

## MEMORIES

BY THELMA GOMES

Well, Kathy wants me to record everything I ever did in my life, all my sex life and everything else...and I'm telling her nothing.....

My favorite stories.....I wish Daddy was here, he could really tell you some stories.

### DADDY COMES FROM ITALY AND STARTS HIS NEW LIFE IN CALIFORNIA

I was born in Placerville, at the old Sanitarium on Coloma Road, February 20, 1927. After I had been there a little while, my parents decided they would take me home...home was in Camino. My father worked as a fireman on the railroad for Michigan California Lumber Company. In about 1908, when he was 11 or 12 years old, he came here from Italy with his father, Dominick, and his uncle, Vittorio. He didn't know any English but he was determined to never go back there and live.

They came through Ellis Island. They dropped the double "R" on his name and left it with one "R". It should have been Borromini, but Uncle Sam did what he damned pleased when you came through Ellis Island, because you were nothing but another hungry, out of work Italian. But Daddy made a good life for himself and a good life for his family and he loved us all.

He swore he would never go back to Italy until they built a bridge because he was afraid to fly and he was too sick on the way over to ever go back on a ship. That twirled into him going to work for Weed Lumber Company, up the California coast, with his Dad and Uncle. They worked up there for three years or so. He came back and worked over at Caldor and over at Jackson and that's where he started his repair on trains and the things that he always loved to do.

When he was twenty-one, he lost his leg on the railroad while working for Michigan Cal. He came back from that and played baseball and danced and did anything he wanted to do...and lived to be 96 years old. He always took care of himself and Mama, he thought. But I took care of them for the last eleven years. It was the joy of my life. But sometimes, I would get so mad, I could throw them out the front window. They would tell me to go, that I was stealing their money, they didn't need me and that they could get along by themselves. But we knew that they couldn't. But it was all right, I let a little go over my head and let a little blow. They were good parents.

## GROWING UP IN CAMINO

I had everything in my life I ever wanted, which wasn't too much. I didn't ask for too much. I never had a bicycle. Daddy was afraid we would get killed, so we never had a bicycle around here. We tried to roller skate on rocks and on the sidewalk up in front of the old company houses in Camino, on Front Street, the old Highway 50. But it was a good life.

We used to have heavy snow here in Camino. We had snow tunnels to the front doors, that was fun. Anyhow, I grew up in Camino. I had lots of friends. I liked everybody. I was a bully, sort of. I wasn't a follower. At least nobody ever got me to do anything that I didn't want to do of my own free will. If I did it, I was guilty, but if I didn't, you knew it. I just had regular grow up days like everybody, playing baseball and things that boys do.

I remember putting a ladder up at the Pentecostal Church at night and watch them roll on their rugs. I went to school in Camino....the same school that my mother went to. She had a certificate that she never missed a spelling word in her eight years of grammar school. Sybil Crocker was her teacher and Sybil Crocker was my teacher. Mrs. Whitmere was my low-grade teacher. We were high class by then and we had 4 or 5 grades in one room and 6th, 7th and 8th were in the other room. I loved my teachers. Mrs. Whitmere was a real sweet lady. Her husband, later, had the pharmacy where the old hotel is now on Main Street.

Years ago, though, the old hotel was down where Michigan California Lumber Company office is now. We lived in a company house. That's all I remember living in. My sister probably remembers another home there in Camino up the street further that was a two story that we lived in, but I don't. I only remember the one on Front Street across from the garage....it was a big garage on Highway 50.

## CURL FOR THE COP

By the time I was 3 or 4 years old, I contracted undulant fever from a tuberculin cow from Jack Wylie's dairy. There were about 10 of us in Camino at the time that got it. It affected the glands and throat. It was a type of tuberculin from an infected cow. It attacked my spine. I was the youngest child to get it. My mother was very ill at the time from kidney trouble from having me. She was never supposed to have me but she did anyhow.



I was different from my sister... I guess they thought I came from the postman or somebody because I was blond and my sister was dark. Like my father, she looked like a little Italian girl and I looked like a little Swede, but so did my mother look like a Swede...she was a Swede. and she was a hot skipper too, let me tell you. She didn't take nothing from nobody. She never gossiped in her life...anything she hated, it was gossip. She used to say, "If you can't say something good, you don't say nothing at all".

In the meantime, they were running me back and forth to the San Francisco Children's Hospital until I was seven years old. I can remember laying in the front room. There was a big window in our house there on Main Street. They put a cot there so I could see out when I came home from the hospital. We had a great cop, Highway Patrol, probably the only one on Highway 50. That's all they needed then. It was two lanes. My Cadillac, now, would take up the whole road. Across the street was George Davenport's saloon and Jack Barkley's grocery store. That was our circle of life. Up the street was Barrett's big butcher shop. It was all cement floor and in the center was a big round fish thing with water and the fish. Mrs. Barrett and her husband ran the butcher shop. We would go tearing in there all the time. They were sweet people and were good to all the kids. We grew up in a village. If anybody needed anything, you were there.

Next door to us, Crystal and Louie Gallupe lived. They would do anything for my mother. I used to get such a kick out of them. Crystal would get so mad at Louie because he couldn't see good and so she would always drive the car. He would be giving her orders which way to go and which way not to go.

