

A Stroll Down Memory Lane

Recalling fond times at the 3-Way Drive-In

By Susan Davis Romney

It was a different world—quieter, and a little more innocent.

At the time I was introduced to the drive-in theater, the most sophisticated technology we had in our home was a radio. Soon after came our eight-party telephone line. After that, there were few secrets in our tight-knit little community we called York Valley.

Growing up just a mile down the road from the old 3-Way Drive-In Theater, it was as much a part of my young life as anything I can remember.

The land where the theater was located—at the intersection of Highways 191, 75 and 78 between Clifton, Duncan, Safford and Mule Creek—had been a part of my family’s ranch.

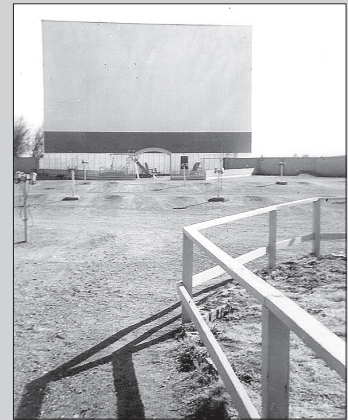
I wasn’t privy to the details of the land swap between my dad and the developer. What mattered most to me was our family had a free lifetime pass to the movies.



Courtesy of Hazel Carlin

Safford Drive-In 'Gone With the Wind'

The Safford Drive-In was built between 1953 and 1954. It was destroyed in a windstorm in the late 1970s, and was never rebuilt. Word is that shortly after its demise, someone placed these words on the marquee in front of drive-in’s final resting place: Now playing: “Gone With the Wind!”



From my young standpoint, we got the good end of that deal.

One of the truly unique features of our drive-in was the two-story home encased in the structure behind the screen. The original owner of the theater was a Mr. Davis from Texas.

According to my research, the structure was built by placing 10 70-foot-long telephone poles in a large rectangle about 40 feet by 20 feet. The screen was built on this frame and the home was built on the back side of the screen.

The Parsons family—Dutch, Esther, Larry and Otho—managed the theater and lived in the home. I remember going with my mother to visit Mrs. Parsons when I was about knee-high to a grasshopper and being completely in awe that there was a home inside that giant movie screen.

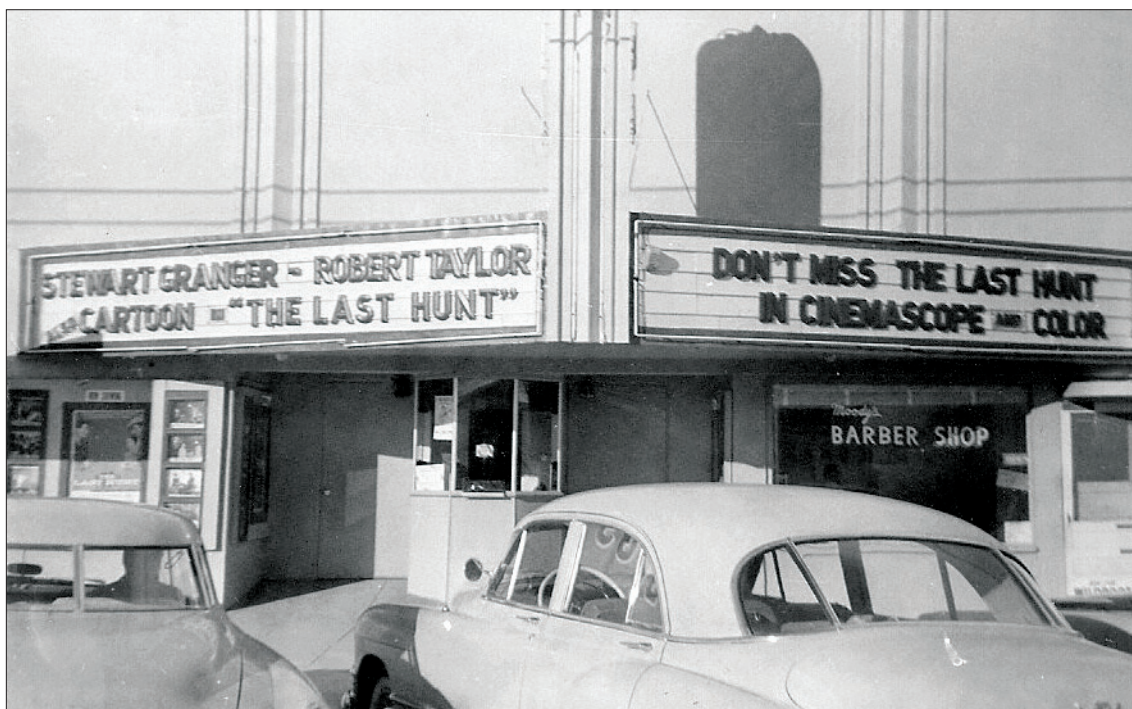
I remember watching Alfred Hitchcock’s “Psycho” which, to this day, I consider the scariest movie ever made. Imagine watching the shower murder scene on that screen and then sleeping inside it.

