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Realtor's family roots, stories run deep

Realtor Gwyn Goodman knows a thing or two about the history of Somis, because her family lived it. The following are memories from Goodman's father that were printed for his funeral, and Goodman recalls they "were enjoyed by many."

This is an excerpt from "Memories of Yesteryear" by W. Arthur Mahan, as told to Gina Ortiz and Ralph Mahan.

Preface

I was born in Santa Paula, California on January 18, 1910, almost 81 years ago. That was the week Haley's comet was circling the earth, and I'd always hoped it would come again. Of course, I was too little to remember, but I heard some darned wonderful things about it. Considerin' the times I grew up in and all the close calls and near misses I had ridin' wild horses, ropin' bulls and doin' other dangerous and crazy things, I think it was mighty considerate of the man upstairs to allow me to see the comet the second time around at the age of 75. I had so many neat experiences in my 80 years that I thought I might share some of 'em with you folks. I hope that everyone who reads these recollections of mine finds them entertaining, cause I sure enjoyed livin' them.

Bean Thrasher and Bindle Stiffs

During the depression in '33 when people were coming to California exactly like the "Grapes of Wrath," we took in a group that wanted to work. They were independent and weren't expectin' somethin' for nothin'. One of 'em was called Little Ike and he had five kids and a wife to support, so he was anxious to earn all he could. In those days, a man earned \$2.50 a day for drivin' a bean wagon and \$3 a day for pitchin' the bean straw into the wagon. Well hell, he was too small to be a pitcher, but he wanted to make extra money for his family so he took the pitchin' job and somehow, with the help of his partner, Paul Jones, who pitched from the other side of the wagon, he made it though the season.

We actually had to have about 50 men on the ranch cause you never knew when some would just walk off the job. If it got hot or somethin' in the middle o' the day and they had enough to live on why hell, those bums would just walk off the field. You had to have three or four extra men workin' so that when



This historical photo shows the Threshing crew in 1918 near Balcom Canyon.

someone walked off you had another man to replace 'em.

We had one guy named Nuts and Bolts. They called 'em that because he just didn't know the difference between nuts and bolts. The poor devil—he was an innocent little devil, darn it. I felt sorry as hell for him. He came back every year for several years. He just wasn't smart enough to do anything else. He didn't know straight-up, but he could drive a bean wagon.

Those stationary bean thrashers were quite an operation. A steam engine provided the power, but you needed an eight-horse team to pull the water wagon for the steam engine and the 43 horses you used to pull all the equipment, and we used a lot of equipment in those days. There were the 14 new wagons, two dump carts for the straw and the nets with which to pull the bean straw out of the bean wagon and onto the table of the combine.

Once the bean straw was on the table, we had two men called hoedowns to move the straw and four men to feed the seperater. One man acted as the field boss — usually



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ridin' horseback — and three men sewing the stacks after the sack jig man put over 100 pounds of beans in each one. One man was the "oiler" and another the "seperater man,"

and of course, there was a cook and his helper. Yep, 43 horses, 54 men and a few nuts and bolts.

—W. Arthur Mahan, Sept. 18, 1990.