

done

Interview with Al and Afton Jandro  
Date of interview: May 4, 2001  
Place of interview: Carlsbad City Library (Cole)  
Interviewer: Susan Gutierrez  
Transcriber: Dee Morning

SG: When did you move to Carlsbad?

Al: In August of 1946. Afton was from Idaho and I came from Minnesota originally. We moved to Carlsbad from North Hollywood. Been in California since 1936, married in 1938.

SG: Why did you choose Carlsbad?

Al: We had some friends in North Hollywood that had moved to Leucadia and we came down on weekends and helped them build their house. We liked the area so we initially started to buy property in Vista. We decided that was a pretty bum deal and we happened to notice an advertisement for fifty acres in Carlsbad. Next time we came down we took a look at it. We weren't really impressed but we wanted to grow flower bulbs on it so we bought it. Turned out you couldn't raise anything on it actually.

SG: Where was it?

Al: On the corner of El Camino (Real) and Vista Way, right where the May Company is and then south of that.

SG: Did you grow anything?

Afton: Well, I was out there plowing with the tractor and a fellow who lived kitty corner over across the street there on the Henie property came over. He was Joe Alvarado, the ranch manager for Leif Henie, Sonia Henie's brother. He (Alvarado) said to me, "You're wasting your time, this ground is worthless. The ocean backed up on it years and years ago and it's salty and won't grow anything. We were shocked!"

SG: What did you do then?

Afton: Went to court.

Al: We proved that they had misrepresented the property but we still kept it.

Afton: The court gave us a reduction on our price.

Al: Well, not really. Then our neighbor Reg Marron Sr. came over and showed us why the land wasn't productive for what we wanted to do. Meantime we decided to go into the dry cleaning business. And then one day I was helping Reg with his water pump that he had for his stock and I said "You know, we ought to see about leasing this land, put it into a shopping center or something <sup>like</sup> lake that." The Stanford Survey that we had seen showed that El Camino was going to be widened and (Highway) 78 improved and we would probably be able to salvage that property as a commercial property.

SG: How much was yours and how much was Reg Marron's?

Al: From the middle of May Company east was ours and from the middle of May Company to the edge of the Hosp property was Reg's.

SG: Where was your house?

Afton: Approximately where the theater is now. (Moviemax Theater, 2385 Marron Road.)

Al: Probably in the middle of the street because El Camino has been widened. That conversation with Reg took place around 1950 I guess. So we talked to our attorney and he recommended Gordon Whitenall and Associates. They sent Kay Kalicka down to look at the property and we introduced Kay to Claud Fennel and Dewey McClellan and some of the other guys. Kay was quite taken with the area, he thought it would grow and I think he planted the seed of incorporation into Dewey McClellan's mind at that time. He said they couldn't really go ahead with any kind of a commitment unless we had a city entity. It was just unincorporated Carlsbad Village then, just part of the County government.

SG: Who was Kay Kalicka with?

Al: Whitenall and Associates, they were consultants for commercial development and for cities. They (eventually) became consultants for the City of Carlsbad. They helped the

city get their act together so they could incorporate. They worked with Dewey McClelland and they brought that young engineer Jack Kubota down who became the city engineer.

SG: Why was talking to Dewey McClellan so important?

Al: Well, Dewey was probably the most knowledgeable about Carlsbad. He had been here in real estate I think since 1920's, some where along there, and he was a thoroughly honest guy. He was a guy that I trusted and Reg Marron trusted. He was person to keep a confidence and was a wealth of information about things around here. So he was the most logical guy for them to talk to. Kay Kalicka thought it wasn't feasible to develop commercially as in his opinion nobody would be interested as long as it was a county/village thing. They would want something more substantial because there would have to be more planning going into the thing, a government that was flexible, one that you could work with on a local basis rather than a remote county government. I think Dewey thought that we could develop something on the scale of a regional mall. We knew 78 was going to be widened, CalTrans had already made the commitment and Camp Pendleton wanted an alternative route to San Diego, they wanted El Camino widened down to the south. However when the funds became available for I-5, paving El Camino all the way to Camp Elliott was put on the back burner .I-5 came before the widening of El Camino.

SG: Camp Elliot was what now?

