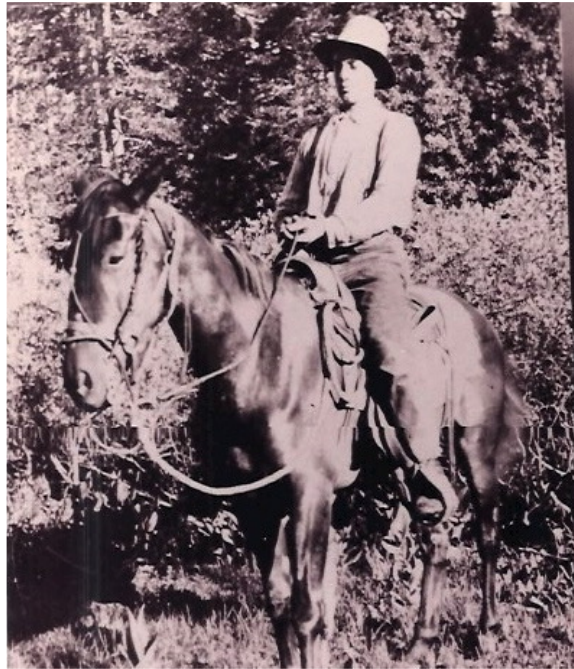


A STORY OF JOHN ETCHEMENDY, SR.

Raymond J. Uhalde



Cover picture: John Etchemendy, Sr. in the Blue Lakes area of the Sierra Nevada Mountains about 1910.

A STORY OF JOHN ETCHEMENDY, SR.

Raymond J. Uhalde

October 2018

To my grandsons Oscar, Whalen and Jackson,
to Tanttta Mayie, my godmother, and
to my dear mother's memory.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Preface	vi
Chapter 1	The Early Years in Arnéguy	1
Chapter 2	Working in America	10
Chapter 3	The Hotel Business	22
Chapter 4	Family Time	33
Chapter 6	Wool Buying	40
Chapter 7	Through Two Wars	43
Chapter 8	The Golden Years	54
Appendix I	Family Trees	61
Appendix II	Amatchi's 1918 Letter	63
	Endnotes	67

Preface

In 1979, my grandfather (“aitachi” in Basque) John Etchemendy, Sr. moved in to my mother Josephine’s condominium to live out the last years of his life – a decade as it turned out. Over the first several months, Mom recorded a number of interviews with Aitachi documenting his early years in France, his travel to America, his many jobs as a recent immigrant, and life at the Overland Hotel and in the Carson Valley. She gave me a copy of these precious cassette tapes that are the primary source of information for this work. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of him are transcriptions from these recordings. While his children knew by heart each of the stories and tales recounted here, our generation and those that follow will have to rely on imperfect oral history, and now on these recorded interviews.

A second source of information is the local newspapers: the Reno Gazette-Journal, the Nevada State Journal, and Gardnerville’s Record Courier. Online access to the archived Reno papers provides a treasure trove of articles about the Etchemendy family, especially about Aitachi and his sons. This digital record augmented the numerous clippings Mom collected over the years. I have footnoted each article so that family members who are interested may readily locate them.

The genealogical work I have undertaken has relied on the French site Gen&O: Généalogie et Origines en Pyrénées-Atlantiques found at www.geneoweb.org. The site offers online access to archived documents and genealogical records on the Basque Country and Béarn. I have used these and other data and information to build and maintain a Uhalde-Etchemendy family tree at <https://www.geni.com/family-tree/index/6000000009352430886>. All family members are welcome to visit the site.

I have been impressed, even astounded, by the accuracy of Aitachi’s recall of different events, places and people as I tried to verify or enrich various of his stories with third-party documentation.

See, for example, identifying “Poco and Duke” as owners of a ranch he worked on for just four months about 75 years earlier. As another example, he remembered the name and owner of the Stockton hotel he stayed in for only two nights in 1908. And when he tells us Amatchi contributed \$5 to the building fund for St. Alphonsus Church in Fresno, we can believe it because it was indeed constructed in 1913 while she was working a few blocks away. In the story that follows, I refer to Aitachi as “Jean” while he lives in France, “John” while he is a single man in America, and “Aitachi” after he marries. I hope this is not too confusing.

I have attempted to be careful and accurate in writing this story, but I am sure I have made mistakes. Please tell me where I have erred or omitted important facts. Nonetheless, my hope is that this story paints the arc of his life in a manner that honors and respects his character, his achievements and his family for generations to come.

Ray Uhalde
aitachi.uhalde@gmail.com

1

The Early Years in Arnéguy

Arnéguy Nestled at the bottom of a Pyrenees valley, carved through millennia by a tributary of the Nive river lays the small village of Arnéguy, France. Today it has a population of about 270 residents, less than half its population in 1900. Across the border with Spain, marked by the river Nive d'Arnéguy, is Lusaide, the Basque name of Valcarlos (its Spanish name) with 400 residents. From its nearby source in the Pyrenees, the Nive d'Arnéguy flows north five miles to join the main Nive river at St. Jean Pied de Port, then on to Bayonne, finally emptying into the Bay of Biscay.



Figure 1: Arnéguy, at the border in 1900

Tradition holds that this valley, extending 10 miles south to the Roncevaux Pass in Spain, is where the rear guard of King Charlemagne's army was annihilated by Basques in the year 778. Charlemagne's troops were returning across the Pyrenees from fighting the Saracens (Muslims), and were stretched thin. Roland, the King's cousin, commanded the rear guard and was slain along with his force. This battle would prove to be Charlemagne's worst, and some say, only defeat in Iberia. The historic battle was memorialized in the epic French poem The Song of Roland, composed by an unknown author about 1100 A.D.

It was at Arnéguy as well where an agreement was signed in 1614 that resolved the often bloody secular dispute between the French shepherds of the Baigorry Valley and the Spaniards of Val d'Erro concerning the pastures of the Aldudes. More recently, Arnéguy for many years



Figure 2: The Nive d'Arnéguy.

hosted an important customs control post at the bridge over the Nive d'Arnéguy. Today, the village is popular as a stop on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela pilgrim route from St. Jean Pied de Port to Santiago in Galicia, Spain. There is a modern monument to the pilgrimage road near the city hall of Luzaide/Valcarlos representing a recumbent pilgrim.

The Etchemendys My great grandfather (“Aitachi zaharra” in Basque) Miguel Etchemendy was born in Arnéguy in November 1852, the second child of Michel (1827-1886) and Anne Josépha Goyhenetche (1831-1892).¹ (The family tree is shown in Appendix I.) Miguel’s parents were both farmers (“cultivateurs” in the French records), and had been married less than three years at his birth. His father Michel was born and raised in the House of Argaraya in Uhart-Cize, a village on the outskirts of St. Jean Pied de Port. Miguel’s paternal grandfather, and my third great grandfather, was Michel (spelled “Etchamendy” on his son’s marriage record). He was born in Valcarlos, Spain in 1779, married Marie Catherine Ibagnet (b.1786) in Uhart-Cize, and died in that same village in 1849. My fourth great grandfather, Sanson (possibly Samson) Etchemendy, was born in Valcarlos and was shown on his son’s marriage record as the deceased etxejaun or master of the House of Laurentcenia in Valcarlos, Spain. He likely was Spanish Basque. His wife Marie had three children. Miguel’s mother Anne Josépha was born and lived in Arnéguy with her parents Michel Goyhenetche (b.1805) and Agnés Castillou (b.1806), both of whom were Arnéguy farm workers (“laboureurs” in French).²

Miguel’s Siblings

Catherine Hasquet (b.1851), Dominica (1855-1932), Jean or Manex (1858-1929), Marie Echamendi (b. 1861), and Michel (1874-1950).

Josephine Jeanne Saragueta (1859-1944) was 18 years old when she married Miguel Etchemendy on February 4, 1877; he was 24 years of age.* Before marrying, she lived with her parents in Arnéguy, though she was born in Espinal, Spain, about 15 miles across the border. Her father, Joseph Jean Saragueta (b. 1815) and paternal

* On their marriage record, her name is shown as Joséfa, Spanish for Josephine.



Figure 3: Amatchi zaharra Josephine with Pierre, Dominica and Joanes

grandfather Martin were Spanish Basques also from Espinal, while her mother Dominica Pebet (b. 1815) was born and raised in Arnéguy.

Miguel and Josephine were both farmers and, at some point after they wed, they established their family's home on a farm they named Ixteotenia. The farm was situated on the side of a mountain, a moderate, uphill trek on a winding dirt road east of the village of Arnéguy.

(Fittingly, the family name Etchemendy derives from the Basque words *etxe*, or house, and *mendi*, or mountain.) At Ixteotenia, Miguel and Josephine raised their family of five sons and four daughters. As son Jean later summarized in an interview, there were:

“Two boys oldest, two girls next, two boys next, two girls next, and one boy last; nine of us. All between two and three years apart, except last boy, he was five years different. He (Leon) was six years old when I come to this country, the youngest brother.”³

The children were Joanes, Michel, Catherine Hasquet, Dominica, Jean, Pierre, Marie Cubialde, Sister Marie Louise (Josephine), and Léon.

Josephine gave birth to her first child, Joanes, about 1878. He was said to be “good at carpenter work” and would emigrate to America, though he would return to France and live to be 88 years old. Michel (b.1880) was born about two years after Joanes and worked for someone off the farm as did Catherine, the oldest sister (b. 1882), who married a Hasquet. Dominica (1884-1987) was the family's first centenarian, living to 103 years of age. She married an Etchemendy who died in World War I in 1914. Dominica made her home



Figure 4: Brothers Léon and Aitachi Jean, 1975.

and raised her two daughters in the town of Bayonne.⁴

Jean (John) Etchemendy, my grandfather or Aitachi, was born at the home place Ixteotenia on August 27, 1886. The family also called him Manex. Pierre (1889-1978) lived and worked at Ixteotenia all his life. Marie (1893-1992), on the other hand, emigrated to America, married Antone Cubialde, and raised her family in Buffalo, Wyoming. She later married Peter Urizaga following Antone's death. Josephine was born about 1896, became a Catholic nun, and died at a young age at the convent as Sister Marie Louise.⁵ The youngest child, Léon (1901-1986), was blind from birth. He married Graziana and they raised six children at Ixteotenia.

Brother Léon would inherit the farm Ixteotenia and raise his family there. With obvious pride, Jean described how Léon would "walk, I don't know how far it is, a couple of miles maybe to town, with his stick in his hand, walk down there and back. He does that years and years. I don't know how he can do it. I guess he don't do it too often now [1979]. He used to do it all the time." His daughter, Jeanne Marie Lapayre, a widow, is the current etxejaun or mistress of the house, and lives with her son Jean Louie at Ixteotenia. The



Figure 7: Ixteotenia's vegetable garden and pastures.

farmhouse or etxalde sits at the end of a one-lane dirt road, on the side of a mountain. Green pastures rise up the mountainside behind the house and above the vegetable garden, while the valley falls far below on the other side of the road. The farm is beautiful! Jean Louis runs about two hundred sheep for milk and cheese. They burn the wool now because there is no market for its



Figure 5: Jean Louis Lapayre and his mother, Jeanne Marie Lapayre, 2010.



Figure 6: Ixteotenia, 2010.

sale. He had been mowing hay with a modern tractor on the day we visited the home place in June 2010.

Life at Ixteotenia There were no tractors on the farm when Jean and his siblings lived at Ixteotenia. Everyone worked hard. Jean said, "Everybody had to work, farm work. I had my uncle there, when I was thirteen years old, my uncle tell me I was best hay cutter already around there, with a scythe." He described his workday: "Get up in the morning, to cut the hay there three o'clock in the morning. Before we go, Mama had the coffee ready, around eight o'clock she bring the breakfast out to the field, then noon, same way they bring the lunch. Nighttime we come home at dark. Cut the hay or something, hay most of the time. Then get the hay together and bunch 'em up, stack 'em up.

"We had 20 cows and 70 head of sheep. We had to milk the sheep. Summertime we had to go up, one of us, sometimes my brother, sometimes I go and stay up there all night, milk at night and milk in the morning. Bring milk home and make cheese out of it. Milk the cows too and make cheese too. Made a lot of cheese. ... Mama and the daughter make the cheese. We work outside all the time." Aitachi zaharra (Miguel) worked the farm and also for his neighbors. "Papa was half-butcher, kill a lot of hogs, for all the neighbors, he go around kill the hogs in the winter time."

Dominica, from an early age, helped her parents oversee the younger children and the farm work, according to Jean, "Dominica hard worker, she worked outside. She was so fast hoeing corn and like that, we couldn't follow her, very fast. Mama she cook all the time; she work outside too sometime ...We make a big garden; Mama work in the garden." Meals came from the farm and often included baked bread or cornbread, soup (Jean's "favorite"), sausage or "lukainka," ham, chicken - they had "lots of chickens."

But it was not about work all the time. On Sundays, "When I went to the church, sometimes I go in the morning seven o'clock church, sometimes 10 o'clock church. Then when it was 10 o'clock church we go to play handball for maybe one game or two. And

when it get a little bit late, twelve o'clock would come, run home all soaking wet, my shirt all wet, before I go in the house I take my shirt off and dry it off on the barn roof before I go see Mama ... Always I liked to play handball, here too [Gardnerville], I like to play handball." Jean can't ever remember his parents spanking him, even when returning late from church in his wet Sunday shirt.

As for school, Jean didn't have much formal schooling, though Dominica and Mama encouraged him. "Not much school. Before I come [to America] I went a few days. Couple of months I went two, three nights [a week] to the school. Teacher was giving night school so went to school. Daytime everyone too busy, not many going to school.... Dominica she had pretty good school. Mama, she didn't have no school. She couldn't write. Papa he could write."

But the Etchemendy family was to experience tragedy and upheaval at the turn of the century and in its first decade. "Papa, Aita he died around 45 or 46 years old I think; he was young. Too much blood, blood choking.⁺⁺ Left a big family." Jean was just 14 years old at the time of his Aita's death, while his mother Josephine was likely pregnant with brother Léon. Furthermore, the family's oldest sons would soon emigrate to America. Michel was the first to travel to America, in about 1904 according to Jean. His older brother Joanes followed him in March 1907. Michel and Joanes went to Reno, Nevada and would meet at the Hotel Indart,⁶ newly opened at 223 Lake Street, according to Joanes' ship manifest.⁷ Joanes' occupation was listed as a "tiller" or farm laborer (as were a dozen fellow passengers), and he was shown on the manifest as able to read and write.

Jean said he spent time during his last year at home "going around a little bit selling cows or pigs or lambs like that to St. Jean Pied de Port, sometimes to Arnéguy, on market days. I go to

⁺⁺ While indeed young, it is more probable that Aitachi zaharra was 46 or 47 when he died. It is also possible that "too much blood, blood choking" is a diagnosis of excessive blood clotting or hyper coagulation leading to a stroke or heart attack.

Laurent's home at Luzaide, every Sunday they got big time over there, big dance or something. I go play handball. I never dance, always liked to play handball." ("Laurent's home " probably refers to Samson Etchemendy's House of Laurentcena referenced above, where his cousins resided.) "Luzaide, and St. Jean Pied de Port, Arnéguy - that is as far as I went."

Coming to America Jean's travel horizons would expand dramatically, however, in September 1907. "I got it in that paper, 1907, I come over on the train St. Jean Pied de Port three days to Paris, then I take a boat there [at Havre]. He was on the boat "seven days, come pretty good that time, and we stay over one night stop too, ... seven days we come, and then eight days from New York to Reno on the train."

