History of the Requas of Mendocino County

Today, Hazel and Gene Requa live in the house in which Gene was born, high on a grassy hill overlooking Highway 101, miles of Mendocino County and the hundreds of acres which were homesteaded by Gene's grandfather 120 years ago.

Near the house is a large depression in the hillside, all that remains of the dugout that was built there by grandfather Alfred Requa during the first winter he moved his family to the hilltop so many years ago when there was no highway, no roads at all, just a narrow foot trail leading to the bustling new community of Cahto and on to the coast.

The original Requa homestead consisted of 640 acres.

The original land grant, Homestead No. 409, was dated August 1, 1872 and signed by President Ulysses S. Grant. The family has that original paper, as well as the original registrations for the additional four pieces of land added to the homestead in 1877.

Alfred Requa was born in New York State in 1827. There were large numbers of Requas in that area, descendants of three brothers who were French Huguenots and fled their homeland in 1640, eventually landing in New Amsterdam (later named New York) the following year.

When news of the California gold rush hit the east coast, Alfred and his cousin Issac Requa set out to join those flocking to the West Coast to make their fortunes.

They sailed around the Cape and up to San Francisco, where they outfitted themselves with supplies, mules and maps and headed for the Mother Lode country.

The pair filed a claim in Nevada County and settled in a place they named Woolsey Flat in honor of Alfred's mother, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Woolsey.

The partners struck pay dirt, and Issac took his share and headed back to San Francisco where he invested his small fortune in gold and then moved to Oakland where he lived for the rest of his life.

Issac Requa became a very wealthy man. He married Sarah Mower, who had come from Maine with her family in a shelter wagon caravan in 1852.

After their marriage they built the first home in Piedmont, a mansion on 40 acres of landscaped grounds called The Highlands.

Issac was president of the Central Pacific Railroad and of the Oakland Bank of Savings, and his wife Sarah was the grande dame of East Bay society right up to the time of her death at the age of 93.

Sarah was active in many social causes. She founded the Oakland Old Ladies Home, the Fabiola Hospital and Convalescent Home, and the Oakland Chapter of Traveler's Aid.

The Requa mansion was a show place and entertaining done was on a lavish scale, with the leading political figures and dignitaries of the time frequent guests.

Sophie Edna Beck, 81 years old and the only remaining child of Alfred Requa, remembers going to Piedmont to visit Uncle Issac and Aunt Sarah and of being awed at the splendor of their lifestyle.

The greatest impression was made by the fact that her Piedmont cousins had a pony cart in which their small guests were taken on a tour of the extensive grounds.

When Issac left Woolsey Flat and headed for San Francisco and Oakland, his cousin Alfred took a couple of partners into the gold mine and left them in charge while he returned east to marry his childhood sweetheart.

Taking a bag of gold with him, Alfred headed south from San Francisco on the return trip and for some reason that no one in the family knows, went into Mexico on the trip home and had some trouble with the authorities there.

He was imprisoned, his bag of gold taken from him, and it was only through intervention of the American Consul that he was able to get out of the country.

Back home again at last, the 26 year old Alfred married Melissa Harris, 18 years old, in October, 1853, and eight days later they left for California, this time traveling across Panama by mule train and then by sailing ship up to San Francisco, a journey that took 23 days at sea.

Once back at Woolsey Flat, the young man discovered that his "partners" had cleaned out his claim of all its remaining gold and disappeared with the take.

Starting again from scratch, Alfred and his bride moved from one gold field to another, seeking to hit another bonanza. Eventually, they worked their way up into Trinity County, and it was there that at least one child was born and later drowned when the toddler fell into a sluice box.

There may have been more children, as in later years Melissa used to say she had given birth to a total of 12 children, but only eight grew to adulthood and nothing is known of any other children.

In 1856 the young couple landed at Point Arena. Melissa was pregnant at the time, and a daughter, Almira, was born there in January of 1857.

At that time, a number of energetic and enterprising young adventurers had discovered the beautiful inland valleys surrounded by redwood forests which would later be known as Long Valley and Jackson Valley.

These included John Simpson and Robert White, who had established a first logging operation and small community at heavily wooded Cahto, and Jackson Farley who had homesteaded a tract of rolling open pasture land surrounded by timbered peaks in the Long Valley area.

Alfred Requa, exploring around for a place to settle his growing family, met one or more of these first settlers in Mendocino County and rode horseback over the Cahto trail to check out the inland valleys for himself.

to be continued.

A view of the Requa ranchlands was taken from a spring fed pond located not far from the house where the Requas still live today. All of this land was at one time Requa property, but some of it has since been sold.

This depression in the hilltop where the Requa home stands is all that remains of a root cellar dug out of the hill by Alfred Requa in 1860, after his family had already spent a winter in another dugout on the lower levels of the homestead. This root cellar also served as a dwelling for the family while the first cabin was being built of timbers felled by Alfred on his land.

Robert White and his partner John Simpson were the first two white men to settle in the area called Cahto, the Indian word for "swampy place". Originally part of the group who headed up the Mendocino Indian Reservation on the coast, White and Simpson first came to Jackson Valley in 1853 in search of wild game to be used at the reservation. They built a small trading store on the site, followed later by a logging operation, blacksmith shop and hotel.

Jackson Farley first passed through the area later called Long Valley in 1849, when he was on his way north to the gold mining country. His wife had died the year before, leaving two children. One child died in 1856, followed by the other the next year. Farley set out to find a new life, and went back to the beautiful valley he recalled in Mendocino County, where he homesteaded the first 160 acres around the peak that bears his name.

Alfred Requa brings his family to

Jackson Farley had first passed through the area of Mendocino County which would later be known as Long Valley, in 1849 when he was on his way north to the gold mining country.

His wife had died the year before, leaving him with two small children.

For the next few years he worked the mine fields, but when first one child died in 1856, followed by the other in 1857, he decided to start a new life and put down roots.

Remembering the beautiful, fertile pasture lands and heavily timbered hills of Mendocino County, he returned here and laid claim to a spread of 160 acres at the foot of the distinctively pointed peak which still bears his name.

When Alfred Requa came looking for land of his own the next year, he no doubt met Farley and possibly visited Farley's homestead, because the land he selected was that which adjoined Farley's claim to the south and west.

Today, driving toward Laytonville on Highway 101, just past the entrance to Bud Sloan's Shamrock Ranch one can see a gentle rise in the land where the open pasture begins to lift in wooded ridges toward Farley's Peak.

It was on that gentle rise that Alfred Requa decided to build his family's first home, a crude, but warm dugout bolstered by timbers and with an opening in the sod roof for smoke from the woodburning stove.

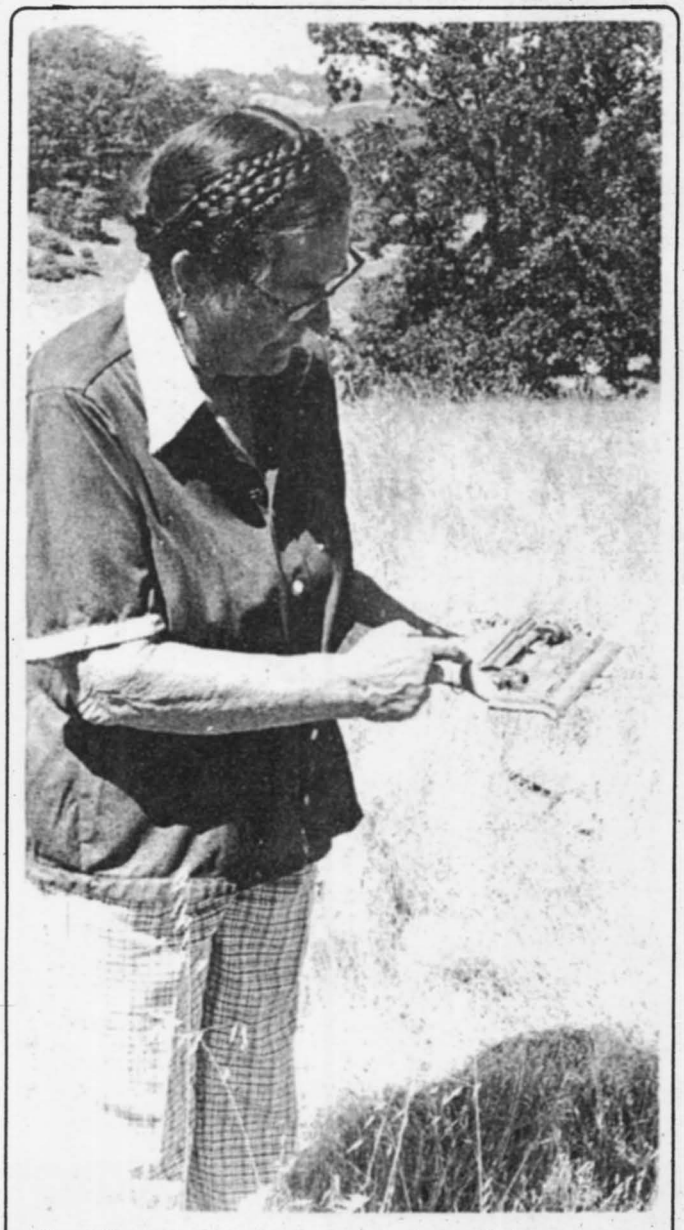
The tall lanky frontiersman returned to Point Arena and bundled his wife, baby and basic household goods into a wagon for the move to their new home.

One cannot help but wonder what Melissa's reactions were when she saw her first "home."

Another baby was on the way and was in fact born in that primitive dugout home in the spring of 1860, a boy child who was named Nelson.

Members of the Requa family who visited the site recently found the depression indicating where the dugout was built. Flat rocks which once covered the roof near the smoke opening were still scattered about in the tall grasses, and fragments of the

Bonnie Christian, great granddaughter of Alfred Requa, uses a metal detector to locate the site of the Requa dugout. Bonnie is standing at the entrance to the dugout, long since filled in and overgrown.



Hazel Requa, whose husband Gene is a grandson of Alfred Requa, shows a piece of iron which formed part of the door of a wood burning stove which was used in the dugout where Alfred and Melissa lived the first winter on their land.

homestead in Mendocino County

old iron cook stove were also found.

The interior could not have been more than eight to ten feet square at the most, and in that small space the family lived throughout that first cold winter, and it was there that Melissa managed to care for husband and child, cook, wash and give birth to another child.

In later years, after he was a grown man, Nelson Requa had a small book of poetry published. One of the poems, "The Old Log Cabin," refers to the one room log cabin "where I was born," but also refers to the good times shared with his brothers and sisters.

By the time other children were born, the family was no longer living in the dugout where Nelson was born, so it appears he was referring not only to the place where he was born, but also to the cabin built by Alfred before the next winter closed in.

As Melissa Requa was noted for a "spunkiness" that made up for her tiny size, one can safely guess that she made her feelings known to Alfred in no uncertain terms as soon as the warming spring sunshine began to dry out the soggy land.

Carrying both babies with her on horseback, she rode with her husband over all their land and finally selected the clean high sweep of hilltop where she wanted a "real home" built.

All that summer Alfred worked at felling trees and beginning work on the cabin that was to be their home.

He also made another dugout close to the building site, but this time it was with the understanding that the dugout was to be used only as a root cellar and storage area.

Once the cabin was finished and Melissa and children moved into it, Alfred continued in a frenzy of activity to get the rest of the building finished before winter set in.

He no doubt had the help of his few scattered neighbors, according to the custom of the day, to complete the granary and the pole barn which was made with sapling poles in which holes were drilled and then rawhide thongs were pulled through and watered.

As the thongs dried they contracted, making a tight connection.

The big hill, further on up above the cabin, was full of springs and near one of these Alfred laid out his garden and an orchard.

The fruit trees he planted, pears and apples, as well as the butternut and chestnut trees which had been brought with the Requas from New York as seeds in a leather pouch, are still standing and bearing today.

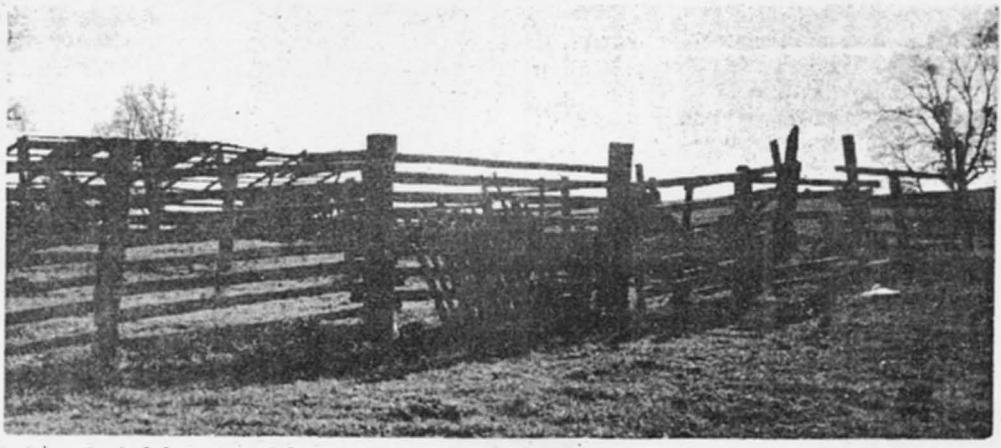
The house overlooked the Sherwood Trail, later to be known as Sherwood Road, one of the original Indian trails which crisscrossed the County.

There was another trail which ran from the coast through Cahto.

This trail split at a spot about where Steele Lane is today in Laytonville, with one branch going south and connecting with the Sherwood Trail, while the other branch went across Long Valley and over Poonkinney Ridge to Round Valley and then on to Sacramento.

There was also a trail that led south from Cahto over Strong Mountain to Sherwood, already settled by the man for whom it was named, and on down to the small community of Little Lake (forerunner of Willits) and south to Ukiah.

To be continued.



A portion of the original fence is shown here, which was near the first home Alfred Requa built for his family over 100 years ago. No one other than Requas have lived on this land since Alfred filed his claim in 1860.

Continuing the story of the Requa

Another family who became neighbors and good friends of the Requas was the Talkington family.

John Talkington came to the area in 1868 with his bride Margaret and homesteaded the land which adjoined both the Requas and Jackson Farley.

Later John bought part of the Farley property and added it to his own and eventually, he held nearly 3000 acres stocked with 1000 sheep.

John built a large two story house right alongside the Sherwood Road, and portions of that house are still standing on the property now owned by the Bud Comer family.

Two sons were born in that house, Charlie and William, boys who grew up with and attended school with the growing Requa family.

In later years, Charlie Talkington was a stage coach driver and the Talkington home was a stage coach stop. One of the first post offices was also in the Talkington home, presided over by Margaret Talkington.

In the meantime, Alfred Requa was working hard on building up his ranch, stocking a line of roan cattle, descendants of which still roam the Requa range today, plus hogs, sheep and turkeys.

This roan heifer, now well along in years and a special pet of Gene Requa, is one of the several roan cattle still roaming the Requa Ranch, offspring of the original roans placed on the ranch by Gene's grandfather over 100 years ago. The cattle were originally used in the early logging camps as oxen teams and were added to the pioneers' herds because they were such sturdy stock.

He used a hand plow pulled by his horse to till the big rolling hills around his house, planting wheat and oats to grow alongside the native patches of wild oats and timothy.

A fenced vegetable and melon garden was planted near the big soda springs at the top of the hill behind the house. Nearby, patches of wild gooseberries, thimbleberries and raspberries grew in tangled profusion.

Everyone planted grains as food for the stock as well as the family. Wheat was used not only to make flour, but also to make a hot breakfast mush, very nourishing.

Alfred Requa took his wheat in bags slung on horseback to the water wheel grist mill built by Jonathon Wilson on Ten Mile Creek where it was ground into flour.

Most social activity of the time was centered at the bustling community of Cahto and it was at one of the parties held in the old White Hotel there that the Requas first met the Woodheads.

Esther Woodhead and Melissa Requa became fast friends, as did their children and from then on, there was much traveling back and forth over the Cahto trail between the two homesteads.

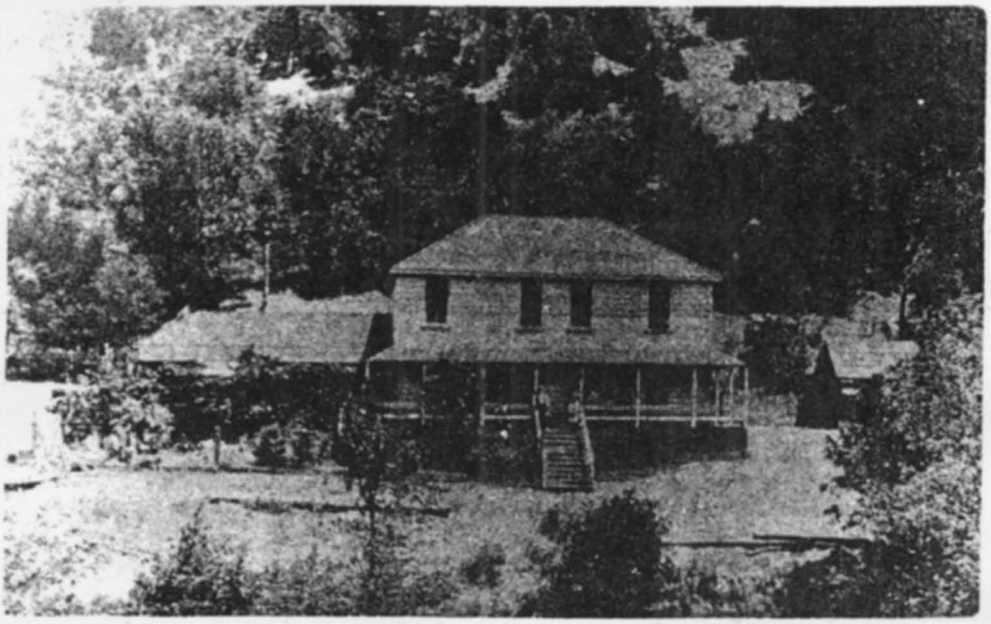
The Requa family was growing. Edmund was the first child born in the new home on top of the hill, in 1865, followed by Alice in 1868, Abe in 1872, Sophie (later known as Edna) in 1874, and Val, born on Valentine's Day in 1878.

There was another child who grew up with the Requas, an Indian girl who came to them as a baby and lived with them until she was grown.

Today, no one in the Requa family is sure from where the child came. One story was that Jackson Farley found the child on one of his Indian raids and brought her home to his neighbors.

But at least one member of the Requa family is sure that it was John Groscup who found the baby and brought her home, eventually giving her to the Requas.

