



NEWSLETTER of the Carpinteria Valley Historical Society

www.carpinteriahistoricalmuseum.org

Editor/Publisher: David W. Griggs

david@carpinteriahistoricalmuseum.org

May/June 2013

CALENDAR



May 25 - Saturday
Memorial Weekend
MUSEUM MARKETPLACE
& ANNUAL PLANT &
FLOWER SALE
8:00 a.m. - 3 P.M.



May 29 - Wednesday
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MEETING - 6 P.M.



June 26 - Wednesday
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MEETING - 6 P.M.



June 29 - Saturday
MUSEUM MARKETPLACE
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 P.M.



July 4 - Thursday
Happy Independence Day!!
Museum Closed



VALLEY HISTORY

Back When They Were Service Stations:
Carpinteria Gas Stations, 1920s-1970s - Part II
by Jon Washington
edited by Roxie Grant Lapidus

Come cruising with us down history's highway as we check out Carp's many service stations in the 1950s. No seat belts required!

McCurry's Shell and the Gentlemen's Club Car

When Ernie McCurry took over the Carpinteria Shell station in 1951, there was one thing that did not change. Since the late 1940s, a 1930 black Lincoln (limousine) had sat on the station premises, near the sidewalk along Linden. The 2 back seats faced each other, as in an English railway carriage. It was a congenial setup for visiting, and 3-4 elderly "regulars" could be seen there every day, chatting, watching passers-by, greeting acquaintances getting on and off the bus to Santa Barbara, and tipping their hats to every woman who passed. Phyllis Armstrong (CUHS class of '48 remembers it well: "*My earliest memory is of the big boxy black car that sat on the Shell lot. It was a beauty of early car design, and belonged to Mr. Kathmann. Old men, including Mr. Braley (Agnes Kline's father) would spend hours sitting and visiting in the car on the lot. I remember Mr. Braley because he always asked me if I was waiting for the streetcar....which he thought was pretty funny!*"

Lou Panizzon '59 remembers them too: "*Gas stations were great places to hang out and people watch. Old guys (probably in their 70's) used to sit in an old car on the Shell lot and visit for hours. I always wondered what they were talking about.*"

Buttons Tobey '61 recalls that Mr. Senteney was one of the regulars in the car. She wrote, "*Several elderly men would sit in the car all afternoon and ogle the young girls who went by ... quite a scene!*"

"Mr. Braley" was the same Ed Braley who had been bookkeeper and gas pumper at Walt Dowling's Rincon Garage in the 1920s-1930s. Other regulars over the years included Elam "Pappy" Williams and of course the car's owner, Barney Kathmann. The club car was affectionately called "the Black Mariah." According to Del Kent, it had originally belonged to wealthy Montecitan C.K. Billings. It was rarely driven off the Shell lot, and was an important fixture there in the heart of downtown Carpinteria. (Editor's note: This car and the story of the "Gentlemen's Club" was the subject of an article in the March/April 1997 Grapevine; the restored automobile was on view at the annual meeting here at the museum in that same year.)

When the gentlemen were absent, Ernie McCurry sometimes sat in the car himself. His daughter Diane recalls: "It wasn't unusual to see my Dad sitting in a car on his lot, having conversations with Rev. John Imbach, or others who needed his counsel." Ernie McCurry directed the choir at the Community Church, and sang in a barbershop quartet. Jim Kirkes '55 recalls, "Ernie McCurry has to stand out. My grandmother thought the world of him and considered him an honest man. He would say to her that it was time to do this or that to the car and she always did it. She had almost no understanding of what went on under the hood, except that people like Ernie informed you of things that needed to be done."

After school and in the evenings the Shell lot was a gathering place for high school boys. Phyllis Armstrong recalls: "The Shell lot was taken over by

the high school 'big men' including my brother, Paul Armstrong, and his friends Ted Tailor, Bill Boren, Mackie Botte, Ernie Johnson and others in the CUHS class of 1945 or thereabouts. Some worked there, the others just hung out."



Barney Kathmann's 1930 Lincoln limousine, similar to the one pictured here, sat parked at the Shell gas station located at Linden Ave. and the old Coast Highway through much of the 1940s and 50s. Old-timers frequently "held court" in its spacious rear seats and watched the world go by. Internet photo.

