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GARDNER BULLIS,
JUST A COUNTRY LAWYER

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by

Marjorie Kellogg
12365 Melody Lane
Los Altos Hills,
California
94022

(415)948-8639

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Photo by Marjorie Kellogg 1981

GARDNER BULLIS

JUST A COUNTRY LAWYER

PREFACE

I became acquainted with Gardner Bullis in recent years and like so many, loved him for his warmth, compassion, his humor, friendliness and independence. The story of GARDNER BULLIS, JUST A COUNTRY LAWYER, is my tribute to his memory.

I interviewed him in July, 1981, so that he would receive recognition on his 94th birthday in August, 1981. His health had become frail so it seemed best not to wait another year, when he would have been 95.

Gardner was reluctant at first and did not consider it worthwhile to write about an "old relic." I am grateful that he eventually agreed, for he died soon afterward.

When we completed interviewing, Gardner assured me he wouldn't feel bad if I decided there wasn't anything worthwhile to write about.

Trying to chronicle 94 years of someone like Gardner Bullis was not simple. I chose what I considered the most important, as well as the most interesting.

Because of his death I met his ex-daughters-in-law and his six lovely granddaughters whose willing contributions added an important dimension to his story as they had to his life.

Marjorie Kellogg

April 30, 1982

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   Family reminiscences by Gilbert Bullis
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GARDNER BULLIS
MORE THAN JUST A COUNTRY LAWYER

By

Marjorie Kellogg

Commenting on the role of the individual in history, the Russian philosopher George Plekhanov said, "A great man is great not because his personal qualities give individual features to great historical events, but because he possesses qualities which makd him most capable of serving the great social needs of his time, needs which arose as a result of general and particular causes."

If these words be true, then Gardner Bullis was indeed a great man. Those whose lives he touched remember him for his dedicated service to human needs, a citizen who loved his country and countrymen, one whose wit and humor lightened many hearts.

When he reached the Biblical three score and ten he said, "I hope an error crept into the Good Book." Indeed it had for he received a twenty-four year extension on his life.

Bullis was 94 when he died on November 11, 1981. It seemed significant that this lifelong arbitrator and peacemaker should reach the end of his life on Armistice Day.

Until the last few weeks of his life, Bullis kept regular hours at his Rancho Shopping Center office in Los Altos. He was lauded as the oldest practicing attorney in California, perhaps in the United States.

Gardner and his wife, Helen, moved to Los Altos in 1947 to be near their only son, Dick, who had located there after the war. They purchased a house which had been built by an oldtimer named Irving Randel. The two story Spanish style house with a red tile roof had once been a small place which various owners added on to.

"One day I was fussing around in the carport and noticed the floor had been sawed up at one time. So I pried it open and found concrete steps going down to a concrete room with a 220 volt switch. One of my predecessors had a still down there during prohibition," Gardner told me. The house, complete with water tower and barn was in the midst of a nine acre apricot orchard on Manuella in what was to become Los Altos Hills.

Back in 1947, land developers were just beginning to infiltrate Santa Clara County. Rumors of subdivisions, annexation, small lot sizes, and intense development of the land triggered citizens in Los Altos (then a part of Mountain View) to move towards incorporation. In 1952, the county form of government was changed to a municipal form.

Many retired residents became active in the new town and volunteered their time as councilmen, city clerk, fire chief or building inspector. Gardner Bullis worked, without reimbursement, as the City Attorney. Later, when the city was able to pay for his services, he refused remuneration.

The importance of his work as one of the founding fathers of the city was emphasized by Patricia Coleman, an attorney who shared Bullis' law office in recent years and is presently the administrator of his estate.

"Los Altos is one of the few cities on the Peninsula between San Jose and San Francisco that has an identifiable character. Both Los Altos and Los Altos Hills have maintained a rural quality. It was due to the farsightedness of those involved at the time, especially Gardner Bullis. He drew up the charter when the city was established," she said as we sat in the office which still has the sign, Gardner Bullis, Attorney at Law, on the door.

City Attorney Bullis unearthed a document dated 1906 in which the original subdividers of the town had left the Shoup property to be deeded to the city, if and when one was formed. Local service clubs donated and planted trees to beautify the new park which had been improved to include a lawn, playground equipment, and restrooms.



1981 Photo by Marjorie Kellogg

WATER TOWER AT GARDNER BULLIS PROPERTY, LOS ALTOS HILLS

A few years later Bullis gave his time to another fledgling town when its citizens voted to incorporate Los Altos Hills in 1956. The council met in the old one room former Purissima School until a Town Hall was built.

There were many discussions as to how the town was to be developed. Irma Goldsmith, president of the Los Altos Hills Historical Society, remembers those early sessions. "Gardner wanted lots of churches. 'To church or not to church,' became a controversey. The problem was that where there is a church, that is tax free land. At that time we were watching our taxes very carefully, trying to make this little town work. It seemed good business to limit the number of churches, but Gardner still wanted as many churches as possible, because that would 'make our town very unique and very good.'"

Remembered by townspeople as a tall, broadshouldered, handsome, graying, courtly gentleman, Bullis thought of himself as "just a country lawyer." His first office in Los Altos was in one corner of the former Clints Ice Cream store (now Le Midi), located at First and Lyell Streets. A wooden screen was the only separation between the two businesses. Since rocky road ice cream was his favorite food, it was an ideal location for Bullis. He insisted, when interviewed in the summer of 1981, "Some of my best cases were there."

In 1950, Bullis moved to a three room office suite at 648 Rancho Shopping Center in Los Altos. The century old rolltop desk which he inherited from his father-in-law, the Cornell chair given to him by his wife, the shelves of law books remain as they were when he died. Missing are the photographs and documents that hung on the walls like pieces of an old roadmap, indicating where his path of life had led.

There had been photographs if his eight beloved grandchildren who were the source of most of his happiness and a lot of his sorrow. A grandson and six granddaughters were born to Gardner's son Dick and his first wife, Lorna Sale Bullis. A granddaughter was born to Dick and his second wife, Eleanor Gross Bullis, in 1970.

The family was struck a terrible blow when Rick, the only grandson, was found electrocuted in 1948. He had taken an electric fan into the bathtub to sail his toy boat.

The oldest granddaughter, Linda, died tragically in 1977. Her younger sister, Sara, wrote, "Throughout it all Pop kept us calm and made us see when we were scared and uncertain of ourselves and of life that you must make the best of all the parts of life and 'muscle on through.' He was such a central and important part of my family,

a man who had the uncanny ability to put everything right when things seemed their worse."

