



RUSSIAN RIVER RECORDER

SPRING 2013 • ISSUE 120

An Official Publication of the Healdsburg Museum & Historical Society



I remember . . .



In This Issue

This *Russian River Recorder* is entirely devoted to firsthand accounts of people, places and events in northern Sonoma County. Several of these writers have never been published in the *RRR*. A few of the articles are collaborations between a "Rememberer" and a writing partner. We appreciate all the contributions and hope you enjoy their stories.

"I Remember Aunt Shade" is a tribute to the pioneer women of Tennessee Bishop's Rock Pile Ranch (north of what is today Lake Sonoma) pre-1900. Written by the late Grace Jewell Coddling Cummings in 1982, this article was contributed by descendant, Earle Cummings. June Maher Smith recalls attending Healdsburg Grammar School in the 1920s. Laura (Dawn Sherman) Tietz shares her own sweet fifth grade memories of 1936 Healdsburg - "the best summer of her life" - in "The Reading Tree." Janet Sbragia Pisenti and Darla Williams Budworth share fond memories and histories of the family doctors who practiced locally in the '30s, '40s and '50s. Fern Naber and her daughter, Elaine Naber Pollack, remember businesses and activities in Healdsburg during the 1940s-1960s. Marilyn Marshall Haywood shares glimpses from her childhood in the 1940s and 1950s. "How My Father Found Paradise in

Healdsburg" is a family's heartwarming journey to a Fitch Mountain cabin, presented by Carol Daneri Gerhardt with Gisela Babb.

Mexican immigrant Gil Gonzalez shares his stories of growing up in Dry Creek Valley in the 1940s and '50s, emphasizing the importance of work and play in the lives of the Mexican immigrant families. Vince Colombano, who grew up in Geyserville in the 1920s and '30s, takes us on a memory walk through his childhood town, identifying businesses and buildings with the help of Geyserville historian, Ann Howard. Joe Pelanconi, author of *Geyserville: Fuzzy Old Snapshots* and several other notable local history books, contributes his jovial reflections on Geyserville of the 1950s and 1960s, contrasting it with Geyserville of today. In 1992, June Maher Smith interviewed her now-deceased uncle, Fred Mason. That oral history provides a close-up historic view of "The Geysers and the Mercury Mines," describing Fred's teenage dream job at The Geysers in 1920.

Sincerely,
Holly Hoods, Curator



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Mary Margaret "Shade" Bishop Cannon, suffragist, with daughters Margaret, age 3 and Eleanor Cannon, age 11

I Remember Aunt Shade

by Grace Jewell Codding Cummings, November 13, 1982

In 1938, I drove with my great aunt from Santa Rosa to Berkeley. It took several hours, as we missed the ferry at Pt. San Quentin which would take us to the Richmond side of the San Francisco Bay. My aunt was my grandmother's sister. We called her "Aunt Shade," but her name was Mary Margaret Bishop before her marriage [to Richard Cannon.] She was born about 1865 on the Rock Pile Ranch in northwest Sonoma County. Shade was one of the four daughters of Tennessee C. Bishop, who settled in the area about 1858 after marrying Eliza Smith in Sonoma. He later became Sheriff of the County and lived in Santa Rosa. My mother has written about him in Notes, but this is about my visit with Aunt Shade during that long trip to Santa Rosa.

I asked about her youth on the isolated ranch which [was] flooded by the Warm Springs Dam Lake Sonoma. She told the tale of selling her little sister to the Indians. It seems the Sacramento Valley Indians each year made the trip to the Coast to fish and trade with the tribal group who lived in the Stewarts Point area. They travelled in family groups, and crossed the ranch, and Aunt Shade said her mother always offered cool well water. This one morning Aunt

Shade and her two brothers and one sister were playing not far from the house. They were supposed to look after the baby, who was in a homemade type of playpen, but the little sister had been fussy and spoiled their game. When the Indians came past, they stopped and admired the baby. One squaw picked her up and she immediately stopped crying. The children thought this was fine and asked her if she didn't want to keep her. The woman said, "Yes!" They immediately handed her the baby's blanket and toy and accepted a sack of acorn flour, and went back to their play.

At noon great-grandmother called the children for dinner. When they arrived without the baby she questioned them and they reported on the fine trade they had made! Mrs. Bishop had to ring the ranch bell and call great-grandfather in from the lower hay field where he had taken his lunch so as not to interrupt his day. When he came back to the house and heard the story, he saddled up his horse and took off after the Indians. They reluctantly returned the baby and accepted their bag of meal.

Aunt Shade said she and her siblings were always a wild bunch. She was sorry that her mother

died in 1870, leaving six young children.

Aunt Shade told me that both her mother and father had crossed the plains from the St. Joseph, Missouri area. Eliza came with her father and brother, her mother having died just before the start of the trip west, but there were older half sisters by their father's former marriage who kept an eye on them, though they had husbands and children of their own in the wagon train. Eliza's father placed her in the Dominican convent, which was then in Benicia, after his arrival in California. He returned to the east with a brother to bring a herd of dairy cattle to this coast. He died on the return trip – from the bite of a Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever tick – and his brother completed the journey, successfully sold the cattle in Sonoma, and turned Eliza's share over to a Mr. Shattock, who was her guardian.

In the Convent with Eliza were three of the [Mariano] Vallejo girls, and on one holiday, the convent girls were all invited with two sisters in charge to a fiesta in Sonoma. They were all lodged in the Blue Wing Inn, which is directly across the street from the Mission. The building still stands as I write this in 1982, and the low balcony across the front and the big pepper tree in the patio behind, appear just as they did in Aunt Shade's story.



Tennessee Carter Bishop, 1880

Her story was that Eliza had met Tennessee Bishop on the trip west when he had been a hunter for the wagon train – and this may be true, because he tells that he came across alone in his late teens, and had hired on as a hunter for a group of families moving West. But the story goes that Eliza and “Tenny” met again at the fiesta and on the third day he rode his horse under the balcony of the Blue Wing Inn and she climbed down on the back of his horse, and they eloped. My mother was not so sure – she

wondered if Tennessee had not heard that she was an heiress with \$50,000 and that could be of great assistance to a young carpenter! But they were married and lived in Sonoma for two years.

Of course I asked, “What happened next?” Her next story made me think that there may have been some truth in Mother's suggestion that it might not have been love at first sight! The young couple rented a house in Sonoma. She shortly had a baby, and he saw that she had good care and a fine Negro woman to help her with baby and home. But he spent most of his time at the local hotel and bar (which are still in Sonoma on the square), playing cards for very large stakes. One evening when the baby was under a year old, someone came to the house and told Mrs. Bishop that her husband had not returned for dinner because he had been gambling all day and for very large stakes, and that he had just put the deed to their house on the table for his bid, as he had run out money! Now Eliza didn't hesitate. She told the housekeeper to hitch up the wagon, dress the baby and herself warmly, and to meet her at the Hotel Bar on the Plaza – and she took off to walk to town.

When she arrived she asked for Tennessee Bishop and was told that he was in the back room, but women were not allowed. She did not stop, she walked right through the door, up to the gaming table where six or seven men sat, including her husband. She did not say a word, but picked up her skirt and swept all the money – and the deed to her home – into her skirt, and walked out. Apparently there was a moment of shocked hush, and then Tenny took after her calling that she couldn't do that to them. She didn't say a word, but climbed into the buggy which her maid had waiting outside with the baby aboard. And she beat Tenny off with buggy whip as she drove out to Sonoma and to the Kenwood area where her guardian lived.