That is not the whole story however. When France enacted the Two-Years Law in 1905, the active-duty military service requirement for all fit Frenchmen was reduced from three to two years, while nearly all exemptions were abolished making service virtually obligatory. Every January, a list of men newly eligible for service that year was posted in each commune. Those listed were obliged to appear before a board consisting of a general officer, the departmental prefect and other representatives of local government. Every man was measured and weighed by a medical officer. Then, on October 1 of a man's 21st birth year, he would report for active duty mobilization or induction.⁸

The Draft in France, 1907

Universal conscription began in France in 1793. Since 1905, all fit Frenchmen (with very few exceptions) were required to serve on active duty in the military for two years, beginning the year in which they turned 21 years of age. Reserve duty would consist of another 23 years.

Jean had already been listed as eligible for military service, received his conscription notice, and had passed his French army physical. He was due to be mobilized, on or about October 1, 1907. "I was afraid the war was coming. I was afraid - that was the reason. That's why I came [to America]," he told a newspaper reporter on the

eve of his 100th birthday.⁹ He said his mother Josephine got him a Spanish passport with a false name so he could leave France.¹⁰ Though he didn't remember the name on the passport, he very likely travelled as "Felix Martin."

The S.S. Provence departed Havre on September 7 and arrived at the Port of New York September 14. According to the ship manifest, only two Spaniards are shown among the passengers, with Felix Martin from Valcarlos listing his nearest relative as his mother Joséfa from Valcarlos. His destination shows Reno, Nevada to join his "brothers." The second Spaniard, Michel Erro, is listed next on the manifest and is also shown as travelling to Reno to join a friend. Jean's cousin Michel Etchemendy was on board as well, listing his nearest relative as his father Pierre of Arnéguy. His destination was Gillette, Wyoming.

Unlike his fellow passengers, Jean did not get seasick on the steamship. "Somebody told me when I came to the boat, "Don't eat but very little," he said. He forgot the name of the boat, but he remembered the trachoma eye examination at Ellis Island after they landed in New York. "My eye doubled up" because medical inspectors turned eyelids inside out looking for infections, especially trachoma which caused more than half the medical detentions. More than 1 million immigrants passed through Ellis Island in 1907, the peak year for immigration in U.S. history.¹¹

He couldn't speak English at the time, but he "found a Spanish fella, a hotel man, who put us on the train, Aguirre. I think its called the Valentin Aguirre Hotel." ... "I don't think we stay [in New York] one night. I think we take a train right away. Only place (we stopped) Chicago, we had lots of sardines we bring over (from France), but my partner take nothing on the boat, I ate myself a little bit, but not too much. On the train, I had plenty of sardines but no bread. In Chicago, I went outside with a piece of bread in my hands asking where I could buy bread.... Someone called me over, they give me some bread. I pay for it."

Jean's train was met in Reno by a man who "was working for the Indart Hotel, and my two brothers were there too. He was tending bar there and Indart sent him over to pick me up. The other Etchemendy [he called Michel "Laurent Etchemendy's brother"] went from New York, we didn't see him anymore, he went to Ely somewhere on a different train."* Jean's second traveling partner from France to Reno was "a carpenter, we come together to Reno." This was likely Michel Erro, the other Spaniard from Valcarlos on the ship manifest.

Jean Etchemendy, alias Felix Martin, completed his 6500-mile journey from Arnéguy, France to Reno, Nevada in 18 days. Old World Basques would one day refer to these emigrants as Amerikanuak (the Americans).¹²

* Michel Etchemendy travelled by train as far as Ely and went to work at the Olaechea brothers' ranch in White Pine County, Nevada. He was later joined by brothers Martin and Laurent. In June 1917 they all registered for the World War I military draft. Michel and Martin subsequently made their home as ranchers in Wyoming while Laurent relocated to Tracy, California, becoming proprietor of the Pastime Pool Hall. He would visit Aitachi in Gardnerville occasionally.

2

Working in America

When Aitachi John Etchemendy arrived at the Hotel Indart in Reno, he reunited with his older brothers Joanes, age 29, and Michel, age 27. John was 21 years of age, stood five foot eight inches tall with brown hair and blue eyes. Joanes had been in America just 6 months while Michel had been in the states about three years. Like most Basque boardinghouses, or *ostatuak*, the Indart Hotel served as a community center offering employment contacts, storage space, grubstaking, and tips for travelers.¹³ John would not hang around the hotel very long. Four days after arriving, he, his carpenter-traveling partner, and his brother Joanes were hired to work for the Western Pacific Railroad on the Spring Garden tunnel near Portola, California, 50 miles north of Reno.

Western Pacific Portola is in the Sierra Nevada mountains at an elevation of about 4900 feet. In 1906, the newly founded Western Pacific Railroad began construction of their Feather River route connecting Oakland, California and Salt Lake City, Utah. The 927 mile rail line was completed in 1909 despite the requirement for many long tunnels on the Sierra portion, and high labor turnover due to dangerous and miserable working conditions.¹⁴ John and Joanes could attest to those working conditions, earning \$1.25 a day plus board “mixing cement all day - feel it in my back to this day - with short handled shovel, for three months and a half. ... Then come too much snow and had to quit.... It was the Feather River Canyon, we were working outside the tunnel.” They returned to Reno, which was “plumb full of shepherders,” and stayed in a room at the Indart Hotel with 8 men sharing two beds “two one way and two the other way.”



Figure 8: Newspaper advertisement

After two days of such luxury, they returned to work for the Western Pacific, this time at Chilcoot, near Hallelujah Junction, and

20 miles east of Portola, California. It was January 1908 and they “worked in the tunnel there, two months and a half.... I had a different job. A fella was drilling and I was turning a bit, like this [he demonstrates to Mom]. Almost every day someone killed there. It was dangerous. Rocks...Soaking wet every day. There was water coming in the tunnel...Two months and a half, then we packed our beds and went to the railroad and come to Reno.” In both Portola and Chilcoot, he worked with “all kinds of people, Chinese, Mexicans, all kinds of different people.” He once told a reporter, “Trying to outwork the Chinamen was the hardest job he ever had.”¹⁵

Shepherding After coming back to Reno, he “herded some sheep, wethers [castrated male sheep], around Reno for a month, not too long. Nighttime I had to make bread myself, and was in the alfalfa daytime, had to stay with the sheep all the time. One time I lost six sheep and I was scared they would blow up, bloated.” He said he made “baking powder bread. They told me, this woman, fold the baking powder into the dough, mix it, put it in the hole and cook it. Lucky it came out pretty good bread, anyhow. But everybody told me after that baking powder bread not too good.”

After a month, “We went to Smoke Creek, worked over there for four months. I went over there myself, my two brothers went herding sheep and I went to be a chore boy. Smoke Creek Ranch had 60,000 head of sheep. Big outfit. Poco and Duke, there was seven partners.¹⁶ I worked on the ranch; chore boy had to do everything. There was a couple of Bizkainos there [from the Biscay province of Spain]. When they were talking I couldn’t understand one word and they could understand me a little bit, but I couldn’t understand them at

Smoke Creek Ranch

The Smoke Creek Ranch, about 90 miles north of Reno, is one of the oldest ranches in Nevada, first settled by T.T. Kingsbury in 1857. Patrick L. Flanigan owned 50,000 acres in northern Washoe County, including the Smoke Creek Ranch, in the late 1890s. His ranches had had 5,000 cattle and 60,000 sheep. He was the first sheep man to ship sheep and wool direct to Chicago and Kansas City. In 1904, Flanigan sold the Smoke Creek Ranch to **John Poco and Andrew Duke**, who later sold it. John Casey presently owns the ranch.

all. Then for two months I was herding 2,500 bucks [rams] for Smoke Creek." Because wool was valuable, he was told to take a sack as he trailed the sheep and pick the stray bits of wool from the barbed wire fences. This was his introduction to the wool business.¹⁷ The Etchemendy brothers worked there for four months, and then came back to Reno.

Capurro Ranch

James Gault started the Capurro ranch in 1870. His Capurro grandsons continued operating the 600-acre farm with alfalfa hay, beef and milk cows, and horses. It contained five ponds, likely a major source of the mosquitos Aitachi vividly remembers. Most of the land was sold to make way for Reno's McCarran Blvd. and a golf course.

"Nevada Centennial: Ranch and Farm Awards Program 2006,"

Michel, who had been the first brother to come over to the United States, left Reno and returned to France in 1908. Joanes would return home to France in 1912. Brother Michel, "He died in France before [Joanes] returned. He [Michel] was a nice looking fella."

Capurro Ranch Back in Reno, "There were no jobs no place, then I went to milking cows ... for Capurro, thirty cows in the morning and thirty cows at night. Hands swell up like this, and hot and mosquitoes. All these ranches were all swamp at that time and millions of mosquitoes. After milking in the morning, we go out there with the scythes and cut the ditch banks with weeds, \$1 dollar a day and board. I work and after three months I get mosquito fever, I was so tired, I don't cover up my face, I was all swelled up. I was 12 days in the hospital."

Blue Lakes Upon leaving the hospital, John went back to the Indart Hotel for two or three days. "A fella was going down to

Stockton; he asked me if I wanted to go to Stockton. He was there a year before and he got a job there pretty easy. So I went down to Stockton and I went to Narbaitz' hotel [opened in 1908 as the Hotel Royal by Raymond Narbaitz and Joe Oyarbide].¹⁸ Narbaitz was running the hotel there, Royal Hotel. The fella that went with me went to work the next day and I went to work two days later. I went to work at the Clay Station [about 35 miles northeast of Stockton] for

[Charles B.] Howard, herding sheep. I was with him one year. Then he sold ... We come up to Blue Lake, Hellhole they call it - rough country." John and Howard drove the sheep from Clay Station to Blue Lakes. A man named Harry Dean drove a wagon with supplies into the High Sierras until they had to abandon it and put packs on the burros. Harry returned to the winter headquarters at Clay Station.¹⁹ It took about a week to trail the sheep 95 miles east and 8,000 feet up into the Sierra mountainside.



Figure 9: Blue Lakes Region
Alpine County, CA

"After one year he sold the sheep, he sold the sheepherder - *me*, the burro, the dog and everything to the other fella, [Allen] Sherfey ... At Blue Lake he had a permit." This is one of John's favorite jokes. On another occasion he told a reporter the story this way: "I was herding just south and west of Squaw Valley when the owner decided to sell out. He sold the whole outfit: sheep, burro, dogs, and *me*."²⁰



Figure 10: Upper Blue Lake,
Alpine County, CA

Upper and Lower Blue Lakes and Hellhole Lake are part of a cluster of small lakes in Alpine County, CA, 35 miles south of Lake Tahoe and 125 miles northeast of Stockton. The lakes are nestled at an elevation of 8,000 feet in the Sierra Nevada mountains near Carson Pass and alongside the present day Pacific Crest Trail. This trio of scenic, alpine lakes sits between El Dorado and Toyabe National Forests. The harsh, high elevation environment stunts the mature conifer forest on the mountainsides. During the spring, fields of wildflowers are rampant. Large granite boulders mark the landscape.



Left to right: Charles B. Howard of Clay, Sacramento Co.; Harry Dean with pipe and dog; John Etchemendy with his dog. (Photo taken in 1909.)

Figure 11: Charles B. Howard's photo of Aitachi on wool sacks, 1909.

In this high mountain country, John herded sheep in the Blue Lakes region for two summers over two years. One of his favorite stories was about his encounter with a bear. As he relayed the tale, 'There were lots of fish in the lakes. I never fished myself. I was in the camp one night in Blue Lake. I was out of grub with nothing to eat so I kill a lamb. I hang it up on one limb on the tree not too high. At night the dog come barking, barking and I say, 'What's the matter?' I had a little tent put up and I look outside the tent and it was moonlight and I see the bear was eating my lamb. I took the hatchet and I put my shoes on and I went outside and knocked the bear down with the hatchet and I killed him, a small [black] bear.'

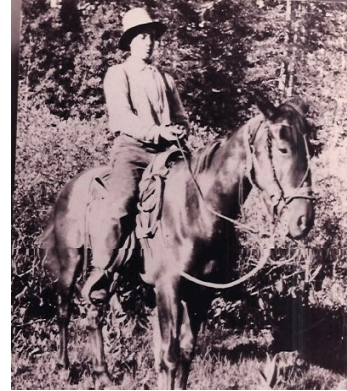


Figure 12: Aitachi in the High Sierras

Charles Howard, John's boss, later told another story about "when John killed a white goose near Rio Vista. The first man he showed it to was a game warden; of course, John was proud of his goose but he had no license and was still a foreigner so his goose was expensive."²¹ John once told a reporter, he learned to speak English from an Italian who was watching 1,000 turkeys in the Sierras near his sheep. "He teach me English and I teach him Basque," he said laughing.²²

After his second season at Blue Lakes, "I don't know how he find me, my brother [Joanes] come over in the fall, before we moved (the sheep) down. He came over on horseback from Markleeville (about 20 miles east). 'You better come to Nevada,' he told me. I told him I was kind of tired herding sheep. I get too lonesome. So in the fall before I go down below I asked the boss [he waited a week or ten days for him to hire another sheepherder] and then I come down to Gardnerville." Joanes had been herding sheep in the Markleeville area, around Diamond Valley. John would never be a sheepherder again. "Herding sheep was easy, but I got lonesome. I couldn't stand it any more," he once recalled.²³

Dressler, Dangberg and Elges Ranches

Dressler Ranch

Under William, his father's cattle and sheep spread grew to cover over 80,000 acres in the Carson Valley of Nevada, Smith Valley, and Bridgeport, CA. He was a director of the Farmers Bank and a state senator for 25 years. He donated part of his land to the Washoe Indians. Bill Dressler died in 1946.

Not one to remain idle too long, John stopped at Woodfords first, about six miles outside Markleeville, and helped a phone company employee install telephone poles and run a line to the road. He said he would give Aitachi a ride to Gardnerville. Then he milked cows and put up hay for another rancher, named Bruns, whose descendants are still ranching in Alpine County.²⁴ He slept in Bruns' barn stall two weeks. Then he went to work for Bill Dressler as a ranch hand hauling manure away to Mud Lake where Dressler built a dam. He also herded sheep for Dressler who owned 3,000 head. One day while at the sheep camp, "His horse

stopped, didn't want to go anymore. Dressler happened to come through in his car. He said to stick him with a pitchfork, but he never move. Stubborn, stubborn mare! Everyone pay \$1 a day plus board then. Dressler had a cabin for the men. Then I came to Gardnerville." He had worked two months for Dressler.

In Gardnerville there were "no jobs, no place. One fella who was digging wells asked me if I wanted to help him. He was digging at Dangberg home ranch, drilling and drilling, and I had to pull the machinery one side and another." Soon it got too cold, the machinery froze and they had to quit drilling and come back to town. He camped out in an icehouse but, as he told a reporter, "I knew it was time to look for better quarters because the sawdust was wet and my bedroll got moldy."²⁵

So when a rancher named Fritz Elges came to Aitachi in 1911 and "asked if I wanted to cut some posts and build some corrals," he was more than ready. "That's

Dangberg Ranch

Established in 1856 by Friedrich Dangberg, this Carson Valley ranch grew to 50,000 acres supporting cattle and sheep operations. The family formed the Dangberg Land and Livestock Company in 1902 and founded the town of Minden. The Home Ranch is now a 5.5-acre historic park.

why I went to Fish Springs [about 7 miles east of Gardnerville in the Pine Nut hills]. He had some bucks there. I took some bucks up to where I was making corrals. I was making posts up there. I make a lot of posts up there out of Juniper trees... Those last a long time those Junipers" as corral posts. After I finished that, I took 400-500 bucks...to Elges. He had a little ranch up there. Then we went to the river ranch, me and my brother [Joanes]. We cut 300 ton of hay with a mowing machine and rake it with a revolving rake. Leave it as loose hay, then haul it in wagons and stack it up. That is the time we lost 12 days work wages." Then Elges sold the ranch to a man named Indart. "Then we went, both of us [Joanes], we went to Elges to get our wages, 12 days. Elges tell us Indart got to pay us. ... Indart said, 'No, no Elges got to pay.' Indart had to come to the ranch and we come together to Gardnerville, then talk to Elges and asked, 'Who is going to pay us that \$18 each we got coming for twelve days work?' I pretty near had to fight with Elges that time. He didn't want to pay us and we lost that \$18 each anyhow." Joanes would soon return to his Basque homeland.