Another picture showed a birdseye view of Olean, New York, where Bullis was born on August 20, 1887. He loved to talk about his hometown. "Olean has a population of about 20,000, situated in a valley sixty miles south of Buffalo at the confluence of the Olean Creek and Allegheny River which flow into the Ohio, and later the Mississippi," he could spiel off his geography. California notwithstanding, Bullis considered Olean "heaven on earth."

A picture of the 1904 Olean High School graduating class showed Bullis the tallest in his class. His associate, Mrs. Coleman, once asked him, "Did you really go to school dressed like that, Mr. Bullis? Girls in long dresses and boys in high collars? 'Yes, yes, things were much more formal then,' he said."

There were photographs showing summer and winter at Cornell University in Ithica, New York, where Bullis received his Bachelor of Laws in 1908. His graduating class was told, "You are a privileged group that has an opportunity to serve our country," which he never forgot.

Bullis was loyal to his alma mater, returning annually for class and law school reunions. Not surprisingly, he was given an award as the oldest alumnis there when he attended his 73rd reunion in 1981.

David Dunlop, Cornell University Director of Capital Projects, wrote the following about the favorite alumnus in the Cornell Alumnus News.

> Gardner's devotion to our university was an inspiration to many Cornellians. He must have been rather shy as a student; he humorously used to describe himself as the only man on the Cornell campus who never spoke to a coed the entire four years that he was a student here.
>
> In contrast to his shyness with the coeds, Gardner went to great lengths to be with his Cornell friends. Members of the Cornell Club of Northern California remember the time when the club held a wine tasting party at the Mondavi Winery north of San Francisco. Although he was almost 90 years of age, Gardner did not want to trouble anyone to drive him to the affair. He took public transportation instead; first, a bus from Los Altos Hills to San Francisco; then another bus north out of San Francisco to the end of the line which still left him two miles to walk to the winery. This was typical of both Gardner's independence and of how much Cornell friends meant to him.



GARDNER BULLIS WAS THE TALLEST IN HIS 1904 GRADUATING CLASS

FROM OLEAN HIGH SCHOOL, OLEAN, NEW YORK

MILLERS FALLS
EZERASE
COTTON CONTENT

Gardner returned to campus from his home in California each spring and fall. He called Cornell his "Mecca" and claimed his visits here restored his spirits. All of us found that it worked quite the other way. After being with Gardner we had a fresh appreciation of the value of Cornell.

Gardner used to fly from San Francisco to New York, Buffalo or Syracuse. He would economize on travel expenses by taking the bus the rest of the way to Ithaca to make his annual gift to Cornell just a little larger.

Dean Al Neimeth recalled how faithfully Gardner attended the Law School reunions. "Many a time he travelled all night to arrive at the Greyhound Bus depot downtown in the wee hours of the morning and would then walk all the way up the Hill to wait on the steps of the Law School for its doors to open so he could register for Reunion. Only in the last few years would he tell his friends here when he expected to arrive so we could meet him at the bus depot."

More than anything else I will remember the marvelous way Gardner focused attention on the good in people and institutions. He made others want to live up to the best that he saw in them. He had a remarkable faith in institutions that develop human potential, Cornell among them. His faith in people and in Cornell was a shining example and still is.

Gardner was a deeply modest man and avoided recognition whenever possible. One of his efforts to help the university find funding for the Society for the Humanities thwarted those instincts. Because time was running out, Gardner offered to ask the widow of an old and dear friend for a gift in memory of her late husband. The gift was made but only on the condition that it would be used to honor Gardner. Only after he made several unsuccessful attempts to persuade the donor to change the terms of her gift, did Gardner consent to the Cornell trustees naming the Bullis Room in his honor.

It was Katharine Treat whose donation made the Bullis Room a reality. Her husband was a Cornell graduate and had been a long time friend of the Bullises. Gardner had been instrumental in persuading the Treats to move from Los Angeles to help form the new town of Los Altos Hills. Sidney Treat was the first mayor.

Mrs. Treat, who is Gardner's age, has lived at Channing House in Palo Alto for a number of years. At the time we talked she was in the infirmary with a bad back but was quite a chipper little lady with a strong voice and great sense of humor.

Has Been Microfilmed

You are cordially invited
to a reception honoring
Gardner Bullis '08
and the dedication of the Bullis Room
in the Andrew D. White
Center for the Humanities
on Thursday, the sixth of October
at five o'clock

P.S. It's a surprise!

R.S.V.P.
Michael Kammen
27 East Avenue
Cornell University
Ithaca, N.Y. 14853

THIRTY INVITATIONS WERE SENT FOR A RECEPTION FOLLOWING THE DEDICATION OF THE BULLIS ROOM



Cornell's President Rhodes talking with Gardner Bullis '08 on Oct 6, 1977 in Bullis Room

Sidney Treat was known to everyone as Peter. "With a name like Sidney Wellington, he quickly became Pete Treat in college," Mrs. Treat laughed.

"Gardner was very nice to me after Peter died when I had to take care of myself. Looked over my finances and things - got me all straightened out. And wouldn't let me pay him a thing. He was so modest. He didn't want to be in the limelight. You had to be careful," she said in short sentences. "I think he was awfully pleased I endowed this room for him. He was just devoted to Cornell. There was nothing he could do to stop it," she said with a mischievous look.

Gardner's former daughter-in-law, Lorna (whom he considered a daughter) accompanied him to Cornell for the dedication of "his" room in 1977. The ceremony and celebration were kept as a surprise.

Another relic which hung in one corner of Bullis' office was a faded poster from Sara Bernhardt's final tour, dated 1904-1906. "Maude Adams was my favorite though. I met her backstage after her farewell performance in Los Angeles," he proudly remembered the turn of the century actress.