We do not know just what happened next, but according to the *Sonoma County History* of 1880, he married Eliza May 3, 1855 and bought a farm, which he sold in 1857. In May, 1858 he left for the northern part of the County, going into the mountains and locating on what is now know as the Rock Pile Ranch. He remained there for seven years and engaged in cattle raising, when he sold his ranch and bought a farm at the head of Dry Creek Valley. So it seems to bear out Aunt Shade's much more colorful story. Apparently he was a good boy from then on.



June Maher Smith and Catherine Hearing Curtis at pre-grammar school age and June Smith today

Healdsburg Grammar School

by June Smith

The southern half of the block bounded by East, Tucker, Fitch and Matheson Streets has been the site of a schoolhouse since the mid-1800s. Some of that site is still being used for education by St. John's Catholic School today.



Healdsburg Grammar School, 1930s

The three story brick and stone elementary school was built in 1911. It had a very imposing entrance facing Tucker Street. Behind the glass front doors was a flight of stairs that led to the second story principal's office and a couple of classrooms. The other classrooms were on the third floor. The school nurse and custodian had their offices in the basement.

As Healdsburg's elementary school-age population grew, two one-story wings were added. The boys' wing was on the west side and the girls' wing was on the east.

There were no fences or lawns on the property, but there were locust trees surrounding it on three sides. When the bell rang to end recess, the boys and girls lined up to enter the building on the appropriate side.

The east wing housed the kindergarten room where Miss Springer was my teacher. Also in that wing was Miss Schwab's room (my first grade teacher) and Miss Field's room. She was stuck with me and my classmates for three years - second, third and fourth grades.

The west wing housed our auditorium/gymnasium. Every year our music teacher, Mrs. Keesling, produced an "operetta" featuring her students. Our mothers made our crêpe paper costumes.

Mrs. Keesling's classroom was on the south side of this wing. Once a week we went to that room to learn songs. I remember we had fun singing "My Grandfather's Clock."

There were seats upstairs on three sides of the auditorium so we could watch basketball games. Plenty of fun was available outside on the slide, see-saw and three different kid-powered merry-go-rounds. There were also bars and rings which encouraged more athletic activities.



Laura Tietz in 5th grade...



and today

The Reading Tree

by Laura (Dawn Sherman) Tietz

My family moved to Healdsburg in the early summer of 1936 and rented a lovely little house on Tucker Street. After some squabbling, my brother (2 years older) got the upstairs back bedroom and I was pleased to move into the one upstairs facing front.



Our house on Tucker St.

To my utter joy (and without my parents' knowledge), I found that I could wiggle out through the bottom of the small double-hung window, slide carefully on my bottom to the edge of the sloping roof and just manage to step onto a major branch of the very leafy tree in the front yard. I found I could settle into the crotch, leaning comfortably against the trunk, with my foot stretched along the branch. Not only was I nearly invisible, but the tree was loaded with ripe apples. I had found my perfect hideaway.

The next wonderful happening was when I discovered the Carnegie Library a few blocks away. I walked in at the lower level side door, gazed around the shelves full of children's books and "moved in," spiritually. I immediately got a library card, discovered the Oz books, and became a regular visitor. Thus began what I now look back upon as the best summer of my life.

I can't remember how much time went by before my parents spotted me hidden in the tree, eating an apple, devouring the first Oz book. Somehow, they decided to let me get away with it--bless them.

In September when school began, I became a happy 5th grader with a wonderful teacher, Evelyn Mayes. I often stopped in at the library after school to explore the shelves.

My family left Healdsburg in the early spring when my father got a job managing a summer resort in a redwood grove north of Laytonville. I finished the 5th grade in a one-room school house with 13 students from 1st to 8th grade and one teacher. As I remember, we sang a lot of songs, but did no arithmetic.

Now decades later, I am once again a Healdsburg resident. The magical apple tree is long gone, but the house on Tucker Street remains...as do the memories of my perfect summer in the Reading Tree.



Dr. J. Walter Seawell



Dr. Donovan C. Oakleaf



Dr. Kenneth J. Dunlavy

Memories of Our Family Doctors, Doctors Seawell, Oakleaf, and Dunlavy

by Janet Sbragia Pisenti and Darla Williams Budworth

Inspired by Ann Howard's recent article on the history of Dr. Frank Sohler and Dr. James Walter Seawell in Geyserville, we began to reminisce about our own doctors who practiced in Healdsburg. It appears that we were both delivered by Dr. Seawell at the old Healdsburg General Hospital on Johnson Street, still in existence, but not as a hospital. Dr. Seawell, at one time, had his offices on the main street and was the first to install an x-ray machine. During the mid to late 1800s, a man named Dr. John Sewell also practiced in Healdsburg, different spelling, but both names pronounced the same. Dr. Sewell passed away in 1888.

Prior to Healdsburg having medical facilities called hospitals, various doctors' homes and medical offices called sanitariums served that purpose. For instance, June Maher Smith was born in the two-story home of Dr. Morse on Matheson Street, across from the Healdsburg Museum. Barbara Rosenberg Ashley was born in Dr. J.C. Condit's sanitarium on West Street (or "Healdsburg Avenue") above Chaney's candy store. Catherine Hearing Curtis was born in the east wing of Dr. James Walter Seawell's home, now the Camellia Inn at 211 North Street.

Darla Williams Budworth was born prematurely on August 26, 1936 to Christine and

Henry "Cotton" Williams in the Healdsburg General Hospital on Johnson Street. She still has the bill, all itemized and ending up with the grand sum of \$38! That might have been a decent amount then, but incredible in these times. Her birth did involve surgery and the recuperation period was 12 days, certainly not uncommon, since most mothers spent seven to ten days in the hospital at that time.



Darla Williams in the arms of nurse and director Nercilla Ames Jones (Harlan) at the old Healdsburg General Hospital. Photo taken in the Solarium three days after her birth, 1936.

In December of that year, 1936, Janet's mother, Trisa Rochioli Sbragia, was giving birth at that same hospital. Dr. James Walter Seawell was the attending doctor and Mrs. Nercilla Jones was the nurse. She spent three days in labor, while Sam Giovannoni, the well-known realtor in town, was recuperating from surgery in a room across the hall. There was no maternity ward. He apparently had enough of listening to her mother and was greatly relieved, he said, when Janet finally arrived on December 8. Her mother was so relieved that Janet became an only child!

A year later, Dr. J. Walter Seawell died and a multitude of townspeople attended his funeral, including 18 nurses in their starched white uniforms. All businesses were closed for an hour before noon and the flag on the City Hall stood at half mast all day for the man who had been the city health officer for the past 30 years. He was a charter member of the Kiwanis Club and was honored by its members and other local, Bay Area, and state medical and governmental dignitaries.

During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, five doctors came to town: Dr. Donovan C. Oakleaf, Dr. Kenneth J. Dunlavy, Dr. Emerson Meyer, Dr. D. Testa, and Dr. Clinton Robinson.

Donovan "Don" Oakleaf – a Colorado Native

Don Oakleaf was born in 1903 in Pueblo, Colorado. He graduated from Colorado State Medical College in 1930 and interned at French Hospital in San Francisco. After completing her nursing degree, the future Mrs. Oakleaf, Ethel Marie Chubb, arrived in San Francisco, anxious to marry her college sweetheart. She tells the story best in the *Healdsburg Tribune* article by Gabe Fraire, called "A Look Back by the Doctor's Wife."

"While Don was finishing up his medical training in San Francisco, there was a nurse who worked with him that was from Boonville. She talked Don into going up to Boonville to check it out. Boonville was in need of a doctor. Don went up there, but he felt that was too far out, so he left Boonville and was driving through Cloverdale, where he stopped at the local pharmacy. The pharmacist told him that the town doctor was going to retire. Don checked into it and decided it would be a good move to set up his first practice in Cloverdale."

