

Taft, California

Greetings from Pete Gianopulos, Class of 1942

The Taft Newsletter

"I Remember When" Boom Town Taft, California

By

Edward F. "Eddie" Coffee

(First in a series)

During the next few articles, some of the writings of Eddie Coffee will be shown. Eddie came to Taft in 1920 and died several years ago. He was a great source of knowledge about Taft and the area. For many years he served as the elected county's constable of the area.

These articles are from what he had written in an unpublished typed account of his memories as one who grew up and was educated in the Taft schools and lived here as an adult for many years.

1920

I went to school to the second grade in a little school wood frame building in the 100 block of Asher Avenue and my teacher was Evelyn Maxey. There were just two rooms in the building, both second grade. There are few of us left that still live in Taft. Some left town, some have died. Those still living in Taft today are Irene Pilgrim, Francis (Perrigo) Eiland, Ray Calhoun, Don Hines and Norman Plaughter.

On the north side of the school was Witherow's Funeral Home. On the south side, on the corner (northeast corner of Asher and Pico), was the Methodist Church where I attended Sunday school.

First grade classes were held in little building in the 200 block on the west side of Asher Avenue. Also in the area is the South Side Theater, Perrigo's Furniture (210 Asher), Mickey's Penny Candy Store, and the South Taft Fire Department (323 Asher).

1921

Third and fourth grade classes, two of each were held at the Harding School (Named after the President at the time) on the south side of Asher Street, more commonly known as the "The Little Yellow School House." Miss Hayden, a husky buxom lady, was the principal.

My third grade teacher was tiny five footer named Miss Brisco. She had a large purple birth mark covering the right side of her face.

1922

My fourth grade teacher was medium build, her name was Miss Norton.

Lefty York and Monty Reedy came to Taft during this third grade and fourth grade period. Left from Coalinga and, I think, Monty Reedy came from that same area, but I am not quite sure.

The one and only janitor from the Harding School was Erwin, a grand old gentleman! All the kids loved him.

1923

Fifth graders from the Harding School and Taft Primary got to go to the brand new school. It was called Lincoln School, and it covered the same grounds today.

There wasn't too much improving or expanding of Lincoln School until after the 1952 earthquake. The buildings were condemned; however, I never saw such an effort to destroy good buildings. They pulled and banged for days it seemed. I watched a big rig with a huge iron wrecking ball bang into the second floor, time after time. I drove by a couple of hours later and all they had was hole in the wall just the size of the iron ball.

The superintendent from 1923 through 1926 was James Joyce. The principal was Sarah Gray. My teachers were as follows:

Fifth grade-- Miss Andrews; Sixth grade -- Miss Lee; Seventh grade -- Miss Sample; Eighth grade -- Miss McFadden and Mrs. Tomerlin.

(NOTE: Mrs. Tomerlin's husband taught in the high school and Taft Junior College. When Marion Martin, the high school student body president and a star football player was killed in and a school bus accident in the fall of 1927 as the high school football team was leaving Santa Maria after a football game, it was Mr. Tomerlin who suggested that the Taft football field be named after

Marian Martin, hence the name Martin Memorial Stadium. Mr. and Mrs Omerlin were also instrumental in constructing the famous Bakersfield Inn on the highway south of Bakersfield, the first such lodging facility in the United States called a "Motel.")

Reader's Responses

From Jim Kinnebrew, Class of 1958, from Pebble Beach, California

Hi Pete, I've seen a few responses from Shirley Porter. My cousin from Maricopa, Jan Webb married an Ed Porter and I wonder if it's the same family. Could you send me her e-mail address.

Thanks, Jim Kinnebrew

From Shirley (Porter) Aney, Class of 1948, of Hacienda Heights, California

Thanks, Pete !!!!! Anxious to hear from Jim Kinnebrew. You know Edward Porter was my brother and yes, he did marry Jan Webb Shirley

From Coleen (Ballard) Hoskins, Class of 1968, of Fresno, California

Hi! Pete, Congratulations!! Would you tell Lyle Smith class of 1968 that our reunion will be in October. Is it possible you let him know to contact me at gense1950@yahoo.com for more information about our reunion.

Would you announce our 40th reunion in your newsletter. It will be October 24-26 in Taft. We are looking for classmates and can use all the help we can get to locate some classmates. Let me know what information you will post and I will get it to you.

Again, Congratulation!!

Coleen Ballard Hoskins, Class of 1968

(NOTE: I called Lyle Smith because I did not have the right e-mail address nor the right telephone number and relayed the message from Coleen to him.)

