

DEAN MILLER

?

Leo Peantoni

LIVING ON A BREA CANYON OIL LEASE

During the 1920's through the 1940's a good deal of the Brea population lived in the Orange County territory in rental housing located primarily on oil company property. All the children were bussed to schools in Brea.

The oil leases during this time were: Union Oil Tank farm located north and west of Brea along the south side of Central Avenue.

Just north of Brea off Brea Canyon Road were a number of oil leases that flourished during this period of time. They were: Birch Oil Company, Brea Canyon Oil Company, Fullerton Oil Company, General Petroleum (Mobil) Oil Company, Shell Oil Company and Union Oil Company. As you entered Brea Canyon and went on up into Tonner Canyon, General Petroleum and Union Oil Company had extensive lease holdings that were sparsely populated by family residences. To the northeast of Brea and north of Deodara (now Lambert) and extending east along the face of the hills, was a continuation of Union Oil Company that extended to the Olinda settlement. Olinda area had its own sixteen room school and was surrounded to some extent by the Chansler, Canfield, Midway Oil Company (CCMO), Tidewater Association Oil Company, Union Oil Company, and General Petroleum Oil Company.

With the exception of daily transportation of children to school, visits to Brea were usually limited to weekly Saturday trips to the local stores for provisions and, occasionally, to Anaheim or Santa Ana for durable goods. Also during this period, the Sears and Roebuck mail order catalog was almost an every household standard.

Life on the oil leases was quite simple as the houses were not clustered close together. The circle of playmates was limited to immediate neighbors who had children of a similar age. While traveling to school on the bus (usually a one-hour ride), you became friends with students from neighboring oil leases and as you grew older were able to walk or ride a bike to a friend's house and play games such as "Kick the Can", "Catch", or "Monopoly". These games were usually restricted to weekends as, in those days, there always seemed to be homework or chores (washing dishes, trash removal, cleaning one's room, yard work, or hoe weeds around the house to reduce the fire hazard) to be done.

Living on an oil lease was not without its hazards and at an early age one was taught to respect the machinery and hazardous installations. No special guards surrounded moving equipment. There were no barricades to prevent access to oil derricks or boiler houses and in many areas live steam pipes were exposed above ground.

Most of the piping in the oil fields were laid above ground and it was difficult to tell whether they carried warm oil from the ground or live steam to drive some of the equipment. Before climbing over these pipes or stepping on them one learned to spit on them to determine how hot they were.

During the thirty year period covered here, no child was ever seriously injured on or by any of the many exposed hazards that existed in the oil fields.

After World War II and between 1945 through 1950 with better transportation and roads the oil companies encouraged families to move off the leases and into Brea and surrounding communities. As the houses were vacated they were demolished until none exist today, and the style, manner and isolation of oil company housing is a thing of the past and only memories, some of which are recorded on old photographs.

*They were built by
Chevron Oil Company, and
General Petroleum (M&M)
Shell Oil Company and
As you entered Brea
at the corner of*

Living on a Brea Canyon Oil lease.

During the 1920's through the 1940's a good deal of the Brea Population lived in the Orange County territory in rental housing located primarily on oil company property. All of the children were bused to schools in Brea.

The oil leases during this time were; Union Oil Tank farm located north and west of Brea along the south side of Central Avenue.

Just north of Brea off of Brea Canyon Road were a number of oil leases that flourished during this period of time.

They were: Birch Oil Company, Brea Canyon Oil Company, Fullerton Oil Company, General Petroleum (Mobil) Oil Company, Shell Oil Company and Union Oil Company.

As you entered Brea Canyon and went on up into Tonner Canyon, General Petroleum and Union Oil Company had extensive

lease holdings that were sparsely populated by family residences.

To the North East of Brea and North of Deardora (Now Lambert) and extending east along the face of the hills, was a continuation of Union Oil Company that extended to the Olinda settlement.

Olinda area had its own sixteen room school and was surrounded to some extent by the Chanster, Canfield, Midway Oil Company (CCMO), Tidewater Association Oil Company, Union Oil Company, and General Petroleum Oil Company.

With the exception of daily transportation of children to school, visits to Brea were usually limited to weekly Saturday trips to the local stores for provisions, and, occasionally, to Anaheim or Santa Ana for durable goods. Also during this period, the Sears and Roebuck mail order

catalog was almost an every household standard.

