

## ***ACCULTURATION AND THE ROOTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE: 1940-1956***

The Second World War impacted the community greatly, and like the African American experience, young Phoenix Hispanics began to call for greater inclusion and equal treatment in Phoenix. The 1950s saw more growth, emerging new leadership, and the movement of younger generations from the established barrios into sections of the City viewed as off-limits in years past. Although the Mexican American population and the overall population of Phoenix nearly doubled between 1940 and 1950, Mexican Americans remained at fifteen percent of the total population within the city limits. By 1960, due to the City's aggressive annexation policy, immigration, and other factors, the number of Hispanic residents in Phoenix nearly quadrupled, as did the entire population of the city.

	<b>1940</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>1960</b>
Total Population	65,414	106,818	439,170
Hispanics	9,740	16,000	61,460
Percent of Total	15%	15%	14%

### ***World War II***

During World War II, between 375,000 and 500,000 Mexican Americans across the nation served in the armed forces. A month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, *El Mensajero* declared: "The Spanish Americans and citizens of Mexico were an element of great energy and aid in the last war with Germany, and now we should show that we are of the same disposition, ready to sacrifice all that we possess, even the precious blood of our sons, to the end that the nation reaches a decisive victory." Many young Mexican Americans from Phoenix served in the Armed Forces with distinction.<sup>197</sup> Former United States District Judge Valdemar A. Cordova, who rose to great success from the Grant Park barrio, joined the military at the age of 17, just two courses shy of his graduation from Phoenix Union High School. While in the service, he flew bombing missions until he was shot down over Germany. He was captured and spent 1 ½ years as a POW at the Stalag Luft I Berth in Germany. For his service, he was awarded the Purple Heart.<sup>198</sup>

Like many other Americans, Phoenicians of Mexican descent experienced fear, worry, and loss while waiting on the home front. Residents displayed banners with blue stars, symbolizing a family member in the service. If a soldier died, the blue star was replaced with a gold star. Spanish-language newspapers and radio programs advertised the names of the young men from the

<sup>196</sup> U.S. Bureau of Census, *Census of Population, 1940-1960*, (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office).

<sup>197</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 110. Adam Diaz remembers that those drafted in World War II came to the Luhrs building, in which was one of Phoenix's induction centers. It is unknown how many Mexican Americans from Phoenix served in the war. The U.S. War Department did not keep statistics of the ethnicity of those who served, but scholars such as Rudolfo Acuña (*Occupied America*) and Raul Morin (*Among the Valiant*) have suggested these figures.

<sup>198</sup> "Castro Names Former Judge to Court Post." *Arizona Republic*. August 27, 1976; "Old School Ties." *Arizona Republic*. November 29, 1982; *En Arizona Quién es Quién/In Arizona Who's Who*. (Phoenix: Fiesta Productions), 1983, p. 16.

community who had died. For example, *El Sol* printed an article in December of 1943 which told of the death of Ray Lara. Ray, the son of Silva Studio owner Lu s Lara, died in action in Africa, leaving behind his 18-year-old wife and a son born two days before his death.<sup>199</sup> At home, the Hispanic community became involved in the home front effort through rationing, volunteer work, fund-raising drives, civil defense, and defense industry work. They organized various activities such as dances, dinners or lectures to show support of Latin American soldiers stationed near Phoenix.<sup>200</sup>

The newspapers included announcements of registration for boys in the selective service, and honored various Phoenix soldiers who enlisted in the armed forces. They also described how Phoenix women enlisted in the service in the various branches, such as the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, the U.S. Marine Corps Women Reserve, WAVES, or the Army Nurses Corps.<sup>201</sup> *El Sol* provided important community information, such as food and material rationing, and instructions on what to do in case of a military attack. The newspaper encouraged people to plant victory gardens, either communally or individually, in empty industrial lots. They were advised to grow lettuce, cabbage, beets, mustard, chard and turnips. Residents could also buy war bonds at the newspaper's office.<sup>202</sup>

One young man who showed immense bravery during the war was Silvestre Herrera. Born in Chihuahua, Mexico in 1916, Herrera lived for a short period in El Paso, Texas. In 1927 he came with an uncle to the Valley, and worked as a young man at local farms and the Central Avenue Dairy owned by the Geare family. Herrera attended schools on the west side of Phoenix, and married Ramona Hidalgo in 1939.<sup>203</sup> With three children, and another child on the way, Herrera received his U.S. Army draft notice in 1944. His uncle reminded him that he was not a United States citizen and was not obligated to join the military. But Herrera felt it was his duty to fight and defend his adopted country, the United States. The Army sent him to Alabama for infantry training. On March 15, 1945, near Mertzwiller, France, his squad was pinned down by enemy German machine gun fire. Private First Class Herrera "stood up and charged with the bayonet fixed on his M-1 rifle. He tipped over one machine gun and captured eight German soldiers. The squad advanced through a mine field toward another, better fortified machine-gun emplacement. Herrera stepped on an anti-personnel mine, and both his feet were blown off." Although severely wounded, he continued to fire to hold off the enemy squad. He was evacuated to Bushnell General Hospital in Utah to receive medical care.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 113.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

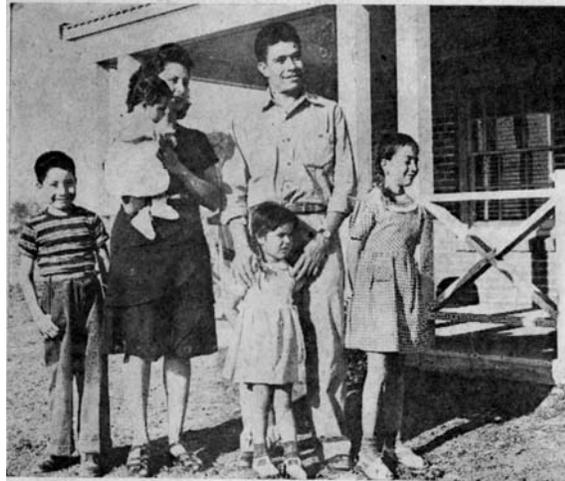
<sup>201</sup> Christine Mar n, "Mexican Americans on the Homefront: Community Organizations in Arizona During World War II," *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies*, vol 4 (Tucson: MASRC, University of Arizona, 1993), 7-9.

<sup>202</sup> *El Sol* June 5, 1942, March 27, 1942, March 12, 1943.

<sup>203</sup> "The Winner of a Congressional Medal of Honor Says: 'A Father Who Takes Care of His Children is a Bigger Hero Than I.'" *Cambio! Hispanic Bilingual Magazine*. (Phoenix, AZ). July 1995, 8-9; Silvestre Herrera, Interview by Dr. Pete R. Dimas, November 4, 2004.

<sup>204</sup> "Injuries Can't Stop GI at War or Home." *Phoenix Gazette*, May 17, 1991; Dolly King and Lucy Gurule HHPS Surveys.

On August 23, 1945, PFC Silvestre Herrera was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in a special military ceremony by President Harry S. Truman. He also received his United States citizenship upon his return to his *Mexicano* community in Phoenix. Herrera was honored for his bravery with a proclamation by Governor Sidney P. Osborn designating August 25, 1945 as “Silvestre Herrera Day”.<sup>205</sup> The Governor and other important officials were at the Union Station in Phoenix to greet the train bringing Herrera back home. He was the guest of honor at a patriotic parade down Central Avenue that morning and he sat on top of the back of a brand new red convertible so the crowd could see him pass by along the route. “The parade stopped in front of the *Republic and Gazette* Building on Central. Some kind of temporary platform was draped with red, white and blue bunting. The people cheered for the governor. They clapped for the mayor [and Governor Osborn] shouted “On behalf of the people of Arizona, I’m proud and happy to welcome you home, Sergeant Herrera!” Yet, “just a few days before [this proclamation], it had been necessary for the Governor to take action to have removed from [Phoenix] business establishments signs which said ‘No Mexican Trade Wanted.’” On the other hand, in a gesture of generosity, Phoenix residents in 1946 raised \$15,000 to help build a new house for the Herrera family, which was located at 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Van Buren Street. Labor unions donated labor, and local companies donated materials and furnishings. In 1947 the Herrera family moved from a three room house on west Sherman Street to a three bedroom home on a two and one-half acre lot. Herrera eventually opened a leather working business at his home.<sup>206</sup>



Silvestre Herrera family in front of their new home at 501 N. 43rd Ave., 1947. The home no longer exists.

Photo from *Las Voces* newspaper.

### ***Residential Development***

In 1940, Phoenix’s city boundaries ran from 24<sup>th</sup> Street on the east, 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the west, Thomas Road generally on the north, and on the south, Buckeye Road west of Central Avenue, and roughly Buchanan Street east of Central Avenue. The areas where Mexican Americans lived remained the same as the previous decade, with most Hispanics living south of Van Buren Street, often in substandard housing, and many outside of the city limits. During World War II housing was hard to find, which was exacerbated by the flow of new people into the Mexican American community. Local banks often refused to provide loans to Hispanics who wished to build a new home in the barrio. In the 1940s, federal money for financing new home construction primarily

<sup>205</sup> “Silvestre Herrera Day Due Throughout State.” *Arizona Republic*. August 25, 1945.

<sup>206</sup> Gerry Niskern. “Memories of Decorated WWII Hero.” *Arizona Republic*. November 11, 1999; Griffith, Beatrice. *American Me*. (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co.) 1948, p. 265; *Arizona Republic* 26 August 1946, 10 November 1950; Silvestre has a Phoenix elementary school named in his honor, and has received a number of community awards.

flowed to the growing suburbs of Phoenix rather than to potential developments in low-income areas. Segregation practices still excluded Hispanics in these suburbs.<sup>207</sup>

A few public housing developments emerged in the early 1940s and into the 1950s that affected Mexican Americans. The main example is the Marcos de Niza Housing Project, begun as a sister development to the all-African American Matthew Henson Housing Project. Nationally, public housing had been an issue since the 1933 National Recovery Act provided for low cost housing projects as part of the Depression era public works programs. In response to the Wagner Steagall Act of 1937, which called for slum clearance and re-housing to "protect Americans from unsafe and unsanitary conditions," the Phoenix Housing Authority (PHA) formed in 1939. Under Franciscan priest Father Emmett McLoughlin's direction as Chairman, the PHA funded the construction of segregated housing projects in 1941: one for Anglos, one for Mexican Americans, and one for African Americans. The all-Anglo Frank Luke Housing Project was located at 20<sup>th</sup> and Polk Streets, and the Matthew Henson project was constructed across the street from St. Monica's Mission on south 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

The Marcos de Niza project initially consisted of 225 homes specifically for Mexican Americans and was located in the area from Yavapai to Pima streets, First to Fourth Avenues. The housing project was named after the Franciscan friar, Marcos de Niza (c. 1495-1558), a French native who came to the Americas in 1531. De Niza is famous for claiming to have discovered the "Seven Cities of Cibola" (purported to be in the New Mexico region) while exploring the country north of Sonora, Mexico for the Spanish conquistadors. With a name selected for this new housing complex, the Phoenix Housing Authority hired Lescher and Mahoney to supervise the design of the three planned housing projects, although local architect Fred Whittlesey drew up the actual plans for the Marcos de Niza project. The P.W. Womack Construction Company built the homes, and the Del E. Webb Company installed the landscaping. The public housing project opened in 1941, and families paid between \$8.25 and \$17.75 per month to rent an apartment, depending on their financial means. A family was required to make \$1,000 or less per year in order to qualify for the housing, and the size of the apartment they could rent depended on the size of their family. This new housing allowed families to move out of their substandard housing and into new homes with electricity, heat, and other amenities.<sup>208</sup>

Roy Yanez became the first administrator of Marcos de Niza. A native of Benson, Arizona, he was born in 1906. He came to Phoenix in the early 1930s as a social worker, eventually gaining a prominent position in the field of housing through his professional association with Father McLoughlin. Yanez became a community leader in the Marcos de Niza housing project, and it was his job to convince the community to apply for housing in the project. He traveled around the community to clubs, organizations, and churches presenting the low-rent housing program at Marcos de Niza. Once he started appearing on the local Spanish-language radio program, residents became interested. He remembers that soon after this outreach effort he received "about three times more applicants than we had apartments." The housing project was fully occupied by August of 1941. Yanez recalls that when a family lost their means of income, they could remain in the home until they began earning a wage again. Some residents lived only on their old age pension and

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<sup>207</sup> Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 48-49.

<sup>208</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 50; *Arizona Republic*, November 3, 1939; December 10, 1939; July 3, 1940.

so could only pay the minimum amount of rent.<sup>209</sup> During World War II, Yanez encouraged children from Marcos de Niza to enter a scrap rubber collecting contest sponsored by Standard Oil. The children won the contest after gathering an amazing 2,200 pounds of old rubber, surpassing the children's groups from other Phoenix neighborhoods. Yanez gave them a party with music, sweets and drinks. Yanez eventually went on to direct the Phoenix Housing Authority.<sup>210</sup>

Former resident Elva Nuñez remembered Marcos de Niza was an ideal place to live. "We all wanted to live in the projects," she recalls, "because all the lawns were so well maintained and they had air-conditioning and we didn't. How we envied those people in the projects! We didn't know that the hope and dream of everyone is to *own* your own home." Some people lost their older homes once they were condemned by the City to make room for the projects.<sup>211</sup>

The public housing concept expanded in the 1950s to provide for the needs of low-income residents in the barrio areas. In 1951, the federal government loaned the Phoenix Housing Authority \$730,000 to purchase land next to the original three housing projects, including Marcos de Niza, to build additional apartments. West of Marcos de Niza, the Housing Authority hired builder E.L. Farmer to construct the Coffeldt-Lamoreaux Housing Project in 1954, financed by a bond issue. The residential development bordered 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue on the west; 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the east; Buckeye Road on the north; and Mohave Street on the south. The community referred to it as *La Diez y Nueve*, because of its familiar boundary, 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue.<sup>212</sup> The Duppa Villa Housing Project or *La Veinte* was another public housing project. The initial phase of this housing development, designed by architects Lescher and Mahoney and built by Del E. Webb, opened in 1943 as an addition to the Frank Luke housing project. Located at 809 N. 19<sup>th</sup> Street, the 200 units were built for war workers at the AiResearch plant. The Housing Authority decided to use the units for low-income Anglo families in 1945, especially for struggling veterans. The Duppa Villa housing expanded with two-story apartments in 1958. The Authority desegregated all housing in 1952.<sup>213</sup>

The 1940s and 1950s were a period of dramatic change for some of the more rural barrios south of Buckeye Road and east of 7<sup>th</sup> Street. For example, the area around *Cuatro Milpas* transformed during this period from a small barrio surrounded by cotton, produce fields and pastures for horses, to neighborhoods in-filled with individual homes. As the identity of *Cuatro Milpas* expanded from the core near 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Street south of Buckeye Road, the area changed from an ethnically mixed area to a primarily Mexican American barrio. On the western edge of *Cuatro Milpas*, toward 7<sup>th</sup> Street and south of Pima Road, the area remained essentially Anglo, much of it enforced through real estate covenants into the late 1940s. South of *Cuatro Milpas* is the Green Valley barrio, stretching from Mohave Street to the river, and east of 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Green Valley began primarily as farm land, becoming urbanized over time. In the late 1960s, the Maricopa Freeway split the

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<sup>209</sup> Roy Yanez Interview, 1978, tape recording, Arizona Historical Society.

