

# Fire destroys home on Christmas Day

FROM STAFF REPORTS

A home in Yuma was completely lost in a Christmas Day fire.

According to a press release, the Rural/Metro Fire Department received a call reporting a house on fire in the 16000 block of South Avenue A 1/2 in Somerton at about 11 Tuesday morning. Firefighters arriving at the scene of the blaze encountered heavy smoke and flames coming from the residence. Rural/Metro requested help from the Somerton Fire Department, Yuma Proving Ground Fire Department and the Yuma Fire Department.

All the fire departments worked together to quickly put the fire out and eliminate any hotspots. According to the release, the home was a complete loss and three vehicles were damaged in the fire. Four people were reportedly transported to Yuma Regional Medical Center. The Red Cross was called to assist the family. The blaze is under investigation at this time.



LOANED PHOTO

CREWS FROM RURAL/METRO, SOMERTON, Yuma Proving Ground and Yuma fire department battled a fire at a residence Tuesday morning. Four people were transported to the hospital. The blaze destroyed the home and damaged three vehicles.

## CONGRESS

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just that -- could depend on some variables.

One of the more interesting scenarios would involve California actually losing one of its 53 representatives because of possible faster growth in Minnesota than the current numbers suggest. If that happens, Brace said, it would be the first time in California's nearly 160-year history that it actually lost a seat.

And he said it's possible that New York actually could lose two seats, depending on the projection modeling.

While that might help Texas or Montana, Brace does not see the numbers giving Arizona more than

one new seat.

All that then creates an interesting scenario of how to redivide the state in 10 pieces rather than nine.

Officially speaking, politics will not play a role here.

That's because voters in 2000 stripped the responsibility of drawing lines away from legislators and gave it to the Independent Redistricting Commission. It is composed of two Republicans, two Democrats and chaired by an independent chosen by the other four.

But politics does matter. The initiative that created the commission requires that it consider a variety of factors, including respecting communities of interest, using county boundaries when possible and have districts of roughly equal

population.

More to the point, what that law also mandates is that commissioners create as many politically competitive districts as possible.

The 2018 election resulted in the election of five Democrats and four Republicans, a pickup of one seat by Democrats.

Political consultant Chuck Coughlin points out that the most rapid growth in Arizona is occurring in Maricopa County. He said that makes it likely that any new district created likely would be carved, at least in part, out of districts already in the county.

Seven of the nine existing districts touch on populated areas of Maricopa County, with five of these wholly within the county.

Coughlin said one likely move would be to redraw

the lines in the East Valley area of the county.

He said CD 9, the district that until recently was represented by Kyrsten Sinema, could be carved up a bit to give Democrats a bit less of an edge and make it more politically competitive.

But in creating a new CD 10 in the area, the commission might have to alter the makeup of the heavily Republican CD 5 on the county's southeast edge which is currently represented by Andy Biggs.

Each change has a ripple effect through the rest of the state. And with the population growth in the Phoenix area, that could mean the rural districts will become even larger geographically to cobble together find the approximately 740,000 people necessary.

## CITY

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ing MPW Industrial Services, which is building a 30,000-square-foot industrial water regeneration plant that will eventually have 44 new jobs. The four-story Home2 Suites by Hilton, a 114-room extended stay hotel, is now being built at the northeast corner of 1st Street and Madison Avenue.

Not surprisingly, Yuma received recognition as one of the top cities in the country in the percentage of job creation and increase in average family income.

"The developers and builders and everyone is busy and have plenty of work. They can't find enough workers," Wilkinson said.

Another project is soon coming to fruition. With help from the late Sen. John McCain, this year funding for a new Arizona State Veteran Home in Yuma was finalized. The project should break ground in late spring on land donated by the city in the vicinity of Avenue 6E and 34th Street. The facility will hold four 16-bed long-term care units and one memory care unit.

One major project that came to a conclusion is the Mesa Heights Apartments, a 58-unit complex built on Arizona Avenue. The new \$13.8 million housing development, the result of public-private partnerships, is intended for low- and moderate-income families.

