

# *The Album*

*Winter/Spring  
1994-95*



*Times & Tales of Inyo-Mono*

# THE ALBUM

Times and Tales of Inyo - Mono

Winter/Spring 1994-95  
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**Cover Photo: Remains of a stone house near the shore of Oneida Lake, Lundy Canyon area. Paw Prints photograph, by Chris J. Wright, who recalls a visit to the May Lundy Mine and stories of another avalanche, page 48.**

This collection of Eastern Sierra history for *THE ALBUM* is our first edition of an annual. There are many stories yet to tell and we hope to continue to collect and record them.

People have often said, "Why don't you write a book about the history of the east side?" How could one person's perspective equal the colorful variety of these writers' voices? Some tell of their own memories, personally recalled or handed down through the family. Others have put hours into research and money into reproductions of photographs to aid in picturing history as it happened. Still others share a lifetime hobby of exploration.

Come with these writers who take you to where the Old West and the New mingle in the shadow of the Sierra.

—Jane Fisher, Editor

*THE ALBUM*, *Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono*, is a collection of stories, history, and natural history of Inyo County and Mono County, in Eastern California.

Letters, comments, and contributions are welcome; contributions should be accompanied by photos, documents, sketches, or maps.

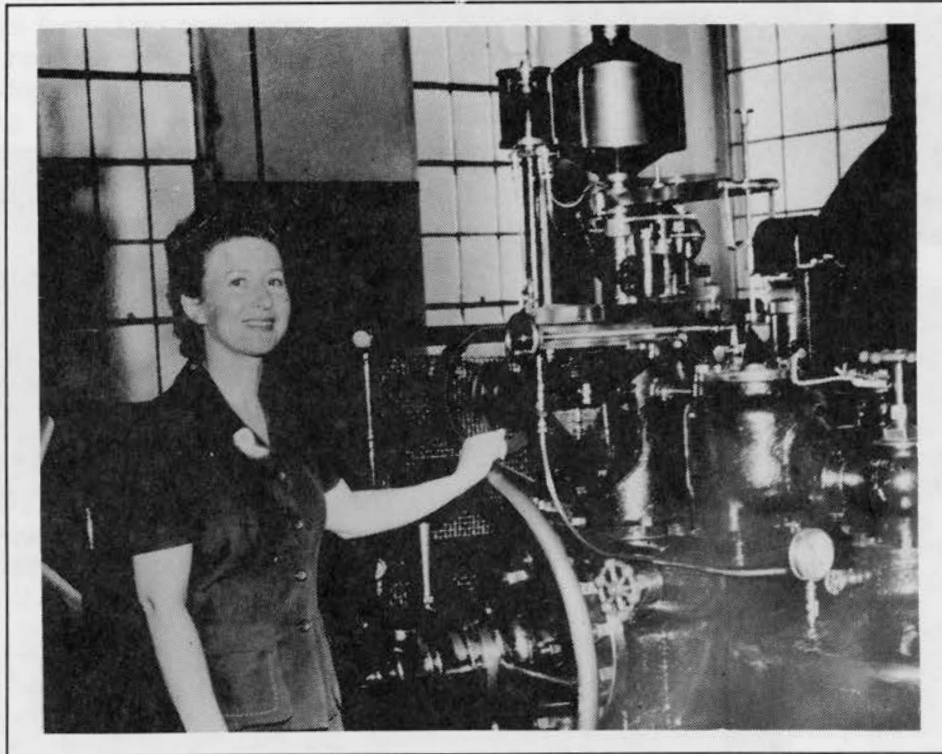
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The Summer/Fall issue of *THE ALBUM* this year will feature some short subjects, bits of history and interesting discoveries from Neill Olds, Mike Hesse, Deric English, Al Blythe, Johnnie Rossi (a 4th grader who tells his story of how Tom's Place got its name), Robert C. Nibecker, and perhaps more, as well as the usual lengthy chronicles of our past.

*Lee Vining's*

# *First Lady Hydro Operator*

by Eunice Yongue



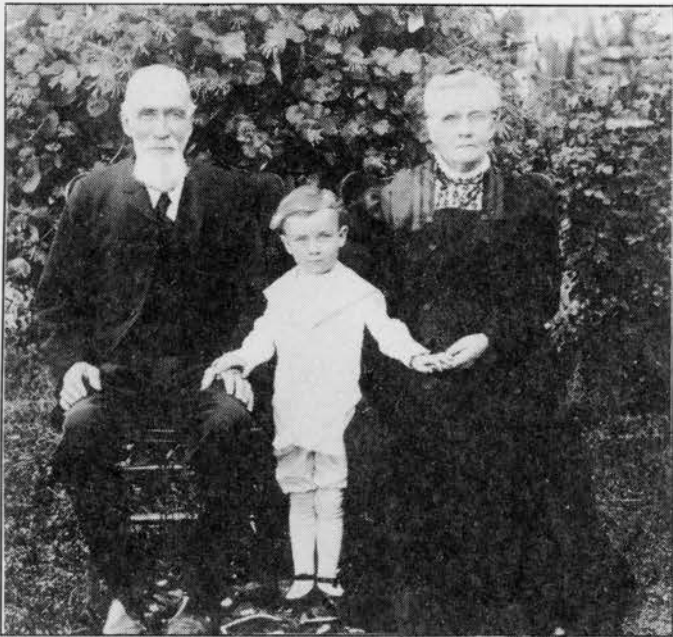
I was born in Midvale, Idaho. My grandparents, who came by wagon train from Missouri in 1877, were early settlers in this beautiful farming valley. They were successful ranchers and farmers, building large family homes in the 1890s. Midvale offered good schools, churches and stores. The first store in town, built in 1899, the same years as the railroad, was owned by my father, William Towell and his partner Mr. Deaton. The railroad was important, running through the middle of town, bringing in mail, passengers and supplies. Saturday was our day for shopping; we would travel the two miles to town in our team-pulled wagon or walk, as I did, to school every day, from the time I was five, with my older brothers.