<sup>210</sup> *El Sol*, July 4, 1942; Roy Yanez Interview, 1978, tape recording, Arizona Historical Society.

<sup>211</sup> Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 23-24

<sup>212</sup> Aumann, 35.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*; Michael Konig, "Towards a Metropolitan Status: Charter Government and the Rise of Phoenix, Arizona, 1945-1960" PhD Dissertation, Arizona State University, 1983, 176-178; Zachary, Bruce. "The Effects of the Federal Public Housing Movement Upon Phoenix, Arizona, 1937-1949." M.A. Thesis, Arizona State University, 1997, 74; *Arizona Republic* 17 August 1943; 5 December 1945; Ryden, *Pre-1950 Historic Residential Resource Survey*, 54.

community apart, and in the decades after 1970 the little barrio between the freeway and Mohave Street became known as Ann Ott, in connection to the Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary School that was renamed Ann Ott Elementary in 1960.<sup>214</sup>

Once World War II ended and servicemen returned to their families, things slowly began to change. Initially, many in Anglo Phoenix society expected pre-war social conditions to continue. David Perez, a member of the famed Bushmasters of World War II and a future police officer with the City of Phoenix, attempted to use his G.I. Bill rights to finance a home for his family. He was, however, prevented by the dual problem of not being able to purchase north of Van Buren Street and the reality that banks redlined, and refused home loans in the area south of Van Buren Street.<sup>215</sup> And yet, because of community action, young people began to move out from the barrios where they had grown up. They looked for new opportunities and homes to accommodate their families, some moving into new areas in Phoenix, others moving out of Arizona. This change occurred for African American and Chinese American families in the area as well. The post war boom in construction, the availability of loans for veterans, and cold war defense industries brought about the creation of suburbia, and Anglo families moved out of their older neighborhoods. Mexican American families took their place. Annie Redondo, a long-time resident remarked, "By that time if you were a Mexican you could live on the north side of Van Buren. As soon as they saw that a lot of [Anglo] people were moving, then they moved to the north part of town. That was just another step [up]." This movement changed the geographical racial composition of the city.<sup>216</sup>

Integration into previously all-white neighborhoods occurred gradually, one family at a time, and some of the first attempts were not successful. For example, in 1947, Amadeo Suarez, a World War II veteran and professor at the American Institute of Foreign Trade, attempted to purchase a home in Melrose Manor on north 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He was turned away due to the race restrictive deed, which stated "No lot or tract, or any part thereof, shall be leased, let, occupied, sold or transferred to anyone other than to members of the white or Caucasian race except those of Mexican or Spanish Ancestry, and this exclusion shall include those having perceptible strains of Mexican, Spanish, Asiatic, Negro or Indian blood." Esmerelda C. Bustoz, daughter of Luís Cordova, founder of the Latin American Club, wanted to move into "north" Phoenix in the 1950s: "We tried to get a house close to Green Gables [near 24<sup>th</sup> Street and Indian School Road]. . . and we put money down on it, but when they found out we were of Mexican descent, they said they couldn't sell it . . . Dad wanted to take them to court . . . You have to remember, as prejudiced as people were at that time, we couldn't come up north." She and her husband eventually purchased a home near 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Osborn Road, determined to live in this neighborhood so her children could attend a school with Anglo children and receive a better education.<sup>217</sup> Similar stories are repeated often by many members of the Mexican American community.

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<sup>214</sup> *Recuerdos: Memories of Life in Barrios Unidos of Phoenix*, 2-3; Velia Fernandez, Interview by Lucas Cabrera, June 5, 2002; Helen Brock, Interview by Lucas Cabrera, September 5, 2002; Eileen Johnston, Interview by Lucas Cabrera and Mike Valdez, 2002.

<sup>215</sup> *Los Veteranos of World War II: A Mission for Social Change in Central Arizona*, produced by Pete R. Dimas, 45 min, Braun-Sacred Heart Center, Inc., 2006, DVD.

<sup>216</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 153.

<sup>217</sup> Esmerelda Cordova Bustos, Interview by Jean Reynolds, August 13, 1999, Tape recording.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the 1948 court case *Shelley v. Kraemer* prohibited the enforcement of racially restrictive housing covenants nationwide, most realtors and subdivision salesmen clung to old practices and refused to sell to Blacks, and to a lesser extent Hispanics.<sup>218</sup> In the summer of 1946 one group challenged housing segregation. The American Legion Post 41, whose members were Hispanics, advocated for the integration of a veterans' housing development built in east Phoenix. Since housing was scarce during the war and immediately afterwards, a federal emergency housing project at 16th and Roosevelt Streets, became the center of a struggle between city officials, Anglo home-owners, and Mexican American veterans. The City had proposed to build 124 new units at this site for Anglo veterans, and housing for Mexican Americans at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Henshaw (Buckeye) Road, the site of an old dump. These homes, used by war workers, were to be temporary in nature, and had been shipped in sections from Vancouver, Washington. Post 41 members refused to be segregated and demanded they integrate the Roosevelt Street project. The Garfield Property Owners Protective Association, led by local businessman Eddie Poole, opposed the integration.<sup>219</sup>

At the City Council meeting where the decision was made on the housing issue, Eddie Poole voiced the Association's views on integration. Ray Martinez recalled that in Poole's speech he claimed that the presence of Mexican Americans would decrease property values and that they would commit crimes such as robbery and rape, if allowed into the development. His racist rhetoric unsettled the Council. Ray Martinez spoke on behalf of the Post, and to his surprise, a Jewish lawyer, Kenny Rosenbaum, stood up and responded to Poole's speech on behalf of the Phoenix B'nai B'rith. "He said, 'my goodness here we are, we've just been through a war, that was mainly motivated by hate, and here we have somebody still spewing hate as bad as Hitler did over there.'" In addition, labor leader John Dutch and Communist Party member Morris Graham spoke on the Hispanic veterans' behalf. According to Martinez, the Phoenix City Council abstained from voting that day on the housing issue, even though the City Manager had told Martinez that the vote had already been decided beforehand in favor of segregated veterans housing.<sup>220</sup>

On July 6, 1946, Mayor Ray Busey and the Council voted to integrate the housing (Mexican and Anglo only), providing 24 of the units to Mexican Americans. The Garfield Association continued to protest, and brought a suit against the Public Housing Authority to stop the integration, which was overturned by the Arizona State Supreme Court. Eddie Poole stated, "We don't hate anybody. We're not fighting Mexicans... We're fighting the type of shacks they're going to build in our neighborhood." He also noted that "other Spanish American families" lived in the Garfield area, using this as argument that prejudice was not the issue. Future State Representative Jimmy Carreón also spoke at a Garfield neighborhood meeting, but was "shouted down as property owners crowded in to sign petitions" against integration. The conflict over the Cordova homes reveals a mixture of racial tension and residents' dislike of low-income housing in their neighborhood. After various setbacks, the housing project was completed in late 1946 and opened in February of 1947. It was named the Harry Cordova Housing Project, for a Phoenix man killed in the Battle of Normandy in June of 1944. Harry, a member of the Army Medical Corps, was the brother of Luis Cordova, well-known community leader and founder of the Latin American Club.

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<sup>218</sup> Luckingham, 48.

<sup>219</sup> Ray Martinez, interview by Jean Reynolds, November 23, 1999, Tape recording; Bruce Zachary, *The Effects of the Federal Public Housing Movement Upon Phoenix, Arizona*, 29; *Arizona Republic* July 3, 1946; July 4, 1946; July 6, 1946.

<sup>220</sup> Ray Martinez Interview; *Arizona Republic* July 3, 1946.

In 1951 the Phoenix Housing Authority lost the lease on the housing project when private owners of the property raised rental fees (which had been lower than the rents at Duppa Villa housing project nearby), and 150 low-income veteran families had to move out. This crisis occurred because the City of Phoenix never purchased the property on which the housing project was constructed. Interestingly, in the late 1940s and the 1950s, more Mexican Americans began moving into the Garfield neighborhood area, joining those pockets of long-time families and integrating other former all-white areas.<sup>221</sup>

Many Mexican Americans moved westward into the avenues, both south and north of Van Buren Street, during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Individuals encountered discrimination in these areas as well. In the late 1940s, Post 41 member Donald Gaylien, who was of Mexican descent (and served in the same naval aviation unit as future U.S. President George Bush, Sr.), encountered discrimination from the Stewart Construction Company when he tried to buy a home in the company's subdivision at 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Adams Street. Armed with recently passed legislation against discrimination in federally financed housing, and with the authorization of Post 41 membership, Ray Martinez confronted the company president and threatened to jeopardize FHA/VA funding of the company's project if they did not sell to Mexican American buyers. Tempe resident Dwight "Red" Harkins provided backing for legal fees should the issue go to court. The company president acquiesced and Mexican American families began to settle there. By the mid 1950s the neighborhood was fairly integrated.<sup>222</sup>



American Legion Post 41 members, 1948.  
Ray Martinez is the first man on the left (standing).  
Pipa Fuentes is standing next to him.  
Courtesy of Martinez family.

Some Mexican residents also moved south to new homes being built south of the Salt River. One of these was the Park South subdivision, located between 24<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, between Broadway and Roeser Roads, built in the late 1950s by the Williams and Jones Company in order to provide new homes for African Americans. One long time resident, Katie Macias, remembers that the area was referred to in Spanish as *El Alacrán* (the scorpion) barrio. The name arose from the large amount of scorpions found in the area, stirred up by the home construction. The home prices in this subdivision ranged from \$500 to \$1500 each and the Federal Housing Administration and

<sup>221</sup> Ray Martinez Interview; Bruce Zachary, *Effects of Federal Public Housing Movement on Phoenix, Arizona, 1937-1949*, 81-83; July 4, 1946; February 2, 1947; July 6, 1946; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 46; Konig, *Toward Metropolitan Status*, 194; Personal correspondence with Ray Martinez's daughter, Norma Martinez Kiermeyer (who lived at 17<sup>th</sup> Street and McKinley 1952-1963) and Charlie Garcia, who lived in the Garfield area since the 1930s).

<sup>222</sup> Ray Martinez Interview; Joe Torres, Interview by Pete R. Dimas; Documentary, *Los Veteranos of World War II: A Mission for Social Change in Central Arizona*, produced by Pete R. Dimas, 45 min, Braun-Sacred Heart Center, Inc., 2006, DVD; Norma Martinez Kiermeyer, Personal correspondence with Jean Reynolds, June 25, 2006.

Veterans Administration readily guaranteed loans for minorities moving into these areas. In 1961, Williams and Jones expanded the Park South subdivision west another 160 acres, offering two, three and four bedroom houses, for prices from \$11,000 to \$22,000. The new homes included central heat and cooling, carport, and landscaping: a far cry from the run-down homes existing in much of the older barrios. Elva Nuñez of the Grant Park area remembered that a number of young families bought homes with their VA loans, in a subdivision on 16th Street and Southern Avenue.<sup>223</sup>

In south Phoenix, the “urban” area was beginning to expand slowly, but the region remained highly rural. Mexican families had previously settled in a number of areas, including north and south of Southern Avenue between Central Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Street, and the old San Francisco barrio south of the Highline Canal and between 28<sup>th</sup> to 32<sup>nd</sup> Streets. New Hispanic residents may have settled in these areas, integrated into mainly Anglo neighborhoods, or settled in rural, ethnically mixed communities throughout the South Phoenix region. For example, Frank Garcia arrived in the Southgate subdivision, located near Broadway and Central Avenues, in the early 1950s. He recalled that this neighborhood was mainly Anglo. The schools he attended in the mid to late 1950s included a small proportion of Hispanics and African Americans. When he attended South Mountain High School in the late 1950s, he remembered the ethnic breakdown constituted roughly 70 percent Anglo, 20 percent Mexican American, and 10 percent African American. Interestingly, he recalled that most of the Hispanic students came from the *Cuatro Milpas* barrio area. Another long-time resident of South Phoenix, Mrs. Jimmy Muñoz, remembered that many families from Golden Gate moved to the area in the 1970s, when the Hispanic community south of the Salt River began to grow substantially.<sup>224</sup>

By the 1950s, city leaders pushed for annexation to increase Phoenix’s status and to keep the city from existing as “a relatively small city surrounded by a number of ‘bedroom’ towns benefiting from city facilities and services but making no financial contributions toward their costs.” In 1940, the city had a population of 65,414 in an area of 9.6 square miles; the totals by the end of 1955 were 156,000 population and 29 square miles. In 1959, the Maryvale area and south Phoenix were annexed into the city’s ever growing boundaries. This included barrios like Golden Gate, *Cuatro Milpas*, and *El Campito*. The city more than doubled in area and added over 100,000 people to its population; by December 1960 Phoenix’s population was 439,170. That year, approximately 75 percent of the people living in the city were residents of areas that had been annexed during the previous decade. This aggressive annexation policy enabled the city to increase its population fourfold and its physical size eleven fold or from 17.1 square miles in 1950 to 187.4 square miles in 1960. The boundaries reached 67<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the west, Cactus Road on the north, Papago Park on the east, and South Mountain Park on the south.<sup>225</sup> In south Phoenix and throughout the present-day boundaries of Phoenix, fields and farms still stretched for miles, and Hispanic workers continued to live in agricultural areas.

## ***Agriculture***

World War II again brought an increased need for agricultural labor, in cotton as well as other crops. Farmers looked for workers, and at first, residents volunteered for a short period of time to

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<sup>223</sup> Dean and Reynolds, 66; Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 24; Katie Macias telephone interview.

<sup>224</sup> Ryden, 55-65; Frank Garcia, and Mrs. Jimmy Muñoz, Personal correspondence with Frank Barrios.

<sup>225</sup> Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 163.

help in harvesting cotton, a necessary crop for the war effort. In October of 1942, "Victory Labor Volunteers" gathered and picked cotton that was necessary for items like parachutes and gliders. Over 5,000 Mexican American workers labored in the fields as volunteers, harvesting 35,000 pounds of cotton.<sup>226</sup> The same year "Victory Labor Volunteers" took to the fields, a new group of Mexican workers entered the Valley to join the agricultural laborers there. The "Bracero Program" began in late 1942 in response to pressure, pleading, and lobbying from the Farm Bureau Federation of Arizona and other agricultural and railroad interests across the United States. This program allowed for the hiring of Mexican "guest workers," to meet agricultural wartime demands. Although reluctant to enter into an agreement after the crisis of the 1920-1921 cotton season and the massive deportations of the 1930s, Mexican officials sat down and hammered out an agreement that they hoped would protect their countrymen from the excesses, broken promises, and hardships experienced earlier.

