

3 Hunting

My hunting memories started when I was about nine years old. We went to an old school house on Stony Point Road in Santa Rosa sometimes to eat lunch, and so that my brother & I could play on the playground equipment. This day it was blistering hot. I went over to the monkey bars as I had often done, spit on my hands (as my dad always did), jumped up and grabbed the bars. Instantly I fried the small calluses I had on my right hand. The skin stayed on the bar. Nine years old - a crying kid. My mother put alcohol on my hand, gauze and some tape. Soon the pain went away but still some leaking blood. We then went to "The Ranch" and my dad took me out into the corn field to shoot doves. He got a few and I carried them and lots of feathers stuck to my bloody hand. Mom cleaned my hand again and redid my bandages. All was well, It took two weeks or more for my hand to heal.

I went hunting when I was thirteen with my grandfather, who was the first person to teach me how to fish. This was my first time to shoot a gun. We were using Gigi's 410 bolt action shotgun. It shot 3.5" 410 shells. My grandfather was very frugal and would not shoot unless he was sure to have a dead bird or rabbit. He would always put the gun up but not fire. He would say "Too far". After a while he handed me the 410 and said for me to walk in front of him and take a shot if something jumped or flew. I had been taught how to handle the gun, its safety, its bolt action, and how to load it by my Uncle Gigi. We were walking along the bottom of the dry creek bed when on the top bank a skunk came sauntering toward us and grandpa says shoot it. I didn't shoot as I thought it was just a skunk moving along. Grandpa yells "Shoot- Shoot!". I shoot and kill the skunk. We walk three feet more and the skunk smell is everywhere. If I hadn't shot we would have been sprayed. For the next few days whenever we passed that spot it really smelled.

Another time my dad went dove hunting on the ranch, parked and left my mother, brother and me in the car. I had a 410 that was left to my dad from the estate of his late aunt, Mrs. Moule. This 410, a single shot - 2 1/2" shells - exposed hammer, would be my hunting shotgun until my brother and I bought single shot 12 gauge Savage guns in 1953. I hunted along a fence line and shot a dove. Boy was I excited when my dad came back and I showed him my bird. He laughed, that's a meadow lark he said. It took me a while but I learned how easy it is to identify birds by name with a little experience. After that I would accompany my dad on most of his hunting trips. We would hunt

the ranch in Santa Rosa, the Godeau ranch near Memorial Park in San Mateo and duck hunting along Skyline Blvd (now near Serramonte), and cottontail rabbit hunting south west of the Chinese Cemetery (near Serramonte) There were ponds on the right & left sides of Skyline. These areas were quite rural before the housing boom of the 50's & 60's. My dad would get up early to go rabbit hunting and be back home in time to go to work. When he went cottontail hunting he used my "410" gun as that's all you needed and it did not make much noise.

One year dad and I went duck hunting in the rolling hills along Skyline, above one of the large ponds. A large duck came by and dad dropped it with one shot. This was Christmas Eve, we got this duck at about 4:00 pm. The duck was a Canvasback. We went home, as our tradition was to go to grandma's for Christmas eve dinner, open presents at about 10:00 o'clock. My dad put the duck in a shoebox without cleaning or feathering it. It looked great in the box. He wrapped it in Christmas wrapping with my grandma's name on it. When she opened it, she really jumped. We all had a great laugh. My dad really loved my grandparents.

My dad would play little jokes on my grandmother now and then. I remember one time coming home from La Honda about half way to Skyline, on a sweeping turn there was a spot to park. About 25' off the road was a large metal tank with spring water and we would always stop for a drink and fill a few gallons with this spring water. This day my dad found a large frog there, brought it to the car and threw it in my grandmother's lap. She screamed and was quite upset. My Aunt Josie was there and berated my dad for giving her mother such a fright. It was a little joke, but it really scared my grandmother.

Some days dove hunting we would ride around and look for doves feeding and watering. On this day we, my dad & I saw a little field with doves coming and going. My dad went to the door of the farmhouse to ask for permission to hunt the field. The farmer said no to my dad who had his 12 gauge double. He saw that I had a small 410 and said I could shoot the field if I would sit with my back against his house. My dad said it might be too noisy for him and his family. The farmer said that it would be okay as the gun was small and pointing away from his house. What a break. My dad thanked him and put me in place with orders, how to sit and shoot. Then he left and went hunting elsewhere. I had a wonderful time as doves came in two or three at a time. I was just learning to shoot flying birds. When I started hunting, I would shoot

doves on fences, posts, trees, or on the ground. Flying birds were hard to hit, that takes practice and experience. That day I got five doves in that little field, the most I had ever gotten up to that time.

After that experience I was getting better at shooting flying birds. One year on the ranch away from animals, buildings and the road I found a little pothole of water that doves were coming to all day long. That afternoon I went there, put my back against a fence post and as the doves come in for a drink I was in a perfect position for some great shooting. My best to date six doves in flight. I won't say how many I missed. That little 410 was a great gun for small game.

One time I was hunting with dad & Uncle Gigi. I spotted a jackrabbit within range of my 410. He had his head up, ears straight up. I shot and when we went to retrieve my kill, we found two dead jackrabbits. My dad & Gigi smirked and made some comments that I didn't get, I was 14 at the time. As I got older and thought more about it, I got the picture.

In those days we hunted for sport but also we were meat hunters. My Uncle Joel (my father's brother) had four children and if he would shoot a shotgun shell there better be something to eat. He would shoot birds and rabbits. I remember once in catechism class, his daughter Sandra asked the nun about the rule of not eating meat on Friday. The nun sister (Genevieve) asked "What do you mean dear?" Sandra replied you know like meadowlarks, woodpecker, pigeons and the like. Sister said, "O yes dear, those are meat also".

My 410 & I had many good times together. At the Godeau ranch we would hunt way back in the mountains & small valleys. We would hunt cottontail rabbits, quail and band tail pigeons. On his day I was with dad and Gigi. It was December and a wintry morning and night. We arrived at dawn and hunted all day. No rabbits but some quail and some areas were full of heavy brush. No match for me, a tough fourteen year old. Shotgun forward and I crashed through that brush. I shot a woodpecker and it fell in some leafless shrubs. I crashed in and got it, no trouble. It was getting dark so we packed up and started for home. It was really cold so Gigi gave me his heavy mutton coat. I sat in the back of his '38 Chevy and he turned on the heater. I was warm as toast. When we got near some buildings the road was blocked with a chain which was not there when we arrived at 4:30 A.M. A man came out to asked what we were doing on private property. My dad and uncle said they

had been hunting here for years as friends of the Godeau family. The man said the ranch had been sold and we were trespassing. He said he was calling the sheriff. My dad and uncle explained that since we hunted here for years, there was no chain across the road and no signs that said "No Trespassing or Hunting" that we were not intentionally breaking the law. We had a little talk and we were let through to the main road. You do not want the sheriff involved. We got home after that with no other problems. The rest of this story is just beginning.

About when we got home, we took our showers and cleaned up as usual. My dad would always take a cold shower and wipe his body with rubbing alcohol whenever we had possibly been in poison oak. Not me this time, as I was still cold. I took a nice hot shower. Little did I realize that the leafless bushes I crashed through were poison oak. That mutton coat, the car heater and the hot shower did their number on me. Two days later I got a little itching and a day later I couldn't even go to school. My head and face swelled up. My eyes were swollen shut, my lips were swollen, my ears were double thickness. My scalp was also swollen. My whole body was totally swollen and a rash. My dad, when he first saw me in this condition laughed. I could hardly talk or smile as everything about my face and skin was tight. The only way I could eat was through a glass straw that my mother pushed through my lips. She would puree everything so I could get nourishment. Once the swelling went down, I would scratch. My mom put some bag mittens on me at night so I wouldn't scratch. Too late. I had spread it head to foot and then some. All parts were swollen. After that, my eyes would ooze and where I had scratched also. The yellow ooze would smell rotten, had to be cleaned and bandaged where possible. I missed about two weeks of school - Aptos Junior High. When I went back to school I looked okay but my shins on both legs were leaking. By noon the ooze came through the bandages and I would start to smell. Everyone avoided me every afternoon for about two weeks. This whole bout with poison oak took about two months to fully clear up. After that I took a self-treatment recommended by our pharmacist. I started with one drop of poison oak extract in a glass of water every day for a week or two (I can't remember exactly). Then a drop at a time and then three drops and four drops etc. After that treatment and my past experience I learned what poison oak looks like at every stage. I think the reason I got such a bad case was the heavy coat, heater, and hot shower, All Wrong. Over the years I have gotten a little poison oak but never like that time. After I was married I told Barbara this

story and you know "The Nurse" said you should have been put in the hospital. I told her, in our family we don't go there for poison oak.

