

TAPE #2JOHN PIEROVICH

Reference: Early days in Jackson, California

I was born Feb. 22, 1898.

(Just tell us about your childhood.)

It was in the horse and buggy days, and I remember the first automobile I ever saw coming through Jackson. This boarding house we had was on Broadway and that was the main street going out of Jackson. I can't tell you what kind of auto it was because I must have been around 6 or 10. The streets were all dust, and I could hear someone hollering, "Automobile!" So I ran down in front and got a quick look at that thing leaving. I didn't see the front part of it. But I run maybe a half mile to try and see it but all I saw was dust.

And, of course, I can remember Main Street when there was two feet of mud in it. They had 16 mule teams coming through, and they had to go right down Main Street. They mostly come down by the old hospital on Water Street. They'd make that turn where the old bank of Amador County was. And these mule teams was the cleverest things I ever seen. You know mules is pretty smart animals. They had what you call a wheeler on there with a jerk line. And those leaders were pretty smart too, and they'd holler, Gee! and Haw!, and give em one jerk or two jerks and they'd know which way to go. And these wheelers were big, heavy horses, and the rest of them were mules. The drivers of these log wagons--and they had a trailer on em just like a truck and trailer now-a-days---and they'd haul logs to the mines. They'd come around that turn, and in front of the

wheelers these two mules were trained---they had a long chain, and all these mules were strapped on these chains with single trees--that is, one on each side of this chain, and they were to go around this turn. But these two mules in front of the wheelers, would jump over this chain and pull sideways. It was the nicest sight to see how they were so well trained. And they kept that wagon from making too short a turn. And most of these logs were going mostly to the Argonaut and the Kennedy. The logs were not big. Mostly 8 or 10 inches in diameter because they were the most handy for timbering in the mines. And how clever that was. AND I can remember in the winter time, nothin but mud, and they had a crossing going over what is now that insurance company--- Amador insurance down there---and they had one up by Clyde Briscoll's pharmacy.

...I'll never forget, in them days there was no compensation...

(Coughing spell)

What was I talking about?

(Main Street.)

And there was a Chinatown up where Spinetti's store was.

I can remember they had a wooden bridge across the creek there. It was all Chinese. And there was a Chinese store right exactly where ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Spinetti's is now. I used to go in there to get Chinese candy once in a while. I can remember the Chinamen with their long pig tails. Oh how they used to get rezzed, the poor guys. The guys would raise the dickens with those poor, old Chinamen.

And then there was a Church. What would you call a Chinese church?

(A Joss House.)

Yeah. Cross this bridge. Us kids would go in and there was a big idol

in there. I can remember going in and playing around. One time they had a big flood there and one cabin went down with a Chinaman in it, but he got out. Then, down where the Safeway is now, the Jones place used to be there. They had a Chinese laundry down there, and I could see them ironing in there. In them days they didn't have much competition, compensation rather, and those miners---if you got killed in a mine in those days it was just your hard luck. They used less timbers than they should and if you got hurt it was too bad for you. I can remember the boarding house that my father had, and most of the time a guy was laid out in there. They didn't have funeral parlors in those days. I can remember one particular place there, if we had a boarder who got killed, why he was just laid out in the boarding house. They had them candles---and I got so used to it I'd play underneath the coffins! (Who were some of the kids you played with?)

Joe Bonney (?) is still living, I think. And we used to go w in the back end play. I don't know if anybody is left?

In the horse and buggy days I'll never forget going to ~~xxxxxx~~ Angel's Camp. Had an Aunt in Angel's Camp, and every year it was a trip, a big one, and I went with my Dad. And my old man driving that one ~~xxxxxx~~ horse. We'd rent a horse and buggy from Podesta, he had a stable where the old Bank of America was. It was 30 miles and that was a long trip. It would take us all day to get over there. Course the old stable in the horse days---it's still there, next to the Amador Insurance.

And I can remember the stage ~~xxx~~ that used to leave in the morning. Chris Meese(?), Howard Meese's father, was the driver. And then they had a shotgun guard, that was old man Fisher. He rode shotgun from here to Ione. And I can remember my Mother taking me

to San Jose one time. And I can also remember riding from Ione back to Jackson. There was a halfway station down where that trestle goes over the road. There was a place there to stop.

