

# **REMINISCE WITH ME**

BY

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## INTRODUCTION

These are memories that cover my family, the things that I participated in, the things I observed and the people I knew as I lived in the small town of Verdi, Nevada.

I dedicate this story in memory of my beloved brother, Sebastian “Sub” Coli, who died May 11, 2006 and to my grandchildren, Dustin, Patricia, Kristina and Steven Coli.

July 21, 2006 marks my 78<sup>th</sup> year that I have lived in Verdi.

## REMINISCE WITH ME

I was born in Verdi on July 21, 1928. My parents were Joe and Maria Coli who had immigrated from Pisa, Italy. My dad came to America in 1904 and my mother came in 1920. They were married on February 5, 1920. I was born a twin to a sister name Bruna, but she died three days after birth. I also had an older brother, Sebastian (Sub) and an older sister, Alba. They along with my parents spoiled me as I was the baby of the family.

Before I was born, Verdi was a thriving lumber town, but by the time I was born, a fire at the sawmill and the box factory along with the depletion of accessible timber forced the Verdi Lumber Company to close operations. The closing not only affected the mill and box factory but also all the workers in the logging operations and the town as a whole.

Some found work with Sierra Pacific Power Company while others went to the lumber business in Reno and other businesses in the Sierra Nevada area. Dad had been foreman in the box factory for many years and found work in a box factory in Reno as did others. These two occupations, along with ranching, kept Verdi from becoming a ghost town at that time.

In 1929 the banks closed and this left my folks and many others without their life savings. This really hurt the people of Verdi. Luckily, my dad still had a night watchman job with the White Pine Lumber Company.

In those days the family always ate together. Mom would put the meal on the table and all of us sat at the table. Nowadays the majority of families are not too familiar with a home-cooked meal or has any time to sit down with the whole family present.

The great depression was just starting and as time went on we were thankful that we were a close knit family. We had a home of our own and food on the table.



Coli Family Pictures

*Alba, Mom, me, Dad  
and Sub*

*This picture was taken  
in 1930.*

*The house on the left  
burned down around  
1935*

*due to a chimney fire.*



*Taken in 1933, everyone has grown older. By the look on my sister's and my face, we must have been scolded.*

August 22, 1935



*This picture was taken of Mom and Dad on August 22, 1935. The pine tree to the right of my mom is where I built my home.*



*Mom had me get some good clothes on to take this picture in 1935. I had my seventh birthday just a month before. This is the last picture taken of my dad and me as he died on Feb. 5, 1936.*

I can remember my Dad and Mom going mushroom hunting. In the fall with the first rain, the mushrooms started to grow. Dad, Mom and we kids would go to the river to harvest them. They would grow in the silt under the cottonwood tree leaves. You had to be careful not to pull the tops off the mushrooms. Mom would clean them, slice them and then can them.

They also would harvest tree mushrooms that grew on the sides of the cottonwood trees. They were the favored ones and better for marinating. I still do marinating, but with store bought mushrooms.

In the late spring, we would go to the ranches and harvest tender dandelion. To me they were a little bitter but after the garnishments were added, they made a good salad.

Heating and cooking stoves were all the wood burning variety. Dad converted an old Chevy car so it could be used to run a wood saw. Wood was expensive so he would cut railroad ties. They made good firewood, but were hard to cut and heavy to carry.

When the wood saw wouldn't run anymore, we turned to sawing wood with a two man saw. It was hard to learn when it was your turn to pull, but after awhile I caught on and I cut many pieces of wood with either Mom or Sub and sometimes my sister.

Before I went to school, I can remember pleading with my Dad to take me to work with him. Dad gave in and took me to work at the mill where he was a watchman. I do remember falling asleep in the foreman's office.

As September came, so did the wine making season. Dad and the neighbors made their own wine. I remember Dad stomping the grapes in a large wash tub, then dumping the grape mash into the open top of a large redwood tank where it would ferment into wine. After the fermentation, Dad knew when the wine was ready and it was drawn from the redwood tank and put in oak barrels in the cellar where it was cool. It was aged for a period of time before it was used, but it seemed the sampling came quite fast. Each neighbor sampled the other's wine to see whose was best. After a few glasses, I don't think they could tell any difference although I'm sure each thought his to be the best.

Once in a while, Dad and Mom would entertain some shirrtail relative and friends. Mom would make a meal that wouldn't take a backseat to any restaurant seven course dinner. Dad always had his wine and we either had milk or watered down wine. My folks were not against us having a little wine with our meals.

After the meal, the men would have their coffee with brandy in it. I'll call it brandy, but I think it was homemade moonshine. I have a little chuckle with that. Often one of the relatives would bring out his accordion and I remember him playing Italian tunes and everyone would sing. Mom enjoyed her singing the tunes she had learned in Italy. Sub, Alba and I did learn some of them, but I have forgotten most of them. We had a screened front porch almost the length of the house and in the summer when they played music and sang, it could be heard throughout the neighborhood.

I have some very good and vivid memories of my Dad and Mom. The following pictures are of my family and neighbors.

## Neighborhood Get Together

This picture was taken around 1930.



1<sup>st</sup> Row: Unknown, Sub, Carlo Lorenzetti, Grace Lorenzetti holding Leada Tuccori, Bruno, Chel Lorenzetti, Alba

2<sup>nd</sup> Row: Unknown, Beppina Lorenzetti, unknown, Mom Coli, Pete Lorenzetti, Dad Coli

3<sup>rd</sup> Row: Unknown, Dan Lorenzetti, unknown, unknown, Chelestino Lorenzetti, Edna Tuccori



*Mom's wooden paddle  
for  
inserting and removing  
bread from the oven*

My dad died on February 5, 1936. Life became different after his death as Mom had always been a homemaker and depended on Dad as the bread winner. Now life was to change, as she had three children and no job. My brother, "Sub" was attending Reno schools at that time and he left school to be the family bread winner. Mom later got a job as a seamstress for the W.P.A. (Work Projects Administration). Looking back at those days, I can really appreciate how Mom made it. But like many others in her condition, she saw it through.

Mom used to bake big loaves of bread and when she removed them from the oven, we would try and be there as we enjoyed having warm bread and butter. To place and remove the bread from the oven, she used a large wooden paddle as shown in the previous picture. I still have that paddle.

Mom did a lot of canning of peaches, pears, vegetables, tomatoes and other necessary items. Although she had a garden, she bought her fruits and vegetables she used for canning. She also made her own tomato paste. I remember her boiling the tomatoes, then running them through a screen sieve until all the juice was out of them and then it had the consistency of tomato puree. She had a large board with 1" sides and poured the puree on it. Then she placed the board out in the sun to dry, thereby the result being tomato paste. Mom had rabbits, chickens and ducks. We used everyone for food except her ducks; they were her pets. We also had two goats. Mom and Sub would milk one of them. I imagine I may have drank it, but I don't remember what it tasted like. I remember trying to use the other goat to pull my wagon. She wasn't too receptive to that, and wagon, goat and I ended up on a rock pile.

There wasn't a grocery store in town so our groceries were home-delivered. A Reno grocery store, Brunetti and Patrone, would come to Verdi, take orders for the week and next week deliver and pickup a new order. They would also have fresh fruit and vegetables if people needed them. Not having a refrigerator, we had an ice box where the ice was placed in the top section and the perishables in the bottom. The iceman came once a week and we usually got 25 pounds. In the winter, we would supplement the ice by going to the Verdi Power canal flume and getting chunks of ice that had formed below the leaky flume.

Rico Quilici delivered our milk from his dairy herd. He also sold fruit and vegetables in the summer. Later we obtained our milk from the Canepa Dairy in Verdi run by Louis Canepa. It too, like the Quilici was raw milk, not pasteurized like it is today and 100% all milk. He would give us a sample of the fresh warm milk from the cow. I thought it was very good.

In my early days, I was quite a rascal and loved to tease but in a polite way, whatever that means. My sister, Alba, was my main target. I deeply loved my sister but I tormented her, sometimes maybe to an extreme. My brother was and is my best friend. I felt he would just turn the other cheek, so I didn't bother him. He was more than a brother, he was my idol. He had the patience and ability to do many things which I haven't been able to achieve to this day. It didn't make any difference what it was, he could do it. He could draw, play an instrument, carve, do masonry work, carpentry and most of all, love his family.

We hunted and fished together. He usually came out with the most fish. I didn't have the patience to fish one place very long. He would find a good fishing spot, catch

fish and then he would call me over to fish the spot. As usual, the fish quit biting or they saw a poor fisherman.

Generally the fishing season started the first of April. The runoff kept the Truckee River at high water, so we fished the Verdi Power canal in Verdi and the Washoe Power Canal. The power company kept the willows along the canals cut down so we were able to walk along the canal and fish. They didn't clear the willows for the fisherman but they did to enable the workers to break the ice and keep the water flowing in the winter during the freeze.

Sub always wanted to be a cowboy. He bought a lasso rope and to practice roping, he would have my sister and me run by him as he lassoed us. When we went to movies, the pictures were mostly westerns. I remember some of the actors; Gene Autry, Bill Boyd (Hopalong Cassidy), Tom Mix and others. We always went to the Wigwam Theater in Reno because it was cheaper. The price strikes me as being 25 cents. Sub did finally fill his desire to be a cowboy when he worked for Rico Quilici wrangling a herd of cattle during the summer.

In 1937 we had several rocks across the road from our house. My brother, Sub, picked a nice round granite rock and chiseled his initials on it. Then we moved all the rocks for more parking space. I set the rock aside. I've moved that rock several times but now, 69 years later, that rock sets in a corner of my yard in my wife, Marie's, flower bed. I'm glad I saved that rock as when I see it, it reminds me of my brother.

During the thirties it seemed as though we had more snow than we have now. We didn't have the money to buy skis, so Sub made his own. He used one inch by four inch pine lumber about six feet long, shaped the tip and grooved the bottom center of the skis to look like boughten skis. Making the skis have a curve up at the tip was another feat. He used about a thirty gallon pot, built a rock fire pit, placed the pot full of water on the fire pit and got the water to boiling. He then stood the skis tip down in the pot.