Another time Gigi & I were hunting in the dry creek at the ranch in Santa Rosa and we were walking very quietly. It was late summer, and we were after jack rabbit and pheasant. They were out of season so we hunted the creek and would only shoot birds on the creek bottom. The game wardens were always in their small planes looking for illegal pheasant hunters. Pheasant hunting was from November 15 - December 6th. Anyway, as we walked, Gigi stopped, pointed one foot to his left, pointed his shotgun, and fired. I didn't see anything and he said it was a sleeping pheasant. He said he shot its head, Lo and behold he shot right in the middle of the bird, a total loss. All we had was a pair of legs. We left the pheasant there and Gigi picked it up after dark as the game wardens were flying all day long. If you ever had flown in a low flying plane you can understand what the game wardens were seeing from that vantage point.

Another day I was hunting the creek bottom and two pheasants came flying toward me, landed ahead of me, didn't see me, and started running towards me. They stopped in some grass and I thought I saw a head. I raised the 410 and waited for about ten seconds and nothing moved so I shot. It ended up a head shot as the bird jumped and thrashed around and died. My first pheasant with the 410. I was about fourteen or fifteen.

One year there were a lot of snipe and my dad liked to eat them. They are hard to hit as their flight is very erratic, more so than a dove. That day we hunted in the morning and after lunch I took my BB gun that was given to my dad from one of his clients "Mrs. Thompson". I went along the road "Wilfred Ave" toward Highway 101 and came back toward the ranch. There was a little swamp area and the snipe came in all the time. I just crouched down and waited as there was no cover. A snipe landed, I looked along the sight of my BB gun and shot. I saw that the BB missed by about one foot. The bird did not move. I pumped another BB into the chamber as this was a pump BB gun. This shot missed by inches and the bird still didn't move. By seeing where these two BB's went I just moved the barrel over to the right after each shot as the shots were to the left of the bird. My third shot was on the money and the snipe just dropped. The snipe is a small grey bird and the swamp area was grey. When I went to pick it up I couldn't find it. Boy, was I bummed out. I told my dad my sorry story and he said you just missed it, the bird flew away. I

knew I killed it, so when we went hunting that afternoon I made sure on our way in I would look again for my snipe. This time I just walked right up to it. A good shot right in the eye, probably the only place that a little BB from a BB gun could penetrate and kill a little bird. When I showed my dad, he said a lucky shot.

I started subscribing to a sport magazine "Field & Stream" when I was 13 (1947) and continued to today - November 16th, 2012. I learned a lot from this magazine and from my life in the outdoors, (hunting, fishing, boating, gardening and just living.) In my younger years I always wanted a 12 gauge shotgun and through Field & Stream always wanted a semiautomatic 12 gauge. At that time Remington had one for \$125.00, a lot of money for a kid making twenty-five cents an hour working for my dad, gardening. Not to say I didn't have the money as I was very thrifty (like my grandfather) cheap. At the time I was about 16 I had about \$150.00 in the bank. While in high school I wanted a leather pilots jacket but they were \$25.00 - \$30.00, and being thrifty I bought a leather jacket for \$15.00. Not a pilot's jacket but I had \$10.00 more in my bank account.

Another interesting story of one of my hunting experiences at the Santa Rosa ranch was that our hunting group would walk and hunt for hours. We did not bring water in those days, so we were getting thirsty. We knew of a bar on Stoney Point Road and would stop there where my dad and uncles would drink beer and shake dice. As we walked along the road to the bar we'd unload our shotguns, walk into the bar and stack our guns in the corner at the entrance. (Boy, that was a different time). If someone saw us entering a bar today (2018) we'd be surrounded by police. Anyway for a kid of 13 or 14 I got all the soda & pork rinds I wanted. One time "Charlie", one of the farm workers, hunted with us and when we went to the bar my dad asked Charlie if he wanted a drink. Charlie said "Thanks" and ordered a martini. My dad never offered Charlie another drink.

One day walking south on Primrose next to the big barn and the silos a couple of pigeons flew by. I pulled back the hammer and took aim, and my dad dropped both pigeons. I was bummed but just too slow. Gigi & dad laughed, and we walked down the road. I walked along with my "410" pointing down at the ground. I must have pulled the trigger as it sounded like a cannon going off. I must have turned white as Gigi rushed over. I was wearing old holey Keds and he thought I shot my foot. There was a hole in the dirt road

about 6" from my foot. Now they thought it was a big joke and were laughing all over. I was in tears, but it was a real learning experience.

The time my dad died, 1953, I had been in college (studying horticulture) for one year. During that year I had been working at a nursery on the San Francisco - Daly City boundary on Junipero Serra Boulevard, "Floral Arts Nursery", great people. At the nursery I was earning about \$1.00 per hour. At this time I was 18 and had some money. That Remington semi-auto was what I wanted but my cheap gene cut in and my brother John & I each bought Savage single shot 12 gauge guns. These guns were hammerless meaning the hammers were not exposed. A great looking gun, light weight but only one shot. You learned how to be accurate with this gun. I think it cost about \$49.00. Our grandfather was proud of us as we kept about \$100.00 in our bank account.

When I got married in 1955 my wife Barbara gave me a J.C Higgins 12 gauge semi-auto for a wedding present. I picked it out. It was a semi-auto but not a Remington. The cheap gene again. In 1953 I contracted "polio" and spent five months flat on my back. I got out of the hospital and did rehabilitation and then back to college. Did some gardening with my new friend "Don Mc Michael" from CCSF Horticulture. Started back as a self-employed gardener in San Francisco. An operation on my right leg and our wedding in September 1955.

After our wedding I had a new hunting partner, "Barbara". I would shoot a bird and she would fetch it. She was my partner and my dog. We hunted together 1955 - 1965. We hunted rabbits, pheasant, dove and quail. One of our first hunting trips at the ranch was for doves, September 1st was the first day of dove season. My brother, Gigi, Barbara & I were in the group. Gigi and my brother stayed the weekend, Barbara and I stayed two more days and hunted together. We used her car, a 1947 Ford Plymouth coupe. One day we were near the west end of Wilfred Avenue and spotted three doves on the electric wires and no one around. So I turned the car sideways and used the little 410. I shot at the middle bird, and it flew away. The two outside birds dropped.

Another dove hunt Barbara's father Al came with us and we were resting under the plums by the big barn out in the field. A dove flew into Al's tree, and

he shot at it from about six feet away. He said he shot at its head but in reality, he blew it apart, nothing left.

On another trip we were all hunting in one of the walnut orchards on Wilfred Avenue west of Stony Point Road. On this day we had the whole family, Barbara & I, Gigi, Al (Barbara's father), Barbara's Uncle Jack and my brother John. We were all in a line, me on the right and Jack on the far left and everyone else in between. A jackrabbit got up six feet in front of me and ran parallel to all the hunters and we all yelled as the rabbit passed each person, "Don't shoot" too close. If we did shoot the rabbit would be blown apart. We thought that Uncle Jack would get the shot after it passed him and he could shoot. Jack shot it at six feet or so as it passed him. He actually cut the rabbit in half. He was using a 12-gauge pump, high base shells with a 30" barrel, need I say more.

On another hunt it was the same bunch, and we were hunting the 40 acres (Wilfred & Stony Point) a really large area. We lined up and went back and forth through that field. After about an hour we were at the end of the field at Wilfred and Stony Point. We were about thirty feet from both roads. We had seen no pheasant and assumed either there were none in this field or they ran away to the sides as we walked along. We were in a loose group, some smoking, others just taking a rest and talking about where to hunt next. I guess we had herded a lot of pheasant to this corner, and they started jumping up and taking wing all around us. We were so surprised and unprepared that we didn't get one bird. About ten males took off. We all felt pretty dumb to be fooled by these crafty birds.

A trip Barbara and I took in about 1958 was to our friend's home in Jamestown, Lee & Nancy Fry. Nancy trained as a nurse with Barbara at St. Mary's College of Nursing on Hayes Street, San Francisco. We were visiting and Lee and I would go quail hunting in the morning. When we arrived, Lee told me to park behind their house in the driveway. It was dark. Lee directed me down the steep driveway. I needed room to open my driver's side door, so I drove slightly to the right with some shrubs brushing the car. All at once a scraping sound. There was a wall behind the shrubs. Our first scrape on our new '57 Dodge. What a bummer. When it was time to go to sleep, John, who was under or about one year old, wouldn't go to sleep. So, we used the old car trick. We brought him out, put him in the car and started it up. I sat there

for about ten minutes. We brought him back to the house and he did not wake up till morning.

In the morning Lee & I were up early to go hunting. We were going to road hunt first and do some walking later. I had never road hunted in a Volkswagen Bug before, and it was a blast. Lee could make "U" turns in the middle of a road. If you do not know what legal road hunting is, I'll tell you. You cannot shoot from a stopped or moving vehicle. While in the vehicle no shells can be in the chamber. Therefore, you must exit the vehicle, chamber a shell with a semi- or a pump. Single or double, you insert the shells. Road hunting is to find the game and then on foot go hunting. I have seen some real illegal road hunting in my day. It was about 1947 on Skyline Boulevard (Highway 35). We were going fishing in La Honda and started out about 5:00 AM, on Skyline Boulevard. Driving along we came up to a convertible driving slow, one guy on each front fender and three guys sitting on the folded top. Feet on the seat. Each guy held a rifle, Boy if the sheriff could have caught them.

