

The Camarillo Sisterhood
Stories of Women Who Made a Difference at the Camarillo Ranch



This week: Secretaries at the Camarillo Ranch
Lena Jones and Audrey Young

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Thank you Linda Plummer for sharing your wonderful stories and photos!

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Adolfo Camarillo at his desk. (undated)

Lena Jones (1880-1982)

by
Beth Miller

The history of office practices and procedures is reflected at the Camarillo Ranch through Adolfo Camarillo and that of his staff. In recent times the comings and goings of employees demonstrate their desire to gain experience and move onto another position. Currently, the average length of time for an American employee, aged 25-34, to stay in the same job is just under 3 years. In Adolfo's time, it was common for employees to remain with the same employer for several years or in some cases for their entire working lives. His secretary, Tranquilina "Lena" Jones remained on the job for 25 plus years.



Lena Jones had this photo taken when she was studying business in San Francisco. Undated

Adolfo and Lena both attended business school but in different eras. When Adolfo graduated from Woodbury's Business College in 1885, he would have been trained in a variety of areas including bookkeeping, banking, importing, correspondence, mercantile law, political economy, and business customs.

The business office was just beginning to make the transition to business machines, such as the typewriter. The typewriter* was first being adopted into business offices in the 1880s. However, typewriters were not even mentioned in the 566 page volume of The Secrets of Success in Business published in 1883. One of Adolfo's classes was penmanship. By the 1940s, he was still practicing his handwriting skills.

(The typewriter was invented in 1867.)

By the time Lena Jones was working for Adolfo, perhaps by 1916, she would have already been trained in the use of different filing systems, adding machines, typewriters and other office devices. The position of financial secretary was a specialty. She was also working in a field that had been previously dominated by men. With the invention of the typewriter, more women entered the business office. Since World War I, the role of the secretary was acquired by women. By the 1930s fewer men entered the field.

In 1941 Lena announced her resignation. She was approximately 61 years old. During her final five years at the Ranch, Lena had worked on the Estate of Juan E. Camarillo. After the estate was settled, Lena left her job. Her resignation was reported on the front page of the Camarillo News. Audrey Young would take over Lena's position. Lena explained wanting, at one time, to leave her job in an interview with the Ventura County Star-Free Press in 1965:

"One time I told Adolfo that I was quitting. (*year unknown*) He was shocked. He wanted to know why. Because I think we should have a proper office where we can carry on business without being interrupted by family. The office was in the ranch house and it got so I couldn't get any work done. So I left. Don Adolfo insisted I return. He called me. He wrote letters. I was stubborn and I refused. But finally, I gave in. He needed me, so I just had to go back to work for him. How could one refuse Don Adolfo?"

Office experiences and expectations had collided.

While Lena complained about family interruptions in the daily business operations of the Ranch, it is important to note that she, too, was a member of the Camarillo family. Lena is part of Isabel Camarillo's complex family tree. Isabel's mother was widowed at a young age and remarried. The children from the first marriage were Isabel's half-siblings. The offspring of Isabel's half-siblings, which includes Lena, were Isabel's half-nieces and half-nephew. They were also the half-cousins to Adolfo and Isabel's children.

Lena was family. She went to major events with the Camarillos and was listed by name in the news coverage of those events. To distinguish her from her mother, with whom she shares the same name Lena was called “Miss Lena Jones.” Her mother was listed by her full first name as “Mrs. Tranquilina Jones.” Lena was an integral part of the family. In 1913, Lena attended a “Grand Ball at the Court House” in Ventura where she was listed with Adolfo and other county notables.

Participating in the Ventura County Fair was very important to Adolfo. Family was by his side. The Oxnard Courier in September 1915 announced the Camarillo family had won prizes. Mrs. Isabel Camarillo won second place for her raisin pie. Rosa Camarillo Petit won first place in the water coloring painting exhibit. Isabella (Nunie) received a first place in china painting.

Within the Camarillo family group it was reported: “Miss Lena Jones carried off first honors on a layer cake exhibited at the county fair.”

Adolfo wrote about Lena’s cooking in his diary. She frequently came to the Ranch to cook with Tia Nati (Natividad Servin). They made empanadas de frijoles (bean turn overs). Lena never married perhaps because she was too dedicated to her job and the family. The 1965 Ventura County Free-Press noted that “She had a fast and energetic mind and became impatient when her advice was not always followed.”