The project is a victory for stakeholders who overcame obstacles, including an arson fire in January that destroyed part of the project under construction. Police arrested five

suspects in connection to the arson, making the victory even sweeter.

Yuma also celebrated the opening of Playa Linda, the city's third riverfront beach. Located in the West Wetlands Park, it has an ADA-accessible ramp, seating wall, open grass area, sand beach, shade trees and new trails connecting to the park.

The beautification of the city continued, with murals popping up everywhere. Internationally known artist MOMO painted a mural on the three-story wall of the Yuma Art Center. NexGen Arts Committee's Mural-a-Month program brought in Mexican artist Adry del Rocio to paint a colorful mural on a wall of the Del Sol Market on 4th Avenue. Soon after, graffiti depicting hate symbols and racial slurs appeared, but the hate messages brought people of all races and walks of life together to erase the graffiti.

Yuma also faced some challenges in 2018. Following initial discussions on how to better compensate police officers and stem their loss to higher-paying agencies, some citizens claimed the city misused funds to build the Pacific Avenue Athletic Complex last year. Consequently, Wilkinson announced an independent audit into the allegations. The auditor, a bond counsel and the city's longtime bond attorney said that they found no irregularities or illegalities in the city's finances.

However, the individuals accusing the city weren't satisfied because the audit did not specifically focus on the PAAC and other reasons and are still seeking answers.

After coming to a consensus, police and city staff have narrowed down a list of pay plan options, and the council is set to continue the discussions next year. The city is also considering raises for all employees. Any new pay plan would take effect the next budget year which starts July 1.

The city's law enforcement is facing challenges, but it also entered into great partnerships, Wilkinson said. AWC is working on a law enforcement academy, and Yuma is part of a joint effort including Yuma County and other cities. It will open in the spring and should cut costs to the Police Department, which currently sends newly hired officers out of town for training.

"It will help everybody in the community," Wilkinson said.

Another challenge faced by the city are the deteriorating condition of roads. In response, a citizens initiative asked Yuma voters to decide whether they wanted to pay an additional half-cent sales tax to fix city roads. The levy would have raised about \$10 million annually, enough to fix 20 miles of city roads per year. Voters defeated the initiative, dubbed Proposition 411.

"That was disappointing. Citizens had put that together," Wilkinson said. "There is no funding to keep up the roads. It will be a huge challenge for the city. We will continue to do the best we can, but there's no money to maintain roads."

The city also stepped in after a contract dispute led to Charter Communications/Spectrum to drop Northwest Broadcasting

stations KYMA, KSWT and Estrella TV programming from the air in Yuma in February. Yuma and the other cities filed a FCC complaint against Charter/Spectrum, which denied any wrongdoing. Spectrum reached an agreement with Northwest in June and the stations returned to the air.

In another dispute, the regional Salvation Army announced that it would be dropping the Boys and Girls Club affiliation at the end of this year and become a multi-generational Red Shield community center. Some Yuma donors that helped raise \$1.7 million, including \$1.2 million for the construction of a new building and the renovation of the existing building, said they felt "duped" by the organization. The city, which donated the building to the Salvation Army, filed a lawsuit against the organization.

In other ongoing projects, the city began the process of updating development fees and the Mesa del Sol Property Owners Association submitted a formal letter requesting annexation. At this point the group is only exploring the option; the formal letter triggers the information-gathering process. In case the annexation goes through, the city has been looking into buying Far West Water and Sewer.

Wilkinson is optimistic about the new year. "The council is well represented, with a tremendous council that does a great job with moving the community forward," he said. "The outlook is very bright for our city."