My father died when I was five months old, leaving Mother with five children, myself and four brothers, the oldest of whom was in his early teens. Later, when Mother remarried, we moved to Oregon where the paper mills, sawmills, and timber companies offered a

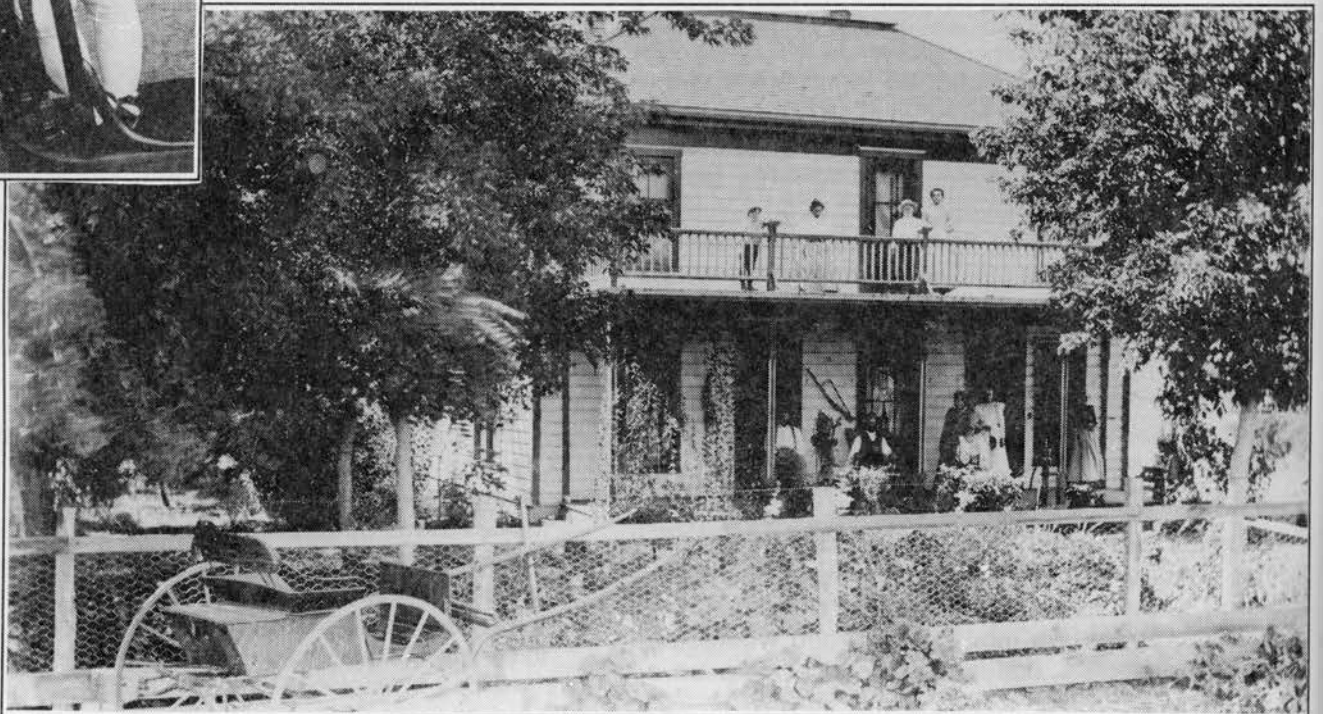
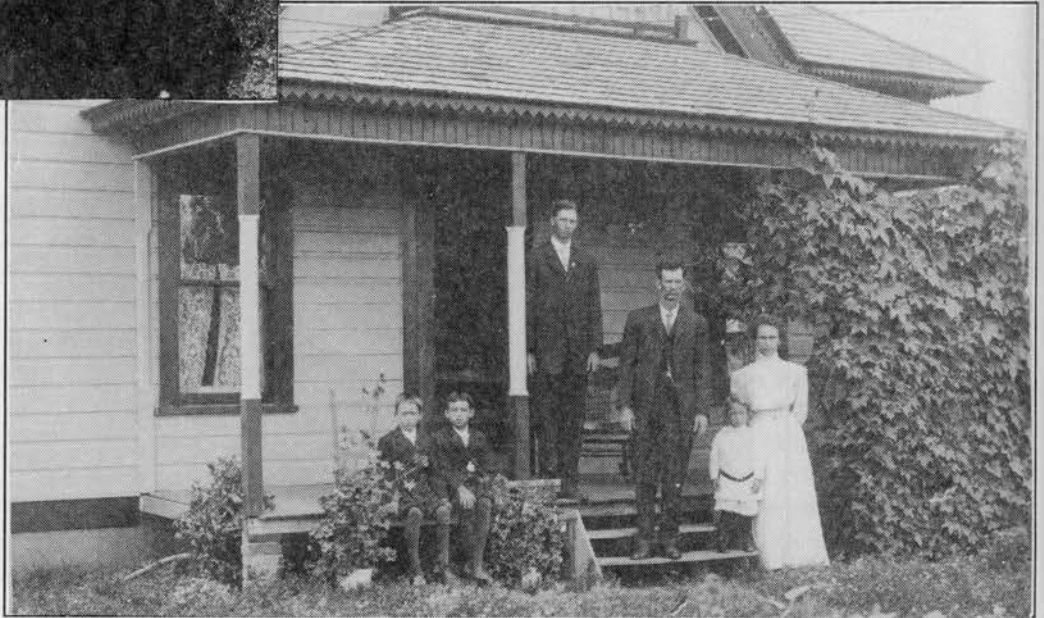
new life. Arrangements were made in advance for living quarters. Everything was shipped by train. I was only six years old and can recall little of the all-night train ride. I remember Mother preparing and serving food to our family in our coach. At last, we reached Oregon City, Oregon, where we settled in our new home. We all loved lush, green, western Oregon. All went smoothly for ten years and then came the depression. Businesses and mills closed and families were stranded.

