

Taft, California

Greetings from Pete Gianopoulos, Class of 1942

The Taft Newsletter

Boom Town Taft, California

By

Edward F. "Eddie" Coffee

(Eleventh in the series)

The series will continue next week.

The Hall of Fame Dinner and Program

It was indeed an honor to have been elected and inducted into the Taft Union High School Hall of Fame on April 12, 2008. I was very enjoyable event where a huge crowd assembled. Many had attended from various places in California as well as out-of-state, included a former Taft High student and his wife who had flown in from Switzerland with his wife to be there.

The group was entertained the TUHS band with their director Amanda Posey providing the evening's music, including the School's Alma Mater and the Taft Fight song sung by the crowd in a very spirited way and rousing way. Mr. Bill Wickwire, retired former Taft High principal and made several introductions and explained who the voting is done.

After dinner each inductee was introduced after a videotape was shown on the large screen of the life of each candidate.

The master of ceremonies was Jeff Lemucchi (Class of 1974) who has morning show on which he is co-anchor over channel KBAK channel 29 or on Cable Channel 7, from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m. Jeff amused the audience with various and very interesting stories and amusing incidents in his life while a student. The audience was indeed amused with Jeff's ability to entertain.

The inductees were Pete Gianopoulos, Dr. J. Dykes Johnson, M. D.'s son was there to speak for his father who died several years ago, Donald Zumbro and Paul "Pete" Magee from St. Paul, Minnesota.

When each inductee was introduced, they were given a rousing standing ovation.

Each candidate was presented with a plaque similar to that which will hang in the main entryway to the building off 7th Street and proclamations and certificates from State Senator Roy Ashburn and our Washington Congressman Kevin McCarthy.

I was very much appreciative that the following members of my family were present -- my daughters Valerie Swearingen and her husband, Don; daughter Georgia and her husband Ron Freitas from Frisco, Texas; grandson Rodney Grantham and his wife, Elizabeth, from Costa Mesa; grandson Ryan Grantham from Bakersfield; sister Margaret and daughters, Valerie and Stacey from Los Osos, CA.; brother George and his wife, Dorothea, from Fresno; Helen Swearingen, mother of my son-in -law from Taft; and former fellow counselor from Taft High, Phyllis Toft. Several other friends were seated in a special reserved table.

Among them was Rear Admiral William L. Putnam (Ret) from Phoenix, Arizona and a counselee from the class of 1962 who was inducted into the Hall of Fame last year and Robert Barrett and his lovely wife, Irena. Robert, a former counselee of mine from the class of 1954, really surprised me by having flown in from Switzerland to be at the dinner and program. He has extensive holding in the Caribbean -- 26 resorts on the Island of Antigua and other Islands and still building, has a coffee plantation in Panama and property in Florida being supervised by another Taft High student who is an attorney -- Larry Basham.

To see the Barrett resorts go to <http://www.eliteislands.com> and <http://www.bahamabay.com> in Orlando.

Also present were Pat Mills and his wife, JoAnne. Pat is a retired principal of Taft High and JoAnne is an administrator for the Kern School District and an officer with the Kern Schools Federal Credit Union.

The other candidates had reserved tables for their families and friends.

It will be an evening long remembered

Reader's Responses

From Bill Wood, Class of 1964, from Bellevue, Nebraska

Hi Pete:

This is Bill Wood I had written asking if you could put me in touch with anyone who still lived in Taft from 1950. As luck would have it someone who reads your news letter saw the one that I was asking for this information told my cousin about it while she was in Taft for a funeral of a good friend. So my cousin and I found each other because of your newsletter. You have talked about the Masonic Temple (521 North Street) in the last couple of letters I remember it as a kid, it was next door to Lair's ice cream store (523 North Street) and across the street from Dykes Johnson's medical clinic (520 North Street). I'm a Blue Lodge, Scottish Rite Mason also a Shriner and Shrine Clown.

Bill Wood

From Charles Welby, Class of 1944, from Raleigh, North Carolina

Good Evening, Pete,

Thought I would try again an e-mail to you. Sent one to you from FEZ, MOROCCO, back in the first week in February. Its main purpose was to congratulate you on the TUHS Hall of Fame election, although I did put in a few other miscellaneous items. Anyway, congratulations again (even if belated).

Your latest Taft Newsletter and its section on Milton Ross brought up some facts and memories. When on those rare occasions that I am in Taft, driving past the Milton Ross Auditorium at the Taft Primary School invokes some of those memories. In short, like you, I had Mr. Ross for a manual training teacher in 6th through 8th grades at Lincoln School, graduating a couple of years after you did. I have in our kitchen the bread board that I made in one of the manual training/woodworking classes, and in our living room the bookcase that I made as the 8th grade project. Among my recollections of Mr. Ross is the fact that he had a nice bass voice and sang in the choir at the Presbyterian Church and sometimes soloed. I suspect that there were other places and occasions where he contributed vocally to a program.

