

Midway

The junction of Highland Home Rd. and Ramsey Street is the approximate center of the "Midway" section. The unofficial borders have changed through the years as Banning annexed more land to the west of Sunset Avenue. Lewis Robertson remembers the area being known as "Midway" as early as the 1930s and 1940s.

It can be said that the "Midway" area has been a kind of "buffer zone" between the cities of Banning and Beaumont. Webster's Dictionary defines a "buffer zone" as "a neutral area separating conflicting forces." That may be a somewhat extreme depiction of "Midway" but it does have its own unique history and to this day has characteristics that have a different look and feel than the two communities on its west and east ends. Until Banning annexed this section "Midway" businesses used the Beaumont address of Highway 99, not Ramsey Street.

Phil Thompson, longtime Banning resident and sports coach, remembers Hart's Drive Inn Cafe that was located at 41464 Highway 99 in the 1950s and offered "Shrimp-Fish-Steak-and Chicken." After Hart's closed the property later became Rusty's Building Supply in 1972.

Pat Siva, Phil Thompson and Clayton Rutherford all remember Marco's Restaurant as being one of the best Mexican Restaurants in the area and a popular meeting place for locals. Marco's was located at 41679 Highway 99 and kept the Highway 99 address until about 1981 when the building became J.R.'s Bar and began using a Ramsey Street address.

One local resident remembers a nine-hole public golf course located near Smith Creek. Banning radio station KPAS was once located on the north side of Ramsey in the "Midway" section. The Voyager Inn Motel and Restaurant shows up in the 1969 telephone book at 5981 Ramsey St. There was a feed and grain store located in the building that is now Bear Creek Pottery. The James O'Neill Lumber and Plywood Company was located where the current Bob's Equipment Rentals stands. The Alpine Haus restaurant shows up in 1973 at 6109 W. Ramsey on property that was originally a ranch headquarters when this area was all agricultural. Other residents remember Hickcox Dates, the Ratz Apartments, Mattress City, the Elephant Motel and the Pink Elephant Bar as being at one time in the "Midway" section. The Ratz Apartments, Alpine Haus, Marco's Restaurant/J.R.'s, Hart's Drive Inn, and Voyager Inn are no longer standing.

One colorful character associated with the west end of "Midway" was Hal "Flagpole" Morgan. "Flagpole Hal" had a restaurant business on the southeast corner of Highland Springs and Ramsey and would occasionally climb his roof and flagpole to attract attention and hopefully business. Does anyone remember "Flagpole Hal" or have a photograph of him?

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