Life on the oil leases was quite simple as they were not clustered close together. The circle of playmates was limited to immediate neighbors who had children of a similar age. While traveling to school on the bus (usually a one hour ride), you became friends with students from neighboring oil leases and as you grew older were able to walk or ride a bike to a friend's house and play games such as; "Kick the Can", "Catch or Monopoly". These games were usually restricted to week-ends as, in those days, there was always seemed to be home work or chores (washing dishes, trash removal, cleaning one's room, yard work, or hoe weeds around the house to reduce the fire hazard) to be done.

Living on an oil lease was not without its hazards and at an early age one was taught to respect the machinery and hazardous installations. No special guards surrounded moving equipment. There were no baracades to prevent access to oil derricks or boiler houses and in many areas live steam pipes were exposed above ground.

Most of the piping in the oil fields were laid above ground and it was difficult to tell whether they carried warm oil from the ground or live steam to drive some of the equipment. Before climbing over these pipes or stepping on them one learned to spit on them to determine how hot they were.

During the thirty year period covered here, no child was ever seriously injured on or by any of the many

5
exposed hazards that existed in the
oil fields.

After WW II and between 1945 through 1950
with better transportation and roads the
oil companies encouraged families to move
off of the leases and into Brea and surrounding
communities. As the houses were vacated
they were demolished until none exist
today, and the style, manner and isolation
of oil company housing is a thing of the
past and only memories, some of which
are recorded on old photographs today.

The following is a recount of the families that lived on the outskirts of Brea during the period of 1938 thru 1944 and the names of some of the children who attended Brea Elementary School District, Olinda Elementary School District and Brea Olinda Union High School District.

Unfortunately, due to lapses of time and records it is not complete. However, an attempt has been made to record the family name, children of the family and year of graduation from BOUHS.

Birch Oil Company lease

Piantoni, Eugene '40
Leo 41
Hazel
Donald

Purdue, Sam 38
Ester 39

Ryan, Mary Louis 38

Tidwell
Austin, Kathleen 39

Hancock 39

Ross 40

Brea Canyon Road

Epson, Loguilla 41

Deby, Kenneth 41

Kissinger, Donald 41

Phillips, Arnold 39
Donald 40

Whit

Fullerton Oil Company Leases

Jenks, Joan 41

Osborne John 40

Shell Oil Company Leases

Gray, Beverly 41

Betty 44

Kumpheffer, Richard 44

Murray, Majorie 39

Ray, Marie 39

Rlea 40

Wilhelm 44

Mobil Oil Company Leases

Holderback, Eugene

Union Oil Company (N.W. Okla.)

Johnson, James 38

Meyne Ruth 39

Martin 41

Neath, Conley 39

Osborne 38

Union Oil Company tank farm

Hadewig, Pat Fullerton 38

Hodges, Shirley

Ondero, Jaunita 42

Robinson, John 45

Edith 42

Sage, Stanley 41

Alis 43

Union Oil Company (East Lambert)

Manis, Joyce 42

Manuel, Lois 40

Louis 40

Washbor, Lucille 38

Robert 39

Union Oil Company (NW Okinda)

Johnson, James 38

Mayme Ruth 39

Marlene 41

Neals, Conley 39

Adrian 39

Lois 41

Pauline 41

Wilma 43

Olinde (Various oil leases) cont

Adams, Bill 39

Allen, Mary 41

Barry, Margie 40

Ray 40

Bennett, Irene 41

Carpenter, Ralph 41

Courtney, Betty 41

Henderson, Sam 38

Herbert 38

Hightower, Bill 41

Ledbetter, Paul 38

Roy 39

Mc Connell, Bud 38

, Hubert 38

, Bob 43

Schribner, Marilyn 40

Richard 43

Schubert, Edna 38

Wally 39

Robert 44

Smith, Leo 41

Stagner, Raymond 38

Muriel 41

Lois 43

Olinda (Various oil leases) cont

Van Patton, Harold 40

Withers, Velma 41

Union Oil Company (East Imperial)

Ferree, Art
Ruby 42

Sharp, Floyd 41
Cecil 44