Anyhow, I was sick and Sugar Cornelious was our cop. I always called him Sugar because he always brought me candy. When it snowed in the winter he would make the plow push all the snow off to the side from my window. He would come in to visit. I had long curls down the middle of my back. Mama would always pull my damn head off brushing them but they always looked so pretty. Sugar would come in and sit on the bed and bring me candy and all kinds of goodies and talk to me. He always said he was going to swipe a curl someday. We'd laugh. Mama would be cooking something in the kitchen.... Mama was always cooking in the kitchen. So, one day when he came, I had been cutting out paper dolls. He had the plow move all the snow away from the house and I could see real good across the street to Beuler's Garage. When he came in, I reached behind my ear and I cut a curl. Then I thought "Oh man, I'm going to be in big shit", but I didn't care...it was done.

When he got ready to leave, I reached under the covers and gave him the curl. Mama walked in from the kitchen just as he took the curl. I can still see her standing in the doorway by the oil stove, and she had the funniest look on her face. Sugar looked like he wanted to become a lump, and he just said, "Nella, I didn't do it". She looked at me and I told her that he wanted one and I had a lot. She said "That's all right, Honey". I know the poor guy couldn't wait to get out of there.

### SMART MOUTHED KID

When I was seven, I went into the third grade. Since I mostly talked to adults and I could read and write and did everything kids could do except not usually that young. I also had a smart mouth. I thought I had the world by the tail because if anybody looked at me sideways, I was sick and thought I should be treated with kid gloves. I got my own way all the time...I knew how to do that. My poor sister, I don't know how she put up with me. She was such a coward all her life. I fought all her battles. If she got her feelings hurt, she would cry and I would go punch them. But that was all right, that was my job in life, to protect my big sister. I remember once when Art Williams threw an ice ball at her and it got her right in the forehead. That was the last time he ever threw an ice ball...I took care of him. His brother, Burt, though, was my buddy and we had good times together.

### DADDY LOVED THE RAILROAD

Daddy would never have given up working on the railroad. He loved building the trains. He loved taking them apart. He loved putting them together. He loved boring out the boilers. He would work on holidays and any day. I don't know if he ever had a vacation. The railroad was his life. That was fine... he was happy.

### MICH-CAL BOARDING HOUSE

In Camino, they had a hotel but actually it was a huge rooming house, down where the Michigan Cal office is now. The men that were not married and didn't have a home, stayed. It was a room and board where they lived when they worked for Michigan Cal. That was where my father met my mother. She was waiting tables because her mother and her step-father ran the hotel for Michigan Cal. This was after my grandmother came from Idaho with the children.

She and my mother had first gone to work in Sacramento for the pencil factory. Grandma then worked in Strawberry as a waitress, where they still have her records. Mama, Uncle Pearl, Uncle Clarence and Uncle George went to school here in Camino. Grandma met Grandpa Henry Robinson and married him. He helped her raise the children. They then started running the hotel here in Camino for Michigan Cal. They did all the cooking and everything for the men.

This was after Mother worked in the apples for the Crockers. Mrs. Crocker taught them in the Camino School. Mama and Uncle Pearl would ride the horse to school. Mama said that Uncle Pearl always had an apple in every pant pocket and if you got an apple, you were a luck lady because he wouldn't give away his apples.



### MAMA AND DADDY GET MARRIED TWICE

Mama finished her school here in Camino and went on to marry my father. This is where they made their home and they were married in Lake Tahoe. My father insisted they also had to be married in a Catholic service so they had a double wedding with Uncle Pearl and Aunt Margaret. So Mama and Daddy were married one day in Lake Tahoe, on the boat, by the Justice of the Peace and then again, the next day in San Francisco in the Catholic Church.

### PINO FOR THE SUMMER (CHIPMUNKS)

Every year after school was out for the summer, we moved to the logging camps near Pino. Daddy worked up there all year and of course, we had to go to school until June. When school was out, we moved to the camps. We thought it was a big holiday. Some kids had a summer home and some didn't. We thought we were hot potatoes. We would go up to the camps and that was our life for the summer.

Bill Cola, Goldie, Flora, Jim, Charles, Jack, Bonnie, Vivian, the Pratts...we would all be at the camps. We thought we were having a ball. We did lots of fun things that kids do. Bill and I had a chipmunk-squirrel trap. We hated the grey squirrels because they chewed our traps up. I can't remember who showed us how to do it or if Bill did it. He wasn't that ingenious...but he might have. We built these traps that were a little bit bigger than a shoe box, a screen on one end and trap door on one end. You lifted it up and hooked it on a little catch in the middle. You put cheese or something in it and when they went in and grabbed it, the trap door would come down and we would have them. They were beautiful little chipmunks.

Daddy and Big Joe built us a big screen-like aviary enclosure. The thing had to have been 10 by 15 feet and 10 feet high. We had bars in it, just plain old water bars, and we would do acrobatics on them. The chipmunks would play on them too. We had swings in there too. We would take the chipmunks in there and turn them loose, so they had their own little place.

