

Introduction to William Paul Pfeffer,

This is an autobiographical, historical peek into the life of William Paul Pfeffer who was born in the Santa Clara Valley and has lived his life from start to almost finish. The contents are simple, a few highlights of his life garnered mostly from him which will be self explanatory as the reader progress their way from him boarding his train of life to his eventual disembarking for new experiences.

Sources

- 1. The information used was given to the author who has known and respected the principal for more than forty years.**
- 2. Mrs. Ann Pfeffer his wife of 65 years, related considerable information to the author.**

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BILL'S STORY

Bill Pfeffer is a man of 93 years. He boarded his train of life on August 4, 1905. His Mother Maude Rose was born in Colorado, and moved while a young girl to and was raised in Grass Valley. His father George Pfeffer was born and raised in the Saratoga foothills. While a young boy, he met and later married Maude Rose. They set up house keeping on Branham Lane, which at that time was the only paved street in the Santa Clara Valley.

Bill's folks moved from Branham Lane to Lundy road so Bill could attend the Eagle grammar school. Their next move was across from the Winchester House so he could continue school at the Meridian School (Not to be confused with Meridian Road.) Bill, while attending grammar school, was busy after school and weekends working at various odd jobs. He picked apricots and learned to slice them. By working in prune orchards, he became a *prune picker* and was proud of the many lugs he filled.

Those are the days Bill remembers fondly. The days when one could hear the lonely whistle of a coal fired steam engine puffing its way through the orchards. When the sound of a neighing horse took precedence over the sound of a rare oddity called a horn on a frightening conglomeration of nuts and bolts named a horseless carriage.

There is a picture of the old Court House taken in 1892 hanging in a restaurant called the Burger Pit, located on Forrest Ave. showing horse drawn buggies, and some freight wagons with horses hitched to them standing in front of the old building. Bill doesn't need a photograph to recall those days, for he can remember standing in front of the Court house with his Father and can recall a mental picture of the days they breathed in the scent of thousands of blossoms on the many trees throughout the valley. Without a hint of the gasoline fumes today's cars, trucks and busses disperse into our atmosphere day and night....

After leaving the courthouse, he can remember walking with his Father under the light tower built on Market Street. As he and his Father headed for home he was only remotely interested in the fact that there was only one paved street in the Santa Clara Valley and he recalls no one stopped for stop signs in those days, for there were none.

Bill remembers many times standing next to his Father as he talked to Sara Winchester over a fence separating their property. Bill says the notion of people trying to spread the idea that Sarah was in left field is preposterous. She was aware of every function of her vast estate. She believed in helping folks that when given the chance, would help themselves.

When on her rounds, Bill learned, when she found one asleep on the job, or not willing to earn their pay, he or she was paid off in cash and told not to return. On the other hand, if a person was willing to earn their keep she was known to retire an older one with a modest pension they had in her opinion earned. Welfare had yet to become a God given right.

After graduating from grammar school, Bill found various jobs working full time for the Flinger Cannery. He was hired as a full-fledged go-fer. He worked up to pulling large carts full of cans needed at the different stations. He also pushed a hand truck to move miscellaneous articles to and from every nook and cranny in the cannery.

As time passed Bill learned he had a natural ability to work with figures; he also was extremely adept when it came to working with machinery, he used both gifts to great advantage.

One day in his travel's he heard there might be an opening at the Western Pump business. He went to their business office and asked if there was a need for a hard working young man. Mr. Bradford who owned the business said he could start him at .50 cents an hour. At that time Bill couldn't even imagine making that much money, so a deal was struck and Bill had his first steady job, this was the start of his many ventures.

As mentioned before he had a head for figures and a desire to own something. He didn't know at the time his desire to work for himself would lead him to contracting to repair many of the farmer's pumps and also drilling wells and installing pumps single handedly. Thanks to his ability to designing and building a movable crane, he could to the job using less labor and thereby do the repairs necessary for less than any of his competitors.

While Bill was a hard worker, he also found time to go to some social functions. One evening he was invited to go to a dance. It was at that dance he met a girl named Ann Margaret Dunn. Ann had been born in Montreal, Canada and later her folks moved to Antioch.

Ann was finishing college at San Jose State and wanted to teach, which she did for a couple of years. After five years of courting, she and Bill were married on June 9, 1926. They had three children two boys, Bill Jr. Bob and a daughter Patricia.

While all of this was going on, Bill was busy with other thoughts. He always had his mind set on buying some land and raising a crop of some kind.

On May 17 1948, Bill bought 14 acres of prunes and apricots. It had a two-story 8-room house on it along with some out buildings. Bill worked the apricots, and prunes along with maintaining his pump business. Ann tells the story of crossing Moorpark to pick up her mail. A dog, cat and several chickens would follow her without any fear of being hit by a speeding automobile.

One day a Realtor approached Bill with the idea of developing the 14 acres into housing lots. Bill was not too sure of what might happen and held back. But the Realtor, a Mr. Stone was persistent and finally Bill decided to take a chance.

His tract was one of the first on the west side of the valley and the Realtor, Mr. Stone, was the father of Mr. Stone who later formed a partnership with Mr. Schulte that developed into Stone & Schulte, Inc.

Their Company is registered in today's yellow pages and they can trace their beginning back to Bill's Tract, called Bascom Manor. Bill kept enough of the property to build eight apartments and a house for himself, plus a lot that he later moved a duplex on. He drove every nail, and did all of the labor almost single-handed, necessary to complete the buildings.

Several years later, Bill thanks to Free way 280, was introduced to Eminent Domain; for his house sat on 25 feet of land that was needed to be removed in order to allow autos to pass under where his house now stood.

