

TAPE #21BABE AND MARIE GARBARINI

Recorded: February 1979

Reference: The newspaper business and old-time Jackson

(How many people worked at the newspaper then?)

Well, there was the editor and the ~~linotype~~ linotype operator and myself. I was the "printer's devil". Old Man King, he was the editor, taught me the case. Well, I come from a family of mechanics and blacksmiths, and that was one of the reasons he hired me. He told me to go back and watch the linotype operator work; one of these days you may be operating it. And anytime he isn't there, you sit down and tinker around with it. That was in March, and school was almost out. Well, this operator went on a small-town drunk as we called it, and he didn't show up for work. So I became the operator. King gave me a manual of the working parts of the machine and if anything went wrong I'd fix it. Well, one Sunday I went over to the shop and there were a couple of parts on the machine that were dirty. So I thought I'd clean them, and I did. And who walks in but Mr. King. And he hit the ceiling. Do you know what you're doing? he asked. And I said, Yup! I had all the parts all over the place. And King said he was going to stay there until I put it back together. So I put it all back together, cranked up the machine, and it worked. That was how I got started in the business.

(When did you begin writing?)

That came later. King sold out to another fellow. And I continued to go to school; my ambition was to be an engineer. I went to school for

awhile at UC, Berkeley, but I didn't finish. I ran out of money, and the only thing I knew how to do was print. So I went to work for a new outfit in San Francisco. Then this fellow who bought out King called and asked if I'd like to work for him. So I went home, and one Thursday morning, this was about 1925, the editor ran out of copy and had a little space open. So I said, Bill, would you like to have a sports column? So I sat down at the linotype and without any notes rattled off about 10 inches of type. And next week he said, hey, how about some more sports? Then I got to writing little tidbits about what was going on down-town. It sort of developed itself, I guess. (When did you take over the paper?)

In 1931. God knows where I would have been if the owner hadn't gotten sick! <sup>I</sup> ~~HE~~ was supposed to be on two weeks vacation, and I'd just gone down to San Francisco with my mother and my brother. I left on a Thursday after the paper was out, and on Sunday the fellow who later became my partner called and said, Babe, you better get home. The boss is sick in bed and can't get out the paper. So I went home. And for a month I was the Editor-in-chief. I wrote an editorial and was almost run out of Amador County for it. I advocated consolidating the school districts---and what a fuss!

(How did you get most of your news?)

We didn't try to keep up with the outside world. The Bee and the Stockton Record did that. But you know, for a small-town eight page weekly there was enough going on around town to keep us busy. We kept in touch with what was going on then. Now, holy cats, it would be impossible. They still don't use wire service here. In our early days we had stringers in every little cubby-hole in Amador County. Akkum on the north, Pioneer on the east, Ione on the West, and all the little towns in between. People in those towns would tell us the

~~xxxxxxxx~~ comings and goings of everybody.

One time when my partner and I were running the show, we had a correspondent over in Akkum. She had a whole list of items about birthday parties, and flower parties and all that sort of stuff. And there were two families over there who had names that were very much alike. Like Kent and Vent, or something like that. And it was always my chore to set up these items because I could read the handwriting of these people better than my partner. One of them read: Mrs. so-and-so has spent some time with her mother in Sacramento. The other one, whose name was similar, was given a shower for her future child. Well, I got the names twisted! Well, the husband of the gal who had visited her mother came in and chewed me out. He was a big guy too; worked out in the woods. He said the people over there are giving me a hard time; my wife isn't pregnant. And he wanted me to print a retraction. Well, I tried to explain how the mistake was made. But it didn't go over, and he still wanted a retraction printed in bold type at the top of the column. So I set it up right there, and he OK'ed the proof. And next week I put it at the top of the column. When the paper finally got over to that area, we had more damn phone calls from people who wanted us to save a copy for them. Of the earlier paper, that is. They hadn't even noticed it, and they had thrown their papers away! They really gave that poor fellow a bad time.

(Did you ever get into hot water in your editorials?)

Not really. I'm an advocate of using the needle and not the club.

(Did the mines close down during the wars?)

Under FDR gold mining was not an essential industry. He had already changed the price of gold---we were off the gold standard, and it was not a strategic metal. A lot of the fellows who were working

in the mines went to work in the strategic mines like copper, manganese, lead. The steel they used for drilling all went into arms and materials. So they shut em off.

(Did they do the same thing at the end of the first war?)

No. The mines continued to operate. Manpower became a little bit short. They worked on a curtailed schedule.

(What about labor unions? When did they move up here?)

There was a disturbance here in '34, I believe. It didn't involve the PG&E. This was strictly miners. I got mixed up in that myself; nearly got the hell kicked out of me. The miners walked off the job. The longshoremens got involved in that. Some agitators moved in here. The miners walked out. But some of the locals continued to work. In order to insure them safe passage through the picket lines some of the local people escorted them through. Then the dirty stuff hit the fan. But they didn't quite get organized.

(Were they ever unionized?)

As far as I know they never did. There weren't any unions here until the mill opened up out here in Martell. It was the lumber and sawmill workers. We have a carpenters union here too.

(What about the PG&E?)

They had their own association. It's the SEA. They had a real organization with their stewards and everything. But I don't think it's affiliated with a national union.