### PINO (POPEYE AND THE SNAKES)

We also had our snake runs. We would come back with rattle snakes. Popeye Joe ran the boiler for the men's cabins for the men's showers. In the evening, he would be building up the boiler's to get the water hot so when the men came in from the woods on the flat cars, they could go to the showers and get cleaned up. Bill and I would take our snakes and throw them into the fire box. They would curl up and strike just like they were alive....but they wouldn't have heads on them. If Popeye would open up one of those doors, and see one of those snakes, he would go ky-yi-yi-yipping down the road. He would get so mad at us kids...he knew Bill and I did it. He would chase us when he saw us. We would do that kind of stuff.

### PINO (YELLOW JACKETS)

In the summer when it got really hot, we had a lot of yellow jackets. We had rain barrels sitting by the door. Mama and Mrs. Cola caught the rain to wash their hair and clothes. The yellow jackets would cluster around the rain barrels. If we saw Sis messing around with her play house (I think Melvin Lorrane and a couple of the Lorrane kids had built it out of wood), it was a little doll house and they could walk inside it and play dolls. She played dolls.

One day she came out and she started swinging her arms because there was a yellow jacket by the front door. Bill and I went down and dipped our arms in the barrel and when we pulled them out, they were covered. Sis started to run and we took after her with our arms out in front of us. When you run from yellow jackets, they fly after you. She ran and we were running after her and they were going off our arms and after her. She was running around the house screaming at the top of her lungs. Mama and Angie came out and were going to kill both of us. That stopped that. Sis came out of that one with only a couple of scrapes.

### PINO (PIGS AND YELLOW JACKETS)

We would go down to the pig pens. They had pig pens for the pork and they had cows too. We had been warned not to go near the pig pens. There was a big old sow down there and she was a mean son-of-a-gun. She was really mean but, of course, Bill wasn't afraid of anything except his own mother and she



couldn't catch him. If he did it, I did it, because I figured if he got it, I got it and if he didn't get it, I wouldn't get it. I followed him everywhere. I know I must have been a "pain in the ass", but we did have a good time. Bill is like a brother to me. I don't know what a brother is like, but he is as close and I love him dearly and his family as if they were my own.

Anyhow, we would go tearing down the road out of camp. It was full of chuck holes and dust holes, you never saw such a mess in your life.

Getting up there, maybe 14 to 20 miles from Placerville to Pino, it was the longest 14 to 20 miles you ever drove in your life! That was just into Pino. After you left Pino that was another herd to go into the camps. Anyway, we were going down the road one day to go to the pig pen. We would get the little pigs, they were so cute, and they would squeal and holler and the big old sow would raise holy cane.

We were on our way back and we had sticks in our hands. There was a big pile of cut brush along the edge of the road. We pushed our sticks into the pile and these wasps came out....Bill and Sis and I were all together. We started to run and the wasps got in front of us and came back and one got my sister right in the middle of the forehead. She went down like a light. We didn't know it at the time, what had happened. I went running toward home screaming bloody murder. This wasn't far, it sounds like we're going miles, but we're not. Mama and Angie came out and went running down the road. They couldn't find Sis....she was under dirt. The dust was so bad you could have died in it and nobody would have found you until next winter.

They picked her up off the road and I'll never forget, she had a lump on her forehead where that wasp, or whatever it was, had bit her and knocked her out cold. We got her home and got that fixed up. So, that was another one of our excursions.

#### KIDS IN PINO

We would go up across the railroad tracks and walk the rails a lot. We weren't allowed to, of course. We weren't supposed to but we were careful and would listen to the rails with our ears, and made sure that nobody got us. Daddy never rode us about the trains. If we wanted to go for a ride, all we had to say was that we wanted to go. He warned us of the dangers of the railroad, but he told us how to protect ourselves. These were the things we did.

I guess we just went about our merry way like anybody does without ever really realizing we were in peril that children our age should never have been exposed to. But the kind of peril was nature. We had the woods. We had the animals, but we weren't afraid of animals. We had people. We had men's cabins. If you had children today in those woods with the type of human beings that we have out on our streets today.....it would be havoc.

You never had a man use vulgar words around women. When I look now, it was nothing like you have now. The kids had no disrespect for the working men. The kids were treated well and it was just normal to me and it should be normal now. A lot of the men were uneducated, a lot of the winos and alcoholics. They worked in the woods to eat. They were the finest people you would ever want to know. You never had a problem with anything like that.

#### FOURTH OF JULY IN PINO

In the summers, on the Fourth of July, they would get a big pig and the Greeks would bury it and a lamb. They would get it from over there where the lambs were by the "Goat Doctor's" place, on the way up to Swansboro Country. On the way back to camp from town, they would pick up a goat or lamb and have it slaughtered and butchered and we would have our big picnic.

Joe and Daddy would go to town and get what they called "a keg of nails", which was a big haul of ice cream or cherries or whatever. They would bring that up to camp. We would have a big party or picnic. Everybody would be there.

#### PINO (FRESH WATER SPRINGS AND THE "REFRIGERATOR")

We had springs of water like you never drank. I remember at Camp 10, we would walk past my house and nearly to Uncle Pearl and Auntie Rose's house and there was a big spring. It was a beautiful spring. We would take our jugs down and get water. You never drank water like that in your life. Ice cold, good water. We had a great time.



