

# Boyhood in the Mountains

By MARGARET KOCH  
Sentinel Staff Writer

"I used to get five cents from my grandfather for every gopher I trapped in his vineyard."

John Buse of Soquel likes to recall his boyhood days in the Santa Cruz Mountains. His eyes shine, his smile broadens and the tales flow thick and fast.

"The traps cost 25 cents each. That was a lot of money. And the nickels I earned bought a lot in those days."

Gophers were an economic menace in the days of the late 1890s and early 1900s when grapes were a thriving fruit crop in Santa Cruz County.

"The traps would disappear," he said. "Dogs and cats would drag them away to eat the gophers. I learned early that they would never eat out in the open if they could drag it away someplace into the edge of the brush."

When traps — which cost all of a quarter apiece — disappeared, John would go looking for them along the edges of the vineyards.

The wine grapes, when ripe, were hauled by horse and wagon to Glenwood where C.C. Martin's winery was located. It was leased out to a San Francisco wine firm which operated it, turning out great wood puncheons of wine which were shipped via railroad to San Francisco. In 1910-11, one gallon of wine cost 35 cents according to old record books John has saved.

Those were the days when some of the transient families living in the mountains added to their slim cash incomes by cutting hoops for lime barrels.

"They would cut the branches from hazelnut bushes, then split them lengthwise, tie them and force them down over the barrels."

### Such Prices!

A cord of pine wood cost and a 275-pound bale of cost \$2.75 in those days, Italian woodchoppers

chopper, cut one cord of wood (by hand) for \$1.50," John recalls. "There were no chain saws in those days."

The only time the mountain kids had ice cream was in the winter when the weather was cold, or maybe on a rare trip to town.

"There were no refrigerators," John reminds, "but there were layers of sawdust between the walls of the milk house to insulate it and keep it cool."

His grandfather, John Nicholas Beckmann, also raised other kinds of fruits for market, packing and shipping them to commission agents in San Francisco.

"The first check that came back from them was always great," John says. "The next check was always small. And the third time there was usually a note saying 'Sorry, but your fruit spoiled and we can't pay you for it.'"

John was born not on the ranch but in Alameda in 1897. His mother was the former Hannah Beckmann and when her young husband died she took her three-year-old son back to her father's ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains above Scotts Valley.

### A New Father

A frequent visitor at the ranch was one Tom Earley, an Irishman who originally rode through the mountains on horseback, looking for a piece of property. On his first trip he stopped by the Beckmanns' and met the young widow Hannah, and her little son.

Tom Earley's trips became more frequent from then on, and in 1909 he and Hannah were married.

### The Three R's

School was close for John in comparison to many of his classmates who walked miles each way. Glenwood School at that time was located on the Mountain Charlie Road, just below the Beckmann ranch. John went to school there until it

Glenwood General Store.

There, it was for a time called Martin School. Erma Rhodes was the teacher, as he recalls. From the store, the school moved into an empty butcher shop nearby and was informally called the "Butcher Shop School" for a short time. Then the school was moved again, up the hill behind the store into an unfinished cottage, and it stayed there until a "new" schoolhouse was built on property Martin donated.

"When it was in the cottage, it was heated by a huge iron stove made by Herb Martin who was a blacksmith. We could put a whole big grape root stump into that stove and it would burn all day."

Water for the school was carried up the hill by bucket from the Glenwood Store, with the kids taking turns doing the carrying, he says. Everyone drank from a common dipper. There were outhouses, of course, one for boys, one for girls.

And that brought to John's mind another story, about the Beckmann family outhouse.

### "Conveniences"

"I fell into it once when I was a kid. But I only got the toes of my shoes in it because it had just been moved."

He says his grandfather had a unique outhouse arrangement. The little house was fastened to a sled. When the hole beneath it got filled, they just hitched the sled to a horse and pulled it to a new location.

And that outhouse story brought forth another, along the same earthy lines. John laughed as it came to mind.

"My mother had long hair — all the women did — and she wore celluloid combs to hold it in place. One evening when I was just a kid, she was standing close to a kerosene lamp, brushing her hair, when a comb caught on fire. She screamed. Almost without thinking I grabbed the chamberpot and threw the contents over her head and put out the fire."

### The Clay Banks

An interesting part of his boyhood was spent observing what went on down at the Clay Banks in the canyon to the north-west of the family ranch.

A fine type of clay was mined there and sent, by railroad boxcar, to Davenport, for the manufacture of cement.

"At first they worked it all by hand, with picks and wheelbarrows. Later there was a small steam shovel to scoop it up."

A lumber mill also was located in the Clay Banks area with a mill, cabins, a bunkhouse, cookhouse and other rough buildings. The bull teams labored in and out, dragging the mammoth redwood logs which were secured by chains, from where they had been felled, to the mill where they were cut into lumber of all kinds.

