

TAPE #32AMADOR COUNTY HOSPITAL

Taped: April 1979

Subject: Early days in the County with Linda Cuneo and others.

Linda---I lived on New York Ranch Road.

(What relationship is Azalea Cuneo to you?)

She's my husband's first cousin. It's a big family. The Cuneos had a party and invited the family. Well, 162 Cuneos showed up, and they still weren't all there. They came from Stockton, Sacramento, Calaveras County; they came from all over. I made a big squash dish full of cheese, garlic and onions. And I had to beg a piece they liked it so much.

(Were you born in the County?)

No, I wasn't.

(Where were you born?)

I was born in Genoa, Italy. I came over when I was eight days old. The Onetto's were relations, and that's what brought us here. We settled three miles from Pine Grove in the New York Ranch District. The road there used to be a toll road. They used to charge 50 cents for each vehicle to cross it. This was the Pine Grove New York Ranch Road. They had a beautiful Hotel in the district. It burned down, and all the ammunition was stored in there. I tried to tell people to be careful, but the shells went off, and no one could get near enough to put out the fire. Just to see that old hotel was something; inside it was just beautiful.

(Can you tell us when it burned down?)

No, dear, I can't remember.

(Family ties must have meant a lot.)

Oh yes. We used to have may-pole dances in the spring. And I'll tell you, my mother was quite a woman. Where ever she went, I went. And she walked everywhere. She walked from home clear over to Rancharia. And I'd go with her. And there were no roads like there are now. We had to walk across the country. And I remember a bridge we had to cross. Mother would grab me with one hand, and the other would be on the little railing for the bridge. I tell people now about those times, and it takes their breath away. They can't hardly believe it.

(People really walked just about everywhere.)

I used to walk from Clinton to New York Ranch Road.

(Where did you go to school?)

New York Ranch school. After they spent 5000 dollars to fix it up, they turned around and sold it for 1500 dollars. I think I'd be tempted to mob them. Now it's all built up; it's not like it was.

(Do you know Leslie Martin at the library?)

Yes. She was a Fleming. Married a Martin. I knew her mother very well.

(Do you remember doing much travelling?)

Not till later years. We would go to Sacramento for the childrens' clothes.

(How did you get there?)

Well, a bunch of us would get together, and somebody had a car so we would head in. And we would always have a good time.

(What did you do for entertainment?)

Where Leslie Martin lives, they had a big hall there. And they

would have dances there. And up at Sutter Hill there was another hall that had dances. You'd have to walk three or four miles to get there.

(What were the dances like?)

They'd go on all night with a dinner late in the evening. Then we would walk back home. Listen, it was nothing to walk from home to Pine Grove. We'd go from home to Pine Grove in 25 minutes, believe it or not. That's a fact.

(What can you tell us of Pine Grove?)

My husband ^{waited on loggers} ~~worked on logs~~ up there. And he had to work from 11 o'clock until 2 in the morning waiting on people. These were from the Dance Hall. And I want to tell you that they would have 400 people there.

(I've got some old pictures of Pine Grove. Perhaps you can identify them for me.)

I'll try.

(This is the Galli Hotel. What can you tell us about it?)

It was built years and years ago. Today you can hardly find a place to stay. But then it was a way station. People came to eat and sleep there. When I worked there we served a big dinner for a dollar a plate, and they could have anything they wanted. Ravioli and good things like that.

(You worked there?)

I sure did! I'd work from 11 until 2 o'clock in the morning.

(How did you get home?)

We had a pick-up.

(What else can you tell us?)

Ben Pitch used to play for them to dance.

(What did he play?)

Listen, I think he played the violin. And there were some rich people who lived next to the town hall. They sold the land for 6 or 7 thousand. Ha! Try to touch it now! But Leslie's house on the New York Ranch Road. It has seven bed rooms; imagine that.

(Now, Suzie, where are you from?)

West Point.

(How long have you been there?)

Since 1937.

(Did your husband work in West Point?)

Yes. He worked falling timber.