Once in a while we would get into trouble with a bear, a small one. I remember one day, it was Mama and I and Mrs. Cola and Sis and Bill, We had been walking. We did a lot of walking and going places, or we thought we were going places. Mama got awful upset that day. It was Monday and Mama scrubbed clothes by hand in a big round tub, that we also took our baths in.

On our porch, we would make rootbeer in the summer. Sometimes you would hear "pop, pop, pop" and we were blowing root bottles. Boy, it was good rootbeer too. We had a cooler. It was a big screen thing, about the size of a large parrot cage. It was all screen with a burlap sack over the top of it and Daddy hooked up a drip that dripped on it from a spring. It was an ice cold drip and it was just like a refrigerator. Mama had to cook on a wood stove and it was hotter than a bugger. But that thing was great...just like a refrigerator.

### THE BOAT

I remember when Bill Cola and I built a little boat. Daddy and Big Joe got us some tar so we could seal it. We built it out of boards. We worked hard on that thing. We had it down in Onion Creek. Mama thought I was catching a bad cold or whooping cough or something, and she said, "I've got to give you molasses".

But Bill and I were running around up at Camp 10. We were all going to go for a walk. We got Angie to go, Bill's mom, and my mom and Bill and me. Away we went down to the creek. Bill and I got into the boat and away we went and we were having a good time and Bill kept saying "Come on, Mom, get in. It's not leaking. We got it fixed, it's not leaking. Come on, get in."

I finally got Mama to get in. She went around and it wasn't leaking. So Angie said "Well, Nella, you tried it so I'll try it." She took her shoes off and got in. Bill was sitting in the back by Angie and Mama and I was up in the front. We pushed off and away we went.

But we were hitting rocks. Then it started taking water in the front. All of a sudden my mama raised her feet up and yelled, "Bill, we're sinking!" And then Angie started yelling, "Bill, I'm going to get you!" We all got out of the boat and she started after him and Bill and I ran. Angie and Mama were running behind us....they were going to get us. I was soaking wet and Mama thought I was going to have pneumonia. We got home, but Angie never caught Bill.

## TARANTULA

Okey, this day, it was wash day and you washed whether you wanted to wash or not. So Mama was up doing the washing, it was Monday. And she always was dressed up. She would get up in the morning, have her clothes on and hair combed. She was not one to wear housecoats in the morning, she never wore make-up, she never did anything to touch up her hair in her life. She always had her little cotton dress on, and her apron, pushing clothes up and down in a boiler that we used to take baths in, or tubs.

Scrub 'em on a scrub board and Daddy was on the engine so you know what his clothes were. Besides us kids on top of it. And those things would be on that line. Man, cutest line of clothes you ever had.

She and Angie would cuss every God damn car that came through camp and left any dust anywhere on the road, and those men were careful, let me tell you. Because...they didn't want the women on their hind ends.

She went out and she was hanging up clothes with her little apron on. I never saw her without an apron. She and Angie always wore an apron. Angie was built just like an hour glass. She was the kind of sweet little lady that I think of when I think of the wagon trains and I loved to grab her and kiss her and love her. I think I could put both my hands around it, her waist...it was so tiny. She was built just like an hour glass.

So, anyhow, Mama was out there hanging up clothes and we heard this screaming and yelling....everybody came running...and I can't remember if it was Josie or whoever it was, lived around there close to us, we all lived close.. and I think Angie or Josie came running and Mama was standing there screaming..... and a tarantula as big as your hand was hanging on her apron! One of the ladies untied the bow and dropped the apron and killed. Bill and I were furious, because we wanted to put it in a jar and keep it.

## WALKING THE RAILS

When they were moving logs out of Camp 14 and 15, I guess, taking them into Pino Grande. Daddy's runs were 10 or 12 hours a day, at least. And it took so long because they had to load slabs and stuff for the fire boxes. Later on, four or five years later, they turned over to oil, which helped a lot. But in the mean time, they had long. hours.



They would bring them into the mill and dump them in the pond and they would go through the saw mill. And after they would go through the saw mill, and come out on the green chain. Zeise was the engineer that brought them down to the cable. The cable had been re-built in '28, after it went down. Lumber cars would all come across on the cable.

We kids used to ride the cable whenever we had a chance. It was a lot of fun. But one day, we were out walking the rails, of course, Bill and I and my sister. And we had been up to the swimming pool, I can't remember the name of the creek, if it was Onion Creek or which one it was. But it was up there. We had huge bridges, they were so big, and Bill, he would always lean down and put his ear on the track, cause then we could hear if the train was coming. And this one day, we were fooling around, running the tracks and we were trying to get my sister to run 'em and she would look through a hole and then she would get down on her hands and knees and crawl the rail because she was afraid of cross the bridges. Bill and I would just run them.

So this one day, he put his ear down and all of a sudden her comes George Zeise in the train. Oh, my God! We took off running like a herd of turtles and poor Sis, she didn't know what to do. We finally got her about, oh, I don't know how far in, 40 yards or so, maybe 20 yards, and we had to jump so we grabbed her. Bill and I grabbed her, both sides, and we jumped. I landed on a big stump and Bill landed down there too, and so did Sis. None of us got hurt, but let me tell you...we were scared shitless! And after the train had gone by, we ran on down the track and there was a gandy dancer. Those are the like go-carts on the rails and they pump from both sides. We would steal those and play around on the gandy dancer, but we had to get back to camp and get back quick. So we put it on the track and away we went and we got home.

