



Historical Happenings

A publication of
the
Brea Historical Society

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VOL. XVIII, No. 6
June, 2001

A Visit with Walt Bergman

by Brian Saul

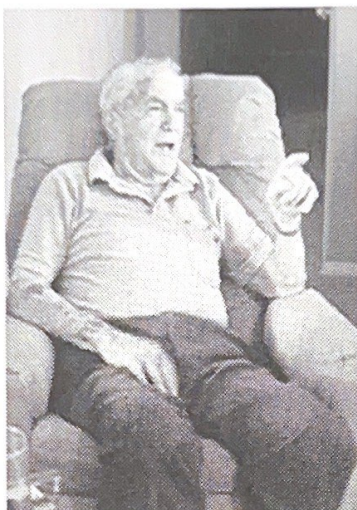
The Brea Historical Society made a quick trip to Las Vegas last month, but not for the reasons you might think. Instead, it was all in the name of learning about and recording our history when newsletter editor Kathy Canon and I interviewed one of Brea's favorite people, former resident, 95 year-old Walt Bergman.

Armed with a tape recorder and two 90-minute tapes, we met Walt at the home of his daughter Darlene with whom he's been living since the mid-90's.

If you've ever talked to Walt, you know just what a remarkable memory he has, and since he came to Brea in 1916, there are a lot of wonderful experiences and stories to record.

Once we pushed the record button, the three hours went by quickly. Unfortunately, because of space I can't tell you everything he said, but I am going to give you some of the highlights.

1. Twenty year-old Walt had the concession stand selling "soda pop" at the big Brea Airport Air Show in April, 1926. On the second day of the meet, the tiny Humming Bird airplane crashed and Walt was one of the first persons to reach the wreck. He described the scene by saying the plane had "plunged into the dirt" and the young pilot was crushed from his mid-section down. Two to three days later, Walt attended his funeral in Long Beach.



Walt Bergman, at his Las Vegas, NV home, sharing memories of his life in Brea with Brian Saul and Kathy Canon. May, 2001.

Will Churchill, who built the wood portion of the Humming Bird (wings, tail and fuselage), also built Walt and Evelyn's 1929 Provincial Revival home at 311 S. Orange Ave.

2. Of interest also is that a little after 9a.m. on April 8, 1926, Walt remembers standing, facing west, at the counter at the family's Bergman Garage at the corner of Birch and Brea Blvd. (later the home of Pawlack Tile). All of a sudden, he saw a "whole wall" of flame shooting into the air. (This occurred when lightning struck tanks at the Union Oil Tank Farm). The fire, he said, lasted a week and it was true, he added, that because of the flames you could read a newspaper on Brea Blvd. in the middle of the night. Among other

duties that week, he helped to direct traffic caused by people coming from all over Southern California to see the "spectacle" of smoke and flames. Even at 2a.m., Brea was full of sightseers.

3. At one time, the city's telephone exchange building was located behind the Bergman Garage. Walt opened the garage at 5a.m. and left at 10p.m. most days. He recalls there being only one telephone operator working a shift at a time and they would change shifts throughout. As he remembers, one operator opened the door to the phone exchange and stepped out for some reason,

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A Message From The President



Jim Schweitzer hitching a ride with Jack Smith at May's Spring Fling.

Far and away, the biggest, and most important goal of this year is to secure and hopefully move into a permanent home as soon as is reasonably possible.

A substantial amount of work has already been done. Some very large sponsors (such as Unocal and Pacific Western National Bank) have been approached and voiced a very real and sincere interest in helping to fund this project, and negotiations with the City of Brea and the City Council have officially been entered into.

As you may already know, the building that has been selected by the Society's Board of Directors and the Brea Museum and Heritage Center Committee is the old American Legion Building located at the southeast end of City Hall Park and the northwest corner of Brea Blvd. and Elm St. It is widely felt that this location makes perfect sense in as much as the building has been vacant for several years now, is one of a very few historic buildings left in town and would make City Hall Park truly a historic and cultural block!

At the May 15th City Council Study Session, an official proposal was presented to the council and, overall, all five members were quite supportive and positive! However, several voiced a concern and desire to see very definite and tangible financial support in place before the City makes a commitment. Understandably, the council

wants to see if the funds will be in place to either fund this project initially and/or long term, well into the future. It was also expressed that it would be helpful if the council could get a better feel for the support of the community and residents for this project of the Society moving its museum and offices permanently into this particular building. Councilwoman Perry expressed the thought that it would be a positive benefit if Brea's residents would express their opinions, pro and con.

Therefore, I respectfully ask the membership to contact one, or all, of the council members and let them know your thoughts, feelings, and hopefully, solid support! Mayor Roy Moore, Tim Harvey, Bev Perry, Marty Simonoff and Steve Vargas can be reached at:

One Civic Center Circle
Brea, CA 92821
(714) 671-4488
(714) 990-7718
(714) 990-2258 (fax)

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, City Manager Tim O'Donnell can be reached at (714) 990-7717.

If it is too difficult for you to express your support directly to the City Council, we have included a petition/survey in this issue of Historical Happenings. Please feel free to complete the petition and send it to us. We will be more than happy to forward it to the City Council on your behalf.

I ask that as many people as possible step forward and let these city officials know of your support!

At this early point, negotiations are still evolving and taking shape. It is not yet clear how the Society and Museum and Heritage Center (which is being headed up by my brother, Don) will interface and just how the City will be involved and what financial support they will provide. Nevertheless, the ball has started rolling and discussions and a constructive dialogue is underway.

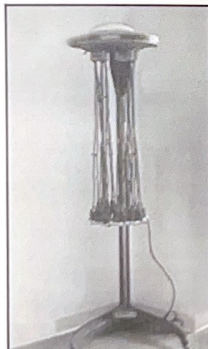
Secondly, Brian Saul and I are working on having a display incorporated into the plans for the new Fire Station #2 that would spotlight/enlarge/mount/display photographs of the 1924 baseball exhibition game between Babe Ruth and Olinda's Walter Johnson, as well as safely displaying the baseball that Ted Craig had autographed by both of those legendary Hall of Famers! Joel Shennum, of the Brea Fire Department and Linda Huffnagle, Senior Park Ranger at Craig Regional Park, have both been very encouraging

and positive in early discussions. So, at this point, it looks quite promising. It is also possible that the baseball would be put on display at the future Brea Heritage Museum in the American Legion Building. This option is also being explored.

For those that may not be aware, the players in that game changed into and out of their uniforms just across the street in the building that is now Ron & Wayne's Automotive Repair and the field was located just a few hundred yards to the north, up near the northwest corner of Brea Blvd. and Lambert Rd. Given the close proximity to where the changing rooms and field were, the opportunity to have a beautiful, brand new display included into the plans of a new state-of-the-art facility, it is felt that the idea makes very good sense!

Lastly, the Portola Monument, located on Brea Blvd. as one drives north out of Brea, is falling into neglect and is in need of a face lift. Determining who has jurisdiction and then working through the

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WHAT IS IT?

Something from outer-space?
Maybe a medieval torture device?
Do YOU know what this is? Wanna find out? Come down to the Brea History Museum and we'll tell you!

The Other Name on the Baseball

by
Kathy Canon

Most Breans are aware, and very proud, of the fact that on October 31, 1924, New York Yankee slugger Babe Ruth and hometown pitching sensation Walter "The Train" Johnson played in an exhibition game near what is now the corner of Lambert Rd. and Brea Blvd. Both of these legends, along with Christy Mathewson and Ty Cobb, were the first players to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

After the exhibition game, Ruth and Johnson signed a baseball for Ted Craig that is currently in the care of Park Rangers at Craig Regional Park. Another player present at that game was New York outfielder, "Long Bob" Meusel. And just as his career was eclipsed by such luminaries as Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, this other member of the legendary "Murderers Row" signed the baseball that day. His is one of the other names on the baseball.

Even advertisements for the game printed in the Brea Progress newspaper relegated Meusel to second billing, listing his name in smaller type, under Johnson and Ruth. A handbill from the actual game doesn't mention him at all.

Although his name is seldom brought up when Breans and baseball historians recall that fall day in 1924, the statistics he accumulated in his 11-year major league career give us a better glimpse as to why he was included on that barnstorming tour in the first place.

At 6'3", the muscular Meusel was

a feared outfielder and considered a solid, all-around player, power-hitting .313 or better in seven of his first eight major league seasons. Hitting behind Babe Ruth in the order, Meusel became the first Yankee right-hander to win a batting title in 1925 with 33 home runs. That same year, he was also the American League RBI champion, with 138. His accurate and

a regular season game played on May 16, 1927, he stole second, third and home.

Bob Meusel and Babe Ruth are the only Yankee players to hit for the cycle three times. Career-wise, Meusel ranks among the all-time Yankee leaders in doubles (338), triples (87), RBI's (1,005) and batting average (.311).

With statistical superiority to many players in the Hall of Fame, Bob Meusel was considered "grim and unpopular" by fans and Yankee Manager Miller Huggins felt he played with an "indifferent attitude" and "could have done better".

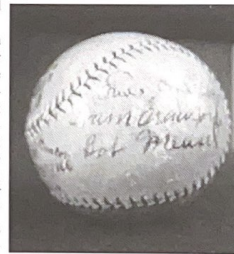
Looking back at some of Meusel's exploits during his career, it's still difficult to understand why he is an almost forgotten character in baseball lore.

On October 16, 1921, with baseball pals Babe Ruth and Bill Piercy, he embarked on a barnstorming tour of Buffalo, NY, contrary to Baseball Commissioner Landis' ban against the World Series participants playing in post-season exhibitions.

Five days after the tour began, they cut it short in Scranton, PA, but Babe Ruth challenged Landis to act against them...which he did - fining the players their World Series shares, \$3,362.26 each, and suspending the players until May 20th the following season.

