

TAPE #8GEORGE BONNEFOY

...We've kinda shut out big entertainments in Jackson because we don't want the riff-raff element here...

(What were the celebrations around the turn of the century?)

They were small; mostly the 4th of July. Everybody had to have a flag. In those days the flag was put on the head of your horse or in your cap. Most everything was put on by the Native Sons.

...I had the first auto in the County with a starter. It was a Hudson, a 1912. But Ford, he really had a clunker! Gas tank under the seat and everyone had to get out to fill it. And in Volcano, no body could make the hill. Had to turn the car around and go up in reverse. Anyway, in 1912 when I heard they had a car with a starter I wanted one. And along came the Hudson. So I went to Sacramento with a horse and buggy, took us all day...Then we wanted to go to the circus in Sacramento and we had to start out the day before. Ya know, we didn't get there until after the circus left Sacramento. ...Getting back to the automobile...went to Sacramento...the Hudson really had something and I bought it. Came to Jackson with it, and you remember where the old lumber yard used to be? Walter Steele's I think it was. I stopped there and here's this guy sitting in this old car and people came around and finally there were so many I couldn't get out of my own car! And across the street was a bar---that's where Walter ended up, he was an alcoholic, ya know.

(Didn't a log of logging wagons go down through here?)

In those days it was hauling logs to the mines. That's what they timbered the mines with. We cut a lot of timber right here at one time. Not much left---fires went through here.

My Grandfather was born in the grape country of France. And my Grandmother was born and raised in Paris. The parents would pick the husband for the wife. She didn't like him at first.

From there he come to Calif. Around the horn. Then after the discovery of gold he came here.

The Indians had ~~gold~~ gold; and the Chinese, they got most of our gold too. They were here when my Grandmother came.

...We had copper mines too. The old man, he put my father in charge of a copper mine. It was six miles below Plymouth. We had a payroll there of about 400 people. That was part of my work; working with the old man in the office here.

...The last big job I had was to complete 88 from coast to coast. The last job on it was Reg^d Lake Grade. John Begovich was our senator at that time, and I called him and said we had 88 through with the exception of that grade. And I told him to get busy. We needed~~X~~ 2 million more to get the job done. He called me back and said they were going to meet at Silver Lake, all the big boys, ya know. And he said he expected to have the money to take care of Red Lake Grade. And he put it over.

(Can you remember any of your old teachers?)

The two Battaracco's. The women lived down near Fuller. There was two of them. They had a place at twin lakes, near us. We had a little

We had a little school on the other side. This was on Clinton Road. We had a bridge across the creek, and we used to walk over to school. That was abandoned and we went to Jackson. Had an old horse we called Jim, and if I went to a dance I'd catch Jim and harness him up. We'd dance till the sun came up. Don't think you dance that long now.

My Mother and my Aunt, that was Mrs. Gilbert, they had forty acres. The old homestead was 160 acres. I was born in ~~19~~ 1883, and my mother was born in 1863. I was born in Jackson but she was born down here.

(You were a young man when most of these mines started.)

Old man Dieter, he owned all this land. Now this was before the Kennedy. Well, the Kennedy started first and they put a shaft down out there close to the highway. Then, of course he had all the holdings; clear over to Jackson Gate. He had the Zeile mine too. But from that shaft out there, he run a tunnel out under the hospital. I think he put a shaft down near there. Now the Argonaut came in much later.

Well, my father was Dieter's right hand man. And to wind up, he got into copper down there. I bought most of that land for him---several thousand acres. Bought most of the land for 1.25 an acre. The timber land too. Well, people tried to homestead and that's what it cost em. We'd buy it and they got their money back. I go to some poor sucker who couldn't make it and offer him 1.25 an acre.

And I bought up a lot of that stuff.

Anyway, he heard about this guy, Ziele, when he came to Jackson. Ziele had a copper mine. In Calaveras County. Well, he got in with Ziele and picked up the mine. And when Ziele passed away he left Dieter all his holdings. And that's when I came into it.

I started as his bookkeeper. Then he expanded. The Kennedy had two shafts out there. Then the next one was the Argonaut. He figured they had two shallow shafts there. And he was satisfied that the ledge went way down. So he said lets go over there and see what we can locate. So he sent my father over there and he looked around and they picked out the spot where the Argonaut is now. My Father came back and said, Well, Mr. Dieter, you want a shaft over there---I think that's where it should be located. And instead of an incline, it should be perpendicular. Well, they started and within a few hundred feet they hit the ledge. So right away they decided to put a drift in. So they ran a drift from the Argonaut shaft down under the High School. Then they went down another couple of hundred feet and put another drift in. And while they were drifting they were taking out this rich ore. Then they put another shaft down out in the field. And it's over the 7000 feet. And the deeper they go the bigger ledge. But they closed the mines during WW II to save men and materiel, and they've never re-opened.