## **June 1928**

My grandfather in Idaho became very ill. He wanted my mother to come home and care for him, so we returned to Idaho, happy to be back in Grandfather's lovely ten-room home. The echo of our voices brought him happiness, and reminded him of the happy voices of his own children, now grown, laughing and playing in the same home. When Grandfather died, we stayed on to care for an elderly aunt.



*Clockwise: Eunice Yongue's paternal grandparents; Eunice with her mother and brothers; her grandfather's home in Idaho; Eunice at age two and a half.*



Upon returning to Idaho I met my future husband Gerald Yongue. He too was born in Midvale of a farming family. Our parents had gone to school together and we had known of each other but had never met. We met in the summer at a cousin's home, were attracted to one another and dated, but our interests differed. I was still in school, hoping to go on to beauty college and he was farming and working at other available employment.

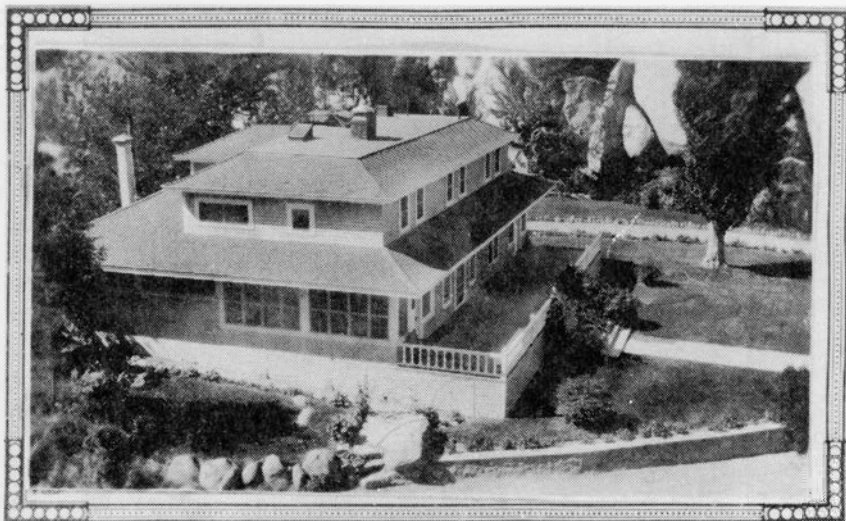
### March, 1930

Gerald's parents pressured him to purchase a forty-five acre farm. After graduating from high school his hope had been to go on to college to get a degree in forestry. After three years of trying to work the farm, he wished to move on; there was nothing to keep him busy through the winter months, so he spent the winter with an aunt and uncle in Riverside, California, where he found work at once. The pleasant climate and easier way of life determined a change in his future. A cousin employed in the Riverside office of the Southern Sierra Power Company introduced him to the hiring department. They told him of the 12 power plants in the northeastern Sierra, and from a six inch stack of applications he was chosen for a six-month training apprenticeship. He was ecstatic. He made a fast trip to Idaho to rent out his farm, leaving him free to advance to a new career. However, he wasn't about to leave Idaho without making sure, with a diamond on my finger, that I would be around at the end of six months.

Gerald's dream of forestry did eventually come true in his working for the forest service at the Mono Lake Ranger Station many years later.

I was having mixed feelings about my future. I had planned to attend a beauty college in Boise, Idaho. Now I was engaged to be married in late fall. Maybe after marriage we might live close to a college. I had a job for the summer a mile from home. The first week I walked; then the people came for me each day at 5:30 a.m. and returned me when evening work was finished. I took care of a family of four and prepared a noon meal for 12 hay men. Sometimes the fields were several miles away so I drove to the fields to serve the noon meal. I received one dollar a day for my work, which lasted about five months. I considered myself lucky.

Gerald left Riverside for plant #4, a few miles west of Bishop, headquarters for all Northern Power Plants and a 350 mile drive from Southern California. In those years Highway 395 was a narrow, two-lane road, half pavement and half gravel, with many rutted, sandy spots. It was not a pleasure to drive, with a windrow of dust following. He arrived at Plant #4 and was assigned to his quarters at the "Club House," the living quarters for all single men, company officials, and guests visiting the northern section. The building was white, two-story,



*Plant 4 Clubhouse*

colonial style, furnished with all the comforts. Downstairs were the guest rooms, dining room, kitchen, and sitting room. Upstairs were individual rooms for the single men. Mr and Mrs. Godlove, the custodians, were wonderful. Later, when they needed a vacation in the winter months, I took over the care of the club house - cooking, cleaning and taking care of eight to ten men. Three meals a day were served family style. The tables were always covered with a white damask cloth.

Gerald began his training period. When he looked at the switchboard spread across half the building, he wondered if he could master it entirely. He hoped he could be there forever, but this position was temporary. His training made him eligible for any of the other stations. If someone left, he could be permanent. We were jubilant when an operator decided to relocate to Oregon. He would also have to be married. The married part was easy as our date was set for November.

