

PHOENIX, ARIZONA, LODGE

A COMMITMENT TO CHARITY AND FRATERNAL IDEALS MARKS PHOENIX LODGE

AN ALL-AMERICAN LODGE

MARK HAGLAND

PHOENIX, ARIZONA, LODGE IS blessed with a number of advantages: located in a relatively affluent neighborhood in northeast Phoenix, the lodge owns a beautifully appointed and spacious facility set on twenty-one acres of land. The lodge has adequate financial reserves and is able to fund all the programs its leaders deem vital. In addition, the lodge is in a metropolitan area that is exploding with growth and opportunity.

Having moved a few times over the course of its 110-year history, the Phoenix Lodge is now located on Thirty-Second Street in a residential neighborhood. The lodge has an interesting history. Founded in 1896, when Phoenix was still literally a cow town, the lodge was among the few organizations that were able to garner a relatively large membership at a time when the total population of the town numbered in the thousands. After meeting for two years in temporary quarters, the lodge purchased the old Opera House in 1898, and then moved once more before it settled at its present location, the third permanent home in its history.

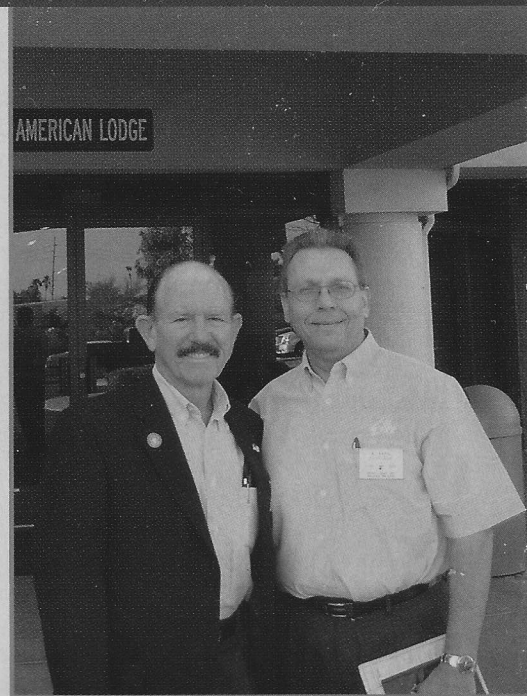
ER Albert Kayal acknowledges the advantages of such upward mobility, along with the benefit that accrues from being located in a Sun Belt city

exploding in population. But, he quickly adds, "The core of our success comes from our members—their dedication and commitment. We literally couldn't do it without them." In addition, he strongly credits "our good officer corps and the great leadership provided by our past exalted rulers," as well as the hard work of the supervisory committees of the lodge and its board of trustees.

What distinguishes this lodge and its 1,350 members is a combination of key factors, including sustained commitment to core Elks values, individual and group leadership, caring for the community, and proud patriotism. And, because of its achievements, Phoenix Lodge No. 335 was named the Division 5 winner of the 2004–2005 Grand Lodge All-American Lodge Contest (see box on page 35).

The True Spirit of Christmas . . . Giving

Like most Elks lodges, the Phoenix Lodge runs numerous, diverse programs at any one time. But several of its programs—the children's Christmas shopping program, the Thanksgiving turkey basket program, and the public safety appreciation program—are worthy of particular note. The lodge's ongoing sponsorship of a very