On June 13, 1924, with New York leading 10 - 6 in the ninth inning, Tigers pitcher Bert Cole hit Meusel in the back with a pitch. Meusel threw

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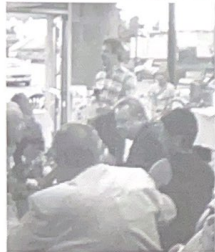
One of the other names on the baseball, "Long Bob" Meusel was part of the famed NY Yankees "Murderers Row".

powerful throwing arm earned the outfielder his other nickname, "The Rifle", and on September 5, 1921, Meusel tied a major league record with four outfield assists in a single game.

In 1924, Meusel had a career high of 26 stolen bases and was two hits shy of his career high of 190, with 188. From 1920 through 1930, his on-base percentage career high was .393. Appearing in six World Series, "Long Bob" stole home twice and in

Spring Fling Recap

The Brea Historical Society Spring Fling, held May 3, 2001 at the Brea Bistro, was more than just a fling...it was an event! Delicious hors d'oeuvres and a yummy buffet were just the start of the evening's treats. Mike Harline entertained on the guitar before dinner, and after, Don Schweitzer took the microphone, in-



Don Schweitzer (with Randy Jones in the foreground), emceeing the festivities at the Spring Fling.

roducing many guests, including LaVeta Daetweiler, who founded the Brea Historical Society with Frank Schweitzer in 1971. Mayor Roy Moore presented LaVeta with a proclamation from the City, recognizing her efforts at historical preservation. Don Schweitzer presented her with a dozen roses.

Then Don introduced the guest of honor, Cy Young Award winner and Brea hometown hero, Randy Jones. Randy delighted the more than 90 guests with stories of his baseball



That dynamo Marie Domenico, with husband Ernie, finally taking a break after tirelessly helping organize our fundraiser.

career, from his start here in Brea, to standing on the mound, ready to pitch in his first All Star Game. Randy graciously answered questions from the audience as he recalled memories of Claude Osteen, Leonard MacKain



Newsletter editor (and baseball fan), Kathy Canon with Randy Jones during a tour of the Brea History Museum.

and Pete Rose.

At the end of the evening, Randy and his wife and parents (who reside in Brea) took a tour of the Brea History Museum with President Jim Schweitzer, Vice President Brian Saul and newsletter editor Kathy Canon. Randy promised to donate his BOHS Varsity jacket to the museum for display, and it was sent to us within a week!

There are so many "thanks" to so



Cy Young Award winner and Brea pitching sensation Randy Jones' BOHS Varsity jacket. Now on display at the Brea History Museum.

many people for helping make our fundraising event such an enormous success. We wish to thank all parties who donated items for the opportunity drawings, Jon Lyng and his staff at the Brea Bistro for their great food and warm hospitality, Jim Crow for all that running around he did, and especially Marie Domenico and Edna Makins, co-chairs of the Spring Fling Committee, for their hard work. Well done all!

Remembering Toad Kinsler

Toad Kinsler died on May 20, 2001. Brian Saul spoke at his memorial service on May 25, 2001.

"A little over two months ago, I spoke at the city dedication of the home of a very special man, and today I'm speaking about another very special person. It just happens that the two are father and son and they're both people I cared a lot about - Toad, who I knew as a good friend and his dad, who I wish I had known.

Some people think of me as a person who knows a lot about Brea history, and because it's something I love, I thought today I really wanted to tell you about Toad's life, especially the early part of it because many of you out there already known about his adult years.

About eleven years ago, when I first got to know him and began my obsession to know more and more about his remarkable parents, I was going through some old newspapers from 1920 and came across an article about the death of Olivia Winchel, the wife of oilworker Harry Winchel. For some reason, I read it and then realized that Olivia, who had died leaving six children, the youngest only two-days old, was Toad's birth mother and he was that two-day old baby.

I also learned that after her death, Harry, Toad's dad, was so distraught and overwhelmed by having to care for six young children that he asked neighbors if they could care for little Ralph Leland Winchel, Toad's original name. First Ralph went to the Senn Family and Mr. Senn was the cesspool digger in town. Next he stayed with the Kewish Family, and Mr. Kewish worked at the Brea Boiler Works on Brea Blvd. Then, there were other neighbors, the last which were the Kinslers, Charles and Lena, who kept him until he was six months old and loved him so much that they asked if they could adopt him. Since Harry had five other children to care for, he reluctantly agreed.

You know what's nice is that Toad said there was never any secret who his birth family was, and he was close to them his whole life. So, really, he had two loving families.

This week, I was re-reading an oral history that was done with Toad back in 1985 and one of the things that really stands out is the love and pride he had for his adoptive parents and sisters, Thelma, Mildred and Arlene.

I think, so you don't get confused who I'm talking about whenever I refer to his Mom and Dad, from now

on I'll be talking about the Kinslers, okay?

Anyway, I read that one of the earliest and clearest of Toad's memories happened when he was three or four years old. That's when his dad Charles took him to work with him one evening in the oilfields. After he showed his son around, he layed him down to bed in what was called the "belt house", which, if I have this straight, was a tin building in which there was a thirty-foot belt attached to a gas engine. With a lot of slapping and banging around, the belt helped the drilling of the well. There was all this loud noise, Toad said, especially for a 3 or 4 years old, but he slept through the night.

He also remembered how lucky he was that because his dad was Brea's fire chief, he got to ride on the Seagraves Fire Truck, the one now parked outside, when it was actually new! This experience led to his remaining for forty-seven years as a Brea Volunteer Fireman.

On Halloween Day, 1924, he attended Brea's famous Babe Ruth-Walter Johnson exhibition game and remembered the boy across the street from his house getting hit by a Babe Ruth foul ball and Ruth coming over and giving him a quarter as a way of saying he was sorry.

In the early 1930's, his dad, who to put it mildly was very active in the city, was having a lot of heart problems. So, Toad had to often help him by carrying his books and files up to the second floor meeting room of the old Craig Building.

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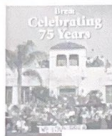
Toad Kinsler being interviewed for Video Brea Line by Scott Pettinger at the dedication of his family's home as a city historic landmark, March 15, 2001.

On Sale Now at the Brea History Museum

When you make your next visit to the Brea History Museum, be sure and purchase your copy of the book, *Brea: Celebrating 75 Years*. Written by Teresa Hampson, the book is 246 pages of photographs and recounts of Brea from its early days as a major oil-production and agricultural center to the early 1990's.

Brea: A Walk in Time is an entertaining 2 hour video, hosted by Brea Historical Society Vice President, Brian Saul. Join Brian as he takes you on a tour of Brea's historical landmarks and visits areas of the city that you didn't know were there.

All proceeds from sales of the book and video go to assist the Society's preservation efforts in Brea.



Brea: Celebrating 75 Years. By Teresa Hampson. \$28.00, incl. tax.



Brea: A Walk in Time. A 2 hour video of the early years of Brea. Hosted by Brian Saul \$14.95, incl. tax.

Will You Help Us?



Panasonic 20" 2 Head TV/VCR Combination

The Brea Historical Society is asking for donations to help us purchase a refurbished Panasonic TV/VCR Combination. Once we reach our goal of \$250.00 and make the purchase, the television will be kept at the Brea History Museum to allow researchers and visitors to view the MANY videotapes we have about Brea's history. We have tapes of "Video Brea Line" and, of course, "Brea: A Walk in Time" that we would be available to everyone. Currently, though, they sit on shelves gathering dust. If you can help, please send your tax-deductible donation to: The Brea Historical Society, PO Box 9764, Brea, CA 92822. Be sure and mark on your check: *TV/VCR donation. THANK YOU!*

Big Doin's at the Museum!

If you haven't been down to the Brea History Museum lately, you aren't aware of the changes taking place. Along with our efforts to acquire the old American Legion Hall as a new home, we've been acquiring wonderful memorabilia that is currently being cataloged and will soon be on display.

Among the items recently acquired are a set of HO size building models. Remember Sam's Place, Oilfields National Bank or the Sewell Building? They're no longer lost to past and will soon be part of a brand new display depicting the history of Brea Blvd. These models are on indefinite loan from the City of Brea, and we appreciate the assistance of David Crabtree in helping us complete this project.

Other exciting memorabilia that have recently been donated come from Catherine Seifer. Catherine has given the Brea History Museum a huge collection of hats, WWI memorabilia, clothing and jewelry from the early-to-mid 1900's...it's impossible to list everything in this small space. Thank you, Catherine...thank you!

We are currently planning an Open House/Reception for our membership and the general public once our new exhibits are in place. You won't want to miss this, so look for your invitation to this event soon!

Toad Kinsler

cont'd from page 4

Charles also didn't have enough strength to drive for himself so Toad, who had learned to drive out on the old G & L Oil Lease east of town when he was 10-years-old, was doing most of the driving for his dad when he was thirteen. He said he went so many places that you could drop him off anywhere in Southern California and he knew where he was.

Before I go any further, how many of you know how Leland (it seems so strange for me to call him that) got his nickname? Well, he had an older cousin, Perry Thayer, who was known for nicknaming people all over town. One day, according to Toad, when he was about four-years-old, he was leaning over playing marbles in the front yard of the house on Orange St. when Perry looked out the window and said, "He looks like a little toad squatted down out there." The name stuck. Toad said he thinks he had teachers who didn't even know what his real name was. Of course, most of you probably know his older brother was nicknamed "Frog", right?

As a teenager, Toad, through his father who had died in 1934, developed a real love of baseball and later softball. Through the years he played in all sorts of softball leagues in Brea, Fullerton and Placentia. In fact, he was 45 or 46 when he finally put his bat down for the last time.

