

Taft, California
Greetings from Pete Gianopulos, Class of 1942
The Taft Newsletter

Boom Town Taft, California

By

Edward F. "Eddie" Coffee

(Third 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 constable for our area of the county.

These article are from an unpublished typewritten account of his memories as one who grew up and was educated in the Taft schools and lived here as an adult until his death.

I had interviewed Eddie for one of my "Taft Heritage" program. Later on I also interviewed Mrs. Tomerlin, his 8th grade teacher at Lincoln School in 1923. Toward the end of my interview, Eddie walked in and sat down next to his former teacher, and she recognized him. It was an interesting way to bring in one of her former students.

Mrs. Tomerlin's husband taught at Taft Union High School and Taft Junior College at the time. He was the teacher who suggested that Taft's football field by named after Marion Martin who was killed in the bus accident outside of Santa Maria as the team was riding back to Taft on the school bus after a game when the accident occurred -- a car running into the left side of the bus, killing the Taft High student body president who was seated in the front row seat behind the driver.

When the Tomerlin's left the teaching profession they started at the time the world famous and beautiful Bakersfield Inn located on Union Avenue -- the first to have been given the name as a "Motel."

All of the more than 200 videotapes are available from the West Kern Oil Museum.

Boom Days during the 1920's (continued)

Cost per month for food, lodging and clean linens ran about \$30.00.

Every night Center Street was like a carnival and everyone came to town. Wednesdays and Saturday nights were the busiest. These were the nights of the big dance at Buchanan's Dance Hall located at the (North West) corner of 6th and Main Streets.

The barber shops were full on these dance nights. Every man got a shave, a haircut and shoe shine. Some bought shampoo tonic and, once in a while, a bonmasello (mud pack).

At one time or another my father had a barber shop in six different locations. One on Wood Street had two bath tubs. You could get a used bar of soap and a clean towel of 25 cents.

Price list:

Haircut	75 cents
Shave	25 cents
Face massage	1.00 dollar
Shampoo	50 cents

A shine was 15 cents, but if you didn't leave a nickel of a dime tip you didn't get much of a shine the next time you came in.

On Center Street, between 4th and 5th Streets, there were four large pool halls, the B and B, Shamrock, Oak and Rex. Each pool hall had card games.

ENTERTAINMENT

In the same block, there were 6 houses of ill repute. The Luxor, Sparber, Bachelor, Oxford, Gem, and Krekler. Also, in other locations in town there were two more, the Gray Hotel and Taft Heights Hotel.

In each location there was a landlady (Madam) and four to six (prostitutes). Once in awhile, if the girls got too busy, the landladies would work a little until they took up the slack. During the boom days the price was \$3.00 for a quickie or, if they really wanted a party, you could stay all night for 20 bucks. When the depression hit, the quickie dropped to \$2.00 and you could bargain for the all-night fee.

Most popular landladies in those days were Suzie Rinker, Flo Baker, Kitty Mills and a German gal names Edna (nobody knew her name.)

The West Kern Oil Museum

At the annual dinner which was a very nice affair, Mile Turner, Class of 1956, of Kelseyville, California, gave the opening prayer. When I was able to talk with him he told me of his great friendship while going through school with Robert Barrett now of Antiqua. Turner told me that he and Bob were going to buy an older Buick and drive to South America.

Another pleasant surprise was when Carol (Clark) and Shirley (Cummins) Vierra of Visalia come up and introduced themselves. That was very nice of them to do that. Both are on my list of recipients of my Taft Newsletter. Carol's father was the administrator of Rec District for many years. Shirley's father, Iver, who trained and taught many to play tennis had the Taft High tennis courts named after him. Many was the time that the Iver and his wife and I would visit Pat and JoAnne Mills here in Taft. What was always amazing was to hear Iver recite poetry, some of the poetry it seemed like would go on for more than fifteen minutes. What a memory that man had.

Reader's Responses

John Wilt, Rancho Cordova CA, Class of 1955

Keep up the great work ... as long as it is fun for you.

Some day I hope to pass on my Wilt history for your vast historical records system ...

My grandfather John Wilt I (It was named after him) came to Taft in 1912 working for Standard Oil ... apparently he also was the President of the Taft Bank (I don't know how ... but I have a \$10 from the bank with his signature as the President !!) He and my grandmother moved to Bakersfield a few years later where he became the General Superintendent for Standard Oil San Joaquin Valley until he retired in 1937.

I have old pictures of Taft's oil camp etc ...

My dad and mom returned to Taft in 1927 as dad was the geologist and petroleum engineer for Honolulu Oil ...

I am also impressed with the successful folks I run across that lived their lives or started their lives in Taft. It is a unique well spring of special folks.

John Wilt

From Don Gillaspie, Class of 1958, in Taft, California

Hi Pete, For all the members of the class of 58, we will have our class REUNION this year on October 11 at OT's restaurant. Letters will be sent out to all class members at the end of March. You can put this in your news letter for those who are anxious to know.

Thanks Pete.

Don Gillaspie uchromateleprod@bak.rr.com

From Jerry Hord, Class of 1958, from Troy, Idaho

Thanks Pete, for all your time and energy in getting this news letter out. It is highly appreciated.

Congratulations on your induction into the Taft Hall Of Fame. It is well deserved from your years as a counselor and teacher alone, not to mention your contributions from your military service and as a citizen of the community.

Also, thank you to Rosalie and Lynne for info on the upcoming reunion. I was wondering where to fine the date. I haven't been to one, or to Taft, in 20 years and am looking forward to being there.

Jerry Hord, Troy Idaho

From Phyllis (Johnson) Solberg, Class of 1963, from Redding, California

Sunday, Feb. 17

Pete,

You might relay to Judy Meeks Kelley that if she was in the Class of '64, then Mom was her Home Economics teacher at Lincoln. Mom started teaching there in 1956, taking over for Ms. Lasley.

Phyllis Johnson Solberg

(NOTE: Phyllis' mother was Ella Johnson one of the Home Ec. teachers at Lincoln school before she transferred and became a member on the staff at Taft Union High School where she taught for many years. I considered Ella as a friend and fellow staff member.)

From Trice Harvey, Class of 1955, from Bakersfield

Big Brain: What a wonderful thing, this computer with E-mail!! I'm so happy for ALL my friends, who I read about, through your News Letter!!! Each name brings back so many good memories of my youthful days in Taft!!! I look forward each week to see what "Old Friends" will write in to you. Thanks Big Brain for all the enjoyment you create!!

Little Brain

From Judy (Meeks) Kelley, Class of 1964, from Los Angeles, California

Thanks to Gary Alexander for the email address for Coy Pierce. See, Pete - you not only do a wonderful service by bringing old friend and neighbors back together, you even reunite families!

Judy (Meeks) Kelley

(**NOTE:** What Judy is referring to is the Larry Pierce family that she is related too. Larry is Taft High's and the county's only a recipient of our country's Medal of Honor. The Taft Post Office will be named after Larry Pierce at proper ceremonies now in the planning stages. The bill before congress was sponsored by Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and in the House of Representatives by our own Kevin McCarthy before being signed into law by president Bush.)