One trip hunting on the "Ranch" my dad & I, Gigi & Uncle Gordon (Josie's husband)were hunting fields, returning to my new 1956 Chevy pickup and driving to another field. My brother & I in the cab, Gigi & Gordon in back. We were driving along, and the game warden came behind me with red lights on. I tell my brother what's up, I guess he's just checking licenses. He comes to us, and we show him our licenses and tags. He checks our guns. All o.k. Checks Gordon, a loaded gun in back of a truck, ticket Gordon. We asked him why as he had Barbara's 20 gauge. A very easy gun to unload, stupid ticket.

Talking about Gordon brings back a memory of his first pheasant hunt at the "Ranch". He was hunting with my dad & I on or around Hearn Avenue. He shot a pheasant, broke its wing and it ran to a chicken farm and up into a coop. Gordon went to the farmer and asked if he could get the pheasant. The farmer said, "Okay". Gordon went in and got his pheasant and brought it over to me and my dad. The bird was still alive, broken wing and able to run away if dropped. My dad, the old country farm boy wanted to know why the tough marine couldn't wring the pheasant's neck.

Another dove hunt that was memorable was about 1957 or '58. We were hunting straight out Primrose Ave on Pimentel land. The doves were all over and not flying far and we were running low on shells. Our cousin Vaughny

(Aunt Mary's son) had come along even though he had no gun and was not old enough to hunt. We told him to go back to the ranch and get us more shells from our cars and trucks. We kept hunting until we had no more shells. It was about two hours and no Vaughny, we started back and were almost to the ranch yard and there is Vaughny coming out the gate. We said what took you so long. He said they were having breakfast and he was hungry and sat down to eat. Boy! What a nut. As a kid he was a nut.

When we were married in September 1955, I took Barbara along to pheasant hunt on the ranch in November. She was a real trooper & walked all over the ranch. Looking back, we sure had a lot of fun when we were young & agile. Many a time, we would hunt alone, just the two of us. Sometimes we would take "Tina", old Charlie's little dog. Size doesn't matter as she was a good hunting dog. After a few years I bought Barbara a nice Aya 20 gauge double. She loved that gun & hunted with it until John was born in 1956. In most of our hunting adventures together she was my dog, I couldn't run so I told her she had to chase down the cripples. It was comical to see her run with all her heavy clothes, and heavy boots. Sometimes it was icy & wet and she wore knee boots, really fun to watch, but she was always a great sport. The last time Barbara & I hunted together was at her cousin's deer club in Pescadero. It was between the coast highway & the town of Pescadero. Coming into town you turned right & headed south. We had the keys for all the gates. This trip consisted of Barbara, me, Barbara's father Al & her Uncle Jack. Jack was the person who got us into this property and had secured the keys. By the way Barbara was about 6 or 7 months pregnant. But Barbara "The Nurse" said she would be alright to hunt. She really liked hunting, and on that day, she had on her hunting clothes but wore a colorful short smock, a kind of short blouse. We were hunting a small hill and along the bottom it was plowed. I couldn't walk the steep hill, so Barbara walked up & started down & across. I walked along the lower edge of the hill. The brush was thick & about four to six feet high. As Barbara moved down & across, quail started flying down in front of me. I shot at about four bunches & got one bird. With all the shooting, Barbara thought I got three or six birds. When she got down to me, she was a little dirty & sweaty as it was a warm morning. Boy, was she disappointed in me for one bird, for all that shooting and her hard work.

Later on that afternoon we rode in Barbara's cousin Frank Conti's WW II Jeep as he had given Jack the keys to the Jeep also. Jack drove all over the property up & down hills & way back in the property. Barbara and I in the

back, Al & Jack in front. Jack started down a steep trail in four-wheel drive & when we approached a crossroad we were still moving quite fast. Jack pulled the hand brake & stood on the brake pedal & made a quick 90-degree turn. I still don't know why we didn't turn over or fall out. As we traveled along the bottom land, we saw a bobcat & I was the only one with a gun open, with two shells in my hand. By the time I loaded and shot he or she was on the move. Needless to say, another miss. On the way back to our starting point riding and thumping along in a stiff jeep my kidneys were killing me. I got out & walked the rest of the way when I could see our car. It took me three quarters of an hour but I felt better. In her condition Barbara was a-okay.

All that bumping along must have had some effect, as son John was born about one and a half months later, five weeks early.

The last time we hunted at Frank's deer club, my brother & I went together. I had my new Browning over/under. We were hunting rabbits (cottontail) & quail. We were out back walking along an old road & could hear the quail but never saw them. We didn't have a dog. As we were walking along, I tripped & didn't want to damage my new shotgun (which was on safety always until I was ready to shoot). So, as I fell, I lifted it level & had it fall flat in some soft mud. As I am laying in the mud, my brother goes over and picks up the shotgun, looks it over and wipes mud off of it & says, "Boy you're lucky it's okay."

After The Pedranzini's sold the Santa Rosa ranch. I was invited to hunt the St Vincent's pheasant club. My friend Lee Frey was a member. I hunted with him a few times and then joined myself. St. Vincent's was a Catholic Church, home & school for boys (troubled or ?). When we had birds to clean the boys would come out on Saturday and Sunday & clean & feather birds for 50¢ each. The cost of membership was \$250.00. When I joined & initiated you were allowed to get twenty birds. You could also rent a hunting dog for a fee/hr. I hunted there for about five years. Barbara liked to eat those pheasants compared to the wild ones on the Ranch at Santa Rosa. These birds were grain fed and were planted the night before a hunting day. I took family and employees and had a lot of fun hunting & eating. Sometimes I would pick up son John from school, Saint Ignatius High School at 2:30-3:00 PM, zip over to St. Vincent's and hunt from 3:30- 5:30 PM. I had bought a Browning A-5 20 gauge 3" for him (a beautiful gun).

One time I took Barbara (by now she had a Browning side by side 20 gauge 3"). A note here is in order. Our house was burglarized a short time ago and they took all my shotguns. We had good insurance and they paid to replace all of them. It took a while to get my Browning back, it finally came in and it was done through Abercrombie and Fitch. Barbara's Aya 20-gauge shotgun was unavailable, therefore I bought her a Browning double 3 inch and these guns were made in Japan. It was a beautiful shotgun and this is what she used from then on. Leon & Tom Chasseur (our two employees) accompanied us on this hunt. Tom didn't have a license or a gun, but he came anyway. I shot a pheasant, winged it & it ran into a barn. Tom ran after it, and we heard banging of wood & out comes Tom with the pheasant. He got it with a 2x4 (a good day).

When no one else was at the club, the manager George, let me drive out in my pickup truck. The rules said no autos. I was an exception. One time three of us went out & they gave us a "German short hair" called "Gus". O boy. As we hunted Gus did a good job until I missed two birds and after that he left us & went back to the club. When we came back later, the manager George said, "I see you missed two birds". He said, "Gus came back & we knew. If a hunter misses two birds he leaves. If you shoot & knock down birds he'll stay with you until you're done". We always had fun at St Vincent's.

One day a notice was posted, and a letter was sent to all members that the club was to be closed. The reason for its closing was that a judge from the San Francisco judicial system, who was invited to hunt there, thought that to have guns & hunting on property owned by the church & school was wrong. He took it upon himself to force its closing. Too bad.

After the closing of St Vincent's, I joined Black Point Pheasant Club. It was also a great pheasant club & still close to the city. The price was a little higher but so was everything else. The manager was very accommodating & they dressed the birds for a fee also. One time I took Leon, Bob Borbeck, Robert & John. It was late November. Robert was about twelve & Barbara remembered how we dressed when she hunted so she sent him along with a pair of Keds & a good jacket. It was a frosty morning & as we came back in, the manager said to Robert, who had frost all over his Keds, "Either you're crazy or you're one tough kid". Robert said, "My mom sent me like this". Barbara felt bad when we told her how cold it was, remember this was November.

A few years later the nephew of Joe Cherolus, of Joe's Nursery asked me to join a duck club with him in Los Banos. I think it was called "Six Gun". I had never hunted ducks before but had heard a lot about it from my uncles Joe & Louie Broucaret. My new partner's name was Rick & we took a ride to check out the club. The year was 1975, right in the middle of a big drought, not a good time to go duck hunting. When we arrived Rick showed me what they referred to as a cabin. Compared to this shack, our childhood cabins in La Honda were palaces. These hovels were drafty, no water, no electricity, spring & no mattress & rat droppings everywhere. Needless to say, I wouldn't be staying there. Rick and I decided to just hunt on Wednesday or Sunday and drive down each day. We'd start early, eat breakfast in Los Banos & then get to our blind before shooting time. Rick provided the decoys. That first year we didn't get many ducks, too much nice weather. I had our new '74 Suburban which made for a nice ride. We hunted there for two years.