[The family was quite comfortable in their Cloverdale residence from 1931 to 1938, and the family grew with the birth of two daughters: Ruth Elaine Oakleaf (Harrington) and Barbara Jean Oakleaf (Anderson).]

"It was Dr. Seawell's wife who asked Don to move to Healdsburg from Cloverdale after Dr. Seawell had passed away. Since the hospital was in Healdsburg, Don had been traveling down here on a regular basis. He knew Dr. Seawell pretty well because he had offered to help Don by looking in on some of Don's patients at the hospital so Don wouldn't have to make the trip.

When Don took over Dr. Seawell's practice, the office was upstairs above the drug store (Brown-Wolfe Drug Store) on the corner of Matheson and Healdsburg Avenue, which was still "West Street." My husband didn't like the idea of stairs and he contemplated the idea of putting in an elevator. Eventually, he moved his office to Lincoln and Center Streets, right behind where the old hospital used to be. And we bought a house there on the corner of Lincoln and Healdsburg Avenue. We had the whole lot all the way back to where Doctors Wellock, Grace and Neal have their offices now. And we built a swimming pool behind the house.

One day while eating, we heard this sound, but couldn't figure out what it was. Well, when Don went out to get in his car, there it was sitting in the pool. The brakes must have slipped and the car rolled down the hill and right into the pool. The pool was empty at the time and the car sat right there as perfect as if it had been placed there intentionally. It was a real event getting that car out."

The Oakleaf family continued to grow with the birth of a son, named after his father, Donovan Oakleaf, and was always called "Van." He and his sisters all attended Healdsburg Elementary and High School. That is when many of us shared their friendship – at school, at church, and sometimes at their lovely home.

Mrs. Oakleaf added that during his many years of practice, Dr. Oakleaf never left the phone uncovered. "We always had our meals interrupted, so we started this little tradition. Whenever Don would come home, the children would say in unison,

'Welcome home, Daddy!' It got so even when our children had friends over, they, too, would sing 'Welcome home, Daddy!' Some of them even carried on the tradition with their own fathers."



Dr. and Mrs. Ethel Oakleaf and their family: Ruth Elaine, Barbara Jean, or "Jeanie," and Van Oakleaf

Treating Patients – Delivering Babies

Many years were spent by Dr. Oakleaf at the hospital and his new office, called the Oakleaf Medical Building. It had 2,500 square feet of office space for Dr. Oakleaf and dentist Dr. P.L. Cadosi.



Dr. Oakleaf

The hospital on Johnson Street had replaced the first hospital, the former T.S. Merchant home, built on the same site. In 1918, Dr. F.E. Sohler purchased the Dr. J.C. Condit medical practice and in 1920, his sanitarium and Dr. Seawell's sanitarium were combined into one in the T.S. Merchant home, with the help of Nercilla Ames Jones (Harlan) and her husband, Charles Jones. It became the

Healdsburg General Hospital. Less than 10 years later, it was partially destroyed by fire and the new Healdsburg General Hospital was built in its place, financed by a successful community fund drive.

The new hospital was a one-level structure, larger and more modern, with the beginnings of all the proper rooms for a medical facility that one could find anywhere. It included 10 private rooms, two-bed wards, surgery room, delivery room, nurse's room, office, solarium, waiting room, kitchen and dining room, a small nursery, and an emergency ambulance entrance. Nercilla Jones was hired as Director.

On June 25, 1944, Nercilla married Ellis Bedell Harlan and from then on was called Nercilla Harlan. Unfortunately, Ellis died in December of that year while boating. He was 46 years old and had served as a Healdsburg councilman. Nercilla continued on with her duties at the hospital and at the high school.

Healdsburg General Hospital ceased to operate as such after 43 years, when the new Healdsburg District Hospital at 1375 University Street was completed in January, 1972.

Dr. Oakleaf died at age 70 on January 3, 1974, in a peaceful setting at his second home in a 50-acre rural part of Cloverdale. In his 40 years of medical practice, his obituary related, Dr. Oakleaf was highly regarded as a reliable family doctor and community servant. Although he may not have been in the forefront in civic affairs, Dr. Oakleaf could be counted upon when there was a job to be done. He was particularly active in the Federated Church, which he joined in 1938. He was chairman of the church council and finance committee for many years. Dr. and Mrs. Oakleaf sponsored an entire room for the fellowship hall. It is quite likely that he delivered more babies in Healdsburg than any other physician in his long medical career. Included in the article were his involvements in the Kiwanis Club, Sonoma County and American Medical Associations, Cloverdale Rotary Club, Sotoyome Lodge 123, F&A.M. and Chapter 82, Order of Eastern Star.

Doreene Zanzi, a longtime Museum volunteer, was also born in the Healdsburg General Hospital. She is the daughter of Ray and Florence Ames White. Florence and Nercilla Ames Harlan were sisters. Doreene worked in Dr. Oakleaf's office for five years and thought he was a very good doctor.

She also recalled that he had earned a veterinary degree prior to attaining his other medical degree.

Ethel Marie Oakleaf enjoyed the good life she had in Healdsburg. She was known for her untiring aid to her church, community and family. She died in Healdsburg in January, 1996.

Dr. Kenneth J. Dunlavy

Kenneth J. Dunlavy was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1905, but his parents moved two months later to Hoehne, Colorado, where most of his growing-up years took place. He was one of six children. The family owned a merchandise store and his father served as county treasurer. Kenneth's interest in medicine may have stemmed from breaking his arm in gymnastics at age 12 and showing interest in the doctor's work on his arm.

Dr. Dunlavy received an A.B. degree at the University of Colorado and received his M.D. from the University Medical School in Denver, specializing in gynecology and obstetrics. He served his internship at the Southern Pacific Railroad Hospital in San Francisco.



Dr. Kenneth Dunlavy with his wife, Ruth Morten Dunlavy, in a happy pose taken near the giant feline statue in the town of Los Gatos, California.

"It was here that he met my mother," related his daughter Karen. "They were not supposed to get married, since they worked for the same company, so they ran away to Guerneville in 1933 and got married there! Then they had a second marriage ceremony so

as to include all their friends. Coincidentally, when I finally decided to train in the medical field, I trained at Med-Tech at Southern Pacific Hospital. When I mentioned my name to an elderly lady there, she said 'Dunlavy? Dunlavy? An intern here?' I replied that he had and she said, 'He wore an orange tie on St. Patrick's Day!' Well, I guess he was a bit of a rabble-rouser."

Dr. Dunlavy did postgraduate surgical studies at Cook County Hospital, Chicago and then answered the call to do medical work with a fishing company in Alaska, called Alaska Packers, where he also treated the Eskimos. Three of his old photo albums were filled with photos he took of all the experiences he enjoyed. Besides his love of coin and stamp collecting, he loved photography and was explicit in describing every person in every photo. What followed was 18 months as medical examiner for the Southern Pacific Railroad and holding a surgical residency in Wichita Falls, Texas.



Dr. Dunlavy is sitting between his friends with his camera always with him, a man who certainly enjoyed life. Every experience was recorded with great care.

In 1935, Dr. Kenneth Dunlavy began his practice in the Kruse Building in Healdsburg. What brought him to Healdsburg? His daughter thought it might be his meeting of Dr. Donovan Oakleaf. In 1939, he moved into his own medico-dental building at 314-316 Matheson Street. The family grew with the addition of Karen Ruth Dunlavy (Bosworth), born on June 2, 1940, and Norman Morten Dunlavy, born on September 4, 1942.

Two years later, in October, 1942, Dr. Dunlavy enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He received his commission as a lieutenant and entered active duty at Treasure Island, followed by a variety of titles and assignments, including a return to his alma mater and

attending to 2,000 service personnel stationed there. The next year, he was sent to Guam to the native village of Yona, then to the Base Hospital, always taking care of the wounded or the native people. His camera was again put to good use. He returned home after the war ended and resumed his practice.