After a period, he would remove the skis, put the tip in some form of clamp and then put pressure on the back of the skis to form the correct curvature on the tip of the ski. He would leave them in this position until they were dry and the curvature was set. In the following picture, you will see a pair of his skis which I too used. The date was 1938.

People do water skiing behind a boat; well we did snow skiing behind a car. My brother would tie a rope to the back of the car and tow me on skis. I not only skied on the road but with the amount of snow we had, I was able to climb up along the side of the road; it was great fun but a dangerous one. We could do better with skis than with a sled. With the sled you had to keep on the road and if the car had to stop, you could crash into the back of it.

*Picture taken in February 1938. Picture is of me and the skis my brother made. He is in the background preparing to throw a snowball. These are the same skis I skied off of the hill across from the post office.*

The other youngsters and I skied the hills around Verdi but I never did go to the large ski areas.

I remember when I was about 12 years old I watched Doug Canonic ski down the hill across from the post office (Verdi Lumber Company building). He impressed me so that I thought if he can do it so can I. I started up the hill and while I was climbing, a crowd gathered at the post office wondering what I was going to do. Well, when I got up to Steamboat ditch, I strapped on my skis and looked straight down the hill. It looked pretty steep but I gave it a chance and straight down the hill I went. I couldn't see too much, but I knew as I neared the bottom that if I didn't do something, I'd be hitting the railroad tracks so I purposely fell. I was proud of myself that I didn't get hurt. A few days later while skiing diagonally on the same hill, I fell and ended up in the hospital. That put an end to my skiing for the year. Although I did ski after that, I haven't been on a pair of skis in over fifty years.

When the winter freeze came, the ponds around Verdi enabled us to have some good skating. We favored the pond at the Fish Hatchery because it was the largest.

One day while we were preparing to get on the ice, Oren Grant drove up with his dad's jeep. To our surprise, he drove out onto the ice and drove around. I could just visualize his breaking through the ice and dumping the jeep into approximately 12 feet of water. Everything went well and he drove off. One lucky, stupid kid.

We played the usual games that others did such as kick the can, can hockey, football, baseball, hide and seek and some of the simple games that all children played. I do remember playing football at night under the street light on Bridge Street in front of the old school house. Traffic in those days was close to nil so we weren't interrupted too much.

In 1937 my brother went to work for the Nevada Department of Fish and Game at the Fish Hatchery in Verdi. The Superintendent was Harry Johnson. During my teenage years, Lester Nicholas was the Superintendent at the Fish Hatchery.

I remember before World War II many "hobos", as they were called, rode the freight trains. We lived, and still do live, close to the railroad and many times the hobos would come to the house and ask for food or water. Mom always made sure they didn't leave without something to eat. They always offered to do some work for the food, but Mom would say no, she had two boys to do the work. They always thanked Mom.

When World War II started, the hobos seemed to disappear. They either went into the service or went to work ship building or other jobs in California.

Mom started working as a cook in the Verdi school lunch program. My sister finished high school, then attended Reno Business College and upon graduation went to work for the Reconstruction Finance Corporation which dealt with mining in Nevada.

On December 7, 1941, we were attacked by Japan and thus began World War II. Most of the eligible boys and men between 18 and 34 were either drafted or enlisted in one of the services. In the spring of 1943, Sub was drafted into the services and was assigned to the 246<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion and served in the European theater. Sub landed in the second wave on "D-Day" at Utah Beach on June 6, 1944. He was awarded the Purple Heart medal for injuries he received. He was discharged in 1946 and returned to his job at the Verdi Fish Hatchery.

When I was eleven, one of the family cousins asked Sophus Mortensen of Mortensen Garage if I could be of any help to him and guide me on the right track. Well,

it turned out to be one good friendship between Sophus and me. He took me under his wing and called me his “Swamper” (helper). It didn’t take me long to learn the sizes of wrenches, sockets and other tools. After he was finished with a job, I would clean them and put them in their proper cabinets.



*This picture of Sophus Mortensen, owner of Mortensen’s garage, was taken by the side entrance to this home in 1943.*



*Mortensen’s Garage, where I spent most of my teenage years, is about three blocks from my home. This picture was taken in the early 1930’s.*

I then was able to wash windshields, check the oil and later started pumping gas. There were five pumps; three of them were electric and two of them were manual with

the glass cylinder on the top holding the gas after you hand-pumped it. The cylinder had the gallonage markings on it. The cylinder would be pumped full of gas, then when the nozzle was opened, the gas would free flow into the car's gas tank. The amount of gas delivered showed on the cylinder scale. Gas was 20 cents and white gas sold for 15 cents a gallon.

It was about 1940 when I was twelve. I was driving cars up on the rack for him. (I'll have to say here that it was my sister, Alba, who taught me how to drive.) I progressed with each summer with more knowledge of the automotive business. I got to the point where I could rebuild a motor.

Mr. and Mrs. Mortensen treated me like a son and I respected that. I remember that on summer afternoons, Sophus would give me money to go across the street to Hank and Virginia Mosconi's grocery store and buy a quart of ice cream for our afternoon snack. Sometimes his wife, Vivian, would have cake or cookies for us. Up until 1946, I spent all my summers at the Mortensen garage. On afternoons that business wasn't too demanding, I would go swimming (I'll cover this part in later pages). At the end of each summer, they gave me war bonds. When I turned 16, they gave me a new hunting rifle and binoculars. They knew I liked to hunt. I used to use my Dad's 303 savage, but I really enjoyed my new rifle. It was a 300 Savage lever action. I think I could fire it almost as fast as an automatic; at least I tried to. Many deer were brought home using it.

I can remember using truck and car tires as toys. I rolled tires, big tires for a truck, and car tires as cars. I got enjoyment from it.



*My sister, me and my brother around 1933. Notice my summer footwear*

During most of my pre-school and early school years, summers meant running barefoot and my feet became quite tough to the rocks, sticks and the hot ground. I was not only hard on shoes but I kept wearing the knees out of my overalls due to playing in the dirt.

During the Depression, some of the families were better off than others. Our family was one of the others. My toys were hand-me-downs or else no toys at all. I was about 10 years old when I got my first new toy. My family gave me an electric train for Christmas. I cherished it and still have it to the day. Most of the boys had new or fairly new bikes. I had a hand-me-down from my brother; it didn't have a light, horn or fenders. It didn't even have two pedals. I used it with only one pedal until Sophus Mortensen welded a bolt on it for the second pedal, but I enjoyed riding it.



*Up the street from our house was the famous rock that was used as a slide. Many britches were ruined on this slide. Alba, myself and Mikey Coffman, 1935*

Verdi has always had dances. They were held in the Verdi 100F Hall (V.F.W.). My brother would attend the dances and tell us how much fun he had. I was twelve or thirteen and I must have said how much I would like to learn to dance. He said he would teach me. When Mom and Alba would go to bed, he would push the living room table aside, turn on the phonograph and lead me through the dance steps. I enjoyed learning and soon went to the dances. The more dances I attended, the better I got and then had no trouble finding dance partners. My brother was a very good dancer and had no trouble at all finding dance partners.

Our main entertainment was listening to the radio or playing games. In my early days there was no TV to keep us occupied. One game that we all enjoyed was played thusly. Mom would get a pail of bran, the kind she fed the rabbits, and empty the bran on the table. The banker would issue an even amount of coins to each player and that player would ante up a coin or coins and throw them into the pile of bran. Then the bran would be stirred up to scatter the coins. The bran would then be partitioned as to the number of players; each member then rooting

through his section of bran for the coins. The game would then continue in the same manner. At the end of the game, the player with the most coins was the winner. We spent many winter nights playing the game. The worst part about the game was the clean up after it was over. The coins were returned to the banker.

In addition to the wood burning kitchen stove, we had a wood stove in the living room which in the winter we used both wood and coal. Mom would get up and light both stoves and by the time we got up, the house was warm. In the winter and during summer thunderstorms, the electricity often failed. If it did at night, Mom would go to the pantry and bring out the kerosene lamps.

Many evenings we sat reading by candlelight. Mom would sit and crochet or knit during that time. Mom crocheted three bed covers, one for each of us kids. We still have them. She also made a patchwork spread which we still have.

Our water supply was from a hand dug well that was located on the property line and served two houses. We had a hand pump in the kitchen and that is how we got water to the home. We didn't drink the water from that well as we thought it could be contaminated being close to the houses. We did have a hand dug well about 200 feet from our house that was used as the well for drinking water only. We called it the community well as all the houses around it used it. It had a wooden wheel (windless) with a handle and rope on it and a metal bucket that would be lowered into the well and water drawn up. We would fill our bucket and bring it home for our drinking water. At home we would have a ladle to get our drinking water from the bucket.

Mom didn't have a washing machine so she used two wash tubs on a stand, washing the clothes in one tub with a washboard, then running the clothes through a hand-cranked ringer into the rinse tub then through the ringer again and off to the clothes line that was stretched between the back porch and the wood shed. These same tubs served as our bath tub. Closing off the kitchen, Mom would heat the water on the kitchen stove, pour it in the tub and that was how we took our bath. All our hot water needs was done by heating it on the stove. Like the majority of the homes in town, toilet facilities were nil in the house, but we all had outhouses. Ours was a two holer, one small hole for the kids and the other for grown-ups. The toilet paper consisted of Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Wards catalogs and if you ran out, you used newspaper. You had to massage the paper real good in order to get that soft feeling. From time to time we had to move "Old Faithful" to a new location.

In 1939 Mom decided we should get one of the fancy outhouses that the WPA was selling. It consisted of a concrete base with a nice house on it plus it had a toilet seat that as you left, the door would automatically close the lid on the toilet. If you forgot to close the lid, you would be startled as when you opened the door, the lid would slam closed. I think it could be heard through all the neighborhood. I think they got to know who forgot to lower the seat.

We sure rejoiced when an electric water pump was installed in the well. A bathroom was installed along with a hot water heater enabling us to take warm showers. Mom got a washing machine and the tubs went by the wayside.

In 1940 we bought a new 4 door Chevy. We were real happy when that happened.