Now I connected with a fellow gardener Jean Pierre Negueloua. He had found an area in the Napa River area. When we saw it, it didn't look too inviting to ducks. We stopped at a marina for a burger and the owner said her brother had an area and might rent it to us. She set up a trial hunt and her brother had a little boat type thing to pull me out to the blind. It was actually a metal mortar box to mix mortar. We met him at the marina & motored out and down the Napa River and down some sloughs. We then walked over the bank, up and over the levy and out to the blind. The three of us hunkered down & as it got light, we could hear ducks down and chattering. The owner Al Giovanini shot in the air and ducks started flying & coming within range. We all limited out, seven sprig each (a sprig is a northern pintail duck). Needless to say, we signed up for the season. We could hunt each Wednesday as the owner & his nephews hunted the weekend. It worked out for us as it was not far from San Francisco.

The process of getting to the blind was quite an undertaking for us. Jean Pierre would come to my house 79 Forest Knolls Drive (San Francisco). We went over the Golden Gate Bridge, up 101 Freeway, Napa Turn off. Just before Sonoma Road we kept in the right lane until we got to Cutting Road (We passed an area that was building the Carneros Vineyards). We drove to the end of Cutting Road, to Al's sister's marina. Here we had secured a weekly rental of a small rowboat (wood). We had borrowed a 9- horsepower. outboard motor from our friend Pierre Apheceix. We'd put the motor on the boat, all our guns, food & gear & set off down the Napa River. We had a

flashlight, life preserver cushions, ropes and oars. We wore our waders and duck jackets. If the boat sank, I don't know if those cushions would hold a person up with our waders and duck jackets. Down the river we'd go along the right of center of the river, in case we went under. We were only about ten feet from the riverbank. Looking south we could see a lighted marker in the middle of the river. At about 1/4 mile before the marker, we'd turn right into a slough. Remember it's dark or sometimes foggy down to 20' visibility. A little way into the slough it gets shallow and at low tide, really shallow one foot deep. There were poles stuck in the mud to let you know the shallow areas. A few times we'd churn up some mud & have to maneuver to deeper water. After we got through this area it was smooth sailing. We'd go along till we come to a Y with a cabin on the point, it also had a dock. We veered left and went down this slough till we got to the area we knew to pull into. This slough was about 25' wide. We pulled up to the bank. I was captain & motorman. Jean Pierre was in front and he climbed ashore, tied the boat up tight & started to unload. I passed him all the gear & then I climbed ashore. We went over the levy & in front of us was the flooded area. It was all pickle weed with a little open water area that formed the pond, with decoys & blinds (3). Al had left the small, galvanized metal mortar box for me and our gear. Jean Pierre would pull me and our gear out to the blinds. He had asthma, really bad, and had a hard time breathing & exerting. He'd stop & take a puff of his inhaler. He really wanted to hunt ducks. We settled in, it was getting light, and the ducks were flying. The whole area looked different in daylight. Now, the calling & shooting began.

Mostly this is a narrative & not so much about duck hunting but about our adventure. One day we took off from the dock at the marina & motored to the area where we tied up, went over the bank & our little mortar box was not there. What to do? We loaded our gear on our backs. I took one oar out of the boat so I could use it as a staff, held on to Jean Pierre's shoulder & limped/walked about a half mile miles out to the blinds through pickle weed & water. By the time we arrived out blind it was getting light. We were all sweaty from our ordeal but ready to hunt. Quite an ordeal to maybe shoot a duck or two.

Another day we stayed out hunting from 5:30 AM till 4:30 PM. There are tides in rivers & sloughs as there are in bays & oceans. Two dumb duck hunters didn't know the dynamics of this. Boy, what a surprise. When we climbed over the bank our boat was tied up tight to the bank as we had left it,

but the stern & motor were under water. Boy, were we dumbfounded. What had happened was - when the tide went out it must have been a big drop as the front of the boat was tied up tight against the bank & the back of the boat dropped with the tide. Putting the boat at about a sixty-degree angle. This and the weight of the motor put the transom almost to the surface of the water. Water leaked in below a 2" board on the transom. When enough water got into the back of the boat the weight became greater and water came over the transom & sunk the back of the boat. We were able to rock the boat & got some of the water out, so the transom was high enough that water was not coming in over it. Jean Pierre was able to remove the motor, so the boat was lighter & we were able to turn it over and get the water out. Now we had to put the motor back on & load up. We thought we'd better get back to the marina before dark or our only hope was that the owner knew we were out there as our car was in the parking area. It's hard to believe that at night, on a clear night you can see the lights of Oakland but feel so out in the boonies. Remember no cell phones yet.

We got in the boat and tried to start the motor, no go. Jean Pierre says, "What are we going to do?". I tell him, "I can row but it will take a couple of hours." So off we go. We get to the dock where the cabin is at the end of our slough. We tied up, I took off the engine cover & removed the boot on the spark plug. I blow the inside of it & put it back on. I try to start the motor again. No go, we fret and swear. I tell Jean Pierre that its best to stay here in the cabin & have someone come for us as the tide is coming in fast and I don't think I can row against it. I tried the motor again & it started. I never would have believed it could happen. I tell Jean Pierre to stay on the dock & I'd run the boat in some circles & runs to make sure it will keep running. It did. So, we were on our way. When we got to the Y in the slough to the main river another boat was there & the guy waved us over. Another duck hunter, but out of gas. So, we towed him in. When we got to the marina dock & unloaded, we talked to this guy & he said, "Yeah I saw your boat underwater". On our way driving home we said if we knew he saw our boat underwater & didn't stop & signal us of trouble, we wouldn't have helped him. I called our friend Pierre Apheciex about how we sunk his motor and he said, he's done it a few times, so I felt better. After I got the motor home, I took off the engine cover and washed the motor out and air dried it. I then put it in a garbage can of clean water and ran it. It's been running ever since ...

Another time I decided it would be better to pull the motor up with the propeller out of the water when we anchored. What happened this time when I put the motor down, was that the fuel hose from the tank to the motor fell off. We found that the fitting at the motor broke off when I pulled the motor up. Stuck again. We are learning good lessons. No gas to the engine. I row to the cabin dock, and we take stock of our situation. Jean Pierre had an idea of holding the broken hose to the broken inlet of the motor and he would keep squeezing the ball on the fuel line hose from the tank. We tried it and it worked with some fuel leaking, but we had lots of fuel. We're both in the boat, me steering and holding the hose to the engine and Jean Pierre squeezing the ball. We ran in circles near the dock & found that it worked well. We start off for the main river & the marina. We get out of sync. a few times by either of us but we make it back. All's well that ends well. I take the broken parts to a Mercury marine dealer, and he gets us the part. It's pot metal, so from now on whenever I pull the motor up, I remove the fuel hose first and from then on that problem was solved. Think that's the last of our adventures? Wait and see.

Another great day we took Maurice, Jean Pierre's younger son (he didn't hunt yet because of his age; but in later years became a great duck hunter). By now we knew about tides and left a long rope from boat to bank so we wouldn't sink it again. This time when we got back to our boat, we found it high on top of the bank, half off and half on. What had happened was with high tide and a long rope the boat floated along the top of the bank. When the tide went out it sat there. Climbing on the boat with waders Jean Pierre & Maurice had to take the motor, gas can, seat cushions, oars and other stuff out of the boat to make it lighter so they could drag it to the middle of the slough as the tide was very low that afternoon. Now they had to put all that stuff back in the boat plus all our gear. Our gear consisted of coffee, lunch, snacks, guns, shells, etc. Lots of stuff. Now we had to plod through mud for about ten feet to get into the boat. Now we were on our way. Another success - All's well that ends well, but that is what duck hunting is all about when you are new at it.

We learned as we go, I went home and made an anchor out of a gallon can, a u-bolt & cement. I tied a nylon rope to it and we had our anchor. Now when we tied up to the bank we unloaded at the bank, then disconnected the fuel line and put up the motor. Jean Pierre held the bow rope, pushed me and the boat out in the middle of the slough. I would throw out our new

anchor and Jean Pierre would pull me to the bank to get off. Then we would tie the boat off with enough slack so it would not end up on the bank, even with a very high tide. Like I said before we were always learning.