Lena’s mother, Tranquilina Lorenzana Jones, who was also Isabel Camarillo’s half-sister, died in 1943. Pallbearers included four members of the Camarillo family: Harold Burket (*Isabella Camarillo Burket’s husband*), George FitzGerald (*Ave Camarillo FitzGerald’s husband*) Alfred Petit (*Rosa Camarillo Petit’s husband*) and Adolfo’s son, Frank “Pancho” Camarillo.

As time went on, Lena was honored by the family and community. Lena and Rosa Camarillo Petit were among the first group of residents to be honored by the Pleasant Valley Historical Society as Dons and Doñas. The event was part of Camarillo’s first Fiesta.

First Dons and Doñas Honored by Pleasant Valley Historical Society
November 1, 1965



HONORARY DONS AND DONAS — Camarillo's first Honorary Dons and Donas are pictured after receiving the honors at the fiesta Saturday. In the back row, from left, are Eugene Putnam, Ike Nor-

man, Fred Stein, Max Riave and Cliff Glenn. In the front, from left, are Eva Hayes, Rosa Camarillo Petit, Marie Fulton, Julia Sotello and Lena Jones. (Daily News Photo)

Standing left to right: Eugene Putnam – Ike Norman (the “mohawk” on his head is the end/tip of a tree limb) – Fred Stein - Max Riave (attired in the late Don Adolfo Camarillo’s fiesta costume, including the colorful hat) – Cliff Glenn

Sitting left to right: Eva Hayes – Rosa Camarillo Petit – Marie Fulton – Julia Sotello – Lena Jones



Lena celebrating Ave Camarillo FitzGerald's birthday with Ave's grandson Brian FitzGerald and Carmen Camarillo. August 1972

In July 1973 Lena attended the catered affair that honored the July birthdays of Carmen and her husband Roy E. Jones at the Camarillo Ranch. The elaborate event was a birthday party and family reunion. Strolling guitarists entertained the family and their many guests at the party that was hosted by Carmen's nieces and nephews.

A few years later, Lena was honored on the occasion of her 100th birthday at the Pleasant Valley Historical Society's Dons and Doñas 16th reception which took place at the Camarillo Ranch. Lena was the first member of the celebrated Dons and Doñas to reach the milestone. "I feel fine," she told the Camarillo Daily News in October 1980, as she reached for a piece of Mexican pastry. She and Adolfo shared their birthday month. Hers was on October 22nd. His was on October 29.

Both Lena and Adolfo were born in Ventura and had spent their entire lives in Ventura County. They were devoted to family and friends. Professionally they shared the goals of good business practices. She greatly admired Adolfo's good-hearted nature, his business sense and skill.

Lena Jones died on June 6, 1982 at the age of 101.

Oxnard Press-Courier dated Tuesday, July 24, 1973



Perhaps remembering another time as they listen to strolling guitarists at the former homestead of the Adolfo Camarillo family are, from left, Miss Lena Jones, 94, of Camarillo, who for 26 years was the secretary to Don Adolfo; Mrs. Edward (Marie Louise) Canet, long-term family friend, who is 100 years old; and Mrs. Mabel Gabbert, both of Ventura. Mrs. Gabbert, 92, is the sister of Miss Jones.



Believed to be Tranquila Lorenzana Jones, mother of Lena Jones and half-sister of Isabel Camarillo (undated)

More Family Connections....



A party at the Petit house was a perfect place to talk for, from left, Jack Stewart, Adolfo Camarillo, Ernest Jones and George Longo.

Ernest Orestes Jones was the brother of Tranquilina “**Lena**” Jones (secretary to Adolfo Camarillo) and was the husband of Onorinda Jones (principal of Pleasant Valley School for 35 years). Siblings Ernest Jones and Lena Jones were “half cousins” to the children of Adolfo and Isabel Camarillo. The mothers of the cousins – Tranquilina Lorenzana Jones and Isabel Menchaca Camarillo – were “half sisters.”

George Longo was the husband of María de **Gloria** Petit (daughter of Rosa and Alfred John Petit). [George was the husband of Adolfo's granddaughter.]

