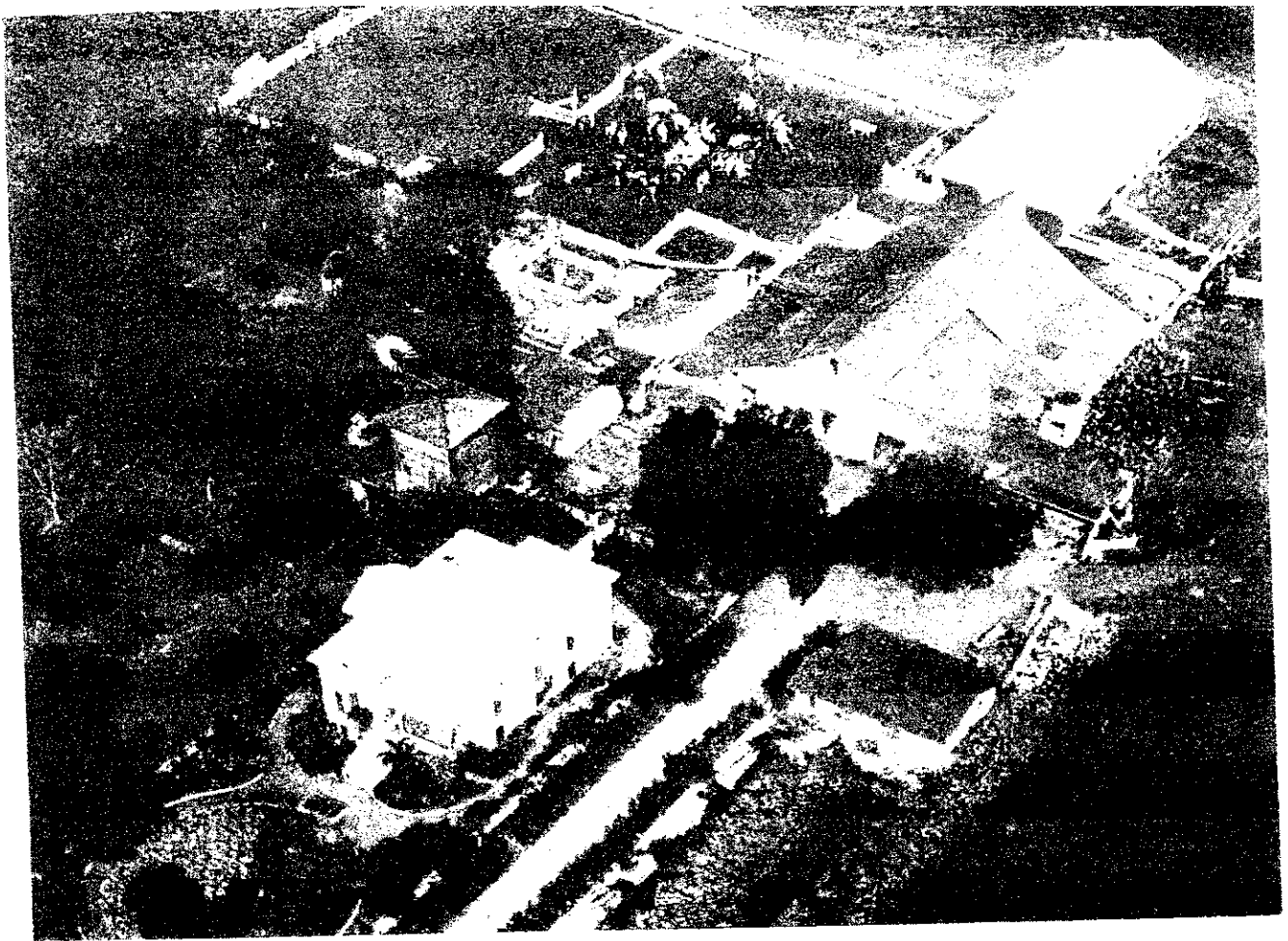


MY LIFE
70 YEARS
IN SANTA CLARA CTY.