Al: Torrey Pines, the University, Tierrasanta, all that area was a WWII staging area for the Marine Corps.

SG: I remember reading that they marched up El Camino Real.

Al: I guess it was Colonel Taylor in that bunch when they inaugurated Camp Pendleton. El Camino was just a dirt road then.

SG: It must have been some march, can you imagine?

Al: Oh yeah, it took them a couple of days I guess.

SG: So everything was on the back burner about the mall until the incorporation?

Al: No, we paid Whitenall a finder's fee to go ahead and find a developer who would be interested even before the city was incorporated. They came up with Jerry Eisenhower who was with Shopping Centers Incorporated. In the meantime he (Eisenhower) had conversations with McClelland and us and some of the other people around. He also talked to the county and state people about highway development and they were pretty firm in their commitment so he saw the potential. The Stanford Survey of 1950 projected North County as going to 500,000 people by 1975, they said that between ¼ and ½ million people would live here. They could see it was a prime spot there, major north and south and east and west (road) commitment.

SG: So did Eisenhower buy the land from you?

Al: He negotiated. Other people became involved in it, a consortium up there in Beverly Hills; I can't remember all the names. Then they got George May interested, he was the person developing all of the May Stores nationwide, he knew it would be a viable area.

SG: When did you sell your land?

Al: We signed the first agreement sometime between 1953 and 1955.

SG: So you and Reg Marron were on the same side as far as how to accomplish this?

Al: Yes, we had a tentative amount of money that we thought was adequate in those days. It took a couple of years to negotiate but finally it came about.

We retained quite a lot of the land and over time we disposed of the hilly part. We still live on the land as far as that's concerned – way up at the top end. The city confiscated part of it for Carlsbad Village Drive. We built a new house way up on the hill; our first house was down on Marron Road.

(Shows a picture of daughter Cheryl and horse. Present day sites of El Camino Golf Course and Mira Costa College are in the background.)

SG: (looking at picture) It was so empty then, you must be in shock now to see everything (that's here now)

Al: Well, it's been half a century so you know to us it's amazing but everyone knows it's the course of evolution that everything moves ahead in 50 years.

Afton: I told my children when we lived in the small house down the hill, "You can expect a lot of changes in your lifetime"

SG: How many children did you have and did they go to school here in Carlsbad?

Afton: Two. Daughter was three when we moved to Carlsbad and yes; they both went to school here, all their lives. Son was born down here. Daughter did very well in school. My son was a person who unless he understood what things were for and all about he didn't always do what he was told at school.

SG: Many of us have children like that.

Afton: One day his fifth grade teacher came into the dry cleaning business and told Al, "Your son's a genius but I have too many children. I am too busy to spend time with him"

SG: What kinds of things did people do in Carlsbad with their free time?

Afton: We worked 7 days a week. In summer Al's sisters came from Hollywood and helped with the children so that I could work in the dry cleaners.

Al: Most of the things were neighborhood and family affairs. The Maroon's took us in as part of their extended family. At that time all the Marron brothers were still alive, Reg, Dave, Frank and Abe.

Our business was in Oceanside although in 1955 we did open the first dry cleaners in Carlsbad. It was called Al-N-Dale Cleaners on Grand Avenue. Later on Afton had two dress shops in Encinitas.

Afton: I did belong to the Vista Palomar Riders and when Daughter was old enough she joined and later Son. I was secretary and I was the Vista Riders Secretary also.

Al: They drew riders from all over. The big thing was the Palomar Ride which lasted a week, camping out every day.

Afton: Two days out, overnight on Palomar Mountain and two days back.

Al: Oceanside had a saddle club too. On Easter Sunday Leo Carrillo used to have a breakfast mass up there at his rancho and horse people from the whole area used to ride over. There was still a Western flavor to the area.

Afton: Cheryl and I rode in the "Days of San Luis Rey" parade.

SG: When did it start to change from Western flavor to what we have now?

Afton: It was gradual.

Al: Probably at the beginning of the Vietnam War, mid 60's, more development, influx of more people, it became more urban, less small town.

Afton: First I belonged to the Oceanside-Carlsbad Riding Club and then the Vista Palomar Riders.

Al: There was something going on every weekend, rides a least once a month. The clubhouse was on North Santa Fe Road and Bobier Drive. Oceanside had a clubhouse on Short Street, which is now Oceanside Boulevard.