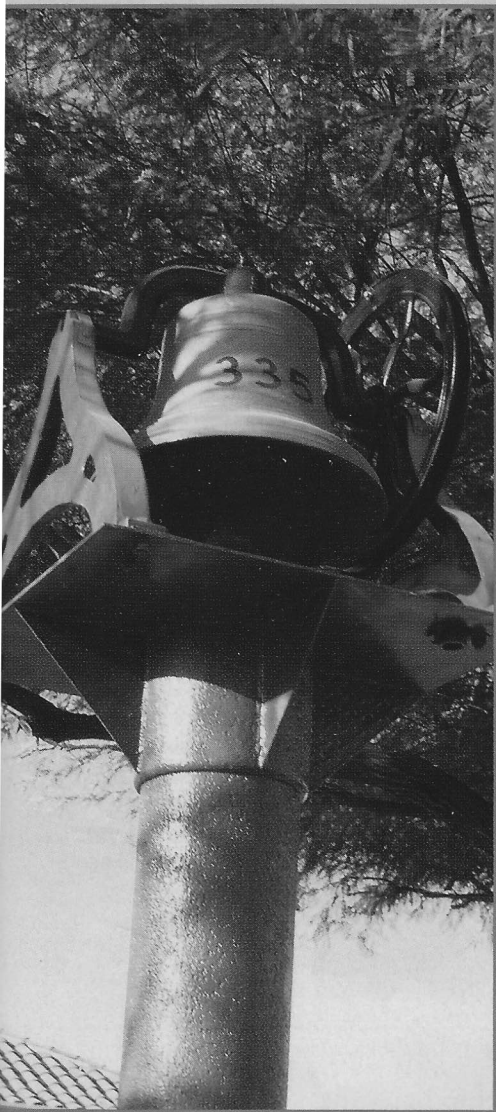


▲ Public Relations Committee Chairman Sidney Palmer (left) and ER Albert Kayal stand in front of the lodge's main entrance.

vital and active Boy Scout troop is also worth mention.

The children's Christmas shopping program is an excellent example of a lodge program that brings together a broad spectrum of community members. Initiated nearly a decade ago, it has become a cherished annual event, and one that exemplifies the values of Elkdom.

Last December, on a Tuesday afternoon just before Christmas, about fifty-five grade-school children—most between the ages of 8 and 11—arrived at a local department store in the Paradise Valley Mall, accompanied by an equal number of lodge members, parents, teachers, and young adults. Identified both by financial need and



▲ Phoenix, Arizona, Lodge No. 335 has a ceremonial bell near its main entrance.



▲ The children's Christmas shopping program included free hairstyling services at a department store salon, courtesy of the store managers and stylists, adding to the value of the shopping spree for the children.

in the faces of the children, both during the shopping spree and the meeting with Santa, and the next day. "The entire [school] staff loves the day after the Elks program," she attests, "because I have fifty kids here standing up straight in their new outfits and grinning from ear to ear. And for me, it's wonderful; the parents of those children are going to be more tied into us; they'll be closer to the school."

Moreover, ER Kayal notes that the store gives very deep discounts on the merchandise it sells to the children during the shopping spree, so that the hundred dollars in credit each child receives is, in effect, nearly doubled in spending power. "There are a lot of programs we're asked to participate in," Carl Erickson, the store manager, notes, adding that the reason the store and its employees participate in the Elks program is simple. "Fundamentally, it's the right thing to do."

From the lodge's standpoint, the program is a big win on many fronts. For one thing, Kayal confirms, the fund-raising for the program—which last year included raffles, newsletter appeals, and steak dinners—raised nearly \$6,000 (allowing fifty-five children to receive the shopping benefit) and is 100 percent supported by lodge members. So the program is essentially self-supporting, and, of course, the lodge volunteers' time is donated.

In the end, the program's intangibles are perhaps its most meaningful aspect, everyone agrees. For example, DeeAnn Chisman, a secretary at Hidden Hills Elementary School, who volunteered this past Christmas along with her daughter, says the young people love shopping with teenaged and adult volunteers and look up to them. "Some of the little girls are 'teenage wannabes.' They were thrilled to go into the dressing rooms and try out clothes," she notes, and to get approval from the volunteer escorts who were teenagers or young women. And, Lieberman adds, many of the boys were obviously thrilled to be shopping with adult men; some students in the program don't even have an adult male in their lives.

For Frankie Palmer, a very active volunteer at the lodge, whose husband, Sidney Palmer, is the lodge's public relations chairman, the Christmas shopping spree has been a tremendous experience. She has participated in three of these programs and has loved every one.

"It's heartwarming when you see the children, because it's obvious that they need help," says Palmer. "And I've never had one that's been greedy. Oftentimes, they'll ask for something for their brother or their sister or their mother. And when we come back [to the lodge] for Santa Claus and cookies, they'll take cookies home." She says

by good academic standing at Hidden Hills Elementary School, each student was given a gift card for \$100, the opportunity to select clothing and shoes of their choice, and a free haircut and styling at the department store's salon.

