

From: Pete Gianopulos [pgianopulos@bak.rr.com]
Sent: Saturday, August 18, 2007 7:25 AM
Subject: The Taft Newsletter" for Friday, August 17, 2007 -- The Lost Los Padres Gold mine

Taft, California

Greetings from Pete Gianopulos, Class of 1942 The Taft Newsletter Cuyama Valley History "The Legend of the Lost Los Padres Gold Mine" (Part 3)

NOTE: This is a continuation of the article of Monday, June 25, 1979 that the Daily Midway Driller published a special Commemorative edition called "Cuyama Valley History." It consisted of 16 pages of historic articles about that area. All of the past publications of the Daily Midway Driller may be seen at the Taft Branch of the Kern County Library or at the Bakersfield Kern County Beal Library.

Most of the articles were written by Virginia Wegis, and she furnished most of the photographs used in that publication. The Wegises of Cuyama Valley were true pioneers of that area.

Part 3 of the article about the Lost Padres Gold Mine is presented below:

This went on for several years. Then one day a war party of Piutes from across the Sierra Nevada attacked the village at San Emidio. When they finally left, all the priests and most of the Indians had been killed. After that no Indian would go near the mine again and with the passing of time no one was left who knew the way except Tucoya and he never spoke of it to anyone.

But the word was not now and for the next twenty years prospector after prospector combed the mountains, hoping to find the lost mine. One man, a Frenchman, was said to have found it and he, too, stumbled into Fort Tejon his clothes tattered and feet lacerated, carrying a sack loaded with nuggets. He organized a group of men to go back to the mine with him, but like the old prospector, he too, was killed when his horse lost his footing and slid down a steep embankment.

Perhaps that would have ended it if Tucoya had not finally decided to reveal the mine's location. A cousin of his persuaded that since he was the only one left alive who knew where it was and since he was a very old man, he should finally share his secret with others.

They had no trouble getting a party together and, in spite of his years. They traveled for two days, covering about thirty five miles each day. At the close of the second day they came to the spring. There it was, just as the prospector had said, a square shaped trough cut out of the rock but choked now with moss and vegetation. Since it was nearly dark they decided to spend the night there, then go on in the morning to the mine. After the others had spread out their bed rolls, Tucoya went a few steps away to pray.

Suddenly he gave a sharp cry. He returned to the camp, shaking with terror. "I have seen them, the priests," he said, "They appeared to me in the sky when I looked up to pray. They do not want me to tell where the mine is and if we proceed farther all of us will surely die!" With that he picked up his things and headed home. In the morning, his disappointed companions had no choice but to follow him.

Tucoya died long ago. If there ever was a mine operated by the Mission Fathers, he and Nature have guarded the secret faithfully. To this day no mine has ever been found.

(The end)

Readers responses

From Bill Wood of from Belleview, NE

Hi:

You ask if I went to Taft High -- no we moved to Texas in 1957. I went to St Mary's Grade school 1st thru 4th grade and the to Roosevelt (School) in grade 5 in Taft. My Dad ran Wood's shoe repair during that time we were in Taft (Telford Wood -- Woods' Shoe Repair, 208 4th St.). I now live in Bellevue, NE. I have been looking for people who lived in Taft during this time. If you know anyone, could you let me know? (NOTE: Bill wrote that he would have been in the Class of 1964.)

Bill (Wood)

From Don Burklo, Class of 1946, from Santa Cruz, California

Pete: As usual your newsletter was very welcome this morning.... keep 'em coming!

I recall the Los Angeles TV broadcasts and the "non-reception" in Taft quite vividly. My granddad was an oil lease caretaker in Brea, east of LA, and when TV came to LA he bought a 9" Zenith TV. When we visited at his "cabin" on that oil lease, I was introduced to wrestling and roller derbies... as well as visual news. Gradually other stuff came on line. While the screen was only 9", the box it was in was so bulky it took two people to move it.

But in Taft, the word was that TV broadcasts in straight line transmissions and no way would our area get TV, due to the peak of the Transverse Ranges between us and the LA TV towers.

However, somebody in Ford City tried and found some reception. My dad scrounged some old 2" pipe, poured a substantial concrete base, and we erected a 30' TV antenna. While I cannot recall how many channels we got, it did work.... albeit not very well as to quality of pictures.... It seems that straight line transmissions can bounce through the mountains and bend a little.

Ours was not the first such TV in Taft, but I cannot recall those TV antennae you ask about.

AND: Is that David Balsler, class of '62, (See article of Aug.10, 2007) the son of Bill Balsler with whom I worked in Mr. Meacham's engineering dept. at Honolulu Oil Corp. in 1949?

Best regards,
don burklo, '46

From Mike Enault, Class of 1963, of Yuma, Arizona

Pete,

Seems I recall those antennas were two inch pipes with chicken wire strung between them?? When we first had "cable" installed, it came with a little switch on the back of the TV with which you could go between cable and house antenna as the cable went out all the time. The "cable" was open ladder wire and if the pole line was close enough to your house, you could wire up a coat hanger and mount it close to the ladder wire and get "free" cable. I'll be anxious to see pictures of the antennas to validate my memory or not. I retired from AT&T broadband (long gone) and saw cable TV go from that ladder wire to broadband services. Quite an experience.

Mike Enault, class of 1963

From Don Zumbro, Class of 1952, From Bakersfield, California

Hey Pete,

Noah Curti Passed away recently, and it sadden many of us. He was a special man. I was fortunate to have him as an instructor at Taft High School and a coach at Taft College. He once took me to his alma mater, UCLA, and introduced me to the famous basketball coach, John Wooden. Noah thought I could fit into their program, but John Wooden didn't. I was too small to play forward and he had two all conference guards. That answered all questions except for Noah. Noah talked John Wooden into sending his junior varsity squad to play Taft College, and I performed okay, but not good enough to change Mr. Wooden's mind. Noah would go the extra mile for you.

I played golf with Noah for several years after his retirement from teaching and coaching. He was a good golfer and quite a sportsman. He was fun to be around. I have never heard a disparaging word spoken against him. I considered him a good friend and will miss him.

Don Zumbro, class of 1952