So, that was an experience that I'll never forget, because, I don't think, till the day my father died, he ever knew that happened to us. I know Bill has got to remember, he's not that feeble minded now, and we did do those kinds of things. So we would get back into camp and then we were O.K. We were safe again. Or into Pino.....no, into camp. We weren't into Pino yet.

#### TAR SHACK

And I remember we would go up to the water tanks, where they kept the water, and we never did get into them though, but we always wanted to swim in the water tanks. But they were stops where they had to fill the steam engines.

They had to have their water and they had to have the slabs. So, we would catch a ride with Daddy and we would help them load slabs and he would pull down the water thing that pumped the water and away we would go back into camp.

This one time, they built a shack, it was nothing but a straight, square bodied shack and it was full of oil barrels and tar barrels and stuff like that for stuff on the engines. So, we went along for awhile and I didn't know that anything was wrong. Nobody knew that anything was wrong. Except Big Joe and Daddy.

The SECOND thing of tar was gone, a 50 gallon barrel of tar, and they are heavy. My dad raised holy shit. He and Joe, Big Joe, bull of the woods. were the only ones that had a key to the shack. So some guy up there made some smart remark, that the only person that could have stolen it was Pete. He knew what it was good for, and he and Joe were the only ones that had a key and they were thicker than thieves, so he knew that's who stole it, right?

So....Daddy said "OK, Joe, we'll take care of that." So for two nights in a row, or three, I don't know how many, they were up half the night watching that shack. The boards were just like you would just build an old barn now. Just hammered in on the bottom. But what they did was just pull those boards out from the bottom and pulled out those barrels and put them on a pick-up and took them to town and sold them. So Daddy and Big Joe caught him. And when Daddy caught him, he grabbed him and of course, you NEVER called my dad a "son-of-a-bitch", because his mother was the sweetest person on earth, according to him, and when you said that word, he took it very personal. Now he used it all the time, for anything. He was a logger and he used language, but us kids knew better than to use it.

But, any how, when they caught the guy, my dad grabbed him and just hit him with one punch. I think my dad's hand across the knuckles was 9 inches. He had a hand like a moose. His fingers had to be 3 inches around. But anyhow, when he hit the guy, he broke his jaw and his nose. One smack.

So, a few weeks later, we had to go to town because the guy filed assault and battery charges. So, Joe Cola and all of us, we had to go to court in Diamond Springs, I think it was, or Shingle, because they only had a Justice of the Peace then, for that kind of stuff. I can remember going into that little courtroom and the judge says all the stuff he's supposed to say and the guy was sitting in there with his jaw all wired together and his nose broke and he looked like a mummy. They took all the testimony and everything. Big Joe was there, and Mama and Sis and I were sitting behind them.



So the judge said "Pete, how do you plead, guilty or not guilty?" So Daddy said "The son-of-a-bitch was stealing oil and I caught him and let him have it." So the judge said "You have injured the man, so that's assault and battery, so I've got to find you guilty because you did." "Yeah," Daddy said, "I did it." "And I'm going to have to fine you ten dollars." My dad stood up and he said "If I would have known it was going to cost me ten dollars, I would have killed the son-of-a-bitch. And if I ever see his face in this area or in camp again, he won't have to worry what I'm going to do to him." Needless to say, the man left camp and we never saw him again.

#### PINO (GO-CART)

Life went on, and at one of the camps, I can't remember what camp it was, but it doesn't matter, we had a good time. We built this slide down the fill, the fill went actually right by our house. It was a railroad fill and went right by above us and of course now we were all very close, you know, these homes are all very close together. The men's cabins are up on the hill and the cookhouse.

So, Bill and I got these stripling logs and we stripped them all and Joe or Daddy gave us oil to put on them and we made a little go-cart and the little cart sat on each side of the tree thing that went down the hill. We had them all hooked together, everything just like a railroad track, coming down the fill and it was a pretty good little grade too. It was a nice little fill. At the end was our horseshoe thing and it dropped off about a foot or so at the bottom. Or maybe two feet.

We finally got my sister to ride on the little go-cart and from it banging against the bottom, the nails, they let loose at the bottom and.....off she went.....and she flew clear out into the road. I thought, Boy, (that's young Joe). I always called him Boy 'cause I couldn't call him Joe when I was a baby. I didn't call him Joe, I called him Boy, and he was my idol, he could do no wrong. But, anyhow, he was going to kill Bill and I both. But she never went on a go-cart again. So that ended that experience.

## FIRE HYDRANT

After we left that camp, we moved to Pino Grande. Everything was moved into Pino Grande because the loads were getting so long, going into the mill. So when we moved into Pino, our lives changed quite a bit. It was like going from Camino to Sacramento. We thought we were in big-city land. They had a school. They had a nurses' station. They had everything.

I remember my Dad had a lump behind his knee on his good leg and it was kind of scary, you know, and it would hurt him. Mom wanted him to go to the doctor and see what it was, but he never did. Finally, one day he jumped off the train, it was some kind of a cyst or something and it broke and blood poisoning went clear through his body. I do remember that he nearly died. He was a real sick man.