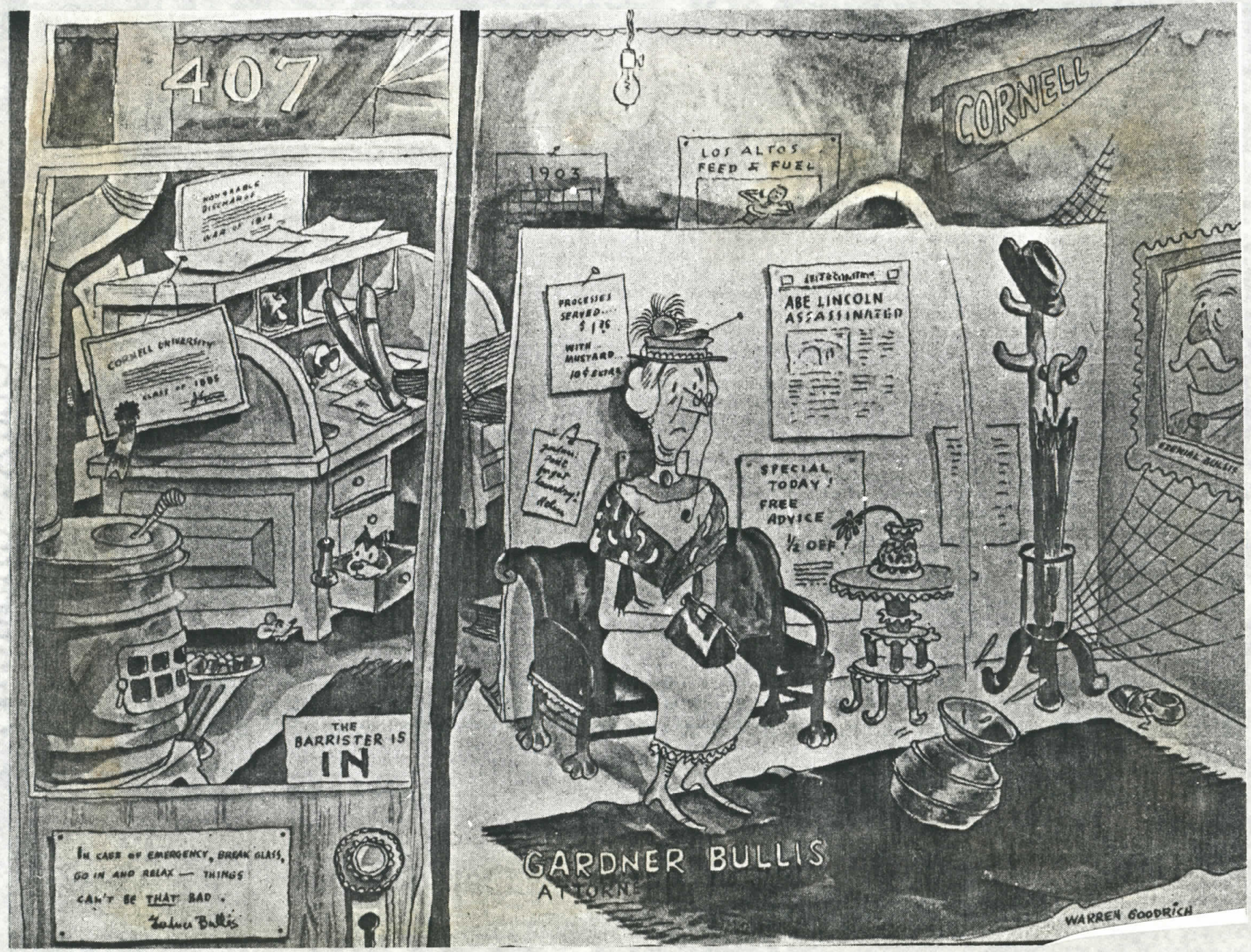
The documents which Bullis had in his office included a certificate dated 1909 which permitted him to practice law in New York State. His first job was with a New York City insurance company and paid $45 a month.

Certificates permitting Gardner Bullis to practice law in Oregon and California were dated 1915. "I was admitted on motion. In 1920 they abolished that system or else I probably couldn't have gotten in," he chuckled. Gardner was forever poking fun at himself.

His favorite memento was a cartoon spoofing the Bullis Law Office. Warren Goodrich, co-owner of the Town Crier during that early era, had sketched an office full of archaic memorabilia, a Cornell banner, pot belly stove, spiderwebs, and humorous signs such as, "Special Today Free Advice 1/2 off." Gardner loved it.

Old timers in town called Gardner "Mr. Tut" after a tall gangly, warm, friendly country lawyer who was popular in a Saturday Evening Post series which ran in the 1930's.

Town Crier editor Dave MacKenzie used to run a best dressed contest satire. Gardner, accused of always wearing the same '40's suit, was once chosen as recipient of the award. He good humoredly denied wearing the same suit every day.



CARTOON BY WARREN GOODRICH, CO-FOUNDER OF THE TOWN CRIER, SPOOFING GARDNER BULLIS' LAW OFFICE - ABOUT 1950

The Bullis office was a place where old friends gathered. "It's satisfying to have this place to come to and I can pretend I'm busy," he said.

Frank Duveneck, a year older than Gardner, used to drop by. "He did a little work for Josephine and me when we started our children's camp out at the ranch. Gardner was always interested in causes of one kind or another. He used to come out to some of the things we did here. But he was not interested in horseback riding, which we did a lot of. The last thing Gardner wanted to do was get on top of a horse," Frank laughed.

Although Gardner and Helen never rode, they loved the horse shows and would make all the arrangements for them to be held at Dick's riding ring, according to one who participated in the all day affairs.

Judge Bowen and his wife, Kay, were also frequent visitors to the man who held court from behind his old rolltop desk.

When Kay heard of Gardner's death, she was reminded of a poem which Edwin Markham wrote when President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated:

"...when he fell in whirlwind, he went down
As when a lordly cedar, green with boughs,
Goes down with a great shout upon the hills,
And leaves a lonesome place against the sky."

Kay was just out of college and living in San Pedro in 1937. Her first job was with the YWCA. "Our executive said the Community Chest Review was in progress and that a man would come to study our budget. I was scared. Gardner Bullis was the volunteer who came. His friendly, humorous approach put us at ease. When we told him we needed $150 for a leaky roof, he said, 'Most outrageous.' Then he added, 'You need $160.' He gave untiringly of his time and effort to community projects."

Kay later moved to Los Altos and visited old family friends, Alfred and Mae Bowen. When in the post office (on State Street in those days) they met Gardner. "He was the same courteous gentleman who had OK'd the Y budget fifteen years before," she said.

Bullis and Bowen had moved to Los Altos about the same time. Bowen was a judge in the Palo Alto Municipal Court. After his wife died and he married Kay they travelled a great deal, always sending post cards to a long list of friends. "Gardner would always call after we returned and thankk us for the card. No one else did." Kay said.