And every night us kids used to wait for that stage to come in. We'd wait across from where Mel's is, and we'd follow that stage right down to the National Hotel. It was a great deal!

And old man Newman, he had a stable close to the creek. And that's where they would put up the horses for the stage. I'll never forget Newman, he had a big, long beard. He owned the horses and the teams, I think. I can remember them stage coaches, one used to be parked in back of the Bank of America---where it is now, that is. There was a stage parked there, and it was on leather swings.

And us kids used to get in there and swing on that thing.

(What about your first ride out to the Italian Picnic?)

First ride I ever had was in a Stanley Steamer. They charged 35 cents, and it was in front of the National Hotel. We went up Water Street and around by the cemetery. Then down North Main Street and back to the National Hotel. Fella by the name of Nunley had the car.

(You say you remember the 1906 fire in San Francisco?)

My two sisters, my brother, and I walked up where the mill is now and you could see the flames just roaring up and plain as can be. Then right down where the Standard station used to be, across from the Mill, right above there was what they called a sanitarium. And it was an old shack. And one of the miners got hurt bad, he got hit in the head. And from the boarding house in Jackson we walked up there---they put that poor guy on a ladder with a

blanket over him, and walked him from the Argonaut Mine up to the sanitorium. He didn't have a chance---he died. And doctors in those days---didn't have certificates I imagine.

Ya know, in the old days, ~~kkkx~~ <sup>foreigners</sup> would come over here and work and get maybe 2.50 or 3.00 dollars a day. And it was an effort to save up a little stake. If you saved 2000 dollars in them days it was quite a bit of money. Well, every once in a while some guy would get ready to go back to the old country, and my old man had quite a lot of boarders in them days. And this one particular man he would come down in the kitchen, and Dad would cook him a ham and some salami and he'd put it in his suitcase and eat it on the way back home. They probably traveled third class too, ya know. So, the old man had this ham cooked and the guy opened his suitcase and ya know what he had in there? He had in there one of our light bulbs and the fixture with the wire hanging from it. And my old man said, "Whatcha gonna do with that?" And the other guy said, "I'm gonna take it back to the old country, and when I get over there I'll put it up on the ceiling and I'll have lights!"

And ya know what my old man did? He said, "You take it over there and have your lights!" My old man liked a good joke. Someone asked my old man if this was the same moon shining over here as it was in the old country.

One time I was eating dinner with a bunch of the boarders. You could look out the front window and see Peek's Hill there. And there were no houses there. I was talking to this one guy and I knew I'd get his goat. I said, "Ya know the world is round!" And I was telling him all this kind of stuff about geography and everything.

And he says, "How can it be round! Look at that hill over there!" I used to have a lot of fun with some of them old timers. They'd come over here; none of em could read or write. You take my father---he got on a ship when he was 12 or 14 years old, back in the old country. He used to sail the seas and he'd tell me about South America and everything. I was pretty young to get his history but I imagine he landed in San Francisco and come up here to the gold country.

There was a hairdresser in town that had kind of a hat shop.

Her name was Miss Prosser, I think. In them days they wore a bustle

~~xxxxxx~~. I can remember my sister putting that ~~xxxxxx~~ bustle, it was a little pad, a kind of moon shaped deal. And this lady had a big bustle on and our boarders were in the front yard.

One guy said, "I betcha that's false." Another guy didn't think so, and they started to make a bet. The other guy said, "How ya gonna prove it?"

(Was the Wells Fargo ~~Office~~ Restaurant ever a Wells Fargo office?)

It wasn't in that building. I think it was on this side of that building. In the Wells Fargo Restaurant was the Ginnochio Brothers Grocery. And they had a dry goods store where you now go into the tavern. Around the corner where you go into the restaurant was the grocery store. Mrs. Vila was a sister to the Ginnochios. And there was another sister named Etta Udy. They had a delivery wagon and were quite prominent in Jackson.