The Dunlavy home on Grove Street was set back from the street with a long driveway. "My father loved fast cars and he would back out of that driveway without looking right or left. Look out! He always loved Oldsmobiles and that's all he ever drove. I remember him arriving home after delivering a baby and Norm and I sitting at the top of the stairs, waiting to see if it had been a boy or girl, since we had made a bet before he left."

Karen also added her memories of how their daily lives were interrupted at times when a car would pull into that long driveway and they'd say, "Would you take a look at this!"



The Dunlavy family at home includes, left to right: Norman, Mom Ruth, Karen, and Dad Ken.

Karen is married to Harry Bosworth and Norm is married to Roselee "Peachie" Demostene. They are a well known part of the Healdsburg and Geyserville communities. There are also six grandchildren in the family.

Dr. Kenneth J. Dunlavy died on November 22, 1972 and Ruth died in 1998 at age 93. He treated many of Healdsburg's citizens and those from the outlying communities and is well remembered. According to his daughter, he is also remembered for telling sometimes "dirty" stories, even to the nuns of St. John's School!

Dr. Testa – Dr. Robinson – Dr. Meyer

The World War II years saw changes in the lives of many doctors. "Doctors left to go to war and doctors came to replace them," recalled Pat Agostini McCracken, Museum volunteer. She was delivered by Dr. Dunlavy and when he left town, Dr. D. Testa became her doctor. He had just completed his medical training at the County Hospital in Santa Rosa and had specialized in allergies. Darla recalled that her father was one of his patients, and the day after surgery, young Dr. Testa was called up for duty in the U.S. Army. He left her father in the hospital and his other patients.

Fortunately, in 1945, Dr. Clinton Robinson moved to Healdsburg. Dr. Robinson's office was located on Matheson Street across from the Plaza and he took on most of Dr. Testa's patients and continued to be one of Healdsburg's doctors for many years. He and his wife, Addie, enjoyed their family life with the addition of five children: Nancy, Diane, Clint, Jr., Jane, and Jan. Dr. Robinson retired in 1971 and returned to Aptos in the Santa Cruz area, where he eventually passed away in 1989.

Dr. Emerson L. Meyer arrived in 1940. He was a graduate of the University of Minnesota Medical School and was associated with Dr. Dunlavy. Dr. and Mrs. Addie Marie (Grant) Meyer's family included two children, Ann and Jim.

The Healdsburg General Hospital on Johnson Street eventually ended up in the hands of Dr. Emerson Meyer, Dr. Clinton Robinson, and Dr. Frank Sohler, Jr. It was sold by them to Chanco Medical and Electronics Enterprises.

Darla Williams Budworth remembered doctors coming at any time of the day or night if you needed them in those days.

Even though Healdsburg has always been a small town, through good times and bad, it has always been protected by its policemen and firemen, its doctors, hospitals, and ambulances...a very good place to live.

Sources:

Healdsburg Museum Archives, 2013

Healdsburg Tribune, 1930s-1980s

Merrie-Anna, a publication of USN Base Hospital No. 18, Nov. 18, 1945

The Sonoma County Physician

Barbara Oakleaf Anderson, 2013

Karen Dunlavy Bosworth, 2013



Fern Naber, 1955



Elaine Naber, 1956

I Remember When...

by Fern Naber and her daughter, Elaine Naber Pollock

Fern Naber was a young bride when she and her husband, Fred, moved to Healdsburg in 1943. All four of their children were born and raised here. Fern offers some of her remembrances followed by those of her daughter, Elaine.

- West Street (now Healdsburg Avenue) was the 101 Highway.



Mallon's Ice Cream Wagon

- Mr. Mallon's horse drawn ice cream truck came down residential streets.
- You could buy a root beer popsicle for 5 cents at the University Street Grocery.
- Gilbert Lumber (later A. F. Stevens Lumber Co.) was located where the Exchange Bank is now.
- The Future Farmers Fair was on Center St.
- Ned's Beefburgers was on Center St. where the Raven Theater is now.

- Purity grocery store was on the southwest corner of North and Center Streets.
- Grocery stores were where CVS is now – Brice, Molsberry and the Longs Drugs.



Merryland Auto Camp

- The Healdsburg Concrete Pipe Company was across the road from the Merryland Auto Camp.
- The Merryland Auto Camp (now Healdsburg Veterans Memorial Beach Park) had a gas station, small store and several cabins.
- The leather shop was diagonally across the street from the Plaza.

- The Prescription Center was where Shelton's is now.
- Biasotti Brothers Grocery was on Center St.



Home Bakery, 1964

- Home Bakery was on the southeast corner of North and Center streets.
- Dr. Rose had his office on West St. on the second floor across from the Plaza.
- There were frozen food lockers on Center St. below Masonic Hall.
- Coast to Coast was in the Mitchell shopping Center south of CVS.



J. Lee Hoy Sanitary Dairy

- We used to get an early morning delivery of bottled milk, cottage cheese, cream, etc. delivered to our doorstep.
- We could walk in an underground water pipe from the ball park to the Russian River.

- We could walk to the lumber yard with our wagon and fill it up with scrap lumber, at no cost, and then go home and pound nails and build wonderful wooden toys.



Iversens Service Station

- We got gas at 'service stations' and they also would give us free knives or tumblers with fill-ups. They also would wash our windshields and check our oil and tire pressure for free.
- I used to peddle the Healdsburg Tribune on Thursday mornings before school. I sold them for 10 cents, and got to keep a nickel. I used to get 15 cent tips from some of my best clients.



J.C. Penney, 1959

- J. C. Penney was on the southwest corner of Healdsburg Ave. and North St. The clerk put your money in a tube that shot down the line to the cash register. Then your change went into the tube and was sent back upstairs.



Marilyn Marshall Haywood, age 6, pre-swimming lessons

My Memories of Healdsburg

by Marilyn Marshall Haywood

Being born and raised here, I have seen many changes in our little town. We were known as the "Buckle of the Prune Belt," and now there are very few prune trees and many vineyards.

One of my earliest memories is going with Mr. [Elisha] Green to wind up the clock at the Preston Church. We lived in a house on Johnson Street. His sister, Mrs. [Stella] Peckham, was a neighbor, and Mr. Green lived with her. [Mr. Green was the caretaker of the Preston Church near Cloverdale.]

In those days there were neighborhood markets. The University Street store was located just north of Tucker Street, but before Matheson Street. It was owned by the Smead family. The College Street store was located just north of Piper Street. The Powell Avenue store was the longest lasting neighborhood store. It was owned by Roy Davenport. When he retired Adam Campbell took over.



Swimming lessons at Memorial Beach, 1950s

During the hot summers a lot of us took

swimming lessons at Memorial Beach. In the 1950s, there were only one or two private pools here in Healdsburg. Our mothers would take us to have our lessons. Morris Ruby was the Red Cross teacher. During the school year he was a teacher at Healdsburg Elementary School. He was so patient with me. I was very scared of the water and wouldn't put my face in the water. Needless to say, I never learned to swim!



*Flood of 1955 looking north on West St., Healdsburg
(Alexander's Bakery is located where Costeaux is today.)*

The flood of 1955 was quite something. The water was knee-deep on Healdsburg Avenue, which was called West Street in those days.

The library was located where the Museum is today. The librarian was very cranky. We, as young people, did not make her job any easier. We were loud and disrespectful. Shame on us!

In the 1950s there were no upscale restaurants in Healdsburg. Our parents did not like us going to Santa Rosa on Courtesy Dance or Prom nights. They approved that we go to Marico's, which is Cricklewood today.