Amy Lieberman, the school's social worker, who selects the children who will participate each year, says, "From the social work point of view, it's absolutely my favorite program because it provides the kids with all the basic necessities. And they go to the Elks lodge and sit on Santa's lap. These are kids who wouldn't otherwise get those opportunities." From the human standpoint, Lieberman says, the success of the program is reflected

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one of the most enjoyable moments is when the children go into the store's hair salon for a free shampoo and styling. Many of the young girls who go to the salon have never had professional hair care before and are absolutely thrilled.

Given the benefits derived by all those participating—Elks leaders and volunteer escorts and organizers, the elementary school, the participating department store, and most of all, of course, the children—there is every reason to believe the shopping spree program will continue for some time to come, ER Kayal confirms.

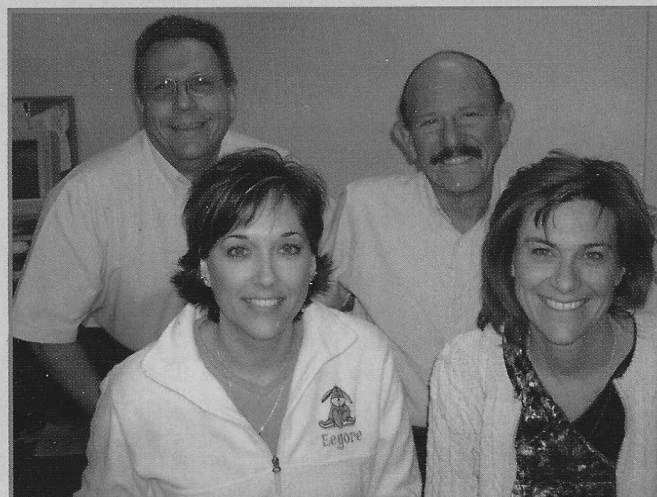
Patriotism and Community Orientation

Phoenix Lodge also has programs similar to those of other lodges around the country, and these established programs are doing extremely well, too. For example, the lodge has been conducting a Thanksgiving basket distribution project for fifty-two years now, with excellent results. This past Thanksgiving, reports Thanksgiving Basket Committee Cochairman PER Sam Burkhardt, the lodge was able to raise donations and obtain food worth a total of more than \$9,000. As a result, the lodge was able to send twenty-five teams of drivers and assistants out across the metropolitan area to deliver boxes of food to 236 needy families. The Thanksgiving program has evolved positively over the years, Burkhardt says. Eleven local elementary schools confirm the names of needy families and pass the information along to the lodge. Recipient families are provided not only with a Thanksgiving turkey and side dishes, but with a full week's worth of groceries as well, which as Burkhardt points out, can be a significant purchase, since families can be quite large. Naturally, he reports, the gratitude of the recipient families is tremendous, with many sending handwritten notes of thanks to the lodge following Thanksgiving weekend.

In another arena, the lodge's public safety recognition program has become well known in the Phoenix metropolitan area for its inclusiveness and sophistication. Each year in



◀ After the children got new wardrobes and haircuts, the lodge invited the children to a Christmas party. Pictured (right) is lodge member Bruce Holmes, as Santa, visiting with a small party-goer.



◀ ER Albert Kayal (left) and Public Relations Committee Chairman Sidney Palmer (right) visit the Hidden Hills Elementary School. DeeAnn Chisman (left), school secretary, and Amy Lieberman, the school's social worker, look forward each year to the Elks Christmas shopping spree.

November, the lodge puts on a Public Safety Appreciation Night, with a full program recognizing police, fire, and other public safety personnel from a range of different agencies. Elaine Schmerbeck, chairman of the Public Safety Appreciation Committee, has emceed the proceedings for the past several years, and the committee has consistently expanded the number and range of public safety agencies honored, including federal agencies such as the DEA and the FBI.

Public safety officials are deeply grateful for the recognition of their outstanding officers. "In terms of recognizing police officers and fire-fighters, there's a lot of dedication and a huge amount of courage involved in serving and protecting the public, and most people don't see it," says Chief John Wintersteen of the Paradise Valley Police Department. "So it's truly important that there be a means like the Phoenix Lodge has provided to recognize individuals as well as all the



▲ Chief John Wintersteen of the Paradise Valley Police Department: "I've been the chief here for nearly eleven years, and I've been impressed, because the Elks run a truly professional [law enforcement] recognition program."



