

# A Torrey Pines Puzzle

Never miss an opportunity to ask your folks a question.

[Terence C. Gannon](#)



One of the four tantalizing clues that Dad left behind. (image: Dr. R. Patrick Gannon)

My father was an institutional physician, which is to say that while our family never lacked for any necessity, we were in no way wealthy. Dad prized time with his family above all else and he was going to be damned if some high paying, private practice position was going to keep him from that. He made professional choices in the 1950s which would look positively modern in the 2020s. I'm eternally grateful to Dad for that because it meant that I, along with my mother, brother and sister, got the lion's share of Dad's attention over the decades we shared here on this planet.



"the magnificent Torrey Pines bluff which tumbles down to the sea" (image: Dr. R. Patrick Gannon)

The one exception to Dad's 'family first, everything else tied for last' life philosophy was the very occasional professional requirement to attend medical conferences. Remember those? When a bunch of people got together in the same room at the same time separated by way less than the

now normal two metres? Yep, Dad would head off on his own to some exotic location for a couple of days to attend what we call today a face-to-face. He would complain about it a lot before he left, but I have a suspicion that he actually enjoyed those trips, particularly when the destination was somewhere he really wanted to go.

Dad wound up in San Diego at one of these conferences in the early 1970s — that is, judging from the mud-brown Pinto he rented. Undoubtedly inspired by its cameo in Disney's *The Boy Who Flew With Condors*, he must have ditched one of the scintillating but undoubtedly stuffy seminars on noise-induced hearing loss (yes, that was his specialty). In his suddenly free afternoon, he must have then sneaked out to Torrey Pines to indulge his intrinsic passion for all things that fly — particularly those without a motor. How do I know that, for absolutely sure? In a recently resurfaced family photo album, four tantalizing clues emerged: four pictures Dad had obviously taken when he was there.





If you look closely, you can clearly see the cylinder of the engine, but no prop. (image: Dr. R. Patrick Gannon)

Looking at the photos, I began to remember him telling the story of the sole occupant above the magnificent Torrey Pines bluff which tumbles down to the sea. It was an old timer, a description which applied equally and aptly to both the pilot and the plane. Dad, who loved to chat with people he found interesting, most certainly would have struck up a conversation with the gentleman while he improbably removed the prop from his gas-powered model. Yes, it turns out the old guy's plan was that lacking a true glider, he was prepared to turn the one plane he had on hand into one. There is photographic evidence to indicate that the 'glider' must have done pretty well.



"photographic evidence to indicate that the 'glider' must have done pretty well" (image: Dr. R. Patrick Gannon)

If you have made it this far, there's a question I want to ask you, dear reader, particular if you are local to Torrey Pines: do you remember this elderly gentleman and his equally elderly model? If so, is there anything you can tell

me about him? I would love to know. I'm pretty sure Dad would have extracted all of those details at the time but, sadly, with Dad's passing a couple of years ago, I'll never know for sure. For reasons I am not able to fully explain — which is to say, I don't understand why it matters but it does — I would really like to know.

I know somewhere Dad is looking down from that amazing thermal he caught on his way out of here, and laughing a little at the little puzzle he left behind, and shaking his head a little that I didn't think to ask when he was still here.

Miss ya', Dad.

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