In 1940, he got a job with Interstate Aircraft and Engineering Co. in El Segundo, and then four years later, in 1944, went into the Navy as a Mortar Machinist's Mate. In 1945, he married Marge in Fullerton, and later on, as you know, had two sons: Chuck, who lives in Brea and Steve who lives in Seattle. After discharge, Toad returned to his job in El Segundo for a short time before hiring on to Standard Oil Co. where he worked for thirty-five years until his retirement.

And how did he spend his retirement? Well, he and Marge bought some empty land up in Stevensville, MT on which Toad planned out where the well was going to be dug and where the mobilehome was going to be placed. For 17 years, they left Brea in the spring for Montana and then returned in the fall just in time to miss the big snows.

Well, that pretty much brings me up to when I first met Marge and Toad back I think in 1990. Gee, what a treat it was for me to actually meet and talk to the son of Charles and Lena Kinsler. I also was lucky enough to

meet Mildred and Thelma Kinsler. From all I learned about their parents, I just knew that their 1912 home on Orange St. needed to be saved from the redevelopment that was wiping out old Brea during the 90's.

So for eleven years, Toad and I worked together to preserve the home as a tribute to his parents who had done so much for this city. Eleven years, and finally on March 15 of this year it happened. One of the things I'll always remember is how happy Toad was on that day at the dedication ceremony. I'm so grateful he lived to see it happen because I know how proud he was of his parents and how much it meant to him to see them honored.

He was a great guy and a good friend of mine, and he had a real love for this city.

In a 1920 article in the Brea Star newspaper talking about his birth it said "THE BABY BOY IS A REAL PRECIOUS BIT OF HUMANITY." He still was at 81."

The Other Name on the Baseball

cont'd from page 3

his bat at Cole and charged the pitchers mound, setting off a 30-minute near-riot at the Detroit Stadium that included both players benches, fans, ushers and the police. Umpire Billy Evans, unable to clear the field to complete the game, forfeited it to New York. Cole and Meusel were both suspended for 10 days. Meusel was fined \$100, Cole and Ruth were fined \$50 each.

Playing for Cincinnati, Meusel's final season in the major leagues, on September 12, 1930 during a game against the Brooklyn Dodgers, Brooklyn catcher Al Lopez drove a ball over the head of left-fielder Meusel. The ball bounced over the wall and into the bleachers at Ebbets Field. Ruled a homerun, this is the last recorded bounce homerun in National League history, as the rules changed the following season to rule bounced HR's as doubles.

"Long Bob" Meusel, born in San Jose, CA on July 19, 1896, died of natural causes in California on November 28, 1977 and is buried at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier. Not much is known of his life after the end of his baseball career. We do know, however, that there was a reason he was on the barnstorming tour that brought him to Brea back in 1924. There was a reason he was asked to sign the baseball with Babe Ruth and Walter Johnson. There is a reason his name is one of the other signatures on the baseball.

Walt Bergman
cont'd from page 1

leaving the door to slam shut and locked behind her. The phone was ringing, the door was locked and the operator was stuck outside! And for those few moments, there was no telephone service in Brea. Walt came to the rescue, however, by dragging a stool to the back of the telephone building, climbing up and loosing the screen to crawl through the bathroom window and came up to unlock and open the door. According the Walt, this happened a number of times.

4. Not related to Brea, but still fascinating to me is during the 1930's when Walt was working for Goodyear Rubber, he went aboard and took a tour of the Zeppelin Hindenburg when it visited Los Angeles. He described his walk through the passenger quarters and up into the main body of the ship itself. What an experience!

So, those are just some of the memories he shared with us. Kathy and I left Las Vegas, not with money, but with a wealth of new knowledge.

Thanks Walt, for a terrific day. You're a great guy and we really miss you here in Brea.

Presidents Message
cont'd from page 2

proper channels, it is my desire to spruce up the monument and immediate surrounding area and make that historic marker a bit more attractive, as well as noticeable...I will actively pursue this project in the next few weeks.

Again, in closing, I encourage anyone who has any sort of feedback, suggestions, ideas or criticisms to phone or write me. I would be very interested in hearing or reading what you have to say!



Special Thanks
to our
Corporate Sponsor

**Pacific Western
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located at
275 N. Brea Blvd

Brea Historical Society

Jim Schweitzer, President
(714) 529-0635

Brian Saul, Vice President
(562) 698-5339

P.J. Mansur, Secretary/Treasurer
(714) 528-4240

Edna Makins, Board Member
(714) 529-1755

Jim Crow, Board Member
(714) 529-3295

Marie Domenico, Board Member
(714) 529-6641

Lloyd Dudding, Board Member
(714) 256-4324

July Board Meeting:

Monday, July 2, 2001, 7:00pm
at the Brea History Museum,
652 S. Brea Blvd.

Office Location:

652 S. Brea Blvd (at the Brea
Heights Shopping Center)
(714) 256-2283

VOLUNTEERS!

You don't have anything to do this Saturday that can't wait! *We need your help* at the Brea History Museum, every Saturday between the hours of 11am and 2pm. If you have the time...even an hour...your assistance will help preserve the history of Brea! C'mon...you know you wanna.



Brea Historical Society
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Brea, CA 92822-9764

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Twenty-Third Psalm

*The Lord is my Shepherd:
I shall not want. He maketh
me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.*

*He restoreth my soul;
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's
sake.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for Thou art with me:*

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

*Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies;*

*Thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my
life:*

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

In Memory Of
Walter F. Bergman

Date of Birth
March 12, 1916

Date of Death
August 16, 2001

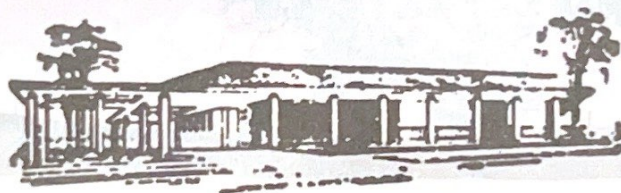
Graveside Services
Wednesday, August 22, 2001
10:00AM

Officiating
Dr. Ed Linberg

Interment
Loma Vista Memorial Park

APPRECIATION

In behalf of the family, we wish to express their gratitude for your many kindnesses evidenced in thought and deed, and for your attendance at the memorial service.



Neels Brea Mortuary

835 S. Brea Boulevard • Brea, CA 92621-5386

(714) 529-2194 (213) 694-3974

FD 623

#486
Member Since

Interview with Walt Bergman.

Recorded at the home of Elsie Bergman, his sister-in-law, on July 2, 2001.

Interviewer: Brian Saul

B. The first thing I want to ask you concerns what you once told me regarding Eddie Rickenbacher landing here at that landing strip south of Imperial Hwy.

W. No, I don't remember Rickenbacher. It was Doolittle. Jimmy Doolittle in one of those big old Douglas 12's that the Air Corps had first. One wheel got stuck in an irrigation ditch and I had a little Diamond T truck I used around the garage and I hooked that onto it and pulled him out of the ditch. (Laughter) That's right where the museum is, where your headquarters are in the shopping center.

B. Now how did that landing strip go? Did it go parallel to Brea Blvd. or did it go...?

W. Well, it was kind of parallel and this ditch circled it like this...and come in here and got one wheel...the landing strip was kinda...

B. So, parallel to Brea Blvd. and didn't go off like...

W. It wasn't really a landing strip. It was first an open field he couldn't land in.

B. Is he the one who went to the Jr. High and talked to the kids?

W. I don't know but he was one of the main ones in the big raid over Tokyo.

B. Oh, I know later on when was this about when he landed there? Do you know about what year that would have been?

W. No. I couldn't say.

B. Because I have this article here that says "Famous Ace is Visitor in Brea". Eddie Rickenbacher landed in Brea and then it says he went to Fullerton and talked to the boys at the high school. That night he talked to some people in Fullerton. So I always thought it was...there was somewhere I had heard that somebody landed and went down to the Brea Grammar School.

W. That was Doolittle. We took him to the grammar school. He talked and the auditorium was full of students and people he talked to there.

B. Oh, that was Jimmy Doolittle who talked. Okay, this is something else then. So we had 2 famous people land here.. We had Rickenbacher and Doolittle landing in Brea. Wow.

W. There were quite a number of famous flyers that were here in and out when we had the Brea Airport.

B. Yeah, I'm going to ask you about some of those people like Otto Schaeffer and Art Goebel.

W. Otto Schaeffer lived in Anaheim and he was the test pilot who htested and flew the big plane that Thaheld built.

B. The big one that crashed in San Diego?

W. Yeah.

b. I'm going to ask you about him in a second. What I want to ask you. Let me see. I wrote some questions down here. Did you ever go up in one of the airplanes?

W. Yeah

B. Oh, you did?

W. Yeah, I had ...my cousin Earl Casner and I bought a jenny.

B. Oh, that's right. I think you did tell me. Tell me more about that.

W. And Lee Miles, the one who came over from the Tri-City Airport over by Redlands, he gave us lessons.

B. Did he charge you or were they free?

W. Well, I didn't pay any cash. I worked for Thaheld and Tremaine on the Humming Bird. I painted the dope on the wings and I got free flying lessons for the work I did on the plane.

B. You're kidding! You never told me that! I didn't know you worked on the Humming Bird.

W. Yeah.

B. You've been ^{holding} ~~held~~ stuff back from me. (Laughter) I want to hear all about that stuff.

W. Yeah, I went in the afternoon when you paint that dope on the wings...

B. What is the dope? Is it glue?

W. Well, it was kind of a banana smell. I know we had to do it out in the open cause you could get drunk on the smell of it.

B. What was it used for?

W. It had a lot of ^{banana} smell to it.

B. But was it used like a glue to hold things together?

W. Yeah, the wings were covered with kind of a canvas and when you painted that dope on it, it made it real hard and stiff and kept it from tearing.

