

# **My Roots**

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My roots to the Pleasant Valley and Camarillo run deep. I am third generation Camarillo-born. Both my maternal grandmother and grandfather were born in Camarillo and were raised in Camarillo. My mother was born here as well as my two older sisters. My great grandparents arrived in Camarillo in the 1930's when the town was small and everyone knew everyone. The stories are endless!

In the 1930's my great grandfather, Harold Moody, came to Camarillo as the manager of the Bank of America. His career with Bank of American lasted several years, but during wartime he moved to an administrative job at Port Hueneme. There was one bank in town with business centered on Dizdar Park and in the few blocks toward the railroad tracks. Over time and by the 1940's town had expanded west toward Pleasant Valley School.

While my great grandfather was a very gregarious person who made friends quickly his friendships and relationship with long-time Camarillo families grew. Soon upon arriving in Camarillo, he became great friends with local farmers as well as the children of Adolfo Camarillo. After a short time in town, my great grandfather moved into the Camarillo Ranch House where he rented a room for the short term. His friendship with "Pancho" Camarillo provided him some wonderful memories of life on the Ranch. A near disaster occurred when he was thrown from one of the Camarillo horses and suffered a severe concussion. He was unconscious for a day or two, but recovered completely.

In 1939 great grandfather Moody married Helen Brigham and they bought a house in Camarillo Heights. The story goes that he bought two acres with a house and a view of the ocean for \$2000. He lived in the house until he died in 1992. My great grandmother was a Ventura girl who served as a reporter for the Ventura Star Free Press. Her family had arrived in Ventura at the turn of the century where her mother would drive a horse and buggy from Ventura to the family blacksmith business in Saticoy and the trip would take three days.

My grandparents, Ron and Kathleen Maurer were children of the 40's in Camarillo and have many stories of their childhood days in Camarillo. My grandmother lived in Camarillo Heights which was a very rural area. There were orange and lemon orchards from the Heights to downtown with very few houses along the way. My grandfather lived with his parents on the south end of town in an area that was the first developed housing track in Camarillo. Kids played in the

street until well after dark. My grandfather remembers the teenagers drag racing down Las Posas. When the police would arrive, they would scatter and hide amongst the lemon and orange trees.

The hub of town remained close to the railroad tracks and most retail activity took place there. There were two grocery stores, a dry goods department store, a dress shop, drug store and, of course, The Buckhorn. In the early 40's, my great grandparents liked to meet their friends at the Buckhorn Café. My great grandfather would play poker with the men in the back room and my great grandmother would sit at the bar with the women. My grandmother was 2 years old at the time and they would sit her on top of the bar while they visited. Both my grandparents went to Pleasant Valley School and graduated in 1954.

In 1944 my great grandmother lead a petition drive to establish a kindergarten at the Pleasant Valley School. Once adequate signatures were obtained the petition was presented to the Ventura County Board of Education and the first kindergarten class at Pleasant Valley School was started in 1945. My grandparents have very fond memories of their elementary school years. Many of their teachers and their principal, Onorinda Jones became lifelong friends. From 1954 - 1958 my grandparents were bused to Oxnard High School as there was only one high school in the Oxnard Union High School District. They were bused from Camarillo to Oxnard and if they missed the bus, they would have to walk from Camarillo to Oxnard via Fifth Street to get to class.

Camarillo was such a small town that my grandfather was the local paperboy for the Oxnard Press Courier and he delivered papers on his bicycle to every resident in Camarillo. Social life for teenagers in Camarillo was very limited. There were Friday night square dances and a small movie theater, but it was a 2 time of "make your own fun". Social pressures were different for my grandparents. There were no street drugs or prolific use of alcohol. Fun was often times mischievous, but generally not illegal.

As I reflect on my family's relationship with the history of Camarillo and listen to their stories, I am intrigued with "the past" and how life has evolved over the past 70+ years. Yes, there are progressive changes that make life better for all of us, but there are also feelings of nostalgia related to what I missed by being born and raised in the current day. I feel fortunate that stories have been shared and I am able to reflect on the history of the Pleasant Valley and what it was like living in such a small town.