

THE MT LEMMON ECHOS

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March 1998

A WET AND WILD WINTER! COLD TEMPERATURES FOLLOWED BY NUMEROUS SNOW STORMS PROVES CHALLENGING FOR THE COOP

by Michael Stanley

The winter continues to be a wild one. January's lack of precipitation and extremely low temperatures were followed by February's 167" of snow. The storms came in on a regular schedule pounding the top of the mountain. The county and local snow plows could not keep up with all of this snowfall. The roads became so narrow the snow would just go over the top of the blades. There was no place to put or plow all of this snow. It has taken weeks to get the snow away from the edges of the roadways. Big equipment had to be hauled or driven up the mountain to use for removal.

The edges of the road had six to ten feet standing. Some places were impossible to get to. During this time, there were several leaks on the water system. The snow removal caused leaks on the system. A small fire hydrant along with valve boxes and other equipment were hit. Sections of the water system had to be shut off to prevent a major water loss. Repair to some of these areas is yet prevented due to the remaining snow cover. A second problem with the repairs is the lack of proper equipment to perform in or on snowy conditions. There were problems on the customer side of the system also. Some of these leaks were impossible to find. The 4' stakes we put next to the meter were covered with snow. Meters next to cabins had much more snow due to the roof shedding or sliding the snow off. The area around and next to

the dwellings had 10' to 12' of snow. Water meters in those areas were found but it required a massive amount of time and labor.

The snow has helped the water shed in many ways. Creeks and streams are flowing; waterfalls and cascades fill the drainages. The sounds of the water moving down Sabino and Carter canyons tickle the ear. Springs are flowing at the highest rate seen since 1987. The mountain is very happy with its white cover of melting snow.

The water systems inflow should be great for the beginning of the spring. The problem is our lack of storage capacity. The majority of water that is flowing could be captured and stored for use in the summer when the demand is the highest

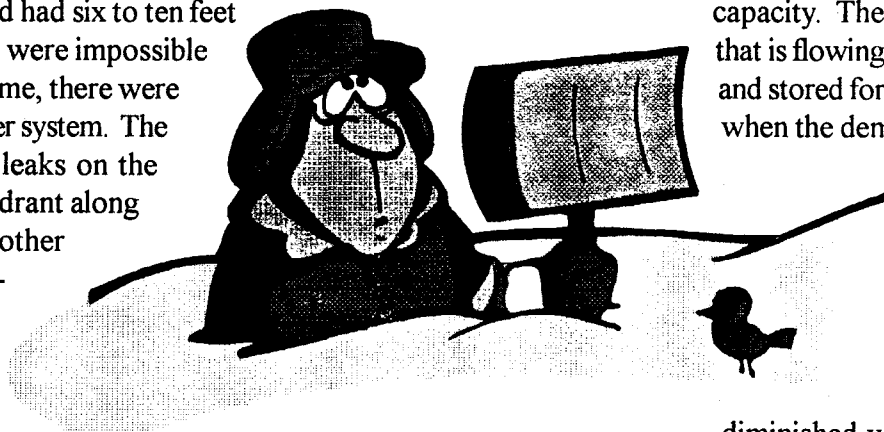
and the spring flow is the least. Our tanks are full now but when the demand is higher and the spring flow is

diminished we may still suffer

outages. Remember to shut your meter off. Customer leaks cause many outages. These leaks are preventable.

We should always be prepared for water outages. Keep extra water (5 to 10 gallons) at your cabin. This may prevent a total inconvenience to you or your guests.

I hope your winter was good. I look forward to seeing you at the annual homeowners' dinner on April 21st at the Savoy Opera House.





SARA LEMMON WOULD BE SURPRISED

THE 1950's BROUGHT HIGHEST RADAR STATION

IN THE UNITED STATES TO MT. LEMMON

by Suzanne Hensel

The very top of the Catalinas is named for Sara Lemmon, a botanist who explored the mountain for unknown plants in the 1880's. Sara would be surprised if she tried to find new plants on Mount Lemmon today. It no longer has a forest of trees, but rather a forest of buildings. This transformation began back in the 1950's during the cold war.

Mt. Lemmon was chosen to be a site for a SAGE radar station. The letters stood for Semi-Automatic Ground Environment. In the name of national security, the very top of Mt. Lemmon became a military outpost complete with radar domes and sophisticated electronic equipment.

There were several other radar sites strategically located all around the United States. Together they could easily detect any aircraft crossing the border. In August of 1956, the radar base on Mt. Lemmon, under the direction of the 684th Radar Squadron, became a part of the radar network

in the southwest.

The base, which cost \$3 million dollars to construct, was manned by 250 officers and airmen. Many of the men were quartered at the base in dormitories. The area was given the

unique distinction of being the free world's highest continuously-operational radar station.