Life was very different in those days, the pace was slower, people didn't feel they had to have as much. And John recalled Emmet Lewis who was the railroad station agent at Glenwood.

"About 1912 he got tired of his job and quit. He asked my dad (Tom Earley) if he could stay in one of our cabins. He just lived there on the place and fished, trapped a little and hunted, living off the land for a few years."

When John was 15 he graduated from grammar school at Glenwood and a few days later, a long, legal-looking envelope addressed to him came through the mail. He held it in his hand, looking at it with amazement, and finally his father said "Open it!"

It was a letter from Cecil Davis. She was Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools for two terms, according to John. She asked if he would undertake a school census of the Glenwood-Zayante area.

"All I could think of was the chore of hitching up the horse and wagon for all those trips I would have to make," John says. "But my

completes Farms up Zayante con were very isolated inose days, as were thoseached via the Mountain Crie Road.

### That Automobile

By 1917 family had an auto — onof two in the area, and Earley auto played a crial role in saving the lifeof a neighbor youngster, Be Angelo.

"Pete's mother was cleaning clothes with gasoline and she had a water glass of it in the kitchen table. She'd p a cloth into it, then rubne cloth over the soiled sps." (Editor's Note: Don't ver do this — you can be blen to kingdom come.)

Pete was laying out in the yard and got thirsty, ran in, saw wit looked like a glass of water, grabbed it and without tasting the gasoline, drank it down. Immediately the child turned colors and became deathly ill. His father rushed with him to the Erleys' place and they started for the hospital at Santa Cruz, in the auto.

"I was driving. My dad was with me. And Mr. Angelo and Pete were in the back seat."

Near Scotts Valley the main highway was blocked. Fresh concrete was being smoothed into place over a section of it. John stopped the car at the barrier.

"I thought 'What do I do now?' Pete looked terrible — like he was dying."

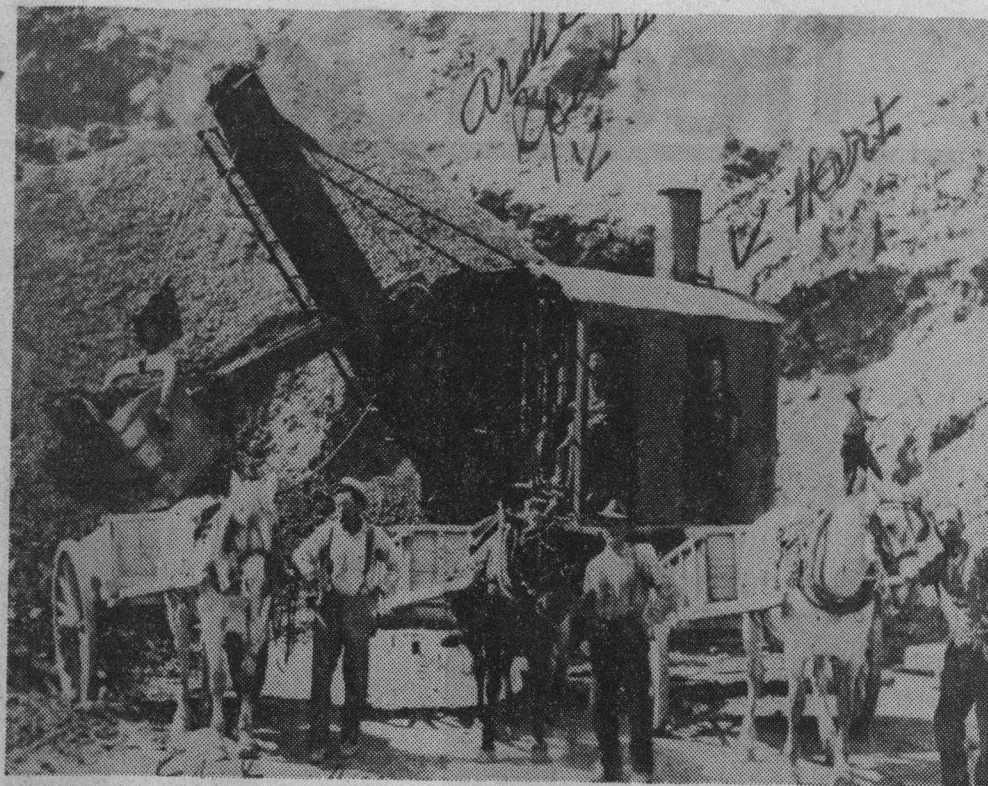
Fred Griffin, a motorcop, happened to be standing at the barrier and took in the problem. Immediately he threw down the barrier and yelled "Go on! You go through there!"