B. Oh, you painted...you put the dope on top of the fabric.

W. Yeah, you just painted the whole thing over.

B. So you did that and you did it out in the back of the...

W. W. Tremaine Garage.

B. But you worked on the Humming Bird yourself?

W. Yeah, yeah.

(Darlene, Walt's daughter, arrives)

B. Hi. He's telling me all this stuff I didn't know. He worked on the little airplane, the Humming Bird. I didn't know he worked on that.

D. I didn't know either, but I know he told me he and his friend went out and ^{swept} ~~swept~~ and cleaned the

runway and got paid for it and they saved their money and bought an airplane. It came to them in a box. It was...it came all in pieces and you had to put it together.

W. Well, that was later...

D. Can you imagine building an airplane!? (Laughter) It was like these toys that came in a box and you have to assemble them. This was an airplane you had to assemble!

W. We bought what ^{they} they called an English Newport. It was a fighter plane in WWI and it was a one-passenger plane. So, Lee Miles helped us assemble it and we worked the seat out lighter so 2 people could sit in there side by side and made dual controls and it had very little lift to the wings. The take off speed was about 112 m.p.h. It had a radial type engine with either wide open or clear down to neutral.

B. There wasn't much in between! (Laughter)

D. Can you imagine?!

W. When they ^{come} come in to land, they come in too fast, why the throttle was kicked clear down and they slid and would kinda turn the thing this way so they kinda slide. (Walt's hand moved straight forward, then off to a slight angle).

B. At an angle. Yeah, slide at an angle.

W. When they get going too slow, they'd grab the throttle and jerk it up and you would hear them go "whrrrrr" to pick up speed again "whrrrrr whrrrrr".

B. So, that happened while they were landing.

D. So you wouldn't crash! (Laughter)

B. So you had some control over the airplane.

D. But I couldn't believe you could order an airplane and it came in a box!

B. You could order a house back then, too.

D. And you had to put it together. (Laughter)

B. Like a model airplane, right?

D. I know! A big model airplane you can sit in! (Laughter) I couldn't believe it. Dad, did that really happen?

W. It cost us \$250.00, FOB, New York City.

D. Can you imagine buying a plane for that?

W. And \$100 to ship it out here.

B. And how did you get the money for it?

W. Oh, I don't know.

D. You said you worked out at the airport, cleaning the runways.

W. We made it here and there. My cousin Earl Casner and I bought it together. I could get it up in the air,

but I could never get it down! (Laughter)

B. Who got it down? Did Earl bring it down?

W. Lee would have to take over and bring it down. There were dual controls.

B. Did you ever fly solo?

W. No, not in it. I did in the jenny.

B. Oh, you did in the jenny?

W. Yeah

B. Let's see, there were 2 airplanes.

W. The jenny was a training plane they used in WWI.

B. Oh, Miles would train you in the jenny?

W. Yeah

B. And then he trained you later on in the plane you bought?

W. Yeah

B. So you could get down in the jenny but you couldn't get down in the other one.

W. Yeah. That's right. Otto Schaeffer I had one or 2 lessons I forget why from him. but most of his time was test flying the planes, the big plane. He test flew that around here, and he was the one who delivered to the Navy men at Rockwell Field in San Diego. *EW*

D. You know, listening to him talk, my Dad is an antique.

(Laughter)

B. A living antique!

D. I didn't even know when I was a little kid...I didn't know that Brea ever had an airport.

B. Most people don't know that Brea had an airport.

D. I ^{learned} ~~learned~~ that after I grew up and he started telling me about the past and how Brea used to be. He never told me that when I was little.

W. One deal I had out there during the big air meet over 4th of July. There was no drinking water outside of either Brea or you had to go clear into Yorba Linda.

B. Or Olinda?

W. Yeah. It was sponsored by the Lions Club of Brea and the Elks Club of Anaheim, and they gave me the rights to handle all the soda pop and I went to the Boy Scouts and got them to help and I gave half the profits to them...And we got some big old timbers from some of the oil companies that were discarded around here and we built 4 different stands around the field. We just made a framework, and over on Palm Ave. in Placentia they'd just trimmed those big palm trees. We got a couple truck loads of palm leaves, and we had the roof so they extended way out to make shade for people to stand and buy.

We bought them (the bottles of pop) from the General Bottling Works in Santa Ana and they brought a truckload up and they brought big boxes about that long...

B. About 3 feet long.

W. And they had them full of bottled soda pop with ice packed up in it. And they had 2 of those for each of the 4 stands.

B. So you had 4 stands out there!

W. About 10:30 we began to run out of soda pop and I called up and said we need another truckload of soda pop. He said "I can't believe it!" (Laughter) and I said "Well, we need it. We've sold everything out." So they loaded a truck, and he came up himself to see. And got on the phone and ordered another truckload right away. (Laughter)

B. He didn't believe you! (Laughter)

W. And the scouts they worked inside and passed out the soda pop and collected the money and I went around with this Diamond T truck I had and raked the empties off the shelf into the boxes and put them into the truck and hauled them to get them out of the way and keep it clean enough that they could sell some more. And that's where I spent my day. And that's where I was in that truck when Billy Freeman came down.

B. Oh, you were in the truck when...

W. I was in the truck and saw it come down (the Humming Bird) and I drove the truck right over there. That's why I was able to get there so fast.

B. Now you weren't the first one there, were you? Were you the first one there?

W. No, I think I was about the 2nd of the third person.

B. Okay. I'm going to ask you more about that later. What happened to that airplane you bought? Since you could never get it down, did you sell it?

W. Oh, we ended up selling it to Santa Ana Airport, and they had a museum down there for old airplanes and it was kept there for a number of years.

B. Was it really?

W. Then I found out that when they rebuilt the...Let's see, that used...It used to be called the Santa Ana Airport. It was called after a flyer. Well, anyway, when they rebuilt...

B. Oh, Eddie Martin...

W. Yeah, Martin and they did away with that and made the Santa Ana Airport, rebuilt it and made it so big. They did away with that museum and the planes were all taken and put in a big museum up in Hollywood. The last I heard it was still there and the Hollywood movie producers would rent them to use in making pictures.

B. How interesting. The Humming Bird crashed in April of 1926, but the airport actually opened in October of 1925.

W. I was thinking it was '24.

B. No. It was '25. I have the news articles.

W. I graduated from high school in 1924 and it opened shortly after.

B. Were you there at the opening of the airport in '25? That was on Halloween Day?

W. Yeah.

B. You were there. What did you do? Did you just go out as a visitor and looked around?

W. Yeah.

B. That's when Willard Sweet and his fiance got married.

W. Yeah, I forgot who did that, but they brought a big plane in to hold about 20 people.

B. Yeah, I have the article about it. The guy's name who owned the airplane was Montoya or Mon-something or other and it was his plane and it could hold a lot of people so they had the minister up there and they had Tremaine up there, who was the witness, and they had the couple and the minister.

So did you ever talk to Willard? I'm trying to get hold of him. I'm sure he and his wife have passed away, but I was trying to get hold of Carl. Now Carl is the nephew of Willard, right? Carl is Harvey's son and Harvey and Willard were brothers.

W. Well, Harvey is the one I knew. I never knew Carl, but I knew Willard.

B. Carl is the son of Harvey.

W. I never knew Carl. I knew the old one, Grandpa Sweet. When we came to Brea Grandpa Sweet had a home. He lived right off the corner of Imperial and Brea Blvd., where the Union Station used to be...He lived there and every once in a while if I got out early in the morning I'd meet Grandpa Sweet with a rifle over his shoulder, heading for the hills. In the evening he'd come home...once in awhile he'd have a bobcat and he always had 5 or 6 rabbits.

B. Was Willard though Harvey's brother?

W. Yeah.

B. Did you ever talk to Willard about the marriage up in the plane?

W. No, I didn't see much of him after we got out of school.

B. What can you tell me about that opening of the airport other than first being there and seeing the ceremony? Is there anything else you can remember about it?

W. No.

B. I know they had races, airplane races and they gave out trophies.

W. Yeah, that was the way Lee Miles was killed. Some famous actress in Hollywood backed him and bought a fancy speedster plane that was being built in the East. And he took it back to Indianapolis and they had once a year the big meet back there, races and everything, and he flew that plane in one of the races, and they told me he got boxed in going around one of the pilings and they'd be going about 60 - -

around this pole and there was a plane above him and below him so he could bank up so he tried to slide in and when he tried to slide around, he lost all his lift and slipped right into the ground.

unintelligible

B. Let's go back to the Humming Bird for a minute. You said you worked on the Humming Bird, you put dope on the wings, what else did you do? Did everyone in town know the Humming Bird was being built?

W. Oh, yeah. I think everybody knew. See, what happened, Thaheld when he first built that they rebuilt a Henderson motorcycle engine and mounted it in. It was a 4-cylinder engine, and the way it sat in the plane, it didn't get enough cool air in the back cylinders and they would burn up. And it would just make 1 or 2 trips and the engine would be shot. So he (Thaheld) went into Los Angeles to a foundry up there and he worked with them and they made the molds for these parts and molded them out and he brought them back down on Brea Blvd, where Shaffer had taken over part of the machine shop in there and machined them all out and put this 5-cylinder radial engine together and mounted it in the plane. It developed about twice as much horsepower as he thought he was going to get. And he wasn't going to let anybody fly it. He said "They'll go up in that and open it up and the wings will fold up." Well, out there that day at the air meet, Billy Freeman finally coaxed him and he says "I'll just go up there and just coast around." Well, he went up and he did. He coasted around 3 or 4 circles and landed and then he went back up again and he got down to one of those pylons and there were army planes racing. They were all passing him up and you could see that thing just shoot ahead. He must have had the throttle open and he went to go around the pylon and the wings just folded back around the fuselage and down he came.