## Obituaries

Allen James Clark

July 7, 1946 - December 22, 2018

Allen James Clark, known to friends as Jim, died peacefully surrounded by his loved ones on December 22nd, 2018 in Yuma, Arizona at the age of seventy-two. Jim was born on July 7th, 1946 in Johnstown, Pennsylvania and lived there until he was twelve; his family then moved to Phoenix. In high school, he played football, participated in student government, and was voted "Most Likely to Succeed". Jim received his bachelor's degree in Government and then his law degree from the University of Arizona. He graduated near the top of his law class. Beginning in 1971, he ran a successful law practice for over forty years, most of which was practiced in Yuma. A few of his many accomplishments include: serving on the Arizona Supreme Court Committee on Character and Fitness, being named one of the one hundred best civil trial lawyers in Arizona in 2011 and 2012, and serving as a judge on the Yuma County Superior Court. Along with his first wife, Carol, he lovingly raised and generously provided for two daughters, Ann and Sarah, in Yuma, Arizona. In 2006, he married his beloved wife Lili.



Aside from his professional life, Jim had a deep love for the outdoors and fishing. He was a smart, creative, funny, generous, and passionate man. No one was better at celebrating than Jim - he was the first to pop a bottle of champagne when the occasion warranted it. Jim continued to provide help and support to his children and grandchildren in multiple ways long after they were grown. Jim will be sorely missed by his wife, Lili Clark, his daughters Ann Clark (Jason) and Sarah Clark (Jerry), his brother Bill Clark (Nancy), his sister Jeanne Clark, his grandsons, Zeke, Leo, and Cyrus and his friend and paralegal, Jeanie Sullivan (Jim). Jim was predeceased by his mother, Marion Clark, and his father, William Clark.

A funeral service will be held at 2 PM on Friday, December 28, 2018 at Johnson Mortuary, 1415 S. 1st Avenue Yuma, Arizona. A reception at the Garden Cafe Restaurant, 250 South Madison Ave, will begin at 4:30 PM. A graveside service will be held at 9:30 AM on December 31st.

Memorial donations may be made to: The National Park Foundation ([www.nationalparks.org](http://www.nationalparks.org)). Please sign the guestbook at [www.legacy.com/obituaries/yumasun](http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/yumasun)

Pamela Smith

April 29, 1967 - December 13, 2018

Pamela Smith entered into rest on December 13, 2018 in Yuma, Arizona. She was born on April 29, 1967 in Phoenix, Arizona.

She lived an exciting, adventures life. She had a brilliant smile with a contagious laugh. She worked as an in home care provider. During her time away she educated herself in various trades such as electrician, carpentry and much more.



Pamela enjoyed art and drawing. She was very competitive and excelled at sports. She is remembered playing Hacky-Sack as she did in her youth. She is forever remembered with her thick long hair blowing in the wind.

Pamela is survived by her mother, Birdiann Parker, brother, Sheldon Smith, Sister, Roxanne Smith, son, Ernest Aguilar III, daughter, Spring Michaud (House), son, Freddy Smith and numerous grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her father, Sylvester Smith, sisters, Bonnie Parker (Arriola) and Shelly Smith, grandmother, Ruby Parker, great grandmother, Hippa Parker, great grandfather, Victor Parker.

Tribal Rites will be Thursday, December 27, 2018 from 5:00 pm at the Quechan Big House with cremation at 12:00 am.

Pallbearers will be friends and family in attendance. Please sign the guestbook at [www.legacy.com/obituaries/yumasun](http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/yumasun)

## Border volunteer faces Jan. 14 trial in immigrant harboring case

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TUCSON — A volunteer for a group that tries to prevent immigrants from dying in the Arizona desert is scheduled for a Jan. 14 trial on charges that he illegally harbored people in the United States.

Scott Daniel Warren was arrested in January after federal agents conducted surveillance on a building in Aja where two immigrants were given food, water, beds and clean clothes.

He has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

He's a volunteer with the immigrant assistance group

No More Deaths.

His arrest came after the group released videos of a Border Patrol agent kicking over water jugs meant for immigrants and of another agent pouring water on the ground. Immigrants who sneak into the United States through the desert face many dangers, including walking for days in scorching heat.

**Karl K. Koenig**

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