Audrey Fraser Young (1910-1986)

by
Karin Farrin

Based on Audrey Young's speech "My Memories of Camarillo in the 1930s & 1940s." Presented by the Circuit Riders, a senior social group of the Camarillo United Methodist Church June 1982 and conversations with Linda Plummer, Audrey's daughter.

Audrey Fraser was born in Oxnard, and moved to Ventura with her family after graduating from high school. From there she went to Los Angeles where she graduated from Business College, and then back to Ventura. Her first position was with the Bank of Italy in Ventura, which later became the Bank of America. She met her future husband, Clifford Young, during this time, while they were both employees of competitive banks. They dated for 5 or 6 years, and in October of 1936 announced their engagement to be married. Comments were made from family and friends. "It's about time."

While working for the Vice-President of the bank, John Lagomarsino, he mentioned that he had been appointed one of the Executors of the Juan Camarillo Estate, (the younger brother of Adolfo Camarillo) and it was necessary to set up an office for the Estate. He asked if she would consider taking on the task, and she gladly accepted the offer.

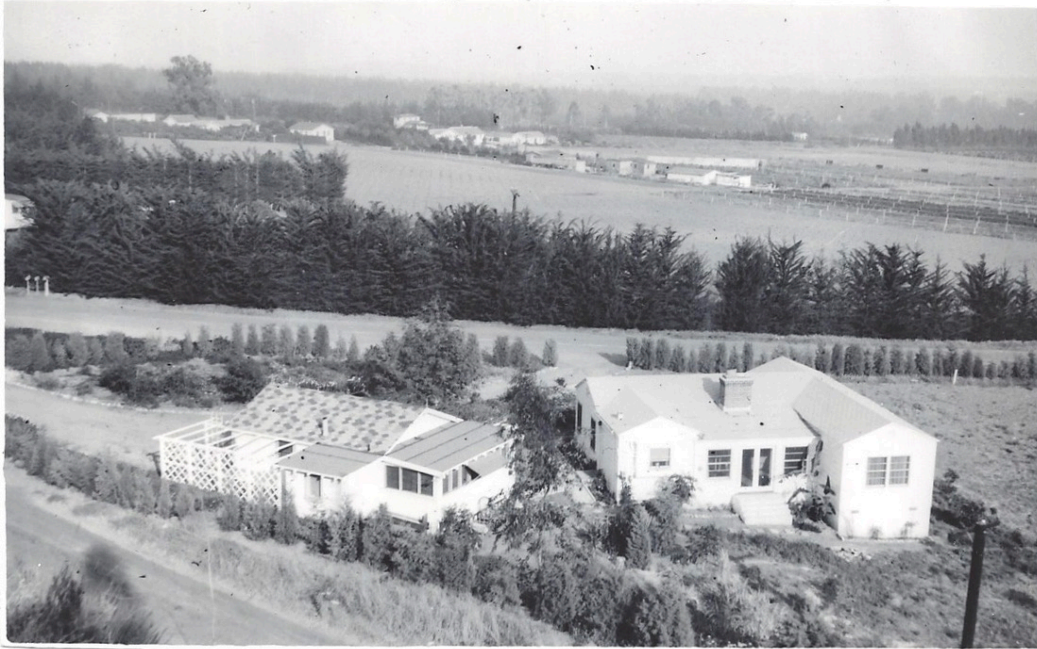
She and John drove out to the Camarillo Ranch the next day to meet with Mr. Camarillo. She had never met him before, but had seen him many times at meetings and parades. A room in the Camarillo house had been converted into a large office for use of the Estate.

The other Executors were Lena Jones, Adolfo Camarillo's secretary, and George FitzGerald, an engineer and one of Adolfo Camarillo's sons-in law. Audrey began work immediately, driving from Ventura every day. For a short time, she was working both jobs; one at the bank and also at the Camarillo Ranch. She and Clifford were married two weeks later in October.

The Estate was settled at the end of 5 years and at that time, Lena Jones chose to retire as Adolfo Camarillo's secretary. Lena lived to be 101 years of age. Audrey was asked to stay on, and was there for another 5 years, at which time they decided to start a family.

They moved to Camarillo in 1941 to eliminate the commuting time. Her husband had found a job in Camarillo as an Office Manager of a citrus warehouse in which Adolfo Camarillo was the director. The population of Camarillo at that time was less than 300 people. In 1978 there were 28,000 people in the City, and 10,000 in the County. Today the population of Camarillo is over 69,000.