In any event, word has passed down through the family about the Indian girl who played with the Requa children when they were small



The Talkington home is shown as it appeared in the 1800s when it was serving as a stop for the stagecoach line, and as a post office for Long Valley families.

This old photograph, taken at the Talkington place a few miles down Sherwood Road from the Requas, shows the Talkingtons seated in the family "runabout" which was used by Margaret Talkington to visit her neighbors.

family

and who assisted Melissa with the house and younger children as she grew older.

It is believed she was the same Indian woman who helped with the births of Alfred Jr.'s children, who helped nurse Melissa when she fell ill, and who once gave Melissa a basket she had made, which Bonnie Christian still has today.

There were a great many Indians moving about the County during those early years when the Requa family was growing, and while there are many terrible stories of battles between some of the early white settlers and the Indians living in the general area between Longvale and Round Valley, there are no stories of trouble with Indians in either the Long Valley or Jackson Valley regions.

Melissa Requa used to tell her grandchildren that whenever she baked and set the fragrant loaves of bread on the windowsill to cool, Indians traveling nearby would pick up the delicious aroma and come riding up to form a silent line, staring at her until she offered them a loaf which they would eagerly accept and then disappear.

Once when she and the children were home alone, a group of strange Indians rode up, killed one of the Requa cows, butchered it, loaded the meat on their ponies and rode off again.

It was the only time Melissa ever felt fear, mostly because she was afraid Alfred would ride up, see the butchering party and react in anger despite being obviously outnumbered.

By the time Melissa's youngest child Val was born in 1878, her oldest daughter Almira was 21 years old.

A strange girl, Almira had moved out of the house by that time and was living in a small cabin of her own which she had built in a secluded patch of trees some distance from her parents' home, but she came every day to help Melissa with the chores and the care of the younger children.

Perhaps because of the harshness of the life and times, every family of those early days had its share of unusual characters, and the Requas were no exception.

To be continued.

The story of Almira Requa

WN 11/28/1979

Most of the people who settled in the woods and hills of Mendocino County during its first years of invasion by the white man were people of strong character, strong wills and strong beliefs.

Their children became adults at an early age, developing their own strange personalities and characters as they reached maturity.

Almira Requa, eldest of Alfred and Melissa's children, was a perfect example. Quiet, obedient, respectful of her parents, Almira had a will of her own and in her early teens began to spend more and more time alone, going for long rides on horseback in the woods, tending her father's traps, making pets of wild animals, and at last moving out of her father's house and building her own one room cabin on a wooded hill across a deep ravine from the Requa home.

In the meantime, one of the more colorful characters of that colorful time had moved into the area.

Loren Cassade, a mystery man himself who had been born and raised in France and who had built a fortune in some unknown way before moving into Mendocino County and buying up thousands of acres of land in Long Valley, had been busily improving his land holdings and building a series of well built dwellings near the headwaters of Cherry Creek, as well as a number of rustic cabins in which he put up his many friends in all walks of life who came to visit him for weeks or months at a time.

Cassade had thousands of head of cattle and sheep, and

The only known picture of The Red House, built by Loren Cassade for his bride in 1888, this picture was taken after the property had been bought by the Dominic Rose family in 1895.

This family portrait is believed to have been taken by a traveling peddler on the Requa homestead about 1882. Alfred Requa is seated in the middle and standing at the rear are Almira, Alice, Edmund and Sophie. The two small boys on either side of Alfred are his youngest sons Val and Abe. The other two small children on his right are unidentified, but may have been the children of his oldest son, Alfred, Junior.

and Loren Cassade

used a special breed of sheep dog which he imported from France along with a trainer and handler. They were the first such animals seen by the other settlers in the county, and were one more proof to the settlers that Cassade was a very peculiar breed himself.

The man did seem to have influential friends in high places. He was a friend and business associate in some way of Randolph Hearst and many of the political leaders of the day, and he had numerous friends in the world of art and letters. Literary luminaries were frequent guests in his many cabins.

One of the many people who lived year around on the Cassade ranch was a man named Arthur Lloyd. A mysterious man himself, Lloyd would remain in the cabin where he lived long after Cassade had left the area. He was a writer, as neighbors who called on him would testify, as he was frequently found immersed in papers at his desk.

He claimed to be a ghost writer for many of the top authors of the time. These included Peter B. Kyne and Zane Grey in later years, around the turn of the century. The Requa family owns a signed first edition of one of Grey's works, which was given to the family by Arthur Lloyd.

In any event, the story that has been handed down in the family is that Almira Requa and Arthur Lloyd fell in love. However, Loren Cassade had also fallen for the strange and beautiful girl and following the custom of the day had gone to her father and made a formal request for her hand in marriage.

The details are now lost, and one can only surmise just what happened. But a deal was made between Cassade and Alfred Requa to give the father 250 head of sheep in return for Almira's hand. Apparently Almira was not consulted but being the obedient daughter that she was, she did not protest and in 1888 the marriage was performed in Cassade's home near Cherry Creek.

Two nights before the marriage, Arthur Lloyd spent the night in Almira's cabin. He was seen leaving at dawn, and the incident was common knowledge among the neighboring families, but the incident was never mentioned and Almira and her lover never saw each other again.

She was nearly 30 years old at the time of her marriage, and her husband was 65.

Cassade built a new home for his bride, picking out a grove of large oak and Douglas fir atop a small knoll with a sweeping view of the surrounding country. Built of redwood, the house became known as "The Red House" and would later be the home of Dominic Rose family when Dominic and his brothers bought out Cassade in 1895.

A fire in the 1930s destroyed the Red House, but the native rock from the fireplace chimney and the huge smooth stone which served as a doorstep still remain on top of the hill which has grown up to madrones and manzanita.

In the spring rows of daffodils outline the old foundation and it is easy to imagine the Red House surrounded by gardens, an apple orchard and a row of fig trees outlining the wagon road to the front door.

The property was owned for many year by Edgar and Stella James and now belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Ken Smith.

Bertha Cook, who will be 100 years old next spring, was living in Long Valley as a child at the time Almira and Loren Cassade were living there. Bertha's father was Spencer Beattie and the Beattie home was at the upper end of the Valley.

Bertha recalls Cassade as a huge, heavy set man with a sandy complexion, very jovial and outgoing. His wife on the other hand was so shy she never went out and was never seen to leave the house.

Cassade had a spring wagon he used to drive to Laytonville or Cahto and he always stopped in at the Beattie home to rest his team when he did so. Bertha went with her family on several occasions to the Red House to visit the Cassades, and she recalls that Almira always served plenty of delicious food to her guests, but never joined in the conversation.

to be continued

Arthur Lloyd, the mystery man who was in love with Almira Requa and who lived on in Long Valley long after Almira and her husband had sold out and moved to Ukiah.

Continuing the story of Alfred and

Bertha Beattie Cook, continuing her memories of her childhood days in Long Valley, says she remembers riding horseback with her father up and down the old Sherwood Road which was the main transportation link between Willits, Sherwood and Laytonville in the 1880s and 1890s.

They frequently stopped at the Alfred Requa home where they were always served something to eat by Melissa, who usually had several pies or cakes fresh out of the oven.

Nelson Requa is shown in this photo as a young man, before his leg was mangled in a haying accident.

Bertha especially remembers the youngest Requa girl Sophie, (who later changed her name to Edna), because she was only a few years older than Bertha.

"She had beautiful blonde hair, and she was very artistic," Bertha recalls. "There was a pile of blue clay in the yard near the house, heaped up there when Alfred Requa dug out the root cellar.

"Sophie was always working with that clay, making little figures of people, animals and birds. And she used to draw pictures of animals while I sat there fascinated, watching her work."

The Beattie family frequently joined the Requas and other families of the area in the social gatherings at Cahto, or later at Pinches Grove.

"I remember going to a Fourth of July celebration at Pinches Grove, and playing baseball with all the other children there. I must have been about ten years old," Bertha continues.

"When I was 13 my father sold his Longvale property and we moved down to Willits."

At about the same time, Loren Cassade sold his property at Longvale to the Rose family from Newark and moved with Almira to Ukiah where they lived in a big home with beautiful surrounding grounds, located where a shopping center now stands across from the airport.

At the time, Cassade owned a large block of downtown Ukiah, including the property where the Palace Hotel stands.

No one remembers now what other business interests he had after selling his ranch, but he was a very wealthy man and when he died, he left a fortune to Almira, who never had any children.

Some of the older Requas still living remember going to visit Almira in her Ukiah home. She married twice more after Cassade died, but outlived both husbands.

At the time of her death, one of the Requas recalls, she had a 1924 Studebaker with 12,000 miles on it.

Almira's will left $1000 to her youngest brother Val and his wife, and $2000 to her youngest sister Sophie (Edna).

According to the will the remainder of the estate was to be evenly divided among her many nieces and nephews, but unfortunately it was discovered her attorney had bilked the estate of $50,000 for which he later served ten years in San Quentin, but the money was never recovered.

Melissa Requa's children

As for the other children of Alfred and Melissa Requa, Nelson, the son born in the dugout the first winter the family lived on their homestead, was also a quiet, withdrawn man who wrote poetry and lived a rather reclusive life.

He married a woman named Nellie Hiles and they had one son, William, who went to the state of Washington as a young man and never returned.

Nelson was crippled in a haying accident after he was grown, and always walked with a cane.

He left the family homestead after his marriage and moved to Redwood Valley, where he had a grape ranch.

He came home only infrequently to visit, as he never owned or drove a car so had to depend upon others for transportation after the automobile replaced the horse as the primary mode of travel.

A man of secret drives and sorrows, Nelson Requa committed suicide in the early 1930s.

Alfred Jr., born in 1862 in the house his father had just completed on the hill overlooking Sherwood Road, was one of the strangest of the Requa children.

He married a woman named Clara and they homesteaded a section of land at the Grapevine on Outlet Creek, near Sugar Loaf and Farley on the other side of Beauty Ridge, which today overlooks Highway 101.

A rare photo of the Requa homestead taken during the winter in the years when heavy snow blanketed the property every year. The barn built by Alfred is in the middle background, with the house beyond.

Just to the right of this grove of trees was the Requa family cemetery, where three adults and three babies were buried during the early years.

Young Alfred's land was completely surrounded by the property owned first by Loren Cassade and then by Dominic Rose and there was a constant feud over several years as the others tried to buy Alfred out.

He, too, was a reclusive and withdrawn man who had little to do with the rest of his family after his marriage.

He and Clara had several children, one of them a crippled child. One of their babies was stillborn, and Clara got up the next day, wrapped the little body in a clean cloth and rode horseback with it to Alfred and Melissa's house so Alfred could make a casket and bury the baby in the family cemetery plot on the homestead.

Very few of the neighbors liked Alfred Jr. He seldom spoke to anyone in passing, and at least one person still living who knew him reports that once he passed Alfred's place after a long trip on foot and asked for a cup of water.

Alfred sullenly shook his head and waved him along.

to be continued

The Willits News Wednesday, December 12, 1979

More on the remarkable,

Continuing on the subject of the strange and unpredictable Alfred Requa Jr., one of the most unbelievable stories about him, one that has been retold many times by the people who knew the man, is of his final move from the Longvale area.

Florence and Edith Beck, the daughters of Sophie Edna Requa Beck, are shown in a photograph taken in 1902.

The time was about 1905. Alfred had been feuding not only with Dominic Rose, who owned all the property surrounding Alfred's, he had been feuding with his brother Abe Requa and had actually tried to burn Abe out, not once, but several times.

At last the atmosphere grew so hostile that Alfred relented and sold out to Rose, packed up his family and moved to the Ozarks, never to be heard from again.

With cash in hand from the sale of his property, he bought himself a pullman ticket on the train, and chartered an entire railroad car in which he packed not only his household goods, but also his wife and children, taking them to the depot the night before so no one would see, and locking them in.

Fortunately, the following day one of the railroad switchmen heard a baby crying inside the sealed car and opened the door. The family was escorted to the pullman car where Alfred was seated, and he was forced to pay for tickets for all of them before the train would leave.

Edmund Requa, born in 1865, left home as a young man and made his way to the state of Washington where he worked at a number of ranches, eventually owned his own wheat farm and became a very wealthy man. He married a Washington girl and raised a large family.

Shortly after he settled down and had money in the bank, he sent for his younger sister Alice who came to live with him.

Alice met and married William Wills and moved to Eugene, Oregon to live. Not much is known of Alice's later life, except that Helen Wills, the tennis great, was one of her grandchildren.

The other younger sister, Sophie, who later changed her name to Edna, married a successful San Francisco hotel man named George Beck, whom she met when he came to one of the many summer camps which flourished in the Longvale and Branscomb areas around the turn of the century.

For several years, these camps drew large numbers of wealthy Bay Area families who came to savor the un-

reclusive Requa family

familiar pleasures of the "rough life," living in tents or rustic cabins, taking long hikes, swimming in the many beautiful rivers and creeks, hunting and fishing.

Edna moved to San Francisco after her marriage and had two girls, Florence and Edith.

The Beck's hotel was in downtown San Francisco on Mission Street, and their home was in the Sunset District.

Edna remained close to her family. Before her marriage, she had spent a lot of time with Almira and her husband, and may even have met her husband through Loren Cassade.

After her children were born, the three of them made frequent trips to Willits or Sherwood on the train to visit with the many less affluent members of the family, always bringing gifts and clothing for all.

One of Edna's children, Edith, lives today in Auburn and is 81 years old.

She remembers going to Ukiah to visit Almira and Cassade when she was a small child and remembers Cassade as "a sweet old man who would take us riding through downtown Ukiah in his horse and buggy, stopping off to buy us candies at a sweet shop. When we got back to the house, Aunt Almira took the candy away from us and put it in a bowl on a top shelf, rationing it out to us one small piece at a time."

The day of the big earthquake in 1906, Edna and George were spending the night in their hotel and the children were at home with servants.

Edna Beck is shown as she appeared when she was about 30 years old.

The hotel was heavily damaged and when the Becks were finally able to get through the crowded streets out to their home it was to find it destroyed and their children missing.

It was several days before the frantic parents found their girls, who had been rescued by Red Cross workers and taken to a family in Palo Alto who were caring for several children who had been separated from their parents during the catastrophe.

Edith also remembers going with her mother to visit Isaac Requa in his mansion in Piedmont, and of riding around the expansive grounds in a small pony cart. And, she says there was another uncle named Len Harris, a brother of Melissa Requa, who also lived in the East Bay and worked for the same railroad of which Issac was an officer.

Edna and her children were among the most popular members of the Requa family, loved by all, and it was a great thrill for the younger members of the family to ride in one of the family wagons to the Sherwood Depot to meet the train bringing their San Francisco relatives to visit.

At Christmas time, burlap bags filled with clothing for all the children arrived, as well as dolls and toys of all kinds, the only real store-bought toys some of the children ever saw.

But the two Requas who became best known in Mendocino County, who were completely dissimilar yet still strangly attached to one another, were the two youngest sons of Alfred and Melissa — Abraham and Valentine, known all their lives as Abe and Volly.

To be continued

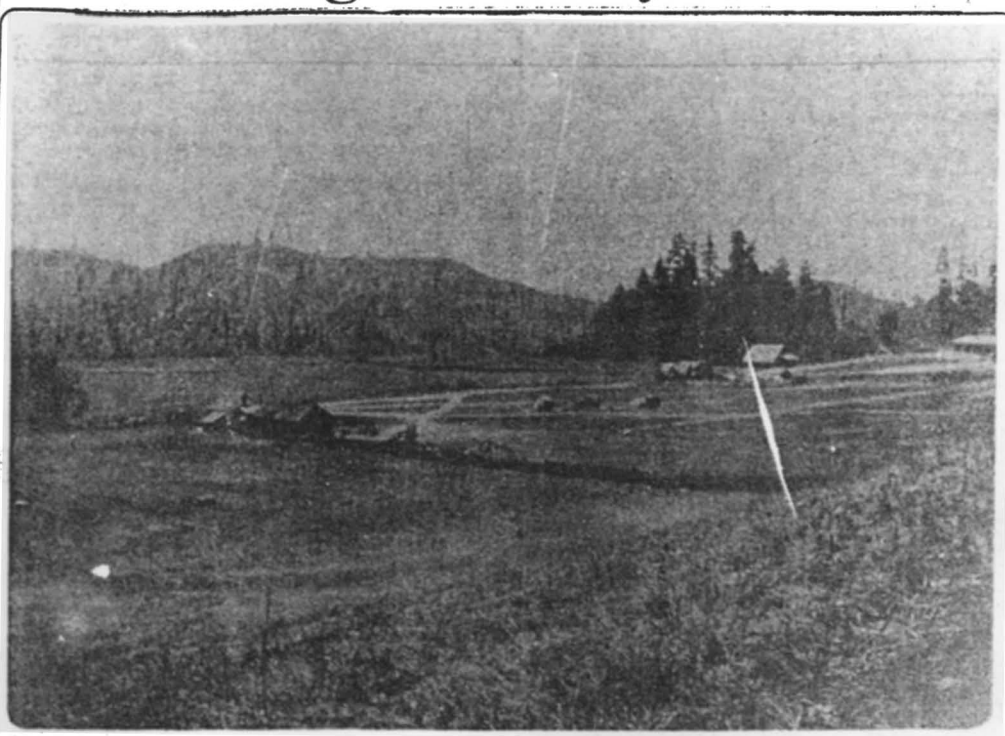
Edmund Requa, seated, is pictured with his eldest son after Edmund had become a well to do wheat rancher in the state of Washington.