The theater opened in 1953 with the movie “Shane,” starring Alan Ladd. According to Larry Parsons, Mr. Davis went to California and beat out other theaters by bidding 125 percent of the box office to get a first showing.

The opening was likely the biggest thing that had ever happened in Greenlee County. I am told by my sister-in-law—who lived with her grandmother at the time on Smelter Hill near Clifton—that during the first showings, traffic was backed up from the drive-in the entire 10 miles to Smelter Hill.

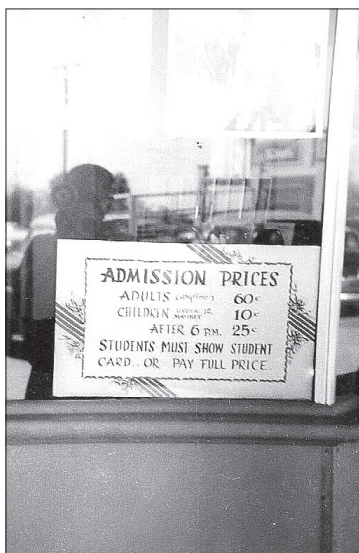
Her favorite memory is of the cows standing along the barbed wire fence behind the last row of speakers, eyeing the odd phenomenon that had taken over their grazing spot.

I may not remember much about the movies that played at the drive-in, but I could go on for days about the experiences I had there: The time I broke my front tooth doing flips on the bar surrounding the patio in front of the snack bar, and getting my first job there making popcorn and



Drive-in movies were a draw more than 50 years ago, but so were traditional theaters. The Pima Theater encouraged moviegoers to see "The Last Hunt" in 1956. Below, tickets were 60 cents for adults (25 cents after 6 p.m.) and 10 cents for children younger than 12 years of age.

Photos courtesy of Val Holladay



flipping hamburgers. There was the time my friend and I picked cotton all day to earn a quarter so she could go with me to the movie. I almost lost a friend, literally, when I let her sneak in by hiding in the trunk of my dad's car, along with a bale of hay. As it turns out, she was allergic to hay.

I have since repented of the foolishness of my youth.

It wasn't just about the movie that was playing, which was so

Ownership Transition of the 3-Way Drive-In

A year or two after it was built, Long Enterprises bought the 3-Way Drive-In. The company owned numerous movie theaters in southeastern Arizona, including the Safford Drive-In and theaters in Gila, Safford, Pima, Duncan, Clifton and Morenci. In 1938, Louie Long and three other Safford businessmen—including Spencer W. Kimball, 12th president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—created the Gila Broadcasting Network. The network eventually included seven radio stations in Safford, Globe, Coolidge, Winslow and Willcox.

much bigger and better than life to this little country girl.

In my earliest memory, it included the draw of the playground underneath the giant screen. Later, it was the connections we made at the snack bar and the patio outside, where we sat in a line of chairs and ate while we watched the advertisements during intermission.

It was the hamburgers, the popcorn and my first exhilarating taste of Dr. Pepper. It was lying on a mattress in the back of a truck in the cool night air.

I experienced my first preteen crush on Elvis Presley watching "Love Me Tender" right there in front of that big screen.

The Everly Brothers had a hit

record in those days that my date and I could claim was written for us. The lyrics went, "Wake up, little Susie, wake up, the movies over, it's 4 o'clock and we're in trouble deep."

We lived that song. My date and I both fell asleep during the movie. I remember the panic I felt waking up at 2 a.m. and thinking my dad was going to kill us.

At some point, the 3-Way Drive-In Theater was destroyed by fire and then rebuilt.

The dilapidated structure that remains today shows no signs of the home being part of the reconstruction. However, its presence is a bittersweet reminder of a time long past. ■

Thanks to Larry Parsons for information used in this story.

Get More Space, Lower Your Bill and Make \$50

*Recycle your old refrigerator or freezer
and enjoy the financial benefits*

Are you cleaning out your garage and want to find a home for that older refrigerator or freezer? Graham County Electric Cooperative is excited to offer a refrigerator or freezer appliance collection and recycling service to capture significant energy savings for its members.

Older appliances, especially those built before 1990, consume up to four times more energy than new, more efficient models. Many members have secondary refrigerators that are old, inefficient and/or ineffectively operated, such as simply keeping beverages cold or storing leftover food.

This program disposes of those inefficient appliances and provides \$50 cash* to the member, in addition to energy savings on their bill.