Gerald took two weeks leave for our wedding on November 4th. The wedding band was engraved with date and initials. I was in Oregon, visiting my two brothers as the date drew near. Not wanting a postponement they sent me home, on the train, to arrive two days before Gerald.

We had made our wedding plans by correspondence, wanting it to be very simple so we could leave at once for our new home. Gerald's sister was also planning her marriage within two weeks: it would be a special double wedding. It was agreed and we had two days to prepare.

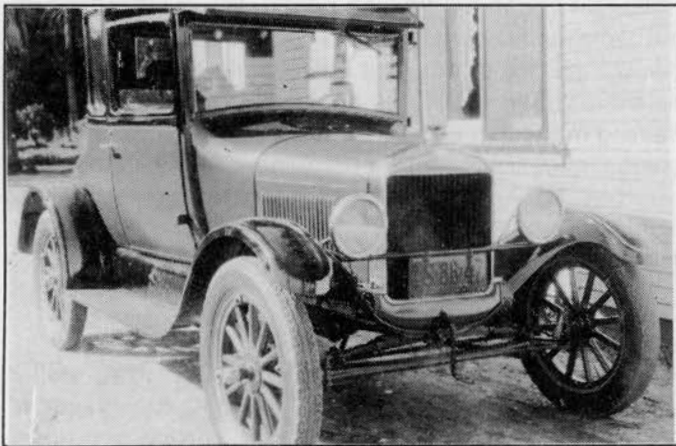
The wedding was at Gerald's family home, our immediate families in attendance. At 4:00 p.m. the beautiful ceremony was performed by Reverend Burchard, who had guided us through our formative years. Pictures



*Bride and groom, Eunice and Gerald Yongue*



*Gerald's sister, Berniece, and Edgar Wilson, also bride and groom*



were taken and the three mothers served a buffet luncheon and wedding cake. At 8:00 p.m., to our surprise, the chivaree crowd arrived. Chivarees were customary in small communities, to honor the wedding couple. After the noise makers and congratulations we left for the night.

I packed my worldly belongings in a steamer trunk. It was tied on a 1927 model T coupe, taking up my side, the door and all of the fender. Thereafter I used the driver's side for my exit. Two large bags filled the space in our tiny car.

We drove down the Columbia River Highway to Portland, Oregon, then along the coast, to San Francisco. Gerald had planned this lovely trip with great surprises for me, including Yosemite National Park. On the map it looked like a short cut across the Sierra, then to Bishop. We knew nothing about Sierra weather in winter months. We left San Francisco in early morning and found the road to Yosemite very good. In the park, the road became narrow and steep, through rough terrain. A dark cloud appeared and snow pelted us as we drove for hours, reaching Tuolumne Meadows at last, with two feet of snow. We had followed fresh car tracks, hopeful that someone was near. The ranger at Tuolumne informed us the road was closed over Tioga Pass; we would have to return to San Francisco, with only 29 miles left to our destination. The snow had stopped, the storm was over, and our car was taking the snow well; we also had chains. "Let us go on" we pleaded. Finally, after some phone calls, he let us go, and we sailed along hoping to reach Highway 395 before dark. It was a lonely drive, no cars or people.

We reached Tioga Pass and came around the first extremely sharp curve – a downhill pitch curving sharply back toward the mountain. The road was one lane with turnouts. If you met another car you had to pull to the side or back up. I can never forget the sensation

that we were flying out into space. We followed the narrow winding route, close to the mountain for the next eleven miles. I cautioned all the way "Don't drive so fast! Don't look! Not so close to the edge!!" Gerald wanted to see the beautiful canyon. We had a fleeting glimpse of the Poole Plant, not knowing at the time its future importance to me. It looked so pretty in miniature from the high pass. How could anyone live there? I knew nothing of the Mono Basin power plants. The last part of the pass was lots of sharp curving switch backs, overlooking sparkling Lee Vining Creek meandering slowly through the lush green of the meadows.

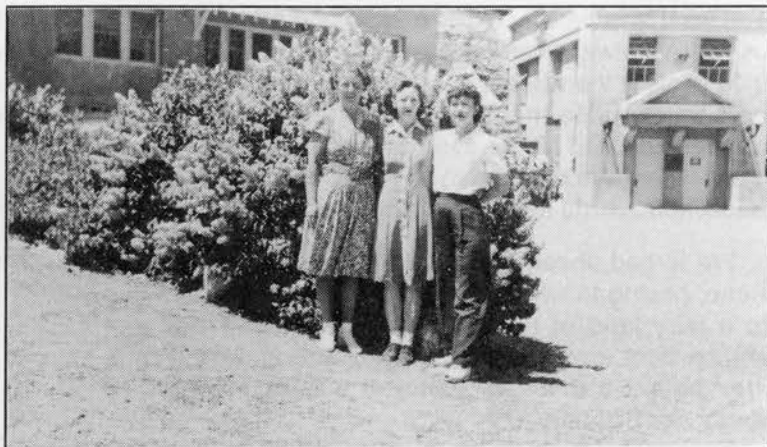
At last we were down and nearing Highway 395. Gerald enjoyed traveling old roads. His friend Art at Plant #4 had told him about a short cut to Bishop. Easy to find, turn right at the Plant #3 intake, about three-quarters of a mile before Highway 395. Gerald was all fired up and just had to see this road. We were off the good paved highway onto a bumpy, narrow, winding, rocky road with sage and rabbit brush swishing us all the way. The brush was so high it looked like a forest. We bumped along for thirty minutes on what we learned later to be the old Matlick Dairy Ranch road to Highway 395. If we had stayed on Highway 120 it would have been three minutes to Highway 395 and on to Bishop.

