

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

### Down Memory Lane

The following article called "**Down Memory Lane**" by Maxine Grimes was taken from a special edition of the **Daily Midway Driller** of Taft, California of Thursday, Aug. 9, 1979. The special 21 page special edition was called "**Maricopa Area History**":

It has been said the best way to find out about the "good old days" is to arrange for a meeting of several old-timers and as one of them recalls an incident that happened years ago, another remembers something else and so on.

Quite be accident two former Maricopa residents , Cecil Garland and Gladys Rochon, both of Taft, stopped by the Driller office at the same time for an interview. The following are some of their recollections.

Garland: "When we lived there in Sunset, which was south of Maricopa, there were few people and maybe six or seven houses.

(NOTE: Sunset later became known as Hazelton. The founder of Hazelton was H. A Blodget, who changed the name of Sunset to Hazelton in honor of his son Hazelton P. Blodget. Originally, it was named Sunset where the first railroad station was built in the Sunset oil fields. Later the branch of the railroad was extended to Maricopa. Originally there was a wye where the trains could be turned around and facilities for loading cattle were available.)

"One interesting thing that I remember is that material from the tar seepage (found on top or near the top of the ground similar to those today in Citric) was shipped in barrels to Bakersfield and on the return trip, water from artesian wells near the Buena Vista Lake was hauled back in the same barrels for use in the oilfields.

The price of 20 barrels of crude oil in 1915 was \$2.50 which was almost the same as the volume of water. Water sold for 5 cents per barrel."

Mrs. Rochon: "Do you remember my father Burt Price who worked for the West Side Water Company?"

Garland: "I didn't know him personally, but I recall the company which hauled water from the springs in Ballenger Canyon."

Neither one of them remembered the exact date of the Lakeview Hotel fire but thought it may have been in 1921 or 1922.

Mrs. Rochon: Remember the Coons and Price building which was also destroyed in that fire? Steve Price was my uncle.

In discussing different places of business, Stone's Bakery and McMahan's Bakery were mentioned along with a miniature golf course, started by Stanley Mulford and later operated by Billy Devine; bowling alley; skating rink; two theaters, one open air and the Star Theater ; a newspaper, published by a Mr. Rock; a dress shop, owned by Mrs. Rochon's mother Florence Price; at least five saloons decked the streets in 1919 and a nice hotel was opened by Homer Babcock.

Garland: Remember the time old Clarence Jones was taken for a ride by the bank robbers.

Mrs. Rochon: "I seem to recall that incident."

One was the Bank of America (formerly the Bank of Maricopa) and the First National Bank established in 1914. The Bank of Maricopa was established about two or three years later.

To the best of their recollection, both banks were robbed that same day.

Mrs. Rochon: "Maricopa was a good place to raise a family, as there were social events and all forms of recreation for the children. I especially enjoyed the Fourth of July celebration when the whole town would join together for a potluck, or picnic or ice cream social. One time it even snowed on the Fourth."

Garland's father John worked in the Westside oilfields and his mother Lillian McEvins still lives in Maricopa.

### Huge fire in Taft last Sunday (12/16/07)

There was a huge fire on Sunday afternoon in Taft and a historic building at 3rd and Main Street, which was originally a USO building, burned down in a tremendous fire. The two-alarm

fire started about 11:00 a.m. and was still going at five o'clock in the afternoon. The building was constructed during World War II on land that the City of Taft had donated and was as a place for the servicemen from Gardner Field to visit and play at the various games that were available, a soda fountain, enjoy dances held in the building, and it included a two-lane bowling alley and an outdoor basketball court. In later years from time to time there were community events held there, such as the annual West Side Recreation and Park District Home Luncheon Show. At one of these events, Gen. Chuck Yeager, who broke the speed of sound over Edward's Air Force Base, was the speaker. He was given a "Key to the City" by the, then, Taft's Mayor Pete Gianopulos.

## Reader's Responses

### **Don Scales, Class of 1953, from Laguna Woods, California**

Well, I've got to input a little about the Sea Scouts. As I recall, the Sea Scout Ship was established about 1952. Lee Talbert Sr. was the Skipper (adult leader/ Scoutmaster). It was sponsored by the 11-C (Standard Oil Co.) camp. I don't remember all the members of that 1st group, but I know Lee Jr, Pat Kennedy '55, Warren Eardley '53 (I think) and myself were among the charter members. I was the Boatswain (Scout Leader). Toward the end of '52 or early '53 someone donated a 30' wooden hulled Monterey commercial vessel to us. This thing really needed some work. It was kept at the Sea Scout Base in Newport Beach. We made a few trips down there to work on it. The engine was pulled and was being rebuilt by the 11-C machine shop. Seems to me that Howard Knost '53 was involved in this also. Going to Newport Beach was no light undertaking in those days. We didn't have freeways and the Grapevine was somewhat a major undertaking. My '49 Chevy pulled it ok without over heating, but not so for some others.

