

Interview with
Carl and Patricia Miller
September 28, 2004
by Marge Howard-Jones
for the
Highway 101 Association

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Interview with Carl and Patricia Miller, on September 28, 2004 at their home, 2035 Basswood Avenue, Carlsbad CA 92008. Interviewer: Marge Howard-Jones Transcribed by Kristi Hawthorne

Marge: It's September 28th and I'm interviewing Carl and Pat Miller at their house. So, we'll start with Carl. Can you give us your name and address?

Carl: Carl Miller, 2035 Basswood.

Marge: Pat?

Patricia: I am Patricia Miller. Pat Miller. My address is the same, 2035 Basswood Avenue in Carlsbad.

Marge: Carl, when and where were you born?

Carl: I was born in Glendale, California in 1933.

Marge: Patricia?

Patricia: I was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan on August 30, 1938.

Marge: What were your parents' names, Carl?

Carl: Carl and Ruth Miller.

Marge: Pat?

Patricia: My parents are John and Nancy Van Epps. Actually my father is still living, 88 years old and still in Kalamazoo.

Marge: Carl, when did you come to Carlsbad?

Carl: I came from Pasadena to Oceanside, California for vacations. That was in probably 1938, 1939. That was for vacations. Then we moved to Oceanside in 1947. Dad retired and we moved to Oceanside, which was a very nice community then. Then I went on to college and when I got out Pat and I married in 1958 and at that time we bought a home in Carlsbad.

Marge: So you've been here since 1958. When did you come to the area, Pat?

Patricia: I came to the area right after I graduated from high school in 1956. I want to say that the two years that I lived right on the 101, were maybe two of the most exciting years than any of my previous life. I will always remember arriving at the end of August; my mom and dad and my two sisters bringing me for my first year of college. First seeing the ocean that seemed like sparkling beautiful, blue diamonds. It was just the most beautiful and unreal feeling and I still feel excited when I think about that.

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Marge: Carl, did you live on or near the 101?

Carl: In high school, that's 1947 through 1951, I lived about two blocks from Highway 101 on South Pacific Street in Oceanside.

Marge: Then of course when you moved to Carlsbad?

Carl: When we moved to Carlsbad we lived near the 101 up on Basswood, near what is now Carlsbad High School.

Marge: Pat, did you live on the 101?

Patricia: I did for two years from 1956 really through to 1958.

Marge: Until you moved up here?

Patricia: Right.

Marge: What was that like?

Patricia: It was an exciting place to live. I lived with my two aunts, my aunt Peg and my Aunt *Neal* and my uncle Frank and their house was right across the street from Tamarack or Tamarack beach. Really, not a lot happening at that time on the beach. I remember Carl and several of his friends surfing. Coming on Saturdays and surfing all day, and that was exciting to either be down watching them or to be looking through a picture window watching them surf.

Marge: And you could see the surf from your window?

Patricia: Oh we could, yes we could.

Marge: Did you go in the ocean yourself?

Patricia: Oh yes. Really probably until December. I went in every day. Our little rafts and just had a marvelous fun with that.

Marge: Do you remember any outstanding event when you were living there?

Patricia: One thing that I think that it was still...it was a nice old town feeling. Taking a Greyhound bus to LA to visit my aunt, uncle and cousin, which I did probably four or five different times during the time that I lived on the 101. I loved taking the Greyhound up there but then on my return trip I would always make sure that I would sit behind the driver. We would visit and talk and laugh all the back to Carlsbad. And then I would say, "By the way, is there any possibility of letting me out right in front of my home?" And they always stopped right on the 101, pulled the Greyhound bus over loaded with other people and he would always every time, let me out in front of the house.

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Marge: Door to door delivery.

Patricia: It really was. It was so neat. It was a situation that wouldn't happen anymore, or not often.

Marge: Carl, what about you? Do you remember any outstanding events connected to the 101?

Carl: Of course the most outstanding I met Pat and she was living on the 101 so that would be certainly an event. I traveled up and down 101 going surfing. One event I happen to remember, to show how little traffic there was on the 101, one time we were driving north to a certain spot called "trestles", another fellow and I, and I looked in my rearview mirror and my board had come off the car and was spinning in the wind and landed on the freeway. I pulled over, backed up, walked out—

Marge: The freeway or the highway?

Carl: Out on highway 101. I was able to stop, back up, walk out on the highway, pick up my board and put in back on the car and off we went. But there were no accidents, no honking, nothing big happened, just the board came off.

Marge: How old were you when you first rode the 101?