Continuing the story of the Requa family's

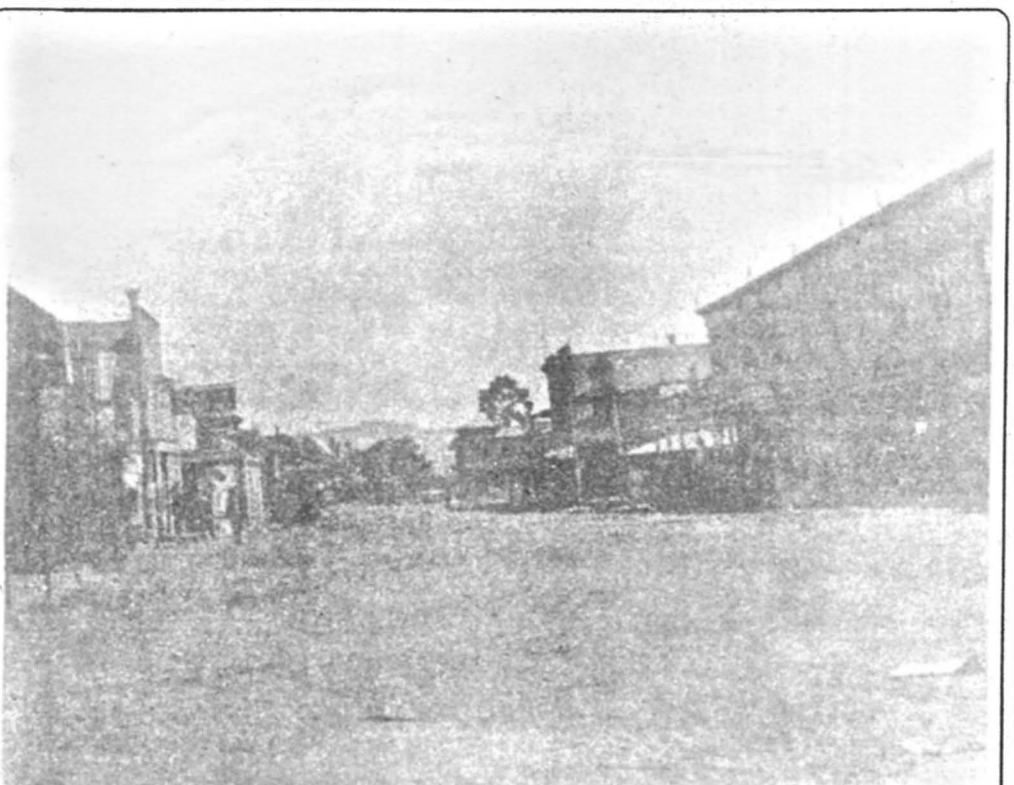
WN 12/19/1979

When Alfred and Melissa's children were of school age, they went first to the schoolhouse built by the Wilson family on Ten Mile Creek, then later as the younger children came along, they attended the original Farley School and it was that school which was also attended by the second and third generation Requas.

Alfred had early on built his own road cutting across the back of his property to connect with the Cahto Trail which would later become the Branscomb Road, thereby cutting off several miles of travel for the family as they



A view of the town of Sherwood as it appeared in the 1890s when the Requas used to drive their team and wagon there to meet the stage coach.



The town of Willits as it looked in the 1890s. This is Main Street, looking north.

memories of Cahto

made their frequent excursions to Cahto, or on to the coast.

During the 1870s and 1880s, all social life for the entire Long Valley and Jackson Valley areas centered in the community of Cahto - at the White Hotel, the Odd Fellows Hall, the schoolhouse, or at the homes of the various settlers in the area.

One of the most popular families was that of John and Esther Woodhead and their children - Alice, Maude, John, Junior, William and Roy.

Esther Woodhead was a midwife, and assisted at the births of most of the babies born in the Requa family, as well as those for the Manchesters, the Branscombs, the Groscups, Clarkes, and Lovejoys.

The Woodheads had one of the largest and finest gardens in the far flung community.

Grandpa John Woodhead had a special knack for growing things and was always experimenting with new crops. He grew things like turnips and parsnips along with carrots, root vegetables which he would leave in the ground and then dig out of the snow in the wintertime as needed.

Fall was butchering time for all families, most of whom raised their own hogs, and the Woodheads usually had a big butchering party.

Vollie Requa in later years would tell his sons about those times, when his parents would load all their children into the family wagon and head over the hill to Cahto and up the narrow trail leading into the back woods where the Woodhead homestead was.

As Vollie told it, six hogs at a time would be done, with an assembly line of helpers set up to handle each stage of the operation.

Big wooden barrels of water would be set down into the ground, and then hot rocks dropped into the water to heat it.

Wood ashes would also go into the water to soften it and the temperature had to be just right, with Grandpa Woodhead making the final judgment as to when it was time to immerse the whole hog body.

The hog was then lifted out and laid on a long table where several would go to work with sharp knives, scraping off the wiry hairs. Sometimes a damp gunny sack would be laid on the rough places to soften the hide and make the job easier.

Usually the hog would be butchered, but sometimes the carcass would be hung up whole in the smoke house.

Everything but the squeal would be put to use. The women made lard, head cheese, cracklings, pickeled pigs feet, and used the tails for making soup. A mush like scrapple was made of all the various smaller scraps of meat.

Hog lard was a favorite of the women because it kept indefinitely and was also good for making soap.

The lard from just inside the animal hide was considered best for soap, and was mixed with a lye made by pouring water through ashes and the mixture stirred in big ten gallon iron kettles.

Then it was poured into wooden frames and let set for a couple of weeks until hardened, when it would be cut into bars.

The Woodheads also grew popcorn and cabbage, as did most of the other settlers.

The cabbage was generally made into sauerkraut and packed into big crocks, along with pickles made from cucumbers and tomatoes, which would provide a family's vegetables throughout the cold winter months.

Vollie Requa and his brother Abe were called upon to do most of the family chores and help their father with the trapping, hunting, fishing which added meat to the family larder because by the time they were old enough to use a gun their older brothers were already gone from home.

Vollie, always a quiet, shy boy, was particularly fond of his father and spent considerable time with him, learning the ways of frontier inventiveness.

He used to tell his children of going out alone when only eight or nine years old with his muzzle loaded shotgun, tending the trap lines and finding great excitement in those times when he found a wild hog in one of the traps.

The family raised turkeys on a large scale, and once when Abe and Vollie were still small boys, they went with their father to herd a large flock from the ranch to market at Cloverdale, which was the end of the railroad line at the time.

It was a journey of several days with little sleep at night as the turkeys would not stay put, following their natural instinct to want to roost in the treetops.

The Requas also used to load up a wagon at least once a year with wool which was taken to Ukiah and sold there, a four day trip there and back.

Staples were usually bought at that time to take home as well as such items as shoes and nails,, and Alfred would always buy at least one small bag of sweets of some kind to take home to Melissa.

At least once a year, the family made the long trip over the Cahto Trail to Westport, taking butter, eggs and cream to trade for staples there.

The trip was usually planned for late summer, so Melissa and the children could gather huckleberries and the famous coast blackberries to take home for pies, jams, and jellies.

Sometimes on the return trip home, the Requas would turn off at the Woodheads and spend the night there with their good friends, always a happy occasion for all the children of the two families.

To be continued

Alice Requa, grandmother of tennis great Helen Wills, is shown in a photograph taken in her teens after she had gone to Washington to live with her older brother Edmund.

Requa brothers marry the

Sometime during their early teens, the Requa brothers Abe and Vollie, who had been so close as children, began to drift apart as their very different personalities became established.

Vollie was the smallest of the Requas, and was a very quiet, gentle person.

Abe grew tall and thin, a gangling six footer with a handlebar moustache, black curly hair and a dark handsome face with a temperment to match.

Abe was a strange man, hated by some, loved by a few, understood by none.

He had an almost hypnotic power over the closest to him — particularly his brother Vollie and later over his wife and children.

Whenever Abe and Vollie went hunting or fishing together, Vollie would meekly let Abe select the best of the haul. And, when Vollie went fishing alone, or when he killed a deer — he would take the biggest fish or the best cuts of meat and give them to Abe.

No stories have come down in the family concerning the courtships of the brothers and the Woodhead sisters whom they married.

The four had been friends since childhood but for some reason love and marriage did not enter the picture until later years.

Abe was 28 years old when he finally asked Maude Woodhead to marry him and none of their children ever remember hearing their mother talk about the courtship, or under what circumstances Abe proposed to the shy, pretty girl.

However, at least one of the children remembers that, although Maude had a far from comfortable life and was even subjected to what today would be considered actual cruelty by her husband, she apparently adored him and never was heard to say an unkind word against him, and in fact was never heard to complain about her hard life.

After their marriage in 1900, Abe and Maude moved into a small cabin on the Dominic Rose property and lived there until Abe built their home on the Requa family homestead across the road from the house in which Alfred and Melissa lived.

Alfred died in 1901, and Melissa lived on in the house he had built with Vollie, the last of her children to remain at home.

In the same year, the first of Abe's and Maude's children was born. Seven children survived to adulthood, but one baby was born dead and it is believed that at least one other child was lost and buried in the family cemetery on the homestead.

Edward was the first child, born in 1901, followed by

Maude Requa is shown here with sons Leroy and Ed, standing beside their home on the Requa property. Maude's illness was evident in her weight gain by this time, and in the weakened condition of her legs.

Woodhead sisters of Branscomb

Leroy in 1902 and May in 1904. All three were born at the Woodheads' home above Branscomb.

When Maude's time would be approaching, she would send word by one of the neighbors to her mother and the Woodhead brothers would come with the family buggy to get her and take her home for the baby's birth.

The next child, Grace, was the first one to be born in the home her father built on Sherwood Road with lumber hauled by wagon from the Haun Mill. All the rest of Maude's children were born in that house — Clarence in 1908, Vernon in 1910 and Ernest in 1918.

Grace, who today is Grace Underhill, remembers the births of her younger brothers with Grandma Woodhead in attendance.

She also recalls seeing her father seated by the bedside comforting Maude when she was having an especially difficult birth. Grace is one of the few, if not the only, person who has any reason to remember Abe Requa with affection.

"I loved both my parents dearly. I know my father was a strange man, a very temperamental man and close with money, but I can remember seeing him in a different light from other people.

"Maybe it was because I was his favorite and he saved his few smiles and kind words for me.

"My mother was the exact opposite of my father — very shy and quiet, always smiling even when she was in great pain, and always trying to do special things for all her children and her husband even after she was physically unable to do much of anything.

"When my mother was on her deathbed, her last words were calls for my father."

Abe, however, was at home. Angry because the rest of the family had insisted on taking Maude to the hospital, he had refused to go with them until forced to do so and then had gone right back home again and refused to return.

Maude was afflicted with diabetes, as was her mother before her. Esther Woodhead had managed to resist the disease until 1914, when Dr. Leonard, who lived where Steele Lane is today in Laytonville, came to the Woodheads' home and spent the winter there to care for her.

Gangrene developed in one leg which the doctor amputated at the ankle, using morphine for anesthesia.

As Esther grew steadily worse, she was moved to Willits to the hopsital at Northwestern Mill, where she was cared for by Dr. Babcock.

Eventually, her other foot was also amputated and she died during the operation in 1917.

With Maude, the early symptoms of trouble did not develop until about 1908, and it began with pains in her legs complicated by a sudden increase in her weight.

Grace remembers seeing her mother carry two heavy buckets of water from the spring at the bottom of the hill up to the house, a long rocky climb that she could only manage to navigate by hobbling slowly along, stopping to rest at the steepest places.

to be continued

A photo of Edward Requa, first child of Abe and Maude Requa, born on the Woodhead homestead above Branscomb in 1901.

More stories of that strange

Although Grace Requa Underhill recalls her father, Abe Requa, with a gentle understanding of the man's complex character, most people who knew him remember him only as a cruel, parsimonious and unfriendly person who demanded total subservience from his wife and children.

Grace's own daughter Bonnie Christian says frankly, "We all thought of him as a mean old man.

"He was a real skinflint who wouldn't let his wife buy anything, and he even kept the food cupboards locked in between meals.

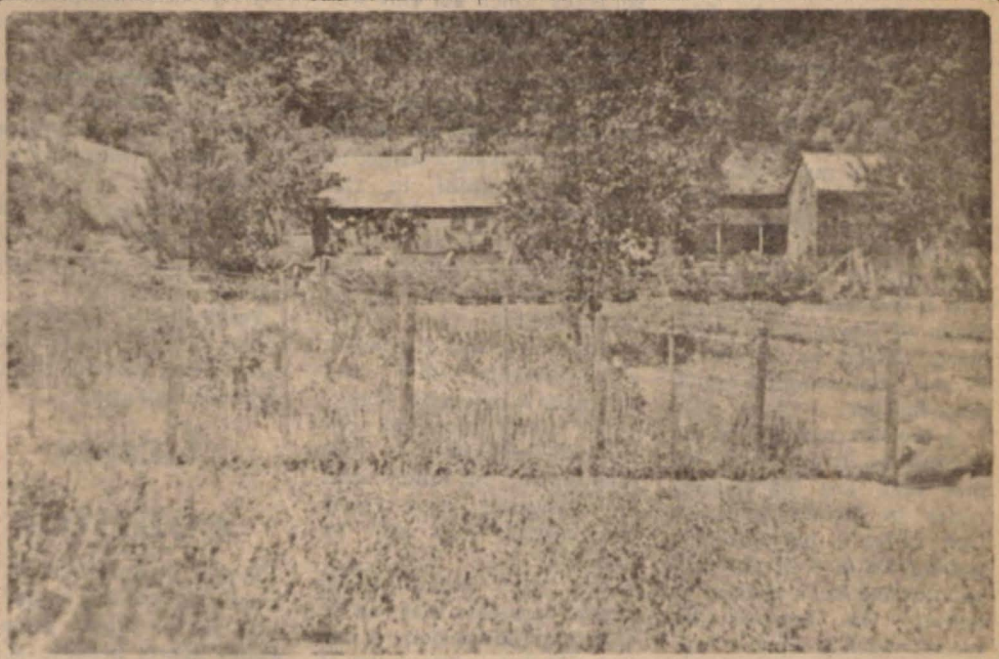
"I remember when I was small, walking with my mother from our house over to my grandparents' place after Maude was in a wheelchair. My grandfather would see us coming up the road and he'd push Maude into a closet and lock her in there so she couldn't talk to us."

Grace, on the other hand, remembers that her father sometimes exhibited a rough tenderness toward his wife, whose care finally reached the point of total dependence upon her husband and children.

Bonnie says she remembers there were times when Abe refused to spend the money for the insulin which Maude needed on a regular basis and sometimes she would go for days without the insulin before her children discovered the need and rushed to town to renew the supply.

Once, following the birth of a child who was delivered on a bed of gunny sacks, one of the Woodhead cousins (Frances Stewart, who was married to Roy Woodhead) arrived too late to assist with the birth and was aghast at the condition in which she found the mother and child.

"She was so mad at Abe," Bonnie recalls, "that she went



A picture of one of the houses located on the Hardin Ranch. This one was usually occupied by whoever was serving as ranch foreman and was frequently visited by members of the Requa family.

and complex character, Abe Requa

right into Laytonville to Jim Dill's store and charged a whole bunch of baby clothes, blankets and diapers and took back out to the house. I never did hear what Abe said when Dill presented him with the bill."

According to family members, Abe was not only a skinflint, he was an astute business man and at one time was reputed to have a small fortune in cash hidden someplace on his property.

Not only did he not spend any more money on his family than was absolutely necessary, he required each of his sons as they became old enough to hire out for wages to turn over every cent they earned to their father.

Most of the Requa sons went to work at about 12 years of age for the big Hardin Ranch which adjoined the Requa property.

The Hardin Ranch at one time consisted of 22,000 acres from Laytonville over to Cahto and down to Sherwood.

Various sections of that ranch would later become the property of the Mast family, the Sagehorns, Sizemores and Cerinis.

No one alive today remembers just when Colonel Pasquale Hardin first started buying up land which had been homesteaded by the first families in the area, but 99 year old Bertha Cook remembers that by the late 1880s the Colonel had already returned to Nevada and his big ranch there, after having divided up the Mendocino County ranch among his four children.

"The oldest son was a big man named Riley Hardin, and he was the one who ran the ranch and lived in the big ranch house. There were seven bedrooms in that house and a double fireplace that opened into both the living room and dining room.

"There were also several smaller houses scattered over the ranch where the hands lived.

"I don't remember what all the Hardins raised on their ranch — but I know they had hundreds of head of cattle and sheep, and lots of horses," Bertha continues.

Ed, the oldest son of Abe Requa, was only 13 years old when he was entrusted with the job of taking the Hardin horses down to Willits to be shod.

He would take as many as six at a time, going down through Sherwood to George Upp's blacksmith shop, which was located where the Circle K market across from the Post Office is located today.

Upp's helper at the time was Earl Jamison, Glenn's father, and in later years Ed used to recall how kind Jamison was to the small boy when he finally arrived after the day-long hike in bare feet.

Ed Requa, who never married, died this past August.

The second son, Leroy, was sent to the Woodheads to be raised when he was still a child. The story handed down in the family is that Abe was obsessed with the belief that Leroy was not his child, adding one more grief to be borne by the already over burdened shy girl to whom he was married.

This old picture of Vollie Requa with two of Abe's children was taken in 1904, shortly before Vollie married. Uncle Vollie was always a special favorite of the Requa children.

In the 1930s, Leroy left the County and never returned.

Clarence Requa was the next son to go to work for Riley Hardin, followed in turn by Vernon and Ernest as each reached his teens.

Ernest, the youngest, was only 12 when he went to work on the Hardin ranch at $20 per month, plus his meals.

The boy walked the long distance back and forth between home and the Hardins twice a day, after getting up before daylight to do chores around the house and help with the care of his bedridden mother before leaving the house.

Although his father provided clothes for the youngster, the $20 monthly pay was collected by Abe in person and none of it ever reached the boy's hands.

Neither Vernon nor Ernest ever married. Vernon, who eventually worked a number of years on the Folsom Ranch, died in 1972, and Ernest, who worked for Northwestern Pacific after he was grown, lives today in Covelo.

Of her youngest brother, Grace Underhill says, "He was always so sweet and gentle with our mother. All the boys were good to her, but Ernest was the last at home after both her legs had been amputated and she was completely helpless."

to be continued

This picture of the Abe Requa family was taken in the early 1920s when Maude was still able to walk although in constant pain. Left to right are Ernest, Maude, Abe, Nelson Requa [Abe's older brother], Pete Berchtold [a neighbor who was courting Grace and later married her], Vernon [standing in front of Pete], Earl [Vollie's son], and Clarence.

Vollie Requa and Alice Woodhead

Vollie Requa, the smallest, shyest and youngest of Alfred and Melissa Requa's children, finally developed enough courage to ask Alice Woodhead to marry him in 1904, when he was 27 years old and she was 22.

Named Valentine because he was born on Valentine's Day, he was called Vollie throughout his life, and his wife Alice was known only as Allie.

Vollie only went to the third grade, but in those years third grade youngsters were able to read adult books and Vollie continued to read all the books he could find for the rest of his life.

He had a keen intellect although he was quiet and soft spoken, and he had the heart of a poet.

During the years he was courting the girl he would marry, he wrote eloquent love letters to her, saying all the things he felt, but was too shy to say, and even composing poems to express his love.

Alfred Requa died in 1901, shortly after Abe Requa had married Maude Woodhead and moved from home, so Vollie was the only one left at home to care for his mother and the homeplace.

This contributed to his decision to postpone marriage, as Melissa was not well, having developed diabetes and heart trouble, but as she grew steadily weaker and less able to care for herself, it became clear that another woman in the house was needed, so Vollie at long last asked Alice to marry him.