After Mrs. Bullis died, Kay and her husband took Gardner out for lunch one day. After they had eaten, Kay started to light a cigarette. Gardner said, "Kay, up to this point I've liked every single thing about you, but put that cigarette out."

"I promptly obeyed and was not offended because I knew he was right. He was a very direct person," she said.

Kay recalled a time when the Lincoln Law School in San Jose had very few books in their library, so the Judge collected duplicate or discard books from various law offices. "Gardner gave a number of books to that library, as well as to the courts in Japan.

"The Judge tried to thank Gardner, who had gathered, boxed, and delivered the books for us to take to Japan. Gardner said, 'Don't thank me - thank yourself. You're doing all the work.'"

Concluding our talk in her cozy Los Altos apartment, Kay said, "Even though today is rainy and a storm is forecast, I have a warm feeling as though I could look across the room and there would be Gardner saying, My, such nice things you are saying. 'Who in the world are you talking about?'"

Patricia Coleman was working her way through law school and caring for her four year old son when she answered an ad for a part time secretary job. When she called, a man answered the telephone, "Gardner Bullis Law Office." She asked, "Is this really a law office, not a real estate office?" This question appealed to Bullis who asked her to come in for an interview.

"That was about 1965 and he was pretty old then," Patricia recalled. She decided to "help this poor old gentleman out, then move on."

When Mrs. Coleman passed the bar, Bullis saw the notice in the paper. "He insisted I was a lawyer from that time on. He kept having little jobs, like legislative histories, short synopsis of pending legislation coming out of Sacramento, or letters to write.

"I called him Mr. Bullis and we kept things on a businesslike basis. He always went to court on his own probate cases. That and wills were about all he handled.

Mrs. Coleman described Mr. Bullis as a very courtly gentleman. "He would always hold the door, carry the typewriter for me - things like that. He was a very gentle person and generous with his time - the kind who would give away the store. He didn't accept fees for a

lot of his work. He never charged for adoption or immigration proceedings."

Bullis' filing system was unique in that he used the floor as a filing cabinet. He also had an innovative briefcase - a big old wicker basket with a handle, "to carry cases home to work on."

"He was very practical and did most of his typing," Mrs. Coleman continued. Gardner used a vintage typewriter and used to say, "I am careful to see that I use erasable stationery for I do more erasing than typing." He frequently fired off letters to the President, a senator, or congressman, to voice objections or concerns. One such letter follows:

September 10, 1974

Honorable Gerald Ford
The President of the United States
White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear President Ford:

I am shocked and saddened by the unlimited pardon granted Richard Nixon for any alleged act, whether now known or not, that he might have committed during his term of office.

Instead of closing the book on that sorry Watergate mess, it assures that the issue remain forever a devisive factor of our public picture inasmuch as the determination by judicial procedure has apparently been foreclosed. I fear that we have stifled the wee progress that has been made for renewed faith in our government and trust in our officials under times of equal justice and equality for all men. A President has been honored by election to an office of highest honor and trust but he still is a man and citizen.

The "suffering" of Mr. Nixon I hope few of us want - no matter what the crime. However, with him it seems minimal with its incident of resignation under fire but with lush transition benefits and lifetime financial provisions. Such is not the case with most offenders and intensity of result to him can only exemplify the old adage "The higher they are, the harder they fall." In his statement which seems to be strangely coincident with the pardon we find another disgusting example of double talk. Mr. Nixon admits no guilt but expresses regret that he acted unwisely in not acting more decisively. From the tapes we can judge to what ends "more decisive" action would have led.

Personally, I rate your reason of inability to obtain a fair trial and long drawn out legal proceedings as lame. Senator Muskie in answer to a question on the State of the Nation program made his usual moderate, tolerant, fair and constructive summary of reasons against your action, and this act he found wildly premature at this time.



Photo by Marjorie Kellogg 1981

GARDNER BULLIS SITTING IN HIS CORNELL CHAIR WITH HIS WICKER "BRIEFCASE"

I am convinced that you must have been motivated by conviction that breakdown mentally and physically was imminent for one with whom you had had such close ties over the years and who, in fact, was responsible largely for your position where you could exercise that power. I am sure that any conflict of this action with public welfare was honestly rationalized away.

I am troubled by the reported negotiations and by your obsession in the office of Vice President with the intensive image building for Mr. Nixon and efforts to avert impeachment. I have difficulty in dismissing your declaration in pre-confirmative proceedings that there would be no pardon at least before any trial. Seems to me that is a real commitment. Nevertheless I retain my faith in your sincerity and purpose of not personal power and fame and fortune but the welfare of our beloved country. I do feel the pardon to be a woeful mistake and regret it, but I elect to continue my belief in your concept of duty and the honesty of your intentions.

I am hoping a constitutional amendment may eventually be had which limits power of pardon to a President who has been elected by vote of the people and bans exercise of that power in favor of a former incumbent to whom the President is obligated in his position. It would avoid a cruel decision again.

My best wishes for all good to you and your family whose image as we have it makes each one most worthy to be a member of our First Family.

Respectfully,

Gardner Bullis

"It was always fun to talk politics," Mrs. Coleman said. "And the space race. He thought the space race was a waste when there was so much poverty on earth, but I held a view that it had a future for scientific reasons and the spinoffs would benefit mankind. He considered politics a service, a public trust.

"He knew both McCloskey (Republican Representative) and Cranston (Democratic Senator) and got a kick out of watching their careers. Mr. Bullis was a liberal Republican and a conservative Democrat.

"He used to talk about Charles Evans Hughes, the former Supreme Court Justice whom he greatly admired. You can imagine how I identified with him," she said with a laugh. I would say, 'Mr. Bullis, I wasn't even alive then. I just read about him in history books.'



Photo by Marjorie Kellogg

GARDNER BULLIS CHATS WITH ALAN CRANSTON (U.S. SENATOR) AT THE DINNER CELEBRATING THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

January, 1981

"Mr. Bullis looked up the law and he insisted that I look up the law, so there was not any guessing. I think he was a very good lawyer. He could quickly pick up the points in a problem and knew how to draw the line on an issue. He believed a court order was to be obeyed.

Patricia Coleman also recalled all the dogs which hung around the office. In recent years, Gardner's thirteen year old Australian Shepherd, Gulley, had been his constant companion. He slept beside his bed, went on mile long morning walks with his master, and accompanied him to the office each day. "He's my partner - he handles all the rough cases," Gardner would quip.