I wrote before that at times the Napa River area gets really socked in tule fog. On this day when we drove into the marina we could hardly see the dock. But by now, I think you could tell that these two crazy duck hunters would venture out anyways. We started down river as usual as we had many times in the fog but this time it was really low visibility. We usually went down the middle of the river and sighted the buoy light to follow. This time it was so thick I couldn't see the light. After a distance I could see the light and had a sigh of relief. After a while the light got closer, and I headed right for it knowing we were close to our turn off. As we went along and got closer to the light, I was shocked that it wasn't the beacon but the wheelhouse of a tug boat which we knew of, that pulls barges of gravel up river to the city of Napa. By the time I saw it, both boats were closing fast. I turned hard left, close to the left bank so if the wake of the tug swamped us we could beach our boat along the bank. When I first knew it was the tug, I told Jean Pierre to grab a flotation cushion and hang on. As the tug went by, I could see the man steering the tug in a well-lit cabin. He didn't or couldn't see us. We had no lights on our little 14' rowboat. We had never seen another boat on the river at that hour. If he had run over us there would be nothing left. We found out later the tug had a 5' propeller and lots of horsepower. After getting by the tug, we finally saw the right beacon and turned into our familiar slough. With the low fog, we started churning mud before we could see our marking poles. Once through this area it was smooth sailing. As I said we are always learning. We learned about tides, fog and safety. The next week when we arrived at the marina it was socked in again. This time we loaded our gear in the boat, got back in your car, had some coffee and talked of our close call the previous week. We waited till we could see. We were lucky and learned a valuable lesson.

The next season, the owner Al knew us well enough to make new arrangements. He gave us a key to two or three gates coming through dairy land so that we could drive to his dock across from his cabin. Thereafter, we wouldn't have to rent a boat from his sister and have a long boat ride to our drop point to the duck blind. The only problem with this scenario was that we would need a boat from the dock on one side of the slough to the other. As I said before, Al owned a marina on the Napa River and he had an old boat we

could have for \$75.00. We thought that it was reasonable price if it was seaworthy. We made an appointment with him and went to his marina on a Sunday. I brought Robert and Jean Pierre brought his two kids Maurice & Lisa. Robert and Maurice were about nine or ten. Al said that the boat was tied up at the end of dock 10. Jean and I were walking out dock 10 and the kids ran ahead. When they got to the last boat Maurice and Lisa jumped aboard this beautiful 20' cabin cruiser with the owner on board. Robert didn't board and said, "I don't think this is the boat as it looks quite expensive." Maurice said, "Yes this is the boat, my dad isn't cheap, this is the boat." As the kids were running around the boat all happy, the owner asked what they were doing. Maurice said my dad had just bought this boat. The owner said it's not for sale. By now Jean & I had arrived, and Jean said, "What are you kids doing on that boat?!" They said, "I thought you bought it." Jean said, "Get off !" and apologized to the owner. Eight feet away across the end of the dock was a 10'- 12' old green wooden boat. The one we purchased for \$75.00. Boy, were his kids disappointed. I climbed aboard the old boat for an inspection. It was an old speed boat with a front deck, steering wheel, good transom & cavitation plates.

Best of all, it was sound and dry, just enough for our needs. We went to the office, paid, and told Al.e'd put our friend Pierre's motor on it. I motored it down the river to the dock across from his cabin and Jean Pierre would meet me there with the kids. The journey was easy as it was daylight, but it took about forty-five minutes.

Now our duck hunting journey was going to be easier and shorter. About this time Barbara and I, Robert, Pierre Apheceix, and my employee Leon had gone abalone diving below Salt Point and had our limit of abalone. We stopped to see an old friend, gardener and association member, Ed Craig and his wife Juanita. They lived in a beautiful home almost under the Highway One bridge that goes over the Russian River. We visited, gave them an abalone and as we were talking about my duck hunting, Ed said he had found a small fiberglass boat coming down the river after a heavy rainstorm. I looked at it and bought it (\$125.00). When we go diving the Suburban is full. I went back on the weekend and brought it home. I gave it a camouflage paint job as we would use it to go out to the blind. With the camouflage we could just leave it by some grass. We would now carry this little plastic boat in the Suburban with all our gear. When we parked at the dock, where our new old boat was tied up, we'd put all our gear into the little boat with a long rope tied

to the front. We'd walked down a ramp to the dock, pulled the little boat down the slope of the bank and tie it to the big boat and motor down to our spot to go over the levy. Jean Pierre pulled the loaded little boat up and over the levy and I'd tie & anchor the big boat so it would be safe even if the tide changed. With the little boat over the levy, Jean Pierre would pull me and all our gear out to the blind. Coming back, it would all be reversed. Lots of work for a few ducks.

One time when we got to our spot to go over the levy, I noticed my shotgun was missing. I thought it fell out of the little boat as it was towed down the slough to our drop spot. But we had traveled slowly and the water was calm. We left our gear and motored back to where we slid the little boat down the bank and there was my shotgun three feet from the water's edge. Another lesson learned. Pack the little boat better & keep track of our gear.

One morning we went out and the night before Barbara and I and the kids had just come back from Hawaii and here I was in all my duck hunting clothes and waders, being pulled in the little boat. My body was still quite warm from Hawaii, frost all over. Jean Pierre pulling, wheezing, spraying his atomizer and me pushing with a frosted pole through thin ice. A real sight to behold.

Another time we brought our friend and my employee Jim Burkett along and we were going to stay over nite in the owner's cabin. A shack but it was dry & no wind coming in. It was quite snug. It had beds and springs. We brought Bekins blankets & sleeping bags. We had to bring water, food, wood to burn in the wood stove and our picnic basket for dishes & utensils. We thought we were living high as we had a real toilet. You had to go outside and get a bucket of water from the slough to flush. It was quite an adventure. The first day was a slow day as far as the ducks were concerned. That day, Jean Pierre and I elected to stay till dark as we weren't going to drive home that night. Jim went back to the cabin early, when we started back the tule tog rolled in. Visibility 10'. The way back to the levy was usually easy with daylight. Now it was dark and low fog. We got off our bearings and knew we were way off, after moving along for 20-30 minutes, three times the amount of time it usually took. We started to call Jim, yelling quite loudly. With the heavy fog, the sound bounces back at you and you can't get a fix on the other person. About one and a half hours from the start, we met Jim on the levy. Now a twenty-minute walk back to the cabin. Now get our food ready. Boy, it really tasted great. We all had a great sleep after that long day.

New duck club! When the duck hunting at Napa River was not productive, Jean Pierre & I started looking for a new place to hunt. Jean Pierre had a bowling friend "Ted" who was joining a club in the Suisun marshes, we would share the blind. The three of us, only two at a time. Now we'd have to supply our own decoys for our blind. Ted had some and found an ad for some used decoys. The decoys get dirty with use as they stay anchored in the pond day and night for the season. Each year you paint or freshen up your decoys.

Jean Pierre did a lot of work at the blind and also the first observation. Ted was always busy. The blind cost us \$1,500.00 for the season which came to \$500.00 each. This club was a lot closer to San Francisco and we'd get there in about forty minutes from my house. The club consisted of a nice (by our standard after my other two clubs) cabin with electricity, phone, full kitchen, two bathrooms, shower, a secure storeroom for our boat motors, five bedrooms, an alarm system, and a dock for our boats. This club had canals all through the property, so you could motor out right to your blind. The main canals were about ten feet wide and approximately 4'-5' deep. When you got to your pond you turned in and motored up to your blind. A real convenience from our past clubs.

Ted had a boat and we had Pierre Apheceix's motor as before. We wanted to really camouflage our blind, so we went over on a Sunday a few weeks before the season opened. I took Robert and Jean took his younger son Maurice. We went in Jean Pierre's van (its class was called "Chateau"). We loaded tools, lumber, chicken wire, etc. We started out early and stopped for breakfast. When we got to the club house Jean Pierre went into the living room as he had forgotten about all the Playboy pictures on the walls. His son was about nine or ten years old, as was Robert. He proceeded taking them all down. The members were not happy, but Jean Pierre prevailed. No water yet on the property, so we were able to just walk out to our blind. It was hot and we had a lot of stuff to carry. The boys helped with this job. I'd like to go back to our breakfast which we had in San Rafael at the "Copper Penny". We all had a hearty breakfast as we had some hard work ahead. As we were finishing our breakfast, Robert said, "Dad I'm full", and I said, "Leave it." At this, Jean Pierre, always the "macho guy" said, "Look at my boy he eats all his food." Now I can go on with the walking, hauling and building up our blind and hiding place for our boat. After we were out working at the blind site for about thirty minutes Maurice says, "Daddy I feel sick" and proceeds to throw

up his breakfast. Robert got a kick out of that and had a smirk on his face. Poetic justice.

