some intense tutelage prior to assuming the job of Exalted Ruler.

As Apache Junction moved into its 50th year, it was a fitting time for fresh leadership and Dennis proffered a very capable assemblage of new officers. Don Verble took over as Lecturing Knight, Matt Cruise as Loyal Knight, Rob Carr as Leading Knight, Vicki Petrosky as Treasurer, Sherry Coker as Inter Guard, Ariel Robbins as Tiler, and Saga Verble as Chaplain. Mo Russell stayed on as Secretary. Sadly,

the death of Al Loggins, Chairman of the Trustees, happened shortly after his taking office. Don Tienian was then elected to the Trustees and assumed Al's position as Chairman of the Trustees, along with two other new Trustees, Travis Robbins and Ed VanSant. With this worthy group of completely new officers, the Lodge entered into its 50th year in the community.

The idea had been 'kicked around' for several years that the Lodge should finally have an impressive elk statue by the front entrance for its 50th year, so the Past Exalted Rulers Association and the Bingo Committee went together and purchased *Old Bill*, the elk that now stands at the Lodge's entrance.



“Old Bill” dedicated 2015

Not to be outdone by his predecessors, Dennis and his board of directors scheduled an impressive agenda to keep Apache Junction's "All American Lodge" status going, and he immediately established his desire to continue the ongoing projects that had been proposed. The Lodge applied for – *and obtained* – all the ENF grants that they were allowed, and they were awarded an additional \$9,000 in ENF grant money for the 2015-2016 Lodge years. A new video security system was installed, and the patio remodel (under the chairmanship of Les Judd) was completed; additionally, some badly needed electrical work was finally achieved, and bids were placed to remodel the old bathrooms for the upcoming summer months. The Power of 2349 Committee elected Annie Linendall as their new chairperson, along with Tom Burns as their treasurer. They immediately set-up some bylaws, defined their purpose and promoted the camaraderie that comprises the Lodge today. Additionally – and thanks to some of their generous members –, four new smoke-eaters were also donated for the club.

Although the paperwork had actually begun under ER Hux Russell the previous year, Apache Junction was again the recipient of another gift of \$3,386 from the estate of Robert Smith. It had been in the works for some time with the assistance of his widow, Elizabeth; again for the benefit of Elks Major Projects. In October, Apache Junction hosted the Major Projects Board Meeting and held a Golf Tournament for their benefit (chaired by Linda Stewart). At the October State Convention in Tempe,

Apache Junction Elks presented the Arizona Elks Major Projects a check for \$7,000 for the Steele Children's Center.

The Halloween Drug Awareness Program was a great success, producing a record-number of children at Prospector Park and headed by Don and Saga Verble. The Veterans Service Committee hosted their annual Christmas Party, and aboard the *Dolly* Steamboat on Canyon Lake a fun time was to be enjoyed by all. Linda VonStein hosted her annual spectacular Children's Shopping Spree and Children's Christmas Party. Scholarship applications were greatly improved, and the Children's Essay and Americanism Poster contest had found a renewed interest over previous years. The social club continued to set new records with increased income and participation. The new RV Campground had developed into the facility everyone had hoped it would, and preparations are in progress for the upcoming 50th Anniversary Gala. As of this writing, ER Dennis has submitted the application for the 2015-2016 All American Lodge contest, and Apache Junction should again be a top contender.

Sadly, the year will end with the passing of one of Apache Junction's favorite sons, and one of the Lodge's most beloved Exalted Rulers in recent years, PER Byron "Hux" Russell.



BYRON "HUX" RUSSELL

07/06/1949 – 01/21/2016

As the Apache Junction Elks Lodge moves into its 51st year, ER Dennis will again be at its helm with a very competent group of officers, debt-free, a sizable treasury, and another plus year of new and promising Elks.

