

PROUD TO BE A RIVER RAT
VOL. II

**CHARACTERS & CALAMITIES ALONG THE LOWER
RUSSIAN RIVER FROM THE AWARD-WINNING
COLUMN “KEEPING THE FAITH”**

ROBERT JONES



McCaa Books • Santa Rosa, CA



McCaa Books
684 Benicia Drive #50
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

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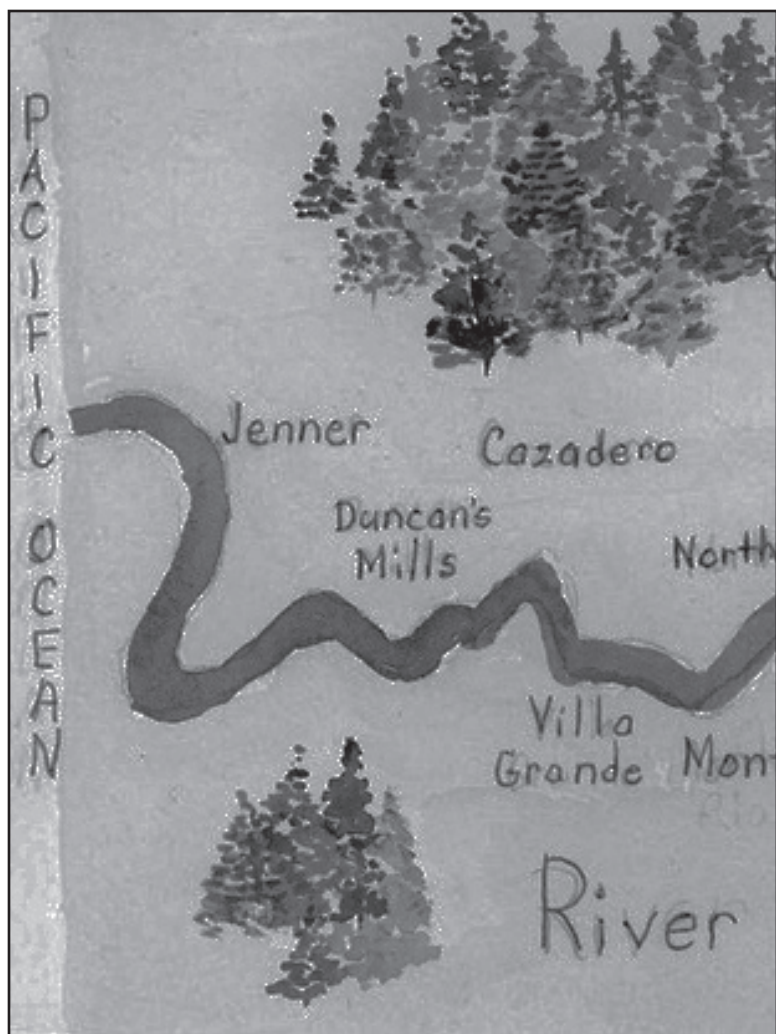
ISBN 978-1-9856-3143-4

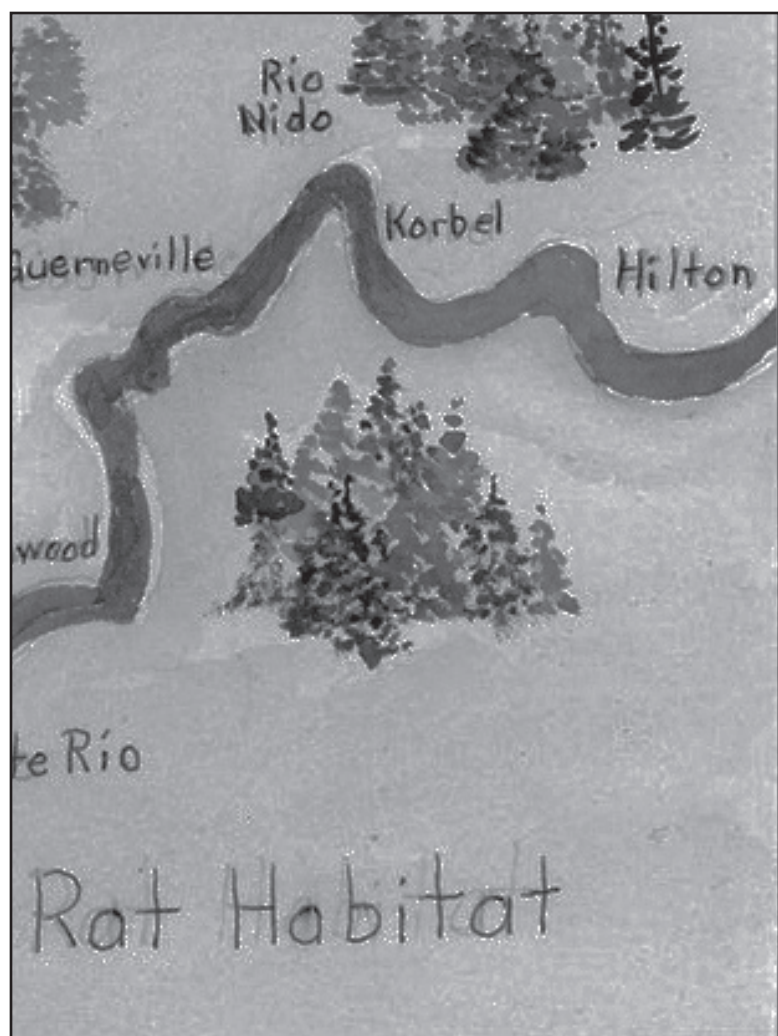
First published in 2021 by McCaa Books,
an imprint of McCaa Publications.