When the first day of duck hunting started on October 14th, we were ready. We'd leave my house at about 4:30 AM. Take the Oakland Bay Bridge, up highway 80 a little past the Carquinez Bridge. We'd turn right towards Suisun and turn left before the bridge to Martinez. We'd pass some refineries and about two miles along a turn off and end at the duck club. We'd cross the train track and park in front of the cabin. We'd go in and some members came the night before as some lived a long way away. We usually came in the morning, hunted till 10:00 AM, started home and just before the Carquinez Bridge there was a good place for breakfast or lunch. We ate there and got home so we could work for four hours. At this club we could hunt on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday. On this first day, it was another of our duck hunting adventures. We'd get our (Pierre Apheceix's) motor and gas can, put the motor on the boat, our guns, flotation seats, small back packs for shells, coffee, etc. Now it was still dark and foggy down low. I always run the motor and Jean Pierre would direct me down the sloughs. These waterways were actually in fields diked off from the bay with ways to let the right amount of bay water in or when there was a high tide the whole area would be flooded. We'd motored out looking for our left turn as the main channel was about ten feet wide and about 5-6' deep. If we had trouble, you'd just bank the boat.

On our first time out, we hit the left turn but missed our next left into our area & blind. We finally made it and put the boat into our camouflaged garage structure we had built for it. That day we got a few ducks. When it got light, we could see looking south toward Suisun Bay, the "moth-ball fleet", lots of old ships, quite a sight. After we hunted a while, about 9:00 or 10:00 AM, pigeons would fly over us, and we had some pass shooting. All the members shot at them, brought them in, feathered and cleaned them and they were put into the club's freezer. When we had enough, we had pigeon and polenta feed. We had an Italian member "Roy" and he did a great cooking job. On other nights we might have a steak barbecue. This was my first new experience of life at a real duck club.

The next year at this club on opening day all the ducks were dropping into an adjacent club, and we had no action. By the next week, we found that that club had been baiting and got busted and was closed down by the game wardens. Now our hunting got better. On some Wednesdays, when we were

all alone, we had some good shooting. One day , some Canadian geese come into a near pond. They were not legal to shoot but it was a sight to see in person.

One outing on a Saturday, Jean Pierre brought his son Maurice to hunt with him. I hunted with another member. This member was a good shot, an excellent caller and also had a well-trained retriever. We both got our limits that day. Once I wounded a duck and my partner sent his dog out on the long retrieve. When the dog came back, the owner had the dog give me the duck. I wasn't fast enough on the pickup and the duck flew away, not far. The dog looked at me as if to say, "I did all that work and you let it get away". When he brought it back the second time, I made sure to get hold of that duck.

Hunting at private clubs is problematic as is refuge hunting. I always said if we'd always limit out, there would be no more ducks. The president of this club was a gentleman named "Chuck" and he was partnered with "Roy." They had the best blind as the president & oldest members should. Chuck & Roy always had ducks and many times our members never matched theirs. One day we arrived at the club, and no one was around, a nice sunny day, not good for duck hunting. After we came in from hunting, over the kitchen door was a semi-auto shotgun with its receiver blown apart. It really looked nasty. By now some other members came in and told us the story, that was Chuck's gun. He and Roy were out together last week with no one else at the club. Chuck shot and the gun blew up in his face, blood all over. Lucky he was not alone. Roy got him into their boat, got to the cabin, called the sheriff, who got a helicopter medevac to get Chuck to a hospital. Chuck did not lose his eyes but was cut up pretty good. When we saw him again, he was healed up. He lectured all the members about reloading our own shells. Lots of members do it. We always thought Chuck overloaded his shells so he could make those long shots. I thought he might have loaded this one shell, had a sip of booze and forgot and added more powder. Now you had a double hot load and bang, disaster.

Another time at this club, when we came in on a Friday night to spend the weekend, a freight train was blocking the road to the club. It was a long one and we had to get our stuff to the other side before we could bring it into the cabin. I was a little apprehensive as I was slow moving and we couldn't tell if the engine was running or not. We made it with no trouble and the next morning the train was gone. One evening we were all sitting down for dinner,

and we heard some loud noise getting closer and closer to us until it was really loud. One of the members said that must be "Dave". He said he'd be coming right from the airport at SFO. It was a helicopter. Dave comes in, slacks, a nice shirt, a sweater and nice leather shoes. Some of the members were "bucks up" and some of us were regular guys but when it comes to duck hunting we are all alike. Dave belonged to two or three duck clubs and left guns & gear at each one.

A story that was told to Jean Pierre and I was that one year it was so cold that the whole area and waterways were frozen solid, about one inch thick. Well, Chuck wanted to go out anyway. The area around the dock was thin ice so Chuck & Roy started out as some members on the dock watched their progress as they went. Their boat was aluminum and as they broke ice one piece went through the hull. They scrambled to the bank, wet and cold. The other members went out & rescued them and their boat & gear. When we joined, we had a heavy wood& fiber glassed boat, and felt quite safe.

There were times that I didn't go, and Ted and Jean Pierre would go together. Ted liked to drink and always left a pint buried next to our blind. We were there one year after Ted left the club and it was a cold frosty morning so Jean Pierre grubs around for the pint and sure enough it's still there. He took a swig and felt warm & cozy. Another early morning, we are all getting our motors unlocked in the shed and putting them on our boats, hooking up the gas lines and starting them, and let them warm up. Then we'd go into the cabin for another cup of coffee and our shotguns. When we came out there are two members (firemen) and they are looking behind their boat into the water. It was icy all over and when they went to put their motor on the transom, they missed, and the motor fell into the water. The last we saw of them as we left for our blind was one of them shedding his clothes and going into the ice-cold water to retrieve their motor. When we returned, their boat and both hunters were out hunting. You know, duck hunters are crazy.

Another time, Jean Pierre was busy, so I took my son Robert for his first duck hunt! Not much action, not a good way to interest a young son in duck hunting. Nevertheless, we did continue hunting. A nice bull sprig came by, and I hit it and it sailed to the right of our blind into a lot of duck grass. After a while we were set to leave, and I thought to look for the downed duck. We rowed over to the weed area which has water about eighteen inches deep and part of the pond. Robert got out of the boat and walked through the water in

the direction of the duck. Along the way he steps in a hole and the water comes over the top of his hip boots. At the same time the duck takes off right in front of him. Not a good day. Robert never hunted ducks again.

Not to be out done Jean Pierre took Maurice one time wearing an old pair of waders with a small hole in the foot of the waders. As Maurice walked in deeper water the leak let in more water. With one cold and wet leg Maurice persevered. A really tough kid.

The next year Jean Pierre dropped out of the Suisun club and my old employee Jim Burkett joined to become my partner. Jim was not a hunter but liked and collected guns, so he joined. Jim had a fiberglass boat but it was white, so we took some old sheets, had his mother sew them together and then we dyed them some green and brown mottled colors. It worked and we hunted for one year together. We attended one of the club's famous pigeon and polenta feeds. Barbara made her fabulous cheesecake for the whole group. This cheesecake was almost five pounds. It was really delicious but after a big dinner, up late about 10:30 PM then up at 5:00 AM; I did not get a good sleep.

The last remembrance of this club was about two years later. In the newspaper an article about Charles "Chuck" Broadway the president of the club. He was indicted and found guilty of tax evasion and went to prison. Jean Pierre and I thought that the worst part, was that Chuck would be a convicted felon on his release. Convicted felons can't own a firearm or get a hunting license. To us this had to be a harsher punishment for Chuck than his fine or time in prison. Chuck was all about duck hunting.

I have now left this club and was looking for another club. When I wrote of my hunting at "Black Point Pheasant Club", I should have written about Fred Vanelli. Fred was a neighbor of Barbara's parents when they had a home on Bowdoin Street off Silver Avenue. Fred and his wife were good friends with Ang and Al and kept in touch even when they moved to Burlingame. Barbara and I were invited with Ang and Al to Vanelli's for dinner. We were quite impressed, as with almost all of the food Fred got or grew himself. Salad from his garden. Vinegar home-made. Anchovies caught, salted and preserved by him. Duck and deer meat also. Fred was quite a man and hunter. I took Fred to Pescadero Creek but not much happened, no big fish. He wasn't too impressed. Ang told Fred of my hunting club at Black Point, so I

took him and his neighbor Gino Filani to hunt there one day. Fred had a yellow Labrador retriever, and we got a few birds & some fun.

On the way home, Fred who was driving his new Ford pickup, was in the exit lane coming off the Golden Gate Bridge heading for the MacArthur Tunnel and Park Presidio Boulevard, when an older woman cuts in front of us and is sideways as we hit her and push her sideways. She almost went over the embankment on top of cars coming out of the tunnel from the marina. Before you know it the bridge captain is there and inquires what happened. Fred tells his part. The lady tells her side and tells the captain that Fred hit her. The captain says, "Yes, he hit you, but you made an illegal turn, as there is only one lane to make this exit." She didn't know how lucky she was. Fred's truck was okay to go but did need some repair. Later he called me. It was the latter part of 1975 and asked if I'd like to hunt his new duck club. My Suburban was new and so I took Fred & Gino. They put me in one blind they each took one as there were three in this pond. It was a beautiful spot right next to "Gray Lodge" with the "Sutter Buttes" to the south. I was looking around more than hunting. A couple of ducks came within range, and I dropped one. The other landed right near it. When Fred & Gino came over, they asked why I didn't shoot the pintails that landed in front of me. I was looking at the Buttes. The bird I got was a spoony and the mate landed with it. I think this trip to Fred's club was to get me interested in joining.