John hesitated. "Who will take the responsibility?" he called.

Griffin motioned impatiently: "I will! Now GO!" John drove on through the fresh concrete with a string of oaths from the workmen following him.

"But we got Pete to the hospital and he lived."

### The Locked Room



The steam shovel at the Clay Banks was operated by Archie Speaker, engineer, with a fellow named Hart as fireman.

wealthy San Franciscan who built a huge summer home on his acres of redwoods and named the largest trees for famous people. He had trails through his groves, past springs and fern grottos, and he entertained royally.

When his wife died, Thorne was so affected that he had her room locked and left that way, untouched, for years. Later the house burned and wood choppers' cabins appeared. Within the past eight years a bunch of new homes have been built on Thorne's acres, each with a wide county view.

### His 4-H Years

John in his adult years, helped start 4-H Camp Loma up near Loma Prieta, after he assisted Harold and Charlotte Nelson of Soquel start Mountain 4-H Club.

"We dammed the creek for a swimming hole at Camp Loma," he says. "And I took the old wood cook stove from the ranch up to the camp kitchen. They had no gas or electricity up there in those early days of camp life."

Today, John and his wife May, live in Soquel and are active in Eastern Star. John keeps his hand in by raising a few vegetables and tending a few fruit trees.

Gophers were worth 5 cents each and ice cream was a sometime thing for country kids, John Buse says. He recalls his boyhood in the Santa Cruz Mountains.



Tom Earley, John Buse's stepfather on his favorite saddle horse, George. Below, John and his mother, Hannah Early, on the back steps of their farmhouse located above Scotts Valley in the Santa Cruz Mountains.



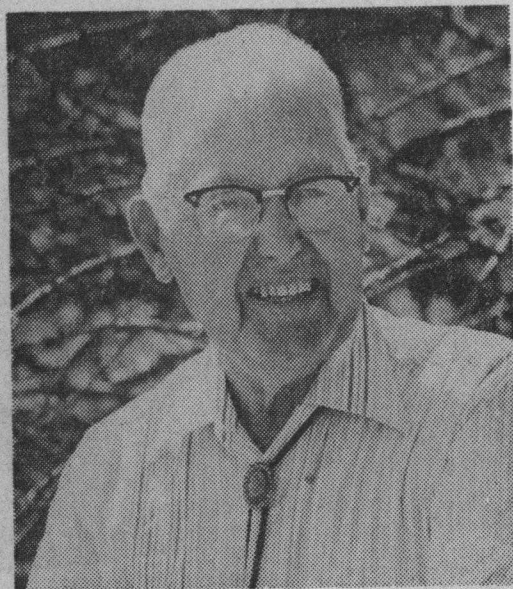
were boarded for 25 cents a meal. burned about 1903, then it was moved to an upstairs room over C.C. Martin's

John's smile faded when he remembered how serious the incident might have been: "My grandfather told me I had done the right thing."

take my saddle horse and a briefcase." John "traveled light," he loved to ride his horse, and the census survey was ac-

Down on Greenwood Drive, which was the main highway in those days between Los Gatos and Santa Cruz, a gate led into the Thorne Place. Thorne was a

But best of all, he loves to get out his scrapbooks and remember back into the old days on the mountain ranch when he was a boy.



John Buse



The kids at Glenwood School lined up for a photo one day, during the time the school was conducted in the cottage on the hill behind the store. From left: the little girl is Mary Ellen Martin; Margaret Borland is in back; Miriam Martin had a hand on her collie, Laddie; Vivian Stratton, Corinne Antonelli, Mabel Stratton, Alfred Borland, Arthur Borland, John Buse, Oreste (Rusty) Antonelli, Jimmy Stratton, Charlie Borland, unknown, Kenneth Ketchum; the teacher, Helen Huff, is in rear with her hair up.

Children who attended but were not in the picture included several other Antonellis, three Plimpton children and Evelina and Alfredo Fadelli.

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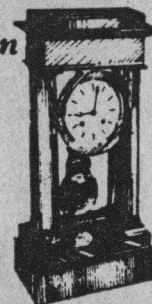
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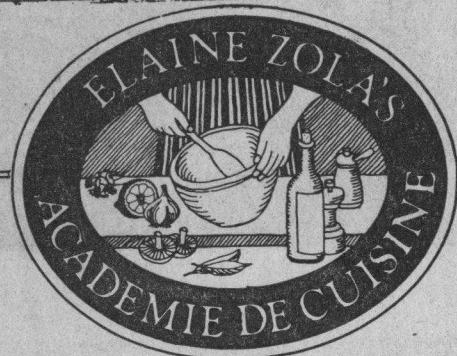
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