In the spring of 1941, my brother had an accident with the 1928 Chevy he used for work. It damaged the car to the extent that he would probably junk it. I asked if I could have it. I talked to Sophus Mortensen about it being repaired enough to drive. We took off all the damaged parts and repaired some of them. I then cut most of the body off and made myself a jalopy. It was sufficient for me to use and me brother used it to go to work. At thirteen I had a car to drive. In those days, not too many officers were around Verdi to enforce the age limit. They kind of turned their heads.

Two girls said they would paint white polka-dots on it to dress it up and I agreed. One girl's name was Joanne Roberts; the other, her visiting friend's name, I have forgotten. Anyway, they painted the dots and added a star in the center. They added stripes and even white walled the tires. I thought it looked pretty good and added a seat in the back with rails on the sides. Everyone thought it was a great jalopy. I called it the "Suby Special." I even drove it to high school several times and the girls all wanted a picture with it.



#### *My Jalopy*

##### *1<sup>st</sup> Phase of "Suby Special"*

*This is the first phase of "Suby Special". Note the car seat; it was the original front seat. Damage to the original car was to the left front. The gas tank was put behind the seat mounted on the box. Pictured with me is Eva Colombini and our dog. Circa 1943.*



*Final Phase of “Suby Special”  
This is the finished product.  
The picture was taken in 1945 in front of our home.*

I also had another project car, a 1917 Model T Ford. I had my eye on a Model T that had been converted for use with a wood saw. It belonged to Nick Gardella. I finally asked if I could buy it and he agreed. The price I don't remember, but I'm sure it was under twenty five dollars. I scrounged up a complete body from the dumps and mounted it on the frame that I got from Mr. Gardella. I had to upholster the seat and paint it. It wasn't a vehicle I would drive on the highway as the steering in the Model T was very difficult. It kind of went where it wanted to go.

One day while driving on one of the back roads, I must have been driving a little too fast and the Model T decided it didn't like it and we ended up on its side. I had Leo Tuccori, Roy Galli, Rudy Galli and myself in the car. Well, Rudy jumped before the Model T tipped, Leo and I stuck it out but Roy was flipped out and ended up under the Model T. We lifted the Model T off of Roy; he wasn't injured. Then we tipped the Model T back on its wheels and drove home. Much more caution was used in the future when driving it. I had painted it black and it looked pretty good. I stored it when I went into the service and in 1958 I sold it for one hundred dollars. Today I wish I had kept it.

The picture shows Model T partially restored. Riding with me is Rose Gardella Nicholas, the daughter of the man I bought the original part of the Model T from. I did construct one thing with wheels that didn't have a motor. I took a car frame with the steering wheel and front steering, shortened the frame, put a horse wagon (buggy) axle under the back and put buggy wheels on front and back. I then added a car seat to it. It made a good vehicle to go downhill, but it was terribly hard to push it back up the hill for another run. One day about six of us got on for a hill run and when I got towards the bottom, I turned the wheels a little too much causing the right wheel to collapse. I think half of the boys were thrown off, without any injuries. Not having another wheel to replace the broken wheel, that vehicle became junk.

## My Model T Ford



*This is what my 1917 Model T Ford looked like when I purchased it from Mr. Gardella in 1944.*



*Model T Ford as partial restoration.*

*This is a partial restoration. When I finished, it had a windshield, lights, covered seats and I painted it black. The lady with me is Rose Gardella Nicholas, Mr. Gardella's daughter.*

As I got older, I started playing around with construction equipment but that will be another story. I'll write about it at a later date.

We had two areas in the Truckee River where we would swim. One was below the box factory site on the west end of town. We called it the Factory Hole. The area is just about covered by the bridge on the eastbound lane of I-80. The other site was west of Dog Valley Road and the Truckee River Bridge. It was the favorite one because it was

deeper and we could dive off one of the piers of the old Verdi Lumber Company railroad bridge. We did have one more swimming area that was close and that was the pool at Verdi Glen. It was not a heated pool; in fact the water was supplied by an underground spring. They did have dressing facilities on the south side of the pool, but the rest was open so one could sunbath.

In the middle of the pool was a fountain. The remnants of the pool and fountain are still visible. The Verdi Glen at one time was a dance hall and resort. Almost all of it burned in 1938. I can remember they had a temporary riding stable there and John Panelli would take me down there to ride. I think it cost 25 cents an hour. I don't know why I keep saying everything cost 25 cents, but I think that price was as common as \$19.95 is today.

Years ago sheep men moved their herds from one grazing area to the next. This also occurred in the hills around Verdi. The sheep herders would move their sheep from the hills (Mt. Rose area) on the south side of Verdi to the hills on the north side (Dog Valley area). Due to the fact that cattle ranchers owned most of the crossing areas in the valley, they found one small ranch to move their herds from south to north. Domingo Gavica, a Basque, allowed them to cross his property to facilitate the movement from south to north grazing areas. The rest of the move was through Verdi using Bridge Street. Many times we would be in school when they passed and we would look out the windows or go outside to see the sheep. The sheep men built a wooden corral in Verdi; it was by the Railroad Depot. The railroad would have cattle cars on the siding adjacent to the depot and when the sheep came down from the hills in the fall, they would be loaded onto the railroad cars and moved to winter ranges elsewhere.

Most of the sheep men and their sheep herders were Basque people. As time went on, the sheep were loaded on cattle trucks and moved from place to place. The railroad did away with their cattle cars as the trucks took over.

In 1938 when Boca Dam was being built, the work force consisted of members of the CIO union. About that time the highway from Verdi to the state line was being rebuilt. The CIO Union wanted the men from the highway job to join the CIO. A confrontation arose and the men from Nevada were ready for a battle. I remember the phone wire was strung behind our house and I learned that it was all the way to the state line. It was for communication between the two groups. I was told that men with pick handles were lined up at the Crump building. As much as I wanted to, Mom would not permit me to go to town as they had the Sheriff's Department at the state line. They got things ironed out and the CIO Union did not enter Nevada.

We didn't get telephone service until the early 1940's and then it wasn't a private line. Another party would be on the line, so many times when you wanted to use the phone; the other party would be using it. We had two rings for our phone and the other party had one. I sure was glad when we got our private line. Before we got a telephone, we would have to use the pay phone in front of the Verdi Inn.

In the spring, baseball was the leading sport for Verdi. I played with the Verdi team of older players, but the younger kids were left out. I was going to high school in Reno and I had a friend, Elmer (Al) Zunino, who had a group of neighborhood kids that liked to play baseball. So they got together and I formed a baseball team and we played Al's team; one Saturday in Verdi and the next Saturday in Reno.

As time went on, our games ceased. The team stuck together and in 1948 I quit playing on the Verdi team and we started the Verdi Juniors. We joined the Sagebrush League which had teams from Reno, Nixon, Coleville, California; the Nevada State Prison and Verdi Boosters, the team I left to form the Verdi Juniors.



1949 Sagebrush Champions

Back Row: Wes Walker, Joe Galli, Leo Tuccori,  
Frank Garcia, Roy Galli, Bruno Coli, Manager  
Middle Row: Bob Kilmer, Joe Garcia, Angelo Matteucci  
Front Row: Walt Walker, Fred Colombini, Rudy Galli,  
Keith Canonic, Charles Bedell (bat boy)

In memory of Joe Galli, Roy Galli, Wesley Walker and  
Fred Columbini

The picture was taken in the summer of 1949 at the  
Verdi baseball field on Trelease Lane.

In 1949 we won the Sagebrush League Championship. I was the manager. Our biggest accomplishment was beating the Verdi Boosters.

In the spring of 1951, I was called into the service and when I returned in 1953, most of the Verdi Junior players were playing for the Verdi Boosters, the only Verdi team.

I would like to mention some of the items of interest that I experienced. In the 1930's and part of the 1940's, the Verdi dump grounds was what is now the corner of Bridge Street and Lakeview Drive. It was on both sides of Bridge Street at that point and was scattered over quite a large area. Now million dollar homes are built there. People

complained about it and the county cleaned it all up and built one adjacent to it. They dug a pit, lined it with rock and installed a fence around a large area. The county was supposed to clean the pit when it got full. I think they did it once and then they must have forgotten about it because the dump area got so full it had even extended out the gate. Mr. Jack Fugitt, the owner of the Donner Trail Resort complained about the dump. The county cleaned it up and closed the dump area. Tony Franchi and Bruno Del Grande got a franchise to operate the collection of garbage. All other items of disposal had to be hauled to Reno.



*Bruno Coli The proud  
Manager of the Verdi Juniors  
1949*

The dump site had a huge rock at the west end and we would use it to place bottles and see how many bottles we could break with rocks. The top of the rock was always covered with broken bottles. That rock is still there. It sits to the west of the house on the west side of Bridge Street and to the north of Verdi school (behind 415 Bridge Street).

In the early thirties, I remember the Indians from Pyramid Lake coming to Verdi selling large fish. They also sold fish eggs (roe) from the large fish. Fishermen used the roe for bait and it increased their ability to catch fish. My brother used it, but he used it sparingly as it was hard to get. The use of fresh roe is now forbidden.

We have had a post office in Verdi for umpteen years. I don't know about the early years, but in my time if you wanted to know anything about what was going on or who was doing what, you had to go to the post office. It was the "gossip" capital of Verdi. I think it is no longer as now the postmaster and assistants are not Verdi residents.

Sometimes for our transportation to Reno, my sister and I would ride the train. It came by Verdi in the morning and another train would return that evening. I don't mean to say the train only ran from Verdi to Reno. It was the passenger train that went to California. The train also brought the mail to Verdi. The Postmistress would hang the mail bag on a stand at the depot and as the train went by, the mail person on the mail car would raise a hook and collect the mail bag. The incoming mail was thrown from the train. The train did stop to unload larger packages.

During World War II, many items were rationed such as coffee, sugar, meat and other commodities. In order to control the rationing, ration stamps were used and if you overused your stamps, you went without. Gasoline was also rationed. It was proportioned as to the number of vehicles and the use of the vehicle, which is whether it was used for work or whatever. Workers that had to travel to work received more stamps.

