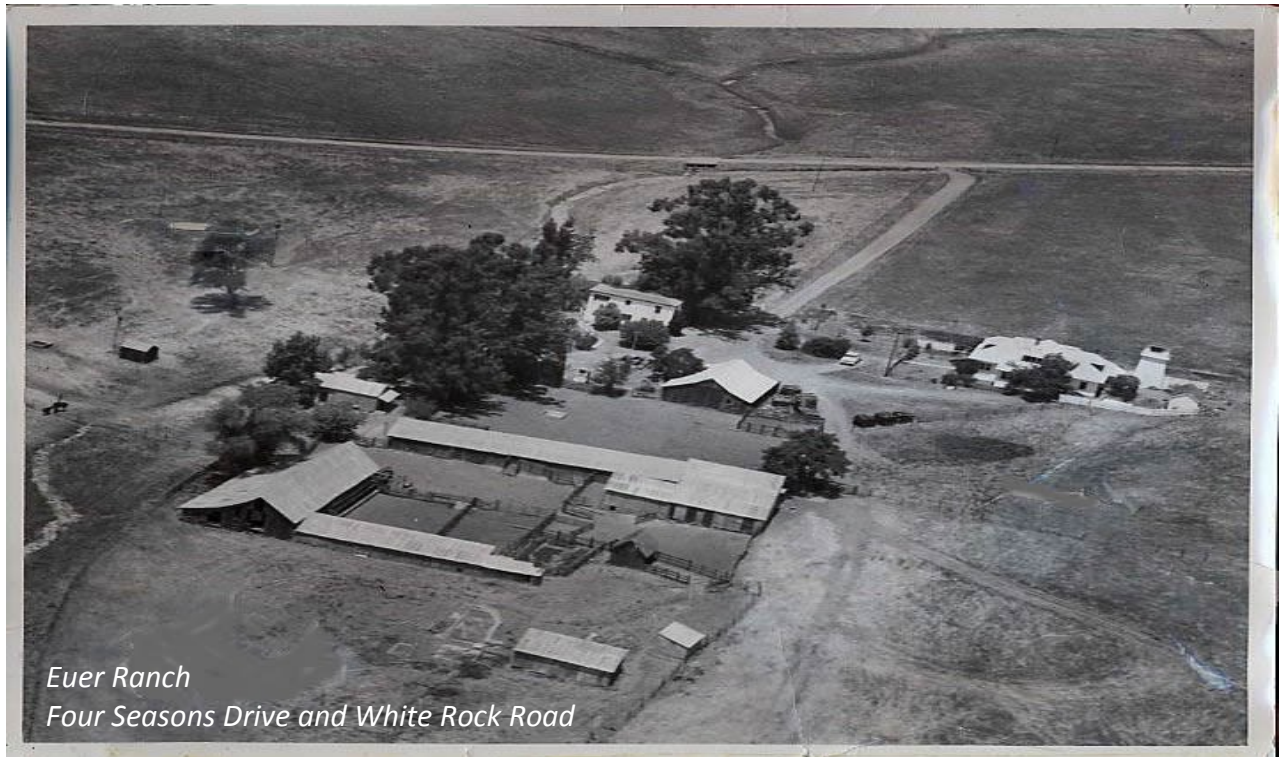


## Our Home Land Four Seasons



By Marva Johnsson

What is Euer Ranch and what about this “tree” we occasionally hear about?

First off, Euer was the name of the ranch that is now our Four Seasons home and the “tree” you hear mentioned is the Eucalyptus tree which is south of Tree Line just inside the front gate. The tree was very dominant on the ranch, sitting next to the old farm house.

Mike Roberts of *Life Newspaper* visited with great-grandson John Euer and wrote about the Euer Ranch and the Industrial Park, which they owned. This Euer story was highlighted in *Life Newspaper* in May of 2007. Euer Ranch was the last family-named ranches that dominated the El Dorado Hills landscape until the 1960’s. John Euer came to Four Seasons to talk to us about the history of the ranch and is hoping to come back soon but is waiting for the houses and outbuildings to be ready for touring.

After twelve years of negotiations and legal skirmishes, the last 160 acres of the ranch was sold to Angelo Tsakopoulos' AKT Development Corp in 2003. The family scrambled to save two houses and a couple of out buildings, which they moved six miles cross country to a Latrobe hilltop where they were awaiting permits and foundations. When Mike Roberts talked with John Euer, the 92-year old Euer farmhouse was sitting on its hilltop jacked up eight feet. There was an aluminum stepladder leaning against the grand front porch which was used to access the home.

Once inside Mike noticed a pile of dusty horse tack lying on the kitchen floor, the leather dried and cracked from years of hard use and followed by more years of disuse. It had been found in the back of a barn but they didn't know what to do with it. There was a tangle of antlers and dusty deer heads littering the living room floor. John said his dad hunted and the antlers had hung in the Folsom hardware store for years.