Wellington John went to work in 1912 for the Reading Brothers as a chore boy at a wagon freight depot and stagecoach way station in Wellington, Nevada.* Wellington lies in Smith Valley about 30 miles southeast of Gardnerville. "I did everything there. I milked cows, 14-15 cows. I worked on the ranch, in the stables. Horse teams go through there; three stables there. Year later they put me tending bar in 1913. Three days and three nights without taking my shoes off! That's the truth. Big teams take the big wagons with 18, 22, once 23 horses in the team go to Bridgeport, Bodie and Aurora." John was in the barn and harnessing mules and horses at three a.m. so the wagons could roll at six a.m.²⁶



Figure 13: Aitachi (front) with friend in Wellington, 1913

* Reading Brothers was the company in Wellington that operated the telephone lines as well as the wagon freight depot. W.E. and Gould Reading were from Bodie, CA and they bought the former Pierce Station in 1903.

San Francisco's 1915
Panama-Pacific
International Exposition

This federally sanctioned exposition was intended to showcase a city rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake and fire, and to celebrate the just-completed Canal. On 635 acres of marshland (now known as the Marina District), the city created a bay-front temporary playground with a Tower of Jewels, a Palace of Horticulture, a hotel, 7,000-pipe organ, various pavilions, and a midway. Over nearly 10 months, about 19 million people visited the expo.

<http://www.latimes.com/travel/california/la-tr-d-sd-sf-1915-panama-expos-20150104-story.html>

“Then in 1915, I was working pretty hard at the time. The boss’s two sons, they liked me like a brother and they told me, ‘You better take a rest. You better go see that San Francisco Exposition.’ And I told them I’d like to go and take a few days off. I got to fix my mouth anyhow, my teeth. That’s the time I met my wife, 1915.”

Aitachi and Amatchi Meet “They [his future wife, her boss Chester H. Rowell, and her friends] come over from Fresno, a bunch of them. It was too hot over there. When I went to a San Francisco hotel, another fella told me at suppertime same night that he had to go to the dentist. ‘Oh, that’s where I want to go too,’ I told him. So we went to the dentist, a Negro dentist. He gave me twenty years guarantee too! That’s the time I meet a lady that was there waiting

for the dentist from Fresno. She was reading a magazine and my partner told me, ‘This lady got pretty legs.’ ‘Don’t talk, maybe she’s Basque,’ I told him in the ear. And she was! She went in first and when she came out she started talking to us in Basque. And she told us, ‘Why don’t you come up to the other hotel, the Spanish Hotel [Hotel Español on Broadway]?’ We go up there... that afternoon, see them, meet a couple of girls there, and we make a date to go to the show that night on Market Street. That was Mama. She went with the other fella.... After the show we eat

Chester H.
Rowell

Chester H. Rowell was the son of a U.S. Congressman from Illinois. He was a progressive Republican who co-founded the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, was editor of the San Francisco Chronicle (1932-1939), and a member of the University of California Board of Regents from 1914 until shortly before his death in 1948.

chicken in the middle of the night. Pay for it and went home one o'clock or so. Then next morning we make a date again and go same way, to show and eat chicken. Before we go, my wife said, 'Let's change partners.' And I went with my wife the second night and the other guy went with the second girl. And that's the way it started. My wife and I went to see the zoo. A few days later she had to go back, her boss was in town too so they went back to Fresno. Then I stayed two or three days more, then I come home."

John returned from the San Francisco Exposition to his chore boy duties in Wellington. He knew that the lady with the pretty legs, Jeanne Trounday, worked in Fresno as a housekeeper, nanny and cook for Chester H. Rowell, the editor and manager of the Fresno Morning Republican newspaper. They struck up a correspondence courtship and married the next year in Fresno.²⁷



Figure 14: The House of Picassary in St. Martin d'Arrossa.

(See appendix I for family tree.) Through birth records, I have identified five siblings, Jean (1879-1901), Gracianne (b.1880), Rosalie (b.1881), Jean (1885-1964), and Pascal-Joseph (1890-1893).²⁸ Aitachi recalled about Jeanne, "She told me her two sisters went to South America (Argentina) a few years before (she went to the United States)."* Jean served in the French army during WWI and was later married. The family home was the House of Picassary in the Exave district of the nearby village of St. Martin d'Arrossa, 1.5 miles from Ossès.²⁹ At that time, the village,

Jeanne Trounday Jeanne Trounday was born in Osses, France on October 31, 1883 to Jean Trounday (b. 1847) and Joséphe Héguy (b. 1851).



Figure 15: Jean Trounday, Amatchi's brother in WWI uniform, 1914.

* In a 1918 letter (see Appendix II) authored by "Jenny Etchemendy," she writes in Basque to Señora G. and Señor Don Juan Aguerre of Monte Caseros, Argentina, and refers to her sister as Gechina and Aguerre as her brother-in-law. Gechina is a Basque female given-name meaning "grace." Her sister's official birth record shows the French name Gracianne. The letter was returned to Amatchi enclosed with a 1946 letter written in Spanish and signed by her niece "Angela Aguerre Trounday."

Marie Grace
Trunday

Marie lived in Madera most of her adult life. She married Joseph Errecart in 1908, and was residing with her widowed aunt Jennie Ospital Chabrouilland and her younger sister Grace Trunday during the 1910 census. She raised four children, and died at age 92.

located on the west bank of the Nive River, was administratively part of the commune Ossès.

On the eve of her 22nd birthday, Jeanne and her 18-year-old cousin Marie Grace Trunday, also from Osses, landed at the Port of New York, having sailed for eight days aboard the S.S. La Gascogne from Le Havre, France. Both passengers were listed as “Trunday” on the manifest, a spelling that the family used in records at various times. Their final destination was shown as Madera, California to join J. Ospital, who was listed on the manifest as Marie’s aunt. Jeanne moved on to Fresno, about 20 miles south of Madera in the heart of California’s San Joaquin Valley.

Jeanne Trunday first went to work at a Basque hotel in Fresno. The Hotel Bascongado on G Street was a two-story wooden frame structure with a deep second-story balcony. The owner and operator was John Bidegaray (Champi3n).³⁰ “My wife, she had another boyfriend over there, Bidegaray, Louis Bidegaray. Before, she had loaned him \$700. She was making \$15 a month cooking for maybe 100-200 men, sheepherders at Bidegaray’s place, Champi3n’s place. In 1915, that’s a lot of money \$700, loaned to her boyfriend and he didn’t have it and he couldn’t get the money. Then this Chester Rowell he told her, ‘You and I we go see him and if he says yes, I get the money.’ And he said ‘Yes I owe it to her,’ and he got the money too. He got it some way.” Jeanne was then working for Rowell.

Marriage “We wrote to each other about a year. I went to Fresno in 1916. I was down there about a month. On January 25, 1916, we get married. That church, a new church, Mama had put \$5 there when they were building it. She donated \$5, she told me,



Figure 16 Aitachi and Amatchi’s marriage license, 1916



Figure 17: St. Alphonsus Church, Fresno

to that church. Nice church.” Attending the bride were Amatchi’s cousins from Madera, Mary Trunday Errecart and Grace Trunday Blanchard.* Aitachi said his best man was Ospital, Amatchi’s cousin. Officiating was Fr. Edward Molloy. More than half a century later, in 1971, their great grandson, my son Kevin, was baptized at this same Saint Alphonsus Church (built in 1913).

The newlyweds stayed in Fresno a few days, then set off for Nevada by train. They got as far as Gardnerville, the French Hotel, but encountered a snowstorm. “There was too much snow, we couldn’t get through the mountains, no stages. We had to go back to the train and go from Minden to Carson, from Carson to Wabuska, Wabuska to Mason. To go to Wellington there was a little route there, a little railroad. From Mason to Hudson, we missed the train and stayed the night in Mason. I call up my boss and say the next day we going to Hudson. The butcher was killing hogs, he got my job, I was killing hogs in Wellington a lot of times. Then he [the butcher] come over with a horse and buggy and get us in Hudson and take us [10 miles] to Wellington.” The trip today from Gardnerville to Wellington would take less than an hour.



Figure 18: Aitachi and Amatchi's wedding party, Fresno, CA, 1916

* Amatchi spelled her name Trunday on her marriage license, as did Marie and Grace on their ship manifest and 1910 census records. The license records her age as 30, but she was in fact 32 at the time. Aitachi is registered with a middle initial, M, perhaps for Michel, and is shown as age 30, but he was just age 29.

Wellington was quite a change from Fresno for Jeanne. Fresno's urban population was 25,000 in 1910 and growing rapidly. Wellington's population was a few hundred at most, relying on Smith Valley's agriculture, wagon freight and stagecoach depot for commerce. She was busy in Fresno, working long hours; not so in Wellington. "She was washing clothes there, not a steady job. She get tired, she didn't like it too much. Too lonesome. She walk down there maybe a mile down to a ranch. Fella, man and wife had a couple of kids. She talk Basque, he talk French. She go down there to pass time."

The hot springs offered a change of pace. "I had horse and buggy, white horse. Sunday afternoon we go to the hot springs, both of us get the baths, hot springs steam baths. Nice place to take baths." It was "ten miles from Wellington toward Yerington." He worked in Wellington "five years and ten months, from 1912 to 1917. Then she was pregnant and I bring her to Gardnerville. I had a horse and buggy at that time."

So ended this chapter of John Etchemendy's American odyssey: from railroad cement mixer, to tunnel rock hand driller, to shepherd, cow milker, telephone linesman, manure hauler, well driller, corral builder, chore boy, livery stable hand, hog butcher, and bartender. The latter skill would serve him well in his new profession.

3

The Hotel Business

Aitachi and Amatchi drove their horse and buggy to Gardnerville and the beautiful Carson Valley intending a temporary stay while Amatchi gave birth to their first child at the age of 33. They took a room at the French Hotel. John Michael Etchemendy was born in their hotel room on January 27, 1917. Seven months after baby John's birth, Anita Louise Borda, John's future bride, was born in the same hotel and in the same room. Her parents, Peter Borda and Marie Ernaut, were the hotel's proprietors.

The East Fork Hotel Before they were to return to Wellington, however, Aitachi encountered another Basque, a businessman, at the hotel. "When I come to Gardnerville, I find that day before Hasquet was at the East Fork Hotel and he quit his partner Martin Antchagno. He was his partner and the women [wives] they didn't get along, so he come to the French Hotel.... Hasquet told me, 'We go to the East Fork to see Martin Antchagno. He is sick in bed. He is a nice fella.' We went, both of us together, see him in the bed. 'I heard about you,' Martin Antchagno said, 'about Etchemendy was in Wellington.' 'Yeah, yeah, in Wellington quite a few years.' I said. 'I want to see you tomorrow,' he told me like that. 'OK, I come and see you tomorrow.' So I went back home, back to the French Hotel....Then I talk to Antchagno. He said, 'Why don't you come to Gardnerville and go partners with me here? I need a partner. I don't feel good. Hasquet quit me and I owe \$300 to [Pete] Chango and [Jean] Aldax. I owe \$300 and they want to take my business too.' " Aitachi continued, "They [Chango and Aldax] want to take me into business too when they bought a ranch. They want to go in the sheep business and they want to go partners with me too. They want that I go with them.* But my wife says she like the hotel business best, so we go partners with Antchagno. I told them I had to go home and tell them after a few days, I had to give them time, I quitting and coming to

* Pete Chango and Jean Aldax were brothers-in-law engaged in ranching and ran sheep in the Carson Valley.

The East Fork Hotel

The East Fork was built in 1893 by George and Charlie Brown, two brothers who came to Genoa with a travelling circus. The Brown brothers also owned a brickyard that supplied bricks for many Carson Valley buildings. At the turn of the century, the hotel was advertised as having "Excellent accommodations and an excellent livery stable connected." One of four eventual Basque hotels in town, including the Overland, French, and Pyrenees, the East Fork Hotel provided boarding rooms and meals for Basque shepherds. The two-story, 3500 square foot building was purchased in 1921 by Raymond and Gorgonia Borda, and also served as their family home. Raymond, who died in 1950, was Tanta Anita's uncle (and my great uncle on my paternal grandmother's side). Gorgonia operated the hotel until her death in 1980. The hotel was demolished in 2014.

Downloaded from [The Record-Courier](#), October 20, 2014, and the Historical Marker.

Gardnerville. I had a horse and buggy. They had a little barn, the French Hotel back there. Also the East Fork had two little barns." He doesn't remember how much he paid Antchagno, but figures it was more than enough to pay off Chango and Aldax. He "had saved a little money up there [Wellington]. I didn't spend any money."

"Next day, I went to Wellington. I sell the horse and buggy and I come back on the stage to Gardnerville. I give them ten days time, the Reading brothers. They want to raise me my wages." He thinks he was making "\$40 or \$45 a month. Shepherders a dollar or a dollar and a quarter a day. I think they want to raise me to \$60." Aitachi returned to Gardnerville, where he would make his home for the next 62 years.

Unfortunately, the partnership with Martin Antchagno was short-lived because he died in August 1917 at the age of 47,³¹ leaving his interests in the East Fork to his widow. In November 1918, Congress passed a temporary Wartime Prohibition Act banning the sale of alcoholic

beverages. It then enacted the Volstead Act to carry out the intent of the 18th amendment, which established the prohibition of alcohol in the United States. "Mrs. Antchagno she didn't want nothing to do with prohibition business. So I had to buy her out." Aitachi bought out Mrs. Antchago's share of the lease to operate the East Fork Hotel.

Later the owner of the East Fork Hotel property, “Charley Brown, wanted to sell it to me the second year, \$13,500, the whole thing, the whole lot, garden, everything up to the back road, the East Fork Hotel.” But the property had problems. “Every morning in the winter time all frozen, all the pipes. Had an awful time. All the pipes was loose under the building. The house was pretty old too same time. Anyhow, we tell him we couldn’t buy it.” Aitachi and Amatchi continued to operate the East Fork under the lease agreement for four years, and their family grew. In 1918, Amatchi gave birth in the East Fork to twin boys Leon and “Baby Louie,”³² but sadly, Louie died at birth. Brother William Walling was born in the East Fork in 1920.



Figure 19: The East Fork Hotel, 2013

While living in the East Fork, “In [September] 1918 we was quarantined there - Leon for a month and 11 days. The twin boy he died, and I had my bartender he died, and the Chinaman he had a room there, he died. I had three dead ones.... I lost a lot of blood from nose. I get over it. Mama very bad, that’s the reason the other one [baby Louie] died. Leon was pretty sick too. All of us It was a tough one. Lots of ‘em died that time of the flu. They don’t know what to do.” Aitachi was accurately describing the influenza epidemic that swept the world in 1918 and killed an estimated 50 million people, with one-fifth of the world’s population attacked by the deadly virus. The pandemic’s death toll was more than twice the number of lives claimed during World War I.³³



Figure 30: Aitachi behind the East Fork, 1918

Earlier that year, John Etchemendy registered for the World War I draft and was deferred by reason of age; he was 32.