Participation is easy. GCEC has partnered with JACO Environmental Inc. to pick up your refrigerator or freezer between July 1 and September 30. If you are a GCEC member, schedule your pickup by calling (855) 559-2524 or going to www.azgcec.coop. Click on the energy programs tab that takes you to the JACO recycling link, and provide your member information and the location of the appliance.

There are a few qualifications for your refrigerator or freezer:

- Units must be at a residential location served by GCEC.



- Units must demonstrate they are in operating order at time of pickup.
- Units must be 10- to 30-cubic feet in size.
- Energy Star units are not eligible.
- Up to two units per member per year can be picked up.

In addition to savings for members, the program offers environmental benefits. When people dump units into landfills, old appliances rust, leak toxic oils and emit gases. Through the program, JACOs disposes of the materials safely.

GCEC has additional energy-efficiency programs. The CFL lighting program promotes the installation of high-efficiency compact fluorescent lamps in homes. Participating retailers include ACE Hardware.

GCEC also gives members a way to save energy on a voluntary basis with time-of-use rates. Additional programs include a residential low-income weatherization program and residential conservation behavior program.

The refrigerator/freezer appliance recycling program is a “win-win-win” for members, GCEC and the environment. Contact the office for details on how you can save energy and money. ■

* Check to be mailed to member 4 to 6 weeks after collection.



**“I USED TO PUT A FEW DRINKS
IN MY SECOND FRIDGE.
AND ABOUT \$146 A YEAR.”**

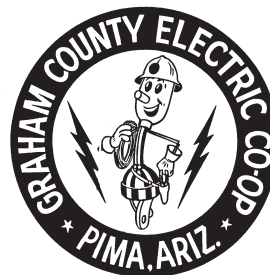
It pays to get rid of that old fridge!

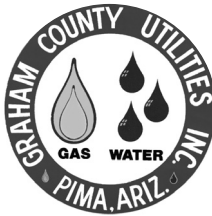
Take advantage of Graham County Electric's refrigerator/freezer recycling program. We will pick up and recycle your refrigerator or freezer and give you \$50. To learn if you qualify and schedule a free pickup, call **(855) 559-2524**, or go to **www.azgcec.coop** and click on energy programs for more information.

No purchase of new or replacement refrigerator unit necessary for program participation. JACO Environmental, an appliance recycler, will pick up and recycle refrigerators and freezers that are empty and working. Refrigerators and freezers must be 10- to 30-cubic feet in size and collection crews will need clear access to the unit. Customers must own the unit(s) being recycled. Limit two units per residential account per year. A check will be issued to the Graham County Electric customer and will be mailed approximately 4 to 6 weeks after the appliance pickup. Contractor reserves the right to leave the appliance if removal may cause damage to the property, or is otherwise impractical or unsafe.

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\$250/yr
in energy costs**





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Manager's Message

AEPCO Prepares for Regional Haze Ruling

Some of you may recall that in our last issue of this magazine, Geoff Oldfather, Arizona Electric Power Cooperative spokesman, reported on a revised plan AEPCO developed following the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's final ruling in December 2012. It was based on the EPA's position AEPCO was contributing to regional haze that was affecting the views in national parks and wilderness areas.

In the ruling, AEPCO was mandated to lower emissions at the Apache Generating Station. The controls that would have been required under the EPA's plan would have cost more than \$200 million, could have raised wholesale rates by as much as 17 percent and, in the worst-case scenario, could have forced closing part or all of the plant.

AEPCO's revised plan, as submitted to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, called for AEPCO to convert one of its coal units to natural gas and perform other emissions control upgrades to the remaining coal unit, which would reduce regional haze. ADEQ approved the plan and forwarded it to the EPA.

If the EPA approves the proposal, AEPCO's plan will cost an estimated \$32 million to implement, resulting in a huge savings to consumers. Whether it is \$32 million or \$200 million, the end-use consumer—you, the member—inevitably



Steve Lines

will share in the cost.

This is one of the reasons why, for six years, I have talked about the importance of being involved—why we need each and every one of you to join the grassroots effort to protect our safe, reliable and affordable sources of energy.

I will keep appealing to you to continue your efforts. If you

haven't voiced your opinion, go to www.action.coop and do so. If you have, then do it again and keep doing it. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

I refer you to the public notice on page 29 of this magazine. In anticipation of the costs that eventually may be incurred to comply with environmental rulings, AEPCO has applied to the Arizona Corporation Commission for permission to develop a pass-through mechanism for the cost of environmental compliance.

If approved, the Environmental Compliance Adjustment Rider initially will be applied with a rate of zero and increased to recover costs as they are incurred.

Remember that AEPCO and Graham County Electric Cooperative are not-for-profit, member-owned cooperatives committed to providing you with safe, reliable and affordable electric power.

I'm sure some of you will have questions. For answers, please refer to our website, www.azgcec.coop. We have posted a question/answer document there under the FAQ tab.