

SOME MEMORIES OF
“THE NURSERY”
ON HIGHLAND AVENUE

BY
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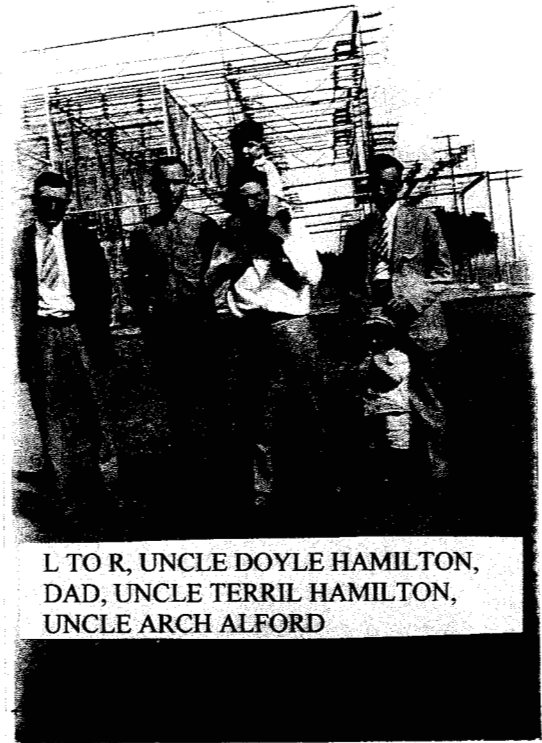
DEDICATED TO MY DAD
JESSIE ELLIS ALFORD
A KIND AND GENTLE MAN
A GREAT FATHER

SOME MEMORIES OF "THE NURSERY" ON HIGHLAND AVENUE

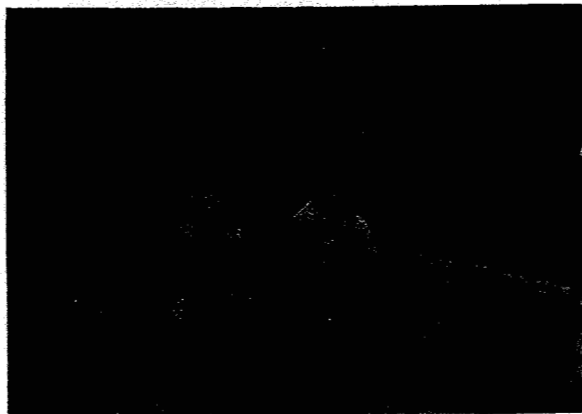
Frank & I were born March 5th 1926 in Anaheim, California. Dad worked for Southern California Edison Co. in several different locations in the vicinity. I remember hearing of Garden Grove, Irvine and Tustin. The first house I remember living in was a company house at Fairview Substation, south of Santa Ana, very close to where John Wayne Airport presently is located. At that time there was a dirt strip airport in walking distance. Dad would take Frank and I walking over there to look at the airplanes. We were living there when Jeannine was born on Feb 17, 1930. I remember the occasion.



GRANDMA HAMILTON

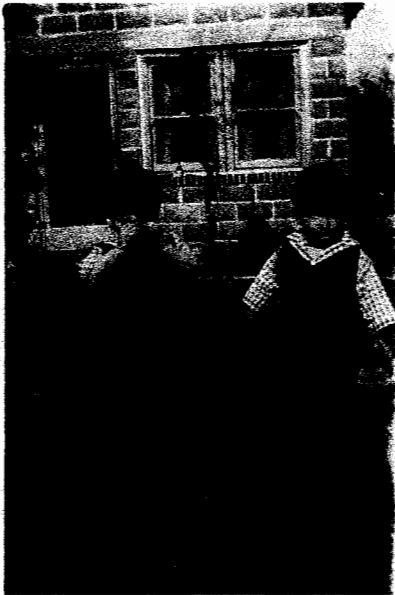


L TO R, UNCLE DOYLE HAMILTON,
DAD, UNCLE TERRIL HAMILTON,
UNCLE ARCH ALFORD



1929

Shortly after Jeannine's birth, Dad's Tuberculosis became active and he had to go to live in a Sanitarium in Monrovia. Mother and we children moved to San Bernardino to live with our Grandmother Hamilton, Mother's mother. We lived at a place called Bethune, a trolley car stop about half way between San Bernardino and Colton. Frank & I started first grade there at Lincoln Elementary School in Colton. We walked up a hill to catch a trolley to a stop within walking distance of the school. For whatever reason, we did not attend Kindergarten but started directly in first grade at age 5½ years, Sept 1931. Two of the pictures below were taken at Bethune. The one of Frank and I show the house where we lived, but as we appear much younger than 4 years, I think that at that time we were just visiting Grandma Hamilton who owned and lived in the house at that time. The other picture (also at Bethune, but at the time we lived there) is of Ernest and Doyl Hamilton Jr., children of Mother's brother (Doyle Hamilton), and on the right is Jeannine. The third picture was in the front yard of the house on 15th Street