Carl: Probably seven or eight years old. Probably 1938, or 1939. We were in Pasadena and my folks bought a house in Oceanside, a vacation home. So we'd come down the 101 in the very late 30's to our house in Oceanside.

Marge: Was there much to see along the way?

Carl: Very little. It was quiet. A couple of things I remember, one was as we came south of San Clemente, there'd come a point, where off in the distance, when we were little guys with our parents, "There are the lights of Oceanside!" We'd say to each other, "Who will be the first to see the lights of Oceanside?" Because that meant we were getting to our house for vacation. Also coming down, there was a—fishermen still refer to it as "the barn." "Fishing off the barn" even though the barn is gone. There was an old barn about halfway between Oceanside and San Onofre going north on the right hand side of the 101. The fishermen, that was a point that they would see and fish off "the barn." That terminology I understand is still used by fishermen even though the barn isn't there. We're going to fish off "the barn", see you at "the barn", but there's no barn there.

Marge: Would that be near Las Flores?

Carl: Near there.

Marge: Pat, how old were you when you first came down on the 101?

Patricia: I was 18.

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Marge: That was your first trip when you came to stay here?

Patricia: That was my very first trip. My aunts and my uncle all through high school wanted me to come for a year of school. I really didn't want to do that during high school, but I talked things over with my parents, we just all thought what a wonderful first year of school. I always wanted to be a nurse and go to the University of Michigan so I thought to come here for a first year. That just sounded like the most wonderful plan to come for my first year here.

Marge: Did you drive down then from LA?

Patricia: No. We drove from Kalamazoo, Michigan. My mom and dad, my sisters took a road trip actually on Route 66. I love the thought of that, too, with the thought of the 101. So I came for my first year of college, then with the intention of transferring back to the U of M, but half way between my school year I met Carl. I just thought "Gosh, I think maybe I'll come back for a second year." I've never, ever regretted that. I think I regretted the fact I didn't continue in school here after two years and get my degree.

Marge: What school did you go to?

Patricia: It was Oceanside Carlsbad Junior College. That was a wonderful experience in itself because I met probably on the second day of school a friend that I still consider one of my very closest friends, who came kind of under the same circumstances that I did. She was from New Castle, Indiana and had the opportunity of coming to stay here for a year with a friend. We met in school one day I think both of us feeling lonely and not quite sure where our next class would be. We got to talking and from that minute on we just were inseparable. As much as I loved Carl, every now and then it would be a toss up. "Do I go with Rosemary or do I go with Carl?" Most often it was with Carl, though.

Marge: Do you remember the first time you drove the 101 yourself?

Carl: I don't remember that.

Marge: You did it so much. Do you remember, Pat?

Patricia: I really do remember driving from 3824, was our address, to St. Michael's Church, which was on Oak Street at the time.

Marge: That was just north of where you were living?

Patricia: Exactly right, like a mile. Uncle Frank said, "Well, here are the keys. We'll give it a whirl." I made it to choir practice and made it home!

Marge: Do you remember some of the business along the 101?

Carl: I remember the 101 Café in Oceanside. It's still there. I remember the Carlsbad Hotel, it's now the Carlsbad rest home and the Twin Inns and both of the buildings were there at the time and since one has been torn down and then Nieman's came in. That was really the extent of

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it. Those are the three, and the Army Navy Academy.

Marge: Were there any hotels or restaurants along the way?

Carl: Not that I remember. As I said, the 101 Café and the Carlsbad Hotel. I don't remember anything else.

Marge: Pat?

Patricia: I do! I remember the Royal Palms, beach, tennis and restaurant. I remember that. I also remember Novak's which was just next to Charles Ledgerwood's home and his little seed area. I remember really on special occasions going with my Aunt Neil to Greg Novak's and having the most wonderful shrimp dinner. Really, I loved Novak's. I also remember Twin Inns and the Carlsbad Hotel. But Novak's was ...

Marge: That was right next to you?

Patricia: It was.

Marge: What other landmarks or unusual structures on the 101 that you remember?

Patricia: I suppose the most special to my heart is St. Michael's and what is now the little chapel. I'll always remember feeling such a part of that group from the first Sunday that I attended. My Aunt Neil was on the alter guild and knew many of the older timers: Mrs. Magee, Betty Ramsey and Betty's mother were a part of St. Michaels. I remember walking up to St. Michaels on the first Sunday that I went with Aunt Neil and one of my aunt's friends came out who was singing in the choir and wanted to know if I enjoyed singing and that happened to be one of the most special things in my life. So on the very first Sunday she found me a choir robe and from that time on until really about fifteen years ago, I sang in the choir in St. Michael's. And I loved it.

