



# Pima County School Retirees' Association

October, 2017

*We welcome all retired school employees*

## Let's Be Part of the Solution -- Support AASRA and PCSRA They Protect Our Pensions



### President's Desk

~ Steve Poe



As we head into fall, I want to reassure you that your Pima County School Retirees Association (PCSRA) leaders and your All Arizona School Retirees Association (AASRA) leadership (including Jerry Holmes, our home-grown AASRA President) are focused on the primary function of our organizations. We are committed to helping AZ school retirees with their pensions through the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS). We monitor the ASRS activities, the AZ State Legislature, and national trends that may affect our defined benefit pensions. We have a dedicated team of volunteers who watch every step in these areas. They react by the use of our citizen lobbyists and keeping YOU informed of changes or threats to your economic survival system, your ASRS pension.

Along these lines, we are encouraging ALL our members to make sure they are members of both PCSRA and AASRA, as these umbrella organizations work to keep your benefits from being "toyed with" by the powers in AZ state government. An extra \$20 per year for AASRA dues is a very minimal price to pay to keep up on any potential changes. With the problems in the financial structure of the AZ Public Safety

Retirement and the AZ Elected Officials Retirement systems (NOT part of ASRS), there is a constant cry by some officials to remove the constitutional protections for our state pensions put in place during the latter part of the past century (the 1990s). The constitutional protections were only done through the initiative work of former educators in AASRA, who were able to place it on the AZ ballot. Without those protections in place,

**... there is a constant cry by some officials to remove the constitutional protections for our state pensions ...**

I am convinced that our ASRS funds would have been raided many times to plug holes in the AZ State Budget over the last 20+ years.

So, please make sure you are doing your part through membership in PCSRA and AASRA to get the most "bang for your buck" and the most "peace of mind" that your colleagues are doing their utmost to protect what most of you worked all of your lives to acquire. We may have been paid poorly for much of our time in the public schools, but we have EARNED our defined benefits pension through ASRS ... and we intend to keep them.



### September Report

PCSRA Membership is currently 196  
AASRA (state) membership is 97  
Scholarship Fund: \$1,000.93

### November 9th Luncheon at Viscount Suites A Bridge in the Desert

\$15.00 each Postmark by Nov. 2 to:  
PCSRA Reservations, 4315 E. Seneca St., 85712.

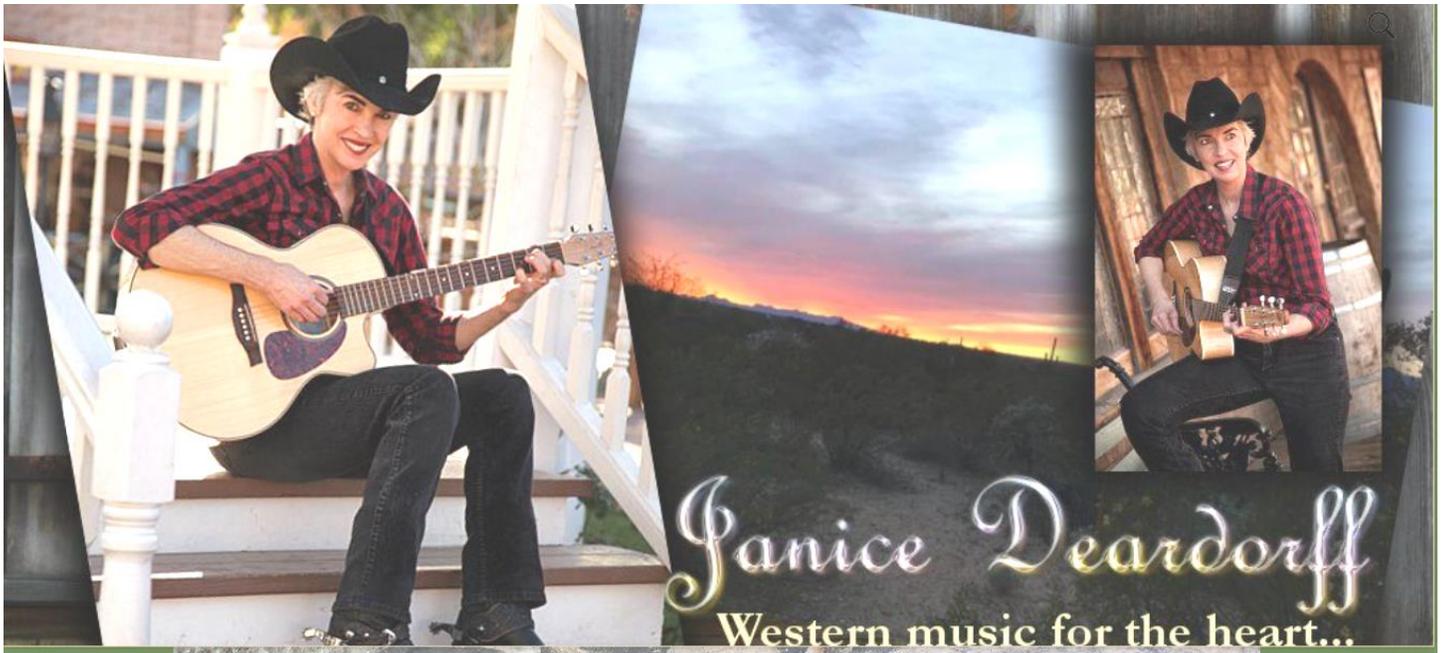
- A - Turkey w/ Mashed Potatoes/vegetable
- B - Trio Salad (Tuna, Egg, Chicken)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Guest \_\_\_\_\_