Angelo Daneri, 1947



Carol Daneri, 1949

How My Father Found Paradise in Healdsburg

by his daughter, Carol Daneri Gerhardt (with Gisela Babb)

My father's family came from a little mountain town above Chiavari, Italy. In 1909 they immigrated to the United States and settled in the North Beach area of San Francisco with family who had arrived before them. Times were hard for father and his family. They only spoke Italian, but my father and his siblings later learned English in school. His mother, Maria Daneri, my grandmother, never did learn to speak English.



Maria Daneri "Nonie"

My grandmother got a job working for the Cuneo family who had a summer home in Healdsburg. The Cuneos were related to the Daneris and back then it was common to have such a "family

arrangement." The Cuneo house was located on Grant Avenue in what is now known as Giorgio's Restaurant. My grandmother was the Cuneos' housekeeper and cook. Her job took her away from her family for the entire summer. My father and his siblings were taken care of by extended family back in San Francisco. In 1922, my father was 13 years old, and really missing his mother who was in Healdsburg for the summer, working at the Cuneos'. He decided to visit his mother. So his friend Horace Gianino and he took a ferry over to the Larkspur area and then hopped a freight train to Healdsburg. He used to tell me, "We were like two hobos." Amazingly, though he didn't know where his mother was, he was able to locate her. Though she was happy to see him, she told him, "You can't stay here with me, this is my employer." So, he and Horace started walking down the road with their knapsacks on their backs, wondering where they should go. After a few miles, a Deputy Sheriff stopped them and asked, "Where are you two young men going?" They told him their situation and the deputy told them to get into his car and he would take them to a place where they could camp. He took them around Fitch Mountain, which at that time was just a dirt

road, until he came to Orchard Lane (now Redwood Drive.) It was no more than a wide, dusty path. The deputy told them, "If you two fellows walk to the end of this lane, you can live off the land and river for as long as you like." My father and his friend walked to the end of the road and my father said they found "the beautiful Russian River." They camped there for almost a month and had the time of their lives. My father told me that at that time there was only one house on the road, which was known as the Barkins' place. The house is still there, which is now 1948 Redwood Drive.

Fast forward 23 years to August 1945. WWII had just ended. My father is 36 years old and married to my beautiful mother, Rosana. They have three little girls and my father has his own lathe and plastering business in San Francisco. Though busy and successful in career and family, my father never forgot those incredible weeks he spent on the Russian River in Healdsburg back in 1922 when he was a 13-year old boy. Every Sunday, from August 1945 through February 1946, my parents would put us girls in the backseat of their car and drive up to Healdsburg. We would drive all over Healdsburg looking for the place where my father had camped back in 1922. Then one cold, rainy Sunday in February, we found Orchard Lane. We drove down almost to the end of the road, where he had camped all those years ago, and my father noticed there was house that was being built and it had a "For Sale" sign on it. My father was ecstatic! He found out the owner lived on 19th Avenue in San Francisco and worked for my father. The gentlemen couldn't afford to finish the house. My father bought the house from him for \$1,800.



The Daneri family (Jean, Angelo, Claire, Rosana and Carol), 1949

Starting in 1946, our family spent every weekend and summer at the house in Healdsburg, which my parents named "The Owl's Roost." During the week in the summer, my father would go back to San Francisco to work, but my mother and sisters would stay behind in Healdsburg. All of us forged long, lasting friendships from our weekends and summers in Healdsburg.



The Owl's Roost, 1950

When my sisters and I were dating we would invite our boyfriends to come visit us at the Owl's Roost as a final test to know if we should marry them. If they were "River Fakers," people who didn't like the Russian River area, we would send them on their way and never go out with them again.

Our family still owns the Owl's Roost. It now has a completed kitchen and bathroom. We dug out under the house to build a garage, which is nice to have on those hot summer days.

Though one lives in Florida, the other in Texas, and the last resides right here in Healdsburg, the three daughters of Angelo and Rosana Daneri still gather every summer at the Owl's Roost with their husbands, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They tell the story of a 13-year old boy who, in the summer of 1922, missed his mother, and not only found her, but found Healdsburg, too.

We all love our piece of paradise that our mother and father called the Owl's Roost and we are grateful for the legacy our parents left behind on Redwood Drive in Healdsburg, California.



Grandfather (Abuelo) Jose Gonzalez, Jessie Gonzalez, Gil Gonzalez, Grandmother (Abuelita) Antonina Sanchez Gonzalez, Martha Gonzalez, Bernardina Vasquez Gonzalez; friends Dora and Leonardo Chavez and Don Francisco, Dry Creek Valley, early 1950s

My Story *by Gil Gonzalez*

I was born in Mexico City in 1941. As I remember life in Mexico was very good. My dad made a very good living so we enjoyed a good life. We had a housekeeper and a nanny and so we pretty much had a great time.

My Dad joined the Bracero program in 1943 when there was a shortage of men in the U.S. because of the war. Men from Mexico were given a work visa to work in the United States. My father, being fluent in English, was an interpreter in Ohio for the Ohio railroad. He would leave for six months at a time, come home for a few weeks, then return to Ohio.

In 1946 he left the Bracero program and returned to Mexico and worked in Mexico City building safes. My grandparents had immigrated to the U.S. and were living in Healdsburg, working at a ranch owned by Harold Phillips. My dad decided that we as a family would have a much better life in the U.S., so in March of 1946 Mr. Phillips sponsored my father and our family to live in Healdsburg. My parents and four of us children, Martha, Carmen, José, and I arrived in Healdsburg April 1st 1946. We

have always joked about it, saying "April fools, we are here." When we arrived in Healdsburg the prune season was about to start. It is funny, school would start two weeks later so the prunes would all get picked. To this day the school season starts two weeks late even though it is all grapes now. Since Martha and I were the oldest, we always had to pick the sunny side of the tree, dump the cans to fill the boxes and stack and mark the boxes. We got paid .50 a box, so it took a lot of boxes to make any money. On the sunny side of the tree the prunes were always soft and it took forever to fill the stupid cans.

When we were home we played all kinds of games. Our favorite was "Kick the Can." We would put a can in the field and hide. When we were found, we had to run to the can and kick it. If we kicked before the one looking for us did, we were home free, otherwise we were out of the game. Years later Martha and I were reminiscing, and I told her how I was never found and how good I was at hiding. She told me they never looked for me, ha ha... There was a hedge of poison oak behind the house that was at

least ten feet tall and a quarter mile long. Not knowing it was poisonous we built a fort in it. Martha would take the small fresh leaves from the poison oak and make a salad for us. As a result we all grew up immune to poison oak.

On Saturdays mom and dad would go grocery shopping, and as always, the whole family would go. We didn't have a car so dad would take the ranch truck with all of us in back. He would give Martha, Carmen and me each 50 cents.

To go to the movies in those days 50 cents would get us into the show. We saw two movies, a cartoon and a news reel and still had enough for a soda, popcorn and a hotdog. Nowadays if a kid takes his girl to a movie it will cost him close to \$30.00; a small Coke and small popcorn will cost him \$11.00.

After the movies we would meet our folks at the [Plaza] park for the Saturday concert. There was one every weekend all summer. All the groceries would be in the back. No one ever bothered them. There were always many trucks with groceries and stuff and they were always safe. In those days everyone respected other people's property.

When we arrived in Healdsburg there were very few [other Mexican] families. There were the Navarro, Viramontes, Chavez, Guzman, Diaz, Martinez, Compian, Savala, Lara and Camacho families. We quickly sought each other out and became close friends. There was always a party at one of our houses. We celebrated all the birthdays and holidays together. During the fourteen days of Christmas there would be a Christmas cake. Inside the cake was a small ceramic Christ child. The family whose piece had the statue would host the next party. The ladies would cook all day and the men would go to work. After work the party would start. It was always great fun and all the families would be there.