That meant Bill had to find or build another house. Fortunate for him, he was able to buy a house across the street, then named Ginger Lane, remodel it and set up house keeping

As we progress down the trail of Bill's life we learn that now and then he encounters a bit of bad luck. Another example of that might be when in 1921 he started a potato chip company.

He named it; **“BEST IN THE WEST.”** The first containers were cardboard boxes. Later he used cans and finally five and ten cent bags to sell his chips in. The only thing that kept Bill from becoming a billionaire was a few dollars, called capital. Today it is difficult for Bill to swallow a chip of any kind.

Bill always was looking for avenues to provide enough income to support his family. He bought 10 acres on Senter Road and figured he would develop it someday. The valley was growing and many factors were beginning to erode small time developments. Rather than fight an uphill battle with building inspections and environmentalists looking for ways to throttle growth, he chose to sell the property. That turned out to be a bad financial mistake.

Bill remembers his grandfather telling the story of riding up a dirt road called Stevens Creek Road with a horse drawn wagon load of grapes to stake out 80 acres on which to plant his vines.

Bill as he recounted the story to the author gave him two bottles of wine with the following information regarding their history pasted on the back of each bottle.

Charles Lefranc Cabernet Pfeffer could indeed be one of a kind; it comes from grapes of the very rare Cabernet Pfeffer variety grown in the cool climate of Cienega Valley in San Benito County.

Little is known of Cabernet Pfeffer, but records indicate it was developed by a Santa Clara Valley winegrower by the name of William Pfeffer around the turn of the century. He had a national reputation as a viticulturist and was a personal friend of the famous Eugene Hilgard, the Professor of Agriculture at U.C Berkley.

Cabernet Pfeffer were planted experimentally by Hilgard associates Professor Fredric Bioletti and Dr. Harold Ohrwall in the Cienega Valley in 1908. This was the source of the wines that are now planted at or about the same location today.

The bouquet and flavor of the wine are reminiscent of the Cabernet Sauvignon, but is spicier with a hint of a peppery taste that is singularly characteristic of the variety. Connoisseurs and collectors should delight in adding this wine of exceptional character and quality to their cellars.

Signed by Klaus P. Mathes

Winemaster

Another attestment to the Pfeffer wine legacy is written on the back of the other bottle of Charles Lefranc Cellars 1982 Cabernet Pfeffer wine.

It goes as follows:

Cabernet Pfeffer is an extremely rare and different wine. Experts recognize its relationship to Cabernet Sauvignon, but cannot agree on its ancestry. Ancestry of the wine in this bottle however, goes back to 1908 in the Cienega Valley. Vines planted then are the source of the few bearing this vintage. Spicy with just a hint of black pepper taste.

Cabernet Pfeffer is one-of-a-kind. Charles Lafranc Cellars makes it for Connoisseurs, collectors and all wine lovers looking for a novel and exciting taste experience. Food compliments: Roast beef, lamb, waterfowl, and cheese. Serve wine at cool room temperature.

Klaus P. Mathes

Winemaster

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To conclude, as we go through life we meet many people; we read and hear of the ones who have accomplished exemplary feats. It is seldom one has the pleasure of meeting one of their stature let alone knowing them and becoming their friend.

Through the years Bill has worn many hats. His formal education was mostly readin' writin' and rithmetic'. He never received or needed any degrees, for he born aware of the basics of life. His approach has always been a no nonsense attitude tempered with a keen sense of humor and like Will Rogers he never met a person he didn't like. Bill's rare gift was always being there for anyone in need of a helping hand. Bill knew how to be a friend and more important make friends. No one knows this more than I, the author of this article.

After my discharge from the service in 1945, I married a girl named Florence and we moved to the Santa Clara Valley. We bought a house at the corner of Spring Street and University Ave.

Several years later we learned we would one day have to move because the air line route would be over our house.

After looking from one end of the valley to the other, we stopped in front of a small Real Estate office on San Carlos street. A little gray-headed old man ran it. When I asked him if he knew of a good residential lot. His answer was an empathic "Yes." he said he knew where the lot I was looking for was located.

I followed him and when we stopped in front of the tract called Bascom Manor, it was Bill's development. We knew without a doubt, we had found the needle in the proverbial haystack. There was no question whether or not we would buy, our only thought was, would we qualify regarding the building restrictions placed on the sale by Mr. Pfeffer who we did not know nor had we heard of him and visa versa. We bought the lot along with Bill and Ann's friendship.

From the day I started the foundation until I finished the house, which took 3-1/2 years, Bill was always there to lend a helping hand. To this day he has always been one I could count on for good advice, friendship and wonderful peeks into the past. Over the years Bill and I have traveled over many miles of the valley. As we drive I see, listen and learn how things were in bygone days.

He told the story as we were driving through Charlettsville, now called Saratoga, of his Uncle Bob sending to Sears for an anvil. He told how his uncle in fit of anger swung a big hammer and hit the anvil so hard he broke it in half. His uncle then made two large 'U' clamps that have held the anvil together for many years. Bill eventually ended up with the anvil and thanks to my interest in some of the history of the valley I am now the owner of the anvil, along with some of Bob's tools and most important, the story they relate to.

There is little doubt Clyde Arbuckle was the Santa Clara Valley historian, but it is doubtful he could recall and relate to past incidents any better than Bill. Today, Bill lives alone for Ann his wife of 65 years died in 1978.

Bill is alive and lucid, has a great outlook on life and will share yarns with anyone who is interested in hearing about San Jose in the “Good Old Days.” Bill and I have been neighbors for 45 years we keep in close touch. He spends most of his time working in his shop for he is still in search for something to fix, repair or invent.

Our Valley is now described literally by the word *Icon*, which translates to; *microchips* not *potato chips*. Our symbols, Images, Idols, and those worthy of standing as Statues for all to recognize, may be *thanking* or *cussing* Bill and others like him for today’s... progress.