

Taft, California

Greetings from Pete Gianopulos. Class of 1942

The Taft Newsletter

Reader's Responses

From Darla (Passehl) Hobbs from Bakersfield, California

Hi Pete, I just wanted to thank you again for sending me your newsletter. I have really enjoyed reading all the responses and inquiries from your readers. I have so many wonderful memories of Taft and some of these names are very familiar. So thank you again for helping me gain some knowledge on my family members (Vern "Moon" & Lorraine Mullen and Harry Passehl) from those that have responded. Keep it comin' Pete!

Darla Hobbs

From Mark O'Brien, Class of 1961, from Monrovia, California

Would you include me on the newsletter E-Mail list? 11-C Camp with its pool and Christmas-tree-wars (boys against girls), the plunge, 25 hill, work at KTKR, the view to USGS from my folks' house, the sound of jack lines, the yapping of coyotes in early morning near the corrals, helping John Alexander feed the horses, watching him "peel out" in front, having to worry about glasspack mufflers, raking up chinaberries in the front lawn, push-mowing the Bermuda Grass, dragging Center: THEY ALL HAUNT ME!

MARK O'BRIEN

Second letter from Mark O'Brien from Long beach, California

My (Law) office is in Monrovia. My home is in Long Beach. A part of my heart is still in the SJ Valley. I graduated from TUHS in 1961 and went on to UCLA, then to UC Berkeley and finally to USC Law School. I am married to Linda Rasmussen (sister to Eric Rasmussen, sister to Marian Rasmussen and sister-in-law to Mike Burnham). Of course I knew Bill Putnam, Jane Mahle, Walter Talbert, Mark Bayer, Bill Kalenborn, Martha Gialdini, Linda Christie. Also Phil Maysonave, Cliff Shelton, Nick Kinney -- we see each other a couple of times a year. I have always been close friends with Pam Marshall (now Davis). We are going to see them over Thanksgiving and go up in their plane. Wish me luck. My mother (Rosemary) went to elementary school with Ruth Maysonave in Berkeley. Some months ago I ran into a relative of yours one day on the boardwalk in front of our house. Sorry, I can't remember her name.

Mark O'Brien

From Mike (Class of 1956) Furtney of Los Angeles, California

Pete, Hope you're having a great weekend celebrating with the class of '53; Mary Shepherd's (Robinson) comments about her father's barber shop bring back many great memories. His shop was close to Milo's fountain, and those two businesses were among my favorites as a kid. Shep always had copies of Life, Readers Digest and other good magazines, plus we kids could eavesdrop on the chatter of the grownups. Very revealing! There were risks, of course, and I recall a couple of times when I was getting a haircut, Miss Myers (who taught English/Shakespeare) and got her hair bobbed at Shep's, would enter the shop and -- spotting me -- would shout in her best voice, "Good afternoon, Michael." This would always elicit smirks and grins from Shep, Scotty and other patrons. We had a unique set of teachers at Taft High, and I would put Miss Myers, Miss Ihrig (later Bell), Mr. Newlee and Miss Steininger up against any teachers anywhere; they were superior and also great characters who created lasting and indelible impressions on us oiltown kids. Mr. Newlee made mild fun of some of our "Kern County dialects," but he worked tirelessly to give us a solid foundation in English, and his colleagues worked equally diligently in their specialties.

When my dad was purchasing agent for Honolulu Oil, a lovely woman named Maggie Mulroy (she lived in a neat little white house on A Street) worked as the secretary for the purchasing department and, to her chagrin, acquired the nickname Magnolia Blossom, given to her by another great Taftian, Al Kuykendall, who later became a senior executive with Occidental Petroleum. Al was the Rodney Dangerfield of Honolulu Oil and teased Maggie endlessly, but always with good humor and no hint of malice. Anyway, I loved chatting with Maggie, as she had

been a member of Taft High's first graduating class in 1918, and how proud she was of that. At the time, of course, she seemed beyond mature to a callow youth like me, but today as I think about my now being 15 or 20 years older than Maggie was when I knew her, it is a reminder of how quickly fly the years.

(NOTE: Margaret Mulroy was the first person that I interviewed for my "Taft Heritage" programs in 1986. Her daughter, Barbara was a classmate of mine. Margaret's was the first class, the class of 1918, to enter the new building constructed in "North Taft," as it was called then, during the 1917 – 1918 school years and the first class to graduate from that new school. Her family arrived in Taft about in 1912, she and had some wonderful stories to tells about Taft at that time. They lived somewhere near 5th and North Street and had to walk to Conley School, crossing the railroad tracks, because there was no road built yet that extended 4th Street south across the railroad tracks.)

A question: As a kid, I went to a football game of the Taft College Cougars, and the star player was a fellow named Gene Taft. This would have been in the late 40's. I don't remember who the Cougars played or the score, but I have always wondered what became of Gene Taft.

As always, many thanks for keeping this wonderful "channel" of information open and functioning.

Best wishes to all, Mike (Class of '56)

(NOTE: I am told that Gene Taft, after going to Oregon State, went into the service and became a pilot. He advanced to the rank of full colonel and retired in Texas. It is not known whether he is still there or has moved to another location.)

From Jean (Van Epps) Stewart, (Class of '46) from Sacramento, CA

Pete: Hope you remember me. How many remembrances I have of Vern (Moon) Mullins and Lorraine Mullins? I lived next door to them on Lucard Street for several years and two memories come to mind. Vern thought nothing of picking up his morning newspaper in his boxer shorts! Not a pretty sight.....And Vern and Lorraine went away one weekend, and upon returning home found that a rabbit had hopped into the house through their doggy door! You can imagine the mess.