Printed in the United States of America
Set in Minion Pro

Front cover images courtesy of Robert Jones.
“River Rat Habitat Map” drawn by Arline Jones, 2021.
Background cover image courtesy of Creighton Bell.

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Preface

We begin with a quick review of two important terms from Volume I, “the River” being the first one. The habit has formed in these parts to call the Russian River itself simply “the River,” always capitalized in print.

But the same term also refers to the towns, smaller settlements, and collections of summer cabins along the banks of the Russian River as it makes its meandering westward way from Forestville where the redwoods begin to Jenner-By-The-Sea. People in the Bay Area will say, “We’re going up to the River for the weekend,” which means they will spend some time in their cabin or at a resort which may or may not be on the River or even have it in view, but it is probably less than a mile away. All of this is “the River.”

At the end of its journey, the Russian River either pours itself into the Pacific Ocean or pools in an estuary that can spread back for miles. It will stay that way until the sandbar closing the mouth of the River is washed away.

That sandbar seems to come and go as it pleases, and sometimes it causes consternation as far upstream as Duncans Mills and beyond. This is because when the River can’t get to the sea for a length of time it backs up fearsomely and threatens the summer cabins and year round houses along its banks, not to mention the pasture land and hayfields that become inundated, thereby reducing what the ranchers have to harvest and what the cattle and sheep in those fields have to eat. It’s not a good situation.

Once somebody had the idea to blast the sandbar away. Heavy charges of explosives were set in and under the sandbar, supposedly in strategic places, and someone shouted, “One, two, three, go!” There was a deep rumbling but somewhat muffled explosion, and tons of sand rose up a foot or two above the mouth of the River in a kind of blob. The River ran freely for the moment, splashing joyfully into the ocean, and the beginning of shouts of triumph could be heard. But then all that sand just plopped down pretty much where it had been, and the River was closed off again. With great effort and expense, the River was opened for the few seconds while the wet sand was in the air. To their credit, I think the people in charge of this project tried it only once.

Then there was the situation that arose thirty or forty years ago when a company interested in scooping gravel out of the last half mile of the Russian River made application to Dr. Joseph and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Dr. Joseph, in his official capacity as the Board's executive director, found no fault with the application, and so the company began to survey the area and set up the apparatus to string huge cables westward into the frothy ocean where great winches rode the waves upon platforms chained to the seabed.

Fastened to these cables were huge iron scoops, each with the capacity of a good sized room and weighing several tons. The idea was for the scoops to dredge up the gravel that is constantly being washed into this part of the River. These gravel-filled scoops would be pulled out of the mouth of the River by the winches, and the gravel would be poured into barges and carried away, thereby rendering the channel deep and flowing. The river would replace the gravel during the next spate of high water, and the process would go on forever, giving a never ending supply of material for new roads and buildings all around the Bay Area.

The story goes that while the cables were being strung, while the huge scooping pots were being lowered into the river, while the barges were being anchored in their places, an old man was seen observing all of this from a perch on the hillside above Jenner. Because his name has gotten away from us, and because a good bit of this may very well be legend, we'll call him The Old Man of the Mountain.