Marge: Do you remember any landmarks or unusual structures, Carl?

Carl: Well, one was the headquarters of the park service and the park ranger had his office in an old barn that is where now there are new condominiums, across from the Army Navy Academy. Where all those condos are, there was an old barn on that property. I remember going there. I worked as a park aide one summer and we'd meet there in the morning in this old barn, in his office. Miramontes was the fellow's name that I worked for. He was the park ranger.

Marge: Is that where the Army Navy athletic field is?

Carl: North of that. The barn was in the vacant lot where the condos are now. That property was vacant for so long. That old barn went way back. It looked like the Kelly barn.

Marge: Was there a particular person along that road that you remember?

Carl: Of course, Pat in 1958, my wife. Any other names were surfing buddies. Carlsbad, I'm

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thinking now of the 1950's, during those years, the 101 south of Oceanside was pretty vacant except for the hotel and Twin Inns. Where the walkway is along the beach there was all just a dirt bluff. I felt bad when the dirt bluff disappeared because I liked the remoteness of that whole area. I can remember birds, seagulls nesting on the beach just south of St. Malo. I can remember birds nesting and you'd have to be careful not to step in a nest, there was so few people. It was pretty remote then. A little activity in front of the Carlsbad Hotel, but it was pretty quiet.

Marge: When did you start surfing?

Carl: About 1954.

Marge: Do you have a favorite memory or favorite trip?

Carl: Of course I still get a funny feeling inside when I remember coming south with my family when I was a little boy heading for Oceanside. I just loved the ocean. I loved coming down here. When we moved here, it was difficult for my parents but it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I loved moving down near the ocean and being around the ocean. I still get a funny feeling like I used to get when we head south on the 101 for our vacation in the summertime in the month of August.

Marge: Do you have another special memory of the 101?

Patricia: I know that the first summer we came, it almost seems miraculous, but my aunts and my uncle were in their 70s. Uncle Frank was 75 and I when I look back and think of all of the wonderful things that we did in the ten days that my parents were still here: Disneyland first opened, we did that, we went to the zoo, we went to La Jolla. I'll always remember going to Laguna Beach and always being so thrilled with seeing the little greeter at the pottery shack. I always loved that through the years.

Marge: He was special.

Patricia: That really was.

Marge: Do you remember any bad accidents?

Carl: I don't remember any bad accidents.

Patricia: I don't remember any bad car accidents, but I will always remember, on a Sunday, we got home from church and it was drizzly and overcast. And as we looked out of our front windows out at the ocean, across to Tamarack, there was a darling girl with a big dog and within ten or fifteen minutes of watching her, a cliff caved in and killed her. I always remember the dog, for the rest of that afternoon, just trying to find her. But as far as car accidents, I don't, but that was a pretty traumatic thing.

Marge: Do you remember any police stories—speeding or jaywalking?

Patricia: No, being as perfect as I was....

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Marge: Carl, do you?

Carl: I remember a couple of police stories. I don't know what year it was, in the 50's. I was driving north of Oceanside and my car quit and a fellow named Frank Cantwell was a highway patrolman. I had known him a little bit. He went to OCJC. He had gone there. Of all things, he was the one that stopped, picked me up and brought me home. He said, "I'll call the tow truck and get your car towed in" to, I think Carpenter's Garage, that was at the north end of Oceanside at that time. So I remember that. I also got my first ticket in Oceanside turning...I was driving north on Hill Street, turning left on Wisconsin Street. The policeman said my turn was too wide and he wrote me a ticket. Now I have to add that policeman about six months later was fired for writing too many tickets. So, I think there was a little more to the story with that guy! That was my first ticket.

Marge: Do you want to mention what you did when you finished school?

Carl: I graduated from college, USC. I went in the Air Force. I got out of the Air Force and I went to San Diego State to get my teaching credential. Then in 1958 I got a job at Carlsbad High School.

Marge: That was your teaching job?

Carl: Taught my whole career at Carlsbad High School.

Marge: What subject?

Carl: I taught Biology.

Marge: Very successfully, too. Do you ever remember a celebrity in a parade?

Carl: Celebrities I remember when I was in high school I washed pots and pans one summer only, a terrible job, at the Carlsbad Hotel. I remember peeking through the door and seeing Victor Mature and seeing Jimmy Durante, John Wayne. These early actors on their way to the races at Del Mar would stop by. They had quite a restaurant there at the time and had quite a name for themselves. Part of the reason I had this job, they made all these elaborate sauces in these huge pots and I had to literally climb inside of them to clean them out. It was worst job I ever had. I was the pot and pan cleaner in Carlsbad.