Sheepman Apparently operating a hotel and raising a family could not occupy enough of Aitachi’s time and energy, so he turned to sheep

ranching for a second job, this time not as a herder but as an owner. “A little bit later [September 1917], me and another partner [Juan Ascarate * and Bertrand Inchauspe] bought some sheep from Jensen, a banker.... Anyhow, we bought the sheep \$16.25 a head [1,447 head]. A lot of money them days. We went about \$25,000 in the hole.³⁴ But even with that we didn’t go broke.” His first year as a sheep owner, was his best year. “First year we sell ewe lambs \$18 a head, 1918. Fella who bought those ewe lambs went broke down in Los Banos....That is what saved us, why we didn’t go broke. Sheep business in 1920s was pretty rough. Lot of them went broke. But we make it somehow.” Aitachi and his partners persisted. “Later we run sheep six years myself. After six years I sold to my partner. I had to sell the sheep or quit the hotel. But my wife say, ‘No, no, we keep the hotel, sell the sheep if you want to,’ she told me. I sold the sheep for \$7 a head, paid \$16.25. That way we didn’t make any money fast,” he laughs. “But even with that we didn’t go broke. 1923 I sold it [the sheep] after six years. It was tough years that time, it was everything down. Yeah, very tough.”



Figure 21: Aitachi at the East Fork bar, 1917.

“When I had sheep, every week I had to make sourdough bread back of the East Fork. In the stable I make a hole there and a fire, and every week I had to make bread. Next day I go out and make camp to my partner [Ascarate] who was herding the sheep.” “Making camp” means the camp tender, Aitachi, would take bread and other provisions out to the sheep camp, usually weekly. “Took me all day, sometimes on horseback, then in car. Especially first year, I had to go to Bodie and Mono Lake and back, half the night on the road.” He kept his sheep in Bodie and Mono Lake in the summer and brought them to Churchill, near Yerington, in the fall for winter and spring. In Churchill they built corrals and sheds for lambing in March and April. “Sometimes we had an awful time, couldn’t get no herders that amount to anything. They no want to work, unless you

* Juan Ascarate’s wife worked for Amatchi in the East Fork “five or six years. They had no kids. Nice lady.”

are around yourself. I had to work night and day” during lambing season.

In 1917, Aitachi bought his first automobile, a Dodge car, for \$700, to help him with his sheep business. “Had to make camps and everything, couldn’t make it with horses.... Had to be a pretty high car to make it go on the highway even. Very bad roads; went to Yerington one time and got stuck, Wellington one time and got stuck.” He didn’t buy his first Buick until 1926, a seven passenger Buick. He

The Overland Hotel

The sturdy brick building at 1451 Main Street was erected in 1894 and opened as the Gardnerville Meat Market by Sam A. Imelli, a successful butcher and ranch owner. It was gutted by fire in 1919 and rebuilt. Imelli died in 1920. His widow sold the building and other structures in 1922 to the Overland Holding Company, of which John Etchemendy was one of five partners.

picked it up in San Francisco. “Both of them were pretty good cars, Dodge and Buick.” After that, he would change cars every two or two and a half years. “Had to travel lots, up to Bodie, Mono Lake, all over. Had the sheep up there, tending camp every week.... Then had to stay up all night, sometimes, in the bar.” He ended this hectic lifestyle when he sold the sheep to his partner Ascarate in 1923. “We didn’t have enough sheep for both of us so he bought me out,’ Aitachi recalls.

The Overland Hotel Aitachi and Amatchi stayed at the East Fork “four years, went there 1917 till 1921.” In 1921, “he [Charlie Brown] had a chance to sell it. He no tell me who it was, but I know myself, I got an idea who it was. The same price, but he keep the garden and one lot himself. I tell him you got to give me 24 hours time. And that night I

don’t know what to do and she [Amatchi] don’t know what to do. Didn’t sleep much that night. Somebody told me the Overland Hotel’s two partners, Spanish fellas, they don’t get along. Mateo and another fella, they don’t get along. So next morning at six o’clock I went outside and see Mateo sweeping the sidewalk. And I went to him. ‘I heard you fellas want to sell

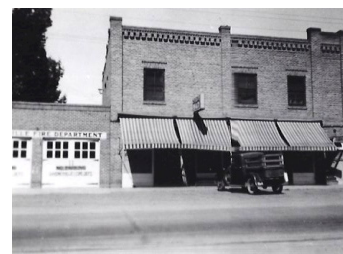


Figure 22: The Overland Hotel with adjoining firehouse, circa 1924.

The Steam Engine

“Another fella tries to build a steam engine at the same garage (blacksmith shop across from the Overland). Italian fella, worked sometimes day and night there, and pretty near off his mind. Before finishing it, he gets sick and he quit, he didn't finish it - the steam engine. I think somebody else had built one in Lovelock. That's what I heard. One time one fella he comes over with a car he built himself, a steam engine car. Big car too, park in front of Overland ... The way I heard it, Standard Oil Company bought him out. They don't want no competition. They won't sell gas if you sell steam engine. That's the reason I guess. That was 1918.”

out,' ” Aitachi said. Mateo answered, “ ‘Oh yes, my partner...he went to Sacramento. As soon as he come back if you want to buy it I sell it to you, buy me out.’ And when he come back that night, next morning I went to see him, he [Mateo] changed his mind, he didn't want to sell it. And the other fella say, ‘If you don't want to sell it, I sell it to him.’ So I get the other fella.” Aitachi bought a half-share of the lease to operate the Overland Hotel with Mateo as his partner. Then they moved the growing family into their new home.

John Etchemendy was not content with leasing the Overland's operations. He wanted to own it. So he and four partners formed the Overland Holding Company and, on March 13, 1922, bought the hotel, slaughterhouse, and other buildings from Sam Imelli's widow for an estimated \$23,455.³⁵ “Five of us. Charlie Brown put in \$7,000; I put \$6,000; Pete Anderson put \$5,000; August Miller put \$5,000; Jimmy [Miller] he put \$2,000 - \$25,000. We bought the whole thing, ” recalled Aitachi. “Two years later, Jimmy moved to Sacramento, he put a business there and he went broke ... We bought him out his \$2,000, me and

Charley Brown ... Quite a few years later we bought him [Anderson] out, Charley Brown and I. Later, Steve [Imelli] bought out August Miller, ” to join the partnership. Imelli later bought out Charley Brown's shares, leaving Steve Imelli and Aitachi as the only partners in the holding company. Over the next 45 years, Aitachi would be an owner, either solely or in partnership, of the Overland Holding Company.



Figure 23: Amatchi and Aitachi with Johnny, Josie, Billy and Leon, 1924.

Meanwhile, Aitachi and Amatchi continued to operate the hotel and restaurant with their partner under a lease. “Mateo, he stay with me a couple of years, not even two years.... Mateo was scared all the time. He didn’t want to do any bootlegging. I had to do all the bootlegging. I had to raise a family. So a year and a half, something like that, I bought him out.” On February 8, 1923, John Etchemendy paid Mateo Marinelareno \$300 for “that certain business known as the Overland

Hotel, consisting of a lease from the Overland Holding Company, and all wares, goods, merchandise, furnishings, etc. contained in the said partnership inventory.”³⁶ Aitachi and Amatchi had now become both owners and the sole operators of the renamed Overland Hotel and Restaurant.

My mother, Josephine Genevieve, was born in the Overland on July 8, 1923. Her sister Marie Ann was born in the hotel in 1927. The parents lived in room No. 1 at the head of the stairs. The girls lived in a nearby room, while the boys (John, Leon, and Bill) would eventually share a room at the far end of the hall where, I was told, a window enabled them to climb out and lie on the roof of the adjoining fire house during summer nights. “Lots of farmers they tell me, ‘How the hell do you raise such a family in a hotel?’ “Aitachi laughs during a newspaper interview.³⁷ “We never lived in a house until military housing,” exclaimed Leon in the same interview.

Amatchi was, of course, a major reason they were able to “raise such a family.” Otto Leon (“uncle” in Basque) once recalled jokingly, “She was a great big brute, all of four feet. She really thought she was something.” Otto John added, “She loved to sing.” She was also the parent the children would go to for their spending money. She was more sympathetic than the “frugal” Aitachi.³⁸ And her special talent was cooking. She was a wonderful cook, preparing



Figure 24: Sisters Josephine and Mayie, 1927.



Figure 25: Friends and relatives in the Overland bar with Amatchi (fourth from left). Cousin Laurent is third from left, 1938.

meals for the family and the hotel patrons. “Mama did the cooking, most of the time. Always we get someone cooking too besides, but she was the one who showed them how to do it. She was doing it most of the time, cooking.” “Was Mama happy in the hotel?” my mother asked. “Oh yes. She liked the hotel. She liked that hotel better than the East Fork, lots better.” The

Overland would become the first in the area to advertise traditional family style Basque meals served in the hotel dining room that also operated as a restaurant. “Everybody laughed, but now everybody does it,” remembered Aitachi.³⁹

Tantta Mayie (“aunt” in Basque) once recalled, “My sister [Josephine] and I were both born in the hotel and along with our three brothers we were raised in the hotel and all worked necessary chores. I thought it was great to grow up in the hotel in Gardnerville where we had many friends. My parents used to arrange to have relatives brought to the states for some of the Basque families and would allow the new arrivals to work off the expenses in the hotel by being maids, bartenders, dishwashers, or whatever was necessary.”⁴⁰

“Rooms were pretty well much filled up all the time, lots of shepherders, lots of credit - all on credit.... Lots of them went without paying,” Aitachi recounts. “Lots of shepherders from Dangberg take two or three months off in the winter time. Two, three days they was broke and I had to carry them months and pay later, like that. Lots of ‘em they go someplace else and had a hard time to get it [money] too. Had to go to Fresno even, couple of fellas owe me \$400 or \$500. Try to get it, but never write or nothing so went down there to get it. Some skipped though. One went up to Salt Lake, \$600, a bad one. One he even took my shepherder blankets and good canvas with him.”

In an interview with a newspaper reporter, Otto Bill recalled, "Pop was a real softy. He always carried them," referring to shepherders and miners. "He must have 100 IOUs from miners." Many of them testify, "If I strike it rich, 50 percent of what I make goes to John Etchemendy," laughed Otto Bill.⁴¹

Aitachi would sometimes have to tend bar around the clock for non-stop poker games or all-night mus games, a Basque card game. "A lot of mus players in them days. All night, playing mus. Next morning they have breakfast and go to work. Sometimes at daylight I had to take them home, lots of them. ... Dance too. We had music box going pretty near all night sometimes."

"Mama had a lot of help in the kitchen sometimes, but she had to show them how to do it and this and that. Some of them didn't last too long. Katherine, Josephine's sister [Mateo's girlfriend], was a good cook, good helper. And sometimes she had to go make beds, all the beds in all the rooms, two beds, and sometimes two, three double up you know. Shepherders, you know."

Even though Aitachi owned the Overland during the Prohibition years of 1918-1933, he "Always had a bartender. One time when I had a bartender and was going lambing, he [the bartender] was there all the time maybe a coupla three years, and that Borda [the East Fork owner] want to take him away. He offer him a little more money to take my bartender away because he know I was going lambing. ... I had to pay him more wages to make him stay till lambing was over anyhow. ... After, I had my cousin Chiquito and Little Leon; they work there a long time."

Bootlegging

"One time, I went down to Dayton to get some wine and some whiskey. I had a place down there. I come back and he (Mateo) was in there between two buildings waiting for me to come. He told me, 'The prohis [a slang term for Prohibition Agents] was in the East Fork. You better move out of here. The prohis is in the East Fork.' Then I don't know what to do. He run back to his room. He was scared all the time. I think it over a little bit, then I back up and put my liquor in the slaughterhouse, upstairs, ... I hide it in the slaughterhouse till next night. ... Prohis didn't stop there because there was no lights."

"At nights we make liquor, me and guy who was working here [hotel]. Make liquor someplace where we could find enough water, a spring like that, and make whiskey. That's the way we did. Make whiskey all night and work all day just the same sometime. Come daylight, home. It was tough." It sure was tough! In 1923, he was arrested for violating prohibition laws. Fortunately, the newspaper reported, "The jury in the case of John Etchemendy, owner of the Overland hotel in Gardnerville, charged with violating the Volstead Act, disagreed last Monday at Carson City."⁴² Aitachi was a free man!

"I had a seven-passenger Buick at that time [about 1926]; kinda green color. It was a big one. We go down to Minden when they arrive by train. We had to haul the passengers up. ... Ten o'clock in the morning arrive the train. Everyday meet the train" to bring the passengers to the Overland Hotel.

The Overland building itself was a sturdy structure, built of solid brick. When Aitachi and Amatchi bought it in 1922, it was nearly new, having been reconstructed after a fire just three years earlier. The dining room/restaurant was a good size, with linoleum flooring, and was kept spotless. Meals were served family style. One of Josephine and Mayie's "necessary chores," I was told, was polishing to a high shine the dark wood staircase that led from the dining room to the rooms upstairs. I recall the kitchen had a large trap door in the center of the floor, opening to a cellar that was used for storage of food, wine and supplies. The bar room sported an oiled wood floor and a tin metal ceiling with a pressed design. The bar itself was a beautiful dark wood with a brass rail. Behind the bar

was a large mirror with dark wood framing and dark wood shelves on either side for liquor and spirits. Round card tables were in the front along with a few slot machines. Restrooms were in the rear of the bar room and a door in the right rear led to a courtyard and outbuildings. It is here that we grandchildren loved to play and explore. A doorway opposite the bar led to the adjoining dining room. Aitachi's office, where he "kept the books," was in a small walled-off section up front at the end of the bar.

In the twenty years since landing at New York Harbor, John Etchemendy had progressed from itinerant laborer and shepherd to become a husband and father of five children, a respected businessman, sheep owner, and proprietor of the Overland Hotel and Restaurant.

4

Family Time

Earning Their Keep Aitachi and Amatchi were not the only family members who worked during those years at the Overland. Josephine and Mayie had their chores to do around the hotel, making beds, polishing the stair rails, setting the tables, and learning to cook for large numbers from Amatchi. All the boys worked on ranches at haying time (sometimes there were three cuttings in the lush Carson Valley), in garages and gas stations, and in stores. But, “We were city kids,” laughs Leon in an interview; “We didn’t herd sheep.” They also told the reporter that, “Frugal Pop made sure he collected their wages, not them.” During one summer, John and Leon worked in the copper mines at Ely, a rough and tumble town at the time.⁴³

Between 1935 and 1940, Aitachi also owned a bar and restaurant at Mono Lake, CA, about 90 miles from Gardnerville, to serve the workers who labored on the Los Angeles Water Project.* “Leon and Billy worked there. Leon got sick there. He was in the hospital a little while. [My unsympathetic mother says it was just an ingrown toenail.] Billy worked in the gas station across the street for somebody else. ... I had a partner in that bar though. ... Michel Irigaray from Carson. After four years they took away our license from us because we wasn’t citizens.”