Thousands of Mexican men joined the agricultural and railroad industries, mainly in New Mexico, Arizona and California. Braceros worked in the fields of Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal Counties. In February of 1943, the Farm Security Administration brought 700 workers into central Arizona. The Spanish-language newspaper *El Sol* praised the program as part of the patriotic war effort, although it also reported with some indignation several deaths and abuses of braceros on farms surrounding Phoenix. The Bracero Program was billed as a wartime measure, and although the war ended in 1945, the program continued well into the post-war era. Not all Valley Hispanics supported this guest worker program. In 1946, 506 mostly Spanish-surnamed residents, identified as "citizens, taxpayers and agricultural workers," sent Governor Sidney Osborn a petition. The petition called for the cessation of braceros importation, explaining that they were being "denied the opportunity of working," and that the braceros were paid "much lower than the prevailing standard wage." These residents from Phoenix, Tolleson, Avondale, Litchfield, Guadalupe and Tempe were supported by the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Workers Union Local 78, an affiliate of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).<sup>227</sup>

Although the agricultural work force declined after World War II in Arizona, as many as 25,000 workers entered Arizona each year between August and December. A 1949 survey of agricultural workers on 60 cotton farms in Maricopa, Pima, and Graham counties found that 41.9 percent were Anglo, 24.8 percent "Latin-American," 24.6 percent Black, and 1.7 percent "contracted Mexican nationals." The study found that half of these workers lived in Arizona, while the majority of the others migrated from Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. In 1950, agricultural workers in the Valley earned approximately \$6.00 a day, or 60 cents an hour.<sup>228</sup> More and more, Mexican farm workers lived in the urban area and commuted to farmland on the edges of urban and suburban Phoenix. Many migrant workers lived in labor camps adjacent to farms much as the Mexican cotton pickers of the late 1910s and early 1920s had done before. Sadly, conditions for these workers were often little improved from that of their predecessors.

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<sup>226</sup> Marín, "Mexican Americans on the Homefront," 3-4.

<sup>227</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 53-54.

<sup>228</sup> Arizona State Employment Service, "1950 Arizona Cotton Harvest," 1, 2, 7, 8; Raymond J. Flores, *The Socio-economic Status Trends of the Mexican People Residing in Arizona* (M.A. Thesis, Arizona State University, 1951), 39.

The Bracero Program worked well enough to last until 1964, clearly far past its life-span as a wartime emergency measure.<sup>229</sup> The U.S. Department of Labor reported that over 4 million men entered the country under contract through the Bracero Program between 1951 and 1964. The program often did not prove ideal for Mexican workers, as many suffered from neglect, abuse, and from dishonest growers who were willing to break contracts while expecting the workers to fall in line or face deportation. Whether or not such excesses were perpetrated on a large scale in the Phoenix area — workers in Texas generally saw the worst abuses — the program left a mixed legacy in the valley. At the same time that the Bracero Program brought farm workers into the United States legally, it seemed to encourage the flow of undocumented immigration as many workers became frustrated and impatient with the delays, official hoops, and bribes required before gaining entry into the United States. When faced with abuse or other issues that American labor officials failed to investigate or resolve, workers in the United States legally often decided to take matters into their own hands by running away from bad situations. While such action broke their contract and made them “illegals,” many Mexican workers chose to take their chances rather than continue on in circumstances that ran from burdensome to downright life-threatening at the hands of unscrupulous growers and negligent labor officials in the United States. One 1950 study counted over 76,000 braceros in the U.S., and over 450,000 undocumented workers.<sup>230</sup>

Overall, the mixed legacy of the Bracero Program had a significant impact on the shape of future farm labor. Some Mexican American leaders saw the program as a drain on the wages of their fellow Hispanics — a valid concern as the labor market was swamped by thousands of new workers.<sup>231</sup> In the post-World War II era, much of the labor force available to Phoenix area farms — both year round and migratory — was made up of undocumented immigrants from Mexico as tens of thousands of these workers came to the valley in search of a better life.

Adding to the complications for legal and illegal temporary workers from Mexico was an international reality for the U.S. economy. The post World War II world economy depended on the U.S. for recovery, as witnessed through the Marshall Plan. This meant that American industry and business needed more labor than ever. At the same time, millions of new acres of land were brought into agricultural production. By 1947, when Mexico negotiated a new temporary worker agreement, American employers, especially in Texas, rejected the requirements of treatment that Mexico demanded for its citizens. Despite protests from the Mexican government, the U.S. government opened the borders and released detained illegal workers, now known as “wetbacks,” to local farmers. This process was repeated during the worker shortage associated with the Korean War. When a post-war recession hit the country, American demands to return Mexicans to their home country resulted in a quasi military operation, “Operation Wetback.” This “operation” swept throughout the Southwest and rounded up over a million people.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Juan Ramon García, *Operation Wetback: the Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 18, 22, 23.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-37, 43-48, 53-55, 237; Richard Craig, *The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and Foreign Policy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 125-126.

<sup>231</sup> Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 51

<sup>232</sup> Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Rivera, *Mexican Americans/ American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos*, (Wang&Hill, 1993), 172-184, 187; Garcia, *Operation Wetback*, 73-85, 169-221.

The farming industry itself was changing too. The mechanization of agriculture, especially after 1945, served to displace many agricultural workers in the 1950s and 1960s. Many of these workers and their children turned to service and retail jobs to make their living, as these sectors of the economy expanded with the growth of metropolitan Phoenix.

### **Commerce**

As in other cities in the U.S., the war pulled Phoenix out of the Depression, and many businesses and industries were on the rise. The population increased as soldiers arrived to train at the air fields and flight training schools around the city. Workers flooded into new defense plants, of which the three largest industries in the Phoenix area were established in 1942. Located between 35th and 43rd Avenues south of Van Buren Street, the ALCOA plant produced aluminum for military use. The Goodyear Plant, built near Litchfield Park on the Southwest Cotton Ranch, constructed parts and fuselages for Navy bombers, as well as blimps for anti-submarine patrols. The AiResearch plant, located near Sky Harbor Airport, built aircraft systems related to cooling, heat transfer, cabin pressure control, and other operations.<sup>233</sup>

After the U.S. entered the war, the demand for workers increased as new factories opened and industries expanded. As the male labor force dwindled, government and mass media encouraged women to enter manufacturing. By 1943, one-third of all workers in the U.S. were women, and they composed over 50 percent of those employed in munitions or aircraft industries around the country. Patriotism, better pay, a chance to gain new skills and social freedom attracted "Rosita the Riveters" into this new work force. Around the nation women filled traditionally male occupations with skill and efficiency, and the changes in Phoenix during the war mirrored the national trends. Women in the Phoenix industries worked as riveters, drillers, mechanics, clerks and typists. The rise of war-time manufacturing companies heralded the manufacturing boom of the 1950s, and a decrease in an agricultural-dominated economy.<sup>234</sup>

The 1940 census reveals that most Mexican Americans "labored in the bottom ranks of the work force." They had minimal representation in the skilled or professional trades. A 1941 survey of Mexican American students in Lowell School found that they came from poor, working-class homes. Fifty-nine percent of the children's fathers worked as unskilled laborers and farm workers, while only 27 percent held skilled jobs such as blacksmiths, plumbers, or mechanics. One-third of all the students worked after school "to help pay the bills of the home," in jobs ranging from shoe-shining to domestic work. Long-time resident Joe Torres recalls that during this time many men worked on the farms, in the agricultural industries along the railroads, and at the A-1 Brewery. As a child, he had his own way of earning some money: "When I was 10 years old, I used to have a little shoe shine box, and we used to go to downtown Phoenix around 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, from 4<sup>th</sup> Street to about 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, we'd walk up and down giving shoe shines, for a nickel, so we could go to the movies. But you had to have your own corner." During the 1940s, the war and the growth of the economy, as well as changing social views, offered improvement to the lives and opportunities for local Mexican Americans.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Craig, 126-127.

<sup>234</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 47.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, 147; Joe Torres, Interview by Pete R. Dimas.

A comparison of Phoenix city directories from the 1930s and the 1940s reveals that women and men advanced in white-collar occupations during the 1940s, and for women especially in the areas of nursing, clerical occupations, and sales. Many of those sales jobs were at the Boston Store downtown.<sup>236</sup> A thesis project completed by Raymond Flores provides an example of this trend. In 1950, Flores interviewed Plácida Garcia Smith, and she discussed the improved employment situation for Mexican American girls in Phoenix. "When I first arrived in Phoenix [in 1931]," Smith explained, "the Mexican American girls were hardly seen in any of the establishments around town. Now one sees them working in offices as secretaries, stenographers, beauticians, waitresses and sales clerks. Some of the girls have gone into the nursing profession and others are developing an interest in newspaper work."<sup>237</sup>

While some Mexican Americans secured white-collar jobs, they also continued to labor in the service industries of Phoenix, particularly as laundry workers, domestic workers, restaurant workers, and medical attendants. The Friendly House continued to place women in homes as maids. The expansion of service jobs such as laundry workers and restaurant workers reflects the increased economic activity in the city during and after the war. Men worked in construction, foundries, and other industries on the rise in the city. New Deal legislation pertaining to labor organizing and the transformation of the Mexican American veterans as a result of their combat experiences resulted in a major shift in economic opportunities for these veterans. Historically, Mexicanos were excluded from craft and trade unions. The 1935 Wagner Act, actually known as the National Labor Relations Act, provided a government monitored means for labor, including unskilled labor, to organize into unions. Returning veterans received a preference for union membership. The large numbers of returning veterans of Mexican descent were changing the face of union membership across Arizona. The mining industry in Arizona was dramatically changed as Mexican Americans took over labor unions and forced the removal of the dual wage structure that paid Mexicans much lower wages than Anglos. In Phoenix, union membership provided wage increases that allowed for improved living conditions. However, at the time these changes were taking place, a "right to work" provision was added to the Arizona Constitution that served to weaken the power of unions in Arizona. An additional constraint to Mexican workers resulted from the fact that farm labor was excluded from the protections of the National Labor Relations Act.<sup>238</sup>

The economic position improved for some families by the 1950s, especially for those who attended college or technical schools through the G.I. Bill.<sup>239</sup> Obtaining a degree helped Mexican American men move into higher paying, professional jobs, such as teaching, law or business. For example, in the late 1940s Phoenix native Bob Ramirez became the first Mexican American hired by Central Arizona Light and Power Company (later Arizona Public Service). He started as a paint shop employee and worked his way up to lineman and electrician. Another Phoenix resident went on to fame in the architectural world. Bennie Gonzales was born in 1924 on a 20-acre farm near 20<sup>th</sup> and Osborn Streets, although he grew up in town. He graduated from Phoenix Union High School in 1942 and served in the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II. Upon his return he used the G.I. Bill to

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<sup>236</sup> *Ibid*, 121-122.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*, 118.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, 125; Joe Torres, Interview by Pete R. Dimas, May 8 2006, HHPS surveys also confirm these types of employment.

<sup>239</sup> Luckingham, 47-48.

enter Arizona State College in Tempe and obtained a degree in Architecture. He also served as a firefighter and as an apprentice at a Phoenix architectural firm. He became involved in building and remodeling homes, and in the 1950s moved to Mexico City to continue graduate architectural courses. In 1961 he returned, opened his own business, and designed his first building, a library in Nogales. He has designed many Valley buildings, including Ocotillo Library in Phoenix.<sup>240</sup>

Another example is Albert Garcia, a native of Yuma, who graduated from the University of Arizona with a law degree and became Arizona's first Hispanic Assistant Attorney General, from 1937 until 1942. He joined the Army during World War II, then operated a private law practice in the late 1940s and 1950s in Phoenix, and later in Yuma. He also joined the American Legion Post 41 and served as Post Commander in 1956. He was a member of many local organizations, such as the Latin American Club, the Alianza Hispano Americano, and other fraternal groups.<sup>241</sup> Arthur Van Haren, Jr., a lawyer of Dutch and Mexican heritage, had long roots in Phoenix. His parents, Arthur Sr. and Rose were part of the original founding group of Immaculate Heart Church, and Arthur Sr. became a well-known baseball umpire. Arthur Van Haren, Jr., born in 1920, became an Arizona attorney after serving in World War II. He received a law degree from the University of Arizona in 1948, and worked in Phoenix for almost 40 years.<sup>242</sup> A third well-known Phoenix lawyer was Greg Garcia, who was involved with the 1950s Tolleson school desegregation case and held the position as Supreme Lawyer for the Alianza Hispano Americana. Another individual, Rudolf Zepeda, became the first Hispanic official at Valley National Bank in the 1950s, serving as the vice-president for foreign trade.<sup>243</sup>

The economic and population growth of the 1940s allowed business owners to expand or to begin new enterprises. In the Phoenix downtown area, small Mexican American owned businesses continued to flourish as in the 1920s and 1930s. This business district would begin to fade in the 1960s along with the rest of the commercial districts in downtown Phoenix, and disappeared after the City built the Phoenix Civic Plaza in the early 1970s.

There are many examples of businesses during this period. Jesús Arreola, who came to Phoenix in 1930 from Jalisco, opened the first Mexican owned furniture store in Phoenix in 1939. Another prominent business owner was José Larrañaga, who owned a jewelry store at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Washington Streets. José lived in the Grant Park area.<sup>244</sup> Restaurants opened during the 1940s as well. For example, Adolfo and Kay Torres ran the Azteca Café from 1948 until 1956, located originally on 3<sup>rd</sup> and Washington Streets. Kay came to Phoenix in 1938 from Seattle, and graduated from Phoenix Union High School. She attended Arizona State Teachers College in Tempe for a few semesters and then married Adolfo Torres in 1946. From their first restaurant, they expanded the business to a florist shop at 8<sup>th</sup> Street, and in 1962 a bridal shop nearby. This eventually developed

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<sup>240</sup> Bob Ramirez HHPS Survey; "Man of the Year: Bennie M. Gonzales," *Fiesta*, December 1967, 1-4.

<sup>241</sup> Albert Garcia Obituary, *Arizona Republic*, n.d.; John Moore, *Who is Who in Arizona*, (Phoenix: 1958), 96-97.

<sup>242</sup> *Arizona Republic* "Ayer Hoy" October 6, 2001; "Van Harens to observe golden day," *Arizona Republic*, 1967. Arthur Sr. came to Phoenix from Florence, AZ in 1897 in a horse-drawn wagon, and eventually became an office manager for the Arizona A-1 Brewing Company. He also was a baseball umpire from 1920 to 1962 for high school, college, semi- and professional baseball games in the Valley. He later was inducted into the Arizona Sports Hall of Fame. He also served as a ring announcer for 26 years at the Phoenix Madison Square Garden.

<sup>243</sup> *El Mensajero*, 11 April 1941; Johnson, 141.