During that time I attended Reno High School. I didn't miss very many dances that were held at the school. I also attended dances at the "Husky Haven", a recreation building that was for high school students. At that time there was only one high school in the Reno area. Sparks had a high school, but their students didn't attend the "Husky Haven".

Husky Haven gave me an idea to do something for the teenagers of Verdi. I discussed this with Marion Bettencourt (Panelli). We decided to start a dance club using the Verdi School auditorium. We recruited about thirty five youngsters and started the club. We had weekly dances that were chaperoned by a parent or an adult. This went on to last for several years.

During the late thirties and early forties, my brother, Henry Hunken and Alfred Nicholas would get together and have a jam session. Sub played the harmonica and later the mandolin. Henry played the piano, mandolin and banjo. There were also two singers in the group, Doris Powning (Aldridge) and Alona Nicholas. The group catered to western music.

In the late forties Henry, Sub and Tom Trelese got together at least once a month and jammed. They held their jam sessions at each other's homes, taking turns as to who would be the host. I enjoyed it when they came to our house as my sister and I got to join in. I couldn't carry a tune in a paper bag, but I enjoyed trying. I remember that close to midnight Mom would bring out the refreshments, and then many times the music would continue. It was surprising that Mom, being Italian, would have a favorite song such as "When Irish Eyes are Smiling." In 1977 when Sub became ill, the jam sessions stopped.

I must mention before I go any further about my brother and his family. Sub met Erica Depaoli in 1944 while he was in Holland during the war. After he came home from the service, he sent for her to become his bride. They were married on July 19, 1947. On July 12, 1948, Patricia was born. They lived at the fish hatchery near Sub's work. In 1961 Sub built their house in Verdi, next to mine. They have lived there ever since. Patricia went to the Verdi school, Reno schools and then the University of Nevada, graduating with an education degree. She married Randall Ward and they have two children, Jeffrey and Stacey. Their home base now is in Connecticut.

In 1948 Verdi had an earthquake that destroyed the southwest corner of the Crump Building (old Verdi Lumber Company building). It also damaged the Verdi Elementary School. They wanted to condemn it but didn't have the money to build a new school. So they reinforced the walls with steel plates and the school continued in use until the fall of 1962 when the new school was completed.

Verdi had its share of fires from 1888 to now. But most of them in the early 1900's were caused by the saw mill burner. The sparks from the burner would ignite the grass and then the west wind would bring the fire right into town. At one time, 42 homes burned in downtown Verdi. The biggest structure fire I saw was in 1944 when, just across the tracks from our home, the Community Church, a small home, Jepsens Lodging, Polly Meyer's home and the Mountain View Hotel burned. Other structure fires have occurred, but only one at a time.

Verdi officially started a Volunteer Fire Department in the late 1940's and it was incorporated in 1950. At the time of incorporation, Joe Mosconi was elected chief. The department had two engines; a homemade one and a 1928 La France that had cost \$800. It had been purchased from Los Angeles, California Fire Department. Our first fire house was a Quonset hut that was next to the Court House in the center of town. A siren was installed on two 40 foot poles and was sounded by pushing a button in the fire house, but that meant that the first fireman there had to keep pushing the button instead of going to the fire. I built an alarm unit so the button would be pushed once and the siren would automatically be sequenced. It worked out pretty good except one night during a winter

snow storm we had lightning. It was so strong that it shook the fire house wall and initiated the alarm system. All the firemen came to the fire house expecting a big fire but were glad to learn that it was the lightning that set off the alarm. It was not a very good night to be fighting fire.

We continued building up the fire engines from surplus equipment and kept acquiring firefighting protection for the firemen. Looking back on the amount of time I spent with the department, I don't know why my wife, Patricia, didn't divorce me. I think at times she thought I was spending more time working on fire engines than I was with her.

We always laughed at some of the occurrences that happened. For instance, we had acquired a fire engine from the Government and we were quite proud of it. We had tried it out on small fires, but had never pumped from a water source. We had a house fire at the Belli Ranch and it required pumping water from the Power Company canal. Fred Colombini went down to place the engine in pumping position. When we asked for water, he started the pump. A screeching noise was emitted from the pump and a herd of Belli's milk cows came running up to the engine to see what was going on. Needless to say, we never pumped a drop of water but we sure had one hell of a cow caller. We had many laughs.

We financed the Fire Department by having a barbeque and a street dance once a year. We would close off Second Street between Bridge Street and Mortensen garage. Tables were set in one section of the street and the dance area adjacent to them. We had live music. We would start serving at 6 p.m. until the affair would generally be closed by midnight. We also had a carnival type area for the kids. We had a dunk tank, dart games, bottle throw and others. When we acquired the old school as our firehouse, we moved our yearly affair there. We had stopped having a dance some years before. We had the barbeque and a carnival set up for the kids. Raffles were held and some very nice prizes were awarded.

Our fire equipment continued to increase; we built up more fire trucks, fire hose and fire clothes (turn outs) for the firemen. Today the department is a very well equipped fire fighting and emergency unit.

My schooling started in September 1934 when I started school in the Verdi Elementary School. The school consisted of three classrooms, an auditorium and a coal room. The classrooms were heated by a stove that burned coal. I might add that there were two restrooms that also contained a cloak room where we could hang our coats, lunch boxes and any other articles such as skates, baseball gloves and hats.

At the age of six, my sister, Alba, escorted me to my first day of school. As I entered the first grade class, my interpretation of school began. My teacher was Mrs. Edland and as she gave us our assigned seats, I began to rebel and it continued until I decided school wasn't for me. When she left the room, I saw my chance and I snuck out the back door and went home. Just as luck would have it, my dad was home and he marched me right back to school. That settled me down to start enjoying school.

In 1935 I advanced to the second grade and again my teacher was Mrs. Edland. By that time, I enjoyed having her as my teacher; she was a very nice person.

I remember that while I was in second grade, we made containers out of phonograph records and planted a tulip bulb in them. We heated the record at the stove and then when it got pliable, we turned up the sides to form the container. The hole in the

center of the record served as the drain. We then placed our plant in a tray to catch the water for the plant. I doubt if my tulip ever bloomed.

In 1936 I moved to the intermediate classroom and I was now a third grader. My teacher at first was Miss Ruth Lyons. I had a crush on her, but it didn't last long as I became interested in younger girls that I could tease. In mid-year Miss Gaffney became our third grade teacher.

I might say that up to this point in my schooling, the principal was Mr. Roland Bastian. He was a very nice person but if you were asked to do something and hesitated a little too long, he would grab you by the short hair on the back of your neck and lift you out of your seat. I can vouch for that with first hand experience.

I'm going to say right here that the three rooms were divided grade wise. First and second grades were in room one; third, fourth and fifth in room two and sixth, seventh and eighth in room three. The principal taught sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

In the fourth grade my teacher was Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Mary Rowe was her substitute. Mrs. Smith really drilled us on penmanship. I did okay on the circles, but my up and down parts were either too short or too long.

That school year we had a new principal. His name was Mr. Jess Ralphs. He started a school band. I wasn't very instrument talented, so I ended up playing the symbols. Mr. Ralphs taught for two years.

In the fifth year my teacher was Mrs. Stuntebeck. She was also the school music teacher. Up to that time all my teachers lived in Reno, but Mrs. Stuntebeck lived in the brick building that is now Kalin's Antique Store (used to be Bony's Candy Store).

In the sixth, seventh and eighth grades my teacher was Mr. Henry Bryant, the school principal. He and his family lived across the street from the Verdi Inn. He was an alright guy; he would join in many of our basketball games and even brought some of the boys to the Reno YMCA where we played against other teams.

In June of 1942 the eighth grade graduation class had four graduates. Marion Bettencourt, Mickey Coffman, David Shirley and me. We were glad to graduate, but sad about leaving the old school. Marion and I were the only two to continue our schooling in Reno. David and Mickey had moved from the Verdi area.

I can't leave without telling about the time I attended the Verdi School without telling about some of the playground equipment, the activities, the functions at the school and the sponsor. Like most grammar schools of that date, our playground equipment consisted of teeter-totters, swings, a merry-go-round, a slide, and a monkey bar that most children had to be lifted up to reach the swing bar and then another child would push him causing him or her to swing. The problem was getting off of the swinging bar as it was five feet off the ground. Many arms and wrists were injured as the swinger fell to the ground.

Another piece of equipment looked like a May pole with several chains hanging from the top and handles at the end of the chain. Several children at a time could elevate themselves off the ground by running fast around the pole, but many of the children would want to do it alone while another pushed. They would really elevate the swinger off the ground. This was really a no-no, but it was done if the teacher wasn't looking. I called them Johnny strikes or giant strikes, but I'm sure that wasn't the real name. The monkey bar, teeter-totters and the Johnny strikes were later done away with as too many injuries occurred.

We also had a dirt basketball court on the west side of the school, a football field and other games area on the north side of the school. The baseball field was on the west side of the school, but outside the fence. It was an ungraded area where the bases were rocks sticking out of the ground and the outfield was covered with sagebrush and rocks but everyone still enjoyed it during recess or lunch break.

At times, during bad weather when we would have a good snow storm, the snow on Bridge Street hill in front of the school would be packed down by automobiles and it made a good place to sled. During lunch time and after school, we used the hill for sledding. One could start at the school and if you were lucky, sled all the way to Second Street (that was before US 40 was moved to its present location).

At the end of the school year, all the students would have one day to attend classes in funky clothes. It was called "Hot Socks" Day. It really was a party day.

In the late thirties we had a lunch program. The meals were cooked and served in the basement. I believe the meals cost twenty five cents and to those who couldn't afford it, they were free.

The Parent Teachers Association was very active in sponsoring functions at the school. At Christmas each classroom would have a play. The auditorium would have a big Christmas tree all decorated with lights and ornaments. The PTA purchased gifts and after the children's presentations were over, Santa Claus would come down the stairs and present a gift to each student.

At the end of the school year, the upper classes would go on a field trip in the vicinity of Verdi. The last one we had before graduation was a hike to the Airplane Beacon Lights which were located on the hills south of the Garson Ranch (Boomtown). The lights operated at night as a directional guide for airplanes. Another beacon light was located to the southwest across the valley. It was located on what the Verdi residents call Crystal Peak, but others call it Lady Bug Peak. The hike to the first two beacons was, as I remember, the longest hike we took, about three miles. It was great to observe Verdi and all the valley from these two locations. A few years later as I went by the beacons on my way deer hunting, the sight of those two beacons brought back memories of the hike and the school days.