My sister and I were young and we would go up to the Placerville Sanitarium and see him and Doctor Reckers said there was no way that he would live. His fever was over 106 at one time, which was really bad. But, by God, he came out of it. BUT he came out white haired.

I remember one night we went up to see him and Mama let my sister drive the car because she had got her license. She was 14 or 15, I guess. We drove up and parked beside where the old Placerville Sanitarium was. There was a high sidewalk there and a fire hydrant at the end. She drove up there and we parked. We thought we were hot potatoes, man! We were out fooling around on the lawn and stuff and Mama was in seeing Daddy and Grandpa was in with her.

All of a sudden, they were coming out and we were going to go home. So mama gets in the car, everybody gets in the car....and Sister backs up....and she hit the damn fire hydrant right there on the end and it lifted the whole end of the car. And we were blowing water from here to New Jersey! And man, she drove off of that like a hot potato and we got off there and went on home. I don't think Daddy ever knew that we did that. And Grandpa said "Don't say nothing...they'll find it." That took care of that.

## BUTCHER KNIFE JOE

I remember Daddy telling a story about Butcher Knife Joe. He was like a hermit actually. He lived down in the canyon there, going into the American River.....or any where he could find a place to live. They were driving back



to camp one night, he always took some men or whoever needed a ride, and they came across Butcher Knife Joe and he had blood on him. They stopped and he had this huge butcher knife and he had killed a bear. It was him or the bear and Butcher Knife Joe got the bear. They took him back to camp with them.

### SHINNY ACROSS THE CABLE

Jack Berry worked for his dad of course, Old Swift, and he drank a lot. His dad had no patience with him what so ever and he had given him an ultimatum....if he didn't show up on the job Monday morning, (because he was always drunk all weekend), it would be the last job he ever had. So, he was in Camino and he knew he had to get back to camp, so he walked out to the cable and he shinnied the cable all the way across to the other side and he was at work Monday morning without any problem.

### PINO (SUSIE THE BEAR AND DADDY BUILDS A SHOWER)

After we moved to Pino, it was a different life and I was older of course. We used to take walks and go up past the school house. Mr. & Mrs. Corker lived at the top of the hill and Margaret Scheller. All the kids, we'd all go up the road to the creek where the guys had blocked it off, where we could swim and mess around. There was an old apple orchard up there and we would get apples. We would meet old "Susie", the bear. She'd be standing behind the big tree. She always scared my mother to death, but not Margaret. Margaret Scheller wasn't scared of her. She had a little girl, a sweet little girl. And we would have a good time swimming and coming back, we would throw apples to "Susie" and sometimes bring her "goodies" from the cookhouse.

We had a good time doing that, but actually, the summer days there were really not that exciting...they were boring... It was dusty, dirty, and a mess.

I remember Daddy put a shower in our house so he could shower when he came home from work because he had long hauls when they were coming in from Camp 14 and 15. Ten and twelve hour hauls. But that shower was sure fun, to go downstairs and be able to take a shower. We had a "two holer" of course. That was always fun, but you had to watch for the snakes that crawled around in the rafters down in there. So my sister was always afraid so she wouldn't go alone and someone had to go with her.

## HALLOWEEN

We would come back down to Camino in the winter. I remember this one winter, in October, it was Halloween. They had built a new, I think it was a Standard station right up on the corner where the Camino Garage is now. It had a nice little out-house there with a corrugated tin roof. Burt Williams and Art, all of us, we all grew up together. They grew up right above it there.

We hooked a rope around it on Halloween and we pulled it down and went right down the middle of Camino...hell bent for election with Burt's Ford. We didn't know where to go with the damn thing so we turned and went down Larson Road, and when we got down a ways, we took it into the pear orchard and dropped it off. And then we took off for town and did the things that all kids do on Halloween.

I remember the next morning, we were at breakfast, and my dad said, "Some kids are lucky they didn't blow their car up last night". I remember my sis and I looking at him like...what's going on? He said they pulled the out-house down up there at the garage and it was sparking all the way down the highway. He said they could have caught the thing on fire and he was all upset about it. He said, "Kids, you know better than to do stuff like that. You wouldn't do anything like that." He never knew that we were the ones that did it...but we did.

We also, that Halloween, went out back and pushed over old George's out-house behind the Camino houses there on front street. We pushed it over...of course we didn't know... we knew but we should have know better...now I would think, but then we didn't. Poor old guy came out, he drank heavy, and he walked right into the hole. I'll never forget that as long as I live. We heard this ki yian and Rube and young George had him out in the backyard, with an ice cold hose on him, washing him down after they pulled him out of the hole. It's a wonder that it didn't kill him. He was yelling bloody murder and they were yelling at him to shut his mouth and get him cleaned up. I always thought that he was going to die of pneumonia, but he never did. He came through that with no problem at all.

What were some of the other bad things we did...? We used to put gates up on fireplace chimneys but didn't do anything really bad....mischievous....but we really didn't do anything bad. We had a good time but that was about it.