B. You know, I could find all the articles in the newspapers about the crash of the Humming Bird and in one of them it said, I'm not sure who was being quoted, Tremaine or Thaheld, but he said they put a block or something under the throttle so it couldn't go so fast because they didn't want him (Freeman) to do that. They were really afraid of that going to happen. And said what they think happened while he was going around and he saw that he was going to lose he may have pulled that block out and then pulled the throttle.

W. Well, I don't know. I didn't hear that part of it.

B. So, you worked on the Humming Bird?

W. I worked some on the big plane, too. (The Dole Race plane)

B. Oh, my God! I'm going to get to that in a second. Anything more about the Humming Bird? Who else worked on it that you know of?

W. I don't know. Thaheld. Of course, Tremaine. He did a lot of work.

B. Did your cousin help at all with the doping?

W. No, he never worked on it.

B. Now, why were you given free lessons?

W. Because I worked on the plane.

B. Who was the guy who gave you the free lessons?

W. Lee Miles. He had some kind of an agreement, I don't know, somewhere between Miles and Tremaine... so the work I put in I got paid in flying lessons.

B. That's great. Did Earl (Casner) ever learn how to fly?

W. Yeah. Yeah, he did pretty good with it. One trip that was made with the Newport, Lee Miles was to fly it to Arizona. There was a race to some place in Arizona. And he got down over Dry Lake in Arizona and it was real hot, and the oil pressure started dropping and he landed and corrected that, but there it was

very hot and the air was so thin, he couldn't get off the ground again. Anyway, he had to wait until early ~~the next~~ morning when it cooled off to be ready to take off, so ~~when~~ ^{he never} finished the race. He came home from there. (Laughter)

B. You told me that the man, what was his name, the one who did the woodwork in your house.

W. Bill Churchill. Yeah, Bill Churchill did all the woodwork on the Humming Bird and on the big plane.

B. On the big plane, also? Oh, okay. Like the wood around the cabin where the person would sit. He did all that work, too?

W. When it came to woodwork and that kind, why he was really a real technician.

B. Now, I wonder if Thaheld actually worked on the plane? Was he just the designer or did he actually work on the plane?

W. Yeah, I think he did. I think he put a lot of time in himself. But, I think most of the work he put in was to the engine and mountings of the engine.

B. I interviewed Thaheld's brother, Frank, back in 1992 and he told me all about Fred when he was young back in Austria.

W. He died about 2 or 3 years back.

B. He did? You mean Frank? I didn't know that.

W. The granddaughter called me to tell me about it.

B. Oh, I didn't know you knew him.

W. I knew all the Thahelds.

B. Walt, who took the Humming Bird out to the airport?

W. I drove it out on our Diamond T truck. I put the fuselage down the middle on the bed of the truck and a wing on each side of it and hauled it out and it was assembled back together out there on the field.

B. Was the engine still attached though to the fuselage?

W. Yeah.

B. Did you take it out the morning of the meet or was it taken out before?

W. No, it was taken out real early the morning of the meet, before anyone else gathered together. We had a clear road, no troubles or anything. We took it out real early before anyone started coming out.

B. So, how did you get it up on the truck? Did you just pick it up?

W. It wasn't that heavy.

B. Even with the engine it wasn't that heavy?

W. No. We had probably 15 or 20 that got a hold of it and lifted.

B. Oh, you had a lot of people do it.

W. There had been about that many who had been working on it so they all got together and loaded it. When I got out there, some of them had come in cars and we unloaded it and put it together.

B. And you took it off the truck? You weren't involved though in putting it back together, were you?

W. No, I just hauled it and it didn't take long to put it together, the way it was built. It just took a few bolts to tighten it up and it was all together. And it was the first low-wing monoplane to be built in the United States.

B. I know it was. That's why it's such a big deal. So, what do you remember about that particular day other than selling the soda pop? Do you remember anything else?

W. No, that's about all I remember because I was head over heels in that soda pop and didn't have time for anything else.

B. But, you actually watched the airplane go down?

W. Yeah.

B. And it came down nose first into the ground?

W. Yeah.

B. And you got out there to the crash site. Tell me again, what you saw once you arrived.

W. It had kinda hit at a steep angle and buried the whole front of it down into the dirt about 8 feet deep. And all I could see of Freeman was from the waist up and he was sitting in the seat.

B. Was he still alive? Some report he was still alive and others say he was dead.

W. No, as far as I could tell, he was dead. He never moved or talked or said anything that I saw.

B. I found a photograph yesterday in a book of an ambulance that came out there and took Freeman away. Did the crowds rush over after the crash?

W. Yeah, it got quite crowded around there. They formed a semi-police set-up and appointed different ones. There were some of the volunteer firemen out there and policemen. Brea only had 2 policemen, they just took a group of citizens and got them to circle around the scene to keep the crowds back.

Later on, the funeral was held down this side of Long Beach. There's a big cemetery there and a big mausoleum, and he was put in the mausoleum down there.

B. I was going to ask you where he was buried because I'm trying to find his grave. I know it's in Long Beach somewhere, but I don't know where.

W. It's on this side of Long Beach inland a little bit as I remember, and he's in the big mausoleum part of it.

B. You went to the actual service when he died?

W. Yeah.

B. I found some description about that. Can you tell me anything you remember about the service?

W. No, I don't really know a whole lot. It was fairly short.

B. He was married I know.

W. I don't think he had any children that I know of. He was quite young. I don't think he was over 22 or 23.

B. I think he was 20. I found an article saying he was 19, but most of the articles say he was 20. So he was pretty young. Did you ever meet him?

W. Yeah.

B. Do you have any memories of what he was like?

W. He was kind of a happy-go-lucky guy. Nothing ever seemed to bother him a whole lot. He never seemed to be afraid of anything about airplanes.

B. I found an article from the opening of the airport in 1925 saying he was also flying that day.

W. He learned to fly, they told me, when he was 15.

B. Did he really?

W. Yeah. Lee Miles was 16 when he learned to fly.

B. Was he that young? There weren't a lot of rules back then. When you wanted to fly, you just learned to fly, right?

W. Lee Miles, he'd been an instructor quite awhile over at that Tri-City Airport in Redlands, and when the war started, he ran down and enlisted. He thought he'd go overseas right away, but he spent the whole duration here; the first part at March Field as an instructor and then towards the last part, they moved him down to Santa Ana Airport where he gave lessons down there to army personnel. And he never did get out of Orange County until the war was over. (Laughter)

B. So you knew him pretty well - Lee Miles.

W. Yeah.

B. Did he live in Brea?

W. Yeah. He lived in Brea after he started working there. I remember one time we took the jenny. There was a movie outfit making pictures out towards Riverside, and there was a place over there cut through kind of a high bank for the trains to go through, and the road went over top. there was a bridge. And he (Miles) says, "We'll fly over there and watch them." They got a guy who's supposed to fly on through there underneath the bridge, and they're going to get a picture of it to go with the movie. So, we went over there and the guy made about 4 or 5 passes and he'd get close and he'd go over the top. He couldn't get up the courage to try to go underneath. So Miles finally said, "Well, let's get in and go home. He's not going to do it." And I got in the plane with him and we took off, and first thing I knew we were headed for it.

B. You were headed for the bridge?

W. Yeah. We did a loop over the bridge, came back and went through it again and around and landed. (Laughter)

B. How funny!

W. These movie guys all rushed over. They'd stood there with their mouths open and never got a picture.

B. Oh, no.

W. So they paid him a big sum to go back and do it again.

B. Did you go back with him?

W. No. I had enough the first time. (Laughter)

B. Oh, that's funny.

B. Before we go on to talk about the big plane (the Dole Race plane), do you remember anything else about the Humming Bird, about that particular day (the day it crashed) or helping build it?

W. No. I told you just about everything I can remember.

B. You told me a lot of good stuff I didn't know. Let's talk about the big plane now. You said you helped build it.

W. Yeah. Mr. Churchill did all the fine woodwork putting the wings together and everything.

B. Now you're looking at the picture of it being built (the photo of the half-built plane in Tremaine's Garage). And what did you actually do on this plane?

W. The same thing - just painted the covering after it was covered.

B. You mean doping it to make it stiff?

W. Yeah.

B. And you did it right inside the garage on Brea Blvd?

W. Yeah, but they opened it all up so there was plenty of fresh air because when you use that dope you get drunk off it.

B. So, everyone knew in town this was being built?

W. Yeah. There was a wealthy dentist in Los Angeles that had this nephew in the Navy stationed in San Diego and he furnished the money for it (the plane).

B. Yeah, Burson, or something like that was his name. I read an article about him.

Now this was such a different design. Did people realize that something this different was being built?

W. It came apart in 2 pieces and they hauled it out to the field. The fuselage was hauled out on one big truck and the wings on another.

B. Did you haul this plane out too?

W. No, I didn't have anything big enough for that.

B. Yeah, because it was a much bigger plane. It was a huge plane.

W. Something like 89 feet from wing-tip to wing-tip.

B. Here's another photo of the plane. This has it out at the airport in front of the hangar.

W. That's what everybody couldn't imagine. The wing was way down here and these big glassed-in windows on both sides with all kinds of view vision, so...why did those guys get about two-thirds of the way out to Point Loma, make a right turn and fly right straight into the side of Point Loma?