"He had a black retriever when I first came," Patricia said. Mrs. Nelson (who did typing) had a couple of dogs, I had a dog, Mr. Bullis had a dog and there were always strays that would hang around outside the door like they were lost. Then Mr. Bullis or I would bring them in."

Patricia recalled a time, early in her career, when Mr. Bullis had to go up to his house and suggested she and her son go along to meet Mrs. Bullis.

"I remember Mrs. Bullis and her sisters were out in the back canning apricots and making tomato preserves. I was very impressed at the vigor and physical stamina at their ages.

"Mrs. Bullis was very lively and quick witted. She was protective of Mr. Bullis. She said, 'Take care of Gardner because he is such a soft hearted fellow.'

"Mr. Bullis was just a nice person, a really good guy. He would have little sayings around which he had clipped - ideals he tried to live up to. He could have taken life easier, but he didn't. He chose to help lots of people instead of saying nothing could be done. Like in my case, I thought I was helping him, but I know that he was trying to assist me in getting started."

Gardner Bullis was born to parents whose lineage had been firmly established in New England since the 1600's. The name Gardner appeared in almost every generation of his ancestors, who emigrated from England. The name Bullis was derived from the bullace tree, a wild plum native to that country.

Other ancestors came from Holland and Scotland. They were Quakers, farmers, blacksmiths. Longevity was common, some living over one hundred years.

They first settled on the Eastern seaboard where they defended their homes against the Indians. One predecessor told of hiding with her children in a well for two days when the Indians looted and burned the area of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

After the French and Indian war, Crown grants of land were opened up in Vermont, New Hampshire and New York, where Bullis forbears migrated. The practice then was to grant large tracts of land to companies which built roads, then sold smaller tracts at prices of from .50¢ to $2.00 an acre. The Holland Land Company was granted the land in the Buffalo area of early New York. Bullises were early settlers who helped form the townships and build plank roads.

Spencer Seth Bullis, Gardner's father, and Sara Eliza Potter, his mother, were born on farms in Erie County, New York. They grew up where brooks ran through the pasture land and hickory nut trees grew wild. There were windmills which children sometimes climbed by day and listened to as they creaked by night. They grew hay, grain, fruit, berries, and vegetables and raised dairy cattle, sheep, and poultry. Surpluses were hauled in wagons to Buffalo during the early morning hours.

Gardner remembered spending delightful quiet summers on the farm which was run by an aunt and uncle by then.

In the early days, German immigrants worked on the farms. It was a time when the land owners prospered and the men wore frock-coats, even in hot weather and on fishing trips. Children wore leather boots which they softened by rubbing mutton fat on them.

Early railroad lines went through their property. When the firemen threw shovels full of hot coals onto the fields as they passed through, there was a scramble for old clothes to use in smothering the fires that were started.

Banks were not common then. It was customary for people to take their savings to local successful men of high repute for safekeeping, with the agreement they could withdraw it on thirty days notice. One of Gardner's great grandfathers was such a person.

Spencer Bullis attended schools in New York and then taught for awhile. He also worked in the oil fields before becoming involved in the business of lumbering off Hemlock forests in Pennsylvania. He operated a saw mill in the little town of Bullis Mills, located on the Allegheny River where the railroad crossed from Pennsylvania into New York State.



SPENCER SETH BULLIS AS A YOUNG MAN
(Gardner's father)



MRS. SPENCER SETH BULLIS
(Nee Sara Eliza Potter)
(Gardner's mother)

He was described as "having a heart of oak and a constitution of iron who never let obstacles stand in his way." There was a story that when his mill burned down and his distraught wife wondered what he was going to do he said, "Nothing until I go to bed and get some sleep."

Transporting of lumber led Seth Bullis into the railroad business. He built the Buffalo, Attica, and Arcade Railroad in New York. Much later, Gardner would work without pay as part of the section crew, changing rails to broad guage when the narrow guage became outdated.

When the railroad was completed, Spencer turned his talents to Gulfport, then an unoccupied townsite on the Mississippi Sound. It was 1894 when he began to build the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad from Gulfport to Jackson, Mississippi.

Although business interests were elsewhere, the family home was maintained in Olean, New York, at 401 Lawrence Street, where Charles Gardner Bullis was born. He was the youngest of seven children, six of whom lived.

Gardner remembered his childhood home as a three story brick house with a slate roof. "The house still stands and I don't think anyone has had to pay a penny on that roof since it was put on," he said in his last interview. The house is now owned by the Olean newspaper and has been converted into apartments for employees.

Gardner described his boyhood as "a very normal outdoor life. The baseball team met at our place since we had a large lot. Many times we made our own baseballs out of string, until we got enough money to buy one," he reminisced.

"I played all sorts of sports - football, baseball, tennis. We had a gymnasium in our barn in Olean. I was very active, but feel I was a shy youngster.

The family enjoyed middle class comfort. "Of course there was no television, no radio, no automobiles. The only facilities you had in those days was a telephone on the wall. We rode sleighs in the winter - it was a very satisfactory form of life," he said.

"My older sister persisted in all sorts of projects to educate the family. When my mother and father were away down south, she had projects requiring one of us to go to the library each day and write up some sort of story to present at the dinner table at night."



THE BULLIS HOME AT 401 LAWRENCE STREET, OLEAN, N.Y.
WHERE GARDNER BULLIS GREW UP

His mother was generally at home while his father was away for long periods. "It must have been a strain on Mother, but we never knew it. She was the most gracious, tolerant, sweetest woman I have ever known. Mother was deaf, a matter that the doctors now say she could have been cured of. But she seemed to be very patient with all of father's ventures."

Gardner was proud of his family. He boasted of a sister who rowed on the first Wellesley crew. A brother, Bert, preceded him at Cornell University, graduating in 1899.

"I always said that Bert had the brains of the family but he didn't have an ounce of common sense. He and I used to have all sorts of arguments, but we remained friends. We had a pecan orchard together down in Louisiana. There were 6000 bearing trees, the largest pecan orchard in the United States. A darkie lived there and took care of it and the cotton we grew," Gardner said.

Another brother worked on the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad and later had a shingle factory in Mississippi. "The thing burned down - he was forty years old without any assurance, so he prepared a title abstract of the parish in which he lived, studied law on the side and passed the bar. He became a very successful lawyer.