We forged on to Plant #4, a two-hour drive. It was such a pretty entrance, the power plant all shining with lights and reflections on the intake and the dozen cottages with streetlights aglow, then over the threshold into our cozy four-room cottage. The houses were furnished with essentials: dining and bedroom furniture, kitchen ranges, and comfortable rockers. With the many company transfers this kept moving problems to a minimum. A beautiful surprise to me, was my first electric washing machine, a Thor, with a spin basket, the latest design. I used it for eighteen years. The many wedding gifts took care of the rest.

We had a few days of vacation left and wanted to see the California I only knew in fantasy: palm trees, orange groves, the blue Pacific with sandy beaches, and a delightful climate all year. We were off to Riverside; mountains, desert, Yucca trees, palm trees and the fragrance of the orange groves. I had left the blur of winter to come into this, hopeful that someday we might live here.

Time came to return and start the adventure of being newlyweds. Two weeks passed. One evening while playing with a kitten our Auntie had given us, we heard a tremendous noise that caused the kitten to run for cover. Everyone was banging on pots and pans, calling to us to join them at the club house where a party was being held in our honor.

A few weeks later the Methodist minister and his wife invited us to dinner. After dinner was cleared away and



*Lilac time: three operators' wives, Eunice on right and below*

we were sitting around for an evening of conversation, the door bell rang. When the door was opened, in came about fifteen young people Gerald had known through the summer attendance at church. It was a shower for the newlyweds, pulled off so well we were overcome with surprise.

Softball was a game I enjoyed and I learned other power company ladies were interested. The exercise was invigorating and the warm spring days of February made us eager to be in the sun. Ladies of all ages got together for tryouts. I preferred second base but we all filled in where needed. The company superintendent was the umpire. We always drew a good crowd.

#### **April 1931**

The nice weather was evidence of spring. We planned a trip to Reno, "The Biggest Little City," to see the area. We would take in Bodie and Aurora, old mining towns, and stay over in Reno for the night.

As we neared Lee Vining a dark cloud overcast the sky and the wind pounded our car, throwing sand like needles. When we found the turnoff to Bodie the road was covered with sand. Thinking it firm enough to drive on we hit it at a fast clip and buried the car to the hubs.

The wind was fiercely blowing sand and filling in around us. Gerald always carried a large tarp and a shovel. He tried to clear the wheels of sand but it filled in as fast as he shoveled. He managed to get the tarp under the wheels. I backed off the sand while he replaced the tarp many times. We returned to Highway 395. The wind had slackened but the foreboding clouds were still ahead.

We forged ahead and found a motel for the night in Reno, hoping to see the city in the morning. We awoke to a fairy land of fifteen inches of snow. Trees and shrubs bent low, and cars stalled with snow covering their tops. So this was Reno? It was noon when we started for Bishop.

Snow removal in the '30s was almost nil. Roads were scooped out, paved trenches. The first snows drifted them full and made them impassible. Cars were stalled along the way, hopeful someone with chains would pull them out of drifts. Our car was set high and could manage most of the tough spots. A few times we drove on the shoulders to get around deep drifts. The storm was over about 9:00 p.m.

On reaching Lee Vining we could see seven lights glistening in the snowy gloss of night. We thought it best to stay over at the power company vacation cabins, five miles up Lee Vining Canyon. The little rough textured cabin was a welcome sight. After a hot bath and a good night's rest we were ready for the final stretch home. The highway was snowy over Crestview and then from Sherwin Grade into the Owens Valley everything was beautiful, green, and peaceful.

### **May, 1931**

Our six months at Plant #4 was ending. Advancement was by seniority, from the least desirable plant to the better plants, through transfers. There was an opening at Owens River Gorge for a relief operator. We were ready.

The Owens River flowed along the bottom of a deep gorge, providing water for two power plants where nine operators and their families were stationed. This was one of the places the power company employees strove to avoid because of the steep, narrow, sandy grade into the canyon. Entering the gorge required low gear at five miles per hour, up and down. Our car had a "ruxal gear" for extra power but not enough to manage this freaky road that followed along the gorge wall to the bottom.

The day we moved to the gorge, our car was firmly chained to the company truck and slowly lowered into the gorge. We ordered a "Muncy" gear which gave us plenty of power. Maneuvering the shifts was more than I cared to learn, so I gave up driving. The company supplied a truck and driver that would fetch the mail and any needed supplies three times a week. All I had to do was leave a note for him with instructions and he would handle the errands, eliminating my need to drive.

The living quarters were very attractive, surrounded

by green lawns, flower beds, space for a small vegetable garden, and chickens. Soon the garden was producing vegetables and the chickens fresh fryers and eggs.

On the earthquake fault we generally had two or three tremors a year, usually during March, but I never got used to them. Once, during the night, a huge rock fell through the kitchen of the intake keeper's house, demolishing that end of the building, but it was soon repaired and life went on as usual.

I still had hopes of attending beauty college, so I kept in practice on Gerald and anyone else who was willing. Gerald bought me a special present, hand-operated clippers. My haircuts improved, even though I had given up on becoming a beautician. I continued to enjoy styling a few friends' hair and they enjoyed the smooth finish of the electric clippers.

The little Model T was about on its last putt, so we purchased a 1929 Chevy Coupe. We said our good-byes, with me driving again, as we left the gorge on our way to the Poole Plant in Mono Basin.

### **October 1933**

No one was willing to transfer to the Mono Basin due to the long, severe winters, huge power orders, and long distances to supplies. Many times Highway 395 was closed for six months due to weather. No longer dreaming of Southern California and Riverside, we were young, would face the future as it came and decided this could be a great adventure.