B. They say it was foggy that day.

W. Well, yeah, it's always foggy there.

B. But, this was all glass on the side (pointing to the side windows on the plane), so they could see out.

W. They had all kinds of vision on both sides.

B. You really couldn't see out the front that much (there was no window [windshield] at all in the front of the plane)

W. There was no reason that they should have turned where they did.

D. Unless something went wrong with the controls and the plane wouldn't turn.

B. No, there were able to turn it. I read they were able to.

W. Oh, yeah, they was flying real good.

B. Do you know where the engine was built? Was it built right in Brea, too?

W. No, they were built back East. They were 2000-horsepower Wright Whirlwinds.

B. Oh, that's right. I read that they were the same ones used on the Spirit of St. Louis, Lindbergh's plane.

W. Yeah, they were Wright Whirlwinds, 2000-horsepower each motor, and they were brand new.

B. Did you know the name of the airplane? It had a name. Do you know what it was?

W. No, I don't remember.

B. It was called "The Spirit of John Rodgers".

W. I didn't remember the name.

B. About the big plane, can you tell me anything else about it?

W. About all I know is that the dentist when he found out it crashed he was able to get to the bank and stop payment on the check and Tremaine had a heck of a time getting money to clear things up after it was over. The dentist didn't want to pay for it after the plane crashed.

B. I know the dentist sued Tremaine afterwards and lost.

W. And Tremaine sued him.

B. Now, how did you find out the plane had crashed?

W. Well, I think I was there at the airport all day the morning it took off, and we saw it take off. I was there at the airport when they got the call it had crashed.

B. It didn't crash that same day because it had to stop 2 times on the way to San Diego. I know that. It had to stop at Santa Ana Airport because of a fuel leak and then stop again in Escondido for another fuel leak.

W. I didn't know that.

B. Yeah, I have the news articles at home about it.

W. I didn't remember that. I knew they delivered it to Rockwell Field in San Diego. Later, the new pilot and navigator were supposed to take off and circle the field, gain altitude and then go out along the harbor alongside of Point Loma, clear to the end of it and then turn and go north over the ocean until they got enough altitude to be able to come in. They just flew right straight into the side of the hill though.

B. Let's switch to this plane (the two-seater). Now, this is another plane that Tremaine built. Do you know anything about that plane? I believe they (Thaheld and Tremaine) built it before the big plane. This is a two-seater.

W. No, I don't remember that one.

B. This is the plane they found in a barn on Stearns Lease all taken apart about 1930 or so. Leo Root, who was a stunt pilot and was a parachutist, was told by Tremaine I think, that it was there (in the barn). With the help of Tremaine to load the plane parts on a truck, they (Leo and his partner) transported them to Compton Airport and reassembled them. Root and his partner then made a bet that they could fly across country without spending any money. So they called themselves "The Flying Hobos". they left from Long Beach where the plane was forced down because of a gas problem, and made it to near the Salton Sea. They then returned home. This, though, is the same plane that was built here. You don't know anything about that plane, huh?

W. I don't remember that plane.

B. That's the plane that nobody ^{seems} seems to really know anything about. Did you know Art Goebel?

W. I knew of him.

B. You never met him, though?

W. I may have met him. I don't remember.

B. What about Otto Schaeffer? What can you tell me about him? Did you ever meet him?

W. Oh, yeah. I took some flying lessons from him after I took lessons from Miles. Otto lived in Anaheim and he was really well known around Northern Orange County. After that, he lived in Anaheim for years. I don't suppose he's still alive.

B. He'd probably now be over 100 years old. What can you tell me about Bill Tremaine?

W. Oh, not too much. I know one time later when we had the garage, he ran up a gas bill and I had to take him to court because he wasn't paying it. He was the constable for the Brea court which was held in La Habra. We got over there and had all these signed slips where he'd signed them for gas, and the judge put them out on the table and asked Bill, "Is this your signature?", and he admitted to the signatures of about half of them, and the judge said, "Well, you pay him for them now" and that's all I ever got out of him. He wasn't known to be too good at paying his bills and so forth around Brea.

B. Well, I know sometime during the 1930's, he was brought up on bribery charges. I don't know if you know that. They were never able to prove anything though, and he was let go.

W. He just coasted along the center, and he almost got caught in a number of things.

B. Did he?

W. He always seemed to be slick enough to get out.

B. So is there anything else you can tell me about the planes or the airport? I'm sure I just need to ask you the right questions, but I'm not sure what to ask you anymore.

W. I think I've covered about everything.

(We then took a pause and drove out to the site of the old Brea Airport, just northeast of the intersection of Imperial Highway and Kramer Blvd. Once there, Walt described to me its layout.)

B. Walt, you told me you went down to San Diego after the crash of the big plane.

W. I was at the airport when they got the telephone call about it and I was trying to think who drove the car, but there were 5 of us who went down in one car, and when we drove down there, the plane was still burning.

B. On the side of Point Loma?

W. Yeah. It was still burning when we got there because it had almost 900 gallons of gasoline on board. They were really loaded. See, they were to fly to San Francisco and then take off from there to Honolulu.

B. So, what did you do when you got down there? Did you just drive out to where the plane crash was?

W. We just looked around. There wasn't nothing we could do, so the City came out there with fire trucks and put it all out. They loaded all the stuff, the remains, on a truck and hauled it in I guess to Rockwell Airport.

B. And then you just came back to Brea?

W. Yeah, we came back to Brea. We just wanted to go down and see where the crash had happened. It was wide open country. There was nothing to obstruct the view or anything. They just made a right hand turn and flew straight (into Point Loma), but they found out afterwards that this pilot was a student pilot in the Navy. He had 150 hours in training flights. He was a nephew of the dentist. The navigator was a friend of the pilots.

B. I read that 1 or 2 nights before the flight, the navigator was switched because the original navigator who was supposed to go on that flight had an abscess on his back, and there had to be operation. Some other person then volunteered to go on the flight as navigator, he was the one who was killed.

W. As I remember, he's the one who said that all he knew about navigating was what he learned in books. He never had any ^{real} actual experience.

B. Okay, is there anything else you can tell me about going down to the crash?

W. No, that's just about all I know.

B. Do you know if Thaheld made any other planes after that?

W. He didn't want to build any more planes after the Humming Bird. He was afraid of more people getting hurt. They finally talked him into building the big plane.

B. Do you remember him taking off after the crash of the Humming Bird and going to New Mexico?

W. Yeah, 4 or 5 months before anyone found out where he was, he waited about 4 or 5 months before he called and said where he was. (Actually it was only 3 weeks.)

B. In the car, a little while ago, you were telling me about Thaheld going to Texas. What did he do there?

W. He worked for this company down there in the machine shop and monkeyed around and developed that diesel engine that could replace the gas engine. Fuel was a lot cheaper those days. They put them (the engines) in two of Shaffers planes (W.D. Shaffer, who owned the Brea Tool Works, Co.) and flew them around here for several years. But Shaffer had the patents on everything. Thaheld didn't want to get into the manufacturing business for some reason. That's when they sold their controlling interest to an outfit back East. They had Thaheld buy this airport up there out of Carson City and he got it all settled and they were supposed to build this factory and build those engines, but they never did.

B. They never built the factory?

W. They never ~~build~~^{built} the factory and never built anything.

B. So, Thaheld bought an airport up there and was going to test the planes, probably?

W. Yeah, he was sitting up there with the airport, and he finally sold it back to Carson City. That's now the big airport up there.

B. You said he built something at the airport. What was it?

W. Well, the barn on the ranch he bought to live on was a beautiful, big barn with double walls, just like a house and everything, and he turned that into a research (unintelligible). He had work benches, all around in it, and he had small bench lathes and drill presses and chapers(?) and he could just make up about anything he wanted to make right there. And for a number of years, he did research work for 5 or 6 companies.

B. What did he do during the war?

W. During the war before he did the engine and everything, he developed that 5-cylinder engine with a company back east and thousands of them went into tanks. They were used in our tanks, and after the war was over, there was a surplus of a lot of these and he got Shaffer to buy a whole bunch of them and they rebuilt them into stationary engines. You may still see some of them around here. They put them out here in these orange fields and a shaft went up to a big propeller to keep the air circulating so the fruit didn't freeze.

B. Oh, a wind machine. I remember seeing them when I was young. I don't know if they're still around.

W. So, he (Thaheld) kept busy all the time. He was always working on something.

B. A very intelligent man.

W. Very gentle and very nice to talk to and always glad to have you come around. We'd go to Carson City and visit with Darlene, Mr. and Mrs. Thaheld would have been real put out if we hadn't spent some time with them.

B. Did Fred have an accent like his brother, a German accent?

W. Yeah, Frank was a German, but I don't know, and they were both very much alike.

I met hiim out here. It's been 6 or 7 years ago.

B. You met his wife then?

W. Yeah.

B. I met her, too. A nice lady.

W. Fred's wife was from a Brea family here. She had 3 or 4 sisters.

B. Fetting was the name of the family.

Well, I think that's about all I need to ask you. Thank you. You told me so much more information than I expected. So, you really were involved with the Humming Bird? You took it out to the airport, you helped build it, you saw it crash and you were maybe the second person to arrive after it crashed. You really know a lot about that. And the second plane (the Dole Race plane), you know a lot about that, too.

So, anything else you can tell me?

W. No, that's about all.

B. But, you said that before to me (Laughter) and (thenall) of a sudden, I find out all these little "goodies".

W. As I go along, I might think of something else.

B. But you told me a lot. I appreciate it. I'll turn this off then.
Once again, the date today is July 2, 2001.

Note: The following day, I called Walt and asked him one final question about the colors of the Humming Bird, as well as those of the Brea Air Club Emblem.

According to him, the wings and part of the fuselage were an aluminum color, and the panels on each side were white. The tail was white also.

As for the emblem, Walt said it had a reddish color.

*I wrote this to be run in
the Star-Progress
newspaper
They ran it on 8-23-01*

IN REMEMBRANCE OF WALT BERGMAN

The death of a kind, caring man like Walt Bergman often goes unnoticed, but when Walt died on August 16 at age 95, Brea lost not only one of its oldest citizens, but one of its greatest assets.

