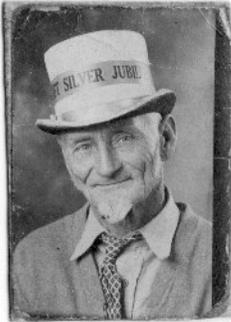


Taft, California

Greetings from Pete Gianopulos, Class of 1942

The Taft Newsletter

Attachment: Nancy (Walter) Doss's grandfather wearing his Taft Silver Jubilee hat for the 1935 celebration.



REMINDER: The Taft Oildorado, Inc. will be celebrating Taft's Diamond Jubilee 100th birthday, October 15 to the 25th 2010.

Taft' Silver Jubilee Birthday celebration

(The article below is a continuation of some of the printed material found in the silver-covered Official Souvenir Program for Taft's twenty-fifth birthday celebration, November 9-10-11, 1935, and I was there for that celebration.)

A Little About Oil

Oil, the "Black Gold of the Desert," was first commercially developed in Kern County in the early 1870's when a company of Italians from Mariposa County built a crude refinery at McKittrick, sunk shafts into the beds of asphaltum dug some shallow wells in search of oil.

The Columbian Oil Company was organized by Solomon Jewett, F. R. Fillerbrown, Dr. George F. Thornton, J. G. Parker, Alfonso Jacob Weill and others, and a well was started on Section 13, 30-21, known as the Del Monte property. The company drilled to more than 800 feet but, because of gas pressure, the drillers were unable to continue with the imperfect machinery available.

The first activity in Sunset (Later known as Hazelton.) was in 1889, where a group located 2000 acres of land, formed the Sunset Oil Company and started a well on section 2, 11-24. William DeWitt of Tulare, drilled the first well and abandoned it after striking sulfur water at 3000 feet.

In 1898, McWhorter, Doheny and others began to explore the West Side for oil. By 1910 had reached the tremendous total of 39,958,000 barrels.

The later part of 1909 saw completion of great flowing wells in the Midway Valley, and gas wells in the Buena Vista Hills. Following the oil land withdrawal act, the morning of January 1, 1910, found the hills around Taft well-sprinkled with tents, armed guards and stakes from which fluttered little, white location notices. Conflicts of interest caused many encounters and threats of violence. The whole effect was a rush of people which would have done justice to any gold excitement in the history of the state. All hotel accommodations on the West Side were swamped. All lumber yards of the county were exhausted and trainloads of derrick timbers were hurried from all points of supply. Oil well supply houses were almost depleted. Strings of big teams made new roads to the West Side.

(To be continued)

Reader's Responses

From Faith (Mosher) Hastings, Class of 1952, from Palo Alto, California

Dear Pete, What a coincidence! I just ran into Nancy Johnson Sicotte at our pharmacy in Palo Alto yesterday. We had a nice chat while she was checking out. I'm so happy to have the picture of Miss Bunday. She was one of my favorite teachers and was the primary reason I majored in history. Her classes were very challenging what with those pop quizzes. She rarely gave A grades, and was happy with my B. The best parts of her class were the "little stories" she told about historical figures and events. They made history come alive. Her text book was loaded with scraps of paper containing quizzes and stories. She was always dressed and groomed perfectly. I think she was Christian Scientist, and she was never out sick. She made a valuable contribution to our community.

I agree with others who have written in about the good English teaching we received. Miss Ihrig (later Bell) taught first year English. She made us write 500 word themes that were due every Friday. I doubt that teachers today would be willing to correct all those papers unless they had an aide to help. In my 4th year English class, Miss Myers prepared us well for the Subject A exam.

Thanks for sharing your family history with us Pete. It is truly an American immigrant success story. I remember my mother, Margaret Hall Mosher, telling me about Mr. Gianopulos returning to Greece to find a wife. Our family was really impressed by that.

Keep up the good story telling about Taft. What memories they bring to mind! I've been inspired to write "my story" and have finished up through my junior high years so far.

Faith (Mosher) Hastings

Mike Petty Class of 1966

Miles Turner. Yours is a familiar name from the past. I seem to recall you and my brother, Jim McNeely, being protégés. If you have contact info, I will gladly pass it on to him. He is retired so to say and has settled deep in the mountains of The Los Padres National Forrest, up behind Carmel-by-the-Sea. Most of his posy has gone on to Texas, Noel Binford, Ken Duvall, and several others which only Jim would be able to recall. His long time side kick, Guts - Stan Coffee, passed away a few years back. Up until Stan's passing, brother Jim often came to Taft with them all meeting up at the Oasis for suds. To put another perspective on my brother, our folks were Al and Georgina Petty, both of whom worked for the Standard Oil Company at the 11-C camp from the 40's thru 1970 for our Dad and 1982 for Mom.

Mike Petty (NOTE: Standard's 11-C Camp was located northwest of the corner of Ash and 10th Street.)

From Alice (Gwen) Manalo, Class of 1950, from Bakersfield, California

Oh, that is wonderful. I used to watch Corbin when he was on LA Law. I watch Jeanne Cooper each time she is on the Young and the Restless. I have always thought of her as a charming lady. When I found out that she graduated 5 years ahead of me from TUHS, I was shocked. Thank you so very much.