<sup>244</sup> *Las Voces*, November 11, 1948.

into the 40,000 square foot Azteca Plaza located between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets along Washington Street.<sup>245</sup>

Other female-owned businesses included the Tolteca Tortilleria, established by Enriqueta Torres Quihuis in the late 1940s at 609 E. Washington Street. Her husband, Efrain, ran the Azteca Tamale Shop in the 1940s at 7<sup>th</sup> and Washington Streets, which specialized in food products from Sonora. Efrain came to Arizona in 1919 from Sonora. One newspaper article labeled the Tolteca business as the first “mainstream Mexican food outlet in Phoenix.”<sup>246</sup> Another type of woman-owned businesses on the rise were the various beauty shops catering to Mexican clientele. María Amaya, daughter of Sonorensé Café owner Gerardo Walker, ran the María Beauty Shop at Third Street between Washington and Jefferson Streets. Amaya was born in 1921 in Phoenix. She advertised in March of 1941, "We can create hairstyles as elegant and exquisite as those of Patricia Morrison, star of 'Rangers of Fortune', the movie that will be shown in the Ramona Theater the 11th through the 13th of this month."<sup>247</sup>

Another example of a small business owner is Fabian Gastelúm, who came from Cananea, Mexico to Phoenix in 1918 at the age of six. His father, Julian, was a blacksmith with a shop on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Grant and Sherman Streets. Fabian began his career in 1933 as a mechanic for the Ed Rudolph Chevrolet Dealership, and eventually opened his own mechanic shop at 311 N. 11<sup>th</sup> Street in 1940. Part of his motivation for opening his own business was his experiences with discrimination when trying to obtain work with the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. He became a well-known businessman, and many people in the Mexican American community patronized his auto shop. Fabian Gastelúm, Jr. continues to operate an auto dealership on this site. Also dealing in the car business were Juan and María Luisa Torres, who opened the Precision Auto Parts in 1953 at 1024 E. Broadway in South Phoenix. Juan took advantage of the G.I. Bill after finishing his service in the Second World War to attend the Phoenix School of Technology and obtain mechanic training. Another entrepreneur was Eduardo Ramirez, who ran the Peerless Auto Top company in the 1940s at 19<sup>th</sup> and Roosevelt Streets. A native of Durango, Mexico, he came to Phoenix in 1913.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Hispanic Industry, *Arizona Republic* news clipping file, Arizona Room, Burton Barr Library

<sup>246</sup> *Arizona Republic* “Ayer Hoy,” October 2001; “In memory of our Coronado neighbor”, newspaper clipping, (unknown title, n.d.); *Las Voces*, November 11, 1948, 14.

<sup>247</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 120; María Amaya Camarena, Interview by Santos Vega.

<sup>248</sup> Interview with Fabian Gastelúm by Julian Reveles, May 8, 2000, Phoenix, Arizona; *En Arizona, Quien es Quien*, (Phoenix: Fiesta Productions, 1983), 195; *Las Voces*, 1949, Vol. 5, nos. 44-47.

Other Hispanic businesses flourished in the mid 1940s and into the 1950s. Rafael Granados Jr., son of the first Mexican drug store owner in town, started his own business miles north of the downtown area in the little community of Sunnyslope. Rafael graduated from Phoenix Union High School in the late 1930s and attended pharmaceutical school in El Paso. Upon his return in 1943, he opened the Sunnyslope Drug store at 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Dunlap Avenue. By the 1950s it included a liquor department, pharmacy



Sunnyslope Drugs, c. 1945.  
Photo from *Las Voces* newspaper.

counter, post office, soda fountain and lunch counter. His patrons were Anglos as well as Mexican Americans. Other entrepreneurs opened businesses that served a mixed clientele. For example, a successful restaurant business owned by the Garcia family began in 1956 under the ownership of Olivia Garcia. Olivia was born in 1929 in Phoenix to Pedro and í Salazar. She later married Julio Garcia and ten years later opened a food take-out counter. In 1959, Olivia established a Mexican restaurant at 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue and McDowell Road. This developed into the popular Garcia's chain of restaurants that included the subsidiaries Garcia's del Este at Scottsdale and Camelback Roads; Garcia's Metro at 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Peoria Road; and another, Garcia's Las Villas, on 44<sup>th</sup> Street and Camelback Road. These were established in the 1970s and early 1980s, and another restaurant, the casual dining chain, Julio's, opened in the 1990s.<sup>249</sup>

As the barrios expanded and more services were needed, more neighborhood businesses developed. One example is El Portal Restaurant, located on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Grant Street. The original owner, Mercedes Zapien, was born in Mexico, and came to Arizona in 1918. She moved to Phoenix in 1931 and lived at 115 W. Grant Street. She opened El Portal next door in 1945, with the help of her sons, who were World War II veterans. The restaurant served many of the veterans at the American Legion Post 41 next door. One of the Zapien sons, Danny, became an actor and over his lifetime played supporting roles in 28 different motion pictures. He acted in many Westerns, usually as an "Indian," but also took on the role of a Chinese cook and a Russian peasant. He appeared in both motion pictures and television, but also kept his "day job" as a Maricopa County Sheriff's deputy. The Zapiens are connected to the Caro family, who also helped run El Portal. Mercedes died in 1961 at the age of 71. Another food-related business is the Briceños Corn Shop, established by Julian Briceño and Richard Rodriguez in the early 1950s. They

<sup>249</sup> Santos Vega, *Profiles of Achievement: Honoring (Hispanic) Arizona Notables For Their Contributions In This Last Century*. (Phoenix: LULAC Council 1083, 1999), 19; *Las Voces*, 1949, vol. 5, nos. 44-47.

specialized in the production and sales of food made from corn. They operated their store at 1611 E. Grant Street.<sup>250</sup>

During the difficult years of World War II, the Hispanic community relied on Spanish language newspapers to keep them informed, whose editorials encouraged residents to remain unified and patriotic during wartime. Jesús Meléndrez's *El Mensajero* and Jesús Franco's *El Sol* were the prominent newspapers at this time. Besides publishing a newspaper, Franco served as Arizona's Mexican consul, with offices in Phoenix, from 1947 to 1953, and represented the views, philosophy and nationalistic ideals of his native country, Mexico. During his consulate period, Franco provided legal counsel to Mexican citizens for the resolution of their legal and socio-economic problems in Arizona. He used his newspaper, *El Sol*, to voice his pro-Mexico beliefs and his strong sense of Mexican nationalism and patriotism. His anti-American editorials and criticisms of American democracy and American laws, which he published in his book, *El Alma de La Raza* (The Heart of the People) brought him into dispute and disagreement among the leadership in the Mexican American community, who opposed his views and questioned his credibility as a consul.<sup>251</sup> When Franco became consul, his wife Josefina and daughter Mary Jo (who later became a physician) continued to publish *El Sol*, with Josefina doing most of the editing. Amador Sanchez served as the newspaper's printer from 1954 until 1979. Franco died at the age of 86 in 1974.<sup>252</sup>



Jesús Franco, c. 1945.  
*Las Voces* newspaper.

Radio emerged in Phoenix in the 1920s, and the first radio program broadcast in Spanish was heard on KOY in 1935. Pete Bugarín pioneered this first radio program, called *La Hora Mexicana*. This early morning broadcast appealed to working-class Mexican residents who enjoyed hearing music and news as they prepared for work. On his first shows, he featured local musicians, including a well known jeweler and vocalist, José Larrañaga. Bugarín, a popular musician, was born in 1917 in Marinette, Arizona, and came to Phoenix at the age of 13. He attended Monroe School and graduated from Phoenix Union High School. Bugarín taught himself to play musical instruments. During the 1930s, his band, *Los Caballeros Alegres*, performed orchestra music on *La Hora Mexicana*. KOY advertised them as "the finest Mexican Orchestra in the Southwest . . . heard for a half an hour at 6:30 every weekday morning." Other radio personalities followed Bugarín, and radio became a venue for local performers to make it big. In 1940, Carlos Montaña from Tucson became director of *La Hora Mexicana*. *El Mensajero* listed the program musicians as Gene Escalante on piano, Martin Martel on guitar, Tony Corral on violin and director of the orchestra, and Enrique Corral as a vocalist.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>250</sup> El Portal Phoenix Commercial Survey State Historic Property Survey Form; Arizona Biographies newsclipping file, Arizona Room, Burton Barr Library. El Portal is now owned by Earl and Mary Rose Wilcox; *En Arizona, Quien es Quien*, 237.

<sup>251</sup> "Jesus Franco: Why Live Here?" *El Machete*. (Phoenix, Arizona). 2 April 1944; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 45.

<sup>252</sup> "Jesus M. Franco dies; Mexican ex-consul here." *Arizona Republic*. December 17, 1974; *Arizona Republic* "El Sol: A proud and pioneer newspaper" n.d.; *En Arizona: Quien es Quien*, (Phoenix: Fiesta Productions, 1983), 239.

<sup>253</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 141; "Obituary for Pedro (Pete) Bugarin", *Arizona Republic*, 19 February 2004.

Early morning broadcasts appealed to working-class Mexican residents who enjoyed hearing music and news as they prepared for work. In 1940, Carlos Montaña from Tucson became director of *La Hora Mexicana*. *El Mensajero* listed the program musicians as Gene Escalante on piano, Martin Martel on guitar, Tony Corral on violin and director of the orquesta, and Enrique Corral as a vocalist. Another vocalist was Molly Cota, who was known for her “exquisite and melodious voice.”



*La Hora Mexicana* with Carlos Montaña (1<sup>st</sup> man on left) and musicians at KOY, c. 1945.  
Courtesy of Moreno Family.

Molly was born in Phoenix in the 1920s, and grew up near Madison Park. She grew up in a musical family and was influenced by her father, who played guitar every morning. Her sister, Arsenia recalls: “She started to sing first at the KOY [radio station].... At six o’clock in the morning she was there, and they had a band.... She used to ride her bicycle to get there. And they had two or three good singers there, but she used to go every day, every morning. I think the program went for about an hour. She went all over. She sang in California, and Los Angeles, to a radio station there. And she traveled with some of the bands out of town, Tucson, and places where they were having a dance. She got paid well. [She was] quite famous. She sang at the Mexican Fiestas.”<sup>254</sup>

*La Hora Mexicana* presented both the more refined, middle-class orchestra music and the popular *corrido*, which reinforced pride in Mexican culture, agrarian ideals, and rural roots. The program also promoted various contests for its listeners. In 1942, Beatriz Lopez won a radio contest after soliciting the most votes from local residents. Similar to the contest prizes given out by *La Opinión* newspaper in Los Angeles during the 1930s, Lopez’s award included a trip to Hollywood to try out for a part in a movie, and gifts from four businesses. In the mid-1940s, Carlos Morales ran a *aficionados* show (an amateur night) on KOY, perhaps to bring in new listeners or to identify talented musicians for local auditions. Listeners could come and display their musical talents every Saturday on the program. Singer Tonita Carlos was offered a singing contract but she declined, since she needed to stay in Phoenix to take care of her mother. Molly Cota also won a prize and toured Los Angeles and performed a series of shows.<sup>255</sup>



Molly Cota, c. 1940.  
Courtesy of Torres Family.

<sup>254</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 141; Vega, *Profiles of Achievement*; Arsenia Torres, Interview by Pete R. Dimas.

<sup>255</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 141-142.

Another radio pioneer is Raphael (Ralph) Gaxiola, of Costa Rican and Mexican heritage. His first radio show began on KOY at 4:30 a.m., and farmers, ranchers, field hands and families listened to the program as they prepared for their work day. Just as in Los Angeles, radio programmers broadcast in the early morning, on weekends, or other times considered "dead airtime" for English-speaking audiences. The show included live music, news reports, and sponsor announcements. Gaxiola's daughter, Geraldine, recalled that "Sponsors of every kind of business would line up in hopes of signing contracts with Raphael and the radio station, to have their products announced by him over the air."<sup>256</sup> She describes how he achieved celebrity status in Phoenix, and people would stop him for an "abrazo, or a handshake, or even a kiss now and then." The Gaxiola family lived at 9<sup>th</sup> Street south of Roosevelt Street, and later moved to a rural home north of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Indian School Road. Gaxiola's wife, Í, did the writing and translation work for his shows. In the 1940s, KPHO ran a Spanish-language program directed by Gaxiola for a half an hour every Sunday afternoon, billed as "*la voz de la colonia*," bringing music and "messages of encouragement" to Mexican homes. Raphael Gaxiola died in 1945.<sup>257</sup>

So as not to miss out on the growing Spanish-language market, KTAR also began a "Pan-American Hour" in the mid 1940s. The first all-Spanish language station was KIFN, "*La Voz Mexicana*," owned by the Redfield Brothers and established in 1949. That year, José Alvarado, known as *Tío José*, became the program manager for the station. Alvarado, a native of Sonora, Mexico, grew up in Phoenix and graduated from Phoenix Union High School. He received a degree in Education from Arizona State College, then joined the military during World War II. He later served in Korea, but returned to the radio profession. He continued on the radio into the 1980s, and even ran unsuccessfully for the State Legislature.<sup>258</sup>

A significant woman in local radio beginning in the 1950s was Graciela Gil Olivárez, a radio personality and community leader. Olivárez was born in 1928 in Phoenix and raised in Barcelona, Arizona (a community near Ray/Sonora, AZ). As a young woman, she came back to Phoenix in 1944 and attended Lamson Business School. While working as a stenographer and translator, she became familiar with the staff at the KIFN Spanish-language radio station. By 1952, as Phoenix's first female disc jockey, Olivárez directed the women's program at the station. She brought awareness to issues such as poverty and migrant worker living conditions. She soon moved from radio to counseling for the "Careers for Youth" program in Phoenix. In 1965, she became State Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity for Arizona. She entered Notre Dame School of Law, and became the first woman to graduate from this school in 1970. Seven years later, President Jimmy Carter appointed her Director of the Community Service Administration in Washington, D.C., and she served as the highest-ranking Mexican American woman in Carter's Administration. Olivárez held this post until 1980. In the early 1980s, she headed a consulting and public relations organization in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She died in 1987.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 140; *Arizona Republic* "Ayer Hoy," September 16, 2001.

<sup>257</sup> Gaxiola Obituary, *Arizona Republic*, September 24, 1945; Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 140; Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 51. Antonia "Tonita" Carlos Soto was born in New Mexico in 1916.

<sup>258</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 140-142; *En Arizona: Quien es Quien*, 138.