This tradition continued for decades. Jim Kirkes recalls, "The Shell station became a hangout for the high school crowd and Ernie McCurry always put up with us, even though he never got much business out of us." David Benedict '55 wrote, "Ernie McCurry's 'Shell Lot' was the meeting place and also a base for the Santa

Barbara Sheriff's Department to keep an eye on us Carp boys." Charlie Kelsey '60 adds, "All of us fortunate to work at the Chevron and Shell felt like gatekeepers to Linden Ave., Carp's main street. We felt privileged. Many kids used to park their cars in our stations just to see who was coming and going."

The New 101 Freeway, 1952

The completion of the new 101 freeway that bypassed Carpinteria changed everything for the gas stations adjacent to the former Coast Highway, now renamed Carpinteria Avenue. Ernie McCurry had left his station in Summerland in 1951 when the new freeway routed drivers south of the town. He enjoyed one year of business at the Shell station on Linden and the Coast Highway before the freeway again rerouted travelers outside of town.

Another person who bought a gas station on

Carpinteria Avenue just about the time the freeway took traffic elsewhere was Al Bevilockway. His son Jack '59 recounts: "My father, Al Bevilockway, became the owner-operator of the Pine Haven Texaco service station in 1953. It was a part of the



The Pine Haven Motel and the Texaco gas station on the old Coast Highway were suddenly off the beaten track when the freeway was completed in 1952—a fate to befall businesses throughout the country as the Interstate highway system was built. Museum archives photo.

Pine Haven Motel and Coffee Shop property owned by Ralph and Betty Brown, at the corner of Carpinteria Avenue and Yucca Lane. We had moved to Santa Barbara from Redwood City, south of San Francisco, earlier that summer. I had just completed sixth grade and was enrolled in La Cumbre Junior High in Santa Barbara. On some weekends, I would ride along to the station with Dad. I would pump gasoline and wash windshields. Filling the pop machine and sweeping around the shop were some of my other duties. He had an insulated ice box that sat outside the garage, and ice was sold to beach campers and travelers. Every few days an ice truck came by to replenish the supply. Credit cards were not yet in use, so everything was paid in cash or by check.

I remember learning to patch tire inner tubes. During that time the tubeless tire was in its infancy and people frequently needed a nail extracted and a patch job. Just like the cigarettes, Camel was the brand name for the tube patches.

Fred Risdon's Mobil station sat directly across the street from Dad's Texaco. Al Venner had his 'Flying A' station across Yucca Lane, occupying that other corner. On the SW corner of Linden Avenue, was a Chevron station, and McCurry's Shell occupied the SE corner. Another block east on Carpinteria Avenue, Eddie Macias and Ernie Villalpando had their Union 76.

This business venture of my father's was short-lived. In 1955 he sold the Pine Haven Texaco to join the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department and became Carpinteria's deputy sheriff."

Macias-Villalpando Union 76 Station

Phyllis Armstrong remembers the establishment of the Macias-Villalpando Union 76 station: "Some time in the 1950s the Union station on the corner of Carpinteria Ave and Maple was opened. The station was built by Reese Taylor, President of Union Oil, who would come up from Pasadena to his beach

house at Sandyland Cove. He wanted his company's station in Carp." According to Ernie Villalpando, who now lives in Ventura, Jess Shaw was the first operator of the station. Ernie himself was the second operator, and was soon joined by Ed Macias '48. Classmate Phyllis Armstrong adds, "Eddie ran the station for years and became an important civic leader in Carp."

George Coshow '56 wrote, "In college I worked at the Macias-Villalpando Union station and greatly admired the business savvy of those owners." Classmate Marty Panizzon worked there too. Frank Castelo '62 recalls: "The Union station was owed by Ed Macias and his partner Villalpando. They had Green Stamps and they always gave that extra service. My mother and dad would never go to anyone else. Everybody used to stop by, and not just for gas. We would sometimes just hang around and talk and decide what we were going to do on the weekend. My neighbor Joe David Escobar worked there."

Neil Ablitt '61 remembers with chagrin: "In high school I was president of the Car Club. Once when I filled up at Macias '76, whoever was on duty urged me to 'peel rubber!' I did, heading down Carp Avenue toward the high school. There was a CHP guy sitting at the Snack Shack. Fortunately for me he was the Car Club advisor, and gave me a lecture rather than a

ticket. I was lucky, but I sure felt small and ashamed."