Family Picnics It wasn’t all about work for the family. “In the summertime we drive out to Lake Tahoe like that. That wasn’t very far. Sometime we go out to Hope Valley for a coupla three days. My

* During those years, the Los Angeles Water Project was in full swing. Construction of the 60,000 foot long Mono Craters Tunnel was underway, extending the Los Angeles Aqueduct. Upon completion, the LA Department of Water and Power began diverting Mono Lake’s tributary streams 350 miles south to meet the city’s growing water demands. Camps for the construction workers were erected in Mono Basin in July 1934. The tunnel was completed in January 1941. As a result of the diversion, the lake level dropped 45 vertical feet by 1990 and lost one-half its volume.

boys was at that time pretty small and they went fishing and early in the morning before daylight. I don't know how many fish they bring in, maybe a dozen apiece. Then 10 o'clock they was hungry. One time I think one boy, I think it was Leon, ate 14 eggs. Everybody couldn't get filled up. Mama was cooking a few hours. We was camping. We put up a tent."

"We went to Lake Tahoe and Hope Valley for picnics, the whole family. ... But maybe a few hours, couldn't stay very long those days. Had to run a business. Back to the hotel and tend to business." "Lot's of time we went up Kingsbury Grade and the car it get to boiling and I had to put water in it. It had a little spring there and I had to put in water." Mom remembered drives up Kingsbury Grade when the kids would urge their Aita to, "Test your lungs Pop," encouraging Aitachi to give out a strong irrintzina.

"I remember one time we went camping a couple hours or so to Zephyr Cove [Lake Tahoe]. It was kind of windy and we was on the lake there. They was swimming - Billy, Leon and Johnny - and Billy, there was waves that took him way in, and Leon jump in and pull him out. I'll never forget that. He pull him out. We was pretty lucky that time."

"Mama and I can't swim. We stay outside. We swim at the hot springs. I could swim under the water but I couldn't stay on top. It was funny, I couldn't stay on top of the water. When I play handball and get a good sweat then go over there to take a steam bath at Walley's Hot Spring. Lot's of time we all go, Mama too if she had time. When we go always in a hurry because we had to tend to the business. [The children] would swim in the pool, I remember that." Aitachi and "Mamma would go in the steam." Ever the businessman, "John Etchemendy and associates" are reported to have leased Walley's Hot Springs from its owner, Mrs. Ella Restrepo, in 1934 for an unknown period of time.⁴⁴

My Mom remembers one time they went in the Buick to Lee Vining and then over to Yosemite. "You remember that?" said Aitachi. "There were seven of us in the car. Josephine and Joe Sario in front and Leonie and Beatrice. Josephine was crying when we was

going down that twisting road in Yosemite. It was a bad one.”
“Didn’t we all stay in a tent?” my Mom asked. “I think we had a room; I think so. Next morning we had breakfast, then went back to Lee Vining. I think same day we went back to Gardnerville.”

Handball and Boxing Ever since Aitachi’s Sunday matches after church in Arnéguy, he would say, “Always I like to play handball.” The French Hotel had a handball court. Pete Borda had it built in the rear of the hotel in 1914.⁴⁵ Amatchi often supplied the handmade balls for matches – “Mama could make the best ones.”⁴⁶ After he played a match, Aitachi said he would drive 10 miles to the hot springs for a steam. He would play as often as time would permit, and as long as his age and health would allow. He finally gave up handball on his 80th birthday when he broke his wrist during a challenge match.⁴⁷ The boys played as well at the French Hotel’s court. Otto John and Otto Bill went on to become champion handball players at the University of Nevada, capturing several intramural championships.⁴⁸ Otto Billy continued to play during his military service and weekly in retirement with a group of friends, winning the golden master’s handball championship at age 60.⁴⁹ (He also beat the pants off of me once in Monterey, CA.)

In 1931, a heavyweight Spanish Basque boxer named Paulino Uzkudun was training for a fight with twenty-two year-old Max Baer at Steamboat Springs, south of Reno. Known as the “Basque Woodchopper,” Uzkudun had been the European heavyweight champion, and was considered a strong and persistent warrior. The famous sportswriter Grantland Rice, waxed poetic in 1929 about the boxer:

“This axman from the Pyrenees
Is tougher than his native trees.
And no man yet has made him run,
I mean Paulino Uscudun.

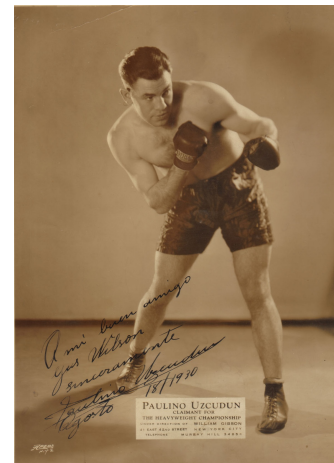


Figure 26: Paulino Uzkudun in 1930 promotional photo.

He has a chest built like a cask,
This heavy, thick-set, burly Basque.
Who grins to see his claret run,
I mean Paulino Uzcudun.”⁵⁰

Aitachi is reported to have driven people to the training site in his touring car⁵¹ and attended the fight along with 18,000 other spectators, including most of the Basque immigrant community of northwestern Nevada. The fight promoter and referee was none



Figure 27: Virginia Street ,
Reno, 1931.

other than former world heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey. Despite the tremendous heat outdoors at the Race Track Arena in Reno, the fight went the full 20 rounds. Uzcudun won by a decision. In a 70-fight career, he was only knocked out once, in 1935 by Joe Louis in his last bout, after coming out of retirement.

The “Basque Woodchopper” sparked a family interest in boxing that would last for years. The Etchemendy sons would box in exhibitions in the Carson Valley, winning roller skates and bicycles. “There were always two out of the three of us in the boxing ring,” Otto John remembered. “Spectators would toss money in the ring, and we’d pick it up afterwards.”⁵² At least one son, Otto Leon, went on to box in intramurals at the university.⁵³

School Days The family attended St. Gall’s Catholic Church in Gardnerville. All the children were educated at Douglas County elementary and high schools. All excelled in the classroom, extracurricular activities, and athletics. The three sons were scouts and the daughters were in 4-H.

Johnny was active in multiple sports, including track and field, tennis, baseball (pitcher, second base), and football (end). But he appears to have excelled at basketball in high school. As just a sophomore, for example, he starred in “a game of Reno giants versus Gardnerville midgets,” as the high scorer for both teams.⁵⁴ At university as well, he was a leader of the Wolf Pack basketball squad that won the 1938 Far Western Conference championship.⁵⁵ Johnny

was also no slouch academically, being consistently an honor roll student and graduating as the second highest ranked male high school student with an average grade of nearly 93 over four years of schooling.⁵⁶

Otto Leon lettered in football two years as quarterback of the Douglas High Tigers. His favorite passing target his junior year was brother John, the team's starting end.⁵⁷ Leon also played for the Tigers' basketball team. Leon had a knack for entertaining audiences. As a high school junior, Leon was well cast as the lead in a three-act comedy, "The Whole Town Laughing." The newspaper characterized him as a "natural comedian."⁵⁸ He would continue entertaining at university as a rally cheerleader.

Not to be outdone, Otto Billy was also a cast member of his senior class play, though unfortunately for us, no reviews of his talents are available. We do know that he was a two-year starter in the backfield for the Douglas High football team and an honor role student. Billy graduated high school in 1938.



Figure 28 Douglas High Tigers football team, Otto Billy standing far right, 1937-1938.

My Mom, Josephine, was very active in 4-H activities, including participation in camping trips to Lake Tahoe and various homemaker competitions. She and her good friend Leonie Sario* once sang a duet to entertain at a church social. She also sang a duet at a high school assembly. And in 1940, the trio of Josephine, Leonie and Helen "Chickie" Borda entertained at a church luncheon.⁵⁹ The three would later become roommates in Reno during the war. Mom likely sang harmony as she excelled in this role. Music was important to her as she also played clarinet in both the high school orchestra and the marching band, participating in several music festivals and band competitions around northern Nevada. The trio also foreshadowed their future

* Tanta Leonie would marry my father's younger brother Albert Uhalde in 1942.



Figure 29: 1941 Tigerettes basketball team, Mom front row third from left with Chickie Borda next.

especially of Andre Agassi. Moreover, she was a starting guard for the 1941 and 1942 Tigerettes basketball teams. She swam as often as possible at the hot springs pool, often riding bikes with siblings and girlfriends the 10 miles each way. She was a member of the “Hags,” a girl’s social group organized in 1940 whose members would remain lifelong friends.⁶² Mom was one of twenty-two graduates of Douglas High in 1942.

Tantta Mayie, the baby of the family, graduated from grammar school in 1942, at which time brothers Johnny and Leon were already in military service and Billy was getting ready to enter his last year of university. Sister Josie was attending Reno Business College. Mayie carried on the family musical tradition by singing in a quartet and performing a coronet duet with her friend Alice Micheo.⁶³ Mayie continued her music in high school playing regularly in a brass quartet, marching band and music festival competitions. Like her sister, Mayie was active in 4-H, including camping and competitions at Lake Tahoe. And she was a two-year player on the girls’ basketball team, earning a letter sweater. She too had a role in the senior play, “Drums of Death,” a mystery. In December 1945, the Kiwanas Club held their annual Christmas party at the Minden Inn. Mayie again played in a trumpet trio, performing “Stardust.” This time, one of those she entertained was her brother Billy, home on leave from the battlefield in Europe as an Army lieutenant wounded several times.⁶⁴ When Mayie graduated Douglas High School, with

career interests when they participated with twenty-six students from thirteen area high schools in a full day competition in shorthand, typing and bookkeeping.⁶⁰ She was active in student government as well as sports. One news report said she was “prominent in athletics” in high school.⁶¹ She played high school tennis, becoming a lifelong fan of the sport,

her class of twenty-five students in 1946, the last of John and Jeanne Etchemendy's five children would leave the Carson Valley, at least for a few years.

6

Wool Buying⁶⁵

Aitachi was always busy with the business of the Overland, but as we have seen, he could always make time for other business opportunities. So when a representative of the Adams and Leland Company,* a Boston wool firm, approached him in 1933 with a proposition, he was intrigued. Would he be interested in buying wool for the firm each year? He of course accepted and was a wool buyer for the firm each spring for the next nine years. In 1942, Henri Haber⁺⁺ of the South San Francisco firm of Haber, Zemel, and Tyron offered him a better deal, a one-quarter-cent raise. He remained with Haber's firm, buying wool each spring for over forty years.

In an interview with Nevada Magazine, then 97-year-old Aitachi explained his approach to wool buying:

"I look for long wool, three inches or better. The merinos I'm used to have fine wool with lots of wrinkles. And wool that is clean." He explained that wool is bid on by the pound, so a buyer must consider shrinkage. How much weight a fleece loses depends on how dirty the wool is at shearing and also on humidity, both at shearing and in storage."

A longtime friend and customer, Fred Fulstone, Sr., described Aitachi's approach to bargaining when he went out to the shearing sheds: "He would always kind of lean over and lift the fleeces. 'Feels kind of heavy to me, Fred,' he'd say. He was hinting that the wool had a lot of dirt. Then he would offer me a lower price."

* Owner Samuel G. Adams was also the past-president of the Boston Wool Trade Association from 1919-1920. His business partner was E. F. Leyland. Their firm was one of the "big six" wool trading firms in Boston, especially prominent during World War I with military wool purchases.

⁺⁺ Henri Haber (1926-2016) was born in San Francisco and was a wool broker for 50 years.

At the shearing sheds, competing buyers or a buyer and his boss working as a team would write their bid in the palm of their hand, and then raise their hand to reveal their offer. Henri (Hank) Haber made many trips with Aitachi out to make such wool bids. He said teamwork is important when they bid. Otto Billy once told a reporter he always liked to watch each man raise his hand to reveal his bid. “Haber went to school to learn the wool-buying business, and Pop learned through practice, so it’s really something to see them study the wool and arrive at the same figure, or nearly the same,” he said.



Figure 30: Brothers Leon, Billy, and Johnny with their Pop during 1984 magazine interview.

Aitachi recalled to my Mom that in the early days his “Territory covered Bishop, Hawthorne and Tonapah, Fallon, Yearington, Wellington, Smith Valley and as far as Winnemucca; Reno, Carson and Minden, and Susanville.” Over the years, Aitachi developed regular customers in and around Gardnerville and Smith Valley, including the University of Nevada Experimental Farm. His boss and close friend Hank Haber explained that, “This business is

based on a handshake and a man’s word, so the buyer has to develop that kind of relationship with his customers over the years... John Etchemendy’s customers know his word is good.”

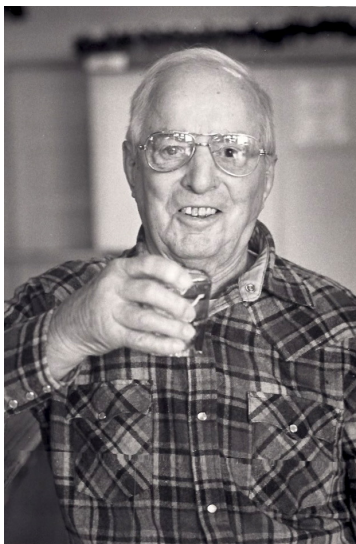


Figure 31: Aitachi toasting with a picón at 1984 magazine interview.

The University Farm is near where Aitachi was reported to have had a head on collision in 1938 in which five persons were injured. Maybe he was on a wool-buying trip? The news article reports Aitachi was driving toward Reno near the Farm with a passenger and, “The brakes of his car locked when he slowed down for a car ahead, and caused the machine to swerve to the other side of the road colliding head on with the

other car.” All were injured, but Aitachi was not given treatment at the hospital.⁶⁶

In his later years, Aitachi’s nephew Jean Pierre, his brother Léon’s son, would drive him in his 1968 Chevy sedan to the shearing sheds in the spring. As with his first car – the 1917 Dodge – the Chevy was “specifically chosen because it sits high off the ground and won’t get stuck when he drives on dirt roads to remote sheep camps.” His sons said to a reporter that Pop always packed a couple bottles of whiskey in the car, because whenever he saw a shepherd, anywhere, he took him a drink.



Figure 32: Aitachi at work docking lambs at age 91, 1977.

Wool buying was not the only unique skill Aitachi employed in support of the sheep business. In that same 1984 interview he told the reporter, “Every spring since 1920 the owners around the Carson Valley would call me to come dock (castrate) the lambs. Not everyone can do it, you know. I had to give it up a few years ago ... my teeth aren’t strong enough now.”

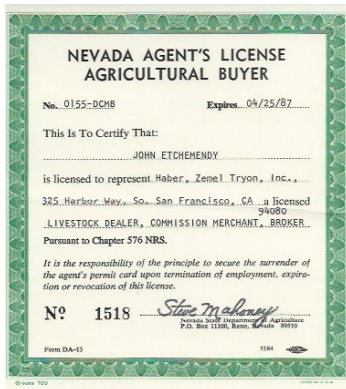


Figure 33: John Etchemendy’s 1987 Wool Buyer's License.

John Etchemendy, Sr. bought wool for over half a century, retiring just shy of his 100th birthday. At the time, he was the West’s oldest active wool buyer, and also likely was its senior docker of lambs.

7 Through Two Wars

“Nevada’s most-decorated brother team,” proclaimed the Reno Gazette-Journal upon the February 1952 return of Otto John from flying fighter jets in Korea.⁶⁷ The article went on to briefly run down the combat service of the Etchemendy brothers during two wars and twenty-seven years of active duty to that date. Combat at “Normandy, St. Lo, Eniwetok, the Philippines, Okinawa, the 38th parallel and the Yalu River” resulted in twelve collective campaign stars, six purple hearts, two presidential citations and nine other decorations.⁶⁸ This summary of course does not do justice to the gallant service of Aitachi and Amatchi’s three sons – nor will this brief recounting which follows.

