

TAPE #29JOHN HUBERTY

Taped: March 1979

Reference: Work and play in Amador County

My mother was born here in 1874. My father was born in Calaveras County in 1868; he came here to Jackson before the turn of the century. My sister has all the old family records. She lives up in Pioneer.

My grandfather came here before 1860; he came from Ireland. He and my three uncles all worked in the Kennedy Mine. And they were all underground men. Just before my Uncle Jim died he was made underground foreman. He died the same night, and at almost the same time of the Argonaut disaster (Aug 1922). I dug graves for those fellas---I was a senior in High School. We'd work after school for four or five hours; until it got dark.

(Did the miners get any compensation?)

Not that I know of. Going back a bit: at one time we had some movie companies up here. Will Rogers liked this area, and everybody loved him. Well, there were some people who let him know and he helped out. And some people went to Hollywood and collected money for the widows. I think it was 15000 dollars.

(Was there any kind of militant movement on the part of the miners?)

I don't know.

(Were you born in Jackson?)

Yes, in 1904. November 16th. I've spent all my life here. I went through the school system; and I went one year to business college.

Then I went to work for the Bank of Amador County. I worked 40½ years for them and then 2½ years for Wells Fargo when they took over. Wells Fargo took over on Jan 1, 1965; I retired in June of 1967.

(What was the first bank in Amador County?)

There was a bank in Sutter Creek at one time. It was started by a man named Jackson Dennis. But I don't have its history. But the bank I worked for incorporated in 1896/

(Where was it located?)

It was actually where the driveway goes through by the present Wells Fargo bank. It was next to the Ledger.

(How did the mines negotiate their gold?)

The gold was ultimately turned into ingots---bars, they were called. The bars were then shipped to the US Mint, or The American Smelting and Refining Works at Selby. The gold would be sold to the government.

(Did you do much travelling out of Jackson?)

No. I've only been in Oregon and Nevada.

(What did you do for amusement as a kid?)

Ha!

(Where was your family home?)

My sister lives there now. It was build about 1896. I have an unmarried sister who lives there. She's 79 years old.

(Now, what did you do when you were kids?)

We played marbles, hop-scotch and we had coasters! We'd get the wheels off old baby buggies. And we played a lot of baseball.

My dad had four or five cows out by the catholic cemetery, and there was an old barn there. It was called Huberty's barn.

We'd go out there on Saturday and everyday during the summer to play baseball. This was from the time I was seven years old, until I was out of high school.

(Was there interest in football?)

No. But I was the first quarterback on the first County team; that was in 1922. They had a couple of exhibition games out here at Zeila ~~XXXX~~ Field. The field was where the low rent apartments are now at the foot of Broadway. It was all originally part of the Zeila Mine. Ione High School and Jackson High had the teams. Sutter Creek didn't have one that year.

(How did you learn to play the game?)

Well, we didn't know a football from a pumpkin! But we played anyway. But we played a lot of basketball. And as far as football goes, we played Preston School a lot; maybe three or four times a year.

(What about dances?)

Oh, they were a big thing. Loves Hall was the place; down where Sprouse-Reitz is now. It was run by a man named Dave Curran. He used to be the boss; he came from Martel. There was a dance band there that came out of Stockton called Patton and Springer; they were famous in these parts, and everyone had to have them at the dances. They had them almost every Saturday night. I remember a dance hall in Sutter Creek too, and one in Amador City and Plymouth and Mokelumne Hill. My uncle used to have the Huberty barn dance. That was at the barn out of town. I remember going over there in a surrey before the days of the automobile. To keep warm on our way we had bricks that we kept warm in the oven of the wood stove. We wrap them in burlap and carry them with us to keep our feet warm!

(Where was the Huberty Ranch?)

It was about two miles east of San Andreas on the Mountain Ranch Road. It not the Huberty Ranch anymore, however. But he gave dances there right into the 20's I believe. And my grandfather before that, he had the dances too.

(Who started the ranch?)

My grandfather came to Calavaras in 1854. But my sister has all the records on that. But I think it was in 1870 or 80 that he took over the ranch. He raised cattle, sheep, hogs and horses. He told this story about Joaquim Murietta: That he knew Murietta personally. I can't authenticate it, however.

(What celebrations did they have in the towns?)

Well, the 4th of July, of course. And the Italian Picnic. And the Native Sons of the Golden West would usually put something on. And the Native Daughters; this is the home of Parlor #1 of the Native Daughters, ya know.

(What can you tell me about your grandfather?)

He was named John Flaherty. My grandmother was Mary McCarthy. And on my father's side, his dad, John Huberty, was born in Luxemburg. But he married an Irish ~~gail~~ girl, so I'm 3/4 Irish.

(Did the circus come through?)

Yes! And Chataqua came too. And to get them you had to have a certain number of promoters. My father was one of them. They used to hold the shows out back by the hospital. It was in the field that's there now. And the circus used to be where Prospect Motors is now. It was called Pasco's Field. Once in a while the circus would play at Zeila Feild.

(Do you remember what kind of shows the Chatuqua performed?)

They had musical shows and lectures. They'd lecture on everything. I don't think I missed a one.

And we had a picture show here too! Originally they were shown down at Loves Hall, and then the theater was down where the ATI store is now. That was John Ratto's place. The Ratto Theater. They even had boxing matches there.

(Were there other dance halls?)

Yes. Right across the street. It was in the Krabenhoff Building. And also down at the Eagle's Hall; they used that for dances.

(Do you remember your first car?)

I had my first car in 1927; it was a ~~XXXXXX~~ Model A Ford. I called it El Toro, the Bull! My father in Law had a Chrysler.

