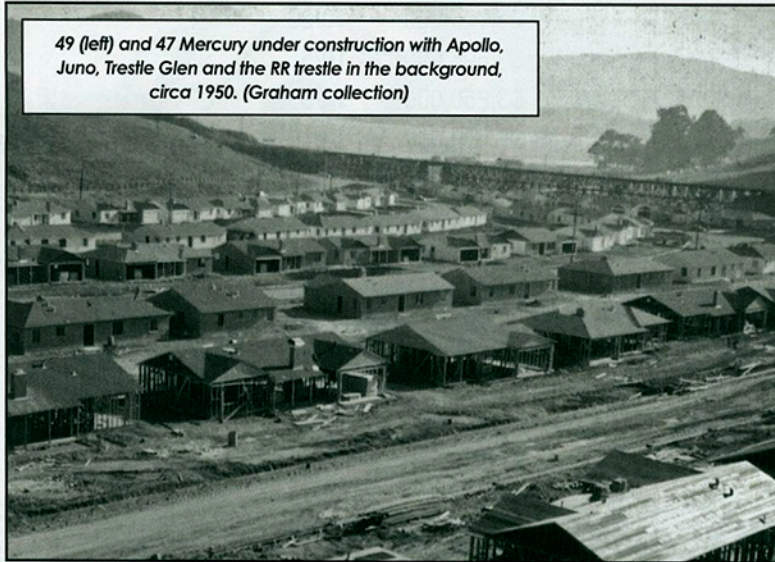


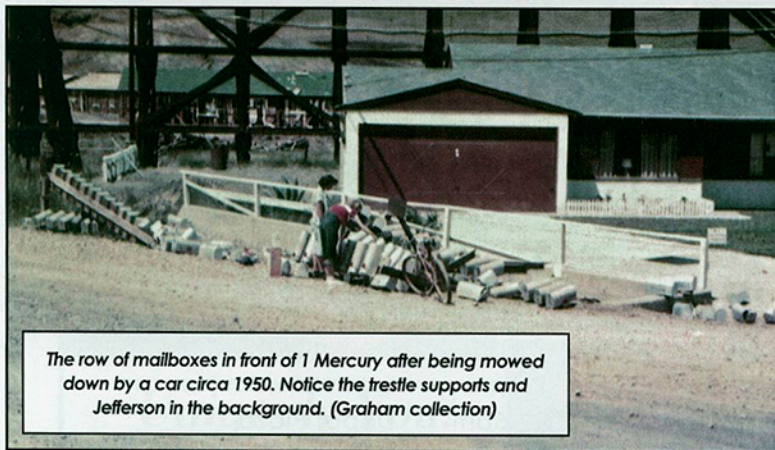
BELVERON: GREAT FOR FAMILIES

By Susan Cluff and Dave Gotz

49 (left) and 47 Mercury under construction with Apollo, Juno, Trestle Glen and the RR trestle in the background, circa 1950. (Graham collection)



The row of mailboxes in front of 1 Mercury after being mowed down by a car circa 1950. Notice the trestle supports and Jefferson in the background. (Graham collection)



Belveron from the air circa 1953. (Marin History Museum)



The 1950s was one of the great real estate booms in American history as returning veterans raced to new suburbs to buy their first homes with government-backed loans. On the Tiburon Peninsula, C. Dudley DeVelbiss announced plans for Belveron Gardens to be built on the low lying pastures either side of the railroad trestle off Tiburon Blvd. at Trestle Glen. DeVelbiss was a successful East Bay contractor, lumber merchant and mill owner. His slogan was "From Tree to Key." He hired a local man, Dan Peacock, to oversee design and construction, using a building process much like an assembly line. Trucks stopped at each site to drop identical, neatly bundled supplies: lumber, pipes, nails and shingles. Then earthmovers appeared to dig for water and sewers. Those were followed by work crews who performed a single phase of construction then moved along.

In March 1950, Marin IJ reported the construction had started and the first 50 of the 250 homes planned would be ready for occupancy by early summer. Billed as "moderate priced, functional homes for the average homeowner," they cost \$7,950 to \$9,450 with just \$50 down for GIs. By mid-May, half of the two and three bedroom ranch homes had been sold. By early 1951, all the residents had moved in, most of them couples and young families. Streets in Belveron East were named for Roman Gods: Mercury, Apollo, Juno and Venus; in Belveron West for historic Americans: Irving, Jefferson and Washington. During the first winter storms, hillsides slid, drains clogged and culverts blocked, backing up dirt, mud and water into some of the new homes. Other drainage and sewer problems were discovered. Belveron homeowners formed an association, petitioned the County, and the contractor made the repairs.

Since the new subdivision didn't qualify for mail home delivery until 1952, Belveron residents picked up their mail from mounted mailboxes at the corner of Trestle Glen (which was one of the social centers of the neighborhood). School boundaries ran right through Belveron homes, with two-thirds of the children in Mill Valley School District, the remainder in Reed Union. Anticipating more development, and even more children, Bel Aire School was built in 1956 at the former Big Reed dairy ranch. When Tiburon incorporated in June 1964, Belveron became part of the town.

Old-time residents remember the "Wonder Years" of the 1960s and 70s - knowing all your neighbors, playing ball on the street, potluck dinners, bookmobile visits, holiday lighting contests, Santa Claus parades. Annual street fairs raised funds for the Belveron mini-park (after the trestle was removed in 1968) and other causes, featuring games, arts and crafts, rummage sales, home-cooked food and cotton candy. Many of the original tract homes have now been rebuilt or remodeled. With its wide level streets, proximity to parks and schools, and easy access to the freeway, Belveron is still a great neighborhood for families.

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