I say "asset" because over the years he shared with all of us his very special gift to the city - his memories.

As a novice local historian with lots of questions, I came to know Walt in the early 90's when everyone kept telling me, "Go see Walt!"

That's exactly what I did too, and during the next decade I interviewed him over and over again for news articles, a Brea history video, the book Brea: Celebrating 75 Years, local TV shows and just for the heck of it.

He was always more than happy to share with me what he remembered, and I was constantly amazed by his memory, even up to five weeks ago when he and I sat down together for the last time.

And who was this special man with all the answers?

Born in Bisbee, Arizona in 1906, he and his family arrived here in Brea in 1916, a year before Brea officially became a city. Since there was no Brea high school at the time, in the early 20's he had to take the Red Cars from the Brea Depot to Fullerton High. After his graduation, his dad, who had been an oil worker up in the hills, bought the garage/gas station that once sat on the corner of Pomona Ave. (Brea Blvd.) and Birch St., where the Old Navy store now stands.

It was from that garage in April 1926 that Walt, looking west, remembered seeing a "whole wall" of fire shooting into the air (this occurred when lightning hit the Union Oil Tank Farm igniting two of the tanks). The fire, he said, lasted a week, and then added that it was true that because of the flames you could read a newspaper on Brea Blvd at midnight!

A couple weeks after the fire was out, Walt, with his truck, was the one who took the tiny, ill-fated Humming Bird out to the Brea Airport so it could compete in the big air show. Built in a garage on Brea Blvd., it was the first low-winged monoplane ever built in the U.S.

On the day of the meet, Walt ran the concession stand selling "soda pop" to the crowds, and when the Humming Bird made its deadly plunge to earth, Walt was one of the first to arrive at the crash site.

A Brea volunteer fireman from 1924 to 1933, when he married in 1929 the other firemen honored the

new couple by sitting Walt and bride Evelyn atop the shiny red Seagraves fire truck and taking them for a noisy ride through the streets of Brea.

The stories go on and on, and because of the interviews, Walt's memories will also go on, to be passed along to those who follow us here in the future.

Even after Evelyn's death and his move to Las Vegas in the mid-90's to live with daughter Darlene, his heart was still in Brea, and he returned here at every opportunity to visit family and old friends, of which there were many.

It's very hard for me to say goodbye to him, knowing that I won't hear his laughter again, see his smile, or learn from his stories. I do want to say though, "Thank you, Walt, for your kindness, your wonderful memory and your willingness to share it."

You're really going to be missed!

Brian Saul

(562) 698-5339

Sale of home fails, Brea couple not unhappy

By Mark Berg
DSP Staff Writer

BREA — Walter and Evelyn Bergman are playing a waiting game.

The longtime Brea residents were set to sell their South Orange Avenue home of 60 years to Thrifty Oil Company when a zoning snafu stalled the deal a day before closing escrow in August. Now they believe their home won't sell, but for Walter

Bergman, that's just fine with him.

"I'd just as soon stay here," he said last month as the couple deliberated unpacking their belongings. He said he hadn't been anxious to move in the first place, "but (Thrifty Oil) made me an offer I couldn't refuse."

Now, almost two months after escrow was set to close the first time, the Bergmans are back in the only home they've known —



(Star-Progress photo by Jack Hancock)

STILL AT HOME — Evelyn and Walter Bergman have lived in their Brea home since they were married in 1929. A fouled real estate transaction may mean they will stay in their South Orange Avenue home after all.

← proached by a Thrifty representative the day before escrow closing, said the city is generally not aware of residential transactions in the making and would have had no reason to be involved in the sale of the Bergman's house. "We had no ability to stop Thrifty from buying it," he said. "From our standpoint, we don't care who buys the property, just what they do with it."

It wouldn't hurt to cheek with the city, though, Bartlam said. "People really should come to the city prior to buying a home to see what the zoning is."

Gerald Greenberg, who handles Thrifty's real estate transactions, would not comment on the company's intended use of the Bergman property, but said both Thrifty and the homeowners were still working on an agreement to purchase the property.

Bartlam said conversion of the lot at 311 S. Orange Ave. to a commercial use was unlikely. The area south of Imperial Highway had been zoned multi-family residential for many years, he said, but was recently altered to a single-family residential zone. "I don't think we want further commercial intrusion south into that neighborhood," he said.

Walter Bergman said he was under the impression that Thrifty would be able to use the property. "As far as I knew, the lot was commercial. It was commercial for years," he said. But

to move into has come and gone. And unless a deal is struck with Thrifty by Nov. 3, Walter said he isn't shopping.

He isn't selling, either, the octogenarian said, "unless they made an offer like Thrifty did."

← until Thrifty offered him a "good price" for the property, he hadn't considered using it for anything but a residence — theirs.

← Meanwhile, the Fullerton home the Bergmans were going

July 17, 1970 ①

Brea couple make way for progress

By Barbara A. Williams
DSP Correspondent

BREA — In August, for the first time in 60 years of marriage, Evelyn and Walter Bergman's address will NOT be 311 S. Orange Ave.

The longtime Brea couple is moving to Fullerton, leaving behind the sturdy, single-story home built to Evelyn's specifications in 1929.

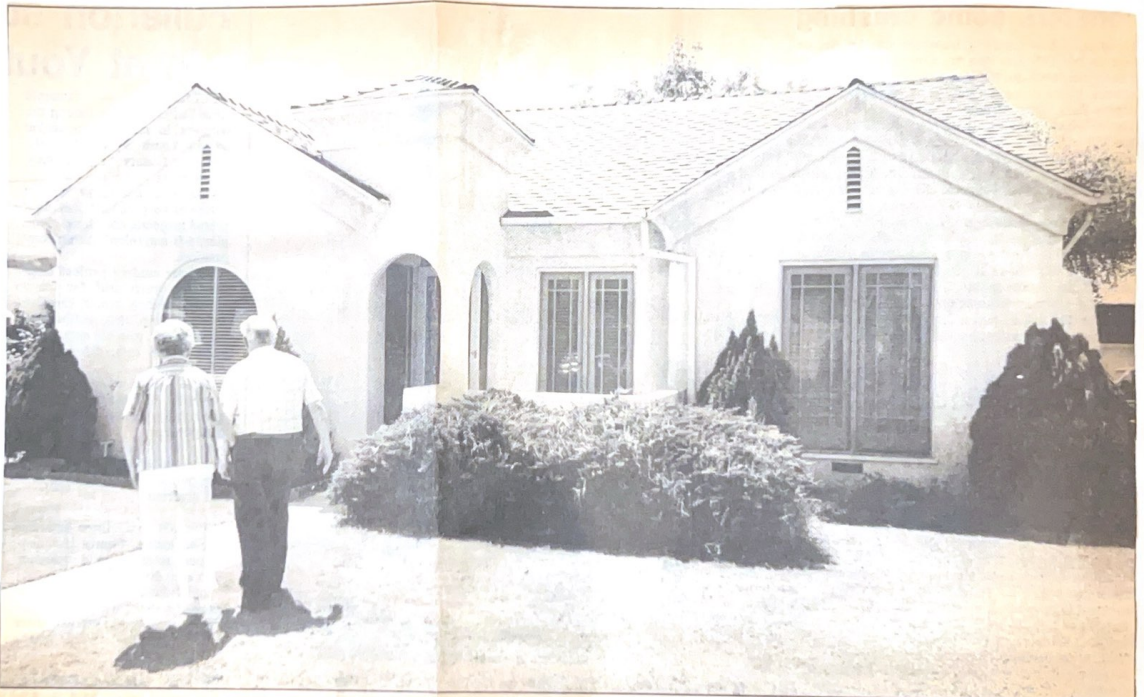
The Bergmans will say goodbye to 60-year-old arched doorways and windows, a breakfast room, a laundry porch and a housewife's dream — a linen closet that runs the length of the bedroom hallway.

They'll make their home on Lark Ellen Drive, just across the Brea line, in a spacious 27-year-old home with modern appliances and a swimming pool.

The Bergmans said they didn't move to get a swimming pool. In fact, they hadn't planned on moving at all. But progress, in the form of a changing downtown profile, came knocking at their door.

The Bergman home, where they settled after their honeymoon in November 1929, is only a block east of South Brea Boulevard, just behind the Circle K gas station on soon-to-be-expanded Imperial Highway. The couple said city of Brea estimators had already visited the neighborhood when Thrifty Oil Co., owners of Circle K, offered a "good price" for their home.

A change of address



60 YEARS OF BLISS — Evelyn and Walter Bergman stroll across the front lawn of their home in the 300 block of South Orange Avenue in Brea. The couple will move to

Fullerton to make way for downtown progress.

(Star-Progress photos by Jack Hancock)

had never considered moving. The biggest reason we're leaving is they paid us enough to move," Walter said.

"I'm not complaining," Evelyn added. "They offered us a good price. There's no use mourning."

Instead, like many other couples who've had to move, they've been reassuring themselves about their decision, and packing up memories along with the dishes.

The Bergmans' recollections stretch back to their dating days at Fullerton High School. Walter, a Brea resident, rode a Red Car to school until he graduated in 1924 — just before the Birch Street campus of Brea Olinda High School opened its doors.

While Walter attended Fullerton Junior College, Evelyn, who lived in Fullerton, finished high school and graduated in 1926. Then the twosome vowed to "go together, have fun and save money," she said. Marriage was postponed until they had bought a lot, borrowed to build a home and furnished it.

Their Nov. 12, 1929, wedding was followed by a honeymoon to San Clemente, San Diego and Calexico. But they didn't exactly settle quietly into their new home.