They were married at the home of Judge Francis Braden in Long Valley, and went directly up to the house where Vollie had been born where they would live all the rest of their lives.

At the time of Alfred's death, the homestead of 640 acres was placed in Melissa's name, but not long after Vollie and Allie were married, the decision was made to transfer the property to Vollie as the only child left to care for the property and for Melissa.

In 1908, deeds of trust were made out and each of the children was paid $500 in return for his share of the estate.

At the time, that was considered quite a windfall for those who no longer had any interest in ever living on the homestead.

In 1906, the year of the earthquake, Vollie's and Allie's first child Earl was born and four years later their second son Gene followed.

Both were born in the same bed in which their father had been born, with Grandmother Esther Woodhead serving as midwife.

In later years, Vollie used to tease by saying that he wasn't sure which was the most important event of 1906 — the birth of his first son, or the earthquake which radically changed the water tables on the ranch.

Prior to the quake, several springs had flowed freely over the top of the ground in several places, but after the quake all the water flow went underground except for one large spring near the highest point on the ranch at the eastern boundary which combined a fresh water flow and a soda spring.

Earl Requa remembers the day his little brother Gene was born, and the excitement in the household as his father tried to keep him occupied outside the house.

Actually, the small boy was more interested in a coconut which his father brought home from Dill's store that morning than he was in the events going on inside the house, and the promise of sharing in this rare treat if he was good helped to keep the

Vollie and Allie Requa are shown here in pictures taken on the ranch during the early years of their marriage, probably about 1912.

marry and move to the homestead

youngster out of the way.

Both Requa boys remember their father with great affection. Neither recalls ever being punished by their father, who left all the discipline of the boys to Allie.

The father had a lot of quiet strength, however, and a temper which could flare with extreme provocation. Both boys were eager to win his approval and neither remembers ever going against his wishes.

"Those were the days when a father's word was law," Earl Requa says today, "and even the quiet ones like our father ruled the roost with a firm hand.

"He didn't have to take a stick to us to get us to mind, we just naturally did whatever he told us."

Once when the boys were still very young, they joined the Groscup children in slipping into a neighbor's field and swiping some watermelons.

The neighbor easily tracked them down to the place where the youngsters were happily feasting on the melon, and then marched them all back home.

Allie gave both boys a switching, but later Vollie took them out in the barn, sat them down and gave them a sober lecture about honesty, trust and respecting another man's property.

"The way he looked at us hurt a lot more than our mother's switching," Earl recalls, "and what he had to say made an impression neither of us ever forgot."

Outside of one trip made to San Francisco to see an eye doctor, Vollie never traveled any further away from home than Santa Rosa and once, when Earl was three years old, to Trinity County.

to be continued

Shown here is the storage pond, ten feet deep, which catches the flow from one of the springs on the Requa Ranch. The water flows through buried pipes from the main big spring at the higest point on the ranch.

Pioneer Families — Requa — Genealogy

Continuing the story of the Requa family of Long Valley

In 1909, when Earl Requa was three years old, his father Vollie Requa left his wife and son alone for the only trip of any distance he ever took.

Packing a saddlebag on his horse, he headed north into Trinity County where there were still occasional reports of gold strikes.

For three months he camped out in the rocky high country, living off the land and whatever game he could bring down, making a slow methodical search of every rushing stream.

Allie remained on the homestead and with the help of the Woodhead men to keep the place going and tend to the heavier chores, she cared for the garden and the smaller animals.

Like her mother-in-law before her, Allie raised turkeys, and her sons say today that "Our mother raised the prettiest turkeys in the County because she gave them very special care."

The birds were raised on acorns and grasshoppers up to the last few weeks before market.

Then Allie would start feeing them the corn she had grown for that one purpose, and she also fed them her own cottage cheese with onions chopped into it.

The turkeys were raised in batches of at least 100 at a time, and when they were market ready Allie and Vollie would dress them out and pack them 24 to a box. The boxes would be loaded onto the family wagon and Vollie would take them down to the train at Longvale for shipping to San Francisco.

While Vollie was gone in the gold country, Allie took care of the entire project herself, along with her endless other household chores.

She milked the cows and put up cream in big metal cans, making use of a hand operated separator in the milk shed. The cream was shipped to the Bay Area going to the Golden State Creamy in San Francisco.

The Requas received $7 for the five gallon cans, $15 for 10 gallons. There were no such things as refrigerated cars in those days, but apparently no one cared if the cream soured before reaching its destinations. If it soured, it would be used for butter.

Allie put away eight gallon crocks of butter at a time in the root cellar dug into the hill near the house, butter that her boys say remained sweet and cold.

When she skimmed the cream, the curd was put in a big kettle on the back of the stove and made into cottage cheese, most of which was fed to her turkeys.

Allie continued to sell cream and butter to the bay area until laws were passed requiring the use of live steam to clean the separator and other health safeguards which made it impractical for her to continue.

However, she did continue to provide fresh milk, cream and butter for her own family, using the old methods she and her mother before her had used all their lives.

Vollie finally returned empty handed from his search for gold, a big disappointment although he would always remember that episode in his life as his one taste of adventure.

The following spring his second son Gene was born, and today it is Gene and his wife Hazel who still live on the homestead.

Gene Requa, youngest son of Vollie and Allie Requa, is shown in a picture taken when he was just learning to walk. The large baby bonnet was typical of the time.

Earl Requa is shown here when he was about 14 years old. He is the one on the left hand side of the group, which includes his cousin Bill Woodhead in the middle, and a Branscomb neighbor Bunny Nolan.

Earl and Gene Requa look back on their boyhood with memories that are touched with sadness for a way and time of life that is now gone.

Earl says, "Those were the days when wild grains still flourished on the ranges, and wild blackberries grew as big as thimbles and we could walk down to any creek and catch all the salmon our family could eat.

"In fact," he continues, "salmon was so plentiful that folks used to haul them home by the wagonload to dump on gardens as fertilizer.

"When we wanted a change, the family would pack up, along with the Woodheads or Groscups or other families, and head for the coast for a day or two of catching sea perch, abalone, clams and mussels.

"What we didn't eat there, cooked over a big bonfire on the beach, we'd haul home and smoke, then pack it away in gunny sacks in the root celler."

Both sons remember their parents as very special people, capable of doing almost anything.

Earl says, "Our father was a crack shot, a trapper, skinner and teamster.

"I remember once Gene and I were out with him early one Sunday morning and Dad was carrying a 38 long barrel, just sort of loosely hanging down while he talked to us, pointing out things of interest as we moved along.

"All at once we flushed a bunch of rabbits out of a berry patch — six of them running down the path ahead of us. Dad swung that gun up and fired whop-whop-whop — killing all six rabbits one after the other without ever even breaking stride.

"We skinned them right there and carried them home for rabbit stew."

Like all families in the area at that time, the Requas depended upon such occasions for a welcome change of diet.

Vollie killed deer (except during the rutting season of fall and winter when the taste was strong) quail, grouse and wild hogs.

The meat was either cooked immediately, put into a brine mixture to pickle, or smoked and hung in the root cellar.

to be continued

More memories of the life and

This is Vollie and Allie Requa's house on a hilltop, showing the section of roof where the Requas dried fruits and vegetables.

Although Vollie Requa failed to find gold in his expedition north, he failed at very little else, working hard every day of his life right up to the day he died at 90 years of age.

Not only did he raise all his own grains for family use as well as feed for his stock, he hunted and fished for food, peeled tan bark in summer and trapped in winter.

Trapping was one of the ways by which families could raise a bit of cash in those days, when bounties were paid for predators and there was a ready market in the East for fur pelts.

From $5 to $8 was paid for coyote skins; $6 to $8 for mink; $2 for bobcat; $1 to $2.50 for skunks; $1 for civet cats, and 70 to 80 cents for weasels.

Vollie once found a fisher in one of his traps and received the magnificent sum of $18 for its rare skin.

The animals were skinned, stretched, "worked" to soften, and tied together in bundles which were shipped to Otto Wagner, a fur dealer in New York.

The Requas kept an open running account at the Irvine and Muir store in Willits, as did most families in the area.

Twice a year, Vollie would make the trip down to Willits to pay up his bill, after having sold some cattle, or a load of fire wood, or a good bark haul.

Gene and Earl Requa remember once when the family needed cash for some urgent reason, their father killed a beef, dressed it out and wrapped it in muslin, then hauled it by wagon down to Irvine and Muir where he received a $5 gold piece in exchange.

Earl recalls helping his father sow wheat seed from a game sack slung over his shoulder with the top folded down and ears made by rope ties in each side of the opening so he could scatter the seed by hand as he walked along the furrows in the hilltop pasture which he had also plowed by hand.

"When the wheat was ready to harvest," Earl says, "Dad used a cradle scythe, cutting the wheat by hand. The grain fell into a cradle and when it was full, he'd tie a string around the bundle and toss it up into the wagon.

"When the wagon was full, he'd drive it to the barn and dump all the bundles out on the floor of a special platform, made of 2 x 12 redwood slabs.

"Then he'd walk his saddle horse over the wheat to thresh it, and on windy days he'd use a hay fork to winnow it, tossing it up into the air so the chaff blew away and the grain would fall back on the platform to be shoveled into sacks and stored in the granary."

There was no way to make the granary varmint-proof, so mice getting into the grain was always a problem. The Requas kept plenty of cats on hand, the only known means of keeping the problem from getting out of hand.

The corn that Allie raised for her turkeys was shucked after harvest and laid out on the roof to dry, covered by mosquito netting to protect it from the birds. After it was thoroughly dried, the kernels were rubbed off the cob and some of it saved for cooking into corn relish.

The same method of drying was used for onions from the garden, and the peaches, pears and apples gathered from the trees planted by Vollie's father so many years before.

The tanbark operation, a very common means of making money in those days when the tanneries of the Bay Area were buying up all the tanbark they could find, was restricted to Vollie's own land.

The only help he ever had in this work was from a man named Charlie Poe, who lived over on the coast, but came to stay with the Requas during the tanbark season.

times of Vollie and Allie Requa

Gene Requa remembers once when he was about six years old the family went in the wagon with his father to take Charlie back home.

Both boys recall going into a bar with their father and of seeing a group of men around a poker table on which gold coins and gold nuggets were piled.

"People used gold a lot in those days," Gene says. "There was very little paper money used. Folks kept gold in their homes, usually hidden in a can buried in the yard someplace.

"I don't remember ever hearing of any robberies. A family could be gone for any length of time, without any worry, and they never even locked their houses.

"Sometimes folks would come in and make use of a house while the family was away, but they'd clean up and put everything away before they moved on.

"There were lots of tramp peddlers, selling all kinds of things off their wagons, and they usually had a camera and would take pictures of families for a small fee or sometimes just a hot meal."

Once when Gene was very small, a group of gypsies came by on Sherwood Road with a colorful covered wagon all painted up with signs.

Gene says they came up to the house and asked his father if they could camp overnight down on Wilson Creek which ran through the Requa property. The wagon had become stuck in the creek while they were trying to ford it.

"Dad went right back down there to help, got their wagon pulled free and told them they were welcome to camp there for the night.

"Next morning when we got up, the gypsies were gone, and so were all our eggs in the henhouse, even the glass ones mother kept in the nests.

"That's the only time I can ever remember anyone stealing anything from us."

to be continued.

The Farley School is shown as it looks today. It is on the west side of Highway 101 a couple of miles south of Laytonville.

This picture was taken of the entire student body at the old Farley School at a time when it consisted of several Requa children. The teacher, at the top of the picture, was Julie Bowman. In the next row below her, from left to right, are May Requa, Ida Groscup, Clifford Snyder and Francis Helm. In the next row are Ed Requa, Carl Groscup, Oscar Snyder, Grace Requa and Oliver Snyder; and in the bottom row are an unidentified boy, Forest Snyder, Marguerite Muller, Clarence Requa and Earl Requa.

Continuing the story of the Requa family of Long Valley

Speaking of Wilson Creek where the gypsies camped on the Requa property, that was one of the many creeks explored by the Requa children, Abe's and Vollie's, who fished in the creek and dammed it for swimming.

The creek was also known for the beauty of the stones over which it flowed, and when Vollie Requa was still a young man he hauled a wagonload of the pretty rocks up to the house and built a stone wall lining the walk up to the backdoor, a wall that is still standing today, colorful with flowers growing in its crevices in the early spring.

Vollie was considered an expert at finding a bee tree and garnering the honey stored therein. Apparently the bees were especially fond of the water in the soda springs at the top of the hill, so Vollie would go there in the early evening when the light was just right to shine on the wings of the bees coming in to drink their fill before heading for home.

Vollie would then follow their flight, either visually or by the sound of droning, until he came upon the bee tree. Sometimes he would catch swarms and take them back to bee boxes he had made and set out on the hill near the house.

Once, Gene Requa remembers going on an all day trip to Willits with his parents and brother Earl in the family wagon, going down over the old Sherwood Road, through the towns of Sherwood and Sylvandale, Northwestern Mill and on into Willits.

The family made such trips twice a year to stock up on household items, shoes perhaps, and needed staples. Flour and sugar were purchased in 100 pound bags and coffee in 10 pound tins.

On the trip home, it was cold and windy and the two boys huddled in the back of the wagon complained to their father that they were cold. Vollie stopped the wagon and picked up an old kerosene can on the side of the road, put it in the back of the wagon and built a fire in it to keep the youngsters warm.

Unfortunately, the can tipped over at the first uphill grade, catching the loose straw in the wagon on fire and quickly spreading into a blaze that required the efforts of all four Requas to stamp out.

The winter Gene was 11 years old, he developed pneumonia and brother Earl drove the family in a model T Ford down to Northwestern Hospital. On the way, they ran out of gas, but Earl poured a can of kerosene into the gas tank and they continued on their way without mishap.

That particular winter had been especially cold, although the Requas recall that most winters were severe and with lots of snow when they were boys.

Earl Requa says he remembers snows three feet deep on level ground, snows that stayed on the ground for weeks at a time.

"We used to cut mistletoe and madrone branches for the cattle to eat, and folks had to hack a path through the snow to get from the house out to the barn.

"Of course, those were the days when the stages and wagons were using Sherwood Road, making a couple of runs a day. They always managed to get through, no matter how deep the snow got. It was slow going, so passengers would get out and walk on ahead, but they eventually got where they were going.

"Later, when automobiles began to appear on the road, they'd bog down every time — never could make it through in the winter time."

Gene Requa remembers the big excitement among all the children at Farley School when he was about 10 years old. There was an overrun of ground squirrels that year and the County offered a bounty of two cents for each squirrel tail brought in to school.

Gene proudly showed up at school the next day carrying three tails — only to find that some of the older boys had brought in as many as 20 each. The youngster was sick with disappointment and embarrassment.

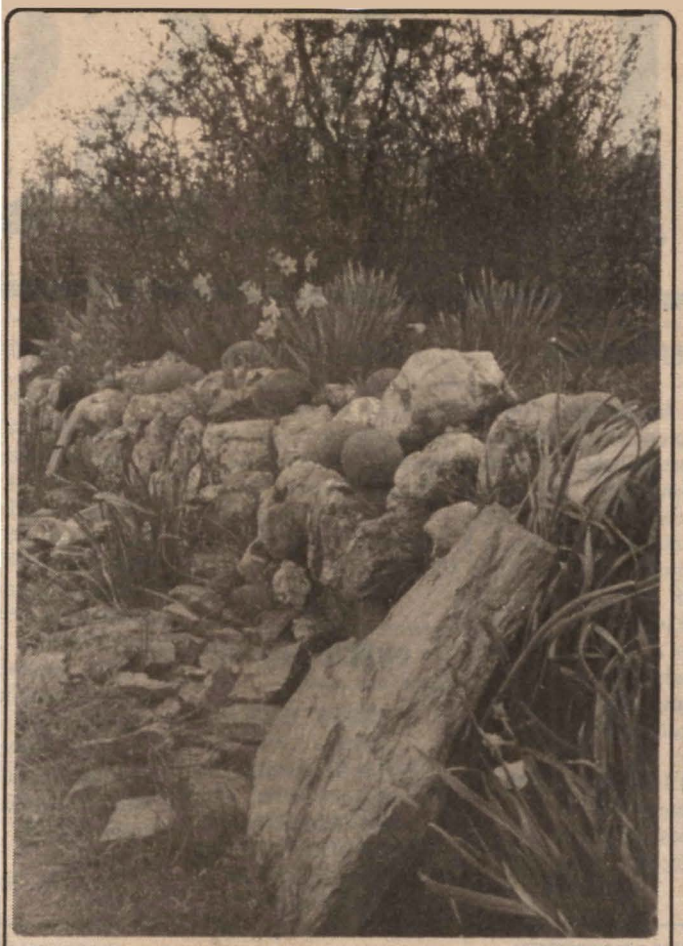
Trapping bounty animals was one way for youngsters to make a bit of spending money, and both Earl and Gene did their share of trapping bob cats and taking the skins in to the store at Longvale where Frank Darby paid $1.50 per animal.

The boys were generally up by daylight for the round of early morning chores before heading off to school. This included milking the cows, filling the wood box, or helping father with some special chore.

One such job was "bluestoning," a process of mixing a blue colored powder with water into a substance that was used for a great many purposes. For one thing, Vollie soaked his wheat seed in bluestone to protect it from insects, and it was also put into the water trough for the animals and in the duck pond, evidently as a bacterial agent.

And, when a dog came down with distemper, there was nothing better in the way of a cure than "bluestoning," according to the Requas.

to be continued.



The rock wall built by Vollie Requa when he was a young man, using rocks hauled by wagon from Wilson Creek.

Vollie and Allie Requa as they appeared during their middle years.

This photograph of the small town of Willits was taken sometime before 1920 from the crest of Sherwood Hill, and shows how the town looked at the time the Requas traveled into town by horse drawn wagon to do their shopping.

The Requa homestead burns down and Melissa Requa dies

In 1912, on a cold day in February, the house built by Alfred Requa on his homestead burned to the ground.

By that time Vollie and Allie Requa were living in the homestead with their two sons and Vollie's mother Melissa, who was confined to a wheelchair.

The original house had a summer kitchen on one side of the house, an open area with a latticed roof covered with cheese cloth, a room used primarily to smoke meats and dry feeds but also containing a large woodburning cook stove.

The morning of the fire, Vollie had arisen before daylight, as was his custom, and had built a fire in the wood stove, set the coffee pot upon it, and had then left the house to tend to his early chores. On this particular day, he was in the upper pasture, rounding up a flock of sheep.

