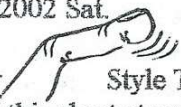


(ME AND MY FRIEND GENE)

Started 5/4/2002 Sat.

(1)

At 9:20 P.M. PDST

One finger  Style Typing.

I'm doing this short story from my failing Memory. And some of it will be true to fact, while some will be a bit sketchy. But I do the best I can.

I first met Gene Wilkinson at the Spinning Wheels Roller Rink on east 7th Ave. on the Esplanade in the summer of 1949. I was 12 years old and Gene was 10 years old. I met him by accident. We were both skating with others in a counter clock wise simi circle inside the rink. I ran into him from the back, and when he fell over the hand rail he reached out and grabbed my right arm and pulled me on top of him. And being kids we had a good laugh over it.



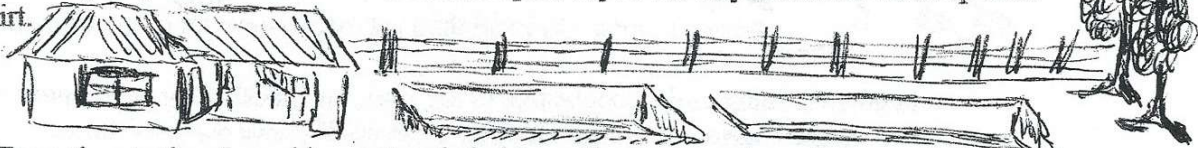
Over the years we became pretty good friends and enjoyed each others company. Gene had fairly poor eyesight, and was never able to get a drivers license. My first car when I

was in High School was a 1927 Model A Rooster with a rumble seat. We use to go with other teenagers like Curtis Dicky Nelson, Bob Bullard who also owned Model A's up into the snow country above Sterling City, Ca. to a place called Inn Skip. Those old fords would go just about anywhere with those 19 and 21 inch nobby tires. And other times we would all go find a good mud or grassey field to spin our tires and do brodies. It was a lot of fun.



Gene's mothers name was Neva and his Step Father was Clyde. They lived on Bryant Ave. just north of Vallumbrosa Ave. and Bidwell Park. I believe Neva taught a painting class in her home, and Clyde was a Butcher and had his first shop at West 5th and Ivy Street next to Rainbo Baking Company. My first job after I turned 16 was as a dish washer for Broadway Coffee Shop. My second job was working as a do-whatever -man for Rainbo Baking Co. My late Father (Bill) also worked there.

Gene's Dad set him up in his own business as an Egg Rancher out on Hwy 32 west of Chico. They built a big Chicken House that held 5000 laying hens, that also had a Cold Storage box and an Egg sorter that would detect blood in the yoke. To the east side of the big building they dug two big pit's some 20 ft. long 8 ft. wide and 6 ft. deep to hold all the chicken pucky and waste water. After those pit's dried out they would fill them up with dirt.



From time to time I would go out and help him gather eggs, and one time even helped him do his annual (Debeaking) of all those chickens, using a hot iron to burn off the top beak just in front of it's nostrils to keep the chickens from pecking each other to death in some cases.

End of page 1

Now 11:20 P.M.

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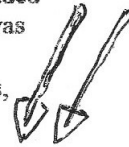
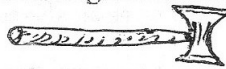
Now 5/5/2002 Sun.

At 6:37 A.M. PDST

One evening when I was out visiting, we both heard someone yelling for help out in the back yard. When we went to see who it was, there was a hobo in one of the pit's up to his neck in Chicken Poo. Apparently he had jumped off a train on the tracks running just north of the ranch and decided he wanted some fresh eggs for dinner, but did not notice the pit when he jumped over the barbed wire fence. We pulled him out, and hosed him down. Then gave him a dozen eggs to take with him. I don't think he ever came back.

On another occasion Gene and I fought a Forest fire together. We had heard on the news that the Forest Service was looking for anyone to fight a fire up near Dunsmeir, Ca. north of Redding. (NOTE) (This was before the days that you had to be a trained fire fighter.) We took our work clothes and I drove Gene and myself up to the Redding National Guard Armory. Parked my 1949 Ford 2 door coupe in a fenced in area. And then we were loaded into big Army Trucks with bench seats. It was a rough ride up to the where the Fire was located just north of Castle Crags State Park and West of Dunsmeir.

They assigned 15 of us to a lead Forest Ranger named Roy Huggins. He had Shovels,



Rakes, Hoes, and very sharp Double Edged long handled Axes lined up, and said in a gruff voice said Choose your weapon. Gene and I both grabbed shovels. (NOTE) (There were No Chainsaws in them days that I know of.) Roy gave us a few simple instructions on how to handle ourselves in the Fire Area, and then lead us up the hill. I learned right off the bat that this was not my cup of tea. Too much walking and back breaking work for a tall thin boy of 17 at 6ft. 7ins. tall weighing only 140 lbs. Gene seemed to like it ok.