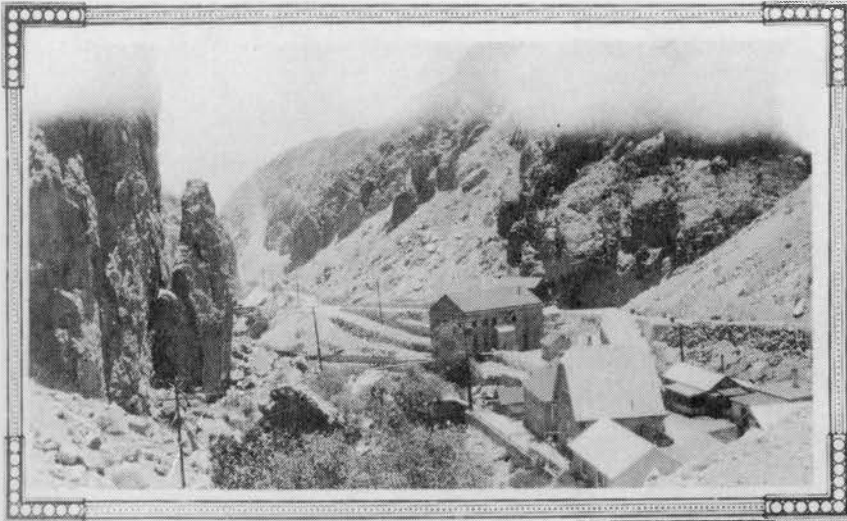
We had never been to the Poole Plant. Just that fleeting view from Tioga Pass, where it looked like a doll house nestled at the end of Lee Vining Canyon. The pride of the company and the newest of all their power plants, it was built in 1924 and named for the engineer who had helped build it. His portrait still hangs in the office of the plant. Operators did not stay on duty in the power house. Telephones were placed in their homes. There were two operators on twelve hour shifts. Each shift relieved the other for two full days of each week.

It was late afternoon as I drove the narrow three miles of winding, ungraded road. The sun had disappeared and the canyon was in deep shadow, with tall Jeffery Pines and shimmering aspen, full of bright, tall colors, and air filled with sweet mountain scents.

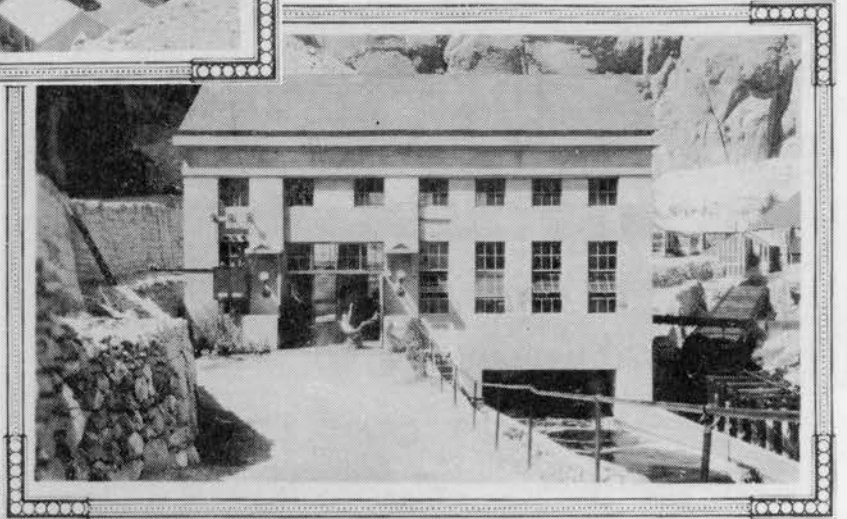
Our home was the nicest of all the company houses. It had three apartments with shining hardwood floors. Once a year the houses were painted and always kept in good repair. Hunting, fishing, many beautiful areas for hiking and exploring were all available to us. We had found our utopia. Friends came to visit our good fortune. We were never lonely.

The power company furnished snowshoes to us as a new means of transportation. On our first fitting we wondered how anyone could manage such big feet. Eager