Jim Campos adds: "A hangout for kids in the early 1960s was Ernie and Eddie's Union 76 Station. Ernie (Porfie) Villalpando and Eddie Macias were the owners. We loved visiting weekly, there was a specific day of the week, maybe Tuesdays, because Los Angeles Dodgers promotional items arrived. We had to get to the station early enough to get whatever item was being offered. Promotional Dodgers stuff



A familiar sight to any kid who ever patched an inner tube.



The Union 76 gas station at the corner of Carpinteria and Maple Avenues in the 1950s. The station is still in business today. Note the Shepard/Castro house in the rear which had been moved back to make room for the station. Museum archives photo.

was free, of course. My brother Art and I got books that were half the size of a comic book, featuring all of the Dodgers. We'd collect them one by one. Also, Dodger portraits were featured one particular year, each portrait painted by the famous artist Nick Volpe."

Downtown Stations in the 1950s

Now that they were no longer on the main highway, gas station owners had to innovate to supplement their gas sales. Football player Ernie Sanchez '54 worked at McCurry's Shell. He recalled, "I was the closer, usually working the 'graveyard' 4 to 10 pm (or later) shift. There were lots of visiting salesmen and one of my many tasks was to talk to them. McCurry always encouraged me to push oil changes, gasoline additives, tires, batteries--almost everything to earn additional sales, since just gasoline was a thin profit. There were no credit cards, although Blue Chip and Green Stamps at some point turned up. Ernie's son Jack also worked there then, I remember. We had lots of fun, too, because all the young people, it seemed, hung out at Linden and Carp. Ave."

Over at Groves & Hofmann Seaside, Don and Bob came up with a new idea. Tom Groves recounts: "Around 1954-55, to take advantage of the increasing popularity of outboard boating, Don and Bob acquired a Mercury (Kiekhaefer) Marine Outboard Motor franchise, along with a Wizard Fiberglass Boat franchise. The boat shop was in the same building as the Schwinn bike shop." John Hofmann adds: "Glaspar was the favorite of the fishing crowd and water ski enthusiasts--they made an all-around version and a little speedboat just for skiing and excitement. I remember when Mercury came out with the 50 HP version and we kids were excited that there was so much power for skiing,

especially when you put twins on the back of a catamaran hull. The most beautiful boat they sold was the all wood laminated lath style Yellow Jacket." Tom adds: "This facet of the business expanded significantly in the ensuing years, prompting a 'satellite' Seaside Boat Shop in Ojai about the time that Lake Casitas was created (1959-60)."

Rick Olmstead '62 remembers the boat shop at the Seaside station: "I spent a lot of time with John Hofmann at the service station owned by Bob Hofmann and Don Groves. I remember a lot of hours just hanging out and helping at what was one of the last real FULL service stations. I also remember fondly looking and drooling at boats that were in the only boat sales agency ever in Carpinteria. The old station has been replaced by a picnic area, but the boat building is still there, and sells used books for the benefit of the library."

John Hofmann recalls, "Bob Hofmann was the first foreign car specialist in SB County, and worked on the first VW bug to be sold in Carp--maybe in the county. This was around 1952-53, and the VW bug was the 1100cc version. I remember how amazed we all were to see this new-fangled car---it looked so silly! Bob told us kids that they

were really well designed, easy to work on and very fuel efficient. Also, Seaside was a drop-off for the LA Times newspaper. As a kid I got paid to fold papers and bag them in plastic, ready for delivery. I think Bobby Groves did that too."

The first VW bug may well have been that of Mrs. Graeber, who delivered the LA Times. She and her daughter Joyce '62 lived on Lambert Road. Everyone stared at the car the first few times they saw it, and some referred to it as "the peanut car"! Mrs. Graeber would arrive at the Seaside station in the early morning hours, get her papers, and be on her way. Tom Groves remembers Esther Graeber:



Carpinteria's only boat shop was operated by Don Groves and Bob Hofmann adjacent to their Seaside gas station on Carpinteria Ave. at Maple Ave. After many other incarnations, including art gallery and several cafés, the building now houses the "Friends of the Carpinteria Library" used book store. Photo courtesy of Tom Groves.

"At the Seaside station, she rented one of the (long out-of-order) restrooms on the outside of the boat shop (ex-Irish Hut) building, where she stored her newspaper-related items. These included a machine that tied rolled-up editions of the paper, ready for her to toss out of both sides of the windows of her VW bug. She hired me to stuff the inserts into the Sunday editions of the Times. It was a couple of hours a week, and I can't remember how much she paid me, but it couldn't have been much. In those days any monies earned helped pay for movies with a date and gas in the car!"