As a youngster, Gardner remembered visiting Gulfport when there was only a little hotel, a general store, and a few inhabitants. "It was all forest then. Now it is a high rise city," he said.

An historian named Parsons wrote a book, "Gulfport," in which he says:

> Gulfport was built as an outlet for Mississippi's once great lumbering industry and remained the most versatile commercial town and seaport on that coastline, because of the energy and farsightedness of one person, Spencer S. Bullis.
>
> The harbor and railroad connects the coast with the central part of the state. He had the idea to build a town and seaport there.
>
> Spencer Bullis was described by citizens in Mississippi as a master builder, a man of giant physique with a rugged face always lighted with a pleasant smile, the grim jaw of a fighter, who was endowed with an energy that was nothing short of phenomenal.

> There were unprecedented rains during the building period causing the embankments to wash away by floods, destroying miles of track. There was a constant danger of yellow fever and lack of adequate machinery for clearing nearly 130 miles from the outlet. Despite the many obstacles, Bullis stuck to his objective until the first train was brought through.

The building aspect was Spencer's only interest. When those tasks were completed, he returned to New York with a plan to build an extension of the Buffalo, Attica, and Arcade Railroad. The scheme was dropped when bonds didn't sell.

He again turned to Mississippi. This time he was involved with electric public utilities in Vicksburg and Natchez - lighting, power and street railways. This was profitable and he kept his interests until he sold out in 1910.

In 1912 Spencer Bullis and his wife moved West after he became interested in an old gold mine on Sterling Creek in Jackson County, Oregon. The operation proved expensive, the gold content was poor, the water and work season short, so the project was abandoned. He entered into a venture of electrifying a short steam rail line which ran out of Medford, but by then the automobile was becoming available and the times were rapidly changing.

When he was well over seventy, he ventured into an activity completely unfamiliar to him. He bought a bankrupt fruit cannery in Medford, built a larger plant and turned it into a successful business, remaining active until his death in 1929 at the age of 88 years.

Meanwhile, Gardner practiced law for a few years after college. He remembered bobbing up and down as he rode the horse cars to one courthouse in New York City. He took the interburrough rapid transit to another courthouse. "Either one only cost a nickel," the thrifty Bullis recollected.

When Gardner Bullis began his career, the sort of pioneering adventures which challenged Spencer Bullis were reaching exhaustion. Not only that, his interests were completely different from those of his father who had left the farm to apply his talents to different horizons. He admired his father but realized he did not have the same enterprising desires. Gardner was concerned with the social needs of people and was not content with many of the positions which family members influenced him to accept.

After the death of an attorney friend of the family who had headed the Interburrough Rapid Transit in Olean, he took over the practice for awhile. "There were 350 miles of electric railway," according to Gardner.

The social life in Olean centered around the country club where there was dinner and dancing, sometimes a play, on Saturday nights. "There was a crowd of about thirty or forty of us who went there. I met my wife when I was a leading man in one of the plays."

An older sister, Helen, introduced Gardner to Helen Hanna, of Franklin, New York. They met on a trip to Europe and she had invited Helen to Olean to see her histrionic brother perform at the country club. "I wore a brilliant red uniform and played the role of a Canadian Royal Mounted Police," he recalled.

By that time Gardner had joined the firm of Moot, Sprague, Brownell, and Marcy, attorneys for the Erie Railroad in Buffalo whom his father knew. This meant free passes for weekend trips to Franklin to visit Helen.

"Her brother and sister used to tease us a lot and thought we were a very queer couple as they never did see us kiss each other," he confided.

The Hanna family moved to Hermosa Beach, California where Helen's father, Richard, was building the El Segunda Refinery. He was one of the first vice presidents of Standard Oil.

During the summer of 1913 Gardner decided to join his father in the Northwest. He detoured through Los Angeles to ask Mr. Hanna for his daughter's hand.

After a small wedding, they spent their honeymoon visiting in Olean and Franklin. On their way back to the West, Gardner recalled the severe flooding in the Dakotas. "We were held up for four days. They even let prisoners out of jail the flood was so bad."

They settled in Medford, Oregon where their only son, Richard Spencer Bullis, was born in 1914.

Within a couple of years his father-in-law pursuaded Bullis to join the firm of Murphy-Dillon, attorneys with a natural gas distributing company in Los Angeles. "At that time you absolutely could not sell natural gas to either the Los Angeles Gas Company or to P.G.& E. They wanted their own artificial gas," Gardner said.

Mrs. Bullis was a dedicated social worker. She founded and became the first president of the Jr. League in Los Angeles, as well as becoming a director with the Children's Hospital.

Because of his young son, Bullis was not drafted in World War I. Near the end, he volunteered for the Coast Artillery and was stationed at Fort MacArthur, near San Pedro. He poked fun at himself by saying, "I loved to salute, but my parading style was so poor they asked me to drop out for special instruction." The lieutenant assured the men of their safety by boasting, "We have guns at Fort MacArthur that can shoot over Catalina Island," which would not be impressive in modern warfare.

"When the Armistice was over, I was glad to get home and to the youngster," he confessed.

The Bullises moved to San Francisco in 1941 so Helen could be near her widowed mother. Gardner was able to develop his continuing interest in social welfare work. He became involved with the California Council of Social Work and served on the National Board of the Mental Health Association.

Gardner was instrumental in the establishment of the San Francisco Foundation, which became the largest of all such community trusts, and helped form the California Commission on Health and Hospitals.

When World War II came along, the half century old Bullis' patriotism surfaced again. In response to his inquiry, the United States government replied, "We do not believe that your service as a buck private in the rear ranks of the Coast Artillery in World War I justifies us in waiving the age limit."

With that he volunteered for Red Cross service. He directed activities on behalf of servicemen and veterans in the Pacific area, overseeing 331 chapters, again accepting no pay. "I don't feel anyone had a right to make money on the war," he maintained.

Whether visiting New York, Washington, D.C., or camps and hospitals in the seven Western states, Gardner always travelled by train, carried his typewriter, and quickly converted his roomette into an office. "I consider it one of the most rewarding and delightful experiences I have had," he beamed.



GARDNER BULLIS WAS A BUCK PRIVATE IN THE COAST ARTILLERY

IN WORLD WAR I 1918

When the Bullises first moved to Los Altos in 1947 they enjoyed socializing with the few families who inhabited the area at that time. There were parties, bridge games, and even a book club. Hildegard Teilhet, their neighbor who co-authored books with her husband, liked to chide Gardner about his taste in Literature. "He loved Perry Mason books for relaxation. I used to argue the literary merits but he still liked them. He read a great deal and had quite a collection of railroad books," she said.