Several weeks after their return, the Brea Volunteer Fire Department placed fellow firefighter Walter and his new bride on chairs at the top of the fire truck, then took them on a noisy ride through the streets of Brea.

Walter was a volunteer fireman from 1924 to 1933, in the days when the department was headquartered first on Ash Street, then behind the "new" City Hall in what is now City Hall Park. A bell, later replaced by a whistle, alerted the volunteers who leaped into their fire



AT HOME — The Walter Bergmans greet a guest with their usual front-door smile, above, as they prepare to move to Fullerton.



At right, the Bergmans wedding photo, prominently displayed in their Brea home, will find an equally important position in their new abode.

clothes and rushed to the nearest corner to jump on the passing fire truck, Walter recalled.

When the Bergmans were married, Walter was working with his father at the family auto garage (now Pawlack Tile) at the corner of Brea Boulevard and

Birch Street. Two driveways angled across the corner then, with customers chugging up to six pumps offering gas from four different gasoline companies.

The Bergman garage closed during the Depression when the lease ran out, Walter said. He and Evelyn considered selling their home, which they built for \$4,200, but they decided to stay.

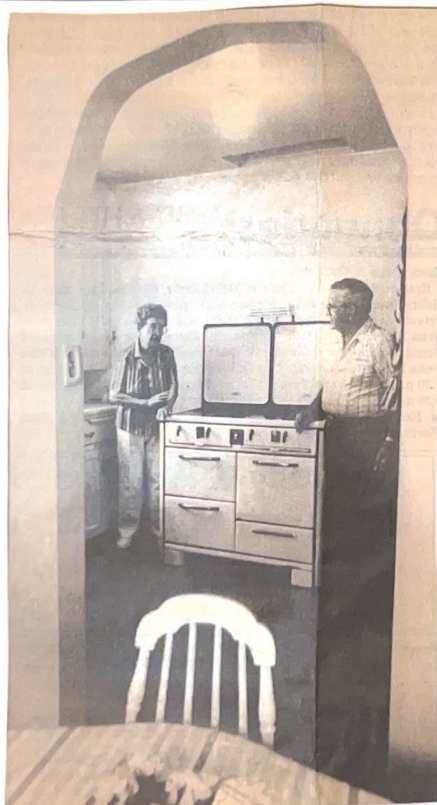
"I said, 'I can go through the Depression in a pretty house, but I can't go through it in a shack,'"

Evelyn remembered.

So she resumed her job at Fullerton's Unique Cleaners, where she had worked before her marriage. Walter worked for the Goodyear Co. for 13 years, then switched to Brea's Chick-san Co. where he stayed until his retirement.

"We hung on to the house, and I'm glad we did," Evelyn said.

The Bergman household eventually included daughter Darlene, Miss Brea of 1951. Evelyn remembered fondly how she



FRAMED IN NOSTALGIA — The Bergmans display their spacious kitchen framed by a 60-year-old arched doorway built to Evelyn's specifications.

rolled up the rugs in their living room so Darlene and her high school friends could dance on the hardwood floors.

"Those were good times," Evelyn sighed.

Good times for Walter and Evelyn also included playing Pinochle with friends, joining the Aloha and Fullerton trailer clubs, and helping plan the monthly excursions for the two camping groups.

A Caribbean cruise to celebrate Walter's retirement still ranks among their fondest memories, they agreed.

During the past 60 years, a few changes have been recorded at 311 S. Orange. Darlene married, moved to Las Vegas and has two children, Darcy and Clint. Walter, now 84, and Evelyn, 82, have traded their newlywed status for membership in the Brea Historical Society. In fact, Walter was recently the subject of an oral history interview conducted by Cal State Fullerton.

But some things are still the same in the Bergmans' Brea home. The honeymooners' new stove still sparkles in the kitchen, and the living room is still centered on the young couple's original — though updated — furniture.

The Bergmans' even have the same phone number they were issued when they got their first telephone in 1938.

And as far as phone numbers are concerned, Walter reported happily, it looks like you CAN take it with you.

B.S.

Fri, Sept 2, 1921

Landmark of Brea Has Been Removed.

One of the landmarks which has been the meeting place and resting place in Brea for so long these many years has been removed from its accustomed place and according to reports it will not be seen again for some time. The Paig Furnishing Store and the bench along side the front of the Brea Garage is gone. It is said by some of the latter day occupants of the bench failed to use reasonable etiquette when requested to refrain from spitting on the wall, going so far as using the front of the Garage building for a cuspidor. Hence the bench has been removed.

La Habran Takes Fullerton Bride

The quiet marriage of Ross Redfern of La Habra and Miss Esther Ott of Fullerton on Saturday evening came as a complete surprise to their many friends. The ceremony was performed at the W. H. Redfern home in La Habra by Rev. J. L. Ridgeway of Long Beach.

The bride is one of the two daughters of Mrs. Bessie Ott, who is well known on the Standard lease near La Habra, while the groom is the son of William Redfern. The couple left immediately after the ceremony for a short honeymoon. Upon their return they expect to make their home in Fullerton for the present.

Mr. Redfern is an employe of the Standard Oil Company on the Murphy lease and is well known in the vicinity of La Habra.

FATHER PASSES AWAY

Mr. B. Sharela, father of Mrs. Fred Johnson of Yorba Linda, tier Friday at 12:30 p. m. Funeral services were held at Whittier today.

IS IMPROVING

Mrs. G. Tidwell of the Birch lease is reported improving. Mrs. Tidwell recently underwent an operation at the California Hospital in Los Angeles but was taken to her home near Brea Saturday.

NURSE BARS ATTEMPTED SUICIDE AT HOSPITAL

With a strip torn from a bed sheet and wrapped around his neck and slowly strangling him

Former Newsboy's Garage Building Now Approaching Completion in Brea

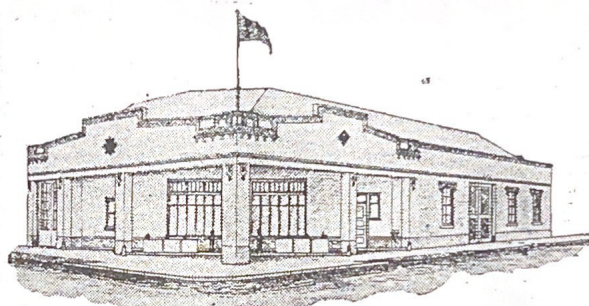
Through the courtesy of Architect Kunst and Michael George of the Evening Herald the STAR reproduces the first showing of the completed garage on Pomona avenue and Olinda road, Brea.

Upon entering Brea and Orange county from Riverside and San Bernardino counties and entering the business district from the south, travelers will look upon one of the finest garage buildings in the South.

Michael George, transportation manager of the Los Angeles Evening Herald, who is justly proud to be the owner of such a building is sparing no expense in the making of the new garage modern in every respect and attractive. Seventeen years ago, Mr. George was known as "Mike" with a bundle of papers on the street corner. Today he is the proud possessor of this building besides owning other business lots near the garage which he hopes to improve in the near future, and other valuable property.

Beautiful Front

The front on Pomona avenue and Olinda road or Birch street, is of a beautiful glazed brick with ivory finish. In planning his



building Mr. George states: "My building will rent in years to come when Brea becomes the large city it is bound to make because I plan for the future in attractiveness and with modern features."

Contractor and Architect

Mr. M. Stepan of Los Angeles is the building contractor, making brick work a specialty and is always on the job to have the finished product up to specifications. Mr. John E. Kunst, an architect and engineer of Los Angeles, designed this beautiful building which is causing much favorable comment as it nears completion.

Modern Features

Driveways directly across from the Olinda road to Pomona avenue with an entrance also on Pomona

avenue to the garage, and exit directly in the rear and also on the Birch street side allow the handling of many automobiles at the same time. Between the driveways across the front are the gasoline pumps while upon entering the building one finds rest rooms and accessories display. Skylights on the north side of the building allow plenty of light in the building.

Complete in 1920

Early in the new year shortly after January first, Contractor Stepan and Architect Kunst expect to turn the building over to O. M. Thompson, M. H. Anderson and W. H. Dryer of Fullerton, who have leased the building for a long term.

COMPANY MAY SEND GAS OUT OF COUNTY

According to a decision by the State Railroad Commission natural gas can be away from industries in Orange county and distributed to domestic users and to commercial which include restaurant Long Beach and elsewhere.

Concerning the decision patch from San Francisco says:

"Domestic and commercial users should have priority industrial concerns in use of natural gas in Southern California. The State Railroad Commission announced in a temporary affecting eighty incorporate cities and towns in Southern California and much outlying territory all served from the five main natural gas producing fields in Los Angeles and Orange counties."

"The order, made for the purpose of controlling the situation pending a complete investigation followed a report filed by the commission's engineers, and ordered, it was announced, cause of complaints regarding continuance of gas service, a serious shortage of gas, and evidence that during the winter conditions will become even more serious."

"The present standard of shall be maintained, the order provided, and the gas must be distributed to insure a continuous supply, and the general principle that commercial and domestic use should have priority over industrial use should prevail."

"The commission did not at the point raised that oil companies producing the gas should be considered as public utilities holding that the evidence gathered by the preliminary investigation

COUNTY OFFICERS TO ENFORCE SIGNAL LAWS

In a campaign to lessen automobile accidents on the road and at street intersections, County Mo-

BROTHERHOOD TO BE ORGANIZED TONIGHT

W. L. York announces a meeting at the La Habra M. E. church tonight at seven o'clock for the purpose of establishing a Brotherhood at La Habra. Anyone interested is invited to attend, re-

Children Give Xmas Cantata

The pupils of the La Habra grammar school delighted a large audience Friday evening with a Christmas cantata entitled, "Santa's Joy Factory." The entertain-