

Coolidge Times

WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2007

COOLIDGE, ARIZONA 85228

TriValleyCentral.com

Ma 7 18	100	66	-0-
May 19	100	68	-0-
May 20	100	65	-0-
May 21	99	63	-0-
Total rainfall for year 2.66 inches.			

There were 240,192 acre feet of water behind Coolidge Dam as of Tuesday morning. Water in storage a year ago was 117,824 acre feet.

Move-out begins at Coolidge-Florence Elks Lodge

By REYNA PISAÑO
Staff Writer

A local landmark for decades, the Coolidge-Florence Elks Lodge No. 2340 will be closing its doors soon and reopening in a brand new building a half-mile north of its current location. The current lodge, located on the northwest corner of Attaway Road and Arizona 287, will be demolished to make way for a Circle K gas station within the next two years.

Elks members have been eyeing this move for the past 18 months, which is how long it has taken to clear up red tape and obtain all necessary permits. Members have spent that time anticipating what it would take to move nearly 50 years' worth of accumulated memories, artifacts, furniture and equipment. This past Saturday marked one of many days of continuous effort it will take to get everything packed up and ready to go.

"This isn't the only weekend we are moving stuff," said Elks Chairman Varr Myers, "but this weekend is the big move."

And who better to help with a big move than big movers? The Elks enlisted the help of both the Coolidge and Florence high school football teams to come out and lend a hand with the move. Both teams, coaches included, sacrificed the majority of their Saturday morning

hauling items and breaking down and moving furniture into temporary storage.

"The location of the lodge is actually the original location of the old Attaway Grocery Store, which burned down," Myers said. "The payoff for the new building, which is the lodge now, was done in the early 1970s."

The structure itself has been there since the early 1960s. The story goes that the building was financed through a bank in Florence, against the majority judgment of the loan committee. The final loan was approved for a whopping \$6,500.

"There are three parts that were built on to it: the offices in the front, the ballroom, and the kitchen," Myers said. "The original volunteer members built that up themselves. Paul Felix, Johnny Felix, Bill Platt... those were original members and they would be out there, stacking block to get it built."

The Elks are looking forward to getting established when their new facility is completed a mere half-mile north on the east side of Attaway Road. The organization is shooting for an early fall completion date, which would accommodate the flood of seasonal members that begin to pay their visits when the weather cools. The new facility is



Staff photo by Reyna PISAÑO

Football players from Coolidge High School help empty the Coolidge-Florence Elks Lodge of furniture and memorabilia over the weekend. In coming months, the Elks Lodge will relocate to a new building just north of its current location at Attaway Road and Arizona 287.

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Elks: Lodge relocating to new building east of Attaway Road

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projected to be a 6,000-square-foot manufactured building, featuring a large, modern kitchen and a patio to accommodate the members of the public who smoke.

"It is definitely a cooperative effort among the members," said Myers. "Chuck Neely is going to do the ground work, and Carl Douglas from Stinger (Welding Company) is going to be working on the building. Everyone will be pitching in."

The design of the building was also a collaborative effort.

"The members all voted to let the trustees do the design of the new building," said Myers. "We visited a similar building in Globe, and we liked it. Plus we already knew what we wanted for the kitchen. The old kitchen took a lot of people, but we had a quick turnaround. We are taking all of our equipment to the new building. The kitchen won't be as huge as the old one, but we won't have to run as far to get things done."

The new building will feature more energy efficient air and heating units, as well as a design that will reduce energy use. The old lodge was 4,000 square feet, but with the new 6,000-square-foot design, "It's a similar size to accommodate the crowds, but we will be able to utilize the space we have better," Myers explained. "The bar and lounge will be in the main area, instead of off to the side like in the old building. Plus the outside will have a large covered patio to make use of the nice weather."

The selection of the new location took considerable debate. Myers said, "We talked about moving into Coolidge or Florence in order to get off of that dangerous corner. We looked at Valley Farms, and considered the old sheriff's roping arena. But we sold 10 acres and that will



Staff photo by Reyna Pisar

The move-out process has begun for the Coolidge-Florence Elks Lodge, which is preparing to move to a new facility north of the Attaway Road/Arizona 287 intersection. The former Elks Lodge will be razed and replaced by a Super Circle K.

help us fund this new project."

In the meantime, members of the Coolidge-Florence Elks Lodge will be meeting at the Florence American Legion on the second and fourth Mondays of every month.

"The Florence American Legion is being very generous to us," said Myers. "We were issued passes as

honorary guests for one year. They told us to come in and have a drink any time. Instead of renting a building for \$1,500 or \$1,800 a month in the interim, they are letting us come in until our building is done. Instead of paying them, we are going to help them to upgrade their facilities while we are there, since the building was

built in 1900."

Even though the Elks Lodge at Arizona 287 and Attaway Road has been a highly visible Coolidge-Florence landscape staple for years, the move was inevitable — and promises to reveal an improved facility for both club and public use. "It's time," said Myers.