Dad's Tuberculosis was pronounced arrested and he came home while we were living at Bethune. We completed first grade while living there and before school started Sept 1932, we moved to a rental house on 15th Street in NW San Bernardino, east of Mt. Vernon between Baseline and Highland Ave. Frank & I went to second grade at Roosevelt Elementary School just 2 or 3 blocks west.

Dad returned to work with Southern California Edison Co. as a Relief Operator. In Santa Ana, at Fairview, he was "Chief Operator" and that was why we lived in the company house on site. Now, as "Relief Operator" he went to one of several locations for a week at a time every other week or so to assist the Chief or be in charge, in his absence. While there, he lived in a little apartment on site, called "the quarters". How happy we were to see him when he came home. He would be at Yucaipa, Redlands, Highlands or Fontana.

The summer of 1933 we moved to another rental house on Evans Street, a block or two east and 3 or 4 blocks north. Dad had a violin, which he liked to play and it was one of the things he took to work with him. When he came home, I always begged him to let me play the violin. One time he told me that if I was going to play with it, I would learn to play it right. That started my violin lessons with a violin teacher, and Dad no longer had a violin to take to work. I continued to take lessons and played in School Orchestras through High School. At age, 75 I can still pick up a violin and play a tune, remembering Dad each time I do so.

Dad had a strong interest in many things. One was growing plants. A small nursery, with a residence attached, at 1197 Highland Avenue had gone out of business and Dad was somehow able to buy it. We moved there before school started Sept 1933. The house was quite small, a living room (which had been an office or florist shop, with an indoor fish pond in one corner), a kitchen/dining room, 2 bedrooms and 1 bathroom.

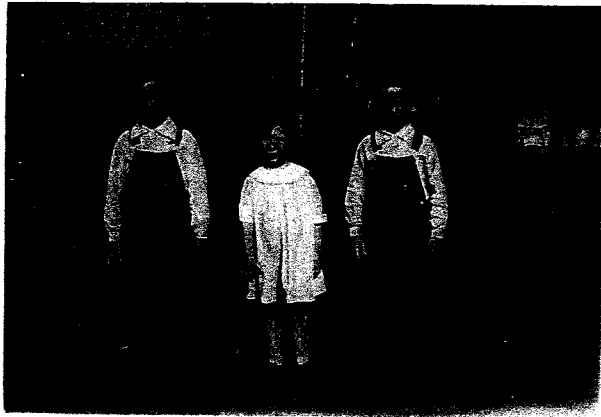


In Sept 1933, Frank & I started third grade at Elliot Elementary School on the NW corner of Highland Ave. and E Street. We also attended fourth and fifth grades there. It was 9/10 mile from the nursery and we walked it, unless it was pouring down rain; then mother took us, in the Model A Ford. Dad bought, for \$20.00, a Model T Ford pick-up truck. He made a waterproof cover for the back and used it to "go to work" with everything he needed for a week (minus his violin) loaded in the back. How happy we were to see that Model T return home! He taught Frank & I how to drive it in a huge vacant lot, off the road when we were about 9 years old.

I do not think Dad had any intention of operating a full business nursery, but just a sort of hobby and sideline. He did get a business license and sold a few bedding plants, mainly Begonias. He liked to grow them from seed in "flats" in the "glass house". He also designed a little price sign and a small trellis. The price tags consisted of a small square of tin soldered to a piece of wire. They looked like miniature traffic stop signs on street corners. The trellises were made of wires he laid out on a special board to hold them in place while he soldered them. He had made an air compressor out of some car parts he had bought at a wrecking yard and hooked up to an electric motor. With this he spray painted them green. The trellises he put in potted plants. The lath house was attached to the house on the west side, with the glass house attached to the south side of the lath house. The first half of the glass house had benches or tables on each side of the walk way. The benches were for keeping flats in for growing new plants, transplanting seedlings to pots or for plants that needed temperature and/or humidity control.