Cheers, Charles Welby

From Jo Ann (Christian) Pratt, from Stockton, California

Pete: Re: Sues. They were Bobbie and Billy Sue. Not sure of the spelling of their first names but remember them well. I was in the class of 1948 so they had to be close to the same year.

Elmer Houchin was a partner of my father's on some coastal property near Pismo. My father had extensive real estate holdings there. He and my mother (Gordon and Joanna) managed many different kinds of businesses. The coastal property sometimes was opened in the summer when many of my cousins were on vacation and could work in the hardware, beach wear, motel, (called cabins, then) and other ventures. I always spent my summers in Oceana where my father had built the summer home in the 1920's. It was close to the Honolulu Oil Cabins and that is

where I would seek playmates. (NOTE: The Honolulu Oil Company had cabins in Oceana where their employees could stay whenever they wanted, and I believe there was little or no charge for rental of the cabins.) My older brothers and sister were around when Dad built the summer home and they played for hours in the sand dunes, I understand. Brothers were Stanley, Elmo (twin), and Howard. Sister was Elmora (twin) who married Fred Isbell. I remember Eddie Coffee very well and have enjoyed reading his writings. Sincerely, Jo-Ann(nee: Christian) Pratt. P.S. Keep up the good work, Pete

From Gary Scott, Class of 1954, from Bakersfield, California

Hi Pete,

The grocery store in the front of K.S. Sue Herbs was called Bobbie's (Bobbie's Market or Bobbie's Groceries), named after his youngest daughter Bobbie, who was very friendly and outgoing. Sorry, but I can't recall her sister's name.

Gary (Scott ('54)

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

Hi Pete --

Memories of Kern Street: Bebe and Bobby were Dr. Sue's daughters, and they babysat my older sister and me when we lived on Kern Street. We moved to Pierce Street when I was nine months old; so I don't remember the babysitting ventures, but my parents remained close friends with Dr. Sue. Dr. Sue added a small grocery store to his herb shop, and named it Bobby's Store. He would let my sister and me clerk there occasionally -- under close supervision since we were pre-teens at the time. Bebe and Bobby were very close in age and graduated from Taft High in the late '40's. Bebe married Tommy Ting from Southern California and had quite an elaborate wedding and reception. If memory serves, Mother said that Dr. Sue did all the catering for the reception himself. Bobby married a man from Walla Walla, Washington, and I believe he farmed.

And more Kern Street memories: AB Smith married my aunt, Dorothy Blair, after both were widowed, sometime around 1956. My husband (Jim Stafford) and I rented their Kern Street house for a few months when Jim worked at Stewart's Drug Store.

It's always such a pleasure to open my inbox and find a Taft Newsletter -- especially when there are articles about or by old friends. Thanks for all your efforts.

Beverly (Merrill) Stafford, Class of 1960

From Herb Spencer, Class of 1949, from Bakersfield, CA

They were Bebe Sue and Bobbie Sue - Class of 1948.

Herb Spencer Class of 1949

From Paul Brandt, Class of 1950, from Pismo, CA

Be Be & Bobby Sue.. sounds familiar to me.

From Murray Johnson, Class of 1955

Pete: I had the pleasure of attending the Hall of Fame induction ceremony last weekend. It was a well-designed and enjoyable evening. While there I realized that Dr. Johnson's son, Neal, and I attended St. Mary's grammar school within a few years of each other. His notation of the nuns being at the hospital where his wife worked brought back memories of those fine instructors from whom we both benefited. It was good to see you and Don Zumbro being honored, as well as my classmate and friend, Pete Magee. Keep up the good work you are doing with the newsletter. Murray Johnson, class of '55

From Julee (Houchin) Skowron

Hi, I work at Taft High School and a friend passed your newsletter to me. It was interesting because Lester Houchin was my grandfather and I don't know much about him or my Uncle Lester. The family has never been real close so I was wondering if there are any resource that you know so I may find out more about them.. Julee Houchin Skowron

From Linda Talbert, Class of 1957, from Kunai, Hawaii

Dear Pete, I am in the north of Portugal, just fifteen miles from the border to Spain and the countryside is beautiful! There is an old Roman road with ruins all along it that I have been hiking every day! It runs by a river and lakes and is spectacular with the original paving of granite rock in many places. That is all I want to do is hike through the beautiful countryside. Cities are of very little interest to me! I leave for home in a week and will be there I'll be home for three weeks before I head out to Cabo San Lucas! Hope things are fine with you! Love, Linda