All Arizona School  
Retirees Association



## Janice Deardorff Entertains and Enchants October Luncheon Attendees

Janice Deardorff is a native Tucsonan who earned her Bachelor of Music from the University of Arizona in 1980 with a degree in Music Education. With 42 years of experience in education, including teaching music in middle school and high school, she has developed curricula in the public and private sectors throughout her educational career. Janice has a deep appreciation for American western heritage. Her passion for keeping alive frontier history, traditions, and values takes shape through teaching, the arts, and interactive experiences she designs to help others develop a similar appreciation.

A singer-songwriter as well as a teacher, Janice enjoys sharing her original songs along with old-time cowboy classics that tell the stories of the West. She was a two-time nominee for the Crescendo Award,

through the Western Music Association (WMA). The WMA, an international organization, encourages and supports the preservation, performance, and composition of historical, traditional, and contemporary music and poetry of the West. She has recorded two music CDs: *Part of the West* and *Just a Horse*. Both albums are played on the radio nationwide and internationally.

Janice has performed locally at Tanque Verde Guest Ranch, White Stallion Guest Ranch, Arizona Folklore Preserve, and Equine Voices Horse Rescue Ranch. She has traveled extensively, performing and sharing western music in Arizona, Colorado, Texas, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Washington State. Deardorff enjoys combining her skills as an educator and as an entertainer to preserve our American western heritage.

## November's Lunch "A Bridge in the Desert" Features Local Minister

Rev. Owen Chandler, November featured guest speaker, will tell us about "A Bridge in the Desert." He served 13 months in Iraq in 2016 as a chaplain and received a Bronze Star. He is the senior pastor at Saguaro Christian Church. He has been married for 10 years and has three children.

Come for a powerful and inspiring presentation by Rev. Chandler to help us celebrate Veteran's Day, and enjoy a delicious lunch with good company and friends.



## Barbara Macpherson Belled in May



Barbara Macpherson holds her newly awarded Ben's Bell.

Annie Schlessinger wrote this article about our First Vice-President honored by receiving a Ben's Bell on May 9.

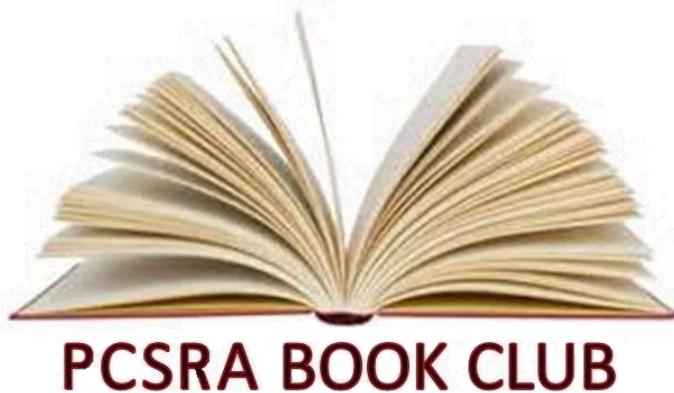
Blind and visually impaired folks can become socially isolated. Barbara Macpherson combated this by helping to found Tucson Society of the Blind, a weekly group which provides education, entertainment and socialization. She currently serves as Vice-President and Program Chair. I am a member. She recruits and works with volunteers who assist at meetings and field trips. Barbara recently ran a successful Rodeo Concert as a fund raiser.