From Richard Pannell, Class of 1958, of Bakersfield, California

Hi Pete, I too want to offer congrat's. As you well know I first met you in the spring of 1954, you were to be my counselor. I hadn't a clue as to how much of a part you play in the history of the great town of Taft at that time. I have never regretted having gone to school there. (you don't know how much harassment I take from my Bakersfield friends) We did have are advantages with all of the tax money from the oil. I agree with Delbert, you had a tough job with us, but you got us through it all. I offer my congratulations to Dr. Magee also. Dr. if you remember, you used to umpire softball in Little League (Actually I think it was called Pee Wee league) You would give me tips as I was a catcher at that time. For those that remember Pete. He was a star swimmer in high school for the Wildcats, thanks for all of the coaching you gave me Pete (Magee) in swimming. It is so good hear from all those that write you. I hope to see you Neal, Karen, Daphne, Delbert, and all of the others from the class of 1958. This is our BIG 50th.Richard Pannell now residing in Bakersfield--

From Susan (Putnam) Christiansen, Class of 1956, from Palo Alto, California

Dear Pete, In reading today's many replies to the newsletter (lots of congratulatory ones !!), I noted such as Neil McCabe's wondering about Roger Bailey. From TUHS '56, six of us came to Stanford, including Roger.

He is in the Frosh book, but not subsequent yearbooks. The alumni directory has "Mr. George Roger Bailey, Class '60 English" in Bakersfield and listed also as an analyst for Contel of California in Victorville.

Connections, connections.....how we all appreciate them.

Best regards, Susan Putnam Christiansen '56

(NOTE: Susan has worked for Stanford University of many years.)

From Robert Barrett, Class of 1958, from the Island of Antigua

Pete, Congratulations -- doesn't seem enough for what you have given all of us. Pete, your guidance changed and developed thousands of us.

I look forward to seeing you in the Spring.

Regards, Rob

(NOTE: Robert has developed and owns 27 resorts in the Caribbean with 4,000 employees with an office in Boca Raton in Florida. To see some of his resorts and what he has accomplished go to <http://www.eliteislandresorts.com>. Robert has never forgotten his roots. He did gardening for me when he worked for his father when they had a nursery on Harrison Street in Ford City.)

From Beverly (Merrill) Stafford, Class of 1960, of Fall River Mills, California

Hi Pete -- I'll add my congratulations to all those that you've already received. Taft was so fortunate that your folks decided to emigrate there, and we recipients of the Newsletter are lucky that your avocation is keeping us informed.

In sad answer to Neil McCabe's comments about the Baileys: Roger (who married Charlotte Summers, Class of '58 or '59) died about a year ago. He and my cousin, Jerry Blair, were best friends through high school, the Navy, and adulthood. Roger and Charlotte moved to Morro Bay - a place they loved -- after they learned of Roger's illness (pancreatic cancer, I believe.)

Do let us know when the induction takes place. I think one of the next inductees should be Larry Peahl.

Best regards and as always, thanks for all your efforts.

Beverly (Merrill) Stafford, Class of 1960

From Jim Dougherty, Class of 1956, from Santa Barbara, California

Pete, I want to add my congratulations on your selection into the Taft H.S. Hall of Fame. As has been said by so many before, you are most deserving and embody the values and character of the place we will always call home. With age, we all become aware that it is our warehouse of memories that shape and give context to our lives...especially our sense of humor. It has also been wonderful to read the notes of congratulations from so many of our Taft brethren, clearly it can be said people will show up when you give them what they want. I also should make mention that your induction mate, the other Pete is a "reasonable" selection as well, even though he's a Yalie. My best, [Jim](#)

From Tom Lutton, Class of 1955, from Fresno, California

Pete, Congratulations regarding your induction to the Taft High Hal of Fame, Very well deserved. You have done and are doing great job, It's always fun to read you e-mails. Also proud of Pete Magee. Hope he comes out so Dick and I can attend. Either way, nice going to both of you. Tom Lutton

From Lee Elton Smith, Class of 1955, of Washington, D.C.

Pete, Congratulations to the two Petes, Gianopulos and Magee. I have been able to keep up with Pete Magee over the years, and was able to meet him for dinner in Minneapolis in Oct last year. By distance messaging of the newsletter, I have kept up with Pete G and many of the TUHS graduates. This effort in keeping the newsletter going has served to add pages to history, and it is a part of your legacy. Thanks for all of your work. Lee Elton Smith

I must put my complete name down since I went by Elton throughout my life in Taft.

From Robert Page, Class of 1943, of the Crooked River Ranch, Oregon

As for my present location it is now in the Crooked River Ranch, Or. This is obviously on the Crooked River near the small town of Terrabonne, Or. which is seven miles north of Redmond. We have over 4,000 people on the ranch. Each residence must be one acre or larger. After my wife passed away in '05, I sold our home in Bend Or. I expanded and remodeled my oldest daughter's house here on the ranch. Being that she was alone it has turned out to be a good deal for the two of us. Thanks again Pete and keep the letters coming... Bob