They sold their house in Ventura, but didn't find another right away in Camarillo. Adolfo Camarillo said they could live in a house on the Ranch until they found a place. "We eventually found a 2-acre parcel in Camarillo Heights." They lived there for 31 years, increasing the size, planting an orchard, paving the driveway, adding a swimming pool and patio, and new landscaping and lawn. "Our house was the first to have a lawn." When Clifford retired, they remodeled a small house on the hill above that they already owned, and lived there.



Audrey and Clifford Young's home located on the corner of Mission Drive and West Highland in Camarillo Heights. It was purchased in 1942. Both streets are dirt roads. The house is on the right. Garage, workshop and guesthouse on the left

Adolfo Camarillo loved to host barbeques. One such occasion took place at Oak Grove Park to celebrate the fact that many of the curves were eliminated on the Conejo Grade, making travel easier.* Local dignitaries were invited from Ventura and Los Angeles Counties. Even though Audrey wasn't a dignitary, she was invited. Leo Carrillo**, a popular movie star and close friend of Adolfo's, was Master of Ceremonies for the event. Oak Grove Park, which is now a County Park, was a private picnic area belonging to the Camarillo family until Adolfo Camarillo gave it to the County for use by the public in 1940.

*Dedication and opening ceremony was on May 1, 1937

**Leo Carrillo was also related to the Camarillos through Adolfo's mother, Martina Hernandez Camarillo.

"There used to be a dairy at one time located on Santa Rosa Road, which is now Leisure Village. After the dairy was no longer in use, there were still some old buildings left standing. Adolfo Camarillo held a rodeo every year in connection with the branding of the cattle, and at the conclusion, he would host a barbeque at the home. My office was converted into a bar for the occasion, and I was appointed bartender.

The Camarillo Ranch has been the setting for many motion pictures over the years. Arrangements for this were made with Adolfo Camarillo through a charitable organization in Los Angeles, which received all funds paid by the movie companies for use of the site."

Audrey remembered a time when the cemetery plots at St. Mary Magdalen church were being transferred to other locations, so a park could be built in its place. During this time, Carmen brought her over one time to the cemetery to watch the proceedings, along with other townspeople. Another time, Carmen brought her to see the opening of Camarillo State Hospital, which was completed in 1936. The reason Carmen was aware of these events is that when she picked up the mail at the Post Office, people were talking about it. This was the place where news was exchanged.

Adolfo Camarillo was a director in many Associations and Organizations, some of them being the Camarillo Citrus Association, the Walnut Association, the Lima Bean Association, along with various School Boards and Banks, the State Fair and many more.

On one occasion he was due at the Bank of A. Levy in Oxnard for a 3:00 Directors meeting which had slipped his mind. He was sitting by Audrey's desk visiting with her, when the phone rang to ask if he would be attending. He said, "Tell them I'll be there in 10 minutes." Audrey told him that was not possible and to drive carefully. In 10 minutes the phone rang. It was Mr. Camarillo, all out of breath. He said, "Audrey, I'm here, goodbye", and hung up.

In the late 1930's Adolfo Camarillo asked Audrey if she would be Secretary and Treasurer for the Ventura County Fair that year. At that time the Fair was 5 days long. She agreed but it was long days, from 8:00 a.m. and she didn't get home until midnight. She asked Adolfo if the next year he could say that he needed her at the Ranch and couldn't spare her, but because she did such a good job for the Fair, the opposite happened, and she worked there until 1941, when the Fair was cancelled due to the war.

Audrey remembers Adolfo Camarillo as a quiet, considerate and generous man. He had a wonderful memory and could quote dates and occurrences from years before. He kept a daily diary and before retiring each night, he would enter the day's events. He could easily turn back to any day in the past and tell when bean planting had started, when walnut picking started, when there was rain, or east wind, who called at the house, etc.



***Camarillo Ranch 1942 Left: Unknown, Carmen Camarillo, Clifford Young, Audrey Young and Adolfo Camarillo
"I was accepted like one of the family. I had lunch with family at noon and if it was the cook's day off, Carmen fixed lunch. If she was not there, I fixed lunch for the two of us. Mr.***

Camarillo spent many evenings alone and often when I was ready to leave for the day he would say, 'Audrey, cook has a lamb roast ready. Call Cliff to come over and have dinner with me.'