Afton: The horse that was born on the mall property in 1957 lived to be 37 years old. We had him up at our new place and I used to ride him in Hosp Forest. Daughter used to play hide-and-go-seek on horseback with her girlfriends in Hosp Grove

Al: It was pretty primitive when we moved here. Leif Henie, the previous owner of our property and the Marrons paid to bring in the electricity line from South Carlsbad, probably around 1943. Most everyone had outside plumbing. Those who lived on the east side of El Camino like the Dunhams still used kerosene lanterns in the 40's and 50's. Mrs. Dunham was part of the Borden family.

SG: There was no electricity at that time?

AI: There was in the downtown area but east of Highland there was just nothing there.

SG: Where was Henie's property?

AI: On the other side of El Camino and 78. East of where Love's Barbeque is now. MiraCosta College sits on Henie's property. They condemned that property and took it away from him and also the hospital site (Tri-City Hospital)

SG: What do you think is the best thing that's happened to the city since its incorporation?

A: Well, I think that the initial people in government had the proper vision of growth and slow development.

SG: And the worse?

AI: People like us who sold property for development. We brought all the headaches and problems to the area.

SG: I heard Oceanside people used to look down on Carlsbad because it wasn't a city – true?

AI: After they found out that we had made the deal with the May Company a lot of people wouldn't talk to me for 8 or 10 years. In fact I belonged to the Oceanside Chamber of Commerce and a lot of those guys wouldn't talk to me at all at the meetings. I used to go there just to gall them, that's all.

Afton: (smiling) Oh AI!

(Afton shows SG more pictures and describes locations)

SG: Anything else of interest you can add, did you use the beach?

Al: We had a beach back then before they put in the boat basin at Camp Pendleton. You could walk at low tide out on the sand 200 to 300 feet, about a ¼ mile out.

There was a beautiful beach all the way down to La Jolla. We used to go grunion hunting and have barbeques on the beach. I think the local people used the beach a lot more in those days. Not many people into surfing then.

There used to be a lot of cooperation between towns. Oceanside was the big city that had events, the San Luis Rey Days and the Fourth of July parades. Those events drew in people from all around. A parade would have five or six blocks of horses.

SG: Where did your kids graduate?

Al: Carlsbad High School. Cheryl's class was the first class that went all the way from grade school through high school in Carlsbad.

SG: Do your children still live in Carlsbad?

Afton: No, our daughter passed away in November.

Al: And our son is up in northern California.

SG: It 's pretty expensive for kids who grew up here to live here these days.

Al: to give you an idea, we paid \$20,000 for that property in 1946 and I guess the appraised value of it today would be somewhere around 54 million. The tax base of the power plant and the mall gave Carlsbad a good start and with prudent management on part of the early city founders I think that the city came along real well. But they were really dedicated people, (Police Chief) Max Palkowski used his own car, a lot of people donated their time.

SG: Why do you think people did that?

Al: That's the way people were. It was the same over in Oceanside. People over there did things for the city. Like Dave Rorick, Ernie Larson, the Weseloh brothers, all of those guys, they just knew things had to be done. It was the same thing here; people had



spirit of town. People used to help each other. I don't think we ever locked up anything when we first came here. Deputy Sheriff Kissinger took care of everything all the way from Encinitas to Vista, including all of Carlsbad. He knew every body's dog and cat and if anything was out of place he knew about it.

SG: Did you have problems? Was there a need for a policeman?

Al: No, when sundown came they just rolled up the sidewalks.

(General discussion of civic-minded people in Oceanside)

Now (Reverend) Brokenshire of the Carlsbad Community Church, he was a neat guy too. My daughter was taking organ lessons from Dorothy Kelly and she didn't have any place to practice so Doctor Brokenshire let her use the church organ.

Twin Inns was the only classy place to eat in this area. That, and the Mira Mar in Oceanside. Of course the Twin Inns had been here for years before we got here. Billy Dominguez's dad and Reg Marron and I used to go to a little restaurant called Casa Negro in the Barrio. They had the best Mexican food outside of Mexico

SG: I'm going to turn this off if there's nothing else and then I'd like to scan these photos.

Al: Okay.