Marge: Pat, do you remember any famous notables?

Patricia: I really think the only one I do was seeing Jimmy Durante two or three times. We'd go to Tony Jacel during the racing season and how exciting that was. I mean I could hardly eat I was just so intrigued.

Marge: Was he "on" or was he just being an ordinary person?

Patricia: He was being an ordinary person with a group.

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Marge: Do you remember when the first traffic light was installed?

Patricia: You know, I vaguely remember Carl and I thinking, “Gosh, what is Carlsbad coming to with a stoplight?” But I don’t remember exactly where that was.

Marge: Do you remember, Carl?

Carl: No, I don’t. One thing I do remember though, when we moved into our house in 1959 in Carlsbad, we were pretty much out in the country up near Carlsbad High School. I can remember one night we heard a siren in the distance and we said to each other, “that’s the first siren we’ve heard.” In our first year of marriage we lived in an apartment in Oceanside and we’d hear them regularly. But over here, “we heard a siren!”

Marge: The big city.

Carl: Yep, I remember that.

Marge: Do you remember gas stations along the route?

Carl: I don’t remember gas stations. On the 101, if you went to Oceanside I remember a Standard Station, right near Mission. But none in Carlsbad, I don’t remember service stations along there.

Patricia: And I don’t either. I don’t recall at all. I think I was more into Novak’s and eating.

Marge: The freeway was built in 1954, I think. What I was thinking is that if cars going south, if they didn’t buy gas in Oceanside they had a long way to go.

Carl: Right.

Marge: Are there any other things you would like to share?

Carl: I might comment, I was thinking about this, one thing that came to mind, which is significant, there wasn’t much going on on the 101. Carlsbad was very quiet. There was the dirt bluff during the 1950s. It was very quiet and I remember before Terramar and the Power Plant were there, I can remember we surfers referred to what is now called Terramar, we called it, because of the housing development, we called it “Guayule”. They had raised a grass there during the Second World War, that they made an oil out of evidently. We all referred to as “guayule” and only the guys that have been here for years remember that terminology. I just remember fields down there, no houses.

Marge: Do you remember the poinsettia fields, too?

Carl: I remember the poinsettia fields. It was very quiet, very peaceful, very nice.

Marge: Pat?

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Patricia: Well, again, when I think of my first two years here just the really content feeling of closeness to two special people. Church people and my family, you know, my aunts and my uncle. One thing that I didn't mention was that my Uncle Frank Downing ran for Carlsbad city council in 1954. Really a neat man. A complete really, liberal now, probably more socialist actually. I always remember the neat discussions. I spent a lot of time with them. I would go downtown with them. I remember Mr. Castorena.

Marge: Manuel.

Patricia: Right, and the conversation that he and Uncle Frank would have and that was always exciting. And to think about Mrs. Magee and I'll always remember Mrs. Magee coming into church and often times with her little cats following her into church and just how sweet that was. And living next to Charles Ledgerwood and his wife and actually their two daughters, Eldene and Claire. Although we didn't spend a lot of time together, we did have fun on the beach. Eldene was married at that time to a Marine that was able to somehow bring the marine rafts to Ledgerwood's place. We had so much fun on those. All in all it was just a wonderful, wonderful couple of years and to think that I enjoyed so much being with older people, just how much fun they were. They were so adorable. I will always remember my aunt Peg sending Uncle Frank on the 101 to the grocery store, and I don't remember where that was, and I would often go with him. But, she needed an onion. She was a marvelous cook and needed an onion for a casserole. About half an hour later Uncle Frank comes home with two huge grocery sacks just jammed full of food. We took everything out and Aunt Peg said, "Where are the onions Frank?" "Well, Peg, they were too expensive so I just thought we'd get candy and cookies." She was so good-natured and she just laughed about and got a kick out of it, too.

Carl: I don't know if we mentioned the traffic in the summertime on the 101 due to the races. I don't know if we mentioned that. I can remember "Oh the races have started!" Downtown Oceanside would be jammed with cars as they headed south and then headed north. So that was something that certainly occurred regularly each year.

Marge: Were there traffic cops that regulated it?

Carl: Not that I remember, no. It wasn't that severe.

Patricia: I really don't remember any real problem getting in and out of the driveway on the 101.

Marge: That's significant.

Patricia: It is.

Marge: Well, thank you!