John, Jr. The story begins when John, Jr. enrolled at the University of Nevada in the fall of 1935.⁶⁹ He joined the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity where he would serve as house manager for three years and president for two years.⁷⁰ He majored in mining engineering and education while minoring in military science Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC). He lettered in basketball, track, and tennis while also playing inter-fraternity baseball and handball. During his fifth year at the university, he was an assistant professor of military science and tactics and an assistant to the director of physical education.

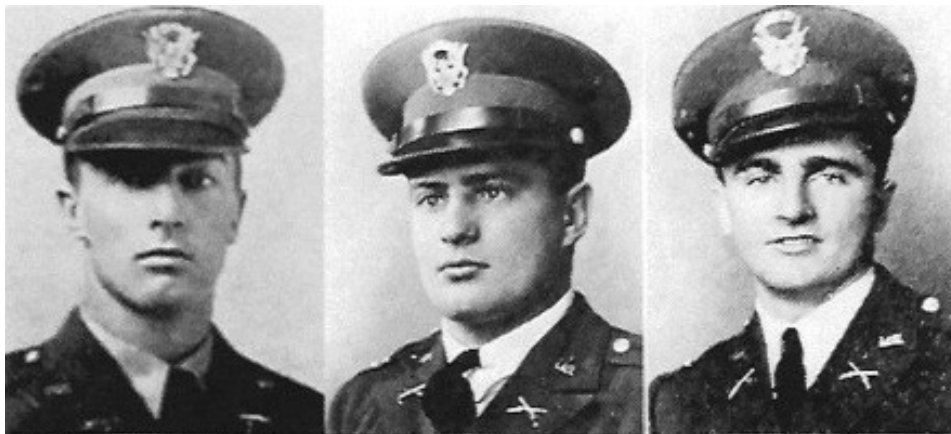


Figure 34: The Etchemendy brothers in their ROTC uniforms.



Figure 35: Otto John and classmates at Kelly Field, 1940

John's military career started even before his time at the university was completed. In May 1939, after graduating from military ROTC with a reserve commission in the U.S. Army infantry, he spent two weeks on active duty training at Fort Douglas, Utah. One year later he enlisted as a flying cadet, just eight and one-half units short of a degree.⁷¹ He reported on May 15, 1940, along with five fellow university classmates, to Lindbergh Field in San Diego to begin flying instruction for the next three months.⁷² Otto John was later transferred to Randolph Field, near San Antonio, Texas to commence 10 weeks of basic flight training. The last leg of John's initial military pilot training took place at nearby Kelly Field. He was commissioned a second lieutenant again, this time in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

John's air corps career began immediately after graduation with a posting to Barksdale Field, Louisiana where he was to serve in the advanced flying school as a single engine flight instructor. On the morning of November 19, 1941 while approaching the airstrip for a landing in an AT-12 Guardsman, a model he had flown more than 72 hours, John survived his first of three aircraft accidents.

On January 31, 1944, Major John Etchemendy returned to his hometown of Gardnerville to wed his childhood friend Anita Borda at St. Gall's Church.⁷³ The newlyweds made their first home together at Randolph Field, Texas. Daughter Renee Drenda - Aitachi and Amatchi's first grandchild - was born that same year.

From 1944 through 1946, he served in the air corps training command as group commander and director of flying at the Central Instructors School at Randolph Field, and at Barksdale Field, Louisiana as assistant training and operations officer, flight safety officer, and assistant to the Commandant.

Otto John got his wish to go abroad when he received orders in 1947 to ship out on the hospital ship Hope bound for Naha, Okinawa. Tanta Anita returned to Reno to live out John's tour of duty with the 51st Fighter Interceptor Group. He returned to the States for a brief stay in 1949.

Within a month of North Korea's invasion across the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950, Lt. Colonel Etchemendy had orders to report to Korea, rejoining his 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing. He later became deputy commander of the 51st Fighter Interceptor Group.

John's 16 months in Korea came to an end in January 1952. During his tour of duty he flew 50 missions with his fighter group. Among them, he once led eight of his fighter group pilots on a mission blasting two railroad bridges and fifteen enemy warehouses in North Korea. On another mission, he led the fighter group on three highly effective raids in a 24-hour period, destroying trucks, tanks, bridges and railroad tunnels. John personally led another mission that destroyed an underwater bridge important to the enemy. Lt. Colonel Etchemendy's wartime service was recognized with the distinguished flying cross, four Korean campaign stars, an air medal, a bronze star, and a Korean citation. He was also awarded a silver star rescue medal for valor when he jumped into harbor waters to save two drowning Navy sailors. He was promoted to full Colonel in 1955.

John would subsequently be awarded the Legion of Merit and the Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters. He would cap his career by returning to the site of his basic flight training, Randolph-Lackland Air Force Base, this time as commander



Figure 36: Lt. Col. John Etchemendy in his F-80 Shooting Star in Korea, 1952.

of the Air Force Basic Military Training School with 20,000 students.⁷⁴ He retired from the military in 1971.

Leon Otto Leon graduated from the University of Nevada in 1942, earning a bachelor's degree in education. Like his older brother, he had been active in sports and student activities at the university, including Alpha Tau Omega fraternity, rally cheerleader and ROTC. He was commissioned through ROTC as a second lieutenant and went directly into the Army infantry after graduation.

Leon's active duty⁷⁵ commenced four months after the United States entered World War II, and almost a year later he married Ruby Nay in Mission San Carlos, Carmel, CA. He had been stationed in nearby Ft. Ord the past 11 months. Aitachi and Amatchi attended the wedding and brother Bill was best man.⁷⁶ Shortly after the wedding, Leon commenced his odyssey through the Pacific with the 7th Infantry Division. He took part in 17 landings from Attu and Kiska in the Aleutian Chain off Alaska, through the Marshall Islands and working back northward.

His first landing at Attu, Alaska commenced May 11, 1943 and was notable for the snow and ice conditions the division encountered. Over three weeks the division lost 600 soldiers in intense combat. After undergoing further training in Hawaii, the 7th Infantry Division undertook amphibious landings in February 1944 on the Marshall Island atolls of Kwajalein and Eniwetok.

His final landing was October 20, 1944 on the island of Leyte in the Philippines, where General Douglas MacArthur famously waded ashore to announce he had returned. There, Leon "got clobbered" badly enough that he spent the next 14 months in and out of hospitals. A medical corpsman from Carson City, Paul Laxalt - later to be governor and senator from Nevada - helped carry the severely wounded Leon on a litter to a nearby hospital ward and cared for him during his recovery.

After recuperating from his wounds, Otto Leon left the Army in 1946 and taught school in Reno and Sparks until he was recalled to

active duty in 1950 with the rank of captain. He was assigned as an ROTC instructor at Reno High School for two years, and then was posted to Europe. After duty at Ft. Riley, Kansas, Leon was assigned to Cambodia during 1957 and 1958, with side tours in Vietnam and Thailand. He observed to a reporter, "They're nice places to visit." His next assignment was with his family in the Panama Canal Zone. His final posting was advising the 7,000-man Puerto Rico National Guard. "I guess I was something different for them," Leon recalled. "It was the first time someone hollered at National Guardsmen ... but they forgave me, apparently."

But Otto Leon wanted to be of even greater service to his country. In 1968 he applied for a transfer to a combat command in Vietnam, where he had earlier made side trips. When his request for



Figure 37: Leon in Cambodia, 1957.

a combat assignment was denied, Lt. Colonel Leon Etchemendy decided to retire after 21 years of military service. He returned to Reno and took a job for which his education, training and experience was more than suited - as training officer for the Nevada Department of Transportation.

Bill Otto Bill graduated from the University of Nevada in May 1943, at the same time brother Leon was fighting on Attu Island. He majored in Spanish and his coursework qualified him to be a public school teacher,⁷⁷ though he had other plans. He also graduated from the two-year advanced ROTC training program.⁷⁸ At UNR he was a member of Scabbard and Blade, an honorary military fraternity, as well as Alpha Tau Omega like his brothers before him. He was active in many campus organizations including the student senate and the Block N Society. He was also the football manager. After graduation Bill went home to Gardnerville for a short visit with his family and friends.

On the night of June 12, Bill and 14 ROTC cadet classmates reported to Fort Douglas, Utah and then entrained to Fort Benning, Georgia to complete 17 weeks of Officer Candidate School.* Upon graduation from OCS in October, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Infantry. A short leave followed.

He was soon assigned as a rifle platoon leader in Company "L," 3rd Brigade, 329th Infantry Regiment, 83rd Infantry Division – the "Thunderbirds."⁷⁹ The division was shipped overseas, sailing 10 days to England for training in April 1944. On June 18, less than two weeks after the Allied D-Day invasion of Normandy, Bill landed on Omaha Beach and his division entered the battle of the hedgerows south of Carentan then on to St. Lo, France. Advancing through



Figure 38: The landing and march to Germany of the 83rd Division.

Brittany, the 329th Regiment captured the Citadel fortress at St. Malo. By the end of September, the division had moved across northwest France into Luxembourg, and then spent November and much of December fighting German forces in the Hürtgen Forest - with 30,000 casualties it was one of the most costly battles in our nation's history.⁸⁰ The battle also was costly for Otto Bill who was one of those casualties, having been wounded in action.⁸¹

Bill probably recovered at a field hospital near his unit, because in late December 1944 he participated with the 83rd Division in the successful Allied effort that stopped the German offensive at the

* Among his UNR and OCS classmates were Jack Streeter who would become Nevada's most decorated World War II soldier, a successful lawyer and Reno's district attorney, and fellow Basque Pete Echeverria who would become a decorated Army captain with a 34-year trial law career, a state senator and Nevada Gaming Commissioner.

Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes. The 83rd struck at Rochefort, engaging in a bitter struggle in knee-deep snow and bitter cold.

In March, the 83d Division advanced toward the Rhine River. Otto Bill was with one of the first platoons to reach the lower Rhine River, as Company L “took up marching fire ... cleaning out enemy resistance” as they “advanced to the approach of the bridge” to Dusseldorf on March 2. However, the “span on the east side of the bridge was blown by the enemy, ruining our chances of capturing the bridge intact.”⁸² It may have been in this battle that Bill was wounded a second time. Aitachi and Amatchi were notified that, while his wounds were not serious, he had been transferred to a hospital in Paris and was recovering.⁸³



Figure 39: Captain Bill Etchemendy in Vienna, Austria, 1946.

After Bill rejoined his unit, and with Germany’s surrender on May 7, 1945, the division moved to Passau and then assumed responsibility for the occupation and military governance of Austria. Bill’s combat days were over, for the time being. He returned to Gardnerville for 45-days leave in December and then returned to Vienna to resume his occupation duties.⁸⁴ In October 1946 he was promoted to the rank of captain.

While stationed in Vienna, Captain Etchemendy met Teje Sablatnig who was employed as a secretary by the U.S. Army, according to newspaper accounts.⁸⁵ They were wed in Gardnerville in November 1947, with Aitachi and Amatchi in attendance. Brother Leon returned the favor and served as best man. The newlyweds would make their home in San Francisco where Bill had been assigned. For his service in Europe, Otto Bill received the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster, the Bronze Star, and four battle stars.

North Korea's invasion across the 38th parallel in June 1950 upended the peace. Captain Bill Etchemendy, now thirty years old, was assigned to the 7th Infantry Division (brother Leon's unit during WWII) that made an amphibious assault landing on the beaches of Inchon in September. Then in November, the division landed along the beaches of Iwon, on Korea's northeast coast. Their mission was to attack north up to the Yalu River on the Chinese border. Bill was commander of Company "L" in the 7th Division's 3rd Battalion, 31st Regiment.⁸⁶ His unit would soon become part of a hastily cobbled-together 31st Regimental Combat Team (RCT).

Late on the night of November 27, in temperatures that reached thirty-five degrees below zero, the 3,000 man 31st Regimental Combat Team, hastily assembled on the east side of the Chosin Reservoir - about 40 miles from the Chinese border - was assaulted by a force of 20,000 Chinese soldiers blowing horns, spraying burp guns, and throwing grenades. They fought a savage battle, often hand-to-hand, lasting four days and five nights. After several enemy assaults, and attempts to rescue and resupply failed, the RCT began a withdrawal under withering fire. The only U.S. survivors were those 323 men ⁸⁷ who were able to walk or crawl the four miles across the frozen reservoir to American lines. Otto Bill was one of those heroes, having been wounded three times during the relentless battle, and flown to a hospital in Japan for treatment and recovery.

During the Vietnam War, Otto Bill would become an advisor to the Army of Thailand. He also served tours at the Pentagon, Alaska and Fort Ord, California among other assignments. When he retired in 1975 after 32 years in the military, Colonel Etchemendy had earned numerous decorations and citations, including the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, the Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster, and the Purple Heart with four oak leaf clusters.

The Home Front Mr. and Mrs. John Etchemendy, Sr. occupied most of their days



Figure 40: Aitachi and Amatchi in front of the Overland, 1940s.

during the 1940s with the work of the Overland's hotel, bar and restaurant. They eagerly awaited word about their sons and looked forward to each home leave. Bill, for example, in December 1945 enjoyed a 45-day leave home from his duty station in Austria.

While Otto Leon was present, neither John nor Bill was able to attend their sister Josephine's wedding to my father Raymond Uhalde in September 1946. He had served 45 months in the Army during the war, with 38 months of that time in the Pacific theater. My father lived and worked on a sheep and cattle ranch with his parents and brothers near Gardnerville. Mom's maid of honor was one of her roommates in Reno, Helen "Chickie" Borda. Mom had spent the war years employed as a stenographer in Reno after graduating from business college.



Figure 40: Leonie Sario Uhalde, Mom and Chickie Borda, 1944.



Figure 41 Dad and Mom on their wedding day in front of the Overland, 1946.

Also in 1946, Aitachi became a naturalized citizen of the United States of America. John was 59 years of age at the time.⁸⁸ He once told a reporter he learned U.S. history and customs from a book.⁸⁹

Between the wars, the family celebrated a rare opportunity for all to be together, in 1948 at the Overland.

They memorialized their reunion by sitting for a professional photographer in Reno. In the photo, shown below, Aitachi and Amatchi look very happy.



Figure 42: The family gathers for the last time, 1948.

Then on October 25, 1949, tragedy struck. Amatchi Jeanne Etchemendy passed away at the Overland after a brief illness due to a heart condition. Amatchi was 66 years old and had been married to Aitachi for over 33 years. She was laid to rest in the family plot alongside her baby Louie in Gardnerville's Garden Cemetery, with her family and many friends present.

The following year, Aitachi traveled to France and his home place Ixteotenia in Arnéguy, for his first visit since he emigrated 43 years earlier. He traveled with his daughter Mayie. They stayed abroad for several months visiting with his surviving siblings Joanes, Dominica, Pierre and León. On their return flight from Paris to New York City on TWA airlines, their fellow passengers were Gardnerville residents John and Jeanne Aldax and Augustine Borda⁹⁰. Upon their return home, Tanta Mayie, who had been attending the University of Nevada, assisted Aitachi in managing the Overland hotel.⁹¹



Figure 43: John Uhalde and Mayie, 1951.