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This is the Victorian home with 40+ acres of land that my grandfather, grandmother and uncle bought in 1920.

It was located on Lawrence Road (later became Lawrence Expressway) and they lived there until early 1950's.

They sold to housing developers.

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PREFACE

The major changes that have occurred here in Santa Clara County since I was born 70+ years ago, is significant and worth writing about for my grandchildren and their generation.

EARLY YEARS

On March 10, 1936, I was born in the Valley's Delight, "Santa Clara County, at San Jose Hospital, located in San Jose on E. Santa Clara Street.

I was the third child born to Antone and Mary Simas who resided at Box 147, Santa Clara. The road (2-lane) was called Lawrence Road, which much later became Lawrence Expressway.

My father had bought land on Lawrence Road and on this 10 acre land he built a three bedroom home and behind the home, he planted cherry, apricot, and walnut trees. Also, a few peach and fig trees.

The United States Depression occurred in Oct. 1929, and life was difficult for everyone.

We were lucky to live across from my grandfather and grandmother's 40+ acres. They were in partnership with my father's uncle, Joe Pombinho. They leased the land to Japanese and Filipino farmers who planted string beans, tomatoes, onions, and other crops. One of my earliest memories is when World War II started, a Japanese grandmother had me on her lap and was crying uncontrollably because the government were sending them away to Concentration Camps. That memory has remained with me to this day.

My oldest brother, Manuel Jerome and my older sister, Carmen Maree met me for the first time, when my mother and father brought me home. My mother named me Lorraine Gay.

How did my parents come to be in Santa Clara County? First my father was born in San Rafael, California on June 21, 1902. His family returned to their homeland, Pico Island in the Azores Islands in 1905. When my father was 17 years old, he returned to the United States. He came all by himself and the story goes that he got off the boat in Rhode Island and went by train to New York City and continued by train to California. He went to Marin County where his mother's brother, Jose Pereira Madruga Pombinho, was living and working. Antone, my father, worked long, hard hours at a dairy. Eventually, J. P. Pombinho entered into a partnership with my grandparents, Antonio Avila Nascimento and Rosa Avila Gabriel Nascimento. This was on a 40+ acre with home and land at Lawrence Road in Santa Clara. My dad came to visit his uncle and fell in love with my mother, Mary Sally Nascimento. They were married on May 21, 1932, the depression years, at Saint Clare's Church in Santa Clara. My mother had been born in San Bruno, California on Dec. 31, 1912. The family lived in a rustic shack near the once famous Tanforan Race Track in San Bruno. My mother often said she has been running life's race ever since then. The Nascimento Family's next big move was in 1916, when they moved to a little house on a grain field near the present day Monroe street in Santa Clara. In those days there was just one way to get to the property, and that was to go down a winding, bumpy washboard-like dirt lane that followed along the Calabazas Creek.

In the early 1900's, Santa Clara Valley was a vision of field after field of hay growing, along with blue lupines, California Poppies and jaunty buttercups. Indeed a painter's paradise. On this property, they had dairy cows. My mother's dad would milk the cows by hand and then my grandmother would drive the milk wagon, loaded with cans of fresh milk, to the Santa Clara train depot. The milk would be taken by train to San Francisco where the milk would be bottled and distributed to the people in the city.

Just STOP AND THINK a minute, almost everything in the early 1900's was done by either a man, woman or child's hands. There was little or no electricity, plumbing, machinery or other modern convenience. It seems, though, most people were happy and challenged as they struggled with life's everyday problems.