(NOTE: Alice was in attendance at the Taft Union High School Hall of Fame dinner and program to see actress Jeanne Cooper of The Young and the Restless soap opera star inducted with the other six in the 2009 group. Jeanne showed up on Thursday in her CBS studio furnished limo with her driver, and she stayed the whole weekend, along with her sister. Alice brought along her granddaughter, and they were delighted that they could meet the actress and her son, Corbin Bernson.)

From Nancy (Walter) Doss, Class of 1968, from Idaho Falls, Idaho

Hi Pete, I've been pouring through the archives trying to find an old photo of my grandpa, Fred Walter, dressed in costume for the 1935 Taft Silver Jubilee. He's wearing a top hat and coat and if my memory is correct, he has a ribbon on that says Taft Silver Jubilee. He has a goatee and looks somewhat like "Uncle Sam." I hope I can find the picture. If I'm successful, I will scan it and send it to you.

I also remember my father had great respect for Miss Maude Bunday and held her in high regard. I remember having Miss Baer for a substitute teacher at Taft High. Miss Baer also donated many books to the Taft College Library when I worked there. I really enjoy all the interesting history about our little town and being able to keep in touch with friends and classmates through your newsletters.

Nancy Walter Doss,

From Nancy (Walter) Doss, Class of 1968, from Idaho Falls, Idaho

Hi Pete, I found this photo of my grandfather, Fred Walter, taken during the 1935 Taft (Silver) Jubilee. The photo appears worn because my dad carried it in his wallet for a long time. My grandpa was a Taft city employee for many years, retiring sometime in the 1940's. He was a longtime member of the First Baptist Church and sang in the church choir. He was also a world champion checker player and would drive the family to Long Beach each summer to compete in World Champion Checker Tournaments. He made many checker boards and sets as a hobby and was also an inventor. He was way ahead of his time, inventing a "gas saver" for the Model A Ford. Before moving to Taft he had a business in Houston, Texas, called Walter's Top Shop where he made the cloth tops for the old cars of that era.

From Pete Fischel, Class of 1952

Hi Pete, You mentioned meeting a young man from the KLUGO family in Bakersfield recently. I wonder if he is related to ALAN KLUGOW of my Class of '52? Alan Klugow lived in the Bay Area for many years, and died a few years ago.

Pete Fischel

From EvaJean (Shank) Williams, Class of 1941, from Spokane, Washington

Just a note about the natatorium. my Mother, Shirley Shank worked in the women's side for several years. She enjoyed the kids so much.

Miss Baer always knew when my Mother had a hand in my sewing projects! But I passed anyway and have been sewing ever since. Quilting is my therapy!!

About the Pioneer Mercantile, my Dad bought my first bicycle there.

Many good memories.

EvaJean (Shank) Williams

From Mike Furtney, Class of 1956, from Los Angeles, California

Pete, Thanks so much for all the great material on Taft. I almost called you two evenings ago when Los Angeles NBC television, Ch. 4, showed "Taft" on the weather screen as Fritz Coleman described a feeble weather front bringing some sprinkles to dear old Moron (when did that name replace "Siding No. 2?"). Also, your photo of the Pioneer Mercantile reminded me that Jake Herrod's Pontiac agency was – what, a block further west? My memory gets less reliable every year, but I thought of Jake when General Motors announced it is ending the Pontiac story next year; my grandparents (Eugene W. Hill who came to the area in 1905 or so and worked for Associated Oil from 1908 until he retired in 1953, and Mildred Smith Hill of Sedalia, MO) bought a series of Pontiacs from Jake. My grandfather would faithfully wash and wax the cars twice a month, but he almost never drove them; that was Mama's job, and how she loved roaring down to Santa Monica with all four Hill girls (all TUHS grads) to spend part of each summer away from the furnace of Taft (Fellows in their case). Which was OK with Mr. Hill, who participated in nightly poker games with Associated Oil's traveling auditors, in the back room of the "recreation" center just outside "metropolitan" Fellows, for as long as his "girls" were lollygagging on the beach at Santa Monica.

Back to Jake Herrod; a story I heard many times was that just as the 1952 earthquake began, he leaped from bed and erroneously jumped into the closet; the closet door jammed, and Jake was stuck there until some minutes later when neighbors heard his yelps and released him. He was a true Taft character and could turn on the charm like nobody else when a potential Pontiac purchaser hove into view; he would not approve of what GM has done.

Be well and keep the weekly bulletins coming; you are more appreciated than you could ever imagine!

Cheers,

Mike Furtney

(NOTE: The J. T. Herrod Pontiac Sales and Service was located at 230 Main Street which is now the REC skating rink.)

From Dick Snyder, Class of 1955, from Bakersfield, California

Hi Pete, Linda and I just returned from a tour of China and to our surprise, we found that our group of 21 included five persons who are Taftians -- Jerry Jones, Linda Snyder, Dick Snyder, Dallas Myers and Cora (Neel) Quinton.

We explored Misty Gorge, ascended part of the Danling River contributory and continued eventually on down to Three Gorges Dam. We also visited Beijing, Xian, Chungqing and Shanghai. This was the best tour of my life....11 days of delight. :-)

More later, Dick