Mr. Chavez had the only record player. He took it to all the parties, but since it was his, he wouldn't let anyone else touch it. All he ever played was waltzes. My dad finally bought a record player. It was a huge record/radio player. I remember it was about three feet wide and five feet high. It took two men to lift it into the truck. Now everybody smiled. Now they could listen and dance to the music they wanted to. At first Mr. Chavez was mad, but soon when he saw how much fun everybody was having, he came around and joined the festivities. Mr. Viramontes lived on Dry Creek Road. Across the

road from his house he owned a big barn. That was where he held the parties. One time, we were all upstairs partying, there were so many people that the floor started giving way and sagging. My dad told everyone to stand by an outside wall. He and some men ran downstairs and quickly put some posts under the floor for support. Someone laughed and said "Nothing can stop us from partying." The dance went on even though the floor was still bouncing up and down.



Don Schmidt and father-in-law Harold Phillips at work at prune grader at Phillips ranch in Dry Creek Valley. Mr. Gonzalez in background, 1960s

In the spring Dad would plant about an acre of corn. In August when it was ready for corn on the cob, Dad would take a week's vacation. The folks would invite all kinds of friends and relatives, some from as far as Texas. Everyone always looked forward to the famous corn feeds. They would camp out in my grandfather's yard and there was a party every night. Dad played the guitar, violin and the accordion; my granddad played the accordion; and there were a lot of guests that played an instrument and always brought them with them. There was a concert every night. Singing and dancing was the order of the day. They would cook the corn in an open fire and cooked a whole pig in a pot that looked like a witch's cauldron. I always loved the wonderful aroma of all the meat cooking. One of my uncles was a playwright. He would write a play for us kids. The last night of the festivities the kids would perform the play on the large porch of my grandma's house, using the headlights of the cars for lighting. After everyone left, Dad would take us aside and tell us "This why we work so hard all year. When you work hard you can always enjoy the fruits of your labor." This has stuck to all of us kids, because we all grew up to be very hard workers.



Vince Colombano

Geyserville Street Scene 1938 – 1940s

by Vincent Colombano with Ann Howard

Vincent Colombano was born on January 9, 1919 at Asti, the second son of Eligio and Angela (Mellana) Colombano and has lived in northern Sonoma County all but 43 months, which he spent on a Pacific Island during World War II. Vince and his wife Anita recently celebrated their 94th and 93rd birthdays. In 2010, Vince published his "West of Geysers Peak, A Memoir" assisted by Shonnie Brown.

Before I was three years old, my family moved from Asti to live on a farm on the west side of the Russian River on Benton Road (now known as River Lane), east of the town of Geyserville. My wife, Anita Gargini, was born February 9, 1920, in Cloverdale, the daughter of Giuseppe and Ales (Lori) Gargini. At three days old, she moved to the family home on Pine Mountain in Mendocino County north of the Sonoma County line. In 1946, Anita moved to Healdsburg with her parents. We were married on May 28, 1947. Both Anita's and my parents were grape and prune growers since the early 1900s. Geyserville and Cloverdale are now considered to be part of Alexander Valley.

Standing in front of Bosworth and Son General Merchandise store and looking across Main

Street, Geyserville, was A. Lampson and Sons Garage and Hardware, Ford Products. In the early days, Lampson was selling Studebaker wagons and wheelbarrows. My father bought a Studebaker wagon from Lampson to haul grapes and other products with a team of horses. Later my father bought a 1919 Model T Ford truck. Everett Lampson ran the business and his brother Warren, Willie Domenichelli and Aldo Lombardi, a mechanic, worked there. One day Warren decided to use a torch to cut a hole in an empty 50-gallon gasoline drum. The resulting explosion broke his leg in a number of places, leaving him in bad shape for a long time.



*Street scene in Geyserville looking south about 1940
(Courtesy of Harry Bosworth)*

Next to and south of Lampson garage was Butterfield's Barber Shop. I only had my hair cut there a couple of times, because my father had always cut my hair.



Main Street, Geyserville, looking south in May, 1938. The "Zan...." painted on the wall of the two-story I.O.O.F (Odd Fellows) building was identified from the ad in The Geysers 1938 yearbook as "Zanzi's, Plate Lunch, Fountain Service." (Courtesy of Elaine Callwell Privat)

Henry Fiuren and his mother lived in the white building seen at the right in the photograph.

Next was Catelli's The Rex saloon, owned and operated by Santi and Virginia Catelli. With a liquor license, they had to serve food. In 1936, I dug a hole for the septic tank behind the Rex with a pick and shovel on a day that proved to be the hottest in June...12 hours of labor...no backhoe. Joe Rochioli, Sr., was painting inside and brought me water to drink. My brother, Lou, tended bar there in 1937 for a year (which Lou said also included emptying the spittoons, mopping, and cleaning the bathrooms).

The butcher shop was next door south of The Rex. Clyde Caldwell, brother of Ora Lampson, Everett Lampson's wife, would butcher our calves and keep half of the meat in trade for other types of meat my family needed.

Dr. Frank Sohler, Jr., had an office in Cloverdale and one in Geyserville, south of the butcher shop. Angelo Scalese, who was younger than I, and his family were our neighbors. When Angelo broke his thumb, Dr. Sohler set it with a splint. Somehow Angelo's thumb did not set right, and I took him to Dr. Sohler's office in Cloverdale. The doctor told me to hold Angelo down while he broke the thumb and reset it...very painful for Angelo and he was angry with me.

Next door was Robert "Bert" Callwell's drug store. I only went in to there a few times to get something for my mother. (Bert and Dorothy (Christensen) Callwell's daughter Elaine who was

born June 17, 1938, provided the photograph).

Next was the Geyserville Post Office run by Postmaster Raymond Brackett, Sr., and his assistant Myrtle Barr, who was a little older than I. My family went to the post office to get our mail, because no mail was delivered on Benton Lane near the Russian River. We would send letters to family in Italy and receive mail from there. When I was about 10 years old, I remember an elderly man I would meet occasionally on the street or at the post office, and he would sometimes offer me a penny or two to go Antrim's Candy Store. I have always thought of him being so kind. I remember asking him his name and he answered "Friday," so I called him Mister Friday. After WWII, a friend in San Francisco sent a letter addressed only to "Vincent C., Geyserville, Cal.," and Mr. Brackett said, "I think this is yours."

At the corner was the First National Bank of Geyserville, but my parents didn't do much business there. I made \$21 a month while in the service during WWII. Not having much to spend it on, I sent part of it home, and my mother opened an account in the bank for me.

The narrow street between the bank and the two-story I.O.O.F (Odd Fellows) building led to the Orange Grove Winery, which we had always called the Marcucci Winery until Faustino "Riccio" (Curly) Marcucci's grandson, my friend Raymond Capri, corrected me recently.

Continuing south there were businesses on the ground floor of the I.O.O.F (Odd Fellow's) building. There was Antrim's Candy/Coffee Store with the Pool Hall in the back, then a café with an EAT sign in the photograph, but I remember Addelman's Hardware store there later.



Leroy Stockham's Grocerteria, O.W. Teaby Blacksmith, tiny Fire Station building (hidden) with fire bell rope hanging down beside the Step Inn Meals sign - 1941. Vince recognized his 1934 Chevy with a spare tire behind each front fender parked in front of the "Eat" sign! (Courtesy of Harry Bosworth)

Oscar W. Teaby's General Blacksmith shop was next door, and sometimes after picking up the mail, I would watch Mr. Luther "Bud" Cake and Mr. James Parrott playing horseshoes behind the shop. "O. W. Teaby" is stamped on the iron pruning shears displayed in the museum next to Harry Bosworth's store.

My family did not shop often in the Grocerteria owned by Leroy Stockham, with a "Trade with Roy" sign in window, since we grew most of our food.