One time while Dad was working with some cactus plants, Jeannine, about 4 years old at the time, walking around on the bench barefooted, stepped on a cactus blade that was laying flat. Fortunately, the thorns were very short and fine but millions of them. Dad melted some paraffin and when it had cooled enough, poured it on the bottom of Jeannine's foot. After it hardened he peeled it off and most of the little stickers came out with the paraffin. The remainder, Dad picked out with tweezers. Dad had a lot of patience and was very gentle. There was a partition about midway through the glass house and beyond that, the west end was a storage area. On the South side of the glass house was an area of outdoor cactus (many types), then some Pampas Grass alongside a fish pond with water lilies and next to it a Rose (Cecil Brunner) arbor with seats. Down the west side was a driveway from the street (Highland Ave.) which turned left (East) along the south edge of the grounds. There was then a shed (open on the sides) to park the car. East of the shed was a chicken house with a chicken pen the rest of the way across. There were a couple of Eucalyptus trees along the south

edge. One of them, Frank & I liked to climb and tried to build a tree house among the branches. Between the chicken pen and the house we had a huge vegetable garden where Mother raised everything from Asparagus to Zucchini's. Between the chickens (eggs & fried chicken) and the vegetable garden, we did not go hungry.



Surrounding the Nursery, sides, back and across the street (Highland Ave.), there was nothing but vacant fields. The railroad from San Bernardino up through Cajon Pass passed behind the house some distance away. Frank & I liked to go across the fields, to sit or stand near the tracks, to watch the trains making the climb up the steep pass, with heavy loads. They sometimes had 3 big steam locomotives, one in front, one in the middle and one at the back all making huge billowing clouds of black smoke. We saw the first streamliner Diesel go by and once a flat car carrying the largest mirror ever built (at that time), specially made for a telescope on Mt. Palomar Observatory.

One day a Barnstormer landed his biplane in the field between the Nursery and the railroad track, taxied over and asked if he could use our garden hose to wash his airplane. He was allowed to and I hoped that he would give us a ride – but he did not do so.

Diagonally, across the field in a south-easterly direction, just across the railroad track was a Weber's Bakery. In the front of the bakery was a "walk-up" window (literally, up about 3 steps onto a porch in front of the window) where day old bread (returned from retail stores) was sold at a reduced price. Mother, quite often, sent us to the "Bakery" to get a loaf of bread. For us it was an adventure!

At other times we walked a couple blocks east, on Highland Ave. to a "Gilmore Red Lion Gasoline" station to get a quart of milk. If we had a couple of pennies

in our pocket, we could get some penny candy there, jaw breakers or licorice sticks, etc. Mother or Dad would sometimes buy gasoline there at \$0.18 per gallon. The pumps were hand-operated. A long lever on the side was pushed back and forth to fill the glass tank on the top of the pump. As the attendant opened the valve on the nozzle, one could visually see the level drop. Markers on the side of the tank indicated how much gas was delivered. The attendant also washed the windshield, checked the air pressure in the tires, water in the radiator and the oil level of the engine.

West on Highland Ave., around the corner on Mt. Vernon, was a Lumber Company. Frank & I would walk over there to get "sticks" of wood that had been trimmed from lumber. We used them to make kites covered with newspaper. We used flour paste to hold the paper together where it was folded over the string around the frame. They did not fly well, if at all. They were too heavy I think! We did not often have money to buy store-bought kites.

We had a lot of Shasta Daisies. On what was then called "Decoration Day", because people would decorate graves with flowers, (which is now called Memorial Day) Mother and Dad would let us kids sit out by the curb with buckets of Daisies to sell to people on their way to the cemetery.

Sometimes on Election Day, our living room was used as a Polling Place. Portable wooden booths were brought in and set up there. Mother would prepare extra food at lunch-time. When the workers smelled her good "down home cookin" they were happy to pay her for a bowl or plate.

Two boys with all that open space and freedom, grew up with a happy childhood. Sometime in 1936, Dad's Tuberculosis became active again and he had to return to Monrovia. The Nursery was too much for Mother to take care of by herself, so she sold it and bought a house at 1175 14th Street near where we had lived, in 1932, on 15th Street. We made many trips in the Model A down "Route 66" (Foothill Blvd., no freeway then) through Azusa to Monrovia to see Dad. The attached drawings are not to scale, nor are they accurate depictions of "The Nursery" They are included only to aid the reader to visualize the foregoing.

"The Nursery" no longer exists and with the addition of a freeway on, or very near that spot, we cannot pinpoint where it was, but it still exists in the minds of Jeannine, Frank & I. We will always remember good times at the Nursery, with Mother & Dad.

RT. 66
BARSTOW & BEYOND



GAS STATION

ELLIOT ELEM. SCHOOL

HIGHLAND AVE.