She is active in Tucson chapter of National Federation of the Blind. She has served on the board and currently does notifications. Barbara is an example of the philosophy of living life as we want and does not let blindness hold her back.

She periodically provides training for Sun Van drivers on how to assist and interact with blind and visually impaired riders.

Barbara uses her personal experiences with vision loss and training to reach out and assist others in working toward independent living which is meaningful and satisfying. She mentors individuals by providing useful information and emotional support and stays in touch with many individuals to encourage them.

Barbara is an example of what a visually impaired person can do including line dancing. She is making a difference in people's lives.



By Jim Marr

We had a very lively discussion about Tears We Cannot Stop by Michael Eric Dyson, our September selection. Everyone shared their passion, history, and hopes for an improving America.

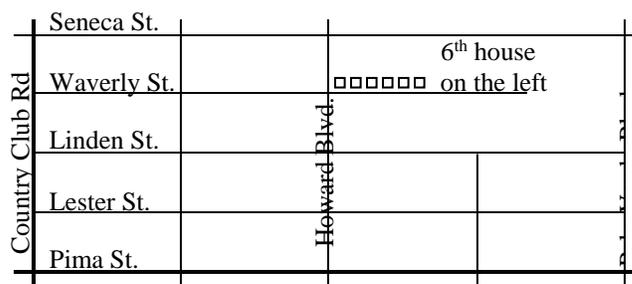
We decided to go in a different direction for this month. Our selection is Giant of the Senate by Al Franken. This is a book about an unlikely campaign that had an even more improbable ending: the closest outcome in history and an unprecedented eight-month recount saga.

Franken's book is about what happens when an unlikely candidate gets a chance to serve in the United States Senate and, defying low expectations, actually turns out to be good at it. It's a book about our deeply polarized, frequently depressing, and occasionally inspiring political culture, written from inside the belly of the beast.

In this candid personal memoir, the reader sees inside the halls of Congress and behind the scenes of some of the most dramatic and/or hilarious moments of his new career in politics.

I always enjoy the variety of this club's choices. There's some spicy variety in our reading! Join us for some invigorating discussion and enjoyable companionship with fellow bibliophiles.

On October 26, 1:00pm, we will be meeting at Steve Poe's home, at 3331 E. Waverly Street (east of Country Club) between Pima and Grant.





## The Empire Ranch—a Western Treasure in Tucson’s Back Yard

The historic Empire Ranch was founded in 1876 when Walter L. Vail and Herbert R. Hislop purchased a 160-acre ranch from Edward Nye Fish and Simon Silverberg. It is located north of present-day Sonoita, a short, beautiful drive from Tucson. In its 141-year history, it became one of the largest cattle ranches in southwestern Arizona and continues as a working cattle ranch today.

The Vail (1876-1928) and Boice (1928-1969) families owned and operated the Empire Ranch for over 90 years. Between 1969 and 1988 it was owned by two private corporations which continued ranching under lease arrangements. In 1988, with public support for preserving the ranch and its grasslands from possible development, a series of land exchanges put the property into public ownership under the administration of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The original ranch properties are now within the BLM’s Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (LCNCA). In 1997, a group of private citizens, working in partnership with the BLM, formed the Empire Ranch Foundation (ERF) as a volunteer 501(c)(3) charitable organization, dedicated to preserving and interpreting the Empire Ranch historic buildings and surrounding landscape for future generations.

The LCNCA and the Empire Ranch Headquarters are open to the public 365 days a year during daylight hours. At the Headquarters you’ll find over ten ranch buildings and structures and a half-mile interpreted Heritage Discovery Trail. The ERF sponsors events throughout the year including docent-led tours of Headquarters on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month at 11 am.

Don’t miss the Annual Roundup & Open House, held this year on November 4<sup>th</sup>--an exciting family-friendly event celebrating Arizona’s Western history and culture. There is no charge to attend the Roundup; a parking donation is requested. For more information, visit [www.empireranchfoundation.org](http://www.empireranchfoundation.org).

## Scholarship Recipient Clear on Education and Career Goals

Paige Brown, the 2017 recipient of the \$2,000 PCSRA scholarship, sent a letter of thanks to our Scholarship Chair, Judy Hokett.