From time to time The Old Man of the Mountain would come down from his perch to examine the equipment the dredging company was installing. He would look at the great scooping pots that were being lowered into the river. He would look at the barges and their sturdy cable moorings. He would look at the steam shovels and pile drivers and conveyor belts. And he would cluck his tongue and shake his head. Then he would return to his hillside perch and watch some more.

That winter we had what was for then a normal amount of rain, which means it rained a lot but not enough to flood our towns or anything. In February, we had a good roaring three day storm, and all the creeks rose and the Russian River flowed close to capacity. The rush of water came swirling into the lower part of the River with tremendous force and picked up those multi-ton iron scoops, picked up those barges, picked up those cables and the apparatus they were attached to and deposited them a good way out in the Pacific Ocean. While this was happening,

The Old Man of the Mountain watched from his hillside perch and nodded his head slowly up and down.

Some few days later, with the winter sun brightly shining as it often does after a storm, it was discovered that all traces of the attempt to mine gravel from the last half mile of the Russian River had vanished. The clearing water flowed smoothly past Penny Island, past Jenner, and beautifully out to the open sea.

On that very day, The Old Man of the Mountain came down off his hillside to DeCarly's store in Duncan's Mills to replenish his supplies. While he was there he overheard some folks talking about the dredging equipment being swept into the ocean.

"I watched this river rise and fall most of my life," The Old Man of the Mountain said. "I coulda told 'em that would happen."

"Then why didn't you tell 'em?" somebody wanted to know.

"They didn't ask," said The Old Man of the Mountain, and he gathered up his supplies and went home.

Now Jenner's environmental activist Virginia Hechtman would have told you that it took organized political effort to stop the dredging operation, and there is good evidence to back her up. But The Old Man of the Mountain says that the River stopped the dredgers all by itself, and anyone who knows the River knows that this makes a lot of sense too. Either way, there are many facets to the River, some as benevolent and peaceful as that old song "Up a Lazy River," and some as a powerful force of nature that has little mercy for what's in its way.

This gets us to the second important term we must be aware of. "River Rat," we noted in Volume I, was a designation for someone born and raised along the lower Russian River in the earliest logging and lumber days going back well into the nineteenth century. Then it became the quite precise label for those young scholars from the River area who, before there was El Molino High School in Forestville, rode the train and then transferred to a bus that took them to Analy High School in Sebastopol. There they were branded River Rats by high-schoolers from tonier places like Bloomfield and Graton, not to mention Sebastopol itself.

Wouldn't you know, this branding became a badge of honor among River kids, and to this day they hold River Rat Reunions every couple of years. The group even circulates a newsletter called "Rodent Review."

I think it is only right and proper that these formerly persecuted kids, many of whom are well into their eighties or beyond these days, have considered themselves the most authentic and self-aware examples of the River Rat species still among us. In mostly quiet and unassuming ways, they are deeply proud to be River Rats.

But then there is the large group of us who came to live here for one reason or another. Our family arrived in 1966 so I could be minister of the Community Churches of Guerneville and Monte Rio, and wife Arline, as it turned out, became a teacher at Guerneville School. Like many others, we stuck it out through heavy rains and high water. Sometimes we were flooded in for days while others were flooded out of homes and businesses. Still we stayed. We came to love the place for its stands of tall trees, its steep green hills, its meandering River, and its collection of free spirited, mostly kind and friendly, every-day sort of people.

It's not so much that those of us in this category claim the name "River Rat" for ourselves but that we are called River Rats by those in more urbane settings to the east and south of us. And even though the term is sometimes uttered somewhat derisively right to our faces, we accept that we're not equal in status with those native born River Rats who faced persecution in high school. Still, we take a good measure of pride in being considered a later variation of the species. There are more than a few of this kind of River Rat included in what follows.

I'm sure some folks will not agree with my take on these designations, and they are certainly entitled to express their understanding of these crucial matters as they wish. But all told, I think you can be sure that we all love the River for many of the same reasons, and that's the main thing.

* * * * *

Now I feel I must tell you that this second volume of *Proud to be a River Rat* features friend after friend I have known and cared about over fifty some years, almost all of whom are no longer in this world. As I compiled this book, I found myself wanting these friends back from whatever mysteries or glories hide them from me. And I began to fear that many who read this book will have similar feelings, for these were our people, dear to us in ways we didn't always know at the time.