NURSERY

I ST.

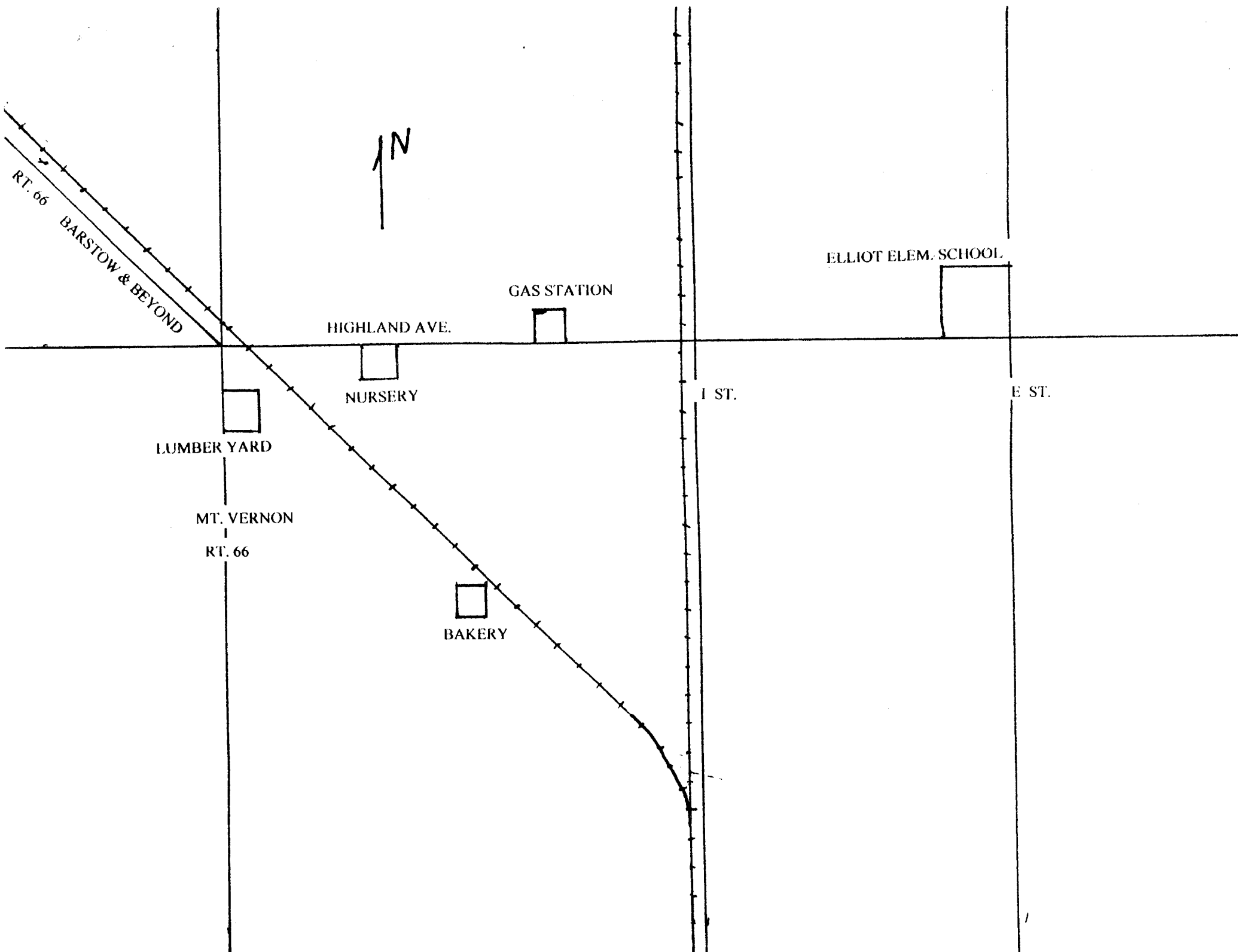
E ST.

LUMBER YARD

MT. VERNON

RT. 66

BAKERY



HIGHLAND AVE.

GRASS
SIDEWALK
GRASS

LATH HOUSE

HOUSE

DRIVEWAY

GLASS HOUSE

BACK
PORCH

FISH POND

CACTUS
GARDEN

PATH

GRASS

PAMPAS GRASS

ROSE ARBOR

VEGETABLE
GARDEN

HEDGE

DRIVEWAY

SHED

CHICKEN
HOUSE

CHICKEN
PEN

FENCE

EUCALYPTUS

TREES

