

RECOM

Retired Employees City of Mesa

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RECOM Executive Board

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Cool History

Ah, ice cream. My favorite dessert. What a wonderful cool summer treat. Thinking back, ice cream was truly only a summer treat as, at least when I was a child, you had ice cream on birthdays and during summer months. You could not purchase pre-packed ice cream in the stores as you can today. And, your favorite ice cream stand closed after Labor Day - or soon thereafter, and would not re-open until after Easter.



Hank's frozen Custard was 'THE' destination point in western PA and Carl's in VA. You had to plan ahead and be willing to wait in line for at least fifteen minutes. You never knew whom you would meet – relatives, neighbors. Hank sold enough custard that allowed him and his wife to "winter" in Florida each year (the original snowbirds back in the '50s). I'm sure that

anyone who comes from a small town has such memories.

But, whom do we need to thank for creating such a delectable delight? Having grown up in VA, I remember the lore about George Washington (my hero as a youngster) somehow being responsible for introducing ice cream to the colonies. But, is this another of those lores about George like his chopping down the cherry tree and throwing the coin across the river. Well, let's see what the history books say.

There is no clear agreement on who originated ice cream although many agree that it was the Chinese. The origins of ice cream actually can be traced back to at least the 4th century B.C. Early references include the Roman emperor Nero (A.D. 37-68) who ordered ice to be brought from the mountains and combined with fruit toppings. King Tang (A.D. 618-97) of Shang, China created a method of creating ice and milk concoctions. Ice cream was likely brought from China back to Europe.

Over time, recipes for ices, sherbets and milk ices evolved and were served in fashionable Italian and French royal courts.

Now, back to my hero. George was known to say “Eat ice cream whenever you can.” He loved ice cream so much that he had installed two ‘ice-boxes’ at his Mount Vernon home so that the Washingtons and their guests could eat ice cream often. Ice cream was a real luxury at the time and was considered extravagant. George was not the only founding father to enjoy ice cream. Thomas Jefferson served it at Monticello and James Madison’s wife, Dolly, served it in 1812. However, credit needs to be given to Governor Bladen of Maryland who supposedly served it to his guests as early as 1700. One favorite flavor of the colonists was oyster, yes oyster! Now, I love both oysters and ice cream, but I think even I would draw the line at oyster ice cream.

Other quick facts about ice cream:

The first ice cream parlor in America opened in New York City in 1776. American colonists were the first to use the term ‘ice cream’. The name came from the phrase ‘iced cream’ that was similar to the term ‘iced tea’.

Nancy Johnson patented a hand-cranked freezer that established the basic method of making ice cream in 1846.

The ice cream cone made its American debut at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair.

In 1920, Harry Burt invented the Good Humor Ice Cream Bar and patented it in 1923.



Burt Sold his Good Humor bars from a fleet of white trucks equipped with bells and uniformed drivers.

Off to the freezerEnjoy!
Peggy Haney

Speaker

I tried to scribble as fast as I could, but Mark Salem could talk even faster --and did! So you’ll have to pardon me if I didn’t get absolutely every tip and warning down on paper about how not to get taken when you take your car to the repair shop. And he should know. He’s been in the car repair business for 20 years.

Having passed eight tests, he’s qualified to work on your car bumper to bumper and he likes the business so much, he even has his son and daughter involved in his shops: Salem Boys Automotive. You might have heard him on the radio at 11:00AM on Saturday mornings on KTAR 92.3 FM giving advice to people with auto repair questions. But on July 19th he was speaking to RECOM not as a repair shop owner – but as an advocate for you – the consumer.



Mark was at our July meeting as a staunch member of the Better Business Bureau and to tell us what scams to look out for in the auto repair industry. He even helped to create an auto repair advisory committee at the BBB. It helps when knowledgeable people look at your claim. Here are some of his tips:

How to select a repair shop:

You won’t know how good a shop is to deal with until you have an issue with them– then you’ll find out how customer oriented they are.

1. Look for a Better Business Bureau rating of A+. It doesn’t guarantee that you won’t have problems, but you’ll probably get a fair hearing before you have to go to the BBB.
2. If you go to his website, www.marksalem.com you’ll find a few recommendations for some Phoenix area shops – including some in Mesa.