<sup>259</sup> Obituary, "Graciela Olivarez," *Phoenix Gazette*, (September 23, 1987):C-4; Al Martinez, *Rising Voices: Profiles of Hispanic American Lives*, (New York: The New America Library, 1974); Christine Marín, "Graciela Gil Olivarez." IN: *BarrioZona: Bilingual Community Expression*. (Phoenix: Hispanic Institute of Social Issues, 2006); "Graciela Olivárez," IN: *Encyclopedia of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. Edited by Matt S. Meier and Margo Gutierrez (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000), p. 170; "Graciela Olivárez," IN: *Notable Hispanic American Women*. Edited by

## ***Political Involvement and Social Organizations***

The drive for acculturation intensified in the Mexican American community during the period of the Second World War and beyond. The WPA funded civics and English classes in the early 1940s, which were offered at Phoenix College, Immaculate Heart Parochial School, and facilities in Golden Gate, Marcos de Niza, *Cuatro Milpas*, and the Grant Park area. The Friendly House also continued to offer free citizenship and English classes. It assisted in the registration of "foreign born" residents of Phoenix, as mandated in the Alien Registration Act.<sup>260</sup>

In 1946, the East Madison Street Settlement, operated through the Episcopal Church, became the Golden Gate Settlement. The Episcopal Church severed its official role with Madison Street Settlement, and the social service and activity center moved to 17<sup>th</sup> and Grant Streets. It provided recreational and social activities for children. By the 1960s, it operated as a non-denominational organization supported by the Women's Junior League and the United Fund. The Settlement provided kindergarten classes, since Wilson and Skiff Elementary Schools did not offer them. They also held community classes such as sewing, and provided clothing and food to needy families in the area. The Settlement became a major institution in the neighborhood until 1984 when it had to move owing to the relocation of the entire community for the Sky Harbor Center.<sup>261</sup>

Another important community center formed at this time with acculturation programs in mind was the Wesley Community Center. In 1950, a group of local Methodist women volunteers began the Wesley House in the Goodwill Industries Chapel at 9<sup>th</sup> and Sherman Streets in the *El Campito* barrio. It began as a "summer vacation school" for children. Two years later, the Methodist church expanded the mission project and relocated the Wesley House into the areas of the growing barrios bounded by 7<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets, between I-10 and the Maricopa Freeway. The women operated child care services from a small home donated for the project. The church in 1955 purchased five acres and built their first structure, which included a nursery and a community room. Here, residents found child care, and could take classes in sewing, woodworking, and learn the use of modern appliances. A year later the Methodist organization renamed their building as the Wesley Community Center. The Center's social programs expanded in the 1960s. They built a second structure, and would later become involved in local Chicano Movement efforts.<sup>262</sup>

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Diane Telgen and Jim Kamp (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Inc., 1993), p. 300-301. Other KIFN radio personalities were Carlos Montaña, Pedro Moraga, Martin Arce, Ivo Luis Alonso. Pedro Moraga went on to become a prominent radio personality for the "Voice of America," a radio network provided to U.S. troops overseas.

<sup>260</sup> *El Sol*, June 5, 1942; Titcomb, 55.

<sup>261</sup> Rosalía Burriel, interviewed by Pete R. Dimas, April 14, 2006; "Cena A La Mex.," *El Mensajero*, November 10, 1936; "Nueva Iglesia Mexicana," *El Mensajero*, October 17, 1936; East Madison Street Settlement House Board of Directors Meeting, October 9, 1946; East Madison Board Meeting, October 23, 1946, Golden Gate Settlement files, Golden Gate Community Center; "Golden Gate Settlement," *Phoenix Point West*, January 1966.

<sup>262</sup> Wesley Community Center, *200 Dozen or So...: A Celebration of 50 Years, 1950-2000*. (Wesley Community Center Commemorative History and Recipe Book, 2000), *passim*. See City of Phoenix, Department of Aviation, *Sky Harbor – Non-residential Sound Mitigation Feasibility Study* (Jones-Payne Group, 2006), Historic Property Inventory Form NRSMS-066, prepared by David Dean, Athenaeum Public History Group.

Local organizations also provided social services to the community. The Friendly House under Plácida García Smith remained at the forefront in this area. Through her participation in mainstream organizations such as the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Board and the Community Council, Smith kept the Friendly House in touch with city-wide activities and advocated for Hispanic needs. By the 1960s, the Friendly House experienced its first fundamental change since its founding. The war on poverty and the nationwide civil rights movement had a profound affect on social services programs throughout the U.S. The Friendly House began programs for senior citizens, created a social work department, trained women for jobs other than domestic work, and expanded its youth programs. In 1961, the original Friendly House structure was torn down and replaced with new buildings.<sup>263</sup>



Plácida García Smith with Louis Rodriguez, c. 1960.  
 Courtesy of Department of Archives and Special Collections,  
 Hayden Library, Arizona State University.

A number of political and civil rights organizations formed, inspired by wartime unity efforts. As in other states, local organizations and community leaders used the concept of “Pan Americanism” to attack discrimination. Under President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, the concept of Latin American unity, or "*pan-americanismo*," swept the Mexican American community. Pan Americanism emphasized the commonalities shared by all countries of the Americas, maintaining that Latin American culture, values and politics were not inferior to those of the United States. Mayor Red Shupe even proclaimed April 14, 1942 as Pan American Day for Phoenix. The mayor asked businesses, schools, newspapers and radio programs to hold Latin American celebrations and programs. Local Hispanic groups celebrated their link with Mexico and other Latin American countries with patriotic speeches and events, while students at Phoenix Union High School organized a Panamerican Club.<sup>264</sup> Mexican American leaders argued that Pan Americanism should begin at home, calling for the equal treatment of Hispanics. Using the rhetoric of the movement, the Spanish-language newspapers attacked discrimination in Phoenix and around the Valley. In June 1943 the Parks and Recreation Department opened up the park swimming pools for the summer, but designated the University and Coronado Park pools as White only, Grant Park pool as Mexican, and Eastlake Park pool as Black. *El Sol* protested this segregation, saying that it was in conflict with the "spirit of social equality which the . . . Good Neighbor Policy was founded, begun, and nobly and valiantly promoted by the great President Roosevelt."<sup>265</sup>

<sup>263</sup> "Autobiographical Resume: Plácida Elvira García Smith," Arizona Collection, University Libraries, Arizona State University; *Arizona Republic* "Placida García Smith: A Life Lived Through Teaching Self Help" July 24, 1981; newspaper clippings in Friendly House scrapbook, Friendly House records.

<sup>264</sup> Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 248-249; *El Sol*, April 10, 1942.

<sup>265</sup> García, *Mexican Americans*, 269; *El Sol*, June 16, 1943. Black children also patronized the Grant Park pool.

One organization that took advantage of the “Pan American” sentiment was the Committee for Americanization and Inter-American Solidarity (CAIAS), directed by State Representative James Carreón. Established in 1942, this group of local residents wanted to address the "rumor" that a "new industry" (perhaps related to defense, maybe the Goodyear plant) would not hire "persons of Spanish language origin." In a plan presented to Nelson Rockefeller, the director of the Office of Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between American Republics, the Committee employed the rhetoric of the Good Neighbor Policy to demand that "true American unity" be established "right here at home." Holding patriotic activities, the organization promoted Americanization and the "strengthening of bonds of Inter-American friendship."<sup>266</sup>

Phoenix resident, writer and speaker, María García, helped found the Phoenix Council 110 of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in August of 1940. A civil rights organization established in 1929 by middle-class Mexican Americans in Texas, LULAC challenged discrimination, emphasized loyalty to the U.S. and pride in identifying themselves as American citizens, and promoted political involvement. Plácida García Smith held the presidency for LULAC Council #110 for most of 1941, until Pedro Guerrero, a community leader in Mesa, replaced her in November. During its early years, LULAC held meetings at the Friendly House to help with citizenship classes, and held social activities in which city officials and politicians were invited.<sup>267</sup> Another community leader in LULAC was Lowell School teacher Daniel Grijalva.<sup>268</sup>

Active in the community during the early 1940s, María García, who was married to Albert García, an assistant attorney general for Arizona, wrote several articles in *El Mensajero* during 1941. She wrote an advice column aimed at mothers and offered other kinds of information on local organizations helping the community. She also participated in activities outside of the Mexican American community, such as working in the Arizona Voter's League, along with Plácida García Smith and Enriqueta Lewis. In February of 1941 they held a meeting for Spanish-speaking residents, answering questions relating to civic matters and U.S. law. She also served as President of Los Amigos Club in Phoenix. In addition, she attended the Committee to Defend America, Women's Division meetings, which addressed the woman's role in the war. As founder of the Phoenix Council #110, María García announced and described LULAC activities in *El Mensajero*.<sup>269</sup>



Front row, Albert García, María García, and Frank Barrios, c. 1947. Courtesy of Frank Barrios.

<sup>266</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 47-48.

<sup>267</sup> *El Mensajero*, April 14, 1944; August 4, 1940; Titcomb, 54; *El Mensajero*, June 6, 20, 1941.

<sup>268</sup> Rosalía Burriel, interviewed by Pete R. Dimas, April 14, 2006; "Cena A La Mex.," *El Mensajero*, 10 November 1936; "Nueva Iglesia Mexicana," *El Mensajero*, October 17, 1936; East Madison Street Settlement House Board of Directors Meeting, 9 October 1946; East Madison Board Meeting, October 23, 1946; "Golden Gate Settlement," *Phoenix Point West*, January 1966.

<sup>269</sup> "Autobiographical Resume: Plácida Elvira García Smith," Arizona Collection, (CB BIO, SMI PLA), University Libraries, Arizona State University; *Arizona Republic* "Plácida García Smith: A Life Lived Through Teaching Self Help" July 24, 1981; newspaper clippings in Friendly House scrapbook. She even spent some time during 1945 as a social worker at the Japanese "Relocation Center" at Gila River. See Titcomb's thesis for more information on Smith.

An example of an older political organization that continued into the 1940s was the Latin American Club, which by 1949 included 125 Phoenix members, and Adam Diaz held the position of club president. The Club held voter registration drives, formed a Latin American Club Juniors for ages 13 to 18, and supported political candidates who courted their votes. Registration drives focused on teaching Mexican Americans who wished to vote, how to pass the literacy test required under Arizona's Literacy Law, established in 1913. The law required an individual to read a part of the U.S. Constitution in English in order to be eligible to vote. This probably deterred many Hispanics from registering to vote, thus limiting their political voice.<sup>270</sup>

The Latin American Club supported Conrad James Carreón, the first Mexican American Arizona state legislator to represent the Phoenix area.<sup>271</sup> Carreón was born in 1909 and grew up in Tucson. He obtained a business education at the Arizona College of Commerce school in Tucson and became involved in salesmanship and in public relations and active in the Democratic Party. He was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1938 in the 14<sup>th</sup> Legislature. He was elected again in 1940, with the 15<sup>th</sup> Legislature, representing the people of Phoenix and Maricopa County. He continued to represent Maricopa County in the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup> legislatures. Carreón was very active in the Legislature, co-sponsoring a bill in the early 1940s to allow women to serve on juries. He sponsored a tough drunk-driving law in 1955.<sup>272</sup> Throughout his political career, he co-sponsored such laws as the increase in old age assistance benefits; aid to the blind and aid to the crippled and supported the teachers retirement law; firemen's relief and pension law; occupational disease compensation law; and the veteran's preference law relating to employment in all branches of the state's political subdivisions. He died in 1983.<sup>273</sup>

The war's ending also inspired the creation of new groups who would play a significant role in the community. One of the most important was the American Legion Post 41. For some veterans, experiences during war changed their political perspective and prompted social activism. Mexican American men from Phoenix returned from World War II with a sense of unity. They desired to create a social group for Hispanic veterans, as well as to address some of the social problems to which they returned. Like the G.I. Forum founded in Texas and the Unity Leagues in California, Phoenix veterans established the Post, in part, to battle discrimination. Former American Legion Post 41 Commander Ray Martinez recalled that the activities undertaken during the late 1940s were part of a strategic plan to build on the positive sentiment toward servicemen, as a way to gain equality. "When we got out of the service, some of us knew, we had a mission, because we were not going to go back to the discrimination we had suffered before. We knew that was the time, right after the war, everybody had a good feeling, everybody loved the servicemen . . . and [we]

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<sup>270</sup> Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 45-46, 52; Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 153; *Las Voces*, Vol 5, nos. 44-47. This literacy test requirement was not abolished until 1972.

<sup>271</sup> Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 45-46. The first Mexican American state legislator, Representative Gonzales from Springerville, Arizona, dates to the first session of the Arizona Legislature in 1912. The first Mexican American in the Senate was Henry Dalton of Tucson, elected in 1937.

<sup>272</sup> "Veteran of Legislature's 'old school' still ready for a fight." *Arizona Republic*. September 12, 1982.

<sup>273</sup> "Carreón Seeks Return to State Legislature." *Arizona Republic*. September 12, 1982. In 1961, he announced his candidacy for nomination to Congress in District 2. Carreón's political motto in his campaigns became a play of words upon his last name: "Carry On With Carreón." In the end, it was Morris Udall who won the Congressional seat in District 2 by defeating Republican candidate Mac C. Matheson in the general election held in May, 1961. In 1982, Carreón, at the age of 73, ran as an underdog in a predominantly Republican district for the State Senate from District 26 in Phoenix.

thought, well this is the time to make the move." These men formed the Thunderbird American Legion Post 41, as a testament to veterans who, prior to the Civil Rights era, organized for equality and to better the standards of living for themselves and their community.

Ray Martinez and Frank (Pipa) Fuentes established Post 41 in October of 1945. The early members held meetings at La Poblanita, the restaurant owned by the Fuentes, located at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Jefferson Streets. Founded as an alternative to the Luke Greenway Post, Post 41 members rallied around a number of issues during the late 1940s. Martinez, the Post 41 Commander and first Hispanic American Legion Commander for the State of Arizona, became involved in the center of these struggles. In 1946, Martinez and Fuentes helped Tempe Mexican American veterans to campaign for a Chamber of Commerce vote that would desegregate the Tempe Beach pool. Previously, Mexican American residents were allowed into the pool only one day of the week. Due in part to the efforts of Martinez and Danny Rodriguez, of Tempe, the veterans were successful. The second challenge focused on the successful integration of the Cordova Homes in 1946, discussed earlier.<sup>274</sup>



Constructing Post 41, c. 1947.  
Courtesy of Martinez Family

A native of Tempe but a Phoenix resident, Ray Martinez had been involved in many social issues during the mid to late 1940s relating to discrimination and the Mexican American veteran. Prior to 1946, Martinez had been active in the community and working with the youth, particularly at Madison Park, where he coached sports and taught boxing. He set up boxing demonstrations at local resorts to help raise money for sports supplies at the park. In the 1950s, he went on to become Arizona Civil Defense Director, the first Hispanic elected to this position.<sup>275</sup>

Post 41 members tackled pursued other social concerns, and worked toward the establishment of an American Legion Post building. Under the leadership of Martinez, they confronted the Stewart Construction Company about its policy of housing discrimination against Mexican Americans. They also sponsored Grant Park activities for the local children, and in 1947, supported a local boxing team which competed in Arizona. By this time the Post boasted 300 members, and they decided it was time to construct their own building on 2nd Avenue across from Grant Park. After obtaining the lease for the property from the City, the veterans raised money, solicited building materials, and called for volunteer labor for the project. The City Council leased the lot for the building to the Post for one dollar per year.<sup>276</sup>

<sup>274</sup> Reynolds, Jean, "American Legion Post #41," Presented at the 2003 Arizona Historical Convention, Tempe, Arizona.

<sup>275</sup> Norma Martinez Kiermeyer, Personal correspondence with Jean Reynolds, June 25, 2006; Joe Torres, Interview by Dr. Pete R. Dimas, May 8, 2006.

