Old Trails Museum

Journeys To Winslow

A City in Motion: World War II & the Cold War

The Santa Fe Railway & La Posada Hotel

In 1941, the United States' entry into World War II temporarily reversed two trends in the railroad industry. Technological advances had allowed the Santa Fe to eliminate jobs, but the war caused industry-wide labor shortages. Passenger rail travel had also been on the decline with the rise of auto-tourism in the 1920s and 1930s. Fred Harvey began closing trackside restaurants and hotels even before the Great Depression. But the war prompted La Posada to hire new and rehire retired Harvey Girls to serve the 3,000 soldiers a day riding through town on "troop trains."

Thousands of women worked industrial jobs because of labor shortages during World War II. Eufelia Baca (back row, center) was one of the local women hired in the Santa Fe roundhouse. (Photo courtesy of Sandi Baca Martinez)

These Harvey Girls at La Posada visit with some of the soldiers from the train in 1945. Harvey Girls Esther Bailey and Velma Hopson remembered how they felt about these young men:

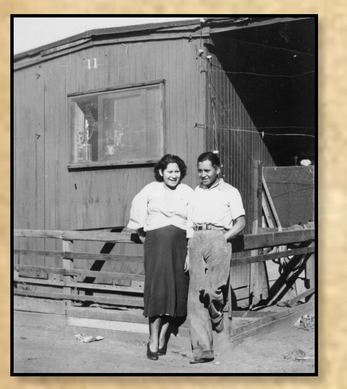
"Our hearts went out to those boys on their way to the front. It helped us keep busy while we wondered and prayed about our own sons in the service."

"We often found letters the boys left under the tables in hopes we'd mail them and we did. We wanted someone to do that for our sons." Janice Henling interview for the *Winslow Mail*, 1980

(Photo courtesy of Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, History and Archives Division, Phoenix, #01-4731.)

The Santa Fe's Laguna and Japanese Colonies

The Santa Fe employed Laguna men in exchange for crossing their Pueblo lands in New Mexico. Laguna families lived in converted boxcars on Santa Fe property in several towns along the line. To the east of Winslow's Laguna Colony was the Japanese Colony, a Santa Fe housing facility for roundhouse workers and their families. Friendly relations between the two groups ended abruptly after the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Empire of Japan. Japanese American citizens in Winslow and across the West were sent to internment camps for the duration of World War II. The town of Leupp, 36 miles northwest of Winslow on the Navajo Reservation, was the site of a Citizen Isolation Center. It was built by the War Relocation Authority to house Japanese American citizens who disrupted other camps in protest of their treatment.



Margaret and Richard Carrillo pose in front of their home in Winslow's Laguna Colony in this 1930s image. (Photo courtesy of Delbert Carrillo) Resident Rosemary Siow Natseway described living in the boxcars:

"*. . . parents (would) put two boxcars together, used one as the bedrooms and then there was a kitchen and they made a living room . . . they made it livable. They made it nice . . . the women, they had their own little get-togethers . . . Some did sewing together…they were always cooking . . . And it was beautiful because the people just gathered and we had our own activities, like . . . baseball . . . social dances . . . I miss those days."* Mary Tolan interview, 2010

This image of Winslow's1936 roundhouse crew includes Japanese American workers like Sam Hirokawa, located in the center of the top row with the lunchbox just to the right of his head. Natseway remembered when the Japanese American employees and their families were forced to leave town:

". . . on the radio they had heard that Pearl Harbor got bombed . . . I remember that mother (was) crying . . . she had gone over there to bid goodbye when they were taking them to the concentration camp . . . then I remember (military) blocking off where we come in the gate . . . really scary. They took all of them right away." Mary Tolan interview, 2010

The Winslow Municipal Airport

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, the US military converted Winslow's airport into a refueling and repair stop for military aircraft. The War Department redesigned the runways and had them lighted and properly drained. Starting in 1942, over 350 military flights passed through Winslow daily. Joseph Kasulaitis worked at the airport during the war and remembered how busy it was:

"We averaged 360 military and 28 TWA flights a day. Every kind of military aircraft flew in here: fighter planes, fighter-bombers, cargo planes, big bombers like the B-17 and B-24 and B-29." Bob Thomas article for *Arizona Highways*, September 2000

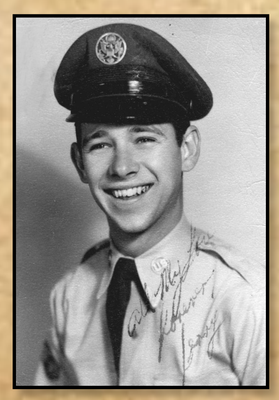
The Boeing B-17 "Flying Fortresses," as they were called, were used in World War II for strategic bombing campaigns. This one, a B-17G, was converted into a fire-fighting slurry bomber. It is seen here taking off from Winslow's airport in the late 1950s.

In 1949, this Northrop YB-49 "Flying Wing" lost four of its eight engines over Colorado. Winslow was chosen for the emergency landing because of its good approach and long runways. As the Cold War escalated, this precursor to the Stealth Bomber remained at the airport under close military guard for over a week awaiting replacement parts.

The Radar Boys of the 904th

During the Cold War, the US military established radar sites across the country. In 1955, the 904th Aircraft Control & Warning Squadron began operations on Tucker Mesa just west of Winslow. Its mission was early detection of Soviet long-range bombers as well as radar guidance for intercepting aircraft. Some of the "Radar Boys" that worked at the base married local women and settled in town. The Air Force closed the base in 1963 due to a restructuring of the air defense system.

The almost 300 military personnel stationed at the base often participated in local events like this visit from President Sukarno of Indonesia in 1956.



Jerry Kincaid worked as a radio operator at the base from 1956 to 1960. This photo was taken at the base when he was eighteen years old. (Photo courtesy of Jerry Kincaid) He served from 1954 to 1974 and returned to Winslow after his military retirement from the Air Force to work for the Santa Fe. Kincaid remembered what it was like for a young man stationed near Winslow in the 1950s:

"We came to town all the time when we were not on duty, if nothing else just to stand on the corner . . . there was a drugstore right there . . . it had a soda fountain, we were all young, we had to get in there and have our sodas and we'd wait for the movie to start . . . there wasn't all that much to do . . . you couldn't travel then as well as you can now, first of all you didn't have the highways available, like from here to Payson, most of that highway was just gravel . . ."