## WORKING IN THE FRUIT

In the summers, we would work in the fruit. My Grandma worked in the fruit. She packed peaches, pears, plums...beautiful fruit then, we've got nothing now. Us kids would get to stay out of school long enough if we worked in the fruit, to finish the job, so the fruit would get out. We had to get the fruit out. That was fun. I was in high school then. We did a lot of fun things then,

## NEW GLASSES

Lots of times, at night, we would drive down from Camino to Angie and Joe's. Mama and Daddy would go down to visit. Bill and I would get in the car...his car. He was hell bent for election...I don't know how many cars he went through...but it had to be a city parking lot full that he wrecked on that Smith Flat Road. Speed was his middle name. Of course, it didn't help any that he drank a little along with it. He would always promise when we would leave Angie's house that he wouldn't do anything bad.

We would always go down and see Lavonne first, 'cause that was his girlfriend. I just got my new glasses, I'll never forget, I think I was twelve years old. I had to have glasses and they had come in the mail that day. We went down and went roller skating and we were just skating around and having a good time and some egg-head hit Bill and I and down we went. My glasses went and we rolled over them and they broke into a million pieces. I got home, we picked up the glasses, of course. Bill was scared we were going to get hell and we didn't. My mama said "that's alright, honey, we'll just send them back and they'll make you new ones." And they did.

## HIGH SCHOOL FRIENDS

I remember going to high school. I'm not sure, but I think Lavonne was a little jealous of me, and I don't know why. She was a beautiful girl. Bill was like a brother to me and I treated him that way I guess I was too familiar, I don't know, but it bothered Lavonne. I'll never forget, outside Mr. Lung's room one day, she came up the stairs and she used to just ignore me and she went to walk by me and I said, "Just a minute." I got her over against the wall and I said, "I want to tell you something. Bill is just like my brother. I wouldn't go out with him. I wouldn't marry him. I wouldn't have anything to do with him except he's my brother and he's that close to me and I love him. If you like him, you had better be good to me because I can be nasty." From then on, Lavonne and I were speaking friends.

Also, Ruth Wilkenson, she was my good friend. She married my husband's best friend, Pete. He was a sweetheart, Pete was. Pete passed away and so did one of their sons. I think one of their son's is still building homes in Placerville. She was another one of my good friends.

I had a lot of good friends. I love thinking about the things we used to do. Maxine Bathurst. I used to upset her terrible. I took my first communion, Maxine got me to go and do my catechism and do all that stuff. She knew I wasn't a church girl, but I did it for Maxine and for myself too. It was a good thing to do. She was such a sweetheart. We had lots of fun in our life.

In high school, I guess Phil Morton was my first love of my life...or I thought he was. Or, just my best friend...I don't know how you want to put it, because he was just one of my finest friends. There was nothing smart going on between us, we just had a great time and we loved to dance.

Dancing was one of the mainstays in my life. We had the Timberino Hall up here, we had the Odd Fellows Hall in town, and we had the hall in Diamond Springs. We were at a dance every Saturday night...one of the other of them.

Phil would come and get me if I didn't have a ride and we'd go dancing. There was always a bunch of kids, we never went alone. Les Stancil, he and I would go dancing too...or, we'd all dance in the same halls. We'd go eat at midnight at the Timberino Hall. They always had food. If not, we'd eat in town...and we'd be home at three in the morning. Those were fun times...all our dancing at the Timberino Hall.

They called my husband, Marv, and George Watts, and Lil' Abner, the "Berkeley Gang." Lil' Abner, they wouldn't allow in the houses. Poor guy, he couldn't find a girlfriend. I guess he was built like a stud horse and he wasn't allowed to go to the whore houses. Anyway, they were called the "Berkeley Gang" and that was quite exciting to us small town kids. I knew Marv from the time I was 13 years old, but we didn't marry until 1945. Clint Jetmore and his twin brother ( who nobody ever really liked) also came along and were part of the Berkeley Gang.

#### GREEN LATTICE

I'll never forget the old green lattice house. It was up behind Dillenger's and down around and came back down where Carpenters store is now. It was a little top road up there. They used to call it the Green Lattice and that was the Placerville Red Light area up there. All the boys, that I knew of, were



very respectful of us girls. They would take us to a show or something and they would go up and find Donez Edwards or Marietta..they would go visit them...but at least they would treat us like ladies. Of course, we didn't know what was going on anyhow. We didn't know what life was all about. We went on our merry way thinking it was a day in the life of Cinderella.

### TEENAGERS IN PLACERVILLE

Every Saturday morning, we got to go to the movies. I remember when all the rockets and all that was going on, and if we missed one of those serials, it was terrible. We thought it was the end of the world if we missed one of those. We had a good time doing that.

We had Mac's Jumbo as our hangout. It was a hamburger joint downtown. I think Soup and Such is there now. That was the kids' hangout after school. We would come down and go there and have a hamburger and coke if we didn't have to go home on the school bus.

I rode the bus a lot back and forth from Camino, but once in a while, Mama would give us permission to go there. We could walk up to Grandma's, she lived on Cedar Ravine, and then Daddy would come and pick us up or we would stay the night and then go to school the next morning and then come home on the bus the next day. We thought that was fun.