Across the street at the north end of the business district on Highway 101 (now Geyserville Avenue) and just north of "Ricchio" (Curly) Sacchi's hay barn (north of Bosworth's store) was where the Sanders family lived. Bill Sanders and I started school in September 1925 and attended school together for ten years, graduating in 1935. That is when our school days ended. We both went to serve our country in WWII.

South of Sacchi's hay barn was (and still is today) Bosworth & Son General Merchandise store. Every time I went into the store, Obed Bosworth, Harry's father, would ask about each one of my family. If I needed to buy a pair of shoes or boots, he would say, "Wait awhile, I have to go to downstairs." Obed signed my birth certificate as Registrar in 1919.

South of Bosworth's store was the Geyserville Garage, repair shop, blacksmith and mechanic shop owned by Paul Stefani. Chittendon was the blacksmith and Bates Dickson the mechanic who repaired farm equipment. In front of the shop was a Flying A gas pump, probably the first one in town. Before the repair shop was built, there had been a stable with many horses.

At the corner of 101 and Highway 128 was a gas station. Behind it to the east was the Wahrman Hotel, which I never was inside, but where the Ferguson brothers stayed when they came to buy my father's wine. Next door was the Telephone Exchange Office, and Archie Robinson's wife was the telephone operator.

Across the street to the south on the other corner was Remmel's General Merchandise store before it became Rood's. Half way between Rood's Store and the train depot was a butcher shop and another store that sold plumbing supplies.

Some of Dad's relatives came up from San Francisco by the train, and Dad went to meet them at

the depot with horse and buggy that could seat four or five people. When I was 12-13 years old and we were milking more cows, we sent cream on the train to Petaluma in 5-gallon cans with our name on them to be returned to us to fill up again.

Across the tracks from the depot was A. F. Stevens Lumber Company where we bought lumber and roofing materials. When we built the big barn we had lumber shipped from Petaluma. Dad took the Studebaker wagon pulled by two horses to haul the heavy load home.

At the south end of town, across from the Geyserville Growers (Geyserville Irrigation Supply today) was the Sequoia Auto Court up against the west foothill, with 3-4 rooms rented out to travelers. Dances were held on Saturday night with music played by a group of Geyserville musicians. My younger brother Fred played trumpet, Albert Domenichelli on banjo, Julio Angeli and Masala Scalesi played saxophone. All went well until someone had too much to drink and the bouncer would escort them out the door.

More Geyserville memories can be found in *The Geyserville 1938 yearbook*:

Step-In Café – Meals-wine-beer, Greyhound Depot, Phone 61W, E. Langdale, Prop.

Compliments of Frank E. Sohler, Jr., M.D., Geyserville.

Dr. F. E. Sohler, M.D., Healdsburg

Geyserville Beauty Shop, Phone 35

Union Oil Company, 76 Gas-Triton Oil

Marcucci School of Music, Wishing You Continued Success, Paul Marcucci, Jr.

Sleese's Shoe Shop

Rex, Wine and Liquor Store, Phone 14

Geyserville Grocerteria, Geyserville's Leading Grocer, Quality Groceries at a Fair Price, Levi

Strauss Work Clothing, Phone 51

Bosworth and Son, Groceries, Flour, and Feed

Geyserville Meat Market, J. Hemple, Proprietor

Frank Nervo Winery, Phone 34-W

The Geyserville Pharmacy, "May you Live Long and Prosper"



The author in 1960



...and again in 2012

The Geyserville I Remember

by Joe Pelanconi

On September 2, 1945, America was celebrating VJ Day, the unconditional surrender of Japan, marking the official end of World War II. Two days later, I was born. With much less fanfare than was accorded VJ Day, I moved in with my Italian American family. We lived in the tiny community of Geyserville, a busy, if not sophisticated, full service village of about 1,500 folks. The town boasted grocery stores, gas stations, a bank, drug store, hardware store, branch library, schools, soda fountain, barber shops, car dealer and more. In the post-war boom of the 1950s, life in Geyserville was simple, yet fulfilling - a great place to grow up.



Aerial view of Geyserville

As often happens with restless youth, I eagerly left Geyserville to attend college, searching for bright lights and greener pastures. Thirty-five years later, I nostalgically recalled the lure of a warm and cozy small town where family and friends know your name and most everything else about you. Defying Thomas Wolfe's mantra that *You Can't Go Home Again*, Geyserville once again became home. All over again, Geyserville felt good, but it definitely was not the same, but I do remember . . .

I remember when The Geysers were geysers. When it snowed on Geyser Peak, we cut school and headed for The Geysers, where steam belched out of the ground, accompanied by the stench of rotten eggs. In 1960, PG&E capped geysers, producing hydroelectric energy and marking the end of steam visibly spewing from the earth. It was just the beginning of developing geothermal power. No one sitting in a Geyserville outhouse during the 1950s could have imagined that in 2003 treated sewage would be pumped to The Geysers to produce even more steam generation. It still occasionally snows on Geyser Peak, but The Geysers I remember are long gone.



Men working on The Geysers

Redwood Highway, but it transports little redwood. Local sawmills (as well as most of the redwoods) have gone the way of The Geysers.



The Italian Swiss Colony Tasting Room, Asti

I remember when Dry Creek went dry every summer. I assumed that's why they named it Dry Creek. We could taunt steelhead trout in winter and swim in Dry Creek during the spring, but by mid-summer, kids were limited to catching frogs and pollywogs in the few remaining warm-water pools. Ever since 1982 the creek flows cool and clear all summer long, the result of Dry Creek Dam and releases from Lake Sonoma. Today Dry Creek is never dry.



Geyserville Old Redwood Highway street scene, 1960s

I remember when wine tasting rooms were simply the cellars in many Italian homes. While many families grew some grapes and many made wine, premium wine grapes were not the major agricultural crop in the area. Prunes were the dominant crop, but there were no prune tasting rooms in cellars or anywhere else. Italian Swiss Colony at Asti was the only local winemaker that was nationally known, and they made what might be called "jug" wine. The premium wine boom of the 1970s made prune trees the firewood of choice. Today, in downtown Geyserville, classy wine tasting rooms are located in buildings that once housed a bank, soda fountain, grocery store and car dealership.



Train nearing Geyserville

I remember when the Redwood Highway ran through town. Crowded with loud 18-wheelers belching diesel exhaust and hauling redwood lumber, Highway 101 was a local traffic nightmare. During college breaks, I drove the Redwood Highway to nearby Asti and pulled green chain (sorting heavy, freshly cut lumber) at Rockport Redwood saw mill. It was a tough, well-paying summer job and provided me with ample motivation to finish college. However, the 101 freeway bypassed Geyserville in the 1970s and today there is little traffic of any kind through town. The nearby freeway is still called the

I remember when trains ran next to Railroad Avenue near the center of town. I assumed that's why they named the street Railroad Avenue. The rail line to Cloverdale was completed in 1872, and for more than a century, agricultural products, lumber, wine and more were transported by freight trains. Loud train whistles and rumbling locomotives were loud distractions that natives barely noticed. As kids, we waved to conductors and the guy in the caboose,

and sometimes jumped on and off a slow moving train going through town. Trains no longer go through Geyserville. Today the tracks next to Railroad Avenue are silent, adorned in the spring with yellow poppies and purple lupines.

I remember when the Hoffmans lived in the Hoffman House. The Hoffmans were an old Geyserville family and friends of my parents. They were farmers and pillars of the community, serving as 4H leaders, scoutmasters and such. They had three daughters who loved the outdoors and were a bit younger, but not unnoticed by me. They were a typical Geyserville farm family with their big Hoffman house sitting prominently on their family farm. I picked prunes on many farms just like the Hoffmans'. Those family farms have disappeared. Today, the Hoffman House is a trendy restaurant, serving the hordes of tourists visiting the wine tasting rooms that are no longer in the cellars of Italian homes.