There were three giant antennas at the base, which made 360 degree sweeps of the horizon every minute. They were protected by huge air-filled, rubber domes.

These structures were made to withstand wind forces of 125 miles per hour. A large rope hung down on the outside of the dome from the top to the ground. In the winter the rope was used to break the ice and snow loose.

In May of 1958, a multipurpose recreational building was added. This structure included a two-lane bowling alley with



The very top of Mt. Lemmon after its transformation in the late 1950's. The base was under the command of the 684th Radar Squadron. It was in operation from August, 1956 to late 1969.

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automatic pinsetters, as well as a gym, hobby shop, photo darkroom, table-tennis equipment and library.

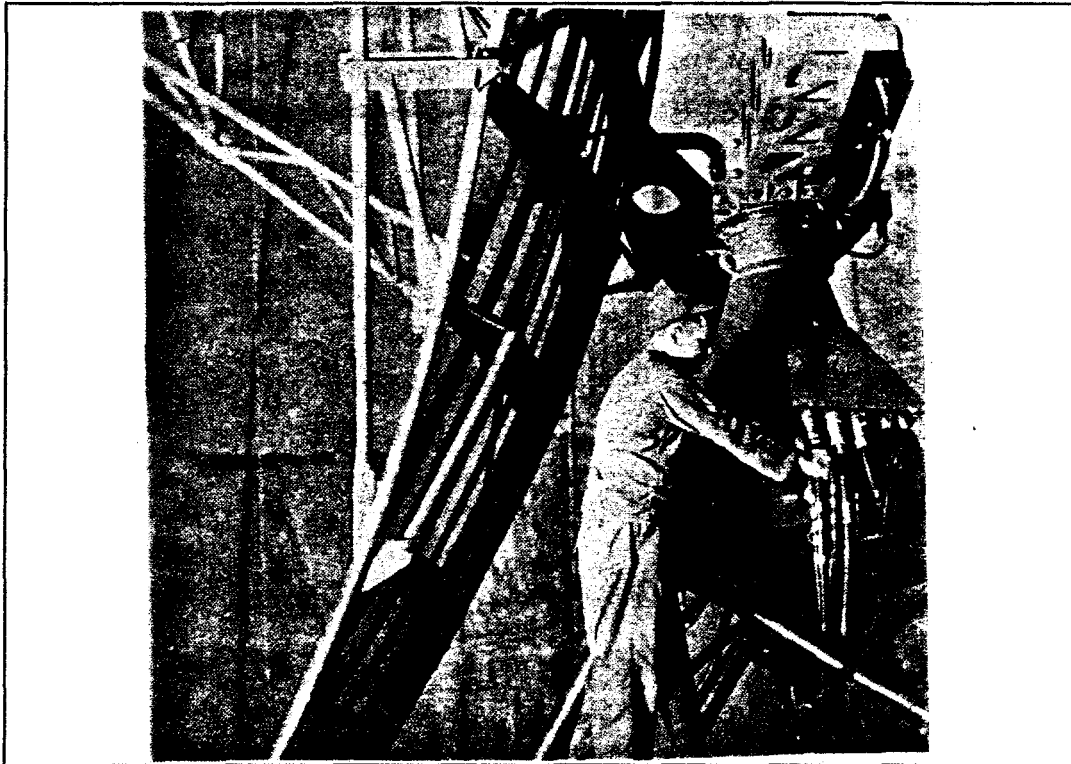
Many of the airmen spent their free time in Summerhaven. A bowling league was even established between the locals and the base. When forest fires became too big for the Forest Service

to handle alone, the airmen quickly came to their aid.

By the late 1960's budget cuts in defense spending determined the fate of the radar base. By 1970, the Air Force had completely moved out of the Mt. Lemmon radar site. They packed up their sophisticated equipment and left, leaving behind several empty buildings. What would become of the old radar site, for a time, remained uncertain. The land still belonged to the Forest Service.

Several people wanted to turn it into a ski resort - an extension of Ski Valley. Instead, the site was given to scientists who were also interested in the skies, astronomers.

When the radar base was vacated, the Lunar and Planetary Laboratory at the University of Arizona submitted a plan to the Forest Service to convert it into an infrared observatory. The Laboratory already occupied a site on Mt. Bigelow with a telescope that was used for mapping the Moon. In 1972, the Lunar and Planetary Laboratory



Sgt. John Bryant, who was a radar maintenance man at the Mt. Lemmon radar base in the 1960's, is shown in this photo checking electrical connections on a tracking antenna, in one of the domes.

transferred all the telescope operations to Steward Observatory, the research arm for the Department of Astronomy at the University of Arizona.