I remember one time on "ditch day" at school, my cousin Goldie Pratt, and Maxine, and Ruth Wilkenson and I decided at lunch time to go to Mac's and get a hamburger and not go back to school. We were afraid to stay on the street because we were afraid we would get picked up by the truant office, but we came back up toward the school. Mr. Larson was the principal and Mr. Lung was the vice-principal at the time.

Anyhow, there was nothing to do and we were close to the school so we went into the Union Cemetery, right across there from Memory Chapel, and we read gravestones all afternoon. When it was time to catch the bus, we walked back up to the school and got the bus and went home.

This time when we came home on the bus, Mama had done the washing and had a basket of clothes. I loved to iron...I used to love to iron. I could get my sister to do anything if I would iron her clothes..she would do any of my chores.

So, when I got home from school, I was ironing away and Mama kept asking me how things were going and what happened in school that day. Unbeknownst to me, she already knew what had happened in school that day. She kept going and going and saying things about this or that...finally I said, "I skipped school today. I wasn't gone long though, but it was "skip day" and so I skipped". She said, "Well, that's alright. You told the truth but I just wanted you to know that I already knew it."

### BIG JOE'S FUNERAL

When I was twelve years old, we moved into Pino, there was no more camp. That was the year Big Joe passed away. I remember we went into the church and my dad fell over the casket, leaned over the casket and nearly went in it, he was so grief stricken. It was at the Catholic Church, St. Patricks. We went in and the casket was in the room before you went into the church and I'll never forget my dad..he fell over the casket, sobbing, he was so grief stricken.

### PINO (MILL POND)

We went back to Pino Grande every summer after that. When we were up at Pino we used to love to run the logs and roll them in the pond. That was a "no, no" because if the pond was really full, it was quite a dangerous spot to be in. My sister and I, and I think Gregg Bodene and I don't know who else, were running the logs and my sis went in, naturally. She always did. We got her out. We waited until we dried off some, we were in shorts anyhow. It was hot in the summer. We went home, we weren't far from the pond, two blocks I guess, if you went down over the hill....we were right there at the big mill. We always did it in the evening when the mill wasn't working and nobody was around. You wouldn't dare go in the pond when the mill was working. We just went to roll them, you know, like they roll them at the State Fair now, or the County Fair.

Anyhow, the next morning, Mama sent us down to shower downstairs under the house, that my dad had rigged up with pipes. It was a crazy thing, I think we were the only ones in camp that had their own shower. The other people in camp went to the big shower houses. So, when sis and I came up and Mama went to comb our hair, she found pitch. So we got in trouble....or I got in trouble..it was always my fault when ever anything happened to Sis. I guess I was supposed to take care of her, I don't know. But when anything happened, it was my fault. If I did it again, I was going to get my neck wrung and she was going to tell Daddy and you know, you always go through that crap. But we came out of that one all right.



### PINO COOKHOUSE

Another thing we would always do is go over to the cookhouse. The cook and the baker over there, if you went over early enough in the morning, would give us goodies. We enjoyed that. We also got stuff for "Susie", the bear. He knew we were taking that to her. He would give us bags of lettuce cuttings and all that kind of stuff for her. But we would go over and get goodies and cookies. The pastry guy made cookies like you wouldn't believe. We had a lot of fun up there.

### PINO NEIGHBORS

Dorothy Darr and her husband were nice guys. They lived right behind us and she had the cutest little baby. My sis and I used to pretend we were taking care of the baby. Next door on the other side of us was Rosamond Strand and her parents. She was a sweetheart too.

### TONI VISITS PINO

Later on, about 1945, I remember Sis's baby Toni would come up to visit Grandma because she was little then. She was three, three and a half then. She would take off her clothes every chance she got. She would not leave on her shoes, nothing. Sis, I think, still has pictures of her walking up the stairs coming up to the house. She had to go on all fours. She'd take two at a time, they were long steps. She would crawl over the steps...butt-ass naked. Mama would have to go out and find all of her clothes, and half the time, she didn't find half of them. She loved it up there. She'd get out in the garden and eat all of Grandma's strawberries. She could play in the dirt and do whatever she wanted. She'd stay for a week at a time.

### COWS IN THE GARDEN

Of course, I would sleep out on the porch. This was the summer of 1943 and they would bring all the cattle into the mountains. When they brought the cattle in, they were belled, of course. Those cattle would run Pino Grande all night. We lived on the hill on the road that went out of Pino and we never thought about the cows coming up the bank. Mama had such a nice garden...they made it up the bank and tried to eat it one night. I got my bee-bee gun, because they woke me and I started pop-shooting them. I was up all that night shooting the cows. The minute the mill started up and the men started coming, the cows would disappear. The next night, Daddy got home from work and he had to build a fence before he could go to bed because Mama was furious.

THELMA RECORDED THESE MEMORIES IN THE SUMMER OF 1993 AND KATHY  
LOVINGLY TRANSCRIBED THEM FROM THE TAPES. I KNOW WE COULD ALL  
ADD STORIES THAT WE HAVE HEARD THELMA TELL, OVER THE YEARS AND  
THAT MIGHT BE A NICE ADDITION TO THIS, SOMEDAY.

ENJOY THESE STORIES AND TREASURE THE GOOD MEMORIES.....