Now back to my joining Fred Vanelli's duck club near Colusa. I guess my trip with Fred and Gino was an invitation to join. At the time I was too busy with business, teaching, the kids' school, Hawaii & living to make that a priority. Now was the time.

After the Suisun club now was the time. I contacted Fred Vanelli. He had a double blind available. From the time I started duck hunting in Los Banos the price went from \$500 a person to \$1200 a person now at "The Buttes!" I talked to Fred and told him I was interested, and that Jean Pierre was interested too. The season was just weeks away so Fred, his family and members were going up to the club on the following Saturday to set decoys and get ready for flooding of the rice fields as his property was an actual rice farm. The rice had already been harvested. The way it all works is that the owners of these small rice farm/duck clubs' contract to a large operator to do all the work expense & the duck club/farm gets a cut of the profit. After the

rice is harvested the stubble is burned off. Now you can't burn it off = air pollution. The burning was beneficial as it killed off plant and grass diseases.

Anyway, Jean Pierre and I took off for the club with the gate combination and a map. We took my 1970 Chevrolet Malibu station wagon which we had restored with a "454" in it with a turbo "400" transmission. It was fun to drive with good punch even at 60-70 MPH, On the way to the club on two lane straight roads I'd slowly start to pass someone and just punch it leave them wondering what was in that wagon. I even did it with some Corvettes. Jean Pierre was like a kid kept telling me do it again; some fun. As usual, even with a map we couldn't find the club. After about one and a half hours after we should have been there, after trying about ten or twelve locks on different gates, we finally arrived. Fred was coming in with the tractor & trailer that they used to carry the bags of decoys out to the pond area. He gave us a dirty look as we were one and a half hours late. We helped put out the remainder of the decoys (duck) and lots of tire decoys for geese. Then Fred showed us around the property and the buildings. Fred had a small Quonset hut for him & Gino. His son and son-in-law had old house trailers. One member had an old camper. We could have an old construction shack or bring whatever we wanted. There was also another building that was the kitchen, meeting area, one bunk for guests and a TV. Very spartan but it had hot & cold running water, sink, stove, refrigerator, electricity, lights and a heater. There was another building. Inside, it had a flush toilet, water heater & behind the wall was another toilet and shower. Hot showers after a cold day in a duck blind was a real comfort. The only problem was it was about twenty feet from each & every building. Rain or ice-cold, or windy weather, you would have to run for your shelter. I always put my clothes on after my shower, but a few members ran in their birthday suits.

Jean Pierre didn't like the set up and I think he didn't like Fred. After the work was done Jean Pierre and I were invited to an early dinner as we had to go home. The others would stay over till Sunday and finish the work. The dinner was prepared by Fred and Gino. Gino had been a cook in the U.S. Army, and had worked as a cook in a restaurant. Gino was now a butcher/manager at Bell Market on Silver Avenue in San Francisco. The dinner was pasta and Gino's meat sauce and Fred's fried venison Steaks. A great meal. Jean Pierre told Fred that these steaks were the best he had ever eaten. He said he hunted deer with a lot of guys but never had venison like this. As I said

earlier Fred has been fishing and hunting for years and knows how to handle game. Over a four-year period at Fred's club I gained a few pounds.

Jean Pierre didn't want to join Fred's club but I decided I would. The custom was a double-blind partnership. I needed a partner, so Fred talked to Gino who had a friend who was looking for a club. I met with this duck hunter at Fred's home on Bowdoin Street in San Francisco. We made a deal and Fred said we could use the old construction shack. We had a little time before the first day of the season, so my new partner and I went up to the club to check out the shack & clean it up. My new partner's name was Bob Angelie. Gino "The Butcher" knew Bob as Bob was the butchers union agent for San Francisco and was also an officer in the national butchers union. When we arrived, we had some tools and did a real cleanup, it was just a shack. We had a 2x4 bunk bed, a couple of lights and that's all. Bob and I were used to more comfort than that. We decided to make some improvements.

Bob acquired a used refrigerator and a gas stove (just a small four burner) and converted it to propane. We bought a small electric water heater, a sink, and some old cabinets. We modified one cabinet for the sink and another to hold pots, pan, and utensils. I brought up our old picnic table. We did some wiring and put in a water line from the main, a trench about 100 feet long. We did most of this work in one weekend. The next weekend was duck hunting and the opening of the season. When we were not hunting, we worked on our abode. We extended the roof about four feet so when it rained, we could get under the overhang and take off our waders out of the rain. We scrounged up some pallets and some boards & made a deck under the overhang. Bob wanted real comfort & brought up a bed, a box spring, a mattress, bedding and his pillow. I brought up an old mattress, used a sleeping bag and a pillow and covered the sleeping bag with a "Bekins" blanket, as we had no heat that first season (I brought a small electric heater and that helped a little). Duck hunting on the cheap is pretty rough.

That first day at Fred's club was a a disaster for me. As I walked out to our blind which was only fifty feet out with water about 18" deep and me, waders on, small backpack and shoulder sling and shotgun over my shoulder and holding onto Bob's shoulder. I was six inches into sticky mud. I couldn't pull my bad leg out of the mud. I tried to use my right hand to pull the leg up. We made about ten to twenty feet and it was a no go. So, we turned around. I hunkered down along the bank. That day I got a wigeon. My new plan was to

bring up my little plastic boat that I used at the Napa River Club. We'd leave it along the bank as it was painted camouflage and wouldn't scare the ducks. At Fred's club we would pull blinds out of a hat each morning that we were going to hunt. Therefore, we could possibly hunt a different blind each time. I'd put my stuff in the boat and pull it along the road and then float out to the blind; Bob pulling of course. The Little Prince again.

The second year at Fred's club Fred put in gravel walks from the banks to the blinds. The water level was only about 4" - 6" of packed gravel, no mud. It was easy walking for me. The previous year none of the members talked of the walkways as other clubs had them. I think many of the members supported this idea on my behalf. It benefited all but me more so. The walk out to the duck ponds was about half a mile to the corner and if we had a far out blind, it was another three quarters of a mile. It would take me from half to three quarters of an hour to get to our blind. You really have to like duck hunting to endure this. Walking was easy as the whole way was all road. No trucks early in the dry season so as not to disturb the ducks. The gravel to the blinds was accomplished in the dry season by as many members as could make it. The dump trucks would start at the blind in a straight line for the bank and lay a layer of gravel and we'd level and contour it. It was about two feet wide of gravel and then dropped off. It worked quite well.

As owners of the club, Fred, his son Rich, and his son-in-law were the ones who set the rules. As members we had a voice, but the owners had the final say. Fred's son in law had two young sons (age 17-19+). They came up a lot and took the blinds that were not in use. All the owners and two kids were all great callers and shots.

That second year Bob bought a wood burning heater for the cabin. It worked well but ran out of heat by morning and you had to feed it wood. The next year we converted it to diesel, with a keg of diesel outside and a 3/4" copper tubing line to the burner. With the porch, good road, hot & cold running water, stove, refrigerator and now good heating, we were the talk of the club as many of them had no heat or water. The kitchen was where most of the members congregated. Now, they also came to our shack when the kitchen was packed. Fred and Gino's shack had no heat. Bob could not believe that Fred, the owner or his son and son-in-law "owners" had no heat. As I said before, sometimes it got down to 24 degrees.

The ducks really fly and try to land when it is cold and there is a good north wind. We always had a weather radio. One morning, my second year at 5:00 AM we had a 55 mile per hour wind, great for duck hunting, but Fred wouldn't let me go out to the pond, as he thought the wind would knock me off my feet. The next day was Sunday with less wind, and I was good to go. I always started out first as I was so slow. The others left about twenty minutes later and caught up with me. As I was walking down the main road, I was buffeted by some good gusts. One gust did knock me off my feet. No problem, as I have fallen many times over the years without breaking anything. I didn't tell anyone, or they probably would not let me go out without an escort.

One time I went up to the club with Paul Thompson (a former student/and employee). We went when no one else was there; it was probably the day or two before Thanksgiving. We went to the club, had dinner, barbecued steaks with mushrooms and a salad. Boy, try and barbecue when it's dark, only a flashlight, and it was about 38 degrees. We were all bundled up with hats & gloves. We got it done and had a great meal. The next morning we were up early as I promised Paul some of our family's famous pancakes (crepes). Butter, sugar, roll & eat. Paul thought they were great. Paul didn't have a gun or license but came just for the fun of it. We were in the blind in the dark after our long walk. We had thermoses of hot coffee and cookies to keep us going. There we some ducks flying, mostly pintails my favorite duck for shooting and eating. We were through by 12:00 PM noon, as we had to be home by 5:30 PM. I had four nice bull sprig (male pintails) and had sailed one down the pond. As we went down the road Paul spotted the downed duck, I had my limit of five ducks. Paul thought I was a great caller & shot. I told him when no one else is around my calling works. That day I only missed two shots.

