

Brief bios 2011 Honorees

TOMMY N. CAYWOOD has been farming in the Casa Grande area since 1937. Moving to Casa Grande from Globe when his mother married his step-father, Lewis Storey, Caywood became a charter member of the Casa Grande Union High School's first National Honor Society. After graduation in 1940 he attended the University of Arizona, majoring in agriculture. When he returned from serving his country in World War II he and his cousin, Jerry Storey, went to work on their fathers' farms. In 1948 their fathers helped the boys start their own farms with leased land. In the mid 1970s Caywood was instrumental in the creation of Electrical District 1 when farmers in the area, who had switched to electrical pumps to help lower their cost of pumping water, were denied inclusion in Electrical District 3. Eventually through his efforts a new District was created, combining ED 1 and ED3 which is also part of the Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation and Drainage District (MSIDD), in 1976. Caywood has served on the West Pinal Natural Conservation District board, the board of MSIDD, Casa Grande's Industrial Development Authority and the Greater Casa Grande Chamber of Commerce, where he continues to serve on the Government Affairs Committee. At 88 Caywood still continues to farm with his grandson Travis.

DICK NAPOLITANO made the move west from Pennsylvania when Clyde Smith recruited him to play football at Arizona State College (now ASU). He met his wife, Annette Marionneaux at ASC. Teaching and coaching jobs were scarce when he returned from service so he and Annette joined her father in his farming and ranching operation in Buckeye. Eventually he became James Marionneaux's right hand man, overseeing all aspects of the business including the ranching, feedlot and farming components of the business.

Sports continued to be a part of his life. For many years Napolitano coached Little League baseball and Pop Warner football as well as coaching football in various positions, including head coach, at Buckeye Union High School for 17 years. Throughout the years Napolitano has continued to give to his community. He still serves as president of the Acme Gin Co. board and in several positions on the NRCD board. He has been involved with the Buckeye Lion's Club for over 40 years and still holds the position of the club's secretary. He spent 29 years on the governing board of Buckeye Elementary School, serving as member, secretary and president and was named Buckeye Chamber of Commerce's Man of the Year in 1979.

The Rayner Family, Earle, Ron and Robert have a long heritage of ranching in the Salt River Valley. They trace their history back to 1914 when Jonathan L. Rayner and his son Frank packed up their farming equipment in California and headed to Litchfield Park where they developed their A Tumbling T Ranches. A community oriented man, J.L. Rayner is credited with circulating the petitions to start Litchfield Elementary School. The farming operation was a family business. Frank (F.E.) grew potatoes and forage crops for a few dairy cows. The potatoes and onions were hauled into Phoenix and sold at market just about where Chase Field stands today.

After their father's death Earle Jr., Ron and Robert needed to expand to support their growing families. They leased land in El Mirage, Waddell, Goodyear, Gila Bend and Willcox and purchased land in Goodyear, Gila Bend and as far away as California's central valley. They helped organize a cotton ginning company in Buckeye, on whose board Ron still serves.

A Tumbling T Ranches grows durum wheat for the pasta plant in Tolleson, alfalfa and forage sorghum for local dairies, and cotton for export. Their California operation produces pomegranates, olives, plums, wine grapes, lemons, navel oranges and tangelos.

Carl E. Weiler is a third generation Arizona, born into a dairy farming family in 1932. He graduated from St. Mary's High School in Phoenix and attended the U of A, where he lettered in football. After a stint in the U.S. Air Force he returned to Arizona and began farming. His involvement in the cotton industry includes both the local and national level. He was a member of Cotton Incorporated, an organization responsible for promoting a resurgent in the use of cotton in the early 1980s. He was a long time member of the Arizona Cotton Growers Association. A member of the National Cotton Council, he served as the chairman of the Producer's Steering Committee (1980-1981). In this capacity he was instrumental in the passage of the 1980 Farm Bill.

Understanding the importance of water, Weiler undertook a statewide campaign to communicate the importance of water conservation and how Arizona farmers manage the precious resource.