I remember when The Vineyard was a vineyard. Located across the river from town, the Domenichellis' had a ranch, with rolling hills of oak, a prune orchard and a vineyard in a small valley. I suckered grapevines in that Domenichelli vineyard. In the 1960s the property was bought and "developed" by affluent folks who did not intend to live off the land. The Vineyard became the location of a number of beautiful homes and included a clubhouse and tennis courts. The Vineyard was located on land that once seemed perfectly suited for hunting deer. The small vineyard valley was covered with a scenic lake. As kids, we suspected this development was an enclave for the rich and famous. My parents and other locals were skeptical and, indeed, more developers were on the way.

I remember when Geyserville school vacations included Christmas, Easter and the Russian River flood. Nearly every winter, the Russian River leaped over its banks, crossed Highway 128 and flooded many of the homes in its path. For local youth, it was an exciting time. School was cancelled. We often splashed around in the floodwater, hoping to assist with some heroic rescue, while being best suited to helping those in the lowlands with cleanup. The flood vacations ended in 1959 when Coyote Dam was built. Lake Mendocino allowed for a gentler, much less exciting, Russian River in Geyserville.

I remember a colorful immigrant group in Geyserville that was viewed as quite different from the Anglo folks that had founded the town. In the 1950s, numerous large Italian families worked the land, often spoke in a foreign tongue and possessed strange quirks and customs. Too numerous to be called a minority, these immigrants were determined to have their children fit into the larger community. As a teenager of Italian ancestry, it was not easy to find a date that was not related. Today those Italian families have assimilated and been replaced by a large group of Mexican immigrants. With their foreign language, agrarian work ethic and different customs, Mexican immigrants struggle to assimilate.



Harry Bosworth behind the counter of his store, 2011

I also remember when Harry Bosworth had hair. As a kid, I assumed they named him Harry because he did have hair. His father, Obed, the unique proprietor of Bosworth and Son General Merchandise, was totally bald. I bought ammunition, work boots, my GHS sweater and much more in that store. Today, with hair-challenged Harry as proprietor, I can still do that. Bosworth's store may be the only thing in Geyserville that did not change while I was away seeking the elusive greener pasture. Bosworth's store remains a throwback to a Geyserville of the 1950s. For me, the oiled floors, western wear, collection of odd hardware, my grandfather's 44 Winchester rifle hanging on the wall and the down home ambiance are a reminder of the way it once was in Geyserville.

Today, despite the efforts (or non-efforts) of the Bosworths, Geyserville is different - still warm and cozy, not necessarily better or worse - just real different. It's my town; I like it. Take that, Thomas Wolfe.



Fred Mason

The Geysers and the Mercury Mines

Fred Mason interviewed by his niece, June Maher Smith, June 25, 1992

Nowadays I don't think anyone younger than myself has much of a concept of the real old Geysers establishment. It was truly a world famous health resort. Their register would show kings of Belgium and a lot of other people came there for health reasons. The hotel itself was a great big old barn of a place, and I don't know how many rooms, maybe 18 or 20, even some of them suites. They had a fine dining room.



Geysers Hotel and Pool

They also had their own electric plant. They piped water in a flume from a big hole in the Big Sulphur called Diana's Pool, about a mile and a half

upriver from the Geysers. And this flume was about a foot wide and high, and carried water all the way down there.



Exploring the Geysers, 1920s

One of my jobs was to hike the flume and find the leaks. I walked down the bloody thing and they had a little hydro plant down along the river, and when they wanted lights at night, they would divert the water from the flume from the river into the hydro plant and kick the lights on. Well, the health aspect of the thing was well developed. What came up through the Geysers themselves was full of all

sorts of things. There was arsenic water that had a lot of chemical data on it and the doctor's recommendations of how much of it a heart patient could drink safely and how beneficial it would be. There was one little grotto where you could scrape Epsom salts right off the rock. Pure Epsom salts. It was incredible.

Mother and Father at that point operated an establishment on the corner of North and West streets, which is now Healdsburg Avenue. Dad had a saloon on the corner. Mother operated the restaurant and she had a rooming house upstairs. I think she had six rooms. We slept up on top. Dad had built sort of an open air bunkhouse up there, all screened, and it was my sister's. She had her room and Mother, Father and I slept in the other room up there, right up on top of the building. Anyway, the hired help for the restaurant was usually recruited from San Francisco through the unions or something, and one of the chaps that was recruited was named Phil Mowrer. He was an awful nice young fellow and he ended up running the place for Mother. He later improved his position and went up as Manager of the establishment at the Geysers [in 1917], so that's how I got into the act. Phil asked me to come up there and get acquainted with the place and act as a guide to take people around.

At that time Ray Lattin ran an old Stanley Steamer bus up there three times a week. He would meet the train down there at 10:00 up from San Francisco, and away they'd go in this old Stanley Steamer. That was for passengers.



Ray Lattin's Autostage

Then there was an old chap named Charlie Foss who had a home about a half mile upriver from the hotel, and ran a team, two horses and a big wagon to carry supplies in.



Charlie Foss

Everything came up through Healdsburg. The Cloverdale Road at that time beyond the Cloverdale Mine was not much of a road. And the Cloverdale Mine was in full operation then. It's located just about a mile above the mouth of Squaw Creek. It's still there, but it's long since dead. At that point in time there were three large quicksilver mines operating in the immediate area. One was the Socrates, which is considerably north and west of the Geysers. Then halfway up on the road from Healdsburg to the Geysers is a big canyon there, and that was the Culver-Baer Mine down in there. Then there was the Cloverdale Mine down on the Cloverdale Road. They thrived and did great things as long as the war or anything was going on. Mercury was at that point used for the big high explosives; and they got a hell of a price for it. But when the wars were over, their business went to nothing.



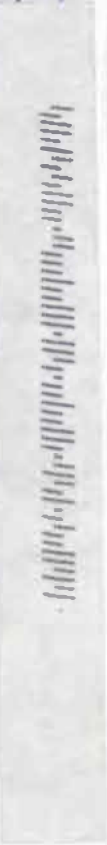
Mining at the Geysers

One time Van and I went up to the Socrates Mines. We ate at the mining table, and at that time

they were employing over 200 men, there at the Socrates. The Socrates was largely quicksilver. I don't know whether you realize this, quicksilver comes in two forms. First there is native quicksilver just setting in the rocks; then cinnabar, which is mercury oxide, which must be heated and stirred in order to get the mercury out of the oxide. Either of those are damn dangerous to the miners. You can get mercuric poisoning very easily. Those miners in the Socrates would come in at night and dump mercury out of their boots; they'd been in contact with it all day. Well, it turns out that one of the bad things about mercury poisoning is you get salivated, so they served no condiments such as catsup or anything on the tables because that seemed to exercise the stuff. Miners would be picking their teeth out with a toothpick if they ate that sort of thing. Well, they didn't last long. Around the cinnebar mines of

course, the danger was the fumes and stuff. Both the Cloverdale and the Culver-Baer were cinnabar, but the main mine up at the Socrates was a dangerous thing all the time to the miners.

Anyhow, one year Phil asked me to come up and spend the entire summer. They had a lot of guests booked in, and he wanted me to do my job of guiding. I was a sophomore in high school or 16 years old (@1920). I hiked up there, that ti from here. I hiked to Geyserville, waded across river and then cut up through the hills to the Geys I got there in one day, no trouble. Anyhow, that the start of my adventure. I never received any p not a dime, but I didn't want to. I was happy jus be fed and given a nice room and be taken care and being able to fish whenever I wanted to. Th the story about the Geysers.



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