The Next 50 Years

As the Apache Junction Elks, move into their next fifty years, I see a bright picture ahead for the Lodge. While Fraternalism, overall, is experiencing a generational decline nationally, it has become evident to me that groups like the Apache Junction Elks are still very viable and important to their members and their community, and are starting to experience a resurgence in popularity in their communities among their peers. Hopefully, they will continue to grow in popularity. Apache Junction seems to have made the transition from their “daddy’s” Elks Lodge to a new group of Elks that are ready to take their place at the head table. Although quite different from their predecessors, today’s Boomers are just as aware of community and goodwill as those before them, and – like those before them –, they will attract, recruit and become involved in the issues of the times *in their own way*. The Elks have been in existence for 150 years; they have undergone many cultural changes over their existence and they have survived many generational turnovers, and the same will continue in the future.

It is my hope and belief that Apache Junction’s legacy at this, their 50th juncture of existence, will stand as an example for other Lodges and organizations of how to make the changes of our time and go on to do even more and bigger things in the future.

I’m extremely proud to be a part of the Apache Junction Elks and its history, and, after reading its accomplishments over the years, I hope you are, too.

Fraternally yours,

Ralph Henderson (*PER*) 2011-2012, 2012-2013

The Origins of the B.P.O.E. - 1868



Front Row: E. W. Platt, William Carleton, Richard R. Steirly,
Charles A. Vivian, Henry Vandermark, M. G. Ash

Back Row: Frank Langhorne, William Sheppard,
John T. Kent, Harry Bosworth

(Not in Picture: G. F. McDonald, W. I. Bowron, Thomas G. Riggs,
J. G. Wilson, John H. Blume)

The New Era



Dennis Mack , ER
2016-2017
All American Lodge

2016-2017 Dennis Mack following in the tradition of his predecessors began his second term as ER with Apache Junction picking up almost every award there was to win from his previous year at the State Convention, the most impressive being the Arizona's Lodge of the Year. Dennis then followed up the state convention by again picking up the *All American Lodge* award for Division IV for his previous year (2015-2016) at the National Convention in Houston. The convention did a very impressive write up about the lodge and needless to say things were on a high note around the Lodge. Sherry Coker took over the Lecturing Knight position from the retiring Don Verble; Don and Saga had done a wonderful job for the lodge over the years, however they felt it was time for them to retire, *Don was one of the lodge's early members*. Doug Hare took over for Saga Verble at Chaplin, a position his dad had held many years before, and Rob Carr assumed the position of Leading Knight. Dennis continued his program for 2016-2017 similar to his previous *All American Lodge* year, and again the Lodge excelled in all the State and Grand Lodge programs there were, and again was awarded the All American Lodge winner for Div IV, for the 2016-2017 Lodge Year. When Dennis and his officers turned the reins over to the new ER for 2017-2018 they had put up two of the most successful years in the Lodges history.



Heather McClellan , ER 2017-2018

2017-2018 Rob Carr actually began the 2017/2018 Lodge year as the Exalted Ruler, however, immediately following his election, Rob, immediately made some very controversial and ingenious decisions and appointments that ultimately resulted in his resignation. Heather McClellan as Leading Knight, assumed the ER position, and was shortly thereafter officially elected to replace Rob Carr as Exalted Ruler permanently by the membership for the 2017-2018 lodge year.

To Heather's credit, she was a natural leader, who picked up things easily, she had many followers and supporters and things were up to speed very quickly with only a few changes in her Officer Corp. Sherry Coker became the Leading Knight, Matt Crews returned to the Loyal Knight position, and Diane Hopkins became the Lecturing Knight. Heather quickly brought a fun new face, a fun atmosphere, and new energy to the lodge. She immediately appointed a new a new house committee, auditing committee, and re-hired Cindy Pierson as Club Manager. Thus began her year as ER.

Already in possession of a wonderful following of volunteers, these new people along with the old stand-by's, put together a seamless transition for the lodge and club, and it was another really great year for the Apache Junction Elks. The lodge had one of best public relations years ever, and excelled at all the AEA, and Grand Lodge programs worthy of any of it's past years, again it was certainly a contender for the All American Lodge once again.



Heather McClellan , ER
2018-2019