Because of this, I have been on the verge of not going on with Volume II. I didn't want to put people through a renewal of sad memories. But every time I told folks how I felt about this, they said, "But you have to do it. You honor these people by helping us remember them." So that's what I've tried to do.

Since every selection in this book appeared in one or another of our lower Russian River weekly newspapers sometime in the last fifty years or so, all I've done is gather them together in one place. Doing so has caused me to feel that I am "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses," as the Bible puts it, with those who have gone before us still speaking, still laughing and crying, still sharing their lives in their particular Russian River ways.

* * * * *

The early history of the lower Russian River has been chronicled in Raymond Clar's remembrance *Out of the River Mist* and in John Schubert's well-researched *Guerneville Early Days*. But, as Schubert points out at the end of his book, the story of the last hundred years still needs to be told.

It is the story of a resort community trying to find ways to do enough business in the summer to survive the wet winters. It is the story of building and rebuilding enterprises, homes, and roads after recurrent floods and fires. It is the story of a country place that wants to give its children a good start in life without becoming too citified.

But I am not a careful historian. Whoever writes the history of the last hundred years in these parts will have to do a lot more disciplined digging than I will ever do. I can't tell you how the election for financing our sewer system finally met with success, for instance. It took three tries, if I remember right, but someone else needs to ferret out who was on what side of the issue and why. But I can give you glimpses of people who should not be forgotten, people, for example, like Margaret Parmeter, Agnes Lenk, and Thes Canelis, all of whom had deep connections to the thriving metropolis of Cazadero.

Margaret married into that large and constant Cazadero clan, the Parmeters. She raised three children of her own, and is known for watching over, stimulating, and guiding hundreds of other youngsters as she taught kindergarten at Guerneville School for years and years.

I remember being at the school one day not long before Margaret was to retire, and, though not a petite woman by any means, there she was skipping around in a circle with the kids, prodding them on. She kept the dance going long after the five-year-olds were ready to have it over with, her sixty-five year old feet flying above the floor.

Agnes with her husband Walter started and ran Cazanoma Lodge, serving German food in a forest setting at the end of a curving one-way road along Kidd Creek. A strong, organized woman, Agnes worked the long hours of a restaurant hostess and manager. Large, pleasant, and often smiling, Walter was mostly in the kitchen supervising the sauces for Rouladen or hasenpfeffer while his brother John Kiesling, dressed in an Old Country outfit that included a green and red vest bedecked with impressive medals and an Alpine hat with a round black feather in the hatband, wandered among the tables playing “Edelweiss” softly on his accordion.

Walter and John had come from Germany after the war and mostly with their own hands created a great country inn among the tall redwoods. It included a waterwheel that splashed its contents into a fishing pond from which patrons could catch themselves a nice fresh trout for dinner. The place was rustic and elegant at the same time.

Agnes went about making sure everyone was tended to. She was not at all happy to have children in her restaurant, feeling they would fuss and detract from the pleasures of Cazanoma. Nonetheless, we sometimes took our daughters there when they were little, and they were well-behaved during those times, thank God. To the surprise of just about everyone, when Agnes and Walter retired from Cazanoma, she volunteered in the kindergarten of the Forestville School and became a beloved second grandma to countless youngsters.

And then there's Thes, the backhoe operator. Well, he was just Cazadero through and through, able, smiling, helpful, and known for getting things done. Almost every time I saw him he was working on something for the community or doing a good deed for somebody. And he seemed always to be happy about it. He graded our driveway, helped surface the Community Church parking lot, and, earlier on, did a lot of the landscaping around St. Elizabeth's Church. “And I'm not even Catholic,” Thes said.

To this day, this generation of River folks has not been written about in a historically valid way, and somebody needs to do it. When we got

here in 1966, Margaret, Agnes, Thes, and their families and friends and neighbors were the people in charge of things. And they were all interesting. You might even call them characters, not because they were overly weird or anything like that, but because they were so definitely who they were. They ran the resorts and restaurants, sold the oil and gas and lumber, built the shops and houses, and kept the taverns jumping. Actually, some of them were a little bit weird, I suppose, but it all seemed to fit at the time.

One thing I know, I'm glad I knew all these people. I count it a privilege to have been able to write about them over the decades in my weekly columns. And there are many more of them in my files. I hope I have the time and energy to get to Volume III.