We did participate in a Sea Scout Rendezvous in Long Beach one weekend. We were expected to compete in various water related and seafaring events which was pretty awesome considering that we were a land locked Ship. But we practiced the rope tying, barrel hoisting, use of block and tackles at our meetings and also at my house. One of the highlights was showing our skill at rowing a 20+ life boat as a crew with Coxswain. We, of course, had never done such a thing until that weekend. However, we read up on it, got to practice a few times there before we had to do the deed. I'll be darned if we didn't get a blue ribbon. Of course, thanks to my good friend Pat Kennedy who organized it, I, as the Coxswain got thrown into the bay. I've got a picture of that somewhere and if I can find it I'll send it . Another highlight of that weekend was the fact that we got there late in the day the 1st night and had to pitch our tents in the dark. Soon after we pitched them it started raining. and blowing. We were camping on the sand and it was some night. But, being good sturdy Taft Boys we survived and had a great weekend. As I write this I think that Pete Magee and Kent Esterbrook were also in that original group. Perhaps some of your readers can help out on that original group.

Well, the Sea Scouts certainly got me even more involved and in love with sea. I started scuba diving in the mid '60's and then built a 33' sailboat in 1970. I and my family of 3 kids sailed that boat for 23 years I calculated that over those years I had traveled about 17,000 miles on it. I mean we used it. I've had 2 sailboats (26' and 41') a twin engine 36' cruiser, and currently own a 34' trawler. Still go to Catalina 4 to 6 times a year, have bareboat chartered in the Virgin Islands and the Pacific Northwest. I lived on the 41' sailboat full time for 6 years, and on the 33' for 1+ year. I've also been on 3 Tiger Cruises with the US Navy. 2 aircraft carriers and 1 amphibious assault vessel. The Carl Vinson, the Constellation, and the Boxer. All with my son-in-law.

So I guess the Sea Scouts made a mark on me.

Thanks for all the good work, Pete. You are a gem. I wish you had been my counselor too.

Don Scales '53

### **From Allen Gemanis, from Santa Cruz area, California**

Hi Pete, I have been active with the Sea Scouts Santa Cruz. Here are a couple of a thousand pictures of our ship The Steeves and somewhere in there a few of the twenty-five crew. We have sailed from Mexico to Hawaii. This vessel was confiscated by the NAVY in the Caribbean for hauling drugs and sold to our chapter for a dollar. Originally the NAVY was to use it for target practice however an Admiral stepped in. The Admiral a former Sea Scout. I currently lead clinics in navigation, communication, power plants, rotating machinery and, my personal favorite, man

overboard drills (those are the best especially during a storm). I really enjoy the picture you sent and will see that this is posted for the crew.

Thank you, Alan (Gemanis)

The two image represents fifty years of Sea Scouts. I'm impressed. The achievement of each scout is their Quarter-Master. Was that true then? I wonder. One has gone on to Annapolis, two of three have gone on to Cal maritime Academy (Michael my son was the one hold out), several are in various capacities in the Navy including one Seal. We are very proud of them too.

**From Rick Marshall, Class of 1959, from Bakersfield, California**

Thanks Pete for the memories of Lee Talbert and the Sea Scouts. What a great adventure that Lee provided for the youth of Taft. I can remember our meetings, our navigation training, the boat (and painting the boat), the cruises, the competition in San Diego, the war stories of Lee and the other men of WW II, and how it all molded those of us who were privileged to be a part of it. I believe that Kent Estabrook was in the Coast Guard Academy and Lee Talbert Jr. was in the Naval Academy when they came to visit us during one of our sea scout meetings in 1955-56. Thanks also for the reminder of TASCOS. I earned my \$1.00/hr. there after school and on Saturdays for three years during high school. Reg Barber was one of the owners, and I enjoyed working for such a fine man of quality and character. Taft is a special place, with special people, and we are fortunate to have you Pete to remind us. Thanks again. Rick Marshall, Class of 1959.

**From Kent Estabrook, Class of 1955. Subject: Sea Scouts**

The picture of the Taft Sea Scouts was sent by Kent Estabrook from the Class of 1955. The picture was taken sometime between 1952 and 1954, according to Kent. Those in the picture from left to right are the scout master, Mr. Lee Talbert standing. The other are Miles Turner, Kent Estabrook, Lee Talbert, Jr., (?), Pete Magee, and Jim (Gus) Freeze. Kent did not remember the names of the other two fellows standing toward the back or the fellow wearing glasses third from the right in the front row. If any of you recognize any of these fellows, let us know.



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1 photo(s)