3. Ask the senior man at the auto parts store which shop he uses; which shop his boss uses.
4. Ask him who orders five parts and returns three? Skip this shop. This means they don't diagnose well and are just guessing what's wrong with your car. They put in one part at a time until they find the problem – and you're paying for the time at \$60.00-\$100 per hour. And they may not take out the parts that have nothing wrong with them! (Oh and remember to ask for the old parts back. If there's a possibility someone will see there's nothing wrong with the old part – chances are they'll leave it in and not charge you for a new one.)

When you take the car in: Just the facts please:

Don't diagnose the problem. Let the shop diagnose the problem.

Do describe what the car is doing: It's OK even good to say: "The car goes krlump mumpity bump when I get to thirty miles an hour." The more you can describe the problem – the closer they can get to diagnosing it right there – really! That saves diagnostic time – at \$60.00-\$100.00 per hour – well you do the math. Because the shop sure will!

When should you get bids:

If the estimate is \$300.00 or more. If the difference between the highest and the lowest cost is more than 25% the highest bidder is probably overcharging you. You'll probably have to take it around to three shops. Nobody diagnoses and gives you an estimate over the phone. Be sure you get in writing what they're going to do: problem, parts list and labor.

What if they fix the problem, but also give me a laundry list of stuff that needs doing:

A favorite is **flushing the upper engine**. This usually means wallet flush. Have them put in writing each part that needs work, what they'll do and what it'll fix. If they're not willing to put it in writing, it probably didn't need doing.

What if I ask my tech to look over the car and tell me what I need:

You've given him a license to steal, but you haven't given him the information he needs to help you. Tell him if you just need the car to take you through town for the next 3,000 miles or if you're going on a cross country trip. The answers should be very different.

When you get the bill:

Be sure they print the **problem and** the solution on the bill. That way, if the same problem happens again, you can bring in the bill and say: **You didn't fix it.**

And, always pay with a credit card – not cash or check – if you have a dispute with the shop, you can stop payment on that charge. Now the shop has to deal with the credit card company. They do not like to do that.

Read your owner's manual:

It usually has a lot of information that'll prevent a panicked trip to the repair shop. For example, keep your tires at recommended pressures. For a small investment, some of the auto parts stores and tire centers sell little caps that go on the tire valve. They're green when you put them on – and turn red if your tire pressure is low.

When to Change the oil:

Every 3,000 miles. OK, this may be one time when you should not necessarily go with the owner's manual. It may say every 5,000 or even 15,000 miles. But somewhere in the fine print it says unless you drive under **extreme conditions**.

These, by-the way, are what the automotive manufacturers consider **extreme conditions – heat, cold, dust, stop & go traffic, and towing**. So – invest the \$30.00 and change the oil every 3,000 miles. A car uses one quart of oil every three thousand miles – so be sure your engine has enough oil to operate!

There was lots more, but remember I said I couldn't scribble as fast as he was taking? Well this is all I could get down before my fingers cramped up.

Reports

Secretary:

Lin Adams reminded those present, and those reading the newsletter that dues were due on July 1st. She also wants to share the following information on AZ state tax withholding.

ASRS/PSPRS State Tax Withholding – July 2010

Effective July 1, 2010 there were changes to the state income tax withholding tables that affect retirees from the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS) and the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS). Instead of using the previous formula for deducting Arizona state tax, a new formula is being used – and the amount being withheld from your checks is considerably less than it was in the past. But, is this a good thing?? Don't be so sure about that, because the actual tax rate is not what changed; rather, just what is being withheld from your monthly check – which could result in a BIG surprise in the amount of state tax that will be due next April!!

Although ASRS mailed an information packet to its members about the change, PSPRS did not. They did mention it briefly on the bottom or back of the monthly direct deposit notices (the statements you get each month, showing your pension check has been deposited).

I recommend that you at least look at the applicable retirement system websites and determine if you need to change your state withholding information. Even though it has already gone into effect, it is not too late to make a change for future checks. For those of you who are continuing to work, your employer probably provided you with information about the withholding changes, but if you haven't looked at your options and completed a new form, don't forget to consider that as well.