And that red light district, it was really something. There were five houses there. That's were the Bank of America is now. I can

remember working for George Thomas, the butcher. I used to drive a little cart with a horse and deliver meat around Jackson. He had a shop across from the old Bank of America. The barn was down next to Davies Garage and we took care of the horses there. And you had to take care of your horse and feed him. I used to get a dollar a day I think it was. And in the afternoon you had to go out and help in the slaughter house. It was on New York Ranch Road then. Then we'd put the horses up, and being a young guy, I'd get an eyeful of the red light district. All those old madams would come out, and I can remember them sprinkling the dust down. And there was an old gas works there, fella by the name of LaTang, and he had some big furnaces there. He used coal, I think. He used to give us five cents for a sack; I used to steal all my old mans potato sacks and go down and get a pinkie nickel. Money was scarce in them days. I made a little money wonce in a while, if we got a letter from the old country I'd make him give me a nickel and I'd give him the letter. Anyway, this Latang, he had gas piped to the boarding house. And it went up Broadway and around...

(The Oddfellows Building had it.)

...then we had to go to the slaughterhouse and help kill in the afternoon. We'd get on the horses, and old man Thomas would never buy us a bridle, and you put a rope around his nose and he'd never stop till you got out there!

(Do you remember the Garbarini blacksmith shop?)

Oh, yes, on Water Street, yes! Babe's mother used to live upstairs.

They had quite a shop and it was a treat for us schoolkids coming by there to watch em shoe those horses. Some of those horses and the mules on them log teams I was telling you about, they were mean and they had to squeeze em into this stall thing cause it was the only way they could shoe them. They'd raise Hell--- and it was a big deal for us! A horse in them days was like a Cadillac now! Ya know, coming down Main Street, if you saw a good horse and a buggy everybody admired it...

...I remember Dave ~~XXXXXX~~ <sup>Briscoe</sup>, I'll never forget him. He was a big dude. Can you remember ~~XXXXXX~~ <sup>Briscoe</sup>, the pharmacist?

(10.)

That's how the pharmacy is named, after Dave Briscoe. He was courtin ~~XXXXXX~~ George Lucco's(?) sister. He married her in fact. And every Sunday I'd see him; he had a two horse buggy. He come down that Main Street, and those two horses would go along and it sure was a sight...

...And in those days they had the horse-drawn hearse, ya know. Joe Ratto had two pretty black horses that he used specially on the hearse. I don't know where those hearses are now?. Joe Ratto had a livery stable, Ratto and Reed was the name. Most of those corpses were laid out in your home! They didn't have no mortuaries ya know...

...My sister got marrie in 1910. My older sister. And about 1911 I went down to visit her. She come up her and then I went back down with my sister Ann. I remember gettin off that ferry and a lot of that San Francisco fire business wasn't cleaned up y t. We walked about fifteen blocks to get to her house! No streetcars were runnin' or anythin'...I'm kinda running outta material,



how about asking me some questions.

(Do you remember when John Smalley started his stage company?)

He's later on---he came here later. But the old timers ...

the Gluckfeld's used to have a store here and I went to school with a Gluckfeld. I don't think he's in these pictures though.

But he's a doctor now, and he's still living. But talking about ~~xxxx~~ their place---used to call it the Red Front, it was a dry goods store and my mother used to buy all her stuff down there.

The Gluckfelds were Jewish people and they were kinda the leading store people in Jackson. And across the street was old man

Muldoon's saloon. There was more saloons than anything else in Jackson. Socky Ardito(?) and his brother Chas, they had a saloon

where the Mother Lode Market is now. No, next to it, I guess.

And old man Chin across the street he had a saloon. He was a Cornishman, from Cornwall ya know. I remember when I was a kid peeking my nose in there. They had entertainment in there and I'd peek in and watch. And the old man, he had a grandson who got sick with the gas...

Across the street, as I said, was the Ardito Brothers, and where the Rex Cafe is Lello had a saloon. Then The Last Chance Saloon was where that foreign auto business is now on this side of Tams.

And the Caribaldi Brothers had a saloon. It was right next to Tams.

(Wasn't Victoria Cuneo pretty early too?)

I'll never ~~xxx~~ forget the first ice cream cone I had at her place.

They all made their own ice cream. And she had a candy place where that hair fixing business is now. And my ~~fixt~~ <sup>first</sup> cornecopeia was about three or four inches long and square at the bottom.

I'll never forget that; five cents for it. That was a big treat.

You didn't have things in them days---now it's easy living, boy!  
...Well, I don't know what else I can tell ya...Joe Bonneys still  
living, do you know Joe?

(No.)

...My father had a lot of friends in Amador. Slavic people.  
Used to go over there once in a while...