Six year old Earl discovered the fire when he plodded sleepily out into the kitchen and found the cheese cloth draping the ceiling aflame.

Allie was in her bedroom tending to two year old Gene when she heard Earl's screams and came running into the living room area to find bits of flaming material flying through the air and landing all over the place.

Rushing her two children outside with stern instructions to the older boy to "stay right here and keep an eye on your brother," Allie hurried back in to get her bedridden mother in law.

Melissa was already awake and struggling to reach her wheel chair. Allie managed to get the elderly woman into the chair, with a shawl around her thin shoulders, and then pushed her outside despite Melissa's pleas to stay behind and search for some $20 gold pieces which Melissa had hidden in the room.

The entire house was by now involved in flames, but Allie made one last run back into the fire and managed to rescue a small trunk which Alfred and Melissa had brought west with them and which contained all the family papers and photographs.

By this time, the billowing clouds of smoke had caught Vollie's eye in the far away pasture and he had come running back to the house only to find it was already too late to do anything but stand aside and watch the place burn.

Melissa continued to beg for someone to go back in and find her $20 gold pieces. Later, small piles of melted gold were found in the ashes, but most of it was never found.

The only two buildings on the place that were spared were the shed and the granary, and it was there that the family lived for the rest of that cold winter.

Vollie went to see Laytonville merchant Jim Dill and made arrangements to borrow $2500 to rebuild, offering to put up the land and his cattle as collateral. Dill magnanimously told him he did not need to put up the stock, "only the ranch itself."

According to the agreement made between the two, the small monthly payments made from then on were only on the interest with nothing paid on the principal, and that arrangement continued for many years until Dill decided to retire and called in all his loans.

Vollie was unable to come up with the required capital and went to his brother Abe for help. Abe agreed to pay off Dill, but received the mortgage on the homestead property in exchange.

It was not until after Vollie's son Gene was grown and married that the old debt was finally cleared with final payment to Abe by Gene and his wife Hazel.

In the meantime, in 1914 Melissa finally died and was buried in a redwood casket with an inlaid silver maple leaf on the cover. Earl Requa says he remembers that maple leaf clearly, and the day of the funeral when all the family came to bury Melissa in the family burial plot on one of the homestead hills.

The big excitement of the day came when Maude and her children showed up, bringing word that Abe had refused to come. John and Roy Woodhead grimly reached for their guns and went over to Abe's, standing in the yard and yelling out their message — they intended to stand there and fire shots into the doors and windows until Abe showed his face and agreed to go along to his mother's funeral "peaceful like." Needless to say, they got him to the funeral on time.

Earl says death was a simple matter in those days. Bodies were bathed and wrapped in clean linens to await the arrival of both the casket and a preacher. It usually took at least three days for a casket to arrive by stage, and during that time the body reposed in the "parlor" of the bereaved family.

After arrival of the casket, it was loaded onto a wagon and the family team hauled the late departed to the nearest burying spot, which during the first years of the county's settlement meant someplace on the property homesteaded by the bereaved family.

Once at the grave, which had been dug by members of the family, the reins were taken off the horses and used to lower the casket into the grave. Once the formalities of the service were over, both the horses and the people hurried back to the house to partake of the great selections of food which had been brought by all the families attending.

With the death of Melissa, Vollie came into full owership of the entire homestead, according to the terms of the agreement reached with the other children years before. Of course, Abe now held the mortgage on the place and he also began to give Vollie a bad time about having been "tricked out of his rightful share" on the homestead.

So Vollie, following his usual pattern of strange obeisance to his brother, took legal steps to divide the property in half, giving Abe the half on which he had built his home across the road from Vollie's house.

Abe then complained that there was no good water source on his half of the land, so Vollie gave him an extra 12 acres which included a spring. Abe then wound up with the lion's share of the homestead, in addition to holding a mortgage on Vollie's share.

to be continued.

Leroy, May and Ed Requa, the three oldest children of Abe and Maude Requa. It was not long after this picture was taken that Leroy was sent to live with the Woodheads, cousins of the Requas.

The Sherwood Stage which served all the families in the Longvale area, bringing mail, supplies and such necessities as the redwood caskets for burying the dead.

Leroy Requa after he was a grown man and had moved out of the area to the East. He never returned.

Continuing the memorable

After the original Requa home burned to the ground in 1912, it was rebuilt by Vollie Requa with lumber hauled by wagon from Andy Haun's mill.

Vollie personally hand selected every piece of lumber that went into the rebuilding, choosing boards without a single knot for the ceiling and interior walls.

Haun's mill was the first to use a dry kiln to season the green lumber, using one Andy made himself with steam boilers.

The new house had just been completed at the time of Melissa Requa's death. On that day, Vollie rode horseback up to the Hardin ranch to use the telephone, the first one to be installed in Long Valley.

"It was several years before the telephone became a common thing," Earl Requa says, "but folks managed to communicate.

"In an emergency, a messenger rode horseback to spread the word, and news from outside the area was carried by the stagecoach drivers who picked up whatever news they could when they made their runs to Ukiah or the coast."

People lived fairly long distances apart — for instance, the Woodheads who were so close with all the Requas lived back in the woods above Branscomb, but the women of the two families appeared to always know when there was need at some other household and there was considerable movement back and forth among the various widely scattered homesteads.

One of the Woodhead sons, Roy, was a particular favorite of all the Requas, especially the children of the family who looked up to him as a sort of hero.

Roy Woodhead was a handsome cowboy type, who worked for many years as a foreman on the Hardin ranch.

He designed and built the first coyote proof fences, was renowned for his skill in breaking wild horses, and ended up marrying one of the most glamorous women ever to come into the area.

Her name was Frances Stewart, a member of a wealthy Bay Area family whose father was a famous organist and city planner, reported to have laid out the town of Coronado and to have played the organ at the San Francisco World Fair.

The Stewarts moved in the same social circle, according to the story handed down, as the DeYoungs, the Coles, the Spreckles and Theriots.

Frances first came to Mendocino County with one of those families during the days when the San Francisco well-to-do were regular visitors at the many backwoods camping facilities developed specifically for their use.

She was in her teens when

John Woodhead is shown in the photo above seated second from the left. The bareheaded young man standing at his right is his son William, and on his right are his sons Roy and John. The other two young men are unidentified. Because all are dressed in unaccustomed finery this picture was probably taken on the occasion of the marriage of one of the men.

story of the remarkable Requa family

In the photo above are Maude Requa, far left, and a Longvale neighbor, Mrs. Weber with her children Janet [bareheaded] and Harold [cap on]. The child in front with the knitted cap is Maude's daughter Grace, and standing behind Harold is daughter May. On the right is the father Abe Requa.

she first came for a summer of camping at the old Irvine Lodge at Longvale and Roy Woodhead, who was considerably older, was at the time working a tan bark operation and had a contract for barking on the Irvine property.

No two people ever had a more divergent background than the goodlooking but "cob rough" woodsman and the pretty, well educated socialite.

But fall in love they did, and much against her family's will (for one thing, they were Catholics and considered the uneducated cowman nothing short of a heretic) she defied them all and eloped with Roy to Ukiah for a Courthouse marriage in 1916.

Following the ceremony, the couple drove in the young lady's surrey from Ukiah to the home of Vollie and Allie Requa, starry eyed with love, but without the faintest idea of where and how they were going to live.

As it turned out, they spent the first year of their marriage with the Requas and Aunt Frances became as popular with all the Requa children as was Uncle Roy.

Earl Requa recalls her as a beautiful, soft spoken woman who was always handsomely dressed and who had great charm and sense of humor.

Frances and Roy took Earl to his first dance when he was barely into his teens, dressed in a brand new suit with knee pants purchased specially for the occasion.

"Every man in the place had eyes only for Frances and she kept busy throughout the evening teaching them all the latest dance steps. She was really quite a woman," Earl recalls.

They went to the dance in Frances' own brightly polished surrey, evidently a wedding gift from one of her wealthy Bay Area friends.

She also had her own team of horses, and a small trap which the Requa boys remember with special delight as no one in the area had ever seen anything quite like it.

"It had four rubber tired wheels, and one seat with a turtleback, pulled by one horse," Earl recalls.

Roy continued his tan barking throughout that first year, but when Frances became pregnant the couple moved to the coast and settled in Point Arena, where Roy ran a butcher shop for several years.

They had one son who died when he was two years of age, and three daughters — Barbara, Frances and Sissy.

Evidently the breach between Frances and her family was eventually healed, or at least she remained close with her former social friends and continued to receive money from some outside source.

The girls all attended a convent school in San Raphael and every other year, a brand new automobile was shipped up by boat to Frances from San Francisco.

Roy also continued to work in the woods during barking season.

Once, sometime during the 1920s when the girls were quite small, they were all out in the woods with their father as he hauled bark by wagon and team.

They became caught in a forest fire, which destroyed the wagon. The horses escaped and made their way home, but they were so badly burned they had to be destroyed.

In the meantime, Roy had buried the girls in soft loam near a spring and then lay down on top of them.

The fire passed over and they were saved, but Roy's back was severely burned and all four developed pneumonia from the dampness and the smoke.

to be continued.

More memories of the

The year after Roy Woodhead and Frances Stewart were married, the mother of the Woodhead brothers, midwife Esther, died during an operation to amputate her right foot.

The remarkable woman, afflicted with the same terrible disease of diabetes as her daughter Maude Requa, had already lost her left leg, amputated during an at-home operation with only the use of morphine.

Esther, who had helped in the births of most of the babies born in the Branscomb-Laytonville area over a 20 year period, was buried on the Requa Ranch next to Melissa Requa, Alfred Requa and at least two Requa babies.

That same year, 1917, John Woodhead Jr. married Wardie Groscup, who had been previously married to one of the Groscup boys, neighbors of the Requas, and had had five children by him.

Wardie and John Woodhead had three children, and Wardie died not long after the birth of the youngest, a daughter named Tiny who was then raised by the other Woodheads at the family home in Branscomb.

The older girl, Alberta, was taken in by Allie and Vollie Requa after her mother's death and raised as one of their own, along with their sons Earl and Gene.

The children all appear to have been very close, all attending the same school (Farley), all required to do the same kinds of chores at home before and after school, and all sharing in the various social events attended by the families of the area.

Clarence Requa, son of Maude and Abe, is shown in a picture taken when he was about 12 years old and had just discovered airplanes.

One exception, of course, was the children of Abe and Maude Requa, whose only chance at socializing was during their brief school careers, due to the stern control over them by their strange and unpredictable father.

The other children in the family appear to have recognized there was something "different" about Abe, but they all loved Maude and her children and developed an early feeling of protective closeness.

As Maude became totally incapacitated due to the loss of her legs, Allie Requa made it a point to walk over to Maude's house every day to help tend to her, bathing her and doing her hair.

Maude's shy children found companionship among themselves and with their cousins from across the road, but never had the freedom of the other Requas.

Ed, Abe's eldest son and one of the three boys who never married, died last August.

Just before his death he spoke one day of his memories

early days of the Requas of Mendocino

Clarence Requa with Earl Requa and Earl's first wife Zella are shown in a picture taken at Mills Field [now the San Francisco Airport] in the 1920s. The plane behind them was the personal airplane of W.P. Fuller. Clarence was Fuller's private pilot.

of his stern, strange father, recalling with no apparent bitterness that there were days when the two worked together all day with not a word spoken between them.

And, he remembered with pride that his father had great strength and intelligence.

"He quit school at an early age, but he was self-taught and read a lot, had a very fine penmanship, and knew all there was to know about working with tools.

"In fact, he made all his own tools, according to whatever was needed, and taught us to do the same.

"I remember that one of those was a wooden hay baler, and all us boys worked with it, raking up hay in the summertime to sell at 30 cents a bale to the stagecoach when it came by, or to passing teams and wagons."

May Requa, the oldest girl left home in her early teens to go to work for Charlotte Middleton, helping in the restaurant at Longvale. It was there that she met her husband, Arnold Begley of Covelo.

It was May's son, Ward Begley, who died in his home in Covelo recently, a victim of the same disease which his grandmother and great grandmother suffered. All three of them died after amputation of both legs.

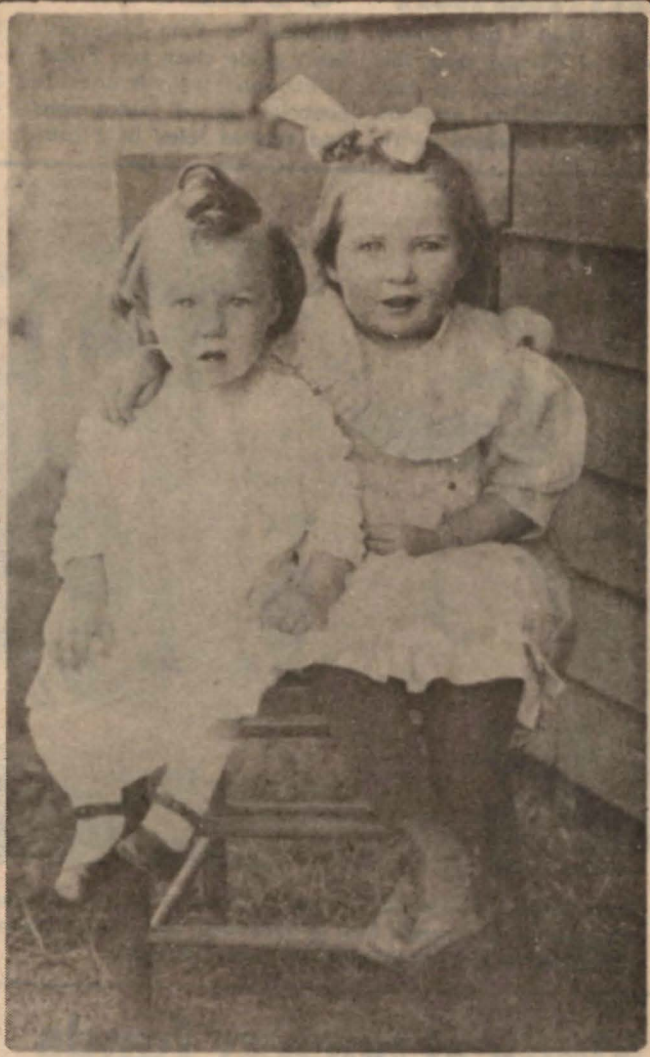
Clarence Requa, one of the few of Abe Requa's children to break away from his confining childhood, became addicted to the exciting new field of aviation at a very early age.

He began to read all he could find on the subject, and at 18 he left home to make his way to San Francisco's Mills Field (now the San Francisco Airport) where he talked his way into a job on the basis of his ability to handle tools.

Not only did he learn the basics of airplane maintenance, but he also took part of his small salary in free flying lessons and was soon piloting planes all over the west, one of the first freelance private pilots and eventually the personal pilot of paint

Vollie and Allie Requa are shown above in their wagon with sons Gene and Earl and little Alberta Woodhead.

County



This photo shows Alberta and Tiny Groscup Woodhead, children of Wardie Groscup and John Woodhead Jr. The older girl, Alberta, was raised by Allie and Vollie Requa after their mother died and Tiny was raised by William Woodhead.

company founder W.P. Fuller.

It must have been with great pride that Clarence used to occasionally fly over his parent's hilltop home and land in a pasture on the Hardin Ranch.

When his plane made its first circle over the Requa hill, Allie would invariably say, "Here comes the airship," and everyone would take off running or on horseback to greet the glamorous pilot in leather jacket and goggles, with a heavy parachute strapped to his back.

Clarence married Norma Gill, whose father operated Gill's airport in Leggett, in 1928 and later he served as a civil aeronautics inspector.

In 1946, he was killed in his plane when it crashed in a mountainous region of Idaho.

to be continued.

Continuing story of the Requa family

Both Vollie and his brother Abe Requa worked for the highway department in the building of the first highway to connect Willits directly with Longvale, Laytonville and points north, and they also worked in maintenance of the road after it was built and maintenance of the Sherwood Road which continued to have heavy traffic even after the other highway was completed.

Typical of the difference in temperament of the two brothers is the fact that Vollie

Another class picture of students at the old Farley School was taken in 1919 when Grace Requa, standing at the far left, was 13 years old. It was during this time that Grace worked at the Irving Lodge. The two boys on horses are the Snyder brothers, and the two standing at the rear are Earl Requa and Carl Groscup.

Two different views of the old Highway 101 as it appeared during the 20s when the Requas worked on it. The photo above was taken just north of Willits near Longvale, and the other picture was taken just north of Laytonville.

as they moved through the 1920s

was content to work for 20 years as a one-man, one-horse maintenance crew, while the more aggressive Abe worked as a supervisor of the road-building and maintenance crews.

Vollie worked for $4 a day, which included the use of his horse Jack and Jack's feed. The two of them operated a small dump cart, filling it with broken rock and then carrying the debris to a dump site alongside the road.

At quitting time, old Jack would always know it was time to make the last run, and he would carefully back his cart to the edge of the road at the right spot and then kick it to dump it over.

It was through this period of time that the two brothers finally reached an impasse and did not speak to one another for 20 years.

Vollie's oldest son Earl recalls that everyone in the family accepted the strange relationship of close ties with Maude and her children, but complete alienation with Abe.

Earl recalls once when he was about 12 years old he saw his Uncle Abe chasing Vollie's cows down the road.

"He was doing it just to be mean, for no other reason, and after all that my father had done for him and given to him.

"It just happened I did not have my rifle with me, something that very seldom happened, and if I had I believe I would have tried to kill the man right then and there.

"All of us kids knew how mean he was to Maude and the children."

Strangely enough, one of the few remaining children of Abe and Maude remembers her father in a different light.

Grace Requa (Berchtold-Underhill) acknowledges that her father was a strange man and little understood, but she insists she remembers occasions of gentleness on his part.

"It may be because I was my parents' favorite child," she reflects today. "They always called me 'Grady' and counted on me to do just about everything. I spent a lot of time with both parents, more than the other children.

"Of course my mother was completely helpless for so many years, we all had to help take care of her, and then my father was off working on the highway so the children had to do everything at home.

"Then we all started working at whatever jobs we could find to help bring money home. My brothers all worked over at the Hardin Ranch, and my sister May worked at the Longvale Cafe.

"My first job was at the Irvine Lodge, located south of Longvale on the east side of the highway. I was employed to help Mrs. Irvine in caring for the lodge guests, preparing the meals, cleaning and things like that.

"I was very fond of both the Irvines. Alonzo Irvine was a son of Henry Muir's partner in the prosperous Irvine and Muir business, and his wife Ida was from a wealthy Vallejo family.