Another end of the year activity was the annual school picnic at Bowers Mansion. All the parents and children would meet at the school the morning of the picnic so we could all travel as a caravan. Mr. Crump, who ran the school bus, would donate his time and bus for those who didn't have a way to get to Bowers Mansion. We would arrive at Bowers about 10 a.m. and the children would immediately head for the swimming pool. It had warm water from a geothermal well. At noon everyone would leave the pool for lunch. Each family had their own lunch and there was always food for those who didn't bring any. The PTA would furnish the ice cream cups for all. After lunch, swimming continued and by three o'clock everyone began leaving Bowers Mansion. Bowers Mansion was built by Mr. Bowers, a gold baron, during the Virginia City hey-day. This end of the year event had been going on for many years. I don't know how long the tradition lasted after 1942.

The Verdi school was used for various occasions such as baby showers, Catholic church services, Catholicism classes, plays, various town occasions and in the 40's, a teenage dance club for Verdi students.

As I mentioned before, my schooling in Verdi ended in June 1942.

In September 1942 my education continued in Reno, Nevada. We were bused to Reno schools by Robert Crump and later by George Powning. I entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade at North side Junior High School. It was located on Fourth Street between Lake and Center Streets (where the Bowling Stadium is now located). In September 1943 I entered Reno High School; it was located on West Street between Fifth Street and Fourth Street (where the Sundowner Hotel is located).

I attended the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades at Reno High, graduating in June 1946.

In September 1946 I entered the University of Nevada and graduated with a B.A. degree in business in the fall of 1950. I truly enjoyed my years in schooling. Now I had to enter another phase of my life; the school of hard knocks.

While I attended the University, my summers were spent working. My first job in 1946 and then in 1947 was with the Nevada Fish and Game. They had an upland game farm in Verdi located at the end of Trelease Lane. They raised chukar and pheasants and then planted them in various areas in Nevada. In 1948 I worked in a grocery store as a delivery man and stock person. 1949 and 1950 were the best years as I worked for the U.S. Forest Service as a patrolman. I was stationed at my home in Verdi, equipped with a pumper truck and I patrolled from Reno to Floriston, California. I also was called to aid other areas if needed.

In the fall of 1950 while attending UNR, I went to work for the Fish and Game and remained there until I entered the service.

In June of 1950 I received my commission as Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve. In March of 1951 I was called to active duty as a Platoon Officer with my assignment being at Camp Roberts, California. I was later reassigned to Fort Benning, Georgia for advanced training. In March of 1952 my next assignment was in Korea with the Second Platoon of "C" Company, Second Battalion, 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. During my time in Korea I was promoted to First Lieutenant. On November 16, 1952 while I was in Korea, my mother passed away. I was not allowed to come home.

In February of 1953 having served my tour of duty, I was reassigned to return to the states. We came home on the U.S.S. Gordon and landed at the presidio in San Francisco. My sister, Alba, met me as I got off the boat. I was separated from the service and reassigned to a reserve unit at Stead, Nevada. By 1955 and having fulfilled my obligation to the Army, I was discharged. By that time I had achieved the rank of Captain. Thus my army days had ended.

In March of 1953, I went to work for the Sierra Pacific Power Company. I started at \$1.47 per hour. Before and during my time in the service, I courted a young lady I knew in high school and on September 6, 1953 Patricia Ann Butterfield and I were married in a Catholic Church in Santa Rosa, California. This was the beginning of my second family.

In November 1953 we started building our home in Verdi. We lived with my sister, Alba, during the construction of our home. I drew up the plans and with the help of my brother put up the foundation.

Pat had graduated from Nursing School and was working for St. Mary's Hospital in Reno. We agreed that with the money she made, we would build the house and my paycheck would be used for living expenses. I worked evenings, weekends and vacation

and with the help of my brother, we were able to move into our house for Christmas 1955.

We withheld having children until we were in our own home. On September 3, 1956 our first child, Joseph Merrill, was born. Pat quit working and became a stay at home mom. As usual for the firstborn, the whole family was thrilled and he received lots of attention and pictures galore. I'm just now getting around to putting them in an album. I guess that is what they call procrastination. He was about two when he saw it snowing and he wanted a snowman and dad obliged. A picture that follows is worth a thousand words.



*Picture of me in 1952 after our battalion was relieved from Hill 1243 to a rest area on the Imje River in Korea.*



*Picture of my son, Joe, at the age of two in the winter of 1958.  
This is the snowman he wanted and I built for him.  
The snowman was built in our yard.*

On February 21, 1958 our second child, Michael William, was born. He was a preemie weighing 2 pounds, 7 ounces. Michael toughed it out and after six weeks in the hospital, we brought him home. He picked up weight and at six months he was doing fine. He commented to me just the other day as to why we didn't take as many pictures of him as we did of Joe. He answered himself that he guessed the camera belonged to Joe. I had to laugh at that.

On July 27, 1962 we had a third addition to the family. We named him Brian Lewis. We did manage to take more pictures of him. As kids will be kids, each one had his own characteristics; Joe was the quiet one, Mike was the rascal and the tease, Bri looked up at his brothers and was a little of both. We tried not to spoil them but I had a very caring family, especially my sister who loved them. There wasn't anything she wouldn't do for them. Ever since I can remember we had a nickname for her, "Tata", and the kids picked it up as soon as they started talking. When they got a little older, they always wanted to go see Tata. She lived in our old house which was two houses up the street where my brother, sister and I were born.

As for toys, they got their share as both Pat and I wanted our kids to have a better time than we had when we were kids. I believe every family feels that way. As time went

on, the boys grew and wanted bicycles so they got new ones with two pedals, not like my hand me down which had only one pedal.

In 1965 I put an addition on the house and added a basement. I had plywood forms that I used for the concrete basement walls. I took about six of the forms and built them an above ground pool. I had inserted sheet plastic in the rectangle of the forms. I filled it with water and the boys and of course, their friends used it for their swimming pool. The next year I bought a plastic above ground pool. Brian was four years old and could swim pretty good. In 1967 my brother-in-law got married and we attended the wedding, staying overnight at a motel with a pool. The boys enjoyed it so much that when I got home I started drawing plans for an in-ground swimming pool. In 1967 I finished building the addition and in 1968 started on the swimming pool. The pool area was dug out and I shaped it and Joe and Mike helped me install the steel reinforcing rods. I then had a gunite installer pour the gunite (concrete) over the steel and with the help of friends, shaped the pool. After a few weeks when the concrete was set, we filled it with water and in 1968, the boys and again, friends, swam in it. The concrete deck was poured with the help of some friends. In 1969 my brother helped me plaster the pool.

In 1970 the friends of the boys started coming and Pat was overloaded with calls, so we said your kids can come, but you have to supervise them. That kind of cut down the requests. The boys and family enjoyed the pool and to this day, their children use the pool.

Pat and I enjoyed watching the boys move through their growing stages. We did some camping and had outings to different campgrounds in the Sierra Nevada area. I remember going camping in the hills south of Verdi in Bell Creek Canyon. We set up our tent and that evening, we got to talking about wild animals and Pat got a little leery of sleeping in the hills, especially when Joe said he thought he saw some bear droppings. We also toured the parks in Oregon and along the California coast. The best one was our stay in Yosemite Park. The waterfalls were beautiful; one of them is called Vernal Falls. Mike was quite young, but he called them Venereal Falls. We still laugh about that.

The first time the family went fishing in the Truckee was near the California state line and when we caught some fish, we decided to build a fire and cook the fish. The boys thought this was a great thing to do and they enjoyed the fish.

Joe was friends with Ira La Rivers, Jr. and they took to herpetology (reptiles and amphibians). Dr. La Rivers was a biology professor at the University of Nevada. In the summer, he and his wife, Marian, toured Nevada looking for different species of reptiles. They took the boys with them and rattlesnakes were collected. Young Ira displayed them at Reno High School lecturing about their poisons. One day Pat had to drive them to school and Ira brought two snakes in a burlap bag and he and Joe sat in the back seat. As they were riding, the boys talked about the snakes. Pat asked where the snakes were and Ira said they are safe, I have them under the front seat. Pat became nervous and didn't enjoy the drive. She didn't want any more snakes after that.

Mike was friends with Pat Alberti, the son of Johnny and Nan Alberti. They were into antique bottle hunting and took Mike with them. Mike acquired some very nice bottles. When I was digging in our back yard with my back hoe, I uncovered a Chinese liquor bottle and that set Mike to digging, but he didn't find anymore. Mike also accompanied the Alberti's when they fished at Pyramid Lake. He caught quite a fish and he was very proud of that.

Brian took the easier route; he went into ceramics along with Melissa and Billy Rainey and Tina Matteucci. I do believe they may have learned how to have patience when doing things.

Moving onto another stage in life, the boys all wanted motorbikes so three new motorbikes arrived on the scene. About that time motocross was going strong, so off came the lights, horn and a change of mufflers and we had dirt bikes.

I had bought Brian a small one as he couldn't handle the medium sized bike. I remember my sister-in-law said she liked to ride bicycles, so we said try Brian's motorbike. She got on it and took off, but after about twenty five feet, she lost control and crashed into a tree. That was the end of her bike ride. Joe went on to race motocross and he and Mike along with their friends enjoyed riding at the "Pits" which is located on the north side of the East Verdi exit.



*Getting ready to go to the pits are Brian Coli, Joe Coli, Mike Coli (gold helmet), Frank Thompson and Pat Alberti (white helmet). The youngster by Brian is one of his friends.*

One day as I was looking out the kitchen window I saw Mike and Pat Alberti laying aluminum cans down in the back yard. Then I heard my truck start up and Mike started running over the cans while Pat guided him as to which hadn't been smashed. I asked Mike why he used the truck and he said that the last time they smashed cans with their shoes, it was too hard so they used the truck. I guessed that was a good idea.