...All these mines used to be working. The little Amador, the  
Central and South Eureka. It was a-hustle and a-bustle in them days.  
God, there were a lot of miners here. But not many houses.  
That place over there, we call it Red Hill, I used to go hunting  
over there. And go over there and get a Christmas tree. Over  
where Amador Highlands is.

I worked in the Moore mine, not very long, though. I didn't like  
those mines. I realise what they do to you. The Moore Mine was a  
young mine, and I worked in the 500, that's all. There's nothing  
much left of the mine now. They had a big dump out there, but the  
County used most of it for road material.

...And the volunteer fire department, my God! Ya get on that fire  
cart and pull the damn thing---Christ, two wheels, I remember that.  
It was the hose cart I was pulling. A fire was a big event.  
I remember when there was a big fire in the red light district.  
That's when I was in the 3rd grade. It was right in back of where  
the Bank of America is now. They let us out of school to help,  
and they couldn't stop it. They didn't have much water, ya know,  
or anything.

...Boy, I don't realise how old I am until I start talking about  
this, sometimes I feel like a young kid, ya know.

(What about the old brewery?)

Oh yeah, I washed bottles there. John Strong, he was a guy from Germany. He talked broken English and, in fact, he was a County supervisor. I worked there during vacation, it was tough too. I didn't get much money. I was just a punk kid. My wife's step-father delivered beer for him. They had two or three wagons delivering beer---some of em went as far as Campo Seco, way over in that country. Some of em went as far as Angels Camp too. Ione, Plymouth, all around. It was made right there and it was a good beer I understand. The brewery was where the hamburger place is now. And down below is where they bottled it---where I washed bottles. It was Petkovich's hamburger place and across the street is the Shell station.

(What do you remember about George Bonney?)

I'll never forget the poor old guy. The first time they build that road that goes out Water Street past the hospital then went up the road---well, George was one of the first boosters of that road. I remember that road was just a trail going up there and George, he put that road over. Now George is 94 and still alert. His family came from France...

...I can remember goin out of town. There was a lot of prospecting going on down on the River Road---on the Middle Bar. I mined down there myself before we were married. I can remember 14 or 15 old miners down there all had a little claim of their own.

...And then when you turn off the main highway to go down to Middle Bar, there was an Indian camp there. I can remember some of them old Indian women still wearing that calico---and they used to come over to the boarding house, and my mother had a lot of leftovers. My mother bought two sets of pots and pans for the

Indians. And they'd come up every night to get the leftovers. And there was a lot of good food---boiled beef and potatoes and stuff from the boarding house. The Indians would take the full pans with them and bring the empty ones back. My mother fed those Indians for years. Hey, do you remember George Darrel? He used to cry when I ~~mentioned~~ <sup>mentioned</sup> my Mother. He remembered when my Mother used to give them all those leftovers. I remember them Indians would come up in the back, all dressed in them big, yellow dresses and calicos---all bright colors. There were a lot of Indians in that camp---but they weren't hostile Indians or anything like that. (Were they able to get work?)

Yeah, there was an old guy named Bachigalupi(?), he was an Indian. Now he got that name, I don't know.

(But what did they do to work?)

They didn't do much of anything I don't think. They were Digger Indians and didn't do much of anything.

(What was their position in the community?)

They didn't do much work, but I was pretty young---it's hard to remember. I do remember one Johnny Jack---you know how the Indians take their name---they reverse them. He was a bronk-buster. He rode them young mustangs up and down Main Street. He was Rosies husband. Rosie used to wash clothes for my mother. Rosie used to say, "He no good." Well, he was a bronk-buster and they used to work around teams and livery stables a lot. A few of them worked for Joe Ratto in the livery stable. The livery business was big in them days, it was like the auto business now. Jackson had three of them---Newman, Ratto & Reed and Podesta. Newmans was where the

Wells Fargo Bank is, and Ratto had the one that is still open there, that was the stable, and Podesta had one where the old Bank of America was on Main Street. And that was torn down and they put a theater in there. And then the Bank of America bought it. (Do you remember the tornado that moved the Station out here? Cyclone Station, I think they called it.)

What was it?

(I believe it was where Ridge Road takes off of 88. About that position.)

No...But I remember the halfway station down where the railroad tracks cross. They had a road right over the road.