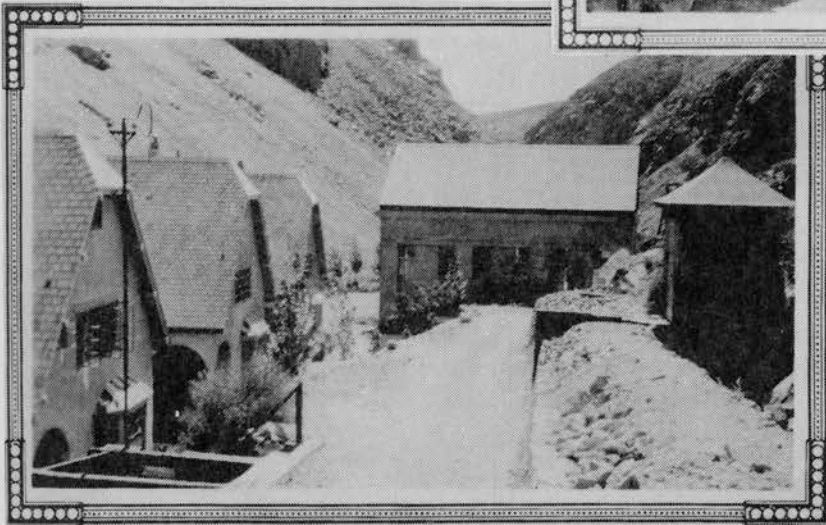




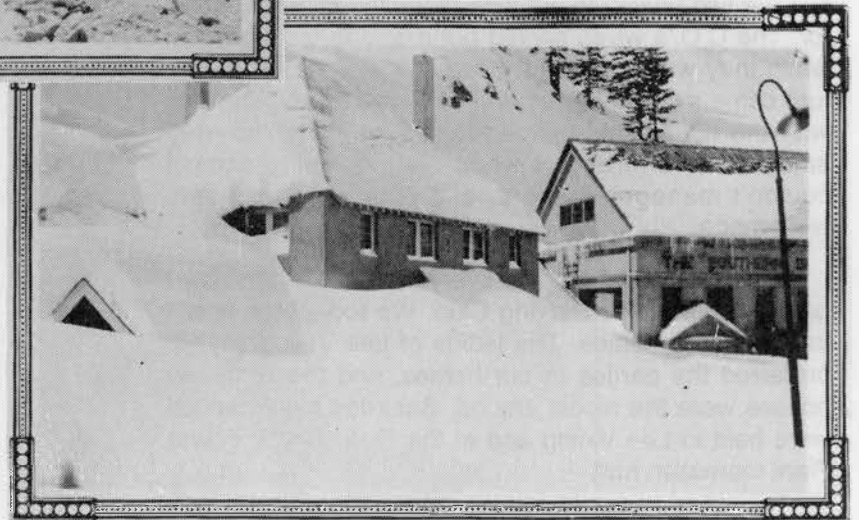
*Gorge plant and house*



*Gorge plant*

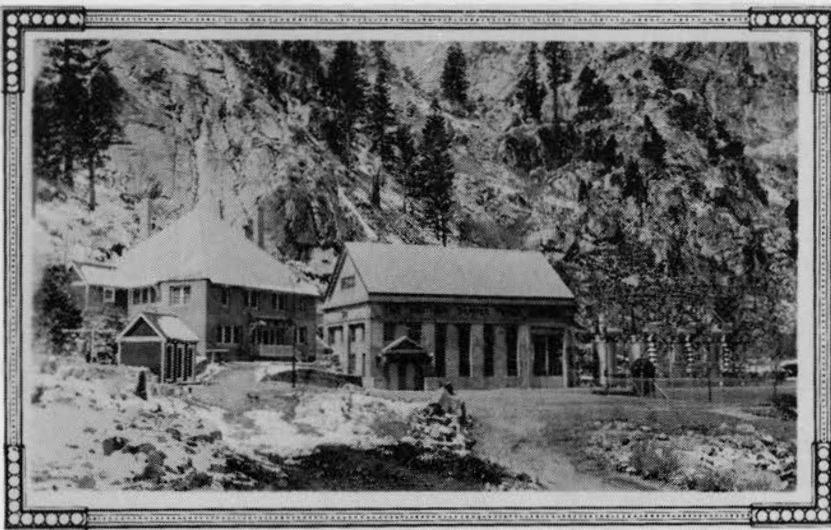


*... and in the snow*





*It was a lot different in the summer*



*Eunice, ready for one of the Saturday night dances in the spring*



to learn, we soon became adept, although at first bruised ankles showed our inexperience. We advanced to skis later.

After two years Gerald was promoted to chief operator. The C.O.'s wives served hot meals to the workmen when they were making repairs at the plant. When my turn came my kitchen turned into a miniature restaurant with the dining table expanded to its limit. The men enjoyed my efforts, but when food rationing came I couldn't manage anymore, and other arrangements were made.

Social life was shared by everyone with dinners, card parties, and Ladies Serving Club. We took turns entertaining in our homes. The ladies of Lee Vining always preferred the parties at our homes, and the company houses were the nicest around. Saturday night dances were held in Lee Vining and at the Rush Creek Power Plant recreation hall.



*Playing in the snow; Eunice and Nancy Ann Hill at the Poole Plant; winning the 1991 Double Slalom at June Lake; Eunice Yongue and Augie Hess*



Mail order catalogs were very important in this area and everyone used them. Sometimes you would meet your neighbor on the street wearing the same dress you had on and joke about each other's good taste. When the mail couldn't get through for a few days or weeks, there was an excited rush to see what packages came.

#### **November 1934**

Upon turning 22, I registered to vote for the first time. The November evening prior to voting, I was called to serve on the election board. Elections were held at Lee Vining Elementary School. It was in bad repair, dreary and old. A single light bulb hung over the work table and we located two desk lamps to get us through the day. I was instructed and had to learn fast. Twelve hours of checking voters, and when the polls closed the real work of counting ballots began. If all went well we could finish in three of four more hours. A long day for twenty dollars, but somehow I was hooked and served for thirteen more years.

My interest in skiing started in the mid '30s. The first pair of skis were very plain, mail ordered from Sears and Roebuck. We were so proud of them. Heavily waxed, they would glide with perfection. After a winter of use the edges were worn to a perfect roundness.

Ski equipment started to have many changes: metal edges, lamination, new waxes, better boots to protect the ankles, and harnesses to hold the boots. When someone purchased the latest model we formed a circle to admire and gain knowledge.

Rope tows sprang up on gentle slopes: Conway Summit, Lee Vining, Mono Ski Club, June Lake, and McGee Mountain. It was thrilling to practice the snow plow, stem turn, and christie at each of these places. The little Lee Vining slope was too tame and soon abandoned. We set up our own tow at the Poole Plant. It was a steep course and only the strong armed could manage. This kept us entertained through the long snowy days of winter.

#### **Spring 1946.**

Forming ski clubs encouraged competition. I raced for several years under Mono Ski Club and have a cluster of gold and silver medals to show for my efforts. A double slalom race was held at June Lake. Two courses were set side by side. Men and women partners started at the same time and ran twice. Many people participated. Augie Hess and I were partners, and came away with first prize, a gold cup for each of us engraved with our names and dates.