All my boys learned to drive by 13. I had an old convertible Corvair that I was toying with that I let them drive. They asked if they could go across the tracks with it where they had more area to drive. I agreed because I could watch them from the house. I never knew until thirty years later while we were on a hunting trip that they and some friends had taken the Corvair on a joy ride on the Quilici Ranch Road. I asked what other things I don't know about. They just laughed.

Then came the cars as I stated, my boys learned to drive early. During their early high school days, they rode the bus. When they had their driver's licenses, they used the family Volkswagen Bug until they got cars of their own. Joe took to four wheel drive

Wagoneers which he continued to use while attending the University. He later acquired a VW bug which he took to Kansas State.

By the time, Mike was 15 years old, he had two 1956 Chevys to work on. He was and is very mechanically inclined. He changed out motors and put higher performance parts in them. Then came the drag racing. The number of cars and trucks he accumulated was unbelievable.

Brian, on the other hand, went a different way. We bought him a new Ford Mustang. He wanted something faster so he traded it for a used Datsun 240Z.

On March 19, 1971 my beloved sister, Alba, died. She is buried in the family plot at the Crystal Peak Cemetery in Verdi.

All three boys attended Verdi Elementary School, Swope Middle School, Reno High School and the University of Nevada, Reno. Joe graduated from UNR and then attended Kansas State University and in 1981 graduated with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. Mike and Brian also attended the University of Nevada, but both dropped out after two years and followed their desired work. Joe is now in partnership with Stephen Damonte and they own the Comstock Large Animal Hospital in Pleasant Valley, Nevada. Mike is an Electrical Substation Foreman for Sierra Pacific Power Company. Brian is still employed in California.

In 1976 I built an addition to the house, a two car garage and remodeled the kitchen. My brother and I did all the construction of the garage; we even made our own trusses for the roof. That ended the construction on the house. Pat and I could now enjoy it and ourselves, which we did.

While still working for the power company, I started collecting construction equipment. In 1979 I passed the State Contractors Board test and got my contractors license. I went into partnership with a fellow Sierra Pacific employee, Reeve Fagg, and started doing contract work in my spare time which was Saturday, Sunday and vacations. Reeve enjoyed working on the used equipment we acquired. If it's made of iron, there is nothing he couldn't make work. We worked on and got the equipment running and looking good.

In 1985 we had two marriages. In January, Joe married Jody Castillo and in May, Mike married Kristine Dunson. Joe and Jody have two children; Kristina, 14 and Steven, 13. Mike and Kristine have two children; Dustin, 18 and Patricia, 13.

Joe and Jody have a home in Golden Valley, Nevada. Mike and Kristine have their home in Verdi. Mike had my folks' home but tore it down and built one to his liking. Dustin will be graduating from McQueen High School on June 8, 2006 and then will enter the University of Nevada, Reno this fall.

In 1983 my son, Joe got a baby burro that the mother had abandoned at the Palomino Valley Wild Horse station. Pat had to bottle feed her and she babied it to health. It turned out to be a real pet and pest. I never did break her for riding, although Mike would get on her back once in a while.



*“Sweet Pea” at about two weeks old.  
1983*



*Sweet Pea and me taken in 1984.*

In 1985 Joe decided he was going to have her pack their camping gear when he and his wife, Jody traveled to the Ruby Mountains. He even bought all the pack rigging. Well to make a long story short, they arrived at the trailhead, harnessed up the burro with her pack and loaded her down with camping gear. “Sweet Pea,” as we call her, decided that wasn’t for her and she laid down. They couldn’t figure out what was wrong, so they removed the pack and low and behold, Sweet Pea jumped, healthy and frisky as ever. Joe and Jody ended up carrying the camping gear and Sweet Pea just walked along. If she could laugh, I’m sure she would have. They never tried having her pack again. Even at

that, they enjoyed their camp trip. Jody was very explicit in telling the story and we really laughed.

Oh! I must not forget the cow. How we acquired the cow was an accident. A truckload of cattle was on its way to California and somehow the cattle got uneasy and one cow went down and was trampled. That night when the trucker stopped to check his load, he noticed that one cow was down. He unloaded his truck at the Washoe County Fairgrounds and called for a veterinarian to euthanize the injured cow. My son, Joe, responded to the call and he thought he could possibly save the cow. His wife, Jody, had other thoughts; she could see beef on the table. Joe called me and explained the situation and asked if I wanted a cow. Of course me, who collects all kinds of things said, "sure."

When I arrived at the fairgrounds, Jody had her two horse trailer backed up to the cow. When I saw the cow, my thought was, "What did I agree to?" We pulled the cow into the trailer with a heavy rope and a come-along. At home we unloaded her the same way and dragged her into the small barn. Joe treated her and said that if she didn't respond to feed, Jody would get her wish of beef on the table. The next day, I fed her some hay and she ate, but wouldn't get up. I fed for two more days and she still wouldn't move. My thought then was to try a little therapy by slinging a harness under her and lifting her into the air. This would stretch her legs down and relax them. I talked this over with Joe and he said to try it.

I went down to the army surplus store and bought a bag that the Air Force uses to drop food and things to the men on the ground. I made a belly sling out of it and pulled it under the cow. I had a chain over the rafters of the barn and with a rope and come-along; I tightened up on the belly sling. After a few minutes, the cow began to lift and I got her high enough so her legs were hanging off the floor. I did this for a few days and she didn't seem to mind. Joe kept her medicated and said she looked okay. I decided something else should be done, so I took the backhoe and lifted her, thereby being able to swing her out of the barn. I did this for several days putting a little more weight on her legs everyday. At the end of two weeks she was doing pretty good, but not standing on her own. About two days later, I went out to feed her and there she was, standing on her own four legs. I almost cried I was so happy to see the results. She continued to improve and by about the middle of summer, "Betsy" was perfectly content in the pasture just up the street. By fall, she started to change and broke out of the pasture and took off to the downtown area. As time went on, my son, Mike, and I had several occasions of chasing her after she would break through the pasture fence, so we brought her home.

By late October, we had a snowfall of about three inches and when I went down to feed Betsy before going to work, she was not in the corral. It was easy to see where she had broken out and the snow made it easy to track her. She had gone east along US 40 highway about a mile toward the Canepa Ranch and I guess a sheriff's officer had put her in the corral. When I got there she was lying down so I thought I'd put a rope on her and bring her home. When she saw me with the rope, she broke out of the corral and took off down the highway. I cornered her in the field just before the River Bend rock cliff. I started to swing the rope to lasso her and she took off down the highway toward the rock cliff. Luckily she left the highway at the cliff and took off along the outside of the guard rail onto a dirt road across the river bridge up to the railroad tracks, then along the tracks back towards Verdi. I didn't see where she had gone after I tried to rope her, but the snow made it easy to track her. When she got up to the River Belle Trailer Court, she crossed

the railroad tracks and headed up to the Garson Ranch. I decided to go to work and then call Chris Garson to see if he saw her. He said she was at the corral fence, so he let her in. I told him that I would pick her up after work.

After work, I went to pick up Betsy and Chris told me she had broken out of the corral by going over a six foot rock wall. He and his brother, George, tracked her toward Boomtown Casino and across Interstate 80 to a field that had a herd of cattle in it. The owner of the cattle found Betsy along the fence and let her in. He happened to be a friend of my son, Joe. I couldn't tell which one was Betsy as all the cattle were white-faced Herefords just like her. Even my son, Mike and my wife, Pat, couldn't identify her. It appeared she was looking for a mate all along. Joe noticed she was pregnant and we kept her there until the other cows were moved out. Then he gave her to the Damonte Ranch in Pleasant Valley. I understand that she had a calf shortly thereafter and several more in the years after that. A few years later, Joe had to put her down as she developed cancer.

In 1953 I considered my job with Sierra Pacific was of a temporary nature. As it turned out, it lasted for 33 years. In 1986 I took early retirement. I retired as manager of Electric Meter operations and went full time into the construction business. I did installation of underground utility lines, house pads, footings, septic systems and landscaping for many of the new homes in the new subdivisions in Verdi.

On March 5, 1987, almost one year after my retirement, my wife, Pat, passed away. I had a very strong family that helped me through the hard spots.

All the time I was growing up, in fact up to the time our children were in high school, Verdi remained a small town.

Everyone knew everyone else and many conversations took place in the middle of the street. If a car came along, the car would move and the people in it would wave or else many times stop and talk. Now if you do it, you risk your life or else you get the horn.

## Bruno Coli retires after 33 years with Sierra



"When I first came to work for the company there wasn't very much demand on the system. We were up to about 125 megawatts," recalled Bruno Coli, who 's retiring from Sierra Pacific in April after 33 years.

"Now we're up to around 700 megawatts," added Bruno, the manager for Electric Meter Operations.

Bruno joined the company in 1953, after earning his business administration degree at the University of Nevada Reno and serving as an Army infantry officer during the Korean War.

"I think the company is a good one to work for," he noted. "Anyone who wants to get ahead sure can by putting his nose to the grindstone."

Bruno's a good example of that "nose to the grindstone" philosophy. He began his career with Sierra as a laborer with the construction department and worked his way up through the ranks — from electrician's helper to electrician to foreman to working foreman to assistant load dispatcher. He also worked in Electric Meter Operations as a field supervisor and as the supervisor for the metering section.

Over the past three decades Bruno has witnessed the many changes that

have occurred at Sierra, including the company's transition from a power purchaser to a power producer.

"That's when the company really started growing and the economy grew with it," he said.

Although he's retiring from Sierra, Bruno's going to remain busy with the excavating business he and a partner have operated on a part-time basis for the past 15 years, RB Excavating.

He may also resume fishing again and, along with his wife, Patricia, "enjoy parts of the United States we haven't seen before."

Of course, they'll also have more time to spend with their three sons, Joe, Brian and Mike, who's an electrician for Sierra.

"The thing I'm going to miss is the people I've worked with; you miss seeing the same friends," Bruno said.