Ira L. Willis is a northern Arizona rancher, a second generation Arizonan born in Snowflake in 1927. He has been heard to say he raises cattle and kids and is very proud of both. The Willis Ranching operation includes a ranch east of Snowflake and Taylor and a farm in the Silver Creek Valley.

Willis Ranch has transitioned from Hereford cattle to Brangus while the farming side of the operation grows alfalfa, corn and oats

Willis has been active in the Navajo County Cattle Growers, and was part of the Northern Arizona Cattle Growers before that. He has served the industry and his community as president of the Navajo County Cattle Association and Navajo County Farm Bureau. In addition he has served on the Silver Creek Irrigation Board and is dedicated to conservation and the wise use of water.

Dr. Bartley Cardon (1913 -2005) is one of three men who are being honored posthumously.

Bartley Cardon was an educator, business leader and public servant. He was a member of the University of Arizona faculty from 1946 until 1954 when he left to become research director for Arizona Feeds. He later became CEO of Arizona Feeds and was made chairman and CEO in 1973. While he was at Arizona Feeds he took a great interest in the 4-H. As dean of the College of Agriculture, in 1980 Dr. Cardon was instrumental in the founding of the Arizona 4-H Foundation.

Among his accomplishments, Dr. Cardon established the UA Maricopa Agricultural Center, which has become an internationally acclaimed semi-arid land agricultural research center. He was also very concerned about water issues and was heavily involved in legislation which created the water laws that continue to serve Arizona today.

Wayne Wright Thornburg (1891-1980) was born at Rancho Los Alamitos in California in 1891. He spent most of his young life growing up and working on ranches, which created a wide and diverse interest in anything agricultural. After moving to Arizona Thornberg spent over 40 years in the business that held a special place in his heart. In the early days he managed three ranches in Yavapai County; the Diamond Two, Three Links and Clear Creek Cattle Company. His concern for the agricultural business in the state led him to serve two terms in the Arizona Legislature as a Senator from Yavapai County. During his time in office he led the creation of the State Highway Department, the State Industrial Commission and served as chairman of the Senate Livestock Committee. In the late 1920s Thornberg bought land in the middle of a cotton field, now North Central Avenue in Phoenix. It was here that he built his home and made his base of operations. As his reputation and his expertise grew he was recognized on the national level. In the 1930s he became one of only five members of the Executive Committee of the US Regional Agricultural Credit Corporation. His interest in cattle led to his interest in grapes when he converted the manure enriched soil into vineyards to grow Cardinal grapes and other crops. Water on the desert is always a concern so he became involved with water issues. He served as both director and president of the Maricopa County Municipal Water Conservation District 1 during the 50s and 60s. Wayne Thorburg passed away at the age of 89 in 1980.

Special Contribution

Goldtooth Begay (1896 -2002) is representative of the long ranching heritage of the Navajo people. He was born in Castle Butte, Arizona on the Navajo Reservation and lived to be 106 years of age. He grew up raising and herding sheep, cattle and training horses. When the federal government set about reducing the livestock holdings of the Navajo people he witnessed firsthand the hardship inflicted on his people and his family. He saw the Navajo Churro sheep, a breed valued for its fleece, meat, milk, bone and fiber, all but disappear. With the repletion of his own wealth Goldtooth Begay left the reservation to seek work on the railroad. It was through a chance meeting with Dr. Lyle McNeal, at the Science Museum of Minnesota, that Begay learned of McNeal's project to revitalize the Navajo Churro Sheep breed. A bond was formed between the two and through it the Dine Bi'Iina' (DBI) was formed. DBI grew from Begay's encouragement for his daughters to establish a non profit organization based on revitalizing and reintroducing the Navajo Churro Sheep back onto the reservation. Dine Bi'Iina continues to support Navajo livestock owners, weavers and shepherds through education. The book *To Walk in Beauty* (2006, Museum of New Mexico Press) by photo-journalist Stacia Spragg-Braude, documents Goldtooth Begay's family history.