So, though remembering old friends who are no longer with us can bring some sadness, there is also the satisfaction of keeping hold of these people and what they meant to us as we shared the ups and downs of life along the River. Often as not, I find myself smiling as I read over what I managed to get down as the deadlines came round week by week. I hope you find yourself smiling too, or maybe even laughing out loud from time to time. It's a River kind of thing to do.

PLEASE NOTE

For the most part I give the date when the column appeared in one of our local weeklies. Except for the very first one, the selections are in chronological order. I maintain the verbal tense of the column as it was written. This means there is much in the present tense, even though the events described may have happened well back in the past. In a few cases, two or three columns are combined to give a more complete story all in one place. With such selections, columns may have been shortened and spliced together with an extra phrase or two.

Among Old Graves

May 5, 2011

On a gray Saturday morning a few weeks ago, John Schubert, our local historian-in-residence and a premier teller of tales of days gone by, gave us another of his walking tours of the Guerneville Pioneer Cemetery. Actually he does this just about every year, each time with a different twist on things, so what is described here is but one tour among many.

In keeping with historical times, John was dressed formally in top hat and tails. I believe that's how old time undertakers would dress, but I have to wonder if they would have been decked out like that in Guerneville, but maybe so, for people everywhere tried to dress properly in olden days. In any case, with his hat bobbing up and down and coat tails flying this way and that, John led us on a great circling stroll among the graves of our forebears who lie in peace beneath the oaks and redwoods on that sacred hillside.

Among the first graves John stopped to tell us about was the one in which Sam Varner lies. He was Roadmaster of the Redwood District and died in 1890. We learned that in those days all roads were dirt roads, and citizens were obliged to volunteer a required number of hours toward the upkeep of the thoroughfares of the community. That is to say the law said they had to do it, but they weren't going to get paid. They either kept up their part of the road, hired someone to do it for them, or paid the county a fee to have it done. The Roadmaster made sure of all this, so it was a big job. I suspect there were those who felt their government had gotten too big and intrusive even then.

Moving on, we were directed to Robert Gorski's headstone that tells us he died in 1906, the year of the Great San Francisco Earthquake. Records show that the shaking was even worse in Sonoma County than in San Francisco. Gorski was a miner at the quicksilver mine north of Guerneville, and he was in the large bucket by which men were lowered into the mine and lifted up out of it. The bucket was being hoisted up the shaft right when the earthquake hit, dislodging a boulder from a nearby cliff. That big rock made a perfect shot into the mineshaft where Gorski was standing in the lift bucket. It killed Gorski and another miner on the spot. Talk about being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In a far corner by a huge redwood tree there's the grave of Lieutenant Albert Bierce who fought in the Union Army during the Civil War. He died in 1914, and was buried in a two-grave plot, the other one reserved for his brother Ambrose, the famous San Francisco writer of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ambrose Bierce was known for a caustic wit often directed against cherished notions. His most famous book, *The Devil's Dictionary*, is still widely read, and, from what I hear, a new edition is soon to be published. Many of Bierce's definitions still apply. A typical one goes like this: "Politics: Strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles."

Ambrose Bierce's grave in the Guerneville cemetery still awaits him. He became a war correspondent assigned to cover the Mexican Revolution, which put him with Poncho Villa's army through many of their battles. So far as Schubert knows, Ambrose Bierce lost his life on that assignment and is buried in Mexico.

Among Schubert's favorite Guerneville pioneers is David Hetzel. He came to America from Germany in the 1860s, enlisted in the U. S. Army and was sent off to the Civil War. In the course of his duties, Hetzel was assigned to the honor guard for President Lincoln at Gettysburg. Live and in person, he heard the famous address Lincoln delivered there. Schubert said he learned from David's son Jack that his father always said that Lincoln did not emphasize the prepositions, "*of* the people, *by* the people, and *for* the people," as we say it today, but he emphasized the word *people*.

I think it may still be true that immigrants who serve their term in the U. S. military are granted citizenship. At least this is what happened to David Hetzel. After the war, he came west to Guerneville where he grew some of the finest tobacco in the country right here along the Russian River. He won the prize for best tobacco at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, won another prize in the Portland Exhibition, and took the Gold Medal in the California State Fair. He died in 1930 at the age of ninety.