*My temporary job that lasted 33 years.*

I'd like to introduce you to most of the older people and most others of them in my generation. They will be shown in different groups. All the people in the first group were in some type of business and so listed. The second group consists of Verdi residents prior to my generation. The third group consists of residents of my generation or close to it. The people in group one, two and three are all dead. Group four is all residents that now live or have lived in Verdi. I'm sure that some of the ones that moved away may be dead as of this writing, but I'll list them as known Verdi residents.

Group One:

Louis and Eva Canepa – Rancher, Dairyman – Verdi  
William and Ester Canepa – Rancher, Dairyman – Mogul  
Manuel Silvia – Dairyman – Mogul  
Mario and Ermina Belli – Dairyman – Mogul  
Martin and Chris Mortensen – Rancher – Verdi  
Chris, Andrew and George Garson – Rancher – Verdi  
George Hansen – Chicken Rancher – Verdi  
Mr. McKenzie – Rancher – Verdi  
Hugh and Anna Holstrom – Rancher – Verdi  
Rico and Bruno Quilici – Rancher – Verdi  
Grover Hill – Rancher – Verdi  
Charles G. Powning – Justice of the Peace – Verdi  
Walter “Tubby” Grignon – Verdi Lumber Company train crew  
Bert Lynn – Mountain View Hotel – Verdi Lumber Company train crew  
Henry Hunken – Ranch and land owner – Verdi  
Domingo Gavica – small Rancher – Verdi  
Hank and Jim Mosconi – Rancher – Verdi  
Frank and Dora Durham – Service Station – Verdi  
Leon Bony – Bony Candy Store – Verdi  
Alibrando and Stella Panelli- Verdi Inn – Verdi  
Sophus and Vivien Mortensen – Garage and Service Station – Verdi  
Les and Vi Schoen – Last Chance Coffee Shop – Verdi  
Bill & Effie Engel – Bill and Effie’s Boomtown – Verdi  
Vic Miolini – Service Garage and Gas Station – Verdi  
Ernie Zunino – Service Garage and Gas Station, Cottage Cafe - Verdi  
Al Martel – Grocery Store – Verdi  
Mr. Leland – Motel – Verdi  
Hank and Virginia Mosconi – Grocery Store – Verdi  
Henry “Hank” Mosconi – Justice of the Peace – Verdi  
Robert and Anna Crump – Verdi Stage Line (school bus) – Verdi  
George Powning – Verdi Stage Line (school bus) – Verdi  
Jack D. Harker – Harker and Harker Pole Line Construction and  
River Bell Trailer Park – Verdi  
Bill Hadley – Garage Service Station and Cafe – Verdi  
Leno Del Grande – Banker – Reno

#### Group Two:

Wesley and Catherine Walker, Joe and Zelfa Tuccori, Elise Middaugh, Ruth Garson, Adam and Leontina Matteucci, Pete and Beppina Lorenzetti, Wallace and Mary Carlson, Norman "Pee Wee" Harris, Dan Lorenzetti, Ella Certain, Minnie Bucking, Ella Allen, Rose Quilici, Walter and Edel Holstrom, James and Melissa Canonic, Oscar and Dora Holstrom, Andrew and Catherine Gardella, Louis Bava, Ceverino Bava, Harry Dixon, Walter "Bud" and Winnie Harris, Angelina Zunino, Lester Coe, Charles Grant, Mervin McKenzie, John Matson, Jim and Muriel Napier, Margaret (Mosconi) Zunino, Fred Poe, Rusty Knapp, Emmett and Louise Leonard, Clarence and Emilia Kelmer, George Smith (I must tell about George; he was a blacksmith for the Verdi Lumber Company and then a constable in Verdi. He always wore a suit and hat and carried his pistol in his back pocket. He intimidated the youngsters with his old west looks.), Carlo Masia, Sam Wiley, John Dixon, Ralph and Grace Truax, Eva Ubbins, Herman Ubbins, Al Powning, Muriel Swanson, Mrs. Berg, Charles and Anna Clifford, Ernesto Lunardi, Nick Zunino, William Larson, Ethel Candido, Euililio Garcia, Nat Garcia, Ross and Irene Mortensen, Pat Mitchell, Augusto and Eda Del Grande, Hugo Del Grande, Bertha Ubbins, Fred and Verly Frey, James Dolan, Fred Rau, Granville Leavitt, Jack Bell, Ada Wiley, Maria Gardella, Nick Gardella

#### Group Three:

Jack McKenzie, Norman McKenzie, Vernon Powning, Marion Bettencourt (Panelli), Guilio Panelli, John Panelli, Elmo De Grande, Alona Nicholas, Alfred Nicholas, Leonard "Buck" Nicholas, Harry "Bud" Ubbins, Henry "Sonny" Ubbins, Wes Walker, Jr., David Shirley, Richard Shirley, Ruth Leonard, Wallace Leonard, Carlo Lorenzetti, Chelestina Lorenzetti, Harold Holstrom, Alton Canonic, Norma Del Grande, Tony Franchi, Janet Rankin (Quilici), Alvin Silva, Frank Quilici, Joe Gavica, Robert Roberts (killed in action in World War II while serving in the Navy), Johnny Alberti, Freida Colombini, Eva Colombini, Gordon Adams, Eugene Junior Coe, Roy Galli, Sebastian "Sub" Coli

#### Group Four

Rudy and Yvonne Galli, Fred Colombini, Bob Harker, June Walker (Hackbarth), Bob Hackbarth, Walt and Helene Walker, Mary Truax (Powning), Lillian Powning, Joanne Roberts, Mary Garcia, Joe Gavica, Manuel Garcia, Lucille Napier, Lester Shirley, Billy Roden, Don Brown, Harold Glassen, Leo Tuccori, Gloria Perry, Nevada Belli, Grace Capurro, Lena Del Grande (Carano), Mary Colombini (Pagni), Annie Del Grande, Patricia Coli (Ward), Erica Coli, Henry Bryant, Mary Del Grande (Franchi), Bruno Del Grande, Joe Gardella, Grace Lorenzetti, Lois (Gray) Del Grande, Ruby Leavitt, Josephine Lorenzetti, Ralph "Sonny" Truax.

I'd like to take a stroll through Verdi noticing the businesses that existed from the 1930's to the 1960's. Let's start at the west end. The first building on the north side of US 40 (now US 80) was the Last Chance Cafe and Service Station owned by Les and Vi Schoen. Moving north on the same side of the street was the Wishing Well restaurant owned by Al Nichols (now rebuilt as the Gold Ranch Casino and Cafe). To the north of the Wishing Well and on Trelease Lane was our baseball park (now the Smoke Shop area). Across the highway was Len's Chevron owned by Len Gilbert. Moving east into

the town, we will go down Second Street. On the right side was Ken's Bar owned by Ken Carpenter. Across the street was the Verdi Justice Court. Next was Durham's Associated Gas Station owned by Frank Durham in the 1930's. In the 1940's it was Powning Service Station owned by Al Powning.

Across the street was Bony's Candy Store owned by Leon Bony in the early '30's and the location of the second Verdi Post Office, then owned by Eva Ubbins, the post mistress (now Kalin's Antique Store). Crossing Bridge Street we continue eastward. On the southeast corner of Bridge and Second Street was the Verdi Lumber Company building. During Verdi's heyday, the building housed the Verdi Lumber Company office, a clothing store, post office and on the corner of Bridge and Second Street, it also had a grocery store and butcher shop. I remember buying candy in the store and my brother remembers Dad buying bologna. Sub said the butcher would always give him a piece of bologna. Robert Crump bought it and used it for his stage garage and his home (now owned by Mike Pierczyk). Across the street, the Verdi Inn owned by Alibrando Panelli. The Verdi Inn had the biggest cast iron wood burning cook stove I have ever seen. It must have been 16 feet long with multiple ovens and huge cook tops. Mr. Panelli would have cut off ends of boards (slabs) from the sawmills shipped to the siding at the Verdi Depot in railroad gondola cars. He would stack most of them in the basement of the Inn to keep it dry. The first floor consisted of the bar and dining area as well as the kitchen. The second floor of the Inn consisted of about 20 rooms, but only one large bathroom.

During my teenage years, the Verdi Inn was the center for meeting your friends. I can remember that if I told someone I would meet them downtown, you can bet we would meet at the Verdi Inn either inside or out in the front. I guess one could say it was a well known location. They had a pinball machine in the bar. We weren't supposed to be in the bar, but Mr. Panelli would kind of turn his back when we came in. I think the price for the pinball machine was 5 cents. The only time Mr. Panelli would holler at us was if we banged the machine too hard. I don't know why because it would usually cause a tilt and end the game, requiring another coin which went in his pocket.

There was a card table on one side of the bar room and the Old Cronies (old friends) used to sit and play cards. They got into some loud playing sometimes. We had a trapper in town by the name of Charlie Masaia. He trapped along the Truckee River and the foothills of Verdi. He too was one of the Old Cronies and when he came to play cards, Mr. Panelli would always know if Charlie had a good day. The indication was the skunk smell he brought into the bar. He would just sit down and play cards as though he smelled like roses. Those of us who were younger made sure we vacated the place.

You know I keep calling them old cronies, but come to think of it as I'm writing this, I'm probably older than they were. I guess that makes me an Old Crony. The Inn was purchased by Ed and Gert Engel and operated as the Verdi Inn Dinner House. A fire destroyed the restaurant and bar area and the building was later sold to Mike De Domenico who started to remodel it. It has never opened.

On the same side of the street was Mosconi Grocery Store owned by Hank and Virginia Mosconi. Across the street, Mortensen Garage and Service Station owned by Sophus Mortensen. Moving east on the same side of the street is Lillard Motel owned by Mr. Lillard. Due to a faulty gas heater vent, a couple staying at the motel died of carbon monoxide poisoning. Moving further east is the Crystal Peak Trailer Park and Gas Station with a laundermat, owned by Bill and Effie Engel (now the Sagebrush Cantina).

Crossing to the north side of the street (US 40) is Bill and Effie's Truck Stop, owned by Bill and Effie Engel and later moved to I-80 as Bill & Effie's Truck Stop (now Boomtown). Heading back west, we find US 40 moving from Second Street to Third Street. The first business on the left (south side) is Mosconi Grocery (moved from Second Street) owned by Hank Mosconi.