We never really did any real fire fighting. We were more or less a Fire Patrol looking for Hot Spots to flare up and then we could put them out. Our sleeping quarters while on the hill was a flat spot dug into the side of a hill with fir or pine baa's layed down to sleep on. We had water to drink. But had gone almost 16 hours with NO Food to eat until they relieved us and we hiked down to the Big Base Camp set up along the north side of the Sacramento River. We worked 8 hours on an 8 hours off. But got paid even when we were not doing anything. I liked that part.

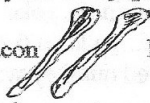
They feed everyone really good. I remembered they always had lots of Steaks



Eggs



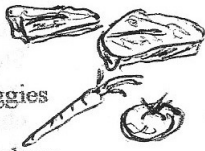
Bacon



Hashbrown



potatoes, all the fruits and veggies



known to man. On more than one occasion a lot of the men and boys

would go swimming in the cool waters of the river, and MOON the passenger trains going down or up the Canyon. It wasn't all work. And we did have our good times.

I can remember only one really bad thing that happened in the 3 weeks we were up there. An African American young college student from Oakland, Ca. Chopped off part of one of his foot while clearing some brush using or using an Ax. He went screaming down the hill yelling for everyone to get out of his way. And we never ever found out what happened to him after that. He just seemed to have disappeared.

End of this page.

Now 8:17 A.M. PDST (C) May 2002

Now 10:42 A.M.

Just got back from my 2 mile walk.

5/5/2002 Sun.

After they got the fire out, they paid everyone off with a check. Then those old rough riding Army Trucks started towards Redding but never got there. They took a slight detour over on Hwy. 299W and west to a new fire near Big Bar, Ca. We were there for another two weeks. Then they gave us our checks and the Army Trucks again took us back to our car.

I took Gene and I over to the Bank of America in downtown Redding to cash our Checks. And it was a mite weird as to how they treated me as aposed to Gene. I had to show them every piece of Identification I had in my wallet, plus they called my house in Chico to asked my parents to tell them what I looked like. I recieved \$3,550 for my 5 weeks. The teller that Gene got never asked him for any I.D. and he recieved \$3,850. \$300 more than I got. To this day we have never figured that one out. The pay and the food was super, but I just did'nt like climbing up an down those steep mountain slopes, and getting stung by yellow jackets.

On Christmas Eve 1954 Gene and I were driving around in downtown Chico in my now 1949 two toned brown Mercury and we spotted a Sailor standing in front of the Old Greyhound Bus Depot. We stopped to talk with him. He said he had missed the last bus to Oregon, and he would not make it home in time for Xmas. I told him that we could take him up there. He was thankful beyond words. I went home to get more money and let my folks know where I was going, and Gene called his Mother. I do believe it was close to 11 p.m. when we headed north on Hwy 99. My Mom had packed a few sandwiches for all 3 of us.

We made stop's in Redding, Dunsmeir, Weed, and McDoli, Ca. for gas and to stretch our legs. We pulled into his parents driveway in Central Keno, Or. at 6:30 a.m. Xmas day. His Dad a Mill Worker was so happy to see his son, he gave both Gene and I \$20 and Shook our hands so long I thought my arm was going to fall off. And his wife gave us 2 fresh loaves of homemade white bread with a small tub of real homemade butter. "OH" Yummy Yum. Gene and I took our time going home, and taking in all the sights that we could not see coming up. Mt. Shasta was Awesome looking up close. It was one of our better 2 days together.

Gene got married at an early age to his High School sweet heart Sharon Peck. They had 2 daughters. Kim, and Kathy. We kinda lost contact for a few years after that. After we graduated from high school Gene settled down to being Hen Pecked an running his business, and I moved over to Arcata, Ca. an went to work for Weyerhaeuser Timber Co. on Old Blue Lake Rd. I was there 11 years.

On my many trips back to Chico to visit my Parents Virginia and Bill Padgett. I would call Gene from time to time and even take him out to the differant bars to drink and dance. We mostly hung around the Western stlye music, an going to the Jolly Fox, Chico Club, and a dozen other ones in both Chico and Paradise. I gave up drinking altogether on Oct. 2 1980. The very next day I bought a brand new GS550E = 4 cyclinder = 5 speed candy apple red Suzuki Motorcycle. I had it for only 3 years. And sold it to a John Underhill up in Anderson, Ca.

The end of this page.

Now 12:56 P.M. 5/5/02 Sun.  May 2002

Now 5:05 P.M.

One other thing that happened to Gene and I and a couple of other fella's back when we were teenagers. One Saturday night Gene along with Clifford Davis and Bob Bullard and I were all riding around town in my 1949 Mercury. I stopped at the Union 76 gas station which was located on the West side of the Esplanade at 9th Ave. While I was getting the gas Gene and the rest were seeing what they could steal from inside. Needless to say we got stopped some 2 blocks from the station and got hauled off the the City Jail at 5th an Main Streets in downtown Chico.