June 16, 2017

Dear Ms. Judy Hokett,



Thank you for choosing me from among many applicants to receive the generous Pima County School Retirees Association Scholarship. I greatly appreciate the investment you have made in my education and future career.

With your support, I am able to continue to pursue my undergraduate degree program in the College of Education, majoring in Deaf Studies with an Education Interpreting emphasis. In the fall, I will enter into my third year of the major program and will be beginning my practicum interpreting for students in Southern Arizona public schools. I am so excited to get into the field and grow as a professional.

My passions lie in Deaf Studies, American Sign Language Interpreting, and Special Education and Rehabilitation. Your contribution to my education will enable me to work to improve and to promote understanding of cultural differences between the Deaf and Hearing communities. By becoming an interpreter, I provide deaf children and adults the ability to eliminate the language barrier, which enables self-advocacy to receive opportunities that are equal to those of others, regardless of ability.

My future academic goals are to further my education and attend the University of Arizona as a graduate student to earn my Master’s degree in Deaf Education and Rehabilitation Counseling for the Deaf.

I am grateful to the Pima County School Retirees Association for believing in me and blessing me with this scholarship to continue my studies at the University of Arizona.

Many thanks,

Paige A. Brown

## Gaslight Theatre: Fun Times & Fund Times



Plan to attend "The Lone Stranger" with 53 of your best friends from PCSRA on February 18, 2018, at 3:00 pm. Judy Hokett has reserved 54 seats, including a row for those who are mobility challenged. Tickets are \$27, sold in advance only, with \$21.67 going to The Gaslight and the other \$5.33 going to the PCSRA Scholarship Fund. That \$5.33 is tax-deductible. Tickets will be available for sale at the November Luncheon until we sell out. They do make great Christmas presents. If you want to be sure to have one or more tickets, please notify Terry Bagwell or Judy Hokett to get your name on the list and pay your \$27! It's not highbrow, but it's FUN!



## Sun Van Provides Transportation for Tucsonans with Disabilities

By Barbara Macpherson

Sun Van the para-transit service is a lifesaver for me. I take Sun Van to Tucson Society of the Blind meetings, exercise, doctors, and out to lunch.

Rides on Sun Van cost \$3 each way for regular fare and \$1.50 for economy fare. To arrange transportation, you call a reservationist up to one week ahead to schedule your ride. They will give you a half-hour window time to pick you up. The drivers will only wait for two minutes; so you have to be ready to board.

You have to qualify for Sun Van by filling out an American Disability Act Application. Once accepted, fares are charged electronically to your credit card.

To get an application call 791-4100 or go to [www.sunvan.com](http://www.sunvan.com)



## Retirement News

~ Jerry Holmes

### TO DO LIST

- Travel
- Write a book
- Volunteer
- Pursue interests
- Enjoy family

## Legislators Play the Shell Game with Our Health Insurance Trust Fund.

Since 2011, the Arizona Legislature has "swept" approximately \$275 million from the Health Insurance Trust Fund. According to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, those sweeps are responsible for healthcare premium hikes for current and retired employees that were announced on September 18<sup>th</sup>. That \$275 million would have been sufficient to cover all premium increases being implemented.

The fund is a repository used by state agencies to pay a large portion of state employees' health care premiums. The legislature has been using the funds to cover costs in other areas for which they did not want to appropriate money from the General Fund. State Rep. Mark Cardenas (D) said, "... (It) has been the Legislature's personal piggy bank for eight years."

Effective Jan. 1, the premium increases average \$151.32 annually for state employees who pay 10% of their premiums. Retirees will be hit harder since they pay all of their insurance premiums with the lowest increase to be \$711.60 annually for an individual with a Medicare supplement policy. Rep. David Farnsworth (R) said, "When the legislature sweeps the fund over and over again, and then we come back and we have a crisis, we refund the fund on the backs of state employees. I don't think that's right."

### Six Guiding Principles of Education

- (1) The public should no longer remain ignorant.
- (2) Education should be paid for, controlled, and sustained by an interested public.
- (3) Education will be best provided in schools that embrace children from a variety of backgrounds.
- (4) Education must be non-sectarian.
- (5) Education must be taught by the spirit, methods, and discipline of a free society.
- (6) Education should be provided by well-trained, professional teachers.