▲ Pictured (from left) are Veterans Service Committee members Leonard Lai, Thomas Minichiello, and Arnold Eggers, with Arizona State Veterans Home recreational therapist Carrie Langford and committee member Bob Chambers.

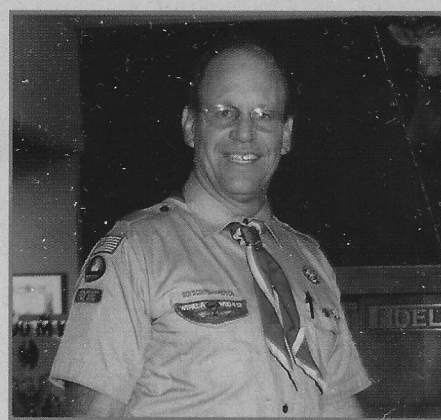
people involved in public safety who are making those sacrifices. I've been the chief here for nearly eleven years, and I've been impressed, because the Elks run a truly professional recognition program," he adds.

Such forms of recognition are important to the overall relationship between law enforcement and the community. Says Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio (Maricopa is the county that encompasses Phoenix), "I believe you should let the people know what you're doing. We serve the people. At the same time, we don't have a budget to go out and create private PSAs [public service announcements]." So, he says, when the Phoenix Lodge recognizes his officers, it helps support the mission of law enforcement in the community.

Leaders in veterans health care and in organized youth scouting are also grateful for the lodge's commitment to volunteering and sponsorship in areas relevant to them. For example,

Phoenix Lodge's Veterans Service Committee, led by Arnold Eggers and Leonard Lai, themselves veterans of the armed forces, makes regular visits to a veterans home in Phoenix, sponsoring such activities as monthly bingo parties and catered lunches. Veterans like Irene McLaughlin, who served as a pharmacist at a California war hospital during World War II, are deeply appreciative of the attention. The Elks "are a good organization," McLaughlin says, adding, "I wouldn't be anywhere else during bingo!"

Similarly, Gary LaForest, the scoutmaster of Phoenix Boy Scout Troop No. 224, is delighted with the ongoing support from the Phoenix Lodge. The lodge chartered the scout troop and continues to support it in many ways. As LaForest notes, "The lodge has been an intimate part of the troop since 1993, and it's a very close interaction between the leaders of the Elks and of our troop. They provide us



▲ Scoutmaster Gary LaForest: "The lodge has been an intimate part of the troop since 1993, and it's a very close interaction between the leaders of the Elks and of our troop. . . . They make us part of their family."

with some sense of security. They give us a meeting place if we so desire. . . . They make us part of their family." Thanks to the lodge's sponsorship, the troop is also able to use the Arizona Elks Association's campground near Globe, Arizona.

Spreading the Word

Despite its involvement in myriad activities that reflect patriotism and community caring, the Phoenix Lodge faces ongoing challenges when it comes to publicizing its good works and attracting new members, says Sidney Palmer, the lodge's public relations chairman. Historically, Palmer says, the Elks have been "relatively low-key" in approaching the media. In terms of the Phoenix Lodge, he says, "We've been able to get into some of the community-level newspapers sometimes, but we've not been very successful getting things into the *Arizona Republic*" or the other daily newspapers, or obtaining regular local television and radio coverage. Still, Palmer, Kayal, and others are working hard to spread the word about the good things their lodge is doing, in order to keep membership growing and to sustain the vitality of volunteerism at the lodge. Keeping a lodge vital requires continuous hard work, Kayal confirms. Yet he and his fellow lodge leaders are optimistic as they look into the future—one that will include ongoing commitment to patriotism and community involvement, hallmarks of Elks' values and traditions. ■

All-American Lodges, 2004–2005

- Division 1** (300 members or fewer) Fayetteville, North Carolina
- Division 2** (301 through 500 members) Jonesboro, Arkansas
- Division 3** (501 through 700 members) Deptford, New Jersey
- Division 4** (701 through 1,100 members) Mount Vernon, Illinois
- Division 5** (1,101 through 1,500 members) ... Phoenix, Arizona
- Division 6** (more than 1,500 members) Sun City, Arizona