Mostly, Gardner devoted the next quarter of a century to social needs of another nature. He served as president, board member and in many other capacities for the California Association of Health and Welfare, giving uncounted hours of volunteer service as council for the association and legislative matters related to the welfare of people in the State of California.

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Clara commended and honored Gardner Bullis "for the years of dedicated service, tireless efforts and deep wisdom which he rendered to the Juvenile Justice Commission, to the Juvenile Court and to the youth of Santa Clara County, rarely missing a meeting."

The Santa Clara Association for Mental Health cited him for outstanding services to Santa Clara County in the fight against mental illness.

The Los Altos Hills Historical Society awarded him a merit of honor for his compassion, concern, dedicated service and friendship for their town.

A fellow Californian who had worked with Gardner on several projects, once described his law practice as "a front for good works."

In the early 1960's a new elementary school was built on Fremont Road in Los Altos Hills, near the Bullis home. He had fought hard in Sacramento for legislation for the school but was totally surprised and embarrassed when he was told it was named for him and urged them to reconsider. It later became the Bullis-Purissima School.

"I don't think anybody was more interested in the schools than I was but I think a lot of people did just as much for them. I consider it to be a great honor," he conceded.



CHARLES GARDNER BULLIS 1959

After Dick moved his family to San Francisco in 1957, the granddaughters regularly took the train to visit the old home place on weekends. They always called their grandfather "Pop." Amy loved horses and missed her old mare, Madame X, who had been given away with the other horses, but Amy always borrowed her back when she returned.

"Just writing about it brings back all the lovely warm memories of loafing around on a horse's back in the orchards that surrounded Pop's house at that time," she wrote from Virginia, where she and her husband now live. "At the end of the weekend I would be put on the train for San Francisco without having to take Madame X back myself. I think Pop knew I would be sad, so he would walk her over to her home. Poppy always said horses couldn't be trusted and were useless as far as he was concerned. Nevertheless, he supported my passion and would even clean up the paddock. Having Pop as my grandfather was my blessing in life," Amy avowed.

Friends who remember dining at the Bullis home describe it as "Victorian formal" with old fashioned silverware and china, but cordial.

Sara, who is married and lives in Michigan agreed and said, "Grandmother was always proper and wanted us to grow up young ladies but Pop was all fun. At meals she would plan melonballs or broiled grapefruit for dessert - not exactly a big favori of kids. She would ring her bell to have dessert served and in would come a platter of melonballs AND a big china bowl filled with solid round balls of peppermintstick, rockyroad, or pecan carmel ice cream. She'd look at Pop and say, "Gardner!" We'd think he was in big trouble with Gram but actually there was an exchange of looks between them that showed she enjoyed his "naughty" side, as she called it. It was fun, it was happy. Everyone would laugh."

One time Sara and her sister, Martha, climbed an apricot tree in Pop's yard. They became frightened when dark clouds and rain filled the sky. Stuck in the tree, they called for Pop to get them down. "He came right away and lifted us both to the ground. He seemed so huge to me then and the feel of his arms around me was so reassuring," Sara said.

In later years she recalled him as "tall and proud in an old '40's suit, and so slender and frail inside those padded shoulders."



Photo by Marjorie Kellogg 1981

"POP HAD GOTTEN SO SLENDER AND FRAIL INSIDE THOSE PADDED SHOULDERS"

As children they loved to play games with Pop. "He would pretend to be asleep in his chair by the fire. We would sneak in and tie his shoelaces together, then go hide. He would wake up and pretend to fall. Then we'd all giggle, laugh and play. I even shortsheeted his bed just the last time I was staying overnight with him," Sara admitted.

Pop called his granddaughters on the telephone each Saturday. It was not easy for them to accept his death, the idea of going on with no more phone calls, no more Pop. He had taught them to ride a bike, to appreciate ice cream, to love animals, plants and nature. They remember him in his jeans and loafers, bent over his corn or flowers, putting a bunch of sweetpeas in wet paper towels to take back to the City.

Sara shared her deep feelings that, "He was my idol, my playmate, my strength, my gift."

The girls understood their grandfather's insistance that they not rush to him when his life was slipping away. He was proud and did not want those he loved to see him with his defenses down. On occasions when he had to be in the hospital, Pop always insisted on wearing a dress shirt and tie in bed.

He never complained about his health and minimized his illness as it progressed. Instead, he turned it into something positive by being proud "to receive the first of a particular type of laser surgery." His eyes twinkled as he reported, "My doctor said I have a pulse of a sixteen year old.

Toward the end Pop was angry and frustrated that he wasn't able to go to the office or take Gulley for his morning walk. He had accepted aging very gracefully up until then. When granddaughter Martha did her graduate work on aging a few years ago, she asked Pop to write about his thoughts and feelings on growing old. She wanted to share his essay.

COMMENTS BY AN OLDSTER ON OLD AGE

by Gardner Bullis

> Perhaps my views on old age are tinted by circumstances that I have been favored with all my life, beyong my deserving. However, I hope to develop that this is consistent with and supports the conclusion I reach.

If old age is spent in loneliness, in ill health, or economic privation, it could not be pleasant, but this is wholly unrelated to the age factor and applies to any age period.

A great value in life is the association with congenial souls. If one is ill or deprived of basic comforts and necessities, there is an inevitable blight and damper to one's zest and enthusiasm. All of these are totally unrelated to the aging process, and in fact, a sound approach to life would seem, as one grew older, to be a philosophy that made ready and unconscious adjustments to unfavorable conditions.

Old age is certainly something which creeps up on you and so far as I am concerned, one may never realize it. Ten years ago I am sure that I was not conscious of any restriction of life's activity nor variation from my own daily pattern. There was, as I look back, the same spring in my step, steadiness and ability to move about, and travel hither and yon. I could even indulge in my favorite sport of jay walking as a challenge to San Francisco traffic!

I realize now that there is not the same spring in my step nor the steadiness that I once took for granted; so jaywalking is taboo. Memory of facts and figures is if anything, sharper, but as to names, sadly lacking and at times a bit embarrassing.