<sup>276</sup> Reynolds, "American Legion Post #41," Presented at the 2003 Arizona Historical Convention.

In March of 1948, the veterans' organization completed their new building. The dedication program includes a quote which reveals their pride and purpose for the new organization: "Ever since it can be remembered, Americans of Spanish speaking ancestry have striven to promote the welfare of our country to uphold and defend its constitution and to fight for it proudly in time of war. It is not intended to drop the battle of Justice, Freedom and Democracy merely because the sound of gunfire has stilled."<sup>277</sup>



Arizona Republic, March 1948



Post 41 dedication ceremony, March 1948, at Grant Park.  
Courtesy of Martinez Family

In 1971, the veterans of Post 41 changed the name of the organization from "Thunderbird" to "Tony F. Soza." Born in 1919 in Phoenix, Soza was inducted into the military in 1944. He went to the Philippine Islands and served admirably at the battle of Luzon, where he saw man-to-man

<sup>277</sup> Dedication pamphlet for American Legion Post 41, March 14, 1948.

combat. For his gallantry, he received the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star. Tony returned to Phoenix after the war and he and his brother joined the American Legion's Thunderbird Post 41. He served on numerous committees, and as a post Commander. Soza served as District Commander of the American Legion District 9 in the years 1962-1964. His work with the State and National Child Welfare Committees brought recognition to Post 41. The post received the "Certificate of Meritorious Service" by the National Child Welfare Commission on March 21, 1970. Soza died five months later. In honor of his service, members renamed Post 41.<sup>278</sup>

That same year Post 41's Women's Auxiliary was formed, providing an example of women's involvement in postwar community activism. Women from the Luke Greenway Post Auxiliary helped Mexican American women to organize. Anita Lewis, the daughter of John and Enriqueta Lewis, was the first president, at the age of 23. Like the women of the Community Service Organization (CSO) in Los Angeles, women involved in the Auxiliary "contributed to the structural survival" of the Post with traditional female skills. Women of the Auxiliary helped organize dances and holiday events, cooked for meetings or activities, decorated meeting spaces, and served food at the Post. They also helped with local park activities, providing transportation for Harmon and Grant Parks girls' softball teams and chaperoning events. Bertha Enriquez, an Auxiliary member, volunteered her time as a chaperone for Grant Park's Campfire Girls.<sup>279</sup>

Auxiliary members also teamed with community members to canvass the neighborhoods to encourage residents to vote for bond issues. In 1948, the Post lobbied the city council to allocate local levy tax funds for improvement of several elementary schools that Mexican American children attended. The city council responded that a bond issue vote would be required to authorize the spending. For a month and a half, the women canvassed during the day and the men helped during the evenings after work. After one failed attempt, the bond issue finally passed the same year and the schools received facility upgrades. Another bond issue during the late 1940s involving money to improve the Grant, Central and Harmon Parks in South Phoenix brought the women out to canvass once more. Again, they were successful in mobilizing the residents to vote, and \$365,000 was appropriated for the parks. These activities are similar to the late 1940s voter registration and neighborhood improvement efforts shared by the women and men of the Los Angeles CSO, as well as the women of LULAC Ladies Councils in El Paso who campaigned and sold poll taxes in support of a mayoral candidate.<sup>280</sup>

The Post also began a well-baby clinic for community members. Dr. Greer, an African American physician, and two women from the Yanez family who were nurses, helped start the clinic. One of them, Clara Yanez, wife of Marcos de Niza Public Housing Project director, Roy Yanez, had served as the first Mexican American County Nurse since 1938. A native of Patagonia, Arizona, she also worked at Father Emmett's well-baby clinic at Santa Monica's Mission in 1936, while a nursing student at St. Joseph's Nursing School. Women of the Post's Auxiliary donated their time to operate the clinic, located in a barrack next to the present-day Post Lounge (it is now part of the

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<sup>278</sup> Edward Soza, "Tony Fimbres Soza: In Memoria." Presentation made at the Soza family reunion held in Tucson, Arizona in 1990, (MM CHSM-344.), Chicano Research Collection, University Libraries, Arizona State University.

<sup>279</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 154-155.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid*, 154-156; A team composed of Henry Montiel, Ernest Carrillo, Adam Diaz, Ray Martinez, Rita Castillo, Anita Ferrá, Carmen Vidosola, Adelina Robledo, and Enriqueta Lewis canvassed the neighborhoods to get residents to vote for the bond issue.

current building). There were few medical services for young children in the neighborhood, so local families were able to get free immunizations. Dr. Greer gathered supplies from Luke Field, and the Yanez sisters recruited other nurses to come and volunteer time at the clinic, while local pharmacies donated medicines. The clinic operated until the early 1950s, when the City closed the operation and opened another clinic in an old fire station at First Avenue and Grant Street. The clinic eventually closed, but the American Legion Post continued to grow, reaching over 900 members by 1950.<sup>281</sup>

In the 1950s, more organizations became active. One example is the Vesta Club, founded in 1954 by teacher Eugene Marín. Marín, born in 1922 in Christmas, Arizona (near town of Hayden), attended Arizona State Teacher's College and received a Bachelors (1948) and Masters in Education (1954). He later received a Doctorate as well. He and his wife Marie settled in Phoenix, where they were both educators. Marín taught in various schools in Phoenix and in California, and later worked in the Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity and in the U.S. Department of Education, among other positions. He and other members of Vesta used the organization to raise college scholarship money for local youths, as well as providing a venue for middle-class Mexican Americans and the college educated to socialize. A 1956 Vesta pamphlet states that club would give an \$800 scholarship to a "worthy Spanish-speaking high school graduate of Arizona," and their motto read, "progress through education." The first members, all college graduates, held meetings at the American Legion Post 41. They held balls and social events to raise money for these scholarships. Some prominent members included Valdemar Cordova, Tony Vincente, and architect Bennie Gonzales.<sup>282</sup>

Mexican Americans also joined multi-racial civil rights and social organizations, including the Community Service Organization (CSO). This organization originated in Chicago as a part of the Industrial Areas Foundation and through the skills of Saul Alinsky and Fred Ross, helped coalesce leadership across the Southwest; perhaps the most famous Mexican American leader associated with the CSO was Yuma-born César Chávez. The CSO operated a chapter in Phoenix from 1952 to 1958, and had committees on citizenship, immigration, neighborhood improvement, voter registrations, civil rights, and a credit union.<sup>283</sup> A few Hispanics also became members of the Phoenix Civic Council for Civic Unity and the Phoenix All American Council for Equality.<sup>284</sup>

As organizations promoting and addressing the needs of the Hispanic community flourished, individual community members opened doors to political change in Phoenix. Fourteen years after the first Hispanic legislator to represent Maricopa County entered the State Capitol, in 1954 the first Mexican American from Phoenix sat at the dais with the Phoenix City Council. Adam Diaz, a resident of the Grant Park area, with a home at 1313 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, began his community service in the 1930s and 1940s. He joined the Latin American Club, the Spanish American Club, and worked

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<sup>281</sup> Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 22-23; Clara Valenzuela Yanez, Interview by Jean Reynolds, 8 September 1999.

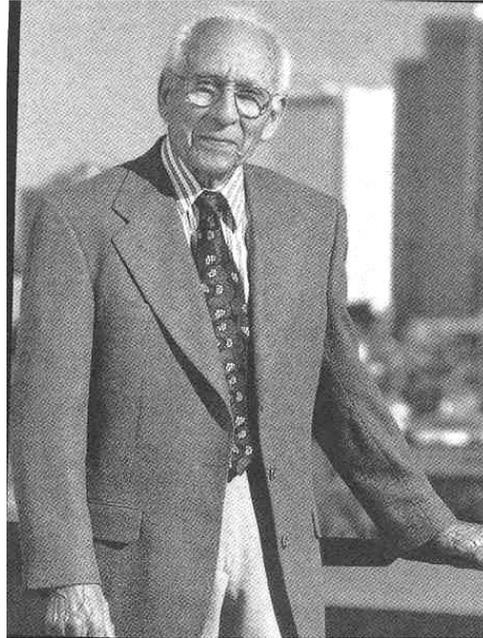
<sup>282</sup> Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 52; "Vesta Club Inc." pamphlet, 1956; Another social organization oriented toward bettering the youth was the Los Amigos Club, which formed in 1948 after a young Mexican American teen was shot by police when he was caught stealing. This group, consisting of men and women from the community as well as Anglo judges, juvenile justice attorneys, and the Phoenix police chief, worked to create a job training night school for youth who were potential juvenile delinquents. From *Las Voces*, 1949, Vol. 5, no. 44-47, p. 13.

<sup>283</sup> Manuel Peña, "The Mexican American in Phoenix," in *To Secure These Rights* pamphlet, (n.p., 1961).

<sup>284</sup> Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 53-54.

with Plácida Garcia Smith, director of the Friendly House. He headed the Lowell-Grant School Neighborhood Council and raised money for children who wished to attend high school but could not afford the books and uniforms. He joined the fledgling American Legion Post 41, and served as the president of the Friendly House Board in 1948.<sup>285</sup>

Diaz went on to become involved in the new charter government of the late 1940s. The Charter Government Committee (CGC) formed as a political organization that stressed themes of “ ‘good government’ and an emphasis on economical and businesslike municipal administration.” The CGC included prominent businessmen and professionals who selected and financed individuals to run on the Charter Government ticket each municipal election. The selection committee looked for individuals who had been active in community service, and who sympathized with the intent of the city charter revisions. Affluent business and professional people with good records of voluntary civic service usually were the only persons endorsed for municipal election by the CGC. The 1949 City Council slate included such names as Nicholas Udall, Barry Goldwater, and Harry Rosenzweig. That year Charter Government Committee candidates organized a rally at Lowell School to encourage Spanish-speaking citizens in south Phoenix to vote for the Charter ticket. Mayoral candidate Udall often spoke with Mexican American residents in their homes. Voters in the south Phoenix



Adam Diaz, c.1995.  
Photo from *Profiles of Achievement*.

precincts responded, helping to elect the Charter Government ticket. Several years later, the Charter Government Committee convinced community leader Adam Diaz to join the slate for the 1954 election. Adam recalls, “I was asked by the...Charter Government group...to run for City Council.... I said it’s a little early—Hispanics are not considered material for political office like that [by Anglos]. So they said, no, we’d like you to run. We think you would draw a lot of people because you are involved with so many organizations.”<sup>286</sup>

Diaz gained visibility to local politicians due to his job at the Luhrs Building and his friendship with George Luhrs. He also was a member of American Legion Post 41, an organization that by this time had made an outspoken push for social equality, and that was becoming a voting force of which CGC members were taking notice. In fact, Barry Goldwater, one of the CGC originals, obtained a lifetime membership with Post 41. Diaz also was a proven community leader, well-respected and admired for his generosity and service. In November of 1953, Phoenix voters elected Diaz along with other CGC candidates to serve on the City Council in 1954 and 1955. As councilman, Diaz helped address social issues that affected the community, and most importantly,

<sup>285</sup> Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 7.

<sup>286</sup> Konig, “Metropolis Status: Charter Government and the Rise of Phoenix, Arizona,” 52-69; Adam Diaz, Interview by Jean Reynolds, 21 February 1999.

opened the door for future Mexican American councilmen. He ended his term on the Council in 1955, and Valdemar Cordova, who will be discussed later, followed him onto the Council.<sup>287</sup>

Diaz continued to be a community developer for many years after his time on the Council. In the 1950s, he helped form Phoenix's Vesta club. Diaz also helped found Leadership and Education for the Advancement of Phoenix (LEAP), served on a variety of boards including the Urban League, the Friendly House, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and Chicanos Por La Causa. While at the Friendly House, he worked to raise \$10,000 for a new building, as the old one was deteriorating rapidly. His job with the Luhrs properties lasted for 38 years, as he rose from elevator operator to manager. He pushed for education in his community, and was known for his kindness and willingness to help the community. In 1964, he earned the "Phoenix Sertoma Club's Service to Mankind Award," and in 1977, he received the first "Plácida Smith" Award for his service to the Friendly House. Diaz was inducted as an Arizona Historical Society "Arizona History Maker" in 1999.<sup>288</sup>

## Health Care

The 1940s also brought a change to the kind of health care services provided to the barrios south of the railroad tracks. In previous years, families relied on home remedies, local doctor visits, and an occasional trip to a hospital many miles from their homes. Many families received services from local African American doctors such as Dr. Winston Hackett at the Booker T. Washington Hospital, and in the 1940s, two Hispanic doctors practiced in Phoenix. These included Dr. A.G. Valle del Lugo and Dr. Alberto Alvarez, whose offices changed location frequently. Dr. Lugo lived on south 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in the Grant Park neighborhood.<sup>289</sup> County health officials offered services as well, and volunteer clinics provided some aid. When Memorial Hospital opened (originally St. Monica's Hospital), it brought an important social organization and institution to the barrio.

The origins of St. Monica's Hospital began with a small maternity clinic, opened by Father Emmett McLoughlin in an old barbershop next to St. Monica's Mission. Registered nurses and hospital interns offered free services to women in the neighborhood. Some of these women were from the St. Joseph's Nursing School. One of these students, Clara Yanez, the wife of the Marcos de Niza Housing Project manager, worked at the clinic at St. Monica's Mission in 1936. "We went over there to help the doctors deliver the babies. You know, prepare the room and everything for the doctors, and help with delivering the babies . . . it was mostly Blacks and Mexicans [who came to the clinic]."<sup>290</sup>

In the early 1940s, the board of St. Monica's Community Center began planning for a 50-room hospital. Partially due to the wartime need for more hospital facilities for soldiers coming through

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<sup>287</sup> Phoenix City Council History, City Clerk's Office, City of Phoenix;

<sup>288</sup> Carol Sowers, "Friendly House: Adam Diaz remembers when," *Arizona Republic*, 22 April 1977; Bud Lanker, "Private War On Poverty Waged by Phoenix Man," *Arizona Republic*, 1 February 1964; Edythe Jensen, "This is a story about Adam Diaz," *Phoenix Gazette*, 8 November 1980; Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 7.

<sup>289</sup> These doctors advertised in the Spanish-language newspapers. In 1935 *El Mensajero* noted that Dr. W.C. Hackett provided maternity and delivery services to Mexican women.

<sup>290</sup> Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 18.