For PSPRS retirees, go to the PSPRS website www.psprs.com to print and complete the forms yourself. If you have problems or questions you can call the PSPRS office at 602-255-5575, and they will assist you in completing the necessary paperwork.

According to the information on the direct deposit notice I received on June 30 from PSPRS, if you don't complete the A-4P form, no state income taxes will be withheld from your check – which may result in an ugly surprise when you pay your taxes next April 15.

For ASRS retirees, if you haven't already responded to the information provided in the packet, you can still go to the ASRS website www.azasrs.gov and get the information there. Once on the website, click on 'Retirees' tab at the top of the page, and then click on the 'Tax Information' tab. You may also call them at 602-240-2000.

If you know retirees who don't have email access or who aren't RECOM members you might let them know about this, in case they missed the notices.

Thanks so much to Ivard Brimley and Sam Halverson (Mesa Fire Dept. retirees) for the information they provided me on this matter.

Lin Adams
RECOM Secretary

For ASRS members who live out of State:

Lin Also received an email from Diane Tuccillo who is a Mesa retiree but lives in Colorado. "We did not know that we should not be paying AZ income taxes any longer after we moved out of state, even though we receive income from ASRS.

You have to go on the ASRS website and formally make the request to discontinue having taxes taken out or they will continue to do it. It is not automatic when you send in your change of address to another state. You can also do this by sending a signed letter to them.

To get the money back (if they have been taking money out) you have to fill out an out-of-state form and include a letter explaining the situation and that you did not know that you had to formally make this change, and request the money back.

You might advise out-of-state retirees to contact ASRS to ask about this if they have questions. The bottom line is, no City of Mesa retiree who now lives out of state should be paying AZ taxes. You pay it in your own state, claiming ASRS pension as income."

Treasurer:

Don Miller reported that there are no major bills outstanding, but RECOM is again planning the pre-retirement seminar and this will incur some bills.

Deferred Compensation Committee:

The next meeting of this committee will be in August, after the RECOM membership meeting. Look for information in the September newsletter.

Benefits Task Force:

The new federal healthcare bill will have a negative impact on the Trust Fund. Jody will discuss this as well as plan changes, premiums and co-pays at the October meeting.

Issues:

Pension Calculations

Jo Ferguson reported that several bills affecting retirees are going through the legislature though **none affecting people who are already retired.**

House Bills 2066 and 2389

Those retiring after July 1, 2011

Will need to accumulate 85 (not the present 80) points in order to receive 100% of their pensions.

Must use the salary of the highest 60 months of the last 120 months. Currently the highest 36 months are used.

If permanently withdrawing pension funds from ASRS, a member may withdraw only the portion of money contributed by the employee (plus interest) – **but not** the portion contributed by the employer.

House Bill 2067

Makes changes to Arizona Revised Statute 38-844.

A member's ordinary disability pension may no longer be reduced or suspended in the period before the member's normal retirement date if the member engages in any employment, and if the member's income from this employment is greater than the amount of their disability benefit. .

Pension Fund

A recent article in the Arizona Republic reported that the Arizona State Retirement System pension fund is only 79% funded. While this is true, with the recent investment losses being the cause, current retirees do not need to worry according to Paul Matson, the Fund Administrator, who was quoted in an article published in the *Capitol Times* on May 10, 2010. There will be no pension reductions. But of course there will also be no increases.

In the future, ASRS **may** have to look for a change, going from a **defined benefit** plan to a **defined contribution** plan. A defined benefit plan is a plan whereby retirees get a guaranteed pension based on their salary and the number of years of service. A defined contribution plan is a plan whereby employees and employers each contribute a set amount each paycheck and the pension reflects how well that money does in investments. Similar to a 401K.

Upcoming Meetings

Aug. 18 Representative from the Attorney General's Office: How to avoid Identity Theft

Sep. 15 Representative from Wildlife World Zoo. He will bring three animals – but no lions, tigers or snakes – Oh my!

Oct. 20 Jody Topping from Benefits Office. This meeting will be held at the South Center Campus. Details to follow.

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month at 9:00AM in the community room of the fire station at Mesa Dr. and 1st Street.

Thank you to all those who remembered to bring bottled water to our July meeting. It was donated to St. Vincent de Paul for those who must spend the summer outdoors in parks or on the street.