In 1918, my mother's dad was driving Alfonso, the horse, homeward in order to do some chores around the house. My grandfather was in a bit of a hurry so he kicked Alfonso in the buttocks, unfortunately the horse "back-fired" with his hooves and broke my grandfather's leg. This accident presented the family with some problems. My mother's brother, John, walked several miles into the tiny town of Santa Clara to find a doctor (at this time the entire world was in the midst of the great flu epidemic). My mother would always remember the sight of her brother John, the doctor and the nurse coming down the lane. They were such a strange group as they approached the house; John exhausted from his search and the doctor and nurse wearing masks over their mouths and noses. It was many years later that my mother realized the significance.

of the masks and the effects of the deathly flu virus.

After World War I, my mother's family moved to a cherry and apricot orchard located on Quito Road (Saratoga). They all lived temporarily in a converted tank house while a small house was being constructed. The economy at that time was very vigorous and they sold the Quito property at a profit. So, it was in 1920, my grandparents and my father's uncle purchased the forty acre dairy/grain field on Lawrence Station Road in Santa Clara from the Harry Lillick Estate (The Lillick's were old time homesteaders.) The Nascimento family was delighted with the new place. It seemed just like a palace to them. The house was an old "Victorian" with three levels. It even had an indoor toilet that automatically flushed when you pulled the long chain. There was a ground floor cellar, ideal for making homemade wine and beer, with a root cellar and several large rooms. The main part of the house had rooms with high ceilings, several large bay windows, kitchen, pantry, three bedrooms, a parlor and a huge formal dining area. There was even a spooky attic to explore. There was a decorative exterior with a large front porch as well as a practical back porch. A large old-fashioned garden completely surrounded the house. Roses, hollyhocks, lilacs, snapdragons, dahlias, and even several large asparagus fern plants twined around the ornate stairway to greet everyone with a fragrant welcome.

A great variety of buildings were scattered around the house. There was a large combination tank house/windmill, a gigantic animal and hay barn, a carriage house, garage and even a traditional outhouse. The outhouse had a wooden lathe facade that was entirely covered by a honeysuckle bush and a bright orange trumpet vine. These flowering plants provided the occupants with a natural "deodorizer" for the regal "two-holer". The tank house was used for water storage as well as for a variety of practical purposes. During prohibition my mother's dad and J. P. Pombinho thought that the tank house would be better than the cellar for their beer and wine making apparatus. Every spring, my grandmother used a large brooder, placed on the floor of the second story of the tank house structure, to raise about fifty baby chicks.

When my mother was growing up it seemed that most of their social activities were centered around the church (St. Clare's Church, Santa Clara and Five Wound's Portuguese Church on East Santa Clara Street in San Jose, and various Portuguese organizations.) My grandmother and grandfather were both very active in the S.E.S. Council #1 in Santa Clara. My grandfather would always donate cattle for the Holy Ghost Festa and my grandmother was one of the cooks for the free Sopa Feeds. The Portuguese festas always featured the crowning of a queen, parades, dancing, auctions, a carnival, fireworks and band concerts. There was something for everyone! J. P. Pombinho was an active member in several Lodges, including S.E.S. and I.D.E.S. He often served as Secretary for the local fraternal group and also for the Supreme Councils.

THE 1940's

Because this is a story of my life in Santa Clara County, I will recall for you the 1940's here in Santa Clara County. I was 5 years old on December 7, 1941, when our beloved President FDR, due to the bombing by the Japanese (Pearl Harbor in Hawaii), ^{and} Congress declared war on Japan and also on Germany.

Just as when The Twin Towers in New York were taken down by terrorists, the country responded and volunteered for military service.

For the duration, sacrifices were made by Americans. For the war effort, Victory Gardens were planted ~~by~~ Americans. Corn, tomatoes, stringbeans, and other vegetables were planted to feed our families. Women went to work in Defense plants, doing work on planes, ships, that the men had done before. Food and gas was rationed and my mother had books that kept account,

I was approximately 8 years old, when along with my older brother and sister and another younger brother Anthony (Tony), in Summers, became the labor force in harvesting and gathering the apricots, prunes, and walnuts in the orchards in our neighborhoods. It actually was a good lesson in the work ethic our generation is known ~~for~~. In June the cherries were harvested. In July the apricots were harvested and In August, the prunes. The walnuts were harvested in September after we came home from school.