Mayie was the last sibling to marry, becoming the bride of John Uhalde of Carson City in April 1951 at St. Gall's Catholic Church in Gardnerville. My mom was her matron of honor. Though he had the same last name, John Uhalde was not related to my father's family. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Domingo Uhalde, lived in Marysville, California.⁹² Aitachi hosted a dinner and dance at the Overland after the wedding in honor of the bride and groom.

Aitachi always enjoyed celebrating special occasions with family and friends. To welcome home his son John from Korea in February 1952, he hosted a grand dinner honoring John, Anita, and their three daughters at the Overland Hotel.⁹³ Brother Leon and Ruby attended, as he was then an ROTC instructor at Reno High School. Mayie and John also attended. Brother Bill was not present because he was still stationed in Japan, on the staff of General Mathew B. Ridgway, Commander of United Nations Forces in Korea.



Figure 44:
Overland
matchbook from
1950s.

My Mom and Dad had moved to Madera, California by then and couldn't attend.

A year later, in February 1953, Aitachi leased the operation of the Overland Hotel, Bar and Restaurant to John Juansaras of Reno.⁹⁴ Juansaras had previously owned a bar in Wellington. While Aitachi retained his familiar room No. 1 as his residence, for the first time in 35 years he was no longer in the hotel business!

8

The Golden Years

Though retired from the hotel profession, Aitachi remained engaged in business, buying and selling properties in the Carson Valley. In 1956, he acquired two properties outside Gardnerville from Bertrand Hargaray, and in 1957 he bought a house with two lots in Minden. Some time later he purchased a “high density residential” lot in South Lake Tahoe, CA that he would sell in the late seventies.

Second Marriage With his involvement in the operation of the Overland Hotel and Bar ended, with his sons posted throughout the world and his daughters married to sheepmen and living elsewhere, and after nearly a decade since Amatchi had passed away, Aitachi may have been lonely as he often said he was when he herded sheep in the High Sierras. He was a very social person who really enjoyed the pleasure of people’s company. In 1958 he found a companion, a fellow high-spirited Basque, who he married on June 21. Jeanne Lartirigoyen, 57, was born in St. Jean Pied de Port, France and lived in Cedarville, California. The wedding took place at St. Thomas Aquinas Cathedral in Reno, and I remember attending the ceremony. His son Leon and her daughter Mary were official witnesses. In July, the bride and groom flew to Paris over the Polar route. They were accompanied by a group of friends from Cedarville, Alturas, Red Bluff and Gardnerville on their visit to friends and relatives in France, with side trips to Spain and Italy.⁹⁵ They returned to New York City in September, and then on to Reno.

Aitachi would divide his time over the next several years between Garnerville and Cedarville. Of course he continued his wool buying activities in the Carson Valley.

Sale of the Overland In 1967, a former sheepherder, Eusebio Cenoz, and his partners Angelo and Esperanza Dafur took over the lease to operate the Overland



Figure 45: My Mom and Dad playing cards with Aitachi and Jeanne, ca. 1960.

Hotel and Bar from John Juansaras for \$58,000 with an option to buy after five years.⁹⁶ In April 1972, Eusebio and his partners exercised the option and bought the Overland business and the building for \$105,000.⁹⁷ Eusebio subsequently bought out his partners and later married Elvira in 1980. He died in 1989 and Elvira Cenoz operated the renamed Overland Hotel and Basque Restaurant for the next 25 years before selling to David Park. The Overland has been completely redone. Only the bar remains where it was, and the restaurant does not advertise itself as serving Basque meals any more. Rather, they promote locally sourced food. The 12 rooms upstairs have been converted to offices. The Overland as we knew it has ceased to exist as of 2015.⁹⁸

Celebrations, Milestones and Honors When Aitachi was 78 years old, he told a reporter that his greatest hope was for a family reunion, but that would be “very difficult “ with his three sons in California, Washington, D.C., and Panama. ⁹⁹ Then in July 1969, a year after Leon retired from the Army, Aitachi got his wish! “Over 50 sons, daughters, relatives and friends of the Etchemendy family ... met in Reno ... for a grand family reunion. It was their first reunion in 21 years.”¹⁰⁰ Their get together lasted two days and was held at Otto Leon’s Reno home. And the siblings made sure it would not be their last family celebration.

In the summer of 1973, Aitachi celebrated his 87th birthday with a lawn party attended by more than 60 relatives and close friends. Again, Otto Leon and Tanta Ruby hosted the celebration at their



Figure 46: Etchemendy clan at 1969 reunion.

home on Juniper Creek. Aitachi, who loved to sing, is reported to have performed a number of Basque songs. Fortunately, I have several recordings of Aitachi singing his favorite Basque songs.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, in December of that year, Aitachi’s second wife Jeanne died at the age of 72 in Cedarville, California. One daughter, two

grandchildren and one great granddaughter survived her. She was buried in the Cedarville cemetery.¹⁰² Aitachi was alone once again.

He was alone, but not without considerable energy to enjoy a “high-spirited life” as a front-page feature article was headlined.¹⁰³ In the spring of his 89th year, John Etchemendy Sr. castrated 2,500 lambs. He undertook the job with his friend Eusebio Cenoz, who had purchased the Overland from him. Leaving Gardnerville at 4 a.m. each day so they could return by noon to open the hotel, the two men operated in the traditional way on Fred Fulstone’s 5,000 ram lambs over a week’s time. Later, they staged a splendid public mountain oyster feast at the Overland.

During the summer of 1975, Aitachi traveled with his 82-year old sister from Wyoming, Marie Cubialdi, and my mother to France, visiting family in Arnéguy. They flew from Reno to New York’s JFK Airport. I drove with my family from Washington, D.C. to meet their flight. We planned to spend a couple of hours visiting and showing off our infant son René while they changed planes. But our plans were foiled! Their flight into JFK was so delayed that they had to be hustled to their outgoing flight across the terminal while Mom held and kissed her new grandson on the run. They marched up the gangway to their flight and we went to the parking lot, loaded into our car and returned to Washington. The story gets worse, however. Aitachi could not board his flight because he had left his passport in Reno, so it was put on a flight, arriving at JFK the next day. Mom had us paged in the airport, but we were already on the road, otherwise we could have spent a pleasant evening visiting with them at an airport hotel. Such a missed opportunity! Their travel problems were not over either. While in the Paris airport, Tanttta Marie suffered a painful leg injury on a moving sidewalk and needed assistance thereafter while walking on their trip. Aitachi soldiered on at age 89! Indeed, after returning to Reno he travelled to Wyoming for a two-week stay.



Figure 47: Mom, Tanttta Marie and Aitachi in Arnéguy with nephew Joseph far left, 1975.

When Otto Bill retired to Reno in 1975, all three brothers were living in the same town for the first time since 1940. In September, the three sons gathered around a poker table in the Overland bar with "Pop," as they referred to him then, for a get together. A reporter for the Nevada State Journal joined them and wrote a front page, Sunday feature article on "'Pop' at 89: High-spirited Life Keeps Him Going."

Then in October 1976, about "120 friends and relatives came from throughout Nevada, as well as from Wyoming, Montana and California to honor John Etchemendy, Sr. on his 90th birthday. The dinner was held at the Overland Hotel."¹⁰⁴

Also in 1976, Otto John was named the general manager of the Reno Silver Sox baseball team, a minor league team affiliated with the San Diego Padres at the time. He served on an interim basis throughout the season, much as he had done once before, in 1972. How cool is that? Of course, his younger brother Leon had been the business manager of the Silver Sox even earlier, having held the post for the 1949 season.¹⁰⁵ It was a family affair!

Three years later, in 1979, Aitachi severed his last ties to the Overland by moving out of room No. 1 after 58 years in residence. Most of his modest furnishings, personal effects and mementos were moved to his upstairs bedroom at my mother's condo in Smithridge Park, Reno. There he would live, with his daughter Josephine, for the rest of his life.

I think Aitachi thoroughly enjoyed his years living in Smithridge with my mother. His favorite pastime was playing cards with "the boys"- John, Leon and Bill. One or more of them would visit Pop almost daily and usually play pidro or pinochle with him. Mayie would also stop by periodically to visit while playing cards. Of course Mom was Aitachi's constant companion and beloved caretaker, though he was very self-sufficient until his last few years.

My family and I had the opportunity to live in Reno for a year in 1979 and 1980. Yvette was born at St. Mary's Hospital. Ruth and I enjoyed playing pidro with Mom and Aitachi. Pidro (or pedro) is a trick-taking card game wherein each player bids to determine the trump suit. The high bidder selects the trump suit and must then take enough points with trump cards to make his bid, or be penalized. Aitachi and I were partners and he would sometimes scold me for playing the wrong card, knowing what cards I had in my hand. How did he always know the cards I held?

Not only did I enjoy extended time with Mom and Aitachi during that year, I also had some great experiences with my uncles. I once was partnered with Otto Leon against John and Bill in a golf match. I rarely play golf and it showed, much to my partner's irritation. On another occasion, Bill took me fishing to a small mountain lake in the Sierras – what a treat that was! And John took us to Silver Sox baseball games. He once drove my youngest son in his classic pickup truck, only to have five year-old René open the door early and fall out onto the carport pavement as they returned from an outing. That was a year in my life I will always remember.

For his centennial year, the family threw a grand birthday party at Harrah's convention center. More than 100 family and friends attended to honor Aitachi, including his sister Marie and many



Figure 49: Aitachi at 100 with family.

of his grandchildren from around the country. The button he wore on his jacket read "Age with Rage," one of several gifts and recognitions he received.* Senator Paul Laxalt sent a gracious and personal card of congratulations to "Papa." He received a congratulatory card from President Reagan

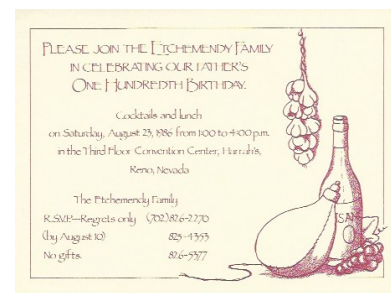


Figure 48: The Invitation

* A Chinese colleague of mine from Washington, D.C. came to the house before the birthday party and gave Aitachi 100 silver dollars! Aitachi thanked him for the gift, smiled and remarked that he was "the biggest Chinaman he had ever seen."

and Nancy, and a proclamation as a “Silver State Centenarian” from Governor Richard Bryan.

A month earlier, the Reno Gazette-Journal ran a two-column story about Aitachi under a lovely color photo of him and Mom. The article reported that Aitachi said America was good to him: “I like it because I had a lot of business here.”¹⁰⁶

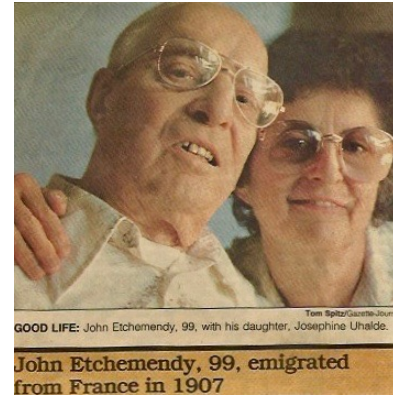


Figure 50

The Nevada State Senate, on July 12, 1987, passed a concurrent resolution of the legislature congratulating John “Pop” Etchemendy on his 100th birthday. Senator Lawrence Jacobsen of Minden was the principal sponsor of the resolution that provides a synopsis of Aitachi’s life and salutes him and his family “for their contributions and service to our state and country.”¹⁰⁷

Sadly, the family lost Otto Leon in 1988 after a battle with cancer. He and Tanttta Ruby were living at Lake Almanor, California at the time. It goes against the natural order of things for a father to have to bury his son, regardless of age, and this second occasion for Aitachi deeply affected him.

Aitachi lived 103 years and seven months. At the time of his passing he was the oldest Nevadan. What was his secret for a long and vigorous life? He once told a reporter that he had a simple plan for staying healthy: “Eat plenty and drink plenty,” but no sugar and no sweets and only one cup of coffee for breakfast, but sometimes make that a coffee royal, he said smiling. Drink wine with most meals and don’t smoke.¹⁰⁸

He died, at my mother’s house in Reno, on March 26, 1990 with 13 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren. Two wives, four brothers, three sisters and two sons preceded him in death. His grandsons, me included, were honored to serve as casket bearers at his funeral at St. Gall’s Catholic Church in Gardnerville. He was laid to rest in the family plot, next to his wife Jeanne, in Garden Cemetery.

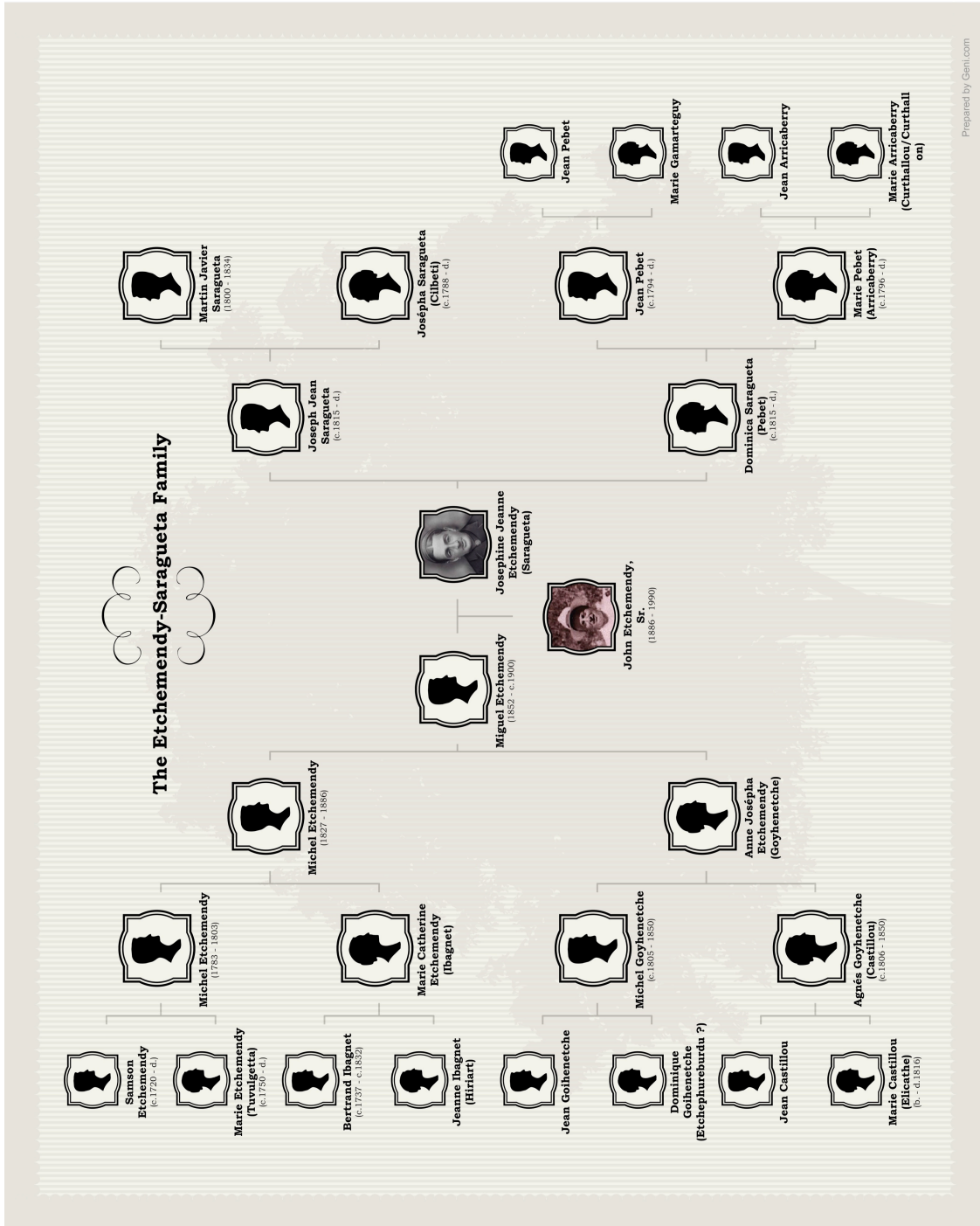
The accolades for Aitachi did not end with his passing however. On Nevada Day 2011, Gardnerville's Record Courier newspaper published a listing of the 150 most influential people in the history of Douglas County, Nevada. John Etchemendy, Sr. is on that list. Moreover, the Etchemendy family was also named among the most influential families in Carson Valley history.¹⁰⁹

Aitachi's legacy endures in the lives of each one of us who are *Etchemendy*. We can be most proud of our rich inheritance.