David's son Jack, whom many of us knew, learned to play the clarinet by practicing long hours in his father's tobacco shop in Guerneville. Our Historian Emeritus Raymond Clar tells us that people walked by the shop to hear Jack play his clarinet even if they weren't interested in buying some tobacco. Later, Jack wrote an important instruction book for clarinet and saxophone and went on to write and produce musical

shows for the Bohemian Club. Jack Hetzel died in 1984, and is buried near his father.

Schubert singled out John and Ellen Bagley for special praise. Not only did John Bagley get the U. S. Postal Office established in Guerneville in 1870, but when Postal officials wanted to know what to call the new post office, Bagley told them to name it in honor of his friend and business partner George Guerne. Had he been a more self serving man, the town might very well have been named Bagleyburg or something like that.

Schubert let us know that Bagley was the first postmaster, the first surveyor, and opened the first general store in town. His wife Ellen wrote a column for the local newspaper for fifteen years, recording who was born, who died, who got a hand cut off in the mill, who got crushed by a falling redwood tree, who got gored by one of the oxen that pulled the great logs out of the forest, and so on and so on. Without Ellen Bagley's writings, Schubert said, his voice trembling with gratitude, it would be all but impossible to know the early history of the lower Russian River.

And so we came to the final grave Schubert had time to tell about that day. It is unmarked, and nobody knows who lies there. But from a column by Ellen Bagley written in 1883, we know that a gray haired man of perhaps sixty years made himself a bed of twigs out in the woods, laid himself down for the night, and never woke up. His body was discovered some months later, and in his pockets were cobbler's tools. He was buried in lot 190, plot number 3. Schubert calls him simply The Cobbler.

Yes, there's much to learn in the stories of those who came before us. They gave us the name of our little town and the names of several of its roads. And then there's this fellow for whom there is no name, no information, and no story at all, just some cobbler's tools in a coat pocket. Such a thing can give you pause as you stand among old graves.

The Shot Heard Round the World

Early October, 1975

Along with many others, I believe the greatest baseball game ever played was between the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants on October 3, 1951. I believe it because it felt like I was there even though I wasn't.

I was a senior in Watsonville High School at the time and had a tall lanky dark haired friend named Don Hubbard who ran the mile for our track team and set the league record. Don, whom we called Hubby, was a good guy and we all liked him.

There was no Major League baseball west of St. Louis in those days, so Californians were fans of eastern teams, especially the Yankees because Joe DiMaggio, a Bay Area native who had played for the San Francisco Seals of the Pacific Coast League, was the Yankees' star center fielder.

Unlike the rest of us, Hubby absolutely loved the Brooklyn Dodgers. He always wore his Dodger blue jacket to school, and the Dodger baseball cap he had sent away for was always on his head, indoors and out. To Hubby, Dodger stars Jackie Robinson, Pee Wee Reese, and Duke Snyder were like the Holy Trinity.

In 1951, school started the day after Labor Day, and, at that point in the season, the Brooklyn Dodgers were something like seventeen games ahead of the New York Giants for the National League Pennant. Good old Hubby couldn't contain himself and got to gloating about it. But then the Giants won sixteen games in a row. "Your Dodgers are fading; they're done for," we told Hubby, but he only gritted his teeth and gloated some more.

The Dodgers' lead got down to five games, then four, then three. Hubby said, "Don't worry, my boys will come through."

"Oh yeah," we said, "if you're so sure, put your money where your mouth is." So bets of a nickel or a dime were struck around the schoolyard. Hubby wrote down the bets on little scraps of paper and jammed them into the pockets of his Dodger blue jacket.

On the last day of the season, the Giants tied it all up, and the two teams went into a three game playoff. The Giants won the first game 3 to 1. The Dodgers won the second 10 to 0. The third game was set for the Polo Grounds in upper Manhattan, the Giants' home field.

The great Don Newcomb pitched for the Dodgers, Sal Maglie for the Giants. During our lunch break, most of the school gathered in the Music Room and sat on the floor or on the risers where the choir practiced to listen to the end of the game on the radio. Hubby was there in his Dodger blue jacket with his Dodger baseball cap firmly on his head.

In the bottom of the ninth, the Dodgers were ahead 4 to 1, and the Giants were down to their last three outs. Al Dark, who later became the San Francisco Giants' manager, got an infield hit. The next batter also

singled and the next one flied out. Then the Giants' Whitey Lockman hit a double down the left field line, scoring Dark. Now it's 4 to 2, one out, two on. Newcomb, who had pitched brilliantly, was replaced by Ralph Branca. "Oh no," Hubby groaned, "not Branca," which was the first indication we had that he was worried.