Another time Jean Pierre came with me for an over nite hunt. I had to be back again by 5:30 PM. Everything went well till we were about to leave with a forty five minute leeway to get home by 5:30. As we loaded the Suburban we discovered the back right tire completely flat. Always prepared we jacked it up and found the spare really low on air. I had a small air pump that plugged into the car battery, but it didn't reach far enough. Jean Pierre found some wire and extended the wire to the battery. Now the pumping, really slow. We finally got enough air to get us going. We ate up more than my forty-five minutes. We took off towards Marysville so we could put more air in the tire & call home as we had no cell phones yet. Needless to say, I arrived at my in-laws one and a half hours late and Ang was quite angry, but didn't say a thing.

Barbara and our kids had almost finished their dinner by the time I got there. I thought it was a winner as I got there at all. You don't call AAA out in the sticks & still get home in time for dinner and dessert. By the way my flat was from a Schlage lock key straight up on the button of the tire as it was parked. Someone must have lost his keys, it got pushed into the soil and I drove on top of it. Boy what luck.

The next year Jean Pierre found an old 3 wheeled mail carrier. It was a Cushman 1964 painted maroon/red. He found it in San Mateo. An old couple used it around town. We looked it over and said sold. I went back a week later with son Robert and the Suburban to tow it home. We were now living at the warehouse at 425 Potrero Avenue, therefore it must have been 1982. When we arrived to pay and pick it up the owner said, we'd have to wait a few minutes as he was just finishing baking a "green tomato pie". I had heard of this pie before from one of my customers, Mrs. Frank Linna Kaye. I told the owner; I knew about the pie but had never eaten one. He said it was just like apple pie. He said he'd be making some more next week, and he'd have one for me. Back to towing my new duck buggy home. It came with a tow bar, so we tied off the steering wheel and away we went along El camino Real at 35 MPH. Boy, did it waddle along. We had to slow down. No cops, no problems and got it home. We registered it with DMV as a motorcycle, plates and all. I cleaned it up & painted it camouflage. Robert, Jim & I took it up to the club before the season. Robert had a car trailer with ramps, so it was an easy tow compared that from San Mateo. It was quite a sight at the club, but it sure beat walking. I'd drive out to the blind, get out and whoever was with me. Took it to the end of the road, parked it & covered the top and windows with the camo cover Jim and I used to cover Jim's boat at the Suisun club. We even used the "duck buggy" to move gravel and material around the club for repairs.

Another time after the rice was harvested Fred was going to change out a leaking blind. He had a new one ready to go. The farmer that was going to use his tractor and backhoe to do this job, was busy harvesting rice. Gino, Bob and I decided that we could remove the old blind and ready the hole for the new one. We didn't tell Fred, we wanted to do it because they were going to flood the field next week as the season would start. No one wanted to be in a blind, you had to bail before you could use it. We had a lot of water, juices, picks and shovels. We worked together and rested and then more digging. We were ages 65-74; boy what dummies. By the time we got it dug out Fred

arrived and asked, "What are you doing?". We said we all agreed we could do it as Bob had installed blinds before. Fred got his tractor & pulled the new blind out to the old blind. He pulled the old one out. These blinds are for two hunters and they are made out of steel and weigh about 300 pounds. We dug a little more, With the tractor and us we manhandled it into place. Now you put a 2 x 12 on each side of the blind over the four welded braces. This when finished will keep the blind from popping up when the water is in the pond. Now we covered the planks and shoveled and packed the soil around the blind. Fred towed the old blind in, and we took the tools in, cleaned them, and put them away. We took showers and went to the kitchen to prepare dinner. Fred comes in and thanks us for our work but says, "Never do that again" as he doesn't want any of us having a heart attack or heat stroke.

One year we had two new members who had a little money. One came in with a brand new 25'-30' trailer, really nice and he had two sons. Another new member owned an electric supply house and parked his nice new 25' trailer across from our cabin "shack". One night as we ate dinner, one member is deep frying a turkey, another is barbecuing elk & antelope. We were living like kings. The antelope was exceptional. The deep fried turkey was my first and it also was exceptional.

This same year we got to talking about cioppino and one thing got to another. Two members challenged each other on who made the best cioppino. A cook-off was arranged for the day of the Super Bowl. It was the 49ers against ?. The cook-off would be at the home of a member who lived in "Blackhawk." He had a beautiful home overlooking a valley facing west. He provided everyone with handwritten directions. Barbara & I took Gino and his wife. Needless to say, we got a little confused as none of us had been out that way for twenty years or more and with new freeways and developments we got lost. We had started out with a lot of extra time. As we went from here to there, we passed Fred two times going the other way. When we finally arrived at the gated community, we were not the last to arrive as others had been confused also. They had a T.V. in their pool room and the younger generation watched in there. The others, including Barbara and I, sat with the older group in the adjoining family room. We ate all kinds of cold cuts & finger food and watched the game; lots of fun. The owner's dog roamed all over & never got near the food. A great retriever and polite dog. He had a kerchief around his neck & looked quite dapper. This was the Super Bowl that the 49ers won with Joe Montana in the last three minutes of the game. Currently

everyone was on their feet yelling clapping and really carrying on. I happened to look down and saw our dapper/polite lab cleaning the plates of all the cold cuts. Boy, really polite opportunist. We were all through eating and the game was over. Now we adjointed to the great room for our cioppino cook off. It was a nice way to end our day with a '49er win.

Fred won the competition and our Blackhawk host was the loser. I was a member of this club for about four to five years at \$1,500.00 per season. The owners voted to have the members buy in and not rent. They were talking about \$20,000.00 or more per person. All the working-class guys did not go along. The guy from Blackhawk and others who had that kind of money available did. I thought I could take my family to Hawaii quite a few times for that kind of money. Guess I wasn't a die hard "duck hunter" as I thought. I heard that with this new money, and new members, they vastly improved the club and living conditions. It was now becoming a gentlemen's club.

One of the stories I had heard was that before I joined, they had a slight emergency. Two of our members went down the road to the adjacent club as they had a phone. Our members had never been to this club. They knocked on the door and the party was in full swing. The men in tuxes and the women in formals. A real lavish party. I guess Fred never forgot. That was my end to hunting or so I thought.

I did one more hunting trip some years later, probably 2015. My brother John and I were always talking about hunting doves at the ranch in Santa Rosa when we were young. My grandson Kris heard these stories and said, he and his friends' hunted doves on this boss' family property in Paso Robles, a couple of thousand acres. Kris had taken my brother there to shoot groundhogs and they had a lot of fun. My brother was a really good shot. Well anyway, Kris set a date in mid-September and made a reservation at a Holiday Inn in Atascadero where he and Chelsea lived. Kris picked us up there early and we drove out to the property. We road hunted and each time we saw doves my brother and Kris got out and walked through empty corrals shooting doves. I sat in the truck as I had my cane and was really slow. By about noon it was getting really hot, about 100 degrees or more. We were riding along a road in a valley & we saw many tarantula spiders crossing the road. Kris said that this was mating season, this is the only time we see them. We drove a little further and Kris stopped to get some water and cold drinks for us out of his cooler. While we were stopped, brother John and I got out to

stretch our legs. While we did this Kris got out three camp chairs for us, so we sat in front of the truck, drank cold water and talked all kinds of hunting, fishing & family stories. When three Broucarets (two generations) get together talking and laughing time flies. Remember, I said it was 100° or more. All three of us kept reminiscing and sweating out in the sun. After about half an hour we thought it was time to get moving. As we drove forward about one quarter of a mile, we came to a large oak tree right next to the road. We all laughed. We could have driven that distance and sat in the shade, but we elected to sit in the hot sun. What clowns.

We next hunted another coral and Kris set me against a fence post, so I'd get some shots. Kris drove ahead and did all the walking and getting the birds to move around. My brother walked along the fence line and up a slight hill. I watched him all the way. You know my brother always thought of himself as fit. I on the other hand is the handicapped brother. As John was climbing up the hill he was moving and shuffling along just like me. I was worried that he'd fall and roll down the hill. With my prayer and his determination, he made it down safely. We all got birds, but Kris got the most. We hunted till it got dark and as we were leaving, we saw a lot of wild pigs, as Kris says, that is when they move around. Kris breasted the doves and gave them all to me. Now that was my final hunt.

My brother and Paula had Opal and I to dinner and my brother cooked the doves just like old times. As we were eating John and I told the ladies about us sitting and gabbing in 100 degree heat. They thought we were the crazy ones. I also related my observations of my brother on the hill. To this day in 2020 when the family gets together Kris always smiles when I tell this story.