Horace Mann, *The Common School Journal*, 1838

## Legislators Aim to Represent Us Cut Off People's Voices at the Ballot Box

An attorney from one of the groups supporting Arizona's voucher expansion legislation has charged that Arizona State Rep. Isela Blanc (D) doctored petitions that were submitted as part of the anti-voucher referendum. The attorney represents the Betsy DeVos-funded organization American Federation for Children (AFC). Arizona's Attorney General is looking into the matter to determine if criminal charges are warranted.

In the meantime, Rep. David Livingston (R) has asked for an internal ethics investigation by the House that could result in Rep. Blanc's expulsion. The allegation is that Rep. Blanc was photographed with a partially completed petition in-hand that did not have a checkmark to indicate whether she was a paid or volunteer collector of signatures on that petition. Recent state law says the appropriate box must be checked before the petition is circulated.

A similar allegation has been made against Christine Marsh, the 2016 Arizona Teacher of the Year, a Democrat who is running for the State Senate in the Paradise Valley area. AFC-funded robocalls, from a Washington, D.C. number, were made for 11 days informing recipients in her district that Marsh had committed a felony of tampering with a petition because a photograph showed a petition she was circulating was lacking that same checkmark.

Save Our Schools (SOS) submitted all of the petitions to the Secretary of State on August 8<sup>th</sup>. A new law allowing lawsuits regarding petitions went into effect on August 9<sup>th</sup>. A lawsuit was filed



## Education News

~ Jerry Holmes



on August 23<sup>rd</sup> by attorneys representing Americans for Prosperity, a Koch brothers-funded group. That suit alleges all manner of technical problems with the petitions and asks that the referendum be decertified.

The basis for that lawsuit is being challenged by an attorney for SOS stating that there had been a law allowing challenges to petitions that was repealed in 2015. They claim that since the petitions were submitted one day prior to the implementation of the new law, there is no basis for the current suit. The claims and counter claims on each side go well beyond the checkmark issue, but typify the picayune nature of the arguments.

In early September, the referendum was certified as qualified for the 2018 ballot as Prop. 305. The language of Prop 305 will require a "NO" vote to defeat voucher expansion. If the voters were to reject voucher expansion, it would then require a three-quarter majority vote by the legislature to make any changes to the existing voucher law. For that reason, some are urging the legislature to repeal the expansion before it goes to voters. The legislature could then make another effort at voucher expansion. The sponsor of the voucher expansion bill in question, Sen Debbie Lesko, says the process has a long way to go before such a decision is made.

## Wallet Hub Statistics Rank Education in Arizona Last (51<sup>st</sup>), as Usual

Arizona was recently ranked as the 51<sup>st</sup> worst state or district (of 51) in which to teach by Wallet Hub. The combination of teacher/student ratio, teacher compensation, per pupil spending and other factors led to the dismal ranking for Arizona. Arizona ranked next to last in Highest Projected Teacher Turnover and second to last in Highest Teacher/Student Ratio.

Arizona was ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in per pupil spending, underspent by only Indiana, Utah and Idaho. Other indicators, such as Average Teacher Starting Salary and Average Teacher Salary as well as Average Teacher Pension and Share of Uncertified Teachers, were also considerations in the study.

The Arizona Republic reported in late September that 526 teachers had already quit or just stopped coming to work so far this year. According to the Republic report, 1,328 classrooms have no teacher and nearly 2,500 classrooms have a teacher without any training in education.

## First of Three Reports on Arizona Charters Points to Profit-Driven Practices

The Grand Canyon Institute, an Arizona think tank that claims to be a non-profit centrist research organization, has issued the first of three reports focused on charter schools in Arizona. The reports are based on three years of “exhaustive research and forensic accounting of data...” The institute says the second report will be issued in the fall and the third before the end of the year. At the end of last year, Arizona had 547 charter schools with about 180,000 students enrolled.

Released September 17<sup>th</sup>, the 90-page first report focused on charter school funding issues. A seven-page Executive Summary details several questionable procedures that can be grouped into four areas of concern: dubious financial practices, policies placing profit over meeting the primary function of educating students, the ineffectiveness of that education, and the lack of accountability for taxpayer monies.

One area the report hones in on is the business practices typical of charter schools that would be impossible in public district schools. Those transactions include frequent “related party transactions” (relative or business associate as beneficiary), high executive compensation compared to comparable public sector salaries and lower classroom spending. The report states “many ... have found opportunities to benefit themselves through financial transactions that are specifically forbidden in public district schools.” and “Current financial practices by most charters fall short of sound business practices and the public’s expectations as to how their educational dollars should be spent.”

