

Strawberry Fields Forever... Continued

BY LOYCE MARTINAZZI

Last month's story on strawberries in the Tualatin Valley evoked a plethora of memories from many folks. Besides my story, the Capital Press, Oregon's agricultural newspaper, as well as Willamette Week recently ran similar stories on the fabled fruit.

Gary Schneider grew up on Frobase Road and remembered when he graduated from picking strawberries at age 14 to a "man's job," hauling hay for Munikma's dairy and Earl and Margaret Sagert.

Pat Berry Brewer remembered not only planting, hoeing and picking strawberries, but using a round tool that chopped the runners off. Diane Silvey Swintek said she picked the strawberries for the old Methodist Church (now Heritage Center) strawberry festival each June. Vic and Pearl Christensen had a berry patch down at the end of Robbins Road, now Lee Farms, and the Christensens would donate the berries for the festival if someone picked them. Ross Baker commented that my story was "berry berry good," and my niece Tammy Foster Rudy, now living in Florida remembered picking and eating Tualatin strawberries.

But the most interesting story I heard was that of the Slawik family who settled in the Norwood area of Tualatin. Now folks, if you don't know where Norwood is, please look at a map and learn more about your community. What we call the Norwood area was owned by Oswego's Oregon Iron and Steel Company, and was part of the thousands of acres purchased for mining rights. After the iron ran out, the land was developed into small three to five acre farms, where it was claimed a family could make a living with a cow, chickens and a garden.

So during the depths of the depression in 1933 Vincent and Matilde Slawik with

sons George and Vincent left the Black Hills of South Dakota and camped out on their way to Oregon to settle on a five acre farm in Norwood. The Slawiks were from Poland and had entered the U. S. in 1927 as immigrants through Ellis Island. They grew strawberries, had a couple of cows and raised Golden and Silver pheasants.

Vincent Jr. graduated from Sherwood High School in 1939, and was part of a strawberry picking crew near Scapoose. One hot June day Vincent and some friends dove into the Scapoose creek to cool off. Vincent's neck was broken as his head snapped back in a strong current. A paraplegic at age 19, his parents cared for him and when they passed brother George took up the task. George passed up marriage twice as the ladies wanted to put Vincent in a care facility. Another brother, John, his wife Darlene and children in South Dakota but joined the Oregon Slawiks in 1966 as they felt it was their turn to look after Vincent. Vincent had taken a correspondence course in accounting and his instructor came to the home where Vincent passed his tests laying in his bed. He practiced accounting for many years.

The Slawik family still lives in Norwood, and still occupies the old home. Jon, who prefers the name Jack went to Vietnam from South Dakota and returned with his bride, Van. (who, I might add, makes wonderful spring rolls). That generation continued to care for Vincent until he passed away in 1992. Jack and Van and their children are proud to live in Tualatin's great little community of Norwood.



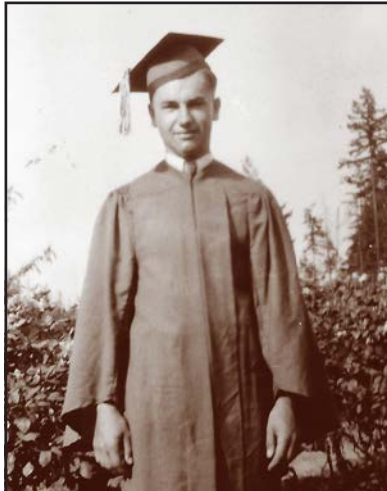
Loyce Martinazzi was born and raised in Tualatin and is passionate about Tualatin History. She is currently Lecturer of the Winona Grange, Co-Founder of the Tualatin Historical Society and Co-Author of *Tualatin... From the Beginning*.



Grandpa Slawik on his tractor.



Grandma Matilde was very fond of Maudie Ellman, who with her husband Howard ran a store/auction house in Norwood.



Young Vincent graduated from Sherwood High School in 1939.



The Slawik house in the 1930s, still lived in by the Slawik family.



The old folks with sons George and Vincent camped out with another family on their way to Oregon.



A reminder of when the "whole sticks" burned up in Norwood.



Vincent's family built a special room for him and cared for him lovingly.



Vincent and Matilde Slawik after a good fishing trip



The Slawiks were hunters and taxidermists. George stands by the old house with a stuffed bird.



A recent aerial photo of the Slawik house on 82nd Avenue.