Benedika zaitzatela Jainko guzialdunak!

Appendix I

Family Trees



Prepared by Geni.com

The Trounday-Heguy Family



Appendix II

Amatchi's 1918 Letter

On May 24, 1918, Amatchi Jeanne Trounday Etchemendy wrote a letter (shown below) to Señora G. and Señor Don Juan Aguerre, in a lovely script, from Gardnerville. The 1918 letter was later enclosed with a 1946 letter written to Amatchi by Angela Aguerre Trounday. A note in Spanish said the letter was included among the letters of Angela's papa, Juan Aguerre. Angela's letter to Amatchi, was written in Spanish. Also enclosed with Angela's letter was a picture of her family in Argentina. My guess is that the man seated in front is Amatchi's brother-in-law Juan Aguerre, and that one of the two women seated on either side is her sister Gracianne, whom she affectionately called Gechina.



Figure 51: The Aguerre-Trounday family of Monte Caseros, Argentina, ca 1946.

Gardnerville Le' 24 Mai 1918

Señora G. eta Don
Juan Teguere, gure ahispa
coinat illoba maite maite
yochina maite exesebitu
dionagun hireetra milapase
rekin yakitias unsa Sies
tela que ere badinagun
gracia bera ganya beraren
eraiteko eta ganya beradina
gun desiraren Owen bisigu
Sian

Figure 52: Amatchi's 1918 letter, page 1.

Beras ahispa maitia eraiten
Aun estunala ene letarie isan
nie igori nenan haura isan eta
~~eta~~ gero esninan hire erreposturic
menturas hianc ditun culpae
nahis Orai aisadiren galseko
manisen eta amaren letarie manien
eraiten Santanan asken letiran
italian Isela gizagaichuae quere
galdiaron beha gauden legeari
Sumetiseko menturas ni ere

Figure 53: Amatchi's 1918 letter, page 2.

Juanen nun Deren hemen
 ere Kasterac triste aritur
 yarsen hanist yende badian
 Orai hemendic eta hor nolada???
 igarsendenat gure Semiaran
 potreta nahi nisten Duen hariac
 ikhusi Orai badusie aski gero
 berse ofecharlat yaran, gubala
 egoiten gitun tantari milaka
 gorainsi gure factes geldijer
 gitun hire ahispa coinat
 illoba fidel Deneri milierta
 potae bitazaren erditic eta milaka
 gorainsiac gante bethi pisbor
 eta Lorios amurus
 hire ahispa fidel bethi
 Jenny Echemendy
 Box 149 Gardnerville Nevada

Esta carta
 encontré en
 tre las cartas
 de papá

Figure 54: Amatchi's 1918 letter, page 3.

Endnotes

-
- ¹ The sources for Miguel's siblings are the work of Jean-Claude Raguin on Geneanet and also MyHeritage Family Trees: Saragueta in Pucheu Web Site, managed by Maria A. Gracieuse.
- ² The primary source for information on the Etchemendy ancestors is the web site Gen&O: Généalogie et Origines en Pyrénées-Atlantiques, found at <http://www.geneoweb.org/>. For the towns of Arnéguy and Uhart-Cize there are catalogued 731 (1795-1900) and 594 (1746-1910) marriage records, respectively.
- ³ This and all subsequent quotes, unless otherwise stated, are from interviews of John Etchemendy, Sr. conducted and recorded by my mother, Josephine Etchemendy Uhalde, from 1979 to 1980 in Reno, Nevada.
- ⁴ Information on Dominica comes from a conversation with my Mom's cousin Jeanne Marie Lapayre.
- ⁵ This is according to Aitachi's recorded interview, though her religious name is somewhat difficult to hear.
- ⁶ Jeronima Echeverria, Home Away From Home: A History of Basque Boardinghouses, University of Nevada Press, 1999, Reno, NV, page 139.
- ⁷ Downloaded from: <https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org> for arrival of Joseph Etchemendy aboard the SS La Touraine at Port of New York, March 17, 1907. This passenger is of the correct age (28), the correct town (Arnéguy), and was to meet his brother in Reno at the Hotel Indart.
- ⁸ Downloaded at: <http://www.151ril.com/content/history/french-army/11>.
- ⁹ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, July 6, 1986.
- ¹⁰ Aitachi told my mother and I this same story earlier when, on a visit to Reno, I told him I couldn't find any record of him traveling by ship to New York in 1907, having searched the ship manifests at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.
- ¹¹ This paragraph based on op. cit., Reno Gazette Journal, July 6, 1986.
- ¹² William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, Amerikanuak: Basques In the New World, University of Nevada Press, Reno, Nevada, 1975, page 1.
- ¹³ "Between 1900 and 1910 Nevada's Basque population increased more than five-fold from 180 to 986. As in California, the flow of Basques into the state peaked in 1907, and by 1910 Nevada's Basque colony constituted slightly over 1 percent of the state's population." Echeverria, op. cit., page 137.
- ¹⁴ Downloaded from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feather_River_Route.
- ¹⁵ Tristram, Dennis, "Pop at 89: High-spirited Life Keeps Him Going," Nevada State Journal, Sunday, September 28, 1975, page 1.
- ¹⁶ Information for the Smoke Creek Ranch sidebar was downloaded from: <http://www.tipurdy.org/tag/nevada/>, Joyce M. Cox, Images of America: Washoe County, Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, S.C., 2011, pages 33 and 34, downloaded at:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=ZrzJXcg9wIAC&pg=PA34&lpg=PA34&dq=smoke+creek+ranch,+washoe+county,+nv&source=bl&ots=rShwbpbenH&sig=kGtYEAt1E5BOatXCR8mWM5JwSaI&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj0qGO8LLZAhVEMt8KHfvKCFs4FBDoAQhFMAo#v=onepage&q=smoke%20creek%20ranch%20washoe%20county%20nv&f=false> , and

Byrd Wall Sawyer, Nevada Nomads: A Story of the Sheep Industry, Harlan-Young Press, 1971, chapter 2, pages 25 and 33, downloaded at:

<https://doczz.net/doc/5246309/chapter-2> .

¹⁷ Christine Cendagorta, “Pop Etchemendy”, Nevada Magazine, March/April 1984, page 29.

¹⁸ Echeverria, op. cit., 194.

¹⁹ The Wool Grower Magazine, circa 1964, Letter to the Editor, “I Am Proud of John” by Charles B. Howard enclosing a photo taken in 1909 and sharing his remembrances of John Etchemendy. The letter validated Aitachi’s account of the sale of “him, and the dog and the sheep all in one package to Allen Sherfey in 1909.”

²⁰ Cendagorta, op.cit., page 28.

²¹ Howard, op. cit..

²² Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, July 6, 1986, op. cit.

²³ Tristram, op. cit., page 1.

²⁴ Downloaded at: <https://www.recordcourier.com/news/old-alpine-county-barn-finds-new-purpose-as-a-home/>.

²⁵ Cendagorta, op. cit., page 29.

²⁶ Tristram, op. cit., page 1.

²⁷ Tristram, op. cit., page 3.

²⁸ Amatchi Trounday’s birth record can be found at:

http://earchives.le64.fr/img-viewer/FRAD064003_IR0002/OSES/5MI436-3/viewer.html?&ns=FRAD064006_5MI436_3_1333. Her parents’ marriage record and birth records for her five siblings are in the same or adjoining book.

²⁹ When I visited Ixteotenia in 2010, Mom’s cousin Jeanne Marie Lapeyre told me that Amatchi Etchemendy’s house in St. Martin d’Arrossa was named Pikatxeborda. But her birth record and those of her five siblings, as well as her parents’ marriage record all show their residence as Maison Picassary.

³⁰ Echeverria, Jeronima, California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California’s Basque Hotels, dissertation, North Texas State University, Denton TX, May 1988, page 141.

³¹ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/15206272/martin-antchagno>.

³² As reflected on his tombstone in the Garden City Cemetery, Gardnerville, NV.

³³ Downloaded from: <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/influenza-epidemic/>.

³⁴ John Etchemendy, Juan Ascarate, and Bertrand Inchauspe formed the Etchemendy Company, a co-partnership with Aitachi named as manager. They executed a mortgage with A. Jensen for \$13,964 at 8 percent interest against the value of 1,447 sheep branded as “EI”, any increase, and all wool to be clipped.

“My partner [Ascarate] put up \$6,000. And I put up \$7,000, and the other fella put up \$1,000,” Aitachi recalled.

³⁵ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, October 1, 1994, page 3.

³⁶ Bill of Sale between Mateo Marinelareno and John Etchemendy, dated February 8, 1923.

³⁷ Tristram, op. cit., page 3.

³⁸ Ibid, page 3.

³⁹ Ibid, Page 3.

⁴⁰ Record Courier, Gardnerville, NV, November 1984, Letter to the Editor by Marie Uhalde commenting on Overland Hotel photo in November 8 edition of the paper.

⁴¹ Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV, September 28, 1975, page 3.

⁴² Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, January 31, 1923, page 6.

⁴³ Ibid, page 3.

⁴⁴ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, August 25, 1934, page 8.

⁴⁵ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, March 28, 1914, page 10.

⁴⁶ Ibid, page 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, page 3.

⁴⁸ For example, see Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, January 13, 1940, page 9 and Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, December 3, 1942, page 14.

⁴⁹ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, May 8, 1980, page 64.

⁵⁰ Downloaded from:

http://www.boxing.com/some_like_it_hot_paolino_uzcudun.html. Uzkudun is spelled with a “k” in Basque.

⁵¹ Nevada State Journal, op. cit., page 3.

⁵² Centagorta, op. cit., page 29.

⁵³ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, March 30, 1939, page 12.

⁵⁴ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, February 12, 1933, page 6.

⁵⁵ Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV, December 23, 1938, page 7.

⁵⁶ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, June 8, 1935, page 8.

⁵⁷ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, December 5, 1934, page 6.

⁵⁸ Nevada State -Journal, Reno, NV, December 19, 1934, page 2.

⁵⁹ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, September 10, 1940, page 8.

⁶⁰ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, May 15, 1941, page 5.

⁶¹ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, September 24, 1946, page 12.

⁶² Downloaded from: <https://www.recordcourier.com/news/local/cordes-cousins-douglas-hags-honored/>.

⁶³ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, May 19, 1942, page 5.

⁶⁴ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, December 21, 1945, page 8 and December 27, 1945.

⁶⁵ Unless otherwise noted, this chapter largely summarizes an article in the March/April 1984 edition of Nevada Magazine, entitled “Pop Etchemendy,” authored by Christine Cendagorta, an adopted Basque by marriage.

-
- ⁶⁶ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, October 15, 1938, page 16.
- ⁶⁷ Reno Gazette-Journal, February 23, 1952, page 5.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ For those interested in a more complete account of Otto John's wartime service, I can make available The Story of John Michael Etchemendy, Jr.: The War Years, June 2017.
- ⁷⁰ Otto John's university record is taken from a draft "Application for assignment as Military Air Attaché to Guatemala," 1946.
- ⁷¹ "Ibid.
- ⁷² Reno Gazette-Journal, May 6, 1940, page 3.
- ⁷³ Reno Gazette-Journal, February 2, 1944, page 8.
- ⁷⁴ Downloaded from: http://96.0.7.134/Lackland/BMT_CC.html.
- ⁷⁵ This account is largely drawn from Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV, August 1, 1968, page 20.
- ⁷⁶ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, March 24, 1943, page 10.
- ⁷⁷ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, September 3, 1943, page 3.
- ⁷⁸ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, May 31, 1943, page 5.
- ⁷⁹ William W. Etchemendy was assigned to the 83rd Infantry Division on July 24, 1944 by Special Order No. 140 of the 83rd Infantry Division and to Company "L", 3rd Battalion on the same date by Special Orders No. 110 of the 329th Infantry Regiment.
- ⁸⁰ "Most Costly Victory in Hürtgen Forest," by Kelly Bell, January 24, 1917 downloaded from: <http://warfarehistorynetwork.com/daily/wwii/costly-victory-in-hurtgen-forest/>.
- ⁸¹ Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV, November 21, 1944, page 14.
- ⁸² Headquarters 329th infantry, "After Action Reports, 2 April 1945, Appendix Number 1, page 1.
- ⁸³ Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV, April 1, 1945, page 12.
- ⁸⁴ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, December 21, 1945, page 8.
- ⁸⁵ Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV, November 30, 1947, page 17.
- ⁸⁶ Roy E. Appleman, East of Chosin, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, Texas, 1987, page 8.
- ⁸⁷ Appleman, op.cit. page 291.
- ⁸⁸ Certificate of Naturalization (Original), No. 5639882, March 11, 1946.
- ⁸⁹ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, July 6, 1986, op. cit.
- ⁹⁰ "Air Passenger Manifest," Transcontinental and Western Air, Inc., Flight No. 951, September 3, 1950.
- ⁹¹ Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV, April 17, 1951, page 6.
- ⁹² Ibid.
- ⁹³ Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV, February 23, 1952, page 5.
- ⁹⁴ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, February 28, 1953, page 7.
- ⁹⁵ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, July 24, 1958, page 9.

-
- ⁹⁶ Basque Oral History Project – Eusebio Cenoz, University of Nevada, Reno, Basque Studies Program, interview summary downloaded from:
http://www.basque.unr.edu/oralhistory/cenoz_eusebio/eusebio_cenoz_index.htm.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid and Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, October 1, 1994, page 3.
- ⁹⁸ “Overland Restaurant Opens to Fanfare,” The Record-Courier, Gardnerville, NV, June 6, 2015, downloaded from :
file:///Users/RayUhalde/iCloud%20Drive%20(Archive)%20-%201/Documents/Genealogy/Etchemendy%20Family/Overland%20restaurant%20reopens%20to%20fanfare%20%7C%20RecordCourier.html.
- ⁹⁹ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, September 28, 1964, page 12.
- ¹⁰⁰ Nevada State Journal, Reno, NV, August 2, 1969, page 15. The gathering also honored the marriage of Suzette Swanson and Bud Hicks.
- ¹⁰¹ “Gardnerville Pioneer Celebrates 87 Years,” undated newspaper clipping.
- ¹⁰² Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, December 3, 1973, page 21.
- ¹⁰³ Tristram, op. cit., page 1.
- ¹⁰⁴ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, October 11, 1976, page 13.
- ¹⁰⁵ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, June 5, 1949, page 15.
- ¹⁰⁶ Reno Gazette-Journal, Reno, NV, July 6, 1986, op. cit.
- ¹⁰⁷ Nevada Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 52, June 12, 1987.
- ¹⁰⁸ Tristram, op. cit., page 3.
- ¹⁰⁹ Record Courier, Gardnerville, NV, January 29, 2012, page 12.