Regarding the priority of profit over the product delivered to the public, the report includes the following quotes: “...charter holders and their corporate boards have created financial arrangements that benefit ownership at the expense of students and teachers.” “Numerous cases were found where administrators’ salaries are shockingly high for the number of students they oversee.”

**Charter holders ... have ...financial arrangements that benefit ownership at the expense of students and teachers.**

Regarding reduced classroom spending the report says, “The losers in this mix appear to be taxpayers, teachers, and students in a majority of cases. Charter school teachers on average earn 20% less than their public school colleagues while 43% of charters do not offer a retirement or savings plan for their employees.”

Citing a 42% failure rate since 1994, the report says (euphemistically), “charter finances and governance need attention.” Regarding academic underperformance the report states, “...the charter sector overall underperforms academically for students of similar demographic backgrounds in the same area. Two independent studies found demographically similar students did just as well or better than average in public schools.”

The report cites the lack of accountability for charters. “Fundamentally, charter schools do not offer parents and their children true school choice when they operate without the financial accountability and transparency demanded of ‘competing’ public district schools.” “...revenue from the state’s General Fund designated for educational purposes instead disproportionately benefits the charter school holders and corporate board members of charter schools.”

**The law’s silence on these issues is deafening.**

The report makes several Key Recommendations that would tighten practices and accountability for charter schools. In conclusion the Executive Summary states, “While information in these policy reports may be alarming, none of it, under Arizona state law, is presently illegal.” In fact, it concludes, “The law’s silence on these issues is deafening.”

The Executive Summary can be found at [http://grandcanyoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/GCI-Policy-Report-Exec-Summary-Following-the-Money\\_Sept\\_17\\_2017.pdf](http://grandcanyoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/GCI-Policy-Report-Exec-Summary-Following-the-Money_Sept_17_2017.pdf)

The full report can be found at [http://grandcanyoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/GCI-Policy-Report-Following-the-Money\\_Sept\\_17\\_2017.pdf](http://grandcanyoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/GCI-Policy-Report-Following-the-Money_Sept_17_2017.pdf)

# Farewell



**Anderson, Marjorie** (77) ~ 9/21;

Teacher, Oro Valley

**\*Barker, Mary Lou** (86) ~ 9/29;

Teacher, TUSD

**Clark, Hezekiah** (95) ~ 9/9;

Teacher



**Fox, Margaret** (84) ~ 9/6;

Teacher, Amphitheater

**Heidel, Sharon** (67) ~ 9/6;

Teacher, TUSD

**Lewis, Mary Ellen** (79) ~ 8/27;

Teacher

**Lindstrom, Deborah** (68) ~ 9/9;

Computer Educ. TUSD

**McConner, Stanley** (87) ~ 9/24;

Teacher, Doolen MS



**Riesgo, Sylvia** (82) ~ 9/28;

Classroom Aide, TUSD

**Swanson, Beatrice** (81) ~ 9/9;

Elementary Teacher, 23 years

**Thompson, Cheryl** (73) ~ 9/13;

Sp. Ed. Teacher, Desert View

**Tompkins, Mary Lou** (95) ~ 9/21;

Fine Arts, TUSD

**Wiltshire, Jose** (61) ~ 9/15;

Teacher



\*PS: Mary Lou Barker,  
a PCSRA member,  
used to play the piano  
for our luncheons.

# Poetry Corner



## *dogma, truth, and mountains*

*I seek the truth, not dogma, that seductive simple answer  
that low-hanging fruit for the lazy  
but truth is like a puzzle with many pieces that paint the  
picture  
when all parts are put together, truth is like my Rincon  
Mountains  
so one dimensional in the distance  
but the slow steady climb reveals its true face, not a flat  
photograph  
but a land of wrinkles so real, the canyons, the arroyos,  
the trails cut over time  
the next ridgeline surprising me, the unexpected  
the ever changing image of these mountains so different  
at the trail head  
and the purples and blues evaporate  
as the breath of the desert wind brushes my face playing  
a soft song  
as the sun waves goodbye in the west working its magic  
as the light paints a pastoral picture  
and the mountains in front of me wear a different face  
as I move further through them absorbing the ever  
changing hues  
as I hear the crunch of the gritty sand beneath my feet  
I begin to truly know these mountains,  
but there's another ridgeling ahead, another opportunity  
to truly see this thing called truth waiting in the distance*

*peter m bourret 2017*