At school, we bought stamps that went toward U.S. Savings Bonds. We collected paper, scraps of metal. We worked together in our neighborhoods to help win the ~~war~~.

When the war in Europe ended in May, 1945 and finally the war with Japan in August, 1945, all our neighbors on Lawrence Road gathered together at the Machado's ranch and around a big bonfire, we celebrated the end of the wars. We roasted hot dogs and all the trimmings and sang and danced and took rides together on hay wagons.

The 1950's

By 1952, my mother's last child was born. Toby Philip was born on March 14, 1952. We had lost my brother, Tony, in 1951 in a motor scooter accident near our home on Lawrence Road. My cousin, Johnny, had been driving the motor scooter and crashed into a Creamery truck. It was very hard ~~on~~ all our family, but especially my mother who was expecting Toby. The family besides Toby, were: Manuel (Sonny), Carmen, (myself, Lorraine,) Vicky, Joey, Bonnie. (7 children).

Beautiful Santa Clara blossoming orchards were going the way of the horse and buggy and were being sold to the developers of housing tracts which were needed for the young growing families.

My grandfather's beautiful Victorian house was demolished and a small modern house was built for them on a piece of their land after they sold to a developer for tract homes. It was sad to see the end of an era of long time neighbors and closeness.

1950's and 1960's

I graduated from Santa Clara High School in 1953. It is interesting to note that my mother was a graduate of Santa Clara High, too. I went to San Jose State for 3 years studying to be an elementary teacher. I discovered, though, when doing student teaching, that I felt too immature to teach. I felt like a kid myself. By 1957, I met my future husband, Glenn (Al) Stotlar and were married Aug. 31, 1957 in Reno, Nevada,

After a brief 8 months in Al's hometown, Indianapolis, where we had our firstborn, Kathleen Ann, we returned to California to a house on my father's pear orchard ranch he had bought in the 1950's. We lived there for a year and ^{then} bought in Milpitas, a new home in the Milpitas Manor. Our 2nd child, Julie Anne, was born in 1960 and our last child, Susan Maureen, was born in 1963.

Milpitas was a sleepy little town with mostly fields and a start up of housing tracts which we bought. There was only one little shopping center which had a grocery store called Brentwood, a 5-10 store called Ben Franklin, a bakery called Butt's bakery. At present, these 3 shops are no longer in business. Our early neighbors were friendly and we all had school age children and we knew each other well.

Our country roads were disappearing and freeways, expressways were taking their place. The peaceful, neighborly times were disappearing. 1963 saw the assassination of another beloved president, President Kennedy. Then we began a ill begotten, war, (just like Iraq War is today), Vietnam, and it wasn't long when the American people began their huge anti-war, peace cries, and kept it up until finally people in Congress began to listen to the people. (The present Bush administration has no qualms in not listening to the American people today)

1960's AND 1970's

Lockheed Missiles came to Sunnyvale in the late 1950's and was a major employer in Santa Clara County.

And after that Silicon Valley came into being. the Valley's Delight turned into electronics. People came from all over the US to work in Santa Clara County.

Housing tracts replaced our beloved orchards.

Milpitas grew too. Besides more housing tracts, a K-Mart came and a new City Hall was built. New schools and a new High School called Milpitas High School.

The small Calaveras Road became Calaveras Blvd. which was busy with traffic steadily as commuters used this thoroughfare.

1980's

All our three girls married. First Kathy in 1982. Then Julie in 1988 and the last, Susan, in 1989. Kathy has remained with her family, Mickey (husband) and Nicole, Natalie, and Melissa in Milpitas. Susan and George (Husband) and Ricky moved to Manteca, Ca and Julie and husband Mike and Heather, Wyatt, Travis, Austin and Waylon live in Medford, Oregon.

Our long-time neighbors started to sell their homes and new foreign speaking immigrants from Asia moved in.