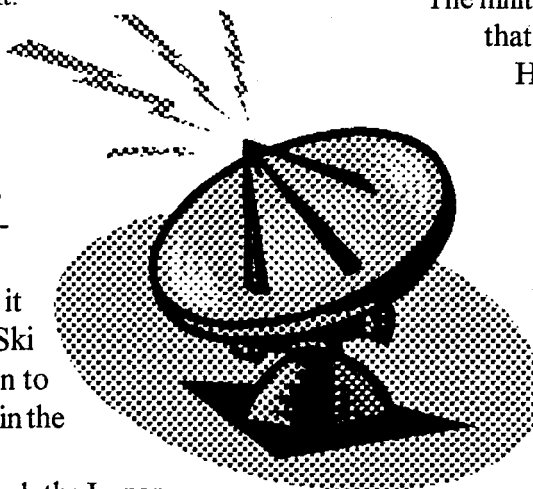
On Mt. Lemmon there are

currently three telescopes - a 1 1/2 meter, which is shared with NASA, a one meter, and a telescope which is run by the University of Minnesota.

The military still maintains one of the three radars that were erected in 1956. It is used by Ft. Huachuca as an army electronic proving ground. Among other things, it is used to pinpoint the location of the space shuttle when it is trying to land.

When summer rolls around, the dormitories that were once occupied by airmen house young budding scientists as they take part in the University of Arizona's astronomy camp. Older scientists from as far away as Japan and Chile also travel to the top to see what can't be found elsewhere.

Just as Sara and John Lemmon climbed to the top to discover plants that were unknown to the scientific world, astronomers climb to the top to discover a part of the universe that perhaps has never been seen before.



FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATE

HARSH WINTER MAY MEAN A MODERATE FIRE SEASON

by John Roads

Happy Spring - I think, at least according to the calendar.

My last article mentioned that the snow pack was a little disappointing. I spoke too early. We were slammed in February. Most of the month was spent shoveling. There were 13 calls, most were motor vehicle accidents and fortunately no one was seriously injured.

March and April are typically busy months for training, most of which is in preparation for the upcoming wildland season. With the recent snow pack, it is believed at this time, that we will not have severe conditions as occurred in 1996. However, since most fires are man caused, we must still be prepared. As soon as it starts to dry out, we plan to continue the property pile burns to reduce the fuel loads

before summer. No burn dates are listed at this time (we are still deep in snow).

Last article I discussed SMOKE DETECTORS. We recently responded to a cabin that was filling with smoke - due to windy conditions blowing smoke back down the chimney. It was discovered that this cabin, used as a rental, had no smoke detector. SMOKE DETECTORS are proven life savers and should be used to protect you and your precious family. Not having a working smoke detector in a rental could cause additional liability issues. If you have any questions, please call me at the fire station at 576-1201.

**PLEASE PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY
WITH SMOKE DETECTORS!**

Mt. LEMMON WOMAN'S CLUB UPDATE

Those of you that didn't attend the last meeting in March missed Jim Klein, historian and curator of the Boy Scout Museum, as our speaker. His topic was Mt. Lemmon and the Boy Scout Camp area with pictures and new information. Hopefully, we can get Jim to return this summer so more folks can enjoy this bit of history.

Saturday, March 28th will find some of our club ladies attending the Southern District General Federation Woman's Club Spring Convention to be held in Tucson

at the Tucson Woman's Club building. Our own Dani Hayhurst will be ending her two-year stint as president of

the Southern District on that day. We are encouraging members to attend this event. There will be Arts & Crafts, music contest winner performing, and enjoying lunch with other ladies from all the different groups from Bisbee,

Sierra Vista, Benson, Coolidge, and other towns in southeast Arizona.

Our next meeting will be our spring luncheon to be held Wednesday, April 1, 1998 at Franny Crowe's home in Tucson at noon. On that day, we will present the slate of officers for the next two years. So bring a salad to share and bring an appetite!

If you would like to attend any of these events, please feel free to call Fran Zimmerman 576-1333 or Helen Quigley 749-0361.



ALEXADER CALDER PAINTINGS

MARCH 20

-MARCH 26

MT. LEMMON HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL DINNER

Tuesday, April 21, 1998
Savoy Opera House
Trail Dust Town
6541 E.Tanque Verde

COCKTAILS 6 PM

DINNER 7 PM

PROGRAM 8 PM

MARINATED CHICKEN BREAST \$17.50

OR

8 OZ. NEW YORK STRIP STEAK \$18.50

Both menus include salads, baked potato, their famous "Pinnacle Peak"
Pinto beans, thick sliced bread, coffee, iced tea and strawberry shortcake.

You need to indicate the NAME of each person and his choice of entree.
We will be making up name tags in advance Red for steak, Blue for chicken.
Please cooperate so we do not have to call you for this information.

Deadline for reservations are April 16th! Any questestions, call Fran
Zimmerman at 576-1333.

Mail your check to Mt. Lemmon Homeowners' Assn. P.O. Box 699,
Mt. Lemmon, Arizona 85619

Name	Entree	Amount
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