

Dan Marciel, partner with John Gandolfo in G&M Farms, is a member of a large family that has long been known for its agricultural heritage. Four Marciel brothers moved to Alameda County about 1880, having emigrated from the Azorean Island of São Jorge. Marcelino Vierra Marciel, the oldest of the four, settled in Sunol and raised cattle.

The youngest brother, Domingo Vierra Marciel, bought land on what is now called Marciel Road after his family. This old ranch road connects with Highland Road north of Livermore. None of his three brothers had children, but Domingo married Rose Davina, whose family also came from the Azores, and they had five children, four sons and one daughter. A large restored barn built by Domingo still stands on the original property at the end of Marciel Road.

One of their sons, George, was Dan Marciel's great-uncle. George became a well-known rodeo rider for many years, starting with our first rodeo in 1918. He was a top bucking horse rider and later participated in the roping events. In 1935 he traveled with Johnie Schneider, Livermore's famous rodeo contestant, and others to Australia.

They introduced Australians to the American style of rodeo and to the heavier Western horses. Johnie wrote an article for the Livermore Herald about their adventures:

"Bulldogging was new to the Australians. They were thrilled to see cowboys riding at full speed jump from their horses and wrestle a steer to the ground." At first they had difficulty because a long rainy spell kept spectators away, but their break finally came when they were invited to appear as the featured attraction at the Royal Agricultural Society show in Sydney.

In nine days of events, 785,000 people bought tickets, according to Johnie. They made a return trip in 1939. The highlight of the 1935 journey for George was his marriage to circus performer Violet "Tibby" Gill at St. Mary's Basilica in Sydney. Tibby immigrated, and they ranched near Livermore. Rodeo remained an important part of George's life. Although his condition was critical at the time, he attended the Hayward rodeo just two weeks before his death in June 1959.

Another of Domingo's sons,

Do You Remember?



By Anne Homan

The "M" in G&M Farms

Frank, married Marie Medina, whose family came from the Portuguese island of Madeira. Frank and Marie are Dan Marciel's grandparents; they married in 1923 and at first lived on the home ranch on Marciel Road. Later, Frank and Marie lived at various locations throughout the valley. The family grew to include ten children. In 1945 they had been renting the Black Ranch on Vallecitos Road, but a fire burned down the house. Two years later, they bought 200+ acres on Collier Canyon Road. In 1937 when Frank was deer hunting in a deep canyon below Crane Ridge, he was shot accidentally by an unknown hunter. His knee was shattered so badly that the doctors had to amputate his leg just above his knee. For the rest of his life, he got around on crutches.

Dan's father was Norman Marciel, the eighth child of Frank and Marie. He married Lillian Fullenwider in 1963 at St. Michael's

in Livermore. Their family lives at the Collier Canyon site. Lillian described her husband as having had the gift of knowing what he could do with the land and what he couldn't. His obituary in 2008 describes his career: "Over five decades, Norman raised cattle, hay, safflower, wheat, grain, and barley in various fields across the Livermore Valley along with a variety of vegetable crops, including corn, tomatoes, bell peppers, and eggplant." He operated the Marciel U-Pick Vegetable Stand on Kitty Hawk Road near the airport for many years in the 70s and 80s. He was also active in the local ag community, serving as president of the Alameda County Farm Bureau from 1991 to 1994 and as director of the Alameda County Resource Conservation District from 1987 until his retirement in 2007. He also was a member of the Ag Advisory Board for Livermore High School, a position in which his son,

Dan, has succeeded him. Dan has two brothers, Frank and Cory, and a sister, Paige. Dan is the only one to follow the family's heritage in agriculture.

Dan runs about 70 beef cows and raises wheat, oats, and alfalfa hay, but his first love is his vegetables. He has raised crops for the Pleasanton farmers' market and for Wente's restaurant: tomatoes, peppers, summer and winter squash, potatoes, and corn. The drought years of 2008 and 2009 defeated his efforts, but the family well has begun yielding more water since then, so he has renewed his efforts. As I mentioned last week, he also raises specialty pumpkins and brightly colored gourds.

Antone Vierra Marciel, the oldest brother in the family, also left the Azores in the 1800s to avoid the Portuguese military. He jumped ship in Hawaii and eventually purchased land on Maui. In 1995 one of Antone's descendants contacted the Marciel family here and invited them to a family reunion in Hawaii. Eight California Marciels went to the reunion and had a marvelous time. George Marciel's son, Stanley, became interested in the family genealogy and traveled to São Jorge. He found a priest to inquire about church records; the man took one look at him and said, "I know what family you're from."

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