We were also included in the Christmas parties and the annual Easter Sunday lamb barbeques. For a few years the large pine tree in front of the house was trimmed with Christmas lights and the view of it at night, from the top of the Conejo grade was unbelievable. Every year on Christmas Eve, some very dear friends of Adolfo Camarillo came to the Ranch to serenade him. This was a well-known Spanish family from Los Angeles. They performed professionally all over the state. They sang and played guitars and were dressed in elaborate Spanish outfits. When we were still living in Ventura, we had an open house one Christmas Eve. Adolfo and Carmen arrived and brought this group of Spanish performers to entertain us and our friends, which was a complete surprise to me, but thoroughly enjoyed.

Birthdays were considered holidays and I was given the day off of work, along with a bottle of wine to celebrate. Even though Mr. Camarillo had a very good memory, the married daughters would call me on the morning of their birthdays and ask me to remind "Papa" that it was their birthday so he would have their check ready for them when they arrived.

Most of the women, including young girls, had their ears pierced, so I talked about getting mine pierced. Carmen said that was fine and she would ask Nati, the cook and housekeeper, to pierce them for me. She said she would do it when the moon was just right. Finally, the time came. She sterilized a needle with a lighted match, then threaded the needle with silk thread. Carmen held a large cork behind my ear while Nati quickly jabbed the needle into my ear and the cord. It was then pulled through with the thread and tied into a circle. My instructions were to spit on my fingers several times a day, rub the thread and pull it through the ear a few times. This was their method of preventing infection. At the end of two weeks I was to put in earrings. Everything worked out just fine with no problems.

Adolfo Camarillo made a tour of the Ranch each day, or at least part of it, either on foot, horseback or car. He was partial to Cadillacs and bought a new one every year. One day he decided he should have a small car to tour the Ranch so he bought a Chevy. He came into the office one morning and said he wanted to take me for a ride in it. He drove up the lane (of Eucalyptus trees) and said "Look, I'm going 60 miles an hour in second gear. Of course this was before cars had automatic transmissions. The car was like a toy to him.