"Alonzo had had an unhappy love affair before marrying Ida and never got over it. He was a very moody man and a poet. Sometimes he would read his poetry to me and I can still remember one of those poems, written about his lost love.

It went:

"Sorrow fills my heart with weeping
When I think how happy he
Who has my Molly always gliding
At his wheel on life's rough sea."

Irvine Lodge, according to Grace, consisted of a motel and a restaurant, surrounded by 160 acres.

There were three soda springs on the property, one below Beauty Ridge and near the highway where a stand was set up during the summer months to sell glasses of the soda water mixed with lemon and sugar.

"Mrs. Irvine was very aristocratic, and wanted to entertain and lead a cultured life, completely different from her husband.

"He was a loner and a dreamer, never learned to drive a car and always rode horseback everyplace, never mixed with folks very much."

Grace also recalls that Alonzo was a "health nut" who kept goats so he could drink only goat's milk, and ate lots of nuts and raw wild foods.

"He used to eat pancakes covered with goat's cream and sugar, and in the winter time he'd break the ice on Outlet Creek and go swimming in the cold water.

"Poor man, he eventually killed himself. Went up in the hills above the Lodge one day and cut his wrists, lay down and died right there on the ground."

to be continued.

More on the Requa families and their

Continuing with Grace Requa's memories of her childhood, she recalls that trapping animals was another means by which the children of the two Requa families made a bit of money which, in her case, was turned over to her father Abe.

"My brother Clarence and I used to take one of our horses, Old Bess, and ride around to check out our traps.

"I remember once we actually trapped three coyotes during one night — this was when the County was paying bounties for things like coyotes because they were killing off so many sheep — and we took the skins in to Judge Woodruff at Woodruff's Hotel at Longvale and got paid $9."

The youngsters also took care of the family gardens. Grace says they had one large garden in a small flat just below the house where they raised turnips, radishes, lettuce, cucumbers, cabbage and tomatoes.

"Water was scarce and had to be hand-carried up hill, so we watered only when the seeds were planted.

"Once the plants came up, there was no more watering. We hoed every day and that helped keep a little moisture in the ground, but the plants survived just as the wild plants did.

"Our potatoes were planted in another garden down near Wilson Creek and a spring there, because they needed more moisture and the ground there was kept damp from spring seepage."

Grace was the same age as her cousin Earl, Vollie's and Allie's oldest son, and her younger brother Vernon was born the same year as their cousin Gene.

"I was very fond of Uncle Vollie and Aunt Allie," Grace says, "and they treated me like a daughter. We were all very close.

"Later, after I was married and had babies, Uncle Vollie used to hike the three miles over the hills to our house every day to help me with the children and with our garden.

"When we were still children we occasionally all went places together, like to the Fourth of July celebrations, but our family didn't socialize as much as Allie and Vollie because my mother was so ill, and then of course my father had his own ideas about what children should be doing.

"You know, everyone talks about my father Abe and how strict he was, but I guess I only remember the good things.

"In spite of everything, he was a very religious man and he used to read to us chidlren out of the Bible every day.

"He loved to read, and he loved poetry. We used to bring books from school which our teacher would lend to us, and Daddy would read them all and loved reading aloud.

"He insisted we all read and talked a lot about how important it was to read a lot."

Grace says that during the years when boys and girls of the area were beginning to take notice of one another in a romantic way, they kept in touch by sending notes to one another by the stage drivers. No one had a telephone.

"My father had built a small shed down alongside Sherwood Road where he kept baled hay to sell to the passersby, and if anyone was sending a note to us it would be stuck in a box we had alongside the shed.

"The mail wagon hauled everything, notes and groceries and hardware for all the families along the way. We'd hear those bells jingling and know it was coming up the hill so we'd all run down to meet it.

"It took one full day for the wagons or coaches to go from Willits up to Cummings, where they'd stay overnight and then head back down.

"When I was about 13 or 14, I began to have a few suitors. One of the first was Gus Raymond, a tall quiet boy who was very musical and well mannered.

"One day when I went down to the mail box, I found a note from Gus saying he would be up the next day to pick me up and take me to a dance at Sherwood.

"I had to get permission from my father, of course, but like most fathers he was interested in seeing that I got a good husband and he approved of Gus so there was no problem, especially since Gus said his sister Lillie would be with him.

"I remember I wore a simple little green and white cotton dress my mother had helped me make, and heavy cotton stockings like we wore

This is the depot, store and warehouse at Sherwood where dances were held during the 1920s. Off to the right out of the picture was Sherwood Inn, which today is the home of Edgar and Stella James.

neighbors during the 1920s

Grace and Clarence Requa are shown here standing in the family cabbage patch.

then.

"The dance was in a big building with a dance floor that was next to the Sherwood store and depot. I suppose it was a warehouse of some kind that got cleaned up every few weeks so folks could dance in it.

"Gus was playing banjo for the dance, and there was a couple known as Pippins and Mittens that played. I remember all the James family was there, and the Silviera family and Dolly and Bert Raymond.

"And, there was a handsome young man playing the harmonica that Gus introduced me to and who immediately quit playing so he could dance with me.

"That's how I met Pete Berchtold, the man I married. It was love at first sight, I guess. I'd never met anyone quite like him.

"He was what the girls called a dashing fellow, so full of personality and sense of humor. Poor Gus! From then on, I never had eyes for anyone but Pete.

"He asked if I was coming back to the next dance and I said yes, but I don't remember now who took me. Anyway, Pete soon came to call at the house and meet my parents.

"My father liked him right off — figured he was 'up and coming' and would make a fine husband.

"I'd already figured that out for myself."

to be continued.

Grace Requa is shown with her father Abe, at about the time she met Pete Berchtold.

The courtship and marriage of

Grace and Pete are shown here shortly after their marriage in 1922. They are at the home of Vollie and Allie Requa.

Oops!

The following chapter in the Requa story is out of sequence and should have appeared prior to last week's episode. Our apologies.

Pete Berchtold, the dashing young man who captured the heart of 14 year old Grace Requa the first time she met him, was born in what was known as the Woodpecker

Pete Berchtold is shown when he was 20 years old, just after he and Grace Requa met and fell in love.

Grace Requa and Pete Berchtold

House on Sherwood Road, the house which had been built by Dutch Henry Russe, but was later bought by Pete's father and was located approximately where Mr. and Mrs. Jack Harwood live today.

Leonhardt Berchtold came to Sherwood in 1891 from Germany. His only son was named Leonhardt Jr., but that was anglicized to Leonard when he started attending Sylvandale School where for some reason he was given the nick name "Pete" which stuck to him for life.

Pete had three sisters, Anna, Elizabeth and Bertha. Anna, the eldest, married John Tsarnas and helped care for her younger sisters and brother after the loss of their parents when Pete was only eight years old.

Their father was killed as he stood in the doorway of their home in 1907, shot by a man attempting to call on one of the girls and ordered off the property by her father.

Two years later the grief stricken mother died, leaving a pathetic note in which she asked Henry Muir to look after her children and Muir did keep an account for them at his Irvine and Muir store.

But it was Anna who really cared for and raised the younger children, and saw to it that Pete and Bertha went on to Santa Rosa Business College.

Anna's husband was one of three brothers who had built a very successful wood and tanbark business and Pete's first job was cutting wood for them.

At the time Grace and Pete met, he was living with Anna and her husband in the old Sherwood Inn where Edgar and Stella James live today, because it was convenient to the railroad for shipping fire wood to the Bay Area where there was great demand for oak and madrone cut in four foot lengths to heat homes and businesses.

There was also a market for redwood, of course, and virgin timber stumpage could be purchased by an independent contractor for 75 cents to $1.25 per thousand.

Pete courted the shy young Requa girl, after formally asking for Abe's permission to do so, for about a year and a half before they married in 1922, when she was 16 years old and he was 21.

Pete had a model T Ford in which they drove down to Ukiah, just the two of them, to get their marriage license, and then they drove back up the dirt highway to the home of Judge E.M. Whitney, located about two miles past the place known as Hill Villa which was north of Longvale.

It was there that they were married, with only the Judge and his wife Etta in attendance.

"I was wearing a white eyelet dress which I had made, but I didn't have any flowers so Mrs. Whitney went out in her garden and picked a bunch of violets for me.

"She also gave me my first wedding gift, a beautiful little glass basket with handles.

"Judge Whitney played the organ and he and Mrs. Whitney sang a wedding song for us and I guess I cried a little, it was all such a sweet ceremony."

The wedding supper for the couple was held at Sherwood Inn, prepared by Annie Tsarnas, with Pete's sister Elizabeth there and the other Tsarnas brothers and their wives.

Grace recalls they had roast turkey and a wonderful dark brown German bread which Annie had learned to make from her mother, plus all the marvelous Greek salads and vegetable dishes she had learned from her husband. The wedding cake was a chocolate spice concoction topped with whipped cream.

The young couple's first home was one Pete had built on property owned by the Tsarnas brothers and called "Tsarnas Hill," located just to the right of the road leading from Longvale to Dos Rios today.

The weekend following their marriage, Grace and Pete were sent an invitation to come to dinner at the home of Beatrice Silviera, a widow who lived in the former Billedeau house on Sherwood Road with her two daughters.

The Berchtolds went, expecting to see only the Silvieras, and found instead a great gathering of people from all the Sherwood area and surrounding hills who had come to give the surprised couple an old time "shivaree."

"That was what they called it, although usually a shivaree was when a gang of friends came to the newlyweds' house during the night and set up a big racket.

"When we drove up, everyone inside the house started hollering and banging on pots and pans so we knew it was a shivaree.

"There were so many people there, I don't remember them all, but all the Raymonds were there, and Lou and Ethel James, and of course all the Tsarnas families and just about everybody who lived in Sherwood.

"Old man Charlie Underhill was there and even helped with the cooking. He was a great cook, and his sons Charles, Porter, Harry and Wesley — they owned a big ranch in the area of Sherwood later called Willowbrook.

"The Underhill boys were blonde and goodlooking and were real cowboys.

"Young Charlie Underhill worked with some of the horses Charles Howard kept on what was then the Harrison Ranch just south of Laytonville, the place now owned by Bud Sloan."

Grace didn't know it at the time, of course, but Charlie Underhill would be her second husband after Pete Berchtold's tragic death.

to be continued.

This picture of Sherwood Inn with Mr. and Mrs. Jack Koch standing in front was taken a few years before Anna and John Tsarnas lived there. Today this is the home of Ed and Stella James.

Hard work and good times mixed with the bad

Grace Requa Berchtold is shown on Old Bess, one of her father's horses.

Grace Requa, looking back on the years when she was a brand new wife and mother with a handsome young husband with whom she was very much in love, says she now remembers the good times best, although there were tragedy and sad times aplenty.

"We were so young, so full of life. And then we were busy, everyone working so hard, there was very little time spent in just sitting around thinking about one's troubles.

"For me, life seemed just about perfect. I loved my home and my husband and my children and there weren't enough hours in the day to do all the things I wanted to do."

All the things she wanted to do included gardening, canning, baking and berrying, and hiking six miles over the hills to her mother's house several times a week to help care for Maude as she became incapacitated.

In addition, Grace and her children ran trap lines in the winter months to gather pelts—raccoons, skunk and bobcat—which were carried home to Pete who skinned and prepared the hides, tying them up in bundles to ship to the buyers back East.

It was necessary to check the traps frequently, and Grace always dreaded finding a dying animal in one of the traps.

She carried a gun and shells with her so she could quickly put an animal out of its misery, but she never got over a feeling of nausea at having to do the job.

One day she found an adult male bobcat in one of the traps, still alive and snarling. Grace discovered with a sinking heart that she was out of shells. Not knowing what else to do, she picked up a nearby piece of wood and hit the animal over the head.

Believing she had killed it, she opened the trap and was pulling him out by one leg when her four year old son said, "Mama, he's opening his eyes."

Just at that moment the cat jerked free, making terrible noises and lunging at Grace.

This is Pete Berchtold's wood truck, used to haul the four-foot lengths of firewood from the place of cutting to the depot at Longvale.

in memory of Grace Requa

Terrified, she grabbed up the stick again, calling out to the children to run for home, and kept wildly swinging and hitting until the animal was lifeless.

"When I finally got home, I was sick all over the place and couldn't even fix dinner.

"I told Pete I didn't want to keep doing that job, but he finally talked me into going out again because we needed the extra money the pelts brought in, and there was no one else to do the job."

A couple of days later, there was a repeat of the incident. This time it was a raccoon in the trap when Grace discovered she was out of shells. Once more, she picked up a piece of wood and made a half-hearted swing at the animal, barely grazing its head.

"That little coon just sort of sat back on its haunches, rubbing its head with both paws and looking up at me with really hurt surprise as though to say, 'Lady, why are you hitting me?'

"I threw down the club, opened the trap and let the coon go. And when I went home, I told Pete that I didn't care how badly we needed the money, that was one job I would never do again."

There were happy social affairs, simple in nature, but the two biggest events of each year were the Fourth of July celebrations in Laytonville and Willits and later, in the 1930s, Old Timers Day in Laytonville.

Pete Berchtold was a fine athlete and a star baseball player, as well as a wrestler and boxer.

He was also very musical and although he had never had any formal training, he could play several instruments and had a beautiful singing voice, so he was much in demand at almost any kind of social gathering.

Grace and Pete both loved the out-of-doors and all growing things.

Bonnie Christian says her father taught her the names of all the wild plants and animals when she was still just a toddler, and her mother was always trying to encourage something new to grow in her garden.

Somehow, Grace also found time to serve for many years on the election board when voting booths were set up in the Longvale store.

Frank Darby and his wife Agnes were running the store during those years and both of them served on the election board, along with Dominic Rose.

Grace recalls there were 48 registered voters in Longvale and that every single one voted in every single election.

"Another thing that was different then, when we opened and closed the polls one of us would go out on the porch with a bell and ring it, and we'd call out, 'Hear ye, hear ye—the polls are now open (or closed).'

"It was unheard of in those days for someone not to come in from wherever they lived out in the hills on election day to vote.

"People took that responsibility very seriously, and besides it was kind of a social event to come in to the voting place and then stay around visiting and making guesses as to how the vote would come out."

to be continued

Grace Requa is shown in one of the last pictures taken at home just before her marriage. With her is her mother Maude and her brothers Vernon, Ernie and Clarence.

More on the life and times of the

Pete Berchtold and his first born child, Bonnie, in a picture taken in 1926.

Grace and Pete Berchtold's third child and second son Max was born in 1933 at the nearly new Howard Hospital in Willits.

Pete drove his wife to the Hospital in a neighbor's model-T truck, only to find on arrival that Dr. Babcock was out at a social gathering being held at Quadrio Park.

Someone was sent by car out to the popular park located on East Hill Road to fetch the doctor, but by the time he got back to the hospital, Max was already born.

Hospital rates, of course, were a fraction of what they are today, in fact it is reported that during the early 1930s, daily room rates at the hospital were $2, an incredible rate for room and board and nursing care.

Even so, few families could afford to have a two-weeks hospital bill, so there were a number of "nursing homes" set up over the early years in Willits where women could go

This family group picture was taken in 1934, the year before Maude Requa's death, at Pete and Grace's home on The 16. Left to right are Leonard Berchtold, sister Bonnie, Edith Beck, Al Finch, Don French and Grace. Standing in front with the bottle is baby Max.

Requa family of Mendocino County

either to give birth to their baby with the aid of a midwife, or go for convalescence after delivery by a doctor.

After two days in the Hospital, Grace and her baby were moved to Nellie Corbett's nursing home, which was located in the house next door to the Masonic Lodge which today is the Earley Gallery.

Bonnie Christian was ten years old when her baby brother was born. She and seven year old Leonard stayed at home on "The 16" while their parents went off to the Hospital, and she recalls how excited they were when father Pete came home to tell them of the baby's arrival.

"My mother had named the new baby Clarence Eugene, after a favorite brother of hers and a favorite cousin, but when my father told us about the new baby he said the baby was so big and husky he looked like Max Baer — and from then on, everyone called the baby Max."

After mother and baby came home, Aunt Allie and Uncle Vollie made daily visits to help with the children and chores, but it was not long before Grace was back on her feet and doing all her own work.

In addition to the care of her children and home, Grace hiked over the hills to her mother's house several times a week, a distance of about six miles.

"We thought nothing of walking long distances in those days," Grace reflects. "If there was a horse available, we rode, but if the father of the family was using the horses for work, then the women and children walked. Six miles was nothing. I miss all that walking we used to do, and I believe we were all healthier for it."

Bonnie says she remembers clearly making the long hike over to her grandparents' house with her mother, and she remembers how sweet and gentle her grandmother Maude was, and how stern and cold her grandfather Abe was.

"Sometimes he'd look out the window, see us coming up the hill, and push Maude and her wheelchair into a closet. I don't believe I ever heard him say anything kind to any of us children, and naturally we all thought he was pretty strange."

Grace, on the other hand, knowing her father better than anyone else and being sure of his affection, never acted as though there was anything unusual about finding Maude hidden away somewhere, but would chatter away to her scowling father while she looked about the house until finding Maude, and then wheeling her chair into the kitchen.

"I understood him," Grace says, "and I know he loved me in his own way. I believe he loved my mother, too, and was just unable to show it. He was basically a good man."

Maude was by now completely helpless and confined to her wheelchair.

The boys Vernon and Ernie were still living at home and helped with the daily care of their mother, and Allie came across the road every day to brush Maude's hair, but it was Grace who bathed her mother and did her laundry and brought her bunches of wildflowers to place in a jelly jar on the windowsill.

Maude, the shy sweet woman who lived most of her life in pain with an almost totally silent man for a husband, died in 1935 at the age of 55 years. She had lost both legs and the use of one arm to the crippling disease of diabetes that consumed her.

During the last year of her life, Dr. Babcock secured an artificial limb for her and tried to encourage her to use it, but it was too late. She was just too weak and tired to make the effort.

The day she died, it was obvious even to Abe that she was sicker than usual and he made the supreme decision, for him, to take her to the hospital.

On the way down Sherwood Road, his car broke down, but fortunately Gene Requa and his wife Hazel were following in another car.

A great argument ensued about what to do with the ill woman, as Abe wanted to keep her in his car while Gene pushed the stalled car all the way to into town.

Finally in desperation, Gene and Hazel managed o get Maude out of Abe's car and into their own and rushed her to the hospital while Abe walked back home.

When Grace reached the hospital, after dropping off her children at Allie's, she found Dr. Bob Smalley in the room with her dying mother.

"Mother kept calling for Abe, he was the one she wanted and maybe at the last she thought he was there. But it was Dr. Smalley who sat there beside her, holding her hand, all day and into the evening as she slowly faded away.