Phoenix or stationed around the Valley, the federal government approved and provided some funding for the construction of the hospital in 1942. Through barbecues, bazaars, newspaper subscriptions and personal donations, community residents and other interested individuals raised \$9,000 to purchase a 14-acre cotton field south of Buckeye Road and west of 7th Avenue. St. Monica's Hospital was completed in February of 1944. St. Monica's Nursing School opened in October 1944, the first interracial nursing school west of the Mississippi. Anglo, Mexican American, African American, Native American and Asian American young women began training there.<sup>291</sup>

St. Monica's hospital provided care for the poor living south of downtown Phoenix, as well as jobs for young Mexican American women as nurses or as service workers. Some members of the community appreciated the effort, while others did not want to be in the same hospital with African Americans. This group, supported by *El Mensajero*, circulated a petition asking that \$450,000 appropriated by the federal government for the building of St. Monica's be divided and two hospitals built, one for the "people of color" and one as a Mexican clinic and hospital. *El Sol*, the rival newspaper, responded to this group by commenting, "We believe that in these tragic hours in which we live, the Mexicans should do constructive work . . . that shows our respect and cooperation with the government, institutions, and people of the United States."<sup>292</sup> In the fall of 1946, Dr. Trevor Browne expanded the maternity clinic to include an outpatient children's clinic. Hospital auxiliary members staffed the clinic which provided check-ups for school children. In 1948, Father Emmett left the priesthood but remained superintendent of the hospital. In 1949, St. Monica's changed its name to Memorial Hospital in honor of World War II veterans.<sup>293</sup>

## ***Religion***

As demonstrated by the growth of an important hospital from a small Catholic chapel on south 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the church continued to play an important role in the Hispanic community during the 1940s and 1950s. During World War II, community members often took part in home front activities in their churches, especially at Immaculate Heart Church. Women joined sewing projects headed by the Immaculate Heart Sisters. Pre-Lenten novena rituals at Immaculate Heart included prayers for world peace, and parishioners placed American, Mexican, and Papal flags in a "place of honor" for those in the armed services. In 1944, women created an altar to the Virgen de Guadalupe, placing a silk banner over it bearing the names of fallen soldiers. The women brought flower *ofrendas* for the altar. "The church was filled every night of the novena and hundreds of photographs of parish soldiers were placed around the holy crucifix. Over three-hundred candles were lit day and night in prayer for the soldiers and over nine-hundred persons received communion in the final night of the novena."<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Dean and Reynolds, *African American Historic Property Survey*, 53-54.

<sup>292</sup> *El Sol*, August 21, 1942; *El Mensajero*, August 21, 1942.

<sup>293</sup> Reynolds, *Grant Park*, 18.

<sup>294</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 135, 148-150.



St. Anthony's Church, dedication April 18, 1948.  
Photo courtesy Phoenix Catholic Diocese.

On the west side and south of the railroad tracks, the little St. Anthony's Chapel moved to a new structure, located on south 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, in 1944. Under Claretian priest Father Bandres, the community built a small structure, later called the "Hall Church." Once this church was constructed, the community began to work on raising money to build a larger and more elaborate building. Between 1946 and 1948, parishioners donated money towards the tiles and bricks. Local architects Lescher and Mahoney designed the new St. Anthony's, based on a church in Spain.

On April 18, 1948, parishioners gathered to celebrate the dedication of the new St. Anthony's, built on top of the "Hall Church," which is now a social hall. The church, located at 909 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, seated 480 people, and the parish extended from 7<sup>th</sup> Street to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Buchanan Street to the Salt River. Eight years later, the church established the new rectory, with Father Leo Labrador at the helm.<sup>295</sup>

West of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, St. Anthony's began a small mission church, Our Lady of Fatima, in the mid 1950s on south 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The mission began under the leadership of Father Terrance Sheridan, a Franciscan priest from Ireland. Father Sheridan moved to another parish in 1959, and new priests arrived every four years to the small church. Our Lady of Fatima provided services and catechism classes for families who were not members of other Catholic churches in the nearby barrios. The church members added a social hall to the rear of the building in the early 1960s.<sup>296</sup>

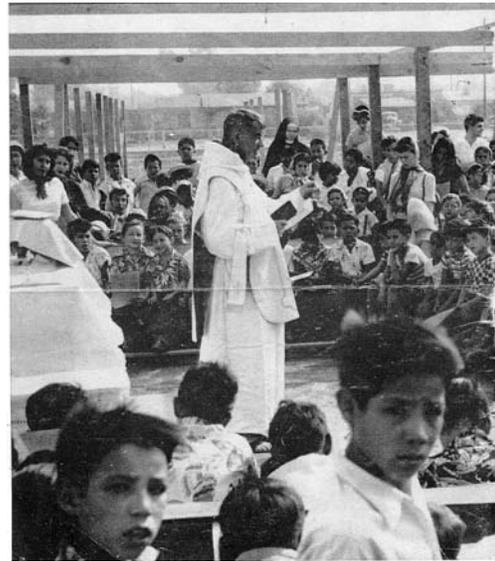
On the east side, efforts to establish a Catholic church in Golden Gate began in 1938, but World War II soon turned residents' attention to the war effort. These community efforts coincided with the establishment of St. Mark's Parish under the Franciscans on March 2, 1946. St. Mark's began with a recycled prisoner of war barrack at 17<sup>th</sup> and Grant Streets on October 12, 1947. St. Mark's boundaries encompassed an area bounded by roughly 16<sup>th</sup> Street to 48<sup>th</sup> Street, Roosevelt to Harrison Streets. In 1950, St. Mark's decided to move the church to the north of the railroad tracks to 26<sup>th</sup> and Adams Streets, while maintaining Golden Gate and the surrounding barrios as part of St. Mark's. The leadership intended to leave the care for the Corazón chapel to the Spanish speaking Claretians of Immaculate Heart. With the move completed in 1952, Golden Gate residents, having raised funds for years for their church through their *jamaicas*, felt betrayed that St.

<sup>295</sup> St. Anthony's Church Dedication Pamphlet, (n.p., 1948); St. Anthony's Church Dedication Pamphlet for the rectory, (n.p., 1956).

<sup>296</sup> Rita Ruiz, long-time church member, Telephone interview by Jean Reynolds, September 20, 2006. Ruiz indicated Our Lady of Fatima was started in 1954 or 1955 as a mission of St. Anthony's Church. The first priest, Father Terrence Sheridan, a Franciscan, apparently lived at St. Monica's for a while. There is an addition to the church on the back, a social hall, which was built between 1960 and 1962. The church is at 1418 S. 17th Avenue. The first city directory listing for the church is 1958. 1957 aerial photos show only a small residential structure that may have held the first meetings.

Mark's would leave for the more Anglo part of town. At this time, a group of Catholic volunteer workers known as the Sacred Heart Workers from St. Francis Xavier and St. Mary's, including William P. Mahoney, Jr., recruited Father Albert Braun, OFM, to come to Golden Gate. Father Braun, a World War I & II hero and chaplain with a national reputation in veterans and Catholic circles, immediately set to work to prove that he would not leave. He gave his first mass on 10 August 1952. He would say mass under a ramada, another barrack, and, by 1954, he would get permission to build Sacred Heart Church. He worked within the neighborhood and through his role as chaplain for American Legion Post 41 to mobilize support for the new church.<sup>297</sup>

Members of the community began constructing the Sacred Heart Church through volunteer labor. The Sacred Heart Church building, however, was in use before it was even completed. Church records show the first baptism at Sacred Heart Church took place on April 4, 1954. Rosalía Burriel remembers mass being held inside the building before the roof was in place and being the first one to be married in Sacred Heart in March 1956, before the front of the church was completed. The church was dedicated in October of 1956. The community also built a parish center and parochial school. Father Braun helped the neighborhoods near the church get paved streets, sidewalks, sewers, street lights, and city water. The church also formed its own St. Vincent de Paul Society and youth services organization. The church was the center of an involved community — a product of its synergy between Father Braun's community building, the activism of Post 41 members, and the vibrant Golden Gate neighborhood that brought the accoutrements of city life to the neighborhoods. The church would continue to be active in the community in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>298</sup>



Father Albert Braun giving mass, c.1954.  
Courtesy of Tony Valenzuela.

Before the Sacred Heart Church was completed, other small Catholic chapels were built close to and by the people in the surrounding barrios, all of which would ultimately make up Sacred Heart Parish. For example, Father Braun organized St. John the Baptist, located on 18<sup>th</sup> and Magnolia Streets, in March of 1954. A few months later, community members in *Cuatro Milpas* formed the St. Mary Magdalene Church at 11<sup>th</sup> and Hilton Streets. By September of 1962, Sacred Heart received status as parish separate from St. Mark's.<sup>299</sup>

The last church to be established in the Sacred Heart Parish was the Santa Rita Chapel, completed in *El Campito* Barrio in 1956 at 900 S. 9<sup>th</sup> Way. *El Campito* resident Martin Palomo helped organize

<sup>297</sup> Reverend John Kouba, "The First Forty Years," unpublished manuscript, Phoenix Diocese Archives; St. Joseph's Parish Committee Report, St. Mary's Church, December 4, 1950; "The First Forty Years" by Rev. John Kouba, SDS (revised by Rev. Chad Puthoff, SDS), both documents in the St. Mark's File, Archives, Diocese of Phoenix.

<sup>298</sup> Dimas, 64–84 *passim*; Annie M. Conway, Sacred Heart Parish Life Coordinator, letter to Pete R. Dimas, December 15, 2005; Burriel interview.

<sup>299</sup> Pete R. Dimas, *Progress and a Mexican American Community's Struggle*, 129, 78.

and recruit volunteers to build the little chapel, and later headed a chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul organization through the church. Father Frank Isidore Yoldi, native of Phoenix, member of the long-time Moler family, and associate pastor of the Sacred Heart Parish, provided services to the Chapel. By 1959, the church included a parochial school and a convent house for the nuns who taught at the school. The Santa Rita Center [Hall] at 10<sup>th</sup> and Hadley Streets, famous for the 1972 César Chávez fast and recall effort against Governor Jack Williams, was constructed in 1957 to provide catechism classes. The Sacred Heart Church provided this building to residents as a community hall.<sup>300</sup>

Golden Gate ceased to exist as a neighborhood as a result of the removal of barrio residents to make room for the expansion of the Sky Harbor International Airport. December 29, 1985 marked the last regular mass at Sacred Heart Church in Golden Gate, and therefore the demise of the neighborhood. Sacred Heart Parish however, continued to exist. Neighborhoods to the west of Sky Harbor Center—*El Campito*, *Cuatro Milpas*, and Green Valley (later known collectively as *Nuestro Barrio*, and finally as *Barrios Unidos*)—remained part of Sacred Heart Parish. A new Sacred Heart Church was built on part of the old site of the Rodeo Drive-In Theater in *Cuatro Milpas* in the late 1980s.<sup>301</sup>

South of the Salt River, St. Catherine's Church began in 1947 under Father George Feeney, and the parish established an elementary school in 1949. The church and school are located at 6409 S. Central Avenue. Residents in the area during the 1950s remember that this church was attended mainly by Anglo parishioners and that it did not change to a mainly Hispanic church until the 1970s.<sup>302</sup> On the north side of the city, another chapel, Santa Rosa de Lima Chapel was located at 1901 W. Ocotillo Road, two blocks west of 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue, in the Santa Rosa barrio. The church was built in 1954, as a mission out of the St. Simon and Jude Church. Father Braun of Sacred Heart Church was the priest who provided the first services. The church began in a barracks structure purchased from Luke Field by Father Gordon of St. Gregory's Church. Father Smith of St. Simon and Jude helped build the chapel. Father Philip Maldonado, who taught Spanish at St. Mary's Elementary School, later provided services to the parishioners. The church operated from 1954 to 1994. Social service agency Chicanos Por La Causa later took over the property and created a service center to provide for the elderly and other needs. It is now the Santa Rosa Senior Center.<sup>303</sup>

Mexican Protestant Churches also grew during the 1940s and the 1950s, but did not have the same impact on the local Mexican American community's development as did significant Catholic churches discussed in this study. Across the Southwest, Protestant sects were expanding missions into the Spanish-speaking community at this time, but the number of Mexican Americans choosing Protestantism over Catholicism remained relatively small. According to one study, in the 1960s only three percent of Mexican Americans in the U.S. joined Protestant congregations. One early member of Betania Presbyterian recalled that in the 1930s and 1940s, her congregation consisted of

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<sup>300</sup> Julia Peña AAHPS Survey; "Chicanos Por La Causa, 1969," (O-43.1), Chicano Research Collection, University Libraries, Arizona State University.

<sup>301</sup> Dimas, 111–12; *Recuerdos*, 2–34.

<sup>302</sup> Personal communication with Frank Garcia, by Frank Barrios, July 10, 2006; and with Mrs. Jimmie Munoz, July 12, 2006. Garcia moved to South Phoenix in the early 1950s. His family initially attended St. Anthony's Church. Munoz, who lived in the area in the late 1950s, attended Immaculate Heart, and later came to St. Catherine's in the 1970s.

<sup>303</sup> Jean Marsteller HHPS Survey; *Diocese of Phoenix Roman Catholic Church Directory*, Phoenix Diocese Archives.

only about 100 individuals. Yet these little churches grew in the barrios. According to Phoenix city directories in 1939, only seven Protestant Churches identified as ministering to the Spanish-speaking existed. By 1945, the number had grown to 13 churches, encompassing the Baptist, Episcopal, Evangelical, Methodist, Presbyterian, 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist, Apostolic, and Assembly of God denominations, as well as a Salvation Army mission. This number remained steady until 1960, although the names, denominations, and locations of the churches listed in the city directories changed many times. Other small churches not identified as “Mexican” began in the 1950s in the location of present-day barrios as well, and may have served a racially mixed congregation or did not identify as “Mexican.” One example is the Southside Assembly of God, founded in 1944. The church was built in 1954 at 1717 S. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, in the *Cuatro Milpas* area. This church may have primarily served the Anglo residents living in the area that had formerly been racially restricted. In 1960, only the *Primera Iglesia Mexicana Baptista* (First Mexican Baptist), Betania Presbyterian, the Mexican Seventh Day Adventist Church, and the *Primera Iglesia Metodista Unida* (First Mexican Methodist) churches remained of the Protestant churches formed prior to 1930.<sup>304</sup>

### ***Education***

In the 1940s and 1950s, Mexican American children attended the schools which had been established in the previous decades. In the mid-1940s, Daniel Grijalva, a well-known and popular teacher at the school, and an important member of the Phoenix chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens League (LULAC), lived on south 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in a 1909 neoclassical-styled building known today as the Thomas House, which was moved to Historic Heritage Square in the 1980s to save the home from demolition. A few new schools opened, including the Adeline Gray School, named after the first known Anglo woman to settle permanently in Phoenix. This school first held classes in 1952 on Durango Street. Another new school was South Mountain High School, built in 1954. Students from south Phoenix finally had a high school of their own. Carl Hayden High School, built in 1957, also included Hispanic students. In fact, Silvestre Herrera Jr., son of the World War II hero, was elected the first student body president.<sup>305</sup>

De facto school segregation continued during and after World War II around the Valley, and some Phoenix schools remained largely Hispanic based on their locations. This changed in the early 1950s with a legal case in Tolleson. In the late 1940s, the west Valley town of Tolleson was primarily a rural and agricultural area. White residents and Hispanics lived in different areas of the town, with seasonal migrant workers moving in and out of the area. The Tolleson School District segregated Mexican and Anglo children into separate schools, with the exception of a few students. Anglo students attended the more modern Unit #1 building, while Hispanic students were taught in the older, dilapidated Unit #2 building. In 1947, Manuel “Lito” Peña and a few Mexican Americans in Tolleson, angry about the situation, led an unsuccessful voter registration drive in an effort to remove Kenneth Dyer as Principal from the Tolleson Elementary School.

