

Riverside hosts presentation on airport's history

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BULLHEAD CITY — The rich, documented history of the Bullhead City area often overlooks one key component: aviation.

One California man, George Petterson, who has long local ties, wants to change that with a free public presentation to the Colorado River Historical Society this weekend.

Petterson's presentation will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. Nevada time Saturday in the Starview Room at Don Laughlin's Riverside Resort and Casino. For more information on the Colorado River Museum, Historical Society or Petterson's free presentation, call 928-754-3399, or email either crhs@frontier.net or lisa@northernvertex.com.

More than 50 years ago, Petterson leased a parcel of land just east of the Colorado River. The land, owned by the federal Bureau of Land Management, became a small privately operated airstrip. Petterson used his skills as an engineer, fixed base operator and entrepreneur to further develop the fledgling Bullhead City airport. In the 1970s, he sold it to Laughlin town founder Don Laughlin, who further developed it before transferring it to Mohave County.

Today, the self-sustaining Mohave County Airport Authority operates the Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport, which grew from an airstrip that handled small aircraft to an airport that now accommodates commercial, military, business, executive and general aviation aircraft and passengers, with a direct and indirect economic impact of well over \$120 million in the Tri-state area.

During a trip to Bullhead City last year, Petterson visited the Colorado River Historical Society and Museum. He learned that books and brochures about the area did not include much history about the local airport, and he wanted to change that.

In preparing for his presentation, Petterson found his personal aerial photos of the airport and surrounding area from 1971, 1981 and 1984. He gave framed copies to Don Laughlin, the MCAA and the museum. "These bring back a lot of memories," Laughlin said.

Now, Petterson has come full circle, from founding and developing the local airport to making sure that its history is remembered. "We are so thankful you walked into the museum," said Elsie Needles, Colorado River Historical Society and Museum president, as she accepted the framed photos. "We have a history of Bullhead City but not the airport. That has now changed. I encourage everyone to come to his presentation."