Giant's right-hand hitting outfielder Bobby Thompson stepped to the plate. Branca's first pitch was a strike. Thompson swung at the second pitch and drove it low to the left. It kept going and going and going and just cleared the fence 315 feet away for a three-run homer that came to be called "the shot heard round the world." Giants' announcer Russ Hodges shouted "The Giants win the pennant" eight times into his microphone, and everybody in the Music Room of Watsonville High School except Hubby jumped up cheering and dancing.

Hubby stood stunned and silent in the middle of the room. He reached into his Dodger blue jacket pockets and tossed the little bet papers in the air. They floated down like confetti around him. He took in a huge breath and let out a blood-curdling moan of anguish, then he sank to the floor and rolled back and forth murmuring "No, no, no, no, no..." His Dodger blue jacket got dusty and dirty. His Dodger baseball cap got all crumpled up. It was a pitiful sight. Not knowing what to do, we became quiet and watched Hubby suffer for a time. Then, to our credit, we left him to his misery and didn't even try to collect on our bets. Hubby had suffered enough.

As this was going on in Watsonville, here along the River two of our stalwarts were in Brooklyn to see that very game. Tony Soares, who runs the lumberyard near the bridge, and Mac Napoli who has a shoe repair just down from Main Street on Armstrong Woods Road, are buddies of the best sort. They love baseball, and Tony knows a lot about it, having played some semi pro ball, I think, or maybe even in the minor leagues.

Playing golf with these two on or about October 3, 1975, Tony told me that, back in 1951, Mac said he could get tickets for that third play-off game and they could stay with his relatives in Brooklyn. Tony said, "Let's go." The flight took about eight hours in those days, so they left in the night to get there in plenty of time, which they did. But when Mac opened his suitcase to get the tickets, they weren't there. He called his wife, and sure enough he'd left them home in Guerneville.

So two of the River's foremost baseball fans flew to New York to listen to the greatest baseball game ever played on the radio, just as we kids

were doing in Watsonville. You won't believe it, but there was no TV in those days.

Tony told me that within an hour after the game there was a fellow at the door selling black edged condolence cards for the people of Brooklyn to send to one another. He said he shut the door in the fellow's face.

An Orgy of Books Summer 1986

I built myself a little room under the house, my own place away from everybody else's place, eight by fourteen by six feet high. That's right, six feet high so it would be easy to heat, and besides, I spent almost all my time in that room sitting down.

I put two filing cabinets there, two desks, both messy, my typewriter, and my very own chair that only I was supposed to sit in. It was my favorite room in the world, mainly because it was all mine.

But then we had the Flood of '86, still the granddaddy of all our floods. At its high point, over six feet of muddy water rose up into my office at the church. I threw away everything the water touched—my Master's thesis, for instance, on which I'd done a lot of work some years ago. Still and all, most of my stuff was stashed on shelves higher than the water got to.

But then, as always after a flood, there was an incipient dampness to everything in that office, the post deluge dampness that seeps out of floors and walls long after the flood waters have receded. I took my surviving books home and set them by the heater outlets. When summer came, I put all those books on newly built shelves in my room under the house. They looked nice there, stately and wise.

But every time I went into my little downstairs room and sat down to read and think and try to come up with a sermon that wouldn't be growled at, I got bad sniffles. I got terrible headaches. I got yellow phlegm. The doctor said, "It's mold, and you're allergic to it. Move that study of yours upstairs to the sunny side of the house and dry out those books."

So I put a desk in one of the rooms the kids left empty when they went off into the world, and I went through my books one by one. Sure enough, some were stuck together and had to be pried apart. Some of

the dust jackets were pasted to the covers by God knows what kind of organic glue. Several had ugly splotches of various colors on them. And they stank.

When I inquired, I was told by our local librarian to stand my books on end in the sun. So that's what I did.

Now about a thousand books stand on end in the open air on our ample deck. The wind fluffs their pages. The sun beats into their bindings. Day by day their odor improves.

At first the wind kept knocking the books over, and I had to spend hours each day setting them upright again. Then I learned that I could create some stability among my books by putting one inside another, sort of like those sculptures of the big fish eating the littler fish that is eating the still littler fish and so on. I made long lines of books this way. I made curving designs of books holding on to books all over the deck, and my books seemed to be quite happy.