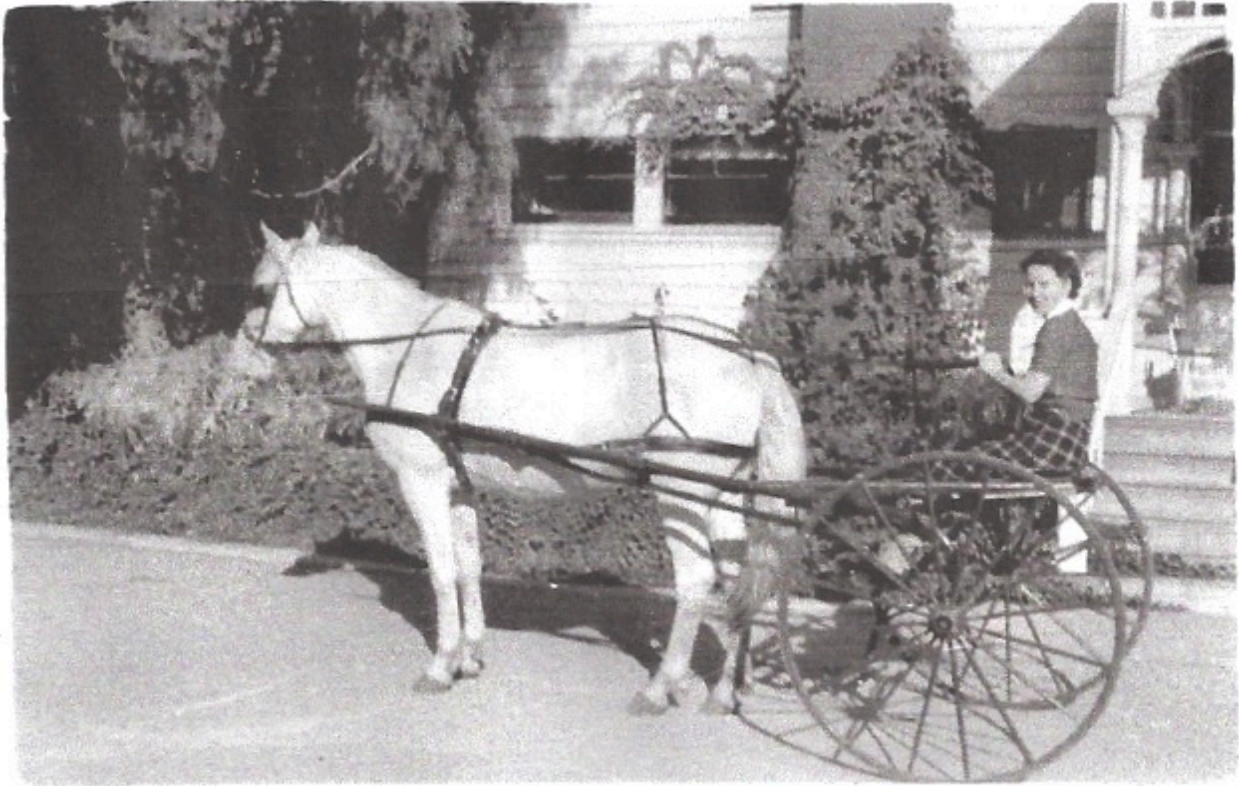


Left: Audrey Young with Gloria Petit Longo, Adolfo's granddaughter and Rosa's daughter

I had the privilege of riding the horses whenever I wished, and I well remember of my first rides. Occasionally I rode at noontime and one day I rode through the walnut orchard from the barn to the orange warehouse to show off to my husband. On the way back the horse shied at a piece of paper blowing in the wind. I was thrown off landing on my back with the reins still in my hand, as the horse galloped along pulling me with him. I realized I had better drop the reins before I was kicked. A truck driver passing by on the road had seen what happened, and stopped and waited until he saw me get up and start walking. I was very embarrassed. I didn't worry about the horse because I knew he would head for the barn. When I got back, Carmen told her father, "You can't put a rider on a horse that doesn't know anything, or on a horse that doesn't know anything, and expect a good outcome. From then on he gave me his own horse to ride when he wasn't riding it. I even rode in a couple of parades later on – one in Ventura and one in Camarillo. Adolfo liked to make inspections on the Ranch by horseback, several mornings during the week. He asked me to ride with him, so I kept my riding clothes at the Ranch to change into.

Adolfo loved his famous White Horses and they participated in many parades each year, including the State Fair events in Sacramento, Santa Barbara Fiesta Parade, Ventura County Fair Parade and Camarillo parades. They were even at the Pasadena Rose Parade.

I remember a time when a small delegation from Japan appeared at the front door and asked for Mr. Camarillo. They wanted to buy one of the White Horses for their Emperor, but Adolfo refused to sell them one.



Audrey Young at the Camarillo Ranch (August 1942)

Another time a horticulturist stopped by to admire the row of white roses that Carmen was tending to. He asked her how she got them so white, and she answered, 'horse manure.'

Adolfo Camarillo died in 1958 at the age of 94, a man who will never be forgotten."

Audrey Young died in 1986. She was 76 years old.

Linda Young Plummer Remembers Her Mother and the Camarillo Ranch

I thought I'd pass along some memories of how generous and caring Adolfo Camarillo was with his "ranch family." I have numerous photos of times my parents had their best friends out to the ranch for horseback riding and bicycle riding. He even had my kindergarten class to the ranch for a field trip arranged on behalf of my mom. It was Pauline Friedrich's class.

He gave me my first dog--a cocker spaniel--and I still have a "baby" doll he gave me. On one Easter he gave me a bunny. My mother was allergic to rabbit fur so late on Easter Sunday after a day of playing with the bunny, she told me it was time to take the bunny back. She explained he had given it to me "for Easter" and Easter was now over. Mom used to say he was a good friend of the movie actor Leo Carrillo and Mr. Carrillo was often a visitor at the ranch.

I took ceramic lessons from Tweedy (*Adolfo's daughter-in-law*). There was a little row of shops between Higgins Market and the Train Depot. These shops were raised from ground level and connected by a wooden sidewalk. One of the shops I believe was Irene's Dress Shop. Below that shop in the basement Tweedy had a ceramic workshop. I really enjoyed that and it was easy for my Mom as Tweedy's workshop was right on the route for Mom picking me up from school and returning to the ranch to finish some work.