I do resent the lack of ability to snap out of a reclining chair, or sitting position, or quickly bend over to pick up documents from the floor (my favorite filing spot). However, every age has its problems! It simply means adjustment, which nature subtly makes without our notice to so many circumstances as one advances in years. To me there is a real irony in the sporting page references to retirement of an athlete hero at the old age of 32. Years really do seem irrelevant! What a sense of frustration it must be to be retired so early in one's life from one's career. Of course some adjust as did George Blande, by grooving into activity until real antiquity at the age of 45. As human beings we are endowed with the ability to adjust, and we pass from one phase of life to another without realizing the changes.

Nature is kind in suiting us to our environment. In my law practice I often close out an office day with a smug feeling of true accomplishment. But if I let myself analyze the record it would only add up to a very limited day of just so few years ago. The satisfaction of achievement is tuned to the capacity to perform.

In each period of our lives we are given the necessary momentum geared to the demands and opportunities that face us. We could make them a joy or tragedy as we ourselves elect. Each of us has our own resource. It may be an old-fashioned, simple devout religious faith or a more sophisticated philosophical structure such as unity. But once again, this is not exclusive of the aged.

There are so many positive elements in my life - friends seem closer, people in general are so respectful, understanding and responsive, with a reduced tendency to criticize. Cheerful allowance is made for shortcomings.

Altogether, at least for me, there is a rich blessing in this period of my life. One very valuable reason is my interest in my wonderful grandchildren. To watch and treasure their life pattern and to bask in their love.

I only hope that I do not succumb to the faults associated with old age, such as, boresome reflection, excessive babbling, living in the past, the inability to adjust to new ideas and modern mores, or perhaps the most fallacious of all, a feeling that just because one has lived so long there must be great wisdom to offer.

Perhaps as we grow older we are apt to gloss over our own shortcomings. We have the great treasure of memories of the favorable events of our lives and of our friends whom we have known and prized. There is always a most self-rewarding activity in the acts that one can do for others, volunteer contributions to worthwhile programs that are tailored to one's own ability.

You have asked for my perception of the role of an "oldster" in her or his own life. I believe that role is that one carries on a normal life pattern fixed as far as is possible on one's own abilities and independent from other's responsibility. The help that is offered by younger friends is greatly appreciated but it should not be relied strongly upon.

In the end, I think that it is important that as we grow older we learn to be as congenial as possible to our own circumstances. That we continue to have a lively concern for and participation in community affairs. That we keep abreast of the times, and so far as is possible, we fill our place in our family and in our community to our utmost constructive ability.

After his wife died in 1977, Gardner continued to live at his Los Altos Hills home. They had celebrated 64 years of marriage. "Helen was a very able and efficient, delightful, fine person," he said of his wife.

His basic needs were seen to by Humberto and Miriam Quintero, a San Salvadorian couple who had worked for the Bullises for many years.

But there were long, sometimes lonely hours to fill. His dog Gulley and the daily trips to the office were healing factors and helped pass the time. As his eyesight weakened he did less and



GARDNER BULLIS (without hat) RODE IN THE MERCEDEZ WHICH LED THE LOS ALTOS HILLS PARADE CELEBRATING THE TOWN'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY

less reading in the evenings, but he enjoyed listening to KABL music and often played Solitaire. "I never cheat," he assured me.

Humberto did most of the driving but Gardner was proud to have passed his driving test and continued to occasionally drive is 1975 Nova.

Miriam was devoted to and dependent on her employer and felt a tremendous loss when he died. She had been spunky and protective of Meester Boolis, as she called him, but in the final analysis it was he who had protected her.

The celebration of the 25th anniversary of Los Altos Hills incorporation made it a banner year for Gardner. He attended all the functions and was duly honored. He rode in the antique Mercedez convertible which led the celebration parade. The mayor and others wore straw hats, to which Gardner objected.

"You don't look very Californian," he said. Then he added, "You don't even look American." However, by the end of the parade, the warm sun on the open car changed his thinking and he said, "I think next year I'll wear a hat like that." That was significant of his adaptability.

Gardner Bullis died during a severe winter storm. The rains poured forth as though the whole world was weeping and angry.

Yet Gardner did not want anyone to mourn him. In his last interview he had said, "I just hope people won't be sorry when I've gone and I hope they will realize that they have given me a great deal of happiness and I appreciate it. It makes me wish I really had contributed something in life to have so much publicity."

According to his wishes, a private graveside service for the family was all that was planned. "Pop was an humble man and didn't like a lot of 'hullabaloo,'" Sara said.

The Los Altos Methodist Church, where he regularly sat in the third pew, dedicated their Sunday morning service to him. All the family - Dick, Lorna, Ellie, and Gardner's beloved granddaughters, Kit, Amy, Martha, Sara, Lorna, and Lizzie came together to fill the space he had vacated.

As a tribute, the minister said, "I sensed in him a greatness that attracted me, a wisdom that made me want to do better, a loveliness that made me want to stand taller, to speak more clearly, and to be more rounded in the word of God.

"Gardner was led by his favorite Bible passage from I Corinthians 13. 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal, etc.' The Bible was more than just a book for Gardner - it was the word of life."

The following week the Communion Service, which was always Gardner's favorite, was in honor of him. It gave friends an opportunity to gather informally in a smaller room and reminisce. The storm had subsided, the sun shone brightly, and it was a time for remembering happy moments.

There were many anecdotes which shed light on Gardner's character and sense of humor. One man had watched a group of older men walk carefully and haltingly along one Sunday morning. One said, "Today I am 70 years old." Another said, "This week I'll be 80 years old." Just then Gardner dashed by, heard what they said and called out, "Next week I'll be 90!"

A man whose father was the same age as Gardner said he knew they would have liked each other had they met for both admired the great baseball player, Christy Matthews because he would never play baseball on Sunday.

A young man remembered when a parking problem developed at the church. From then on Gardner always parked at the Shopping Center and crossed the freeway which was a worry to some who felt that if anyone deserved to park near the church it was Gardner.

The life of Gardner Bullis, a stalwart born during the Victorian era whose life spanned social and economic changes; saw the transportation metamorphosis from horse and buggy days through streetcars, railroads, automobiles, and finally airplanes; was able to adapt to the physical and psychological changes in society while extending protection to it, was like a sturdy tree whose firmly established roots keep it upright and whose ability to withstand drought, flood, cold, heat and abuse from man causes it to grow more solid and durable with time, offering more protective branches the older it becomes.

As seeds perpetuate the reproduction and continuance of the tree, so the deeds of Gardner Bullis will provide a tontinuity to future generations, future changes, and future societies.