(When did you take your first big trip?)

Yeah, we went down in a group to see the 1915 World's Fair. It was my mother, my father, my sisters and my brothers; it was all of us. My mom and dad and seven children, and we went down for a week. We took a four-horse stage from the National Hotel to Martel. Then we took the train to Galt. We changed trains and went down through Stockton to the Oakland Mole; finally it was across to San Francisco on the Ferry boat.

(Why didn't the train come into Jackson?)

I don't know. But it went as far as the mines; they used it a lot. A man named McPherson managed the railroad when I was a kid; I went to school with his son.

(When was Jackson electrified?)

It was before my time. We had a power house down at Electra. It was

called Amador Light and Electric Company. See, Tabeau Reservoir was built about the turn of the century, and the water was used for power.

(What can you tell me of the gas works that was here.)

Oh, LaTangs) Gas Works. I knew the guy; he used to drive around in an old car, and you could smell him coming. He use~~d~~ to sleep down there, and he didn't change his clothes very often. I think he used to sleep in a wheelbarrow sometimes. Anyway, he was quite a guy. It was still working when I was a small boy.

(What about the brewery?)

That was John Strom's Brewery. It was where Galli's Drive In is now. The house next to Galli's was John Strom's place. But the brewery was torn down, and I forget when. And across the street was the soda works. Over where the Shell Station is now. Mr. Gamba had the place. It was Podesta and Gamba. And they had a livery stable down where Placer Savings and Loan is now. And there was another livery stable down where Security Pacific is. Podesta and Ardito had the one where Placer is, and Reed and Ratto was where Security Pacific is.

Talk about travel. I can remember when my dad was county clerk. That was from 1904 until 1929. Well, I can remember as a kid that we had two elections; there was a primary in August and a general election in November. Dad would have a little buggy, and he would take election supplies around a few days before. My brother and I would go on the trip with him. That was like going from here to New York. We'd go to Fiddletown, and then down the road (Highway 16) to Ione and Plymouth; that would take a day. I remember the old Postmaster ~~in~~ in Fiddletown, Bill Brown, he had a store and he did all kinds of business there.

(Where does Jackson get its water?)

Out of Tabeau Reservoir. You had wells too. We had one. I lived right down by Mel's Drive In. They cut my house in half when the new highway went in. Moved it up here on St. Patrick's Day in 1946.

(How did you feel about that?)

I didn't like it at all. Judge McGee was my boss at the bank, and he said, John, you better go home; your house is halfway up the hill!

I stopped and had a few drinks on the way.

(Were there lots of bars in Jackson?)

Lots of them. More bars than stores I think. Starting up Main Street ^{right} on your ~~left~~, you had the Bridge Cabin, then the Wells Fargo, then Pioneer Rex, then The Palm, and the Star was there somewhere, then where the Pizza parlor is now was a place, and a bar in the corner of the Globe Hotel building, and one where the Hiway Bar was. And The Last Chance was in the Krabenhoff Building. And across where the cutlery store is was another bar. Now, going back down the other side there weren't as many. The Olympia was one down the other end, and then under Wells Fargo Bank was the Louvre. And then The National Hotel.

Heck, I was weaned on bootlegged whisky. We used to have an old fella lived down by the river. The Moke, that is. And there was a house on the Calavaras side. The was Clarence Kelton's place, and he said he made the best rye this side of the Mississippi. And he would never sell it in quarts; sold it just in pints. And it was good whisky; I drank a lot of it.

We didn't have any trouble; a few killings that were probably feuds over stills and things like that. It was an interesting period to live through, because I went from the horse and buggy to men on

the moon.

But the town was nice; the houses were open, but things were run well. And the Salt Spring days; that was another period I went through.

(What was that?)

About 1200 men came here to build Salt Springs Reservoir. And every two weeks Jesse McLaughlin and myself would pay off the men. This was from 1928 until 1933. We'd leave the bank at 12 noon, and we'd make a two day trip up there with maybe 5000 dollars. We'd cash payroll checks, and we'd take deposits. Did this in winter and summer; never missed a one! Every two weeks they had what they called Whisky Sunday; the guys would come out Friday night and come back Sunday night. They'd head into Jackson and spend all their money. See, we didn't have a depression here. These men were working and so were the mines; we didn't know what the depression was. Earl Garbarini was chief of Police, and Lucot was sheriff; and they handled the town. Garbarini was a good man with his fists; he was a prizefighter. If they got in trouble you locked them up and then let them out Sunday night to go back to work.

I got to know the guys pretty well, and they'd say, Huberty, when I come to town next week don't you give me any money out of my account. Well, we'd stay open late on Saturday, and this guy would come in and ask for 25 dollars. I'd refuse, and he'd get mad as hell and storm out. But he'd thank me later!

And I was never held up. I only had one scare. See, there was a camp at Tiger Creek and Summit Camp and Panther Creek and then the Swamill Camp which was a mile from Salt Springs. Jesse used to drop me off near the end and I had to walk about a mile to Salt Springs. And one night I saw this guy standing in a doorway and I never carried

a gun. I just had this little satchel with maybe 5 or 6 hundred dollars. I watched him for a bit, and everytime I went around a turn I expected some one to jump me. But nobody touched me.

Next time I went up there I found out that the guy was an ex-con! But it would have been hard for anyone to get out of there, because they were so far in. And they didn't know the roads, plus there were guards at most of the road crossings.

I remember coming down that road in the snow. The brakes on the car were no good anyway and you'd slip and slide all over the place. Warren Taylor who works for the Ledger wants me to write up some of these stories.