Audrey Young, Ventura Parade 1943



Field Trip of
Pauline Friedrick's
Kindergarten Class
January 24, 1951

Meliton Ortiz

Audrey Young's daughter, Linda Young Plummer, and her kindergarten classmates enjoyed a field trip to the Camarillo Ranch. Meliton Ortiz is in the bottom photo. January 1951

**Audrey Young's Daughter:
Linda Plummer Tells Us About
Her Family Tree in California and Camarillo Ranch Memories**

Both sides of Audrey's grandparents came from Nova Scotia. Her mother's father Duncan McFadden came to El Cajon Valley in about 1880 and took the job of a Blacksmith. He then sent for and married his sweetheart and started his own ranch and Blacksmith shop. His business grew and he eventually owned several buildings in El Cajon and expanded the ranching properties which included raising fancy race horses. In 1898 a depression had hit El Cajon Valley and Duncan turned his business over to an employee and headed to Alaska to make money smithing in the gold rush. He got sick enroute and died in Skagway where he is buried. Duncan's wife Christine handled the business activities but six months after Duncan's death, a fire broke out in a Japanese restaurant and destroyed all of their properties. Duncan and Christine had three children; the one daughter was Flora Jane McFadden, Audrey's mother. She graduated from State Normal School (now San Diego State University). Her first teaching job was on an Indian Reservation in San Diego County. She married Alexander Grant Fraser in 1908 in San Diego. They settled in Oxnard where Flora taught at Haddock Grammar School on C Street. The family moved to Ventura in 1928 where she taught at Lincoln Elementary School.

The family of Thomas Daniel Fraser Sr and Mary Jane MacPhee arrived in Ventura in 1889 from Nova Scotia with their eight children, Alexander Grant Fraser being Audrey's father. They came to Ventura because Thomas' older brother Donald who had arrived in 1872 was working for Thomas Bard and encouraged them to make the move. Donald supervised and built several piers along the coast including the Ventura and Hueneme wharfs. A. Grant Fraser owned Fraser Bros. Grocery and a Coffee Roasting Shop both in Oxnard. In 1928 they moved to Ventura where he was Deputy Sheriff for Ventura County for several years.

Audrey and her older brother, A. Donald Fraser, were born in the family house on C Street and the younger sister Winifred Rae Fraser was born in their house on D Street. Audrey graduated from Oxnard High School in 1928 and then went on to Sawyer School of Business from which she graduated in 1929. She worked at Bank of America from 1929 until 1936 when she resigned to take the position with the Camarillo Estate. The following month she married Clifford Norman Young. They met while Clifford was working across the street from Audrey at the Union National Bank of Ventura. Their first house was on Poli Street in Ventura and then they moved to the house and acreage in Camarillo in 1941. For several years Clifford managed the citrus packing plant near the depot in Camarillo. He later became manager of the Pleasant Valley Lima Bean Growers and Warehouse Association which is the big warehouse on E 5th Street and Pleasant Valley road. In 1973 after Clifford retired, they moved from the house on Mission Drive just up the hill to a smaller house they had owned for years. Clifford died on December 26, 1984, in Camarillo, and Audrey died on August 29, 1986, in Camarillo. I am the only child and

am married to Guy Lawrence Plummer. We have one son, Todd Alan Plummer, and we are living in Morgan Hill CA.

Finally, now for the specific questions you asked. Other than recognizing names from your great newsletters, I don't recall any specific events with them. I previously mentioned having taken ceramic lessons from Tweedy.

At times Mom would pick me up from school and bring me back to the Ranch while she finished some work. At some of those times Meliton would talk to me about the animals and show me the horses and saddles. I remember him being enthusiastic (my grown-up word) about what he was doing.

I also remember the warmth and good smells in the kitchen, and I was fascinated by the wood burning stove. The particular memory I mentioned to you was one afternoon I told Mom that I was hungry so she sent me into the kitchen to ask Nati for something to eat. Nati put a tortilla on the flat iron of the stove to heat it up and then she spread real butter on it. When I got back to Mom, I told her it tasted "funny." I had never had real butter nor a tortilla (and this one had "scotch" on it). Little did I know what a delight I was having--but I certainly know better now!