(When did West Point get electricity?)

It was 1939, I think.

(How many people lived in West Point then?)

About 700. But most of them were out in the bushes.

(Did you know Sidney Trice?)

Yes. He was the only colored man there.

(Was the living rough?)

Yes. We didn't have chain saws like you do now. We'd use a saw six or seven feet long with somebody on either end of it. We also didn't have grocery stores much. We would barter a lot with our neighbors.

(Now, back to Linda.)

O.K.

(How many acres did or do you own?)

129 acres. But some of our land was in Jackson and the rest was in Sutter Creek. We just sold 40 acres for grapes, but we still have the 129.

(What did you do for doctors in those days?)

When we were young we didn't get sick. So all the doctors were good doctors.

But there was Dr. Goodman in Sutter Creek. He used to go up to West Point time and time again with his horse and cart. And he would always stop by our place on the way and get a cup of coffee. But we didn't have anything like we have now. He was a wonderful man, I'll tell you that! And Dr. Lynch was the same way. But doctors don't do that any more.

Suzie---We had a doctor in West Point. And there was also a little hospital. It seems odd now that all this is past history.

Linda---You can go to the marble quarry and see the works. The marble there is very pretty.

(Did you ever ride the stage?)

Listen, I'll tell you, he would pick you up when he went down and he'd bring you back. And listen, he didn't charge us either!

(How old were you?)

Well, not very big. But the stage driver would buy anything you wanted in Jackson, and he'd deliver it too. I never paid that ~~man~~ man one penny. He wouldn't let me. And now if you don't pay, they'll throw you in jail.

(Where did you get your water in those days?)

Suzie---From a spring.

Linda---You carried water all the time in those days.

(How many kids were in school with you on New York Ranch Road?)

There were 30 kids. One big room, and the teacher taught every grade.

AND she got the lousy sum of sixty dollars a month!

I went to school there through the ninth grade, and then I took a post-graduate course. School was fun. We played bingo, and we played

baseball with a hard ball! We also played Prisoner Base. I went to Middle Fork School for a bit. And we had to walk four miles to the school. We start at 7.30 in the morning and go over those hills and school started at 9. We legged it pretty fast.

(Did you have chores after school?)

Well, I didn't get home until 5. But I might have to go get the cow for the folks.

(What was a typical meal?)

You got mush. Rolled oats, you know. You could buy it in big 10# bags.

(What would you have for dinner?)

Listen. The meat wasn't like it is now. We had mashed potatoes and gravy, and being Italian we had lots of corn meal. We made palenta.

(Did you make your own noodles?)

It was quite a chore to do it. I used to make all that stuff. But it got to be such a job that we would buy it when it was on a sale or something.

And I used to make bread. Well, I had three going to school. And we never bought bread.

(Lets go around the table and find out what others had to eat. Suzie, what about you?)

Pancakes. And syrup and butter.

(What did you have for dinner, Suzie?)

Potatoes and meat. Roasts.

(Did you have to go to a butcher for your meat.)

Yes. But later the butcher wagon would come around.

(Yes, Linda?)

We butchered the beef and the pork. Made bacon and all that.

We smoked a lot of things too.

Suzie---We had ducks and geese, turkeys and lots of chickens.

Linda---And at supper we would eat soup.

(Did anyone here have relatives who worked in the mines?)

(No answer to the above at this point.)

(Bessie, how long have you been in Jackson?)

I was twenty six when I got married.

Linda---Did we have orange and lemon trees! But the frost got em.

(What can you tell me about gambling and prostitution in Jackson?)

They were gambling in 1946! They closed in 1956.

(Were there many Chinese here?)

Not here. Ione had them all.

(What about the law?)

Well, Sherrif Lucot, let's see. Judge Ryan's wife is Sheriff Lucot's daughter. They had a big party up at Daffodil Hill, and the Sheriff heard that we had nice corn at home. So we went and picked some for him. We got 4 dozen ears and I never lived it down. Out pickin corn with the Sheriff! That's all I heard for awhile.