Moving west across Bridge Street was Ken's Bar (moved from Second Street) owned by Ken Carpenter (now a nursery and landscape business).

This pretty well covers my views of Verdi for the time being.

Although not in Verdi, I think the State Line Monument south of Verdi on Highway 40 should be mentioned. It was a huge monument. The base was made of granite; what the rest of the monument was made of I don't remember. On the top was a big eagle's nest with an eagle chick and a big eagle standing in the nest. Walt Walker remembers the monument, but like me, he doesn't remember where the monument went when they built the new I-80 highway. I have inquired, but have not found anything about it.

In September 1987, being I enjoy dancing, I joined the dance group at the Senior Center in Reno. I also joined the Verdi Senior Club which also held dances. At the Reno Senior Center I met a lady who liked to dance and we made sure we attended the dances on the same night. In early 1988 we started dating and did so for over two years. On September 22, 1990 we had a very small wedding attended by our families and a few friends.

Marie was born to Xavier and Marie (Ulrich) Fassbind on July 14, 1930. Her parents were immigrants from Switzerland and found their new home in Tillamook, Oregon. They bought land and started a dairy farm. They had four children; Marie, Gertrude, Annie and son, Joe. As the girls grew up, they had chores to do as Joe was the last born. They milked cows, worked in the fields and helped the family flourish. As Marie read my story, she said that some of the things I did brought her memories of the ones she did. They were very interesting to hear and some were closely familiar. This with our marriage begins my third family.

I gained two grown stepchildren; a stepson, Dirk Christensen, who is married to Cindy and their two daughters; a stepdaughter, Tamara Sundell, who is married to David. They have three children; a girl, Tina, and two boys, Mike and Eric. Tina and Adrian have two small girls; Eric and Melissa have two girls and one boy. Mike is not married. All the grandchildren have been born within the last six years. Every year Marie travels to see her grandchildren and great-grandchildren on their birthdays.

Marie worked for Arch Billmire, a firm in Sparks until June 12, 1992. Like I stated, we have our home in Verdi and after Marie's retirement, have spent many hours working on the yard and we painted the house. Marie loves to garden and keeps the yard looking nice. I, meanwhile, am a good supervisor although at times I feel guilty and do pitch in to help. In the summer, most of our yard work is done between the hours of 8 and 10 a.m. and then again from about 5:30 until dark. Marie doesn't like the heat, so between that time we retreat to the house.

We bought a travel trailer and have toured the state, from Goldfield to both the Oregon and Idaho borders. Marie thought that Nevada was all desert, but she soon saw that Nevada does have some very scenic sights. We tried to visit the museums in the towns we traveled to.

She will go hunting with me as long as we can take our travel trailer. She is not one that likes to sleep in a tent where bugs could be around. The trailer we had was a twenty-six foot trailer and with two dogs, I felt locked in. So we bought a thirty-two foot trailer with a slide out and everyone and everything was very comfortable. Three years ago, in 2003, my son, Joe and I took it elk hunting and we felt real comfortable when the weather got down to two degrees below zero and we had the gas furnace to keep us warm all night. By the way, I did get an elk with five points on each side.

We have also traveled to her hometown of Tillamook, Oregon and on down the Northern California coast.

We still love to dance and attend as many dances as we can. Mostly at the Senior Center in Reno and the Senior Group held in Verdi.

In the winter I retreat to the family room with a nice warm fire from our pellet stove and thereby I become a couch potato. Marie keeps busy crocheting doilies, sewing clothes, knitting, afghans for the family and friends.

Soon as the weather changes in late winter or early spring, you will find us back out in the yard working. We each have a dog. Mine is an Australian cattle dog mix and hers is a miniature (hot dog) dachshund. She also has a cat, a fat cat. A burro which is more or less a "no" work burro.

Other than my hunting and fishing trips, I'm pretty much a stay at home. I find enough work to do at home and I enjoy it.

Our next venture will be painting the house. It will be interesting because she won't let me climb a ladder. I must tell you how we painted it in 1992. I put forks on the front of my backhoe bucket. It worked like a forklift. Then I put a pallet with plywood nailed to the pallet and when it came to painting on the second story, she stood on the pallet with her paint and I lifted her to the desired height. I don't think she is game to do it this year. I told her I can still operate the backhoe, but I didn't get a very good response.

Marie likes to do furniture refinishing. She has refinished a bedroom set that belonged to my sister and several end tables and chests of drawers that Marie had. We have all the above items in our home. She also refinished a 1900 piano which she gave to her great-granddaughter, Tina's girl. She has another piano in the basement all torn apart and will be working on it this fall and winter. I'm sure she will be giving it away also. I imagine she will get one to keep for herself as she learned to play the piano when she was a youngster.

Marie likes to do carpenter work. She says her dad always said she should be a carpenter. Sometimes when I do some carpentry work, she has to come out and watch. Pretty soon she's butting into my work and I tell her whose doing this and she will say you are, but that's not the way my dad did it. I have to say that was 50 years ago. I do it my way, but sometimes she is right and it does make my work easier. I said she likes carpentry, but if I'm working on the car, she's right there with her, "Can I help?" I have to laugh.

We enjoy needling each other. She's a good sport when it comes to teasing.

Marie was a licensed nurse for 23 years and it has come in handy for me. She has been taking care of my ills and making sure I go to all my appointments and insure that my medications are taken. If it was up to me, I probably wouldn't have gone to the doctor in 2002 before I had my heart bypass and other illness. I love her for that.

She likes to raise a garden and I keep teasing her as to why she raises a garden. I keep telling her it's a waste of time as I can go to the store and buy vegetables rather than spend time growing them. But she enjoys doing it and I can keep on teasing her when her tomatoes look like the size of peas and stay green year round.

We are both active in the Verdi History Preservation Society. Marie is doing arranging and rearranging of information that she and others have collected about Verdi, its activities and the problems such as annexation and fires.

I've enjoyed writing this story although I have not covered everything that I saw happen during my life to date. I'll just have to keep it to myself as memories in future years when I write Volume II. That's if I can still remember. Ha! Ha! Ha! That's a good one. Thought of that all by myself.

I mentioned previously about the burro; well, we still have her. It is now 23 years old and still going. Marie likes to feed her roses and when she sees Marie close to the rose bushes, the burro perks up her ears and comes to the fence thinking she's going to get a few roses. So Marie obliges and Sweet Pea is happy. From time to time, I turn her loose in the back yard and she roams around the area and then comes up and eats the grass. When Marie mows the grass, the burro follows her around. I think she wants a hand out, but doesn't get any until Marie is through mowing. If it's not flowers, it's day old bread and she loves that too. That's what I use sometimes to get her back to her corral.

Before my wife, Pat, died we attended dances or functions in Verdi and invariably she would always be still getting dressed when I would be ready to go. I would say you sure are a slow poke. When we got to the dance, I always requested them to play the song "Slow Poke" which goes something like this, "You keep me waiting 'till it gets aggravating, Little Slow Poke" and we'd laugh about it and dance closer.

Now the shoe is on the other foot. Marie says aren't you ready yet? My reply is that after 33 years of marriage to Pat, some of her traits rubbed off. So when I get to the dance, whether it be in Reno or Verdi, they generally play a tune called "Oh Marie". I sing it tenderly while I dance close. It goes something like this, "Oi Marie, oi Marie, quanto sogno o perso per tei. Oi Marie, oi Marie, farmi dormi questa nolte con tei oi Marie, oi Marie." Translated it means "Oh Marie, oh Marie, how much sleep I have lost over you. Oh Marie, oh Marie, let me sleep this night embraced with you." This makes her smile and we keep on dancing. She seems to enjoy it and I love her for it as I can't carry a tune in a basket.

Coming to the end of my story, I do want to cover the changes that have recently changed Verdi and the Verdi area, which I include the Verdi township. At one time what is now Incline area used to be in the Verdi Township and I don't deny them their own township as they are over the hill from us on the Lake Tahoe side.

In Verdi valley changes have really been made. From the west, as you entered Nevada, you would begin to see a green valley with trees and green fields. As you continue into the Valley, ranches bordered the foothills and were always green and pleasant to the eye. Now all the ranches have been sold to developers. And although there are many beautiful and expensive homes, the brown fields do not fulfill the feeling of an area that somehow greets you with a beautiful outdoor scene. I guess I just hate to see the Old Days go, but they say progress has to continue.

I was writing these last few pages on May 9<sup>th</sup> and I was able to discuss some of the Verdi people and old buildings with my brother. We laughed about some of the names people had. One in particular was “Dirty Neck.” How he got the name or what his real name was, we weren’t sure of. He lived in a run-down cabin where the Last Chance Cafe was built and we saw him in town only once in a while.

We talked about others. I was very fortunate to spend that quality time with my brother as within two hours we were called to his home when he suffered a stroke. He died on the morning of May 11<sup>th</sup> at Saint Mary’s Regional Hospital. Some excerpts of what I wrote in this story about my brother were used by his daughter, Patricia, in his eulogy given by the Reverend.

I participated in many organizations in Verdi:

- I was the first secretary of the Verdi Volunteer Firemen’s Association
- Past Noble Grand in Verdi 100F Lodge Number 42
- Member of the Verdi VFD Water Department
- Life member in Verdi PTA
- Past Commander and life member of Verdi V.F.W. Post 10053 (just received my 40 year pin)
- Past member of Verdi Senior Club
- Former Assistant Fire Chief in VVFD
- Current President of Verdi History Preservation Society, Inc.

As a member of Verdi VFW Post 10053, I have for twenty-five years or more, been raising the flag and placing flags on the graves of our Veterans at the Verdi Crystal Peak Cemetery. In the last few years, my grandchildren, Dustin and Patricia, have been helping me. I do this to honor our great Veterans, not only in Verdi, but around the world wherever they may be. We placed 26 flags on known Veterans’ graves.

My last comment to everyone: walk straight, good health, good luck and God Bless America.

## VERDI CRYSTAL PEAK CEMETERY



*Raising the Flag*



*Placing flags on graves of Veterans on Memorial Day.  
The graves are of Richard and David Shirley; we went to grammar school together.*