When he was attending SB City College, Ward Small '59 "apprenticed" himself to Mrs. Graeber, in anticipation of taking over her route while she went on vacation. He writes, "Alas, I found that both the hours and the complexity required to learn the route, extending from the Rincon to the western fringes of Old Town, in the short time available, was not compatible with my class load."

Though gas stations were a good source of earnings for high school kids, the pay was sometimes depleted by "business expenses." John McCafferty '53 recalls, "I worked in Fred Risdon's station on the corner across the street from the central block of 10th St., then known as the Coast Highway. I never took much money home because I drank it up in Cokes from the station Coke machine, and used the rest to gas up my old Model A Ford, the object of endless practical jokes from my fellow CUHS Warriors. I put chits in the cash register and filled 'er up. One week Mr. Risdon paid me for a week's work by pouring a small amount of change

into my hand. I had used up the rest on gas for my car."

The summer after his sophomore year, Llew Goodfield '56 also had unexpected "business expenses" one night at Groves & Hofmann's Seaside: "A slick-looking character drove a beat-up Cadillac in and said he needed his battery charged. I wasn't sure why, since he'd driven in, but I wheeled the charger out, hooked it up, and went about my chores. A few minutes later he came and said I'd hooked the charger to the wrong terminals, and ruined his battery.

I didn't think I had, but he'd already removed the clamps, and I couldn't be certain. He then offered to split the cost of a new battery with me. I didn't know what else to do, so I agreed, and installed a new battery. I think I made just enough that night to pay for half of his battery."

The story of Llew's job that summer is a colorful one:

"In the spring of 1954, Mix Van de Mark, the Sheriff's Deputy

assigned to Carpinteria, caught me drag racing on Carp Ave. with John Mullins. John was from Santa Barbara and got off with a warning, but I got Probation for the summer. I was allowed to drive only to work and back. Among other jobs, I got the job at Seaside, working nights and Sunday. Don Groves' son Jimmy had been in my class, and had died of Polio in 9th grade.

Don ran his station like a well-oiled machine, and expected employees to carry out duties in the manner he prescribed. I soon learned that sometime during my shift he would cruise by, and if I wasn't



This late 1940s photo is looking west up the old Coast Highway at its intersection with Linden Ave. (note the small traffic light in the upper right-hand corner). The two most popular stations to work or hangout at can be identified by their signs: Ernie McCurry's Shell and John Moyer's Standard Chevron. Just up the road behind a telephone pole one can just make out the Pine Haven Texaco sign, and across the street from that, the Mobilgas Pegasus sign. Museum archive photo.

busily working my way through my list of duties, I'd hear about it. One night I'd seen him drive past, so thinking it was safe, I drove my car onto the rack for a quick lube job. Don chose that night to pass by a second time, and I was busted. I got a stern reminder that I was on his clock.

I closed the station at 9:30 every night. About 9:20, Mix Van de Mark, the Deputy I blamed for ruining my summer, would pull into the station across the street (Union 76) and wait for me to close up. At 9:30 I'd pull out, with Mix behind me, and drive straight home. When he'd see me turn into my driveway, he'd continue on with his patrol. I'd park my car, then jump into the car of my waiting buddies, and off we'd go to the Blue Onion in SB. So, maybe my summer wasn't ruined entirely!"

The Blue Onion Drive-In on upper State Street was a hub for teenagers in the mid-1950s. Among the few Carp girls to own cars in that era, Roberta Rollins '57 and Margie Barber '59 both recall taking groups of friends there on weekends. Roberta writes, "Mr. McCurry got lots of one-dollar orders when a bunch of girls in my car would set off for SB after each contributing 25 cents for the evening. The evening usually consisted of a run to SB to cruise State Street and to see who was hanging out at the Blue Onion." Margie got her first car when she was working at the Snowman frosty shop at Santa Claus Lane. "Somewhere or other my dad picked up a little green '43 coupe for me, with a vacuum clutch. For my next birthday they bought me seat covers, and I was in heaven. My friends and I would love to cruise State Street in Santa Barbara on Saturday night. That involved several trips up and down the street, waving at friends and feeling grown up. It also involved French fries and a Coke at the Blue Onion. Or maybe a hot fudge sundae. It might also involve a taco at a little restaurant named El Ranchito on Chapala, I think. Everyone in the car would contribute fifty cents for gas, and we always made it home with plenty to spare."