Old books, paperwork and furniture were left in closets for the move and were stacked helter-skelter in every room. The house was a scrapbook of four generations of ranch life. John Euer admitted the house looked pretty junky but he was hoping to get it fixed up. He had some minor structural damage when the house movers hit a rock and a few cracks appeared in the walls but all-in-all, the old building survived its overland trip intact.



There was a musty odor in the old rooms, smells which are familiar to grandparents' homes. To prove it was truly John Euer's grandparents, he sprung up a narrow, creaking stairway to a bedroom closet where a portion of the structure behind the wall revealed his grandfather's signature, dated May 19, 1915. They had discovered this when they remodeled the closet.

John Euer lived on the White Rock ranch with his wife, children and his brother. Among the structures was the house his parents built in 1933 and several picturesque outbuildings, including a vintage tank house. It held well water for the ranch and was originally powered by a windmill. The parent's house and the water tank were moved with the big house to the Latrobe hilltop.

The ranch dates back to 1866 when a young Swiss German immigrant named Sophary Euer traveled across the Isthmus of Panama to find a new life in Sacramento.

A dairyman by trade, he first worked at the Meister Dairy in Sacramento and was eventually employed by the Barton Ranch on White Rock Road near Scott Road. By 1867 he'd begun acquiring land on Old Placerville Road which later became part of the Lincoln Highway and still later became the stretch of White Rock Road immediately west of Latrobe Road.

Seeing how the grazing land became parched in the summer, he decided to adopt the Swiss practice of moving his herd to the mountains each year. He homesteaded a parcel of grazing land in the Truckee Valley in 1868 and purchased adjoining land over the next few years in which is known as Euer Valley. The cattle drive would last up to five weeks each summer with a return drive in the fall. In later years the move was accomplished by train and then by mid 1950, by truck.

Sohpary Euer, who called himself "Sam", married Clara Lamblet in 1871 and raised seven children near the white rock outcropping north of White Rock Road. Some olive trees are all that remain of the original Euer home. In 2007, the parcel was still owned by the extended family.

The original ranch was a cream and butter dairy and at one time produced 17,000 pounds of hand-churned butter in one year. It took four men to operate the large churns. The butter was packed into 30-pound kegs and the wheels of cheese were wrapped in cheese cloth and the cream was shipped in cans.

In the late 1930's, John's father, Brice, converted the family business from dairy to beef. The ranch had shrunk through sales to other ranchers and splits through inheritance, stabilizing at roughly 1,020 acres bordered by what is now White Rock Road, Latrobe Road, Wetzel Oviatt Road and the western boundary of Four Seasons.

The kids were primarily the ranch labor and they spent a lot of time on horses and in the corral. The work was long and hard but they enjoyed that way of life. Everyone was tied to the land. It was a ranch community and they shared the common goals and lifestyle, neighbors helping neighbors.

John and his brother, Bob, inherited the ranch in 1972 and raised registered polled Herefords, producing the Canadian National Champion bull in the mid 1990's.

But the Euer brothers watched as economic forces threatened the ranch lifestyle. It was a lot of work and not much pay plus the value was in the land, not the business. The "community lifestyle" had eroded. John and his brother were the fourth generation and John's sons were the fifth but the sons did not want to pursue agriculture.

John Euer's grandfather, Bob, married Josephine Forni, who came from a well-known El Dorado County pioneer family. In 1915 he built the ranch house for her which his grandson would drag cross-country in the following century.

"Josie" Euer taught at Carson Creek School, a one-room school house three miles south of the Euer Ranch. John recalled his grandmother being a "strict Swiss-Italian school teacher-type" who made sure her grandsons "toed the mark". The boys went to school in Folsom which was a town of around 3,500 people. John recalled the dedication of the Folsom Dam in 1955 and Highway 50 being a two-lane road.



But John's sons had a very different experience growing up in the 1980's El Dorado Hills. They rode horses on the ranch after school and bottle fed cattle but by the time they graduated from Oak Ridge High School, they became modern, urban young men.

Facing the most difficult decision of his life, John Euer finally concluded that if he could save the house, he'd sell the land. His original plan was to retain six acres and leave the houses on the place but that didn't work out. He sold off the 860 acres which became the EDH Business Park, leaving the roughly 160 acres where Four Seasons sits today.

After twelve years of wrangling with the county, environmental groups and Angelo Tsakopoulos, running out of money and fight, he was faced with knocking down the historic structures.

The move and the man demonstrate a profound respect for the Euer family history which made the difficult task of breaking up the family ranch where five generations of Euers thrived.

As John said to us when he visited Four Seasons, "This was our home and now it's your home. When we sold the property we wanted it to be a good thing and I think that has happened."

*To be continued.....*



*John Euer, Old Farm House & Water Tower*