Because of the language barrier, there is not the sense of knowing one's neighbors, but we are living together side by side in harmony.

Transportation has changed greatly in Santa Clara County. We have the Bart, which is expanding. We have the light rail and the buses and trains.

In October of 1989, during the Baseball Championship Game at Candlestick Park in San Francisco, a 7+ earthquake struck. My husband, Al, and I were at a Long's Drug Store in Milpitas buying some wine for my youngest daughter Susan's wedding. Suddenly, the shaking began. I headed for a center aisle to hold on to a pole. My husband was in the paper item aisle and all the paper items were flying everywhere. He tried to help calm other shoppers and I remember screaming because I was extremely scared. It seemed that the shaking would never stop and I was hoping the ceiling wouldn't fall on us. Santa Clara County was not the hardest hit. The casualties happened in Santa Cruz and surrounding areas and in Oakland and San Francisco.

When my husband and I returned home, our neighbors told us they heard on TV that the Bay Bridge had collapsed, as well as another bridge in Oakland. Our power was out, but my daughter, Kathy, who also lives in Milpitas, had power so we went there and watched TV news and were astonished of the great damage in the Bay Area.

For weeks, in Santa Clara County, people were unable to forget this destructive earthquake. We were afraid to drive under any bridge or underpass. Relatives from Indiana called to make sure we were ok.

Retrofit began in earnest in the Bay Area because Santa Cruz collapsed due to their not retrofitting.

1990's

My husband, Al, who had heart problems decided to retire from Santa Clara County at the age of 58 in 1993. He had worked for the County since 1958, where he started as an Orderly and then went to the Utility Works Dept., primarily washing the high-rise building's windows and moving furniture of depts to new locations in the County. He became a night-Watchman and then he became a Road Painter, striping the paint on the many roads, expressways of Santa Clara County. He suffered a major heart attack in the early 1980's and was out an entire year in recovery before returning to work. He worked his final years in the County Warehouse and distributed supplies to the County offices. So after 34 years with the Cty.,

Al was looking forward to his retirement. He wanted to write a mystery book. He wanted to enjoy his grandchildren. He had built a miniature trainset with painstaking care and with his dedication to detail produced a complete countryside with roads, and a village of people and buildings. It was truly his work of art. He continued his piano playing and composing songs.

In 1997, Al suffered a stroke that affected his brain. He told me his brain felt like sand. He lost his parallel vision and couldn't do the things he had done prior to the stroke. He could no longer drive. He was very vulnerable now. My heart went out to my beloved husband. I was still working, so I found out from the City of Milpitas, he could be picked up by them. They had a bus that transported those Seniors who couldn't drive. At the Senior Center he enjoyed lunch and the social time with the other Seniors.

He enjoyed making friends at the Senior Center. Al was a people person and made friends easily.

I was anxious to retire to be with Al. So, in 1998 I retired. Al continued going to the Senior Center because he enjoyed the lunch, the people and the activities.

There were many trips made to the hospital, and seeing the various doctors who treated Al. Al was positive and kept his happy disposition.

2000's

Santa Clara Counties' cities and towns continues to grow in population and new businesses are established. City of Milpitas built a new City Hall, and a new library and Senior Center is in the works.

We live now in a global economy and quiet neighborly families living side by side is now a piece of the past as the cost of housing has made communal living in our neighborhoods a necessity and we have few single family residences anymore.

We've come a long way in Santa Clara County since my birth 70+ years ago. The large families on small and large farms and orchards, who harvested crops and the dairy's who provided milk and beef are mostly gone. The simple hardworking families who did most everything by hand has come into the age of computers and the Internet. Technical advances keep happening but sometimes the easiest way is the way of our ancestors who were prideful of their manual labor because it was done with love and joy.

My beloved husband, Al, of 47 years passed on Abraham Lincoln's birthday, Feb. 12, 2005, and I will always remember him saying "Santa Clara County is God's country."

The End

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