Editor's note: We will need one more issue to "top off" this tank of memories of Carpinteria's service stations, so pull in next time to get your fill of the third and final installment in this series.

MUSEUM NEWS

MEMORIAL WEEKEND MARKETPLACE TO INCLUDE FLOWER & PLANT SALE

Don't miss the big Memorial Weekend Museum Marketplace on **Saturday, May 25 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 P.M.** on the museum grounds.

The annual plant & flower sale is planned for this event. Over thirty local nurseries will donate many, many varieties of cut flowers, orchids, garden, and houseplants to this museum benefit. Your purchases will be supporting the work of the historical society while beautifying your home and garden! **The marketplace also features a large array of antiques, collectibles, hand-crafted gifts, and bargains** on used & vintage goods of every description including furniture, jewelry, clothing, kitchen and household items, tools, toys, books, and much, much more! Nearly 70 vendors will fill the museum grounds, parking lot, and Wullbrandt annex for this popular fund-raising event.



Flowers and plants galore await shoppers at this year's Memorial Weekend Museum Marketplace sale. David Griggs photo.

We especially need donations of your quality used items to this event. Our inventory of used treasures for the rummage tables is quite low, so now is the perfect time to clean out the closets, under the bed, and the back of the garage! Items may be left on our back patio at any time and are greatly appreciated (and tax-deductible!).



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We wish to extend a warm welcome to our newest members of the Carpinteria Valley Historical Society & Museum:

Terry & Geoff Banks
Jane Benefield
Sharon Campbell
Kelly Forsyth
Bert Gemmell
Dr. & Mrs. Michael Harrington
Maxine Kelly
Gloria Torres
Maribeth & Carl Wirdak

and a special welcome to our newest LIFE members:

Melanie & Rene Topalian



CONTRIBUTE YOUR MEMORIES TO THIS NEWSLETTER

We hope you have been enjoying the many stories and memories presented on the pages of this newsletter. It has been very gratifying sharing these recollections of life in Carpinteria during the mid-20th century, while documenting for posterity what living in this wonderful community by the sea has meant to so many folks. These reminiscences are very well received by the readership, and we appreciate all of your compliments and kind words of support.

We especially wish to thank contributing author Jon Washington and associate editor Roxie Grant Lapidus for their amazing stories spun from the memories and contributions of so many Carpinterians.

To keep this current theme of articles going, we once again ask that you consider penning your memories of life in, or visits to, Carpinteria—special people, places, activities, and events that stand out in your mind. You don't need a degree in English, as we have some great editorial help to polish your contribution. Please call David at the museum or email at david@carpinteriahistoricalmuseum.org to discuss a story you may wish to share. *Thank you!!*



MEMORIALS

TERRY BLISS: Emily & Bradley Miles.

FRANK COLSON: Emily & Bradley Miles.

ROSALIE COPELAND: Phyllis Hansen.

PAT DEHNKE: Anita Lewis; Emily & Bradley Miles; Carl & Nola Stuckey.

ART GARCIA: Angelo & Marie Granaroli.

PATSY GRAZIANI: Anita Lewis; Emily & Bradley Miles.

ROBERT "BOB" HAMER: Esther Mansfield.

"MILLIE" SCARLETT KREPS: Judi & Bruce Conroy.

SUE MOYER: Emily & Bradley Miles; Phyllis Fenger.

ROBERT "BOB" RAGSDALE: Anita Lewis.

DEAN ROBBINS: Phyllis Hansen.

LILLI ROSSI: Mary Lou Morales.

JESSE SHAW: Emily & Bradley Miles.

PETER SMALL: Emily & Bradley Miles.

ROSEMARY TOPHAM: Sennheiser Electronic Corp.; Paul & Mary Foley; Mr. & Mrs. R.E. Martell.

PETER ZANELLA: Emily & Bradley Miles.

Tax-deductible donations to a loved one's memory are acknowledged to the family as directed; funds support museum operations. We are most grateful for the generosity of the above listed donors.



CARPINTERIA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

956 Maple Avenue • Carpinteria, California 93013 • (805) 684-3112

Address Service Requested

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Santa Barbara, CA
Permit No. 1016

To:

**CARPINTERIA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
956 Maple Ave., Carpinteria, California 93013**

Please place the enclosed amount to the credit of the

MEMORIAL FUND

In Memory of _____

And Inform _____

Residing at _____

Signed _____

Address _____

Date _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Checks Payable to *Carpinteria Valley Historical Society or C.V.H.S.*