

VENTURA COUNTY *Showcase*

Local Realtor's roots run deep

BY WENDY DAGER
SPECIAL TO STAR HOMES

Several decades ago, Gwyn Goodman's father, Art Mahan, decided it was time to share some of the colorful stories that had sculpted his upbringing as a member of one of Ventura County's pioneer families.

The stories were meticulously typed by Gina Ortiz, who worked in the office of Art's son, local rancher Ralph Mahan. Upon Art Mahan's death in 1995 at age 85, the stories were compiled into a booklet entitled "Memories of Yesteryear," and handed out at his funeral.

"His life was absolutely so fun," said Goodman, a lifelong resident of the area and owner of Goodman Realty, Inc. "Every day was good for him. The people in the area worked hard and played hard."

With her collection of vintage photos and stories of bygone years, Goodman's memories of her father, his friends and other family members are as clear as day, even the tales that go as far back as the 1920s and 1930s. This includes the time Art Mahan, then a young man, was running cattle in Balcom Canyon and his horse suddenly had a heart attack and died.

"He was dazed and wobbly from going down with the horse," said Goodman. "He tried to get a ride from someone in Balcom Canyon, but no one would pick him up because they thought he was drunk!"

Another story from Art Mahan's typed memoirs recalls a major event in their family's history: the time his brother Harry Mahan decided to make a crystal set. According to Art Mahan, a man named Jerome Jay Green, a retired college professor, was one of the purveyors of the crystal set—a primitive radio receiver—after World War I, and had come to Moorpark to teach people how to make their own radios.

Art's brother Harry made the set based on Green's instructions by using, among other



Harry Mahan, left, built a crystal set that Walter Durden (third from left) said was "spiritualism" until he realized that it was entertainment; then no one could get their own time with the set. Second from left is Harry's father, Ralph Mahan. On the right is a man called Davies who may have lost a daughter in Lake Piru along with a number of the Sisson family and other related families when their raft in the lake capsized and few could swim, even though they were not far from shore. The incident made the local news at the time.

simple components, a needle-like piece called a "cat whisker," and was able to tune into a choice of three radio stations: KFI, KNX and KFJ. They encouraged family friend and music-lover Walter Derdon to listen to the radio, but he refused, claiming that he was worried that his mother would "go crazy over spiritualism," the perceived source of the music. He said he couldn't be sure where the music on the crystal set was coming from, and continued to spend his money on records to play on the Victrola. Eventually,

Harry Mahan was able to sneak the crystal set's headphones up to Walter Derdon's ear when he wasn't looking. From then on, said Art Mahan, "Nobody else ever got a chance to listen to that thing after that."

Eventually, the family got a real radio, which Art Mahan said was five-feet long and a foot high, and had three big dials. It cost \$260, which was a substantial purchase in those days, but well worth it, considering that was the main source of entertainment for the family and its

hired ranch hands.

For those who wish to see more glimpses of the area's early days, Gwyn Goodman has many historical photos on her website, www.gwyngoodman.com.

As a real estate broker and Realtor, Goodman specializes in assisting clients who buy and sell agricultural properties in the Somis and Moorpark areas. To contact Gwyn Goodman of Goodman Realty, Inc., call 987-6695 or e-mail ggoodmanrealty@aol.com.