In 1950, a group of Mexican Americans in Tolleson formed a Committee to challenge the segregation, arguing that the Mexican children received a poorer quality education and lacked adequate facilities. Tempe native Ralph Estrada, a local lawyer and active in the *Alianza Hispano*

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<sup>304</sup> Phoenix City Directories, 1939-1960; Scott Solliday, *Additional Historic Property Survey Work for Community Noise Reduction Program*, June 2006, Phoenix Historic Preservation Office, 4-5; Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 99.

<sup>305</sup> *Bicentennial Commemorative History of the Phoenix Union High School System*, 24, 57.

*Americana*, agreed to serve as counsel for this group. The Committee filed their suit in 1952 against the Tolleson School District in the Arizona District of the Federal Court. Ross Sheeley served as Superintendent and Kenneth Dyer was Principal. Greg Garcia, a Phoenix attorney and president of the *Alianza Hispano Americana*, joined in support of the Committee, as did Al Wirin, a Los Angeles lawyer who was Chief Council for the American Jewish Council. Manuel Peña, future state senator offered testimony regarding the inequality of the buildings.

The Committee attacked the case of segregation by arguing that the inequities of accommodation were a violation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and that Arizona statutes permitting segregation applied only to African Americans. The Committee demanded the right to choose what school their child would attend. Representatives for the school district defended the separation based on “language barriers.” The Committee challenged this argument by showing evidence that no tests had ever been conducted to see if the Mexican students indeed were “deficient” in English. They said that students of all races should be together in one school which would help achieve assimilation.

In 1955, Judge David Ling ruled that the School District had violated the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and that segregating students in Tolleson was illegal. This case prompted other Arizona groups to challenge segregation, such as the 1955 *Ortiz v. Jack* case, which desegregated Glendale. The *Gonzalez v. Sheeley* case was also significant as among the first cases in the Southwest securing basic civil liberties for all Mexican Americans. The most famous desegregation case in the country, *Brown v. the Board of Education* in 1954, used the Tolleson case as reasoning in the argument for a national law against segregation.<sup>306</sup>

By the end of 1954, local elementary schools in Phoenix were officially desegregated, and in central and south Phoenix, Hispanic children mingled with Anglo and African American children in their classes. South of the Salt River, the Roosevelt School District re-divided its school system along geographical lines, ending the legal segregation of African American students. Near the Grant Park area, children began attending the formerly all-Black school, Dunbar Elementary. Other segregated Black schools closed.<sup>307</sup>

### ***Recreation and Leisure***

In the 1940s and 1950s local parks continued to be important places of recreation for Hispanics. For example, at Grant Park, recreational director Laura Clelland developed a series of classes in Spanish dance, and formed an "authentically costumed" dance troupe. They performed at military camps and community gatherings. Clelland started working at the park in 1935. She began her programs with a boys and girls club, started sports teams, and helped their produce their own plays. She also began the community's first weekly night programs of "music, dancing, chorus groups, orchestras, community singing, amateur contests, aquatic pageants and native dances." Grant Park also sponsored an arts and crafts program where children learned plaster casting, and adults learned leather tooling, metal work, and costume making. In the late 1930s, Clelland lobbied for new lighting, grass, and a fence around the pool.

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<sup>306</sup> Arizona Historical Society “Desert Cities” exhibit files; Similar cases were tried in California and Texas prior to the Tolleson case.

<sup>307</sup> “Good Old fashioned school days,” *Phoenix Magazine*, December 1974; Dean, 76.

During World War II, she began a pre-school nursery for women who needed to work. Under the guidance of Clelland, the teenagers who patronized Grant Park published a small newsletter from 1946 to 1948, entitled *The Grant Park Weekly Tribune*. In addition to circulating the newsletter among the neighborhood, the park staff also mailed it to servicemen abroad. In one issue, the newsletter proudly noted that Grant Park was the “only park [in Phoenix] having its own paper, for the publishing of its own news and teen-age, hip-talk, which is published on a year-round basis.” In 1948, the Post 41 and the Women's Auxiliary awarded senior park director Laura Clelland with the "Lady of the Year Award" for her community work. Three years later, she pushed for the construction of a new building at the park, funded by a bond issue, which included an auditorium, stage, kitchen, and offices. She worked at the park until the 1960s.<sup>308</sup>

Across from the Grant Park, the American Legion Post 41, once opened in 1948, functioned as a community venue to hold regular dances, wedding receptions, and other community events. It continues this function to the present day. In the Golden Gate barrio, Berney Park became a significant recreation site for residents. Located on 20<sup>th</sup> and Lincoln Streets, the park



The Olympics softball team from Grant Park, c. 1935.  
Mary López Garcia is second from the left in the top row.  
Courtesy of Garcia Family.

developed through the efforts of Leo Berney, a Jewish resident in the area since 1939. He organized a baseball team for local children, and they played games on an empty lot. Seeing the need for a community park, Leo requested funds from the County Board of Supervisors. When they refused, Berney found a 5-acre plot belonging to another Jewish family in the area that he could rent for a year. In May of 1945, the County purchased the parcel of land and officially named the site “Berney Park.” Several other groups helped improve the park, such as the “Breakfast Club,” a women’s organization which raised money for the installation of a cement slab for tennis and basketball. Berney secured an old building from St. Luke’s Hospital for a recreation center. He formed eight baseball teams, which competed in several leagues. Twelve years after Berney died in 1947, the park transferred into the City’s system.<sup>309</sup>

Dances continued to be a very popular pastime. The Riverside Ballroom was one of the favorite places to gather during the 1940s and 1950s. Here, Mexican Americans danced, socialized, and many met their future spouses. During the fifties, admission to the big, round, wood frame ballroom to hear the house band, the Pete Bugarín Orchestra, cost only fifty cents. As in the 1930s, Mexican American patrons could only attend Sunday night dances. In November of 1943, *El Sol* protested when two young, Mexican American women were turned away by the door men after they attempted to attend a non-Mexican night dance with two Anglo soldiers. The editor of

<sup>308</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 139; Ralph Mahoney, “Guardian of Grant Park, *Arizona Days and Ways*, 5 April 1959.

<sup>309</sup> Phoenix Historic Preservation Office City Parks file; “A Short Biography of Leo S. Berney.” Arizona Jewish Historical Foundation.

*El Sol*, and the father of the two girls, Jose Loza, both wrote letters of protest to the Mexican Consulate, who, in turn, wrote letters to Buster Fite, manager of the Riverside dance hall, and Governor Sidney Osborn. The next week, Buster Fite issued an apology to the girls.<sup>310</sup>



Inside the Calderon Ballroom, c. 1955. Leonardo Calderon is front row, third person from the right. The photo includes radio announcer Hector Ledesma and the band Mariachi Alma Jaliciense. Courtesy of Calderon Family.

Another dance hall, the Calderon Ballroom, brought in Mexican American bands as well as African American performers. Leonardo Calderon, a native of Ray, Arizona, grew up in Phoenix, and began his career selling tires for the B.F. Goodrich Company. In 1946, the Calderon family opened an auto parts and hardware store, located at the northeast corner of 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Buckeye Road in the Golden Gate area. They changed the focus of their business when they converted the store into the Calderon Ballroom in 1949, and advertised a dance floor, bar, and family restaurant. Although his entertainment business was a success, Calderon continued his day job as a tires salesman. Some time later, he added “Nano’s,” a popular bar operated by his son. The Flamingos, led by Frank Romero (a planner for the City of Phoenix) was one popular band that performed in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>311</sup>

After Pete Bugarín left KOY in 1936, he continued his career as a musician. He and his orchestra played at the Riverside Ballroom for 25 years, and recorded at least one album. Music historian Manuel H. Peña notes that Bugarín’s music represented a unique mixture of Tejano, California orchestra music, and jazz which were played in the region at the time. He recalls, “We started out, most of us just kids, playing in little dance halls around Phoenix — the Plantation at 24<sup>th</sup> Street and Washington, the Frolic at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Van Buren, the Cinderella at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Adams, and finally the Riverside. In 1950, we became the Riverside’s house band, and we played between sets when the big name bands came through on tour, usually on Thursday or Friday night.” Some members of his 12-piece band included vocalist Molly Cota, trumpeter Bill Scott, drummer Joe Gonzales, and bassist Chapito Chavarría. Bugarin took his band on the road and they traveled the “taco circuit,” the Mexican American



Pete Bugarín (middle) and his band, c. 1950. Courtesy of Torres Family.

<sup>310</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 144; Arizona Historical Society “Desert Cities” exhibit files.

<sup>311</sup> “Saturday night at Calderon Ballroom,” *Arizona Republic*, February 4, 1973, *Arizona Republic* July 30, 1995; *En Arizona, Quien es Quien: In Arizona, Who’s Who*. (Phoenix: Fiesta Productions, 1983), 187.

orchestra band tour through the Southwest and Midwest. Bugarín worked at and eventually leased the Riverside until it burned down in the 1970s. He also worked as a teacher, an accountant, and owner of La Piñata Restaurant at 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Osborn Road in his later years. He was active in Chicanos Por La Causa, LULAC and the VESTA club. Pete Bugarín passed away in 2004.<sup>312</sup>

Another local musician connected to the Riverside and Calderon Ballrooms is Ralph “Chapito” Chavarría. Chavarría was born in 1914 in Solomonsville, but grew up in Tempe. When he was eight years old, his father organized the popular Pablito Chavarría Orchestra, which performed into the 1940s. Chavarría began playing the violin in his father’s band in 1923. After returning from World War II, he played with other musicians such as Pete Bugarín and Chavio Dominguez, before forming his own band in 1963. As a young married man, Chavarría and his family moved into the Marcos de Niza housing project but relocated to South Phoenix in the late 1950s. During the post war years, he worked in maintenance at the Matthew Henson Project during the week and then played music on the weekends.<sup>313</sup>

Mexican Americans also continued to patronize local movie theaters. In September 1944, Walter Greg, the manager of the Rex Theater, opened a new venue called the Azteca Theater, located on Third and Washington Streets. The theater was built on the site of the former Star Theater. Local architectural firm Lescher and Mahoney designed this building. The green painted structure seated 855 patrons. The Azteca showed Mexican movies during the week and Westerns on the weekends. Mexican stars also appeared on stage at the theater.<sup>314</sup> The older Rex Theater continued to bring in Mexican-centered entertainment, such as performances by actress and singer Reina Velez, the sister of film star Lupe Velez, as well as Lalo Guerrero, a Tucson-born musician and composer known on both sides of the border for his versatility, talent, and often satirical songs.<sup>315</sup>



Azteca Theater, 1944.  
Courtesy of Tang Family.

<sup>312</sup> *Arizona Republic* July 30, 1995, *Arizona Republic*, February 19, 2004; Vega, *Profiles in Achievement*, 11; Manuel Peña, *The Mexican American Orchestra* (Austin: University of Texas, year), 188-194.

<sup>313</sup> Chapito Chavarría, Interview by Jean Reynolds. August 23, 2003. Phoenix, AZ. Tape recording. Other well-known musicians includes the Ray Andrade Band, which played ballroom music around the Valley. Another musician (and KIFN radio announcer) was Luis Estrada, who was a vocalist with the Pedro Chavez Orchestra and the Pete Bugarin Orchestra.

<sup>314</sup> Jerry Reynolds, *Golden Years of Theater*, 102-103.

<sup>315</sup> Reynolds, *We Made Our Life*, 143. The term “Pachuco” refers to a Mexican American subculture with origins in Los Angeles, when young men wore zoot suits and young women dressed in outlandish styles.

Another new movie theater was the “Rio,” built in 1948 by theater magnates Joe Richards and Harry Nace south of the river, at 4212 S. Central Avenue. The theater seated 800. When it opened, the theater only charged admission of \$1.00 per family. The theater closed in the 1950s due to competition with the Silver Dollar Drive-In Theater on Central Avenue next to the canal north of Baseline Road, and later became a shoe store. Drive-in movie theaters became popular in the 1950s as an extension of automobile oriented American culture. Many drive-ins opened around the Phoenix area, and a few were located near Mexican American barrios, such as the Rodeo at 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Buckeye Road, on the site of the former Grijalva family dairy. Located in the *Cuatro Milpas* neighborhood, residents could sit in their yards or on their rooftops to watch the movies on the big screen. Opened some time in the 1950s, the Acres and Peso Drive-Ins (back to back screens) were located at 3720 W. Van Buren Street. The Peso screen showed Spanish-language movies, and kids often snuck between movie screens to watch the Mexican and American films in one night.<sup>316</sup>



Interior of Azteca Theater, c. 1947.  
Photo from *Las Voces* newspaper.

A final venue that gained popularity with the Mexican community was the Madison Square Garden, a place to watch boxing, wrestling and other kinds of entertainment. Built in 1929 at 120 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue by William Lentz, Madison Square Garden opened to a flood of boxing and wrestling fans. Many local and national athletes competed in this arena. During the 1930s, Mexican American residents most likely attended the venue along with other racial groups to watch boxing, but it wasn't until the late 1940s, that boxers of Mexican descent entered the ring. In the next decade, the national Golden Gloves competition drew in young Hispanic men to the venue to compete in tournaments. In fact, American Legion Post 41 sponsored young boxers that won Arizona and regional championships in 1947. Along with boxing, during the 1940s to the 1960s, Mexican wrestlers began to draw an audience. Early Mexican wrestlers included Alberto Corral “Gorilla” Ramos, *El Diablo*, and Miguel Torres. At this time wrestling became an international sport with standardized rules. Matches were televised by the 1950s and 1960s. A cast of masked characters from Mexico's *Lucha Libre* wrestling style soon joined the ring in Madison Square Garden, displaying a “faster acrobatic style of wrestling and the unusual format of three-on-three tag team matches.” Residents young and old flocked to the venue to see the famous *El Santo*, *El Demonio Azul*, and many others. In addition some local Mexican American wrestlers frequented the Madison Square Garden and gained their fame, such as six-time heavyweight champion Tito Montez, who came to Phoenix in 1958.<sup>317</sup>

<sup>316</sup> Jerry Reynolds, *Golden Years of Theater*, 103, 113; Phoenix city directories; Mary Garcia, Interview by Jean Reynolds, March 25, 2006, CD recording; personal recollection of Pete R. Dimas.

<sup>317</sup> Vince Murray and Scott Solliday, *Phoenix Madison Square Garden, Historic Property Documentation*, July 2005, Phoenix Historic Preservation Office.

The Mexican American community was rapidly growing and changing. A new generation of children would come of age in the 1960s, creating another change in the social and political landscape of Phoenix. The period of the late 1960s, marked by social struggles for racial equality, protest against American military involvement in Vietnam, and an opening cultural divide between younger and older generations of Americans, influenced local Mexican Americans, or “Chicanos,” to become involved in the farm worker movement, community organizing, and social welfare issues.