But they were wonderful friends and neighbors. And we all had some really good times together.

Jean Stewart ('46)

Rosalie (Snyder) Pritchett, Class of 1955, Placentia, California

Pete, Since Jacque (Graham) Moore brought Lorraine Mullen's name up, I too took dancing lessons from Lorraine in her converted garage. Lorraine and Vern were such caring people. Apparently my mother must have made arrangements for me to stay there after my dancing lesson till someone was able to pick me up... I would sit at their kitchen table and do my homework until my ride came. They would even offer me a snack. Funny, I haven't thought of that in over 60 years. Pleasent memory.

From Ron Foster, Class of 1944, in Anaheim Hills, California

Dear Pete,

I am Ronald Foster from the class of 1944 and want to thank you for all the e-mail updates you send to us. You are to be commended for all the hard work you do to keep us informed.

In your News letter of Nov 4, 2008 you sent a letter that you received from Ruth (Rowell) Boone.

I was so happy to receive the information about Ruth's life in Cuyama. However, I knew her and her family when her father (Jack Rowell) had a service station in Derby Acres.If possible I would like to get in contact with her by e-mail if possible.I would like to see if she remembers the song," Hey Daddy". My email address is in case you could send it to her and let her know that I would

like to hear from her.

Thanks, Ron Foster of Anaheim Hills, CA

From Jim T. Smith from Merlin, Oregon

(Subject in regard to: Ruth [Rowell] Boone formally from Cuyama Valley, California

Ron (Foster), Ruth would be delighted to hear from you. She remembers you and your red headed sister. Phone is 661-172-2022

Jim Smith

PS to Pete. She is really tickled... She says to give her phone to one and all that remember her.

From George Gianopulos, Class of 1945, from Fresno California

Pete & Dave (To brother Pete Gianopulos and David Conant of Hayward, California, a classmate in the class of 1942 and fellow member of the 41st Infantry Division, 163rd Infantry Regiment in Canon Company, who was wounded on Jolo Island in the Philippines).

As I was waking up this AM, I thought it was raining, and I remembered I had heard rain was expected over this weekend. My mind wandered a bit, thinking that today meteorologists actually see the coming storm event, i.e. satellite pictures, and can predict. Those thoughts took me back to the time we – you, Pete, Dave and I – were taking a class from J. Wendell Howe that covered meteorology. We covered ‘cyclonic disturbances’ wherein it was conjectured that storms came in circular form, rotating counterclockwise. We were told that if you measured the wind direction and velocity, took temperature readings and humidity, and finally atmospheric pressure, you could predict/estimate where that cyclonic disturbance was and thus when the storm would hit. In that case, we did that, i.e. took all those measures in the fall of that year 1946. Behold, on Armistice Day, November 11, I was on the football field, standing there waiting for the afternoon football game kickoff when I felt the first drop of rain. (NOTE: George played fullback on the Taft Junior College Cougar's football team.) We had predicted correctly, that it would rain on Armistice Day. Boy, how times have changed. Weather satellites do it all for us now, no guessing, no measuring (I'm sure they still do, though), just study the photographs from up above. Anyway, just thought I'd tweak your memories as I watch this storm come through this weekend. George Gianopulos

From Pete Gianopulos, class of 1942, from Taft, California

Dave and George,

Yes, I remember that class from J. Wendle Howe in Geography at Taft Junior College after I was discharged from the Army after WWII.. I must admit to you that I enjoyed his classes. He was one of the best lecturers that I ever had in college. It was rather simple to take notes of his lectures because he was so well organized. And who can ever forget his surprise quizzes when you walked into the classroom, the three questions on the board with a curtain pulled down over the questions. The one thing that we learned in that class was that you better have studied the lessons before going to class. The other thing that I remember was that one day I came down with a Malaria attack while sitting in his class, getting up and walking out to go home and to bed.

I have sent this e-mail on to his son and daughter who are on my list of recipients of my Taft Newsletter. J. Wendle was one of the administrators of the

Camp Condor summer camp and later went into the camping business for children in the Yosemite area, which his son and daughter took over eventually. John recently moved to Bellingham, WA. from Los Alto Hills and Marian lives in Fresno. In fact, I just saw John at his class reunion just last Saturday -- the class of 1953.

After I was employed at Taft Union High School I had worked with J. Wendle who at the time became the night school administrator that I had to work with him because I taught a night school class.

So, those are some thoughts that I had about Geography from J. Wendle Howe.

Another thing that I remember was Mike Kusturis, formerly of Capay, CA. near Clear Lake. Dave, on one of my trips to San Francisco, I stopped to visit with Mike's mother who at the time lived in Hayward. Mrs. Kutsuris had been on the same ship coming from Greece that our mother was on, The Byron, and became good friends. They were very happy that the pictures that they had of their young and prospective husbands that they would marry after coming out to Ellis Island actually looked like their picture. There were visits of our families down through the years.

On one occasion Mike Kusturis, being in a very high position in the Rotary International, came to Taft to visit the local Rotary Club, and my mother and I were guests of Glenn Black at the luncheon on that day. We visited with Mike after the luncheon. Glenn had met Mike from time-to-time at Rotary Club events around California.

Pete Gianopulos