"I will never forget that, how compassionate he was."

to be continued.

Grace Requa Berchtold with her sons Leonard and Max, standing on the Requa homestead property. Her father Abe's house is in the background.

More on the Requa family - the

Although the last two brothers of the original Requa family, Abe and Vollie, spent the final years of their lives as strangers, their wives and children all remained close friends and visited regularly back and forth across the narrow dirt Sherwood Road which separated the two homes.

No one knows for sure just which incident triggered the final break between the brothers, but some members of the family believe it was when Abe went to the Laytonville Post Office one day and picked up a legal envelope from the East addressed simply to "Descendants of Alfred Requa."

Abe never shared the contents with the rest of the family, but it is believed that the envelope contained an inheritance from the Eastern Requas and was meant for all of Alfred's children and grandchildren.

In any event, none of the family except Abe ever knew what the envelope contained.

Earl and Gene Requa, sons of Allie and Vollie, were instinctively protective of their parents, especially the gentle man who was their father.

The boys spent most of their childhood in the company of their father, absorbing all the wood lore he had gleaned from his own father, hunting, fishing, trapping and learning to handle all kinds of tools with ease.

Gene says the only machine his father never mastered was the automobile. For some reason, Vollie had a deep aversion to the gasoline-powered vehicle and never owned or drove one.

The boys, as they grew into their teens, learned to drive in the casual, off-hand way that all boys did in those days, and one of them was always close at hand in any emergency when a driver was needed.

Like all the other Requa children, Gene and Earl attended Farley School.

After completing the eight grades offered there, Earl moved down to Willits to live with some "shirt tail relatives" who were members of the Haun family while he attended the old Willits High School on Pine Street, coming home on the weekends to help with the chores.

At the age of 19, Earl answered the siren call of the big city lights and left home to seek fame and fortune in the

The young Gene Requa is shown on his horse at about the time he first met the girl he would marry.

This family group picture was taken at the home of Allie and Vollie in about 1932. Left to right are Leon Berchtold, Gene Requa, Pete Berchtold, Edith Beck, Alberta Woodhead and Grace Requa Berchtold.

growing up of Earl and Gene Requa

Bay Area.

One of the Woodheads, a cousin of the Requas, and one of the Groscup family, were living and working in Martinez for Shell Oil, and it was there that Earl landed, taking what he thought would be a temporary job which ended up lasting 42 years.

Retired eight years ago, Earl and his wife Margaret still live in Martinez, making occasional trips to revisit the home place.

Both Earl and Gene look back on their childhood as a happy time with days full to the brim of work and play that somehow lapped over and in retrospect were one and the same.

Gene recalls the Fourth of July celebrations and rodeos as the high points of the year, especially those held in the early years at Rancho Primero, where he had his first taste of ice cream.

He remembers particularly one year when someone brought fresh cherries to the big picnic always held before the rodeo, and his mother Allie was greatly alarmed and warned her sons not to eat cherries and ice cream together because to do so would be sure to be fatal.

Gene was working at full time jobs away from home while still in his mid-teens, but he continued to live at home and help his parents with chores before and after his full day jobs.

He did all the usual things men did in those days to earn a few dollars — worked for the big ranches, worked for Pete Berchtold in cutting fire wood, cut tan bark and picked moss.

The latter occupation was a favorite and one of the best paying. The moss gathered was the soft thick moss which grew on the trunks of oak trees and which was easy to peel off in big chunks.

These were stuffed into a big burlap bag slung over the shoulder and when the bag was full, the top was laced together with a big needle and twine.

The bags were taken by wagon to the train depot at Longvale, and when there were as many as 150 bags accumulated there, they were shipped down to San Francisco to one of the wholesale florists there who used the material for insulation in packing flowers.

Gene says he was paid 25 cents per bag, and he could gather as many as 30 bags in one day, making a total of $7.50 which was exceptionally high pay for a day's work.

In 1928, when he was 18 years old, he was working one summer for the Tsarnas brothers on their place at Longvale, cutting firewood for the old LaRue school house which was located on the Tsarnas property.

It was there that he met a pert, big eyed little blonde girl with long golden braids, only 13 years old, but already a beauty and so sassy and spirited that Gene was completely captivated the first time they met.

Hazel Euchler had come up from San Francisco with her parents and two sisters to vacation in the Tsarnas campground, which was located on the edge of Outlet Creek about half a mile from the two story Longvale depot.

The family had been coming to the area every summer for several years, one of the many that did so during the 1920s and 1930s.

to be continued.

Continuing the story of how Gene and Hazel Requa met each other

Clarence "Pete" Euchler, Hazel Requa's father, was a motorman in San Francisco, but was born in Kentucky and had a life long love of the country.

He dreamed of finding a "spot of land" someplace away from the busy city in which to raise his family and studied the property ads in the San Francisco papers daily.

He finally found what sounded like the ideal spot, a large tract of timbered land for sale near Dos Rios in Mendocino County, so the family was packed into his 1916 Dodge touring car and they took off, with mother Laura carefully packing a two day supply of food to take along.

Hazel, the youngest member of the family, was just a toddler at the time, but she remembers that it was a long hot drive and long before they reached their destination their steaks had spoiled and been tossed out the window.

In Dos Rios, the family discovered that the property they had come to see was inaccessible by road and could be reached only by a four mile hike.

Wearily, they went into the small hotel on the one street of the town only to find that they were too late for the dinner hour and no food was available.

They did, however, get rooms for the night and divided up what little food was left from what had started out as an ample supply. Hazel says she remembers only consenting to eat some graham crackers.

The next morning, the family arose early to tackle the long hike, and found that the dining room was not yet open for breakfast so once again they had to fall back on their meager and diminishing food supply.

A small two wheeled baby cart had been brought along for Hazel, but she refused to get into it and even if she had, a portion of the hike was over railroad tracks and the small carriage would have been impossible to push along. So father Pete had to carry his fractious young daughter.

Once they reached the property for sale, the long-suffering Laura informed her husband she had no intention of living in such a remote, God-forsaken spot on earth, so they turned around and made the long hike back to the hotel where they arrived too late for the noon dinner.

The by now famished group piled into the car for the long trip home.

That was years before the present day Covelo Road was built, so the town was reached only by the old Laytonville Road.

There was one small store in Dos Rios which also sold gasoline, but this was during World War I and there was a shortage of gas, just as there is now.

The only fuel the store had for sale was something called "dislet," a fuel much like kerosene, and this was pumped into the Dodge for the trip home.

As Hazel remembers it, the car ran alright on level ground, but on even the slightest grade it was very labored, going with a lot of frightening backfiring.

The entire family sighed with relief when they finally reached Willits and could have the tank drained and filled with proper fuel.

On the trip home, along about Petaluma, the family saw a car ahead of them hit a large chicken as it skittered across the dirt road in front of them.

The other car continued on its way, but the hungry Euchlers quickly stopped, gathered up the prize, and had it plucked clean by the time they reached San Francisco.

"That was one of the best chicken dinners I ever ate," Hazel muses today.

So that was the beginning, inauspicious though it was, of the long affair of the Euchler family with the Longvale area.

The very next summer, and every summer thereafter, they drove up to the camping grounds along the banks of the Eel River and Outlet Creek to camp out under the stars.

"My mother went along with this plan, but grudgingly," Hazel says.

"My sisters and father and I loved it, and I never could understand why my mother didn't love it, too.

"Now of course, looking back, I realize she worked for two weeks ahead of time getting everything packed and ready, worked from dawn to dusk every day cooking and keeping the camp neat, and then when we got home worked for two weeks getting everything washed up and put away again."

Hazel says they brought a large supply of canned goods and staples with them, shipping it up ahead of time on the train.

They brought cots, and thin mattresses, and basic cooking equipment, but made all the rest of their camping furniture after arrival.

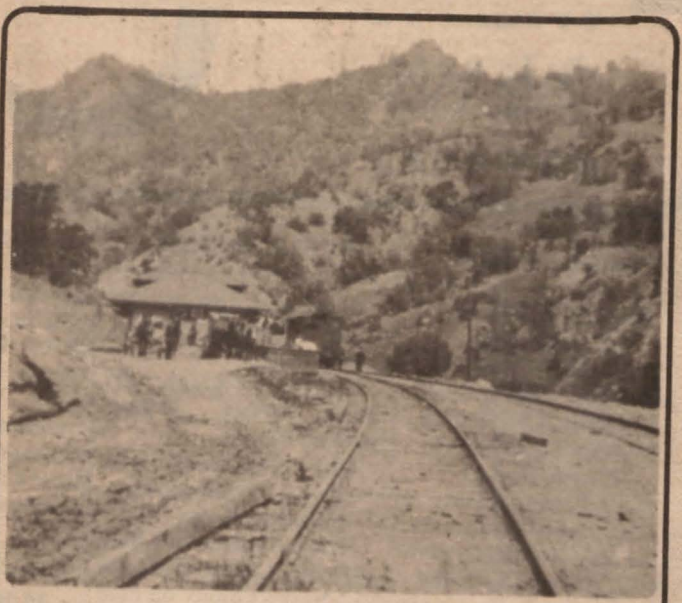
"Our favorite spot to camp was on the banks of the Outlet, not too far away from where the Longvale train depot was located.

"Just below the station there was a dumping area where old packing cases were thrown out, and we'd go down there and gather those wooden cases, take them back to our camp, and my father would make tables and benches and cabinets out of them.

"We always brought a toilet seat with us, and father would put it on a box set over a hole, and then put up some poles and hang a big piece of canvas around it.

"I remember once he even rigged up a shower for us. We kids thought it was all wonderful, but I can understand now why my mother wasn't overcome with joy."

to be continued



The railway station at Dos Rios is shown here as it looked when the Euchler family first visited the small town and walked down these tracks to look at some property.

The depot at Longvale was located just above Outlet Creek and a half mile south of where a favorite camping ground was located on a shelf of land alongside the creek.

Gene Requa meets the girl

Althoug' the Euchler family began coming to the Longvale area to camp every summer when their youngest daughter Hazel was only three years old, it was another ten years before she met the shy, but handsome cowboy she would eventually marry.

The Euchlers had become good friends with several of the families living in the Longvale area, and Hazel became particularly close friends with the Tsarnas girls, Lucy and Esther.

Looking back, there is a good chance that somewhere along the line the Euchlers and the Requas met, but Hazel was not aware of any of them until the day she and Lucy walked up to the top of Tsarnas Hill, where 18 year old Gene Requa was cutting wood for the old LaRue School which was on the Tsarnas property.

Lucy introduced the pair, and Hazel asked the young man why he was cutting the wood into "slices."

This tickled him, so he took the time to explain that the correct term was "cuts," and the wood was being cut in that particular size to fit the schoolhouse stove.

As he talked, he became aware of those remarkably large and beautiful eyes staring solemnly back at him, and of a particularly golden shine to the two long braids that draped over the small shoulders of the most interesting looking girl he had ever seen.

Although Hazel was only 13 at the time, she was already a mature and self-possessed young lady of exceptional talent and intelligence.

She had become active in

An overall view of the town of Dos Rios as it looked during the time the Euchler family lived there.

This is the old original highway which connected Willits with the Bay Area during the years when the Euchler family were driving up here.

he will marry, rocky courtship begins

theater work in San Francisco, following a love for drama which developed after her first public performance in the fourth grade.

At the time she met Gene, Hazel had just won a top award in the annual Shakespearean Festival held by the San Francisco schools.

Later, she joined a Little Theater group which met and performed at the Fairmont Hotel and the director, Reginald Travis, was so sure of the girl's potential that he offered to pay for her to go to Stratford-on-Avon to study, but the Euchlers could not bring themselves to agree to anything so radical.

Hazel continued to work with the San Francisco theater groups right up to the time of her marriage.

Following that first meeting of the pair, a courtship by correspondence began, highlighted by the two weeks or so each year that the family came north to camp.

Looking back, Hazel says she cannot remember all the things they did for fun during those days, except for simple picnics and fishing, hiking, and going to parties at people's homes.

"I loved to dance, and Gene didn't dance at all, but we still went to all the dances because that was what people did mostly at those parties — eat and dance.

"There was no hard liquor; folks didn't drink much in those days, just coffee and lemonade.

"Music was always by local people — fiddles, harmonicas, ukeleles — and everybody sang. Sometimes the men would play cards, and the women sat around and talked.

"Doesn't sound very exciting now, but it was really a great way of life."

Hazel's father finally bought some property up on Shimmins Ridge, but there was no way to reach it by road and so the Euchlers never built on it.

Hazel remembers hiking up to the property with her father and they both loved it, but eventually he sold it to the Rudolph family and bought a chicken ranch just outside Dos Rios.

"I was 19 when we moved from San Francisco to Dos Rios, and by that time Gene and I were a steady pair and altar bound, although he didn't know it. I don't think he was ever really sure of me until the day we got married, and even now he sometimes asks if I'm sure of my decision.

"I guess he never believed I would give up my career but as for me, from the first day I met him, I think I knew where my life was going, and I've never had any regrets."

Independent and full of fire, Hazel was so different from any of the girls Gene had known that he, too, says now he never had eyes for any other woman after meeting the outspoken young miss with the big eyes and shiny pigtails.

Hazel recalls once after her family had moved to Dos Rios, Gene was to drive the 14 miles over from Longvale to pick her up for a picnic they were to attend.

He was supposed to be at the Euchler home at 8 a.m. and Hazel was dressed and waiting with her picnic basket at that time, but the hours crept by and Gene didn't come.

"Finally, late in the afternoon he showed up. His car had broken down and after trying in vain to get it moving, he had walked the 14 miles.

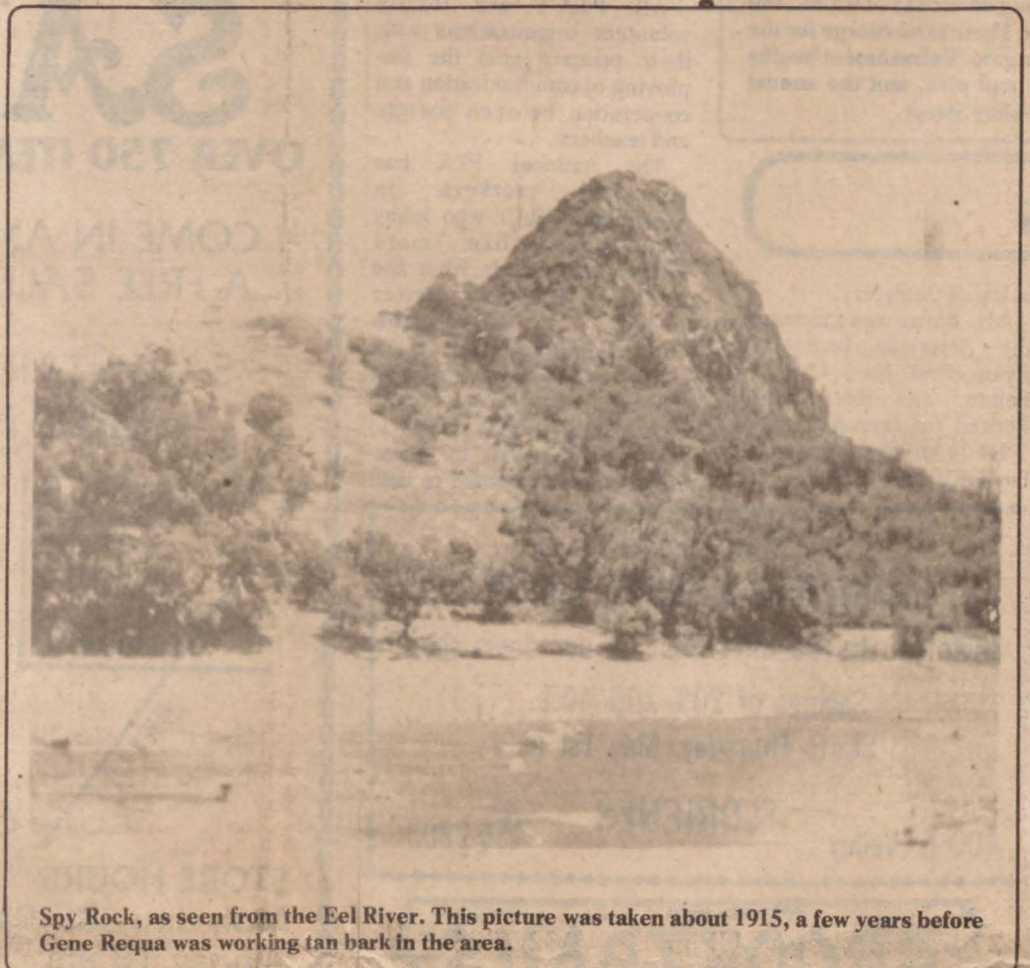
"I was so mad I wouldn't even speak to him, even after all that. It's a wonder he didn't tell me to take a hike."

On another occasion, he picked her up early in the morning and took her with him in his truck up to Spy Rock, where he had a job hauling bark. She packed a lunch and went along to spend the day watching him work.

"On the way home, coming back down that narrow mountain road at night, the lights on the truck went out and we had to drive all the way down to the highway in total darkness.

"I was really scared, but Gene knew the road so well he kept reassuring me he could drive it blindfold, and that's about what it amounted to, but of course we finally made it home."

to be continued.



Spy Rock, as seen from the Eel River. This picture was taken about 1915, a few years before Gene Requa was working tan bark in the area.

Gene and Hazel Requa marry after

Gene and Hazel Requa are shown in a picture taken during the early days of their marriage.

The chicken ranch operated by the Euchler family at Dos Rios during the years their daughter Hazel was being courted by Gene Requa was located about one and a half miles off the Dos Rios-Laytonville Road, but the road in to the ranch covered about two and a half miles, part of it over a very steep grade.

The place was known as Bear Wallow, and was about seven miles distant from the small town of Dos Rios.

Closest neighbors were the Levermans, who also had a chicken ranch and were located at the junction of the County road with the road back to the Euchlers.

There was also a family named Comer, Hazel recalls, who had a wildflower nursery and shipped wildflower plants and seeds all over the country.

Winters were usually severe in the high country where the Euchlers lived, and the winter before Gene and Hazel married, the snow was so deep that the family was unable to get out for six weeks.

"We had plenty of food, what with home canning and dried foods," Hazel says, "but our biggest worry was the chickens and keeping them fed. We had 1800 laying hens, and that makes for a lot of eggs.

"Normally, my father used to take eggs down to Mr. Leverman who would then take them into town along with his own eggs to sell, or ship out on the train. But when we were snowbound, the eggs accumulated until we had them piled up all over the place.