I stood back and admired my work. Why right there in front of me my books were embracing each other! The Bhagavad-Gita was caressing the Koran. The Talmud, the Upanishads, and the Gospels were cuddling together. A thin volume of Buddhist meditations clasped a thick Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Calvin's Institutes were in a compromising position with St. Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica. Eastern and western mythologies rested in each other's arms.

The same was true of books by theologians and philosophers who in truth had no use for each other. The words of gods and humans were all tangled up in front of me, and they seemed to be having a good time. The religions, literatures, and philosophies of the world were getting it together right there on my spacious porch. All those ideas and images, all those stories, poems, and plays, all that history and philosophy, seemed more or less compatible, more or less at peace with each other.

Some of the authors of those books had condemned some of the other authors straight to hell. Some of the readers of one of those books or another have risen up in war against some of the readers of other of those books. Great passions have given rise to some of those books, and the soothing of the passions has resulted from others of them. People have been put to horrible deaths for writing, reading, or even knowing about some of the books I'm trying to rescue. Some of them are still banned in many public schools and libraries of this land.

This looping line of books that meanders across my porch represents the twists and turns of human knowledge, controversy, and compassion that gave rise to them. It's something to contemplate, that's for sure.

The books themselves seem not to be aware of their influence or importance. They just sit there in the sun drying, enjoying themselves, and waiting for the next reader to come along.

Goodbye, Anita

1993

Anita Styles was one of those persons you just assume will go on and on. If you stopped to figure it out, you realized this small, red headed dynamo was in her mid-eighties, but it sure didn't seem like it. I don't think I ever heard her say anything like, "I'm doing pretty well for my age." From all one could tell, her age was nothing to her. She was always on the go, and her enthusiasms stayed strong and vital to the end. Her enthusiasms were her music and her family and friends.

Yes, Anita died last week. There was hardly a hint that anything was wrong. Apparently she just went to sleep one night and didn't wake up the next morning. In a way, I'm glad for her, for Anita would not be one to linger.

Our family got to know Anita when she was teaching music at Guerneville School. This was her second or third profession. Toward the time most people are thinking about retirement, Anita went back to college and got her teaching credential, and Guerneville School Superintendent Sam Pullaro hired her and told her he wanted a marching band and a spring musical.

It took some doing, but Anita produced both. She taught the whole gamut: a beginners section, intermediates, and advanced band. At the start of each school year, Anita's beginners sounded like a number of poorly tuned chain saws trying to cut down a tree too big for them. By the end of the year, there was music.

The Guerneville Gator Band in their blue and white uniforms marched in many Stumptown Daze Parades with Anita Styles waving her baton and marching alongside them. Our daughter Carolyn was a clarinet player in several of these bands, and we have some great home

movies of the youngsters keeping time to Anita's waving arms. Anita was about the same size as her students, but her red hair stands out in the pictures.

One of my favorite Anita Styles moments was at the beginning of a concert as she got the band's attention and raised her ever present baton. She would count out the tempo and give a great upward sweep of her arms which lifted both of her feet right off the floor. From that height came the downbeat and the concert was on.

Anita's conducting was also memorable. Her baton swished this way and that and pointed to the horns or the violins to be emphasized as she saw fit. Once she flayed the air so enthusiastically the baton hit her music stand and broke in two. She continued conducting with only the stub of the baton in her hand.

After she retired from teaching, Anita opened a business at Whistle Stop Antiques in Santa Rosa. She also began playing piano with various jazz bands, most recently with the nine piece group Vintage Jazz.

I often saw Anita at the jazz clubs I am known to frequent. She was especially fond of the Bob Lucas Trio and their singer Lois Tanner. If the music was right and the space was available, Anita would pull me up on the dance floor and I would do my best to keep up with her, which was not all that easy, I'll tell you.

During recent years Anita became a valued friend of our family. Last year, God bless her, she drove all the way to San Diego for our daughter's wedding, and she and I danced a jig or two that day as well.

A week ago Saturday, Anita was at our house to meet our new granddaughter. She brought a huge stuffed rabbit, three or four times bigger than the granddaughter, saying, "It's silly, I know, but I just wanted the baby to have something soft and funny."

A few days after that, Anita was gone. She leaves behind wonderful memories and the legacy of a full life. I wish I could muster her kind of energy. Surely the orchestras of heaven will be playing more up tempo from now on.