I did not Know at that time what those 3 had been doing. But it was my car they found the stuff in. (Items were: A gage that measures the depth of the tread on your tires. Dark Sun Glasses. A Muffler for a sports car. None of them owned a sports car. An Auto magazine, and a few other things I don't remember.) After the Police called all our parents Gene an Clifford an Bob finally told the Officers that I had nothing to do with stealing any of that stuff. It was Clifford's Idea to have a little fun. So I was off the hook. I think all three were put on probation for a couple of years, and had to be home by 10 p.m. And they paid some kind of Restitution, but I don't know how much. Gene never got in any trouble ever again. But I can't say the same for myself. (But that is another story.)

I don't know what year it was, but Gene's first wife Sharon passed away do to complications with her weight after some surgery was done. And since he did'nt drive the Welfare Dept. in Butte County was going to take his 2 young daughters away from him. His mother Neva stepped in an adopted them as her own. I have not seen either of those girls in over 25 years. But Gene say's they are still around someplace.

I was kinda responsible for Gene meeting his 2nd wife Genie (last name unknown) I had met her in a one of the local bars and had a few dates with her. I do not know when they became an idem, but it was an on an off relationship. And towards the end of there marriage she verbally abused Gene with her sharp tongue critizing him for his bad eyesight an not being able to drive a car and cook or clean house, and on an on an on. And to this day I do not know where she ended up. But good riddunce. But being a strong minded man he never took what she said to heart. And somehow moved on with his life.

Somewhere along the line he met a beautiful lady who had 5 children an lived in south/east Chico. I do believe she was a music teacher from Washington State. Gene fell madly in love with this lady who's name I do not remember and wanted to marry her, and give her and her lovely 5 children a loving home. But she refused his offer. Much later she died of a brain tumor. Gene was heart broken for a long time. I do not know what happened to her children.

Sometime before 1980 Gene met his present wife Shelley Jo. She told me once that she Adored Gene very much, and would take good care of him. I attended there Wedding in 1981 at a private home or a small Church over on the West side of Chico. Well she has kept her word, because they have been married 21 + years and are still together. Good for them. They have No children but have a 9 year old cat with die-a-beat-tus and Gene gives her 4 units of insullin morning an night.

Now 8:25 P.M.

In 1969 I moved back to Chico from Camino, Ca. to be closer to my mother who was not in good health. Gene and I got together many a time to go bar hopping and just hang out a bit.

Sometime after he married Shelley we took a trip in my 1969 Volkswagon Bug back up to the Placerville area where I once worked for a short 3 years for Michigan Calif. Lumber Co. We stopped off at Coloma, Ca. where Gold was first discovered at Sutters Mill on the Middle Fork of the American River in 1849. I still have the pictures I took of Gene standing next to the replica of the old Sutters Mill in his blue Levi's, cowboy boots, brown lambs wool lined vest, and a big cowboy hat. He was a good looking fella back then. I can see why Shelley fell in love with him.

After leaving there I took Gene by to show him where I use to work. and also a couple of places I use to live at. Then on up hwy 50 to South Shore Lake Tahoe to do a bit of gambling. The first place we tried was Harvey's Wagon Wheel. I don't think we were there much more than 20 minutes when I won a \$250 jackpot on a Quarter machine on the second floor. A few minutes later Gene hit a \$250 jackpot on a quarter machine. We were two happy dudes.

We stayed there for about 5 hours winning some smaller pots, and losing a few. Took in about 4 free shows, and drank a lot of watered down screw drivers. Had a great dinner of Lobster an Prime Rib at the Resturant that Rotates on the top floor. Great view of the Lake an surrounding area, including the Heavenly Valley Ski Resort. I think we left there with about \$350 a piece.

I took Gene back to Chico via hwy 89 north up to Truckee, on I-80. then took that road down until we took hwy 20 west into Nevada City, and Grass Valley. Then 20 west down to 8 miles north of Marysville an cut across over to hwy 70 an north thru Oroville and finally Home. That trip was the last time we did any traveling together. It was a fun time for me.

Gene gave up on the Chicken Ranch many years ago, and has worked as a Male Orderly at Beverly Manors or River Side Convalescent Hospital for over 30 years I think. I mite be off a year or two. A couple of years ago he had a Triple By Pass surgery on his heart. And has recovered nicely from that. Gene and I had a great visit on Saturday the 4th of May 2002. And he looks the same to me, with just a bit of greying hair like most old goats that make it to our age. It was great to see him again. Afterwards I took him home an was able to see his still loving wife Shelley and thank her for taking care of my good friend all these years. I left with a few tears in my old eyes.

Nowwith E-mail I can drop them a line or two an keep in touch more often. At least that's my plans for now.

This concludes this short story. Hope all who read it well think more about your best friend, and keep in touch.

Now 5/5/2002 Sunday at 11:10 P.M. PDST

Written an Typed an Art Work done by Alan W. Padgett In Chico, Ca.

Ham Call Nov. 6 Real Nice Person N6RNP

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