"I remember we emptied out all the bureau drawers and filled them with eggs, filled up every box and pail on the place. Finally, we simply had to do something, and besides we were running out of feed.

"So Dad and I rigged up a sled and we packed nine cases of eggs on that sled, strapped it down, and started out for Levermans, with Dad pulling and me pushing.

"There was one steep 40 degree grade that was always a trouble spot. We got up the hill all right, but then when we started down the sled got away from us and went flying on down on top of the snow, gaining momentum and finally crashing into a tree at the bottom with eggs flying in all directions.

a long courtship

That was one big frozen omelet, I can tell you!"

The period of that six weeks the family was isolated was the only time Gene and Hazel were not together on an almost daily basis for the nearly eight years of their courtship.

The very next year, on November 23, 1936, they were married. Retaining her independence right up to the last, Hazel spent the final weekend before her Monday wedding with friends in the City and in Palo Alto, where she attended the big game on Saturday with a friend who had been taking her to that event for many years.

Early Monday morning she boarded the train north, wearing a brand new white silk dress and a corsage of gardenias which her sister presented to her at the depot.

In Ukiah, Hazel was met by a freshly scrubbed and trimmed Gene, uncomfortable in a brand new suit and shoes, and they walked the short distance to the Courthouse and were married in the chambers of Judge Held.

Following the brief ceremony, Gene offered $3 to the Judge, who studied the bills for a moment or so and then handed them back with the smiling comment, "I believe you need this worse than I do."

It was still mid-afternoon, and neither one of the pair was anxious to check into their hotel room that early so they went to a movie, an exceptionally rare event for Gene.

"Don't ask what the movie was," Hazel laughs, "because we neither one remember it."

Once out of the movie, they headed back to the Palace Hotel and had dinner in the dining room there. Hazel recalls that Gene ordered steak, but does not remember what she had.

"It was a nice old hotel, but it didn't look anything like it does today after the remodeling, so there was nothing fancy about it," Hazel muses, "but naturally it was a pretty special place for us."

The next morning the couple took off for home in Gene's 1930 Chevrolet.

"Home" of course was the Requa home of Gene's parents, Vollie and Allie, where the young couple planned to live until they could find a place of their own close enough to keep in daily touch with the old folks.

About the third day, Hazel was helping Allie about the house as she always did, and became aware of some unusual things going on.

For one thing, she found an enormous bowl of whipped cream in the ice box, and Allie scrubbed all the floors in the house which was an unusual thing to do at that time of year.

Wisely, Hazel confided to Gene her suspicions that "something's up" and sure enough, that evening the young couple was treated to a wild screaming crowd of friends piling out of a caravan of cars to honor the newlyweds with a typical Mendocino County shivaree.

to be continued.

This picture of Grace Requa Berchtold's children was taken at the home of Vollie and Allie at about the same time that Gene and Hazel were married. Standing at the back door of the house with grandmother Allie is Bonnie [center] with her brothers Leonard and Max.

The story of the Requas of

The "shivaree" was a standard social event in Mendocino County up to about 35 years ago, before it became fashionable to have bridal showers for newlyweds.

The event followed a standard pattern. A group of friends and relatives would gather at a specified time and place where baskets, boxes, bowls and buckets of food and drink would be loaded into one or more vehicles, along with gifts of food and household items.

Waiting until dark, late enough to be sure that the couple to be honored would already be in bed, the group would then approach the house in stealth and burst in upon the startled young people with screams, bangings and bell ringings.

Hazel Requa recalls that at the shivaree thrown for her and Gene after their marriage, they were gifted with dozens of cans of food from which the labels had been removed, a favorite trick to play upon the newlyweds on such occasions.

The party would then go on for hours, sometimes all night long, with music and dancing and game playing.

Gene and Hazel were married on a Monday of Thanksgiving week, and although they went directly to Gene's parents', the young couple were expected to be at Hazel's parents' home in Dos Rios for Thanksgiving.

Early Thanksgiving morning, Hazel awoke to find Gene already up. Afraid she had overslept, she jumped out of bed and called to him, "We've got to hurry and get started."

Smiling in memory, she says, "He walked into the room and said, 'We're not going anyplace,' and I said, 'Of course we are, we've got to get started for the folks'."

Gene just pointed to the window, and when Hazel looked out it was upon a world covered with snow so deep that it came up to the cows' bellies. It was one of the heaviest snows in years, during a time when heavy snows were annual events.

It was a couple of days before the roads were cleared enough for the young couple to attempt to reach her parents' in Dos Rios. They drove as far as they could, then hiked the rest of the way in, nearly three miles.

"I was wearing a long fur coat," Hazel recalls, "and it was bad enough going in, but after we had visited for awhile and started back out again, the top of the snow pack had melted and we kept sinking down in show up to our elbows. At that point, I was tempted to take that coat off and throw it away.

"It was dark before we finally reached our car."

Gene and Hazel stayed for nearly four months with Allie and Vollie in the family home atop the hill overlooking Long

The Requa home is shown as it appeared during one of the heavy snow storms that used to blanket the North County during the first part of the century.

WK 5-14-1980

Valley, and Gene worked at a variety of jobs throughout the area while Hazel helped the older folks at home.

"I loved those old people like my own," Hazel says. "They were so dear and kind. I was always trying to do something special for Allie — she had worked so hard all her life and never had many luxuries.

"She was color blind, and never knew how to pick out the right kind of colors to wear. I remember once I bought her a new dress, and she put some kind of trim on it that just didn't match at all, so I got some flowers for her to wear in place of the trim.

"Course, part of the trouble was that Vollie was old-fashioned and like a lot of the oldtimers he didn't like his wife to wear what he called 'fancy' clothes, which was almost anything pretty and colorful.

"When they had their 50th wedding anniversary, I took Allie to town and bought her a new dress, a pretty pale pink and she was so pleased, but then when Vollie saw her in it the day of the party he made her take it off and put on an old dress.

"He was a good man, but had those old-fashioned ideas. Like a lot of quiet men, he had an iron will and once he had an idea, you couldn't change it."

Vollie never owned a car nor learned to drive and right up to the day he died, he used to walk from the house up on the hill down to a store called Red Buck (as it still is today) to do their shopping.

The store was so named because the original owner looked out his door one day and saw a big buck standing on the hill across the road just at sunset so he looked all red.

It was located about three miles down the road from the Requas, and Vollie would walk there and back with a large mesh bag slung over his shoulder in which to carry the supplies.

Gene and Hazel moved into their first home four months after they were married. It was a cottage on the Dom Rose property in which Heath Angelo's mother had once lived, but had been unoccupied for several years and was falling apart.

The young couple pitched in together to rebuild it and fix it up, with Hazel doing a lot of the work herself while Gene cut firewood and picked moss to earn a few dollars.

to be continued

Gene Requa is shown in a picture taken at his parents' home during the early days of his marriage.

Allie Requa stands on her vine covered porch with Grace Requa and Alberta Woodhead, the little niece raised by the Requas after her mother died.

The expanding Requa family of the 1940s

WN 5-21-1980

Hazel Requa nostalgically recalls that she and Gene paid the great sum of $5 in monthly rental for the old Dom Rose house they rebuilt and lived in as their first home.

It was while they were living there that their first two sons were born, Peter in 1937 followed by Joe the following year, both born in Howard Memorial Hospital.

Gene continued to work at whatever he could find to do in the woods, but money was a scarce commodity.

In 1940, the young couple was given the opportunity to buy out Frank Darby's stock in the general merchandise store and Post Office he had operated for several years at Longvale.

There was a small space at the rear of the store which the proud new owners remodeled into living quarters and it was there they lived for the next five years while Hazel ran the store and served as Post Mistress of the tiny Longvale Post Office.

The Requa family has lived under five different Postal townships. During the first years they lived in the sparsely populated County, the name of the Post Office serving them was Cahto.

This was later changed to Sherwood, then to Laytonville, then to Longvale, next to Willits and then back to Laytonville again.

The small store and house where Hazel ran the Longvale Post Office was located north of today's junction of Highway 101 with the road to Dos Rios and Covelo. The new highway had not yet been built, and the old road was located across Long Valley Creek from today's big wide freeway.

Driving along there today one can see scattered signs of the disintegrating shelf of land where the road once meandered on the other side of the creek, but the old store and post office have now been gone for many years.

The Requas lived there for five years, until 1945.

That was a banner year in the lives of all the Requas, because it was in that year that Gene and Hazel managed to finally pay off the last installment on the homestead mortgage to Abe Requa, so that Vollie at long last held the deed of reconveyance on his own share of the homestead settled by their father so many years before.

Abe Requa, in the meantime, had remarried a couple of years after the death of Maude. He secured his new bride, Adah, through a matrimonial correspondence club and neither of them had ever laid eyes on one another until the day they were married.

One of the first things Abe did after moving Adah into his home was to gather up all Maude's few personal belongings, including family photos, letters, and mementoes, and destroy them all in a huge bonfire.

Also in 1945, Gene Requa was offered a job as ranch foreman for the big Anderson ranch which was across the highway from the Red Buck store, and as a house on the ranch was made available for the foreman the Requas gave up their combined home, store and post office at Longvale and moved again.

During the three years they lived on the Anderson ranch, Gene's and Hazel's third son David was born, and the larger Requa family suffered two major losses during that period.

In 1946, the dashing, handsome young pilot, Clarence Requa, was killed in a crash of his plane and the following year, the equally dashing and handsome young Pete Berchtold, Grace Requa's husband, died as the result of injuries in a logging accident.

Bonnie Christian tells the story:

"My father was working with my brothers, who were 12 and 18 years old at the time, on the Camalli Ranch owned by the famous ballplayer but now part of the Ben Mast property.

"He was logging on the property and was loading his truck, using a skadget loader, when one of the logs dropped and rolled over him.

"The two boys saw it and of course knew their father was in terrible pain and they were helpless to do anything.

"My father's last words were to reassure the boys and to tell them to go get Doc Winchester. I think he knew there was no hope, but he just wanted to get the boys away.

"Well, Doc Winchester came and gave Pete some shots, and other people gathered and helped lift the log off so they could get him out and rush him to Howard Hospital where Dr. Babcock worked with him all night.

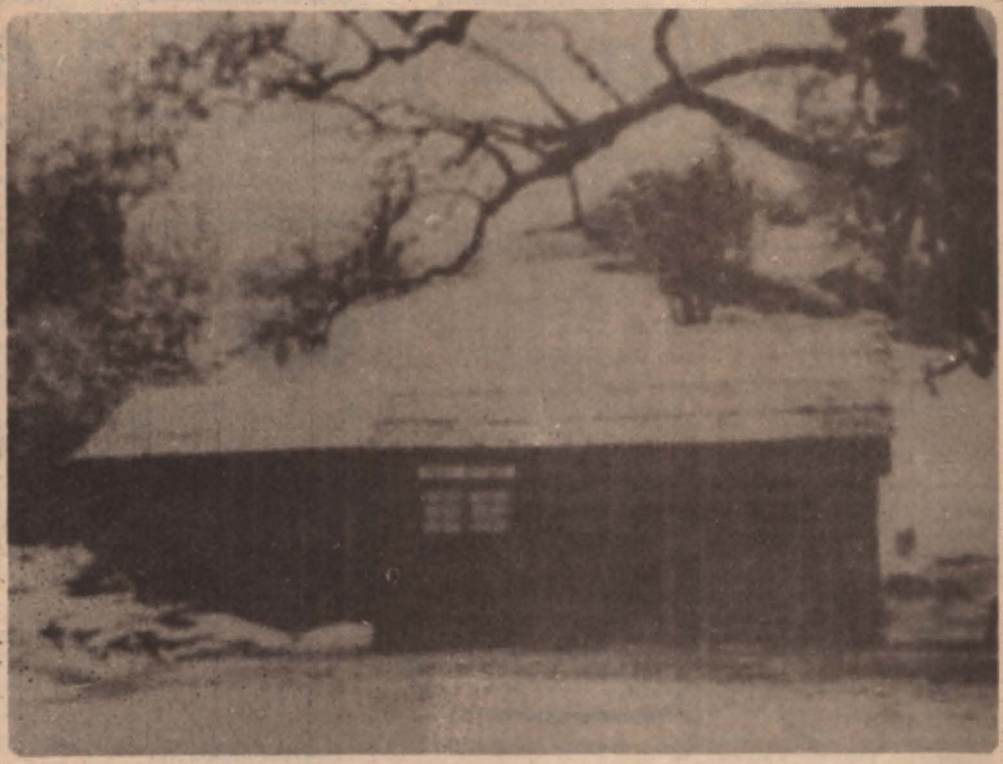
"He was unconscious by that time, but that wonderful Doc Babcock just didn't give up hope.

"He called the University of California medical center and they flew up a group of specialists and between them they kept my father alive for five days but there was no way to save him."

Among Bonnie's treasures is a poem written by her father in honor of General Ed Miller, a former owner of the Jackson Valley Lumber company which logged the valley but left several huge redwoods standing with one named in memory of General Miller. Pete wrote the following on that occasion:

"Standing alone in this wasteland, challenging the one who would dare
To cut and tear and destroy me in face of the name that I bear.
My fellow trees lived for centuries, tall sentinels in the sky,
But they have vanished one by one as the woodsmen made them die.
Now all is hushed and quiet, no breaking thundering sound
As when a giant redwood goes crashing to the ground.
I stood here through the winter, the snow, the sleet and the rain,
The hot and sultry summer, and now face them all alone again.
I am left here as a monument, as I might well be,
In tribute to a worthy man, I am named the General Miller tree."

to be continued.



An early day photo of the store and post office at Longvale, where Gene and Hazel Requa lived for five years.

Grace Requa Berchtold is pictured here with Adah, her father's mail order bride, on her father's property. This picture was taken shortly before the death of Grace's husband Pete.

The Requa family saga ends where it began

WN 5/28/1980

It was 120 years ago this spring that the first son of Alfred and Melissa Requa was born in the crude dugout Alfred had built in the side of a grassy hill overlooking the open pastures and timbered crests of the land he had claimed for his own.

Six more children would be born on that land, and Alfred and Melissa would die and be buried there.

Today, all those children are long gone. The youngest, Vollie, lived to the age of 90 years in the house where he was born and which his father had built so many years before.

His brother Abe, who lived in his own house atop a hill across the road from Vollie, was the first of the two to go in 1953. Abe left his share of the original homestead to his daughter Grace, who by that time had married Charlie Underhill and was living in Covelo.

Grace leased the property to others for many years but in 1957 she sold the property to the State when the new four lane Highway 101 was being built.

By that time, Gene and Hazel Requa had moved from the area and where living on property they had purchased in Little Lake Valley, a portion of the original Mast property.

That was their home for 30 years, but they kept a daily contact with Gene's parents who lived on alone on their hilltop, and Gene returned every few days to help the old people with the upkeep of the place.

Mother Allie died in 1962, but Vollie refused to leave the place and continued to live in the only home he had ever known.

Right up to the day he died at the age of 90, Vollie was taking care of his garden, cows and horses, building a fire each morning in his wood stove, and walking a couple of times a week the several miles down to Red Buck store to buy supplies.

Bonnie Christian recalls that not long before the old man died, she visited with him out on the porch where he sat in his favorite rocking chair and reminisced on the past.

"I've had a long, good life," the old man reflected. "I've outlived a wife, all my brothers and sisters, my favorite horse and dogs, and two barns. I guess it must be about time for me to go too."

Not long after that, a neighbor called Gene one morning to say she had been unable to reach Vollie by phone as usual.

Gene and Hazel hurried up to the place and found the old man in bed with a half-rolled cigarette in his hand. Death had come quietly and painlessly.

For the next few years the homestead remained unoccupied, with Gene and his sons going up for frequent checks on the house and land.

Old Alfred Requa must have had moments of great pride as he viewed these visits of his grandson and great grandsons.

Peter, the eldest boy, is now a First Officer with Pan American Airlines, after six years as a commissioned officer in the Naval Air Service. He and his wife and three children live in Rosedale.

Joe, the second boy, took four scholarships in Willits High School and eventually earned a degree in nuclear physics and a master's degree in science and math.

Now employed at the Lawrence radiation lab, he is the author of books on computer programming and the building of computers. He and his wife and daughter live in Livermore.

David, the youngest, also won a scholarship at Willits High School and went on to earn an engineering degree at Davis, specializing in the problems of water pollution. He now works for a private engineering firm in Walnut Creek and he and his wife and two children live in Concord.

Those three scholastic records and professional achievements are a far cry from the humble family beginnings in a raw dugout on the Requa homestead in Long Valley, but the roots of the family remain imbedded in the sun washed rolling hills of home where Gene Requa and his wife Hazel have now returned to live.

For three years, the two worked at restoring the house where Gene and his father before him was born, and in 1978 they left the Valley and went back to their richly beautiful Requa hilltop.

In the spring, the hills are awash in wildflowers, and birds of many hues nest beneath the eaves of the house and in the branches of the gnarled and ancient fruit trees.

Gene watches with loving care over the last of the flock of roan cattle descended from the first ones brought to the land by his grandfather, and frequently rambles over the upper sections of the land where mammoth giant firs still stand, and where the ground surrounding the welling springs that have watered three generations of Requa gardens occasionally turn up an Indian arrowhead or paint pot or weathered mortar and pestle.

The sounds of traffic on Highway 101 are muted by distance, and the 100 degree angle of view brings no other sign of habitation in sight except for the buildings on the land that once was Abe Requa's and part of the original homestead.

Except for those compartively recent buildings, the view the Requas enjoy today is the same that once greeted the eyes of Alfred and Melissa Requa more than a century ago.

A dozen or so direct decendants of the pair still live today in homes scattered about the North County, all in daily contact with one another and frequent visitors at the old homestead where Gene and Hazel live.

This includes Gene's older brother Earl, who now lives in the Bay Area, but comes home from time to time to renew his ties to the land.

In a nearby woods-encircled opening is the family cemetery where the old ones sleep in deep peace as the winds sigh over the gentle hills.

Their presence in the place is as real as the roots of the trees which share the earth with them in the never ending cycle of life.

Allie and Vollie Requa were photographed on their 50th wedding anniversary in 1954.

The last picture taken of Vollie Requa, shown seated with his grandson Earl Requa. Standing behind them are Grace Requa Berchtold Underhill and her daughter Bonnie Christian. Only a few months later, Vollie died in his bed while rolling a cigarette.

Gene Requa is dwarfed by this giant Douglas fir, one of the centuries old trees still standing on the land his grandfather homesteaded.

Gene is shown with his two oldest sons and his parents, Vollie and Allie Requa. In the background are the barns and a portion of the home where Gene was born and where he lives today with his wife Hazel.