I entered one more race at McGee Mountain in the spring of 1941, hoping for the big perpetual trophy. Roma McCoy and I competed eagerly. She had no fear of the downhill, I was better in the slalom, and in the combined time I lost only by seconds. A year after retiring from racing I was invited by Mono Ski Club to fore-run their last ski race. I felt honored and surprised at the

improvement of each young contestant.

Walter Dombroski was one of Mono County's supervisors, with Lee Vining in his district. He served at least four terms and was eager to promote skiing in this section of the Sierra. His efforts paid off; soon people were enjoying this beautiful ski area and it became known far and wide. He never missed a ski race, and always was near to cheer each contestant.

#### **December 1941**

Radio was hard to receive in the canyon at Poole Plant. The only signal we could receive came through our antenna which ran east and west from the top of a tall jeffery pine to the top of the house, where it was fed into the apartments. The news of Pearl Harbor came to us by radio at 7:00 a.m. The shock!! Young men in the prime of life called to serve their country, leaving wives and young children. It was heartbreaking to see them go.

There was also a serious problem for the power company. Warned of sabotage, guards were stationed at the plants, lights were kept lowered, and safety glass placed in all the windows of the plants. The safety procedures continued for a long time.

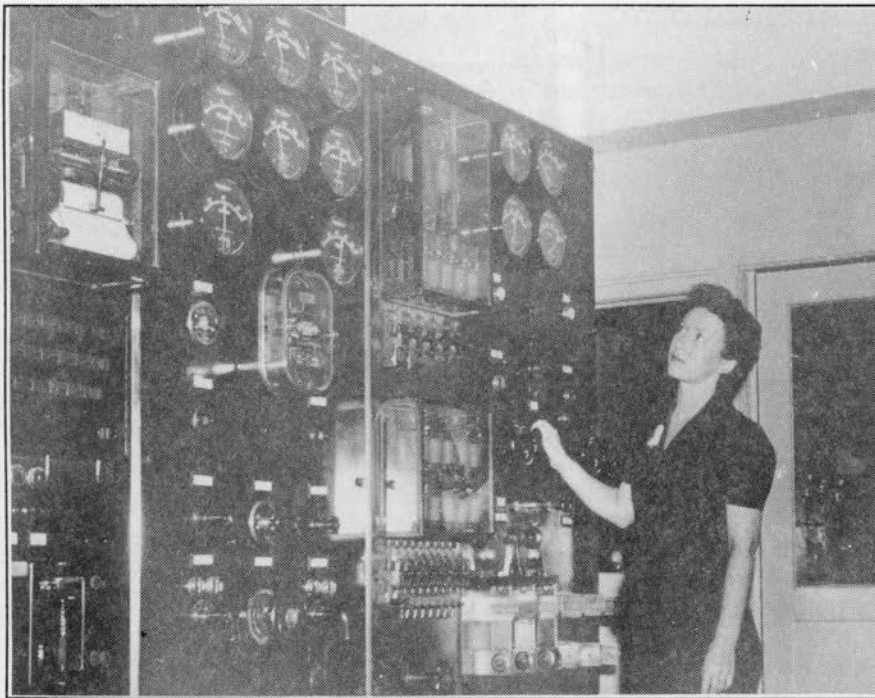
All of America was feeling the pinch with rationing and shortages: food, gasoline, tires, sugar and a shortage of everything else. The baggy rayon hose were mended with a touch of nail polish or needle and thread when they ran.

#### **1943**

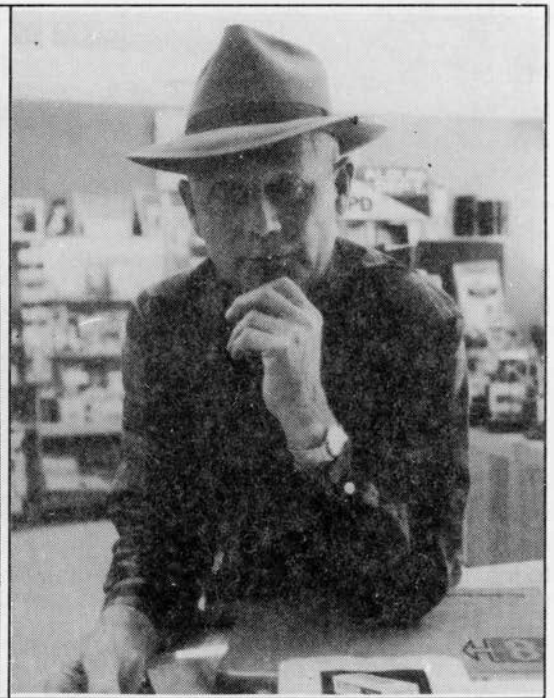
A call was made for older men thirty and forty years of age. Gerald was in this age group and Uncle Sam had him by the shirttail. We feared he would be called, but power was important to national security so the company kept having him deferred. The power company did not approve of working wives so I had never worked outside the home. We must think of my future if Gerald were drafted. Where could I go to find work? Many went to cities to work in factories. Women were filling many vacancies. The power company was in dire need of help; living so close I was familiar with all operations. We contacted the Bishop superintendent, he thought it was a fine idea and wonderful that I wanted to do this. He gave his okay and said I would be hired to fill the first opening.

I spent four months during the winter of 1943 learning everything thoroughly, completing my apprenticeship with Gerald as my instructor. Soon there was an opening at Poole Plant. All operators reported to duty at the beginning of each shift to the control station on Bishop Creek. Orders were dispatched for each of the power plants. I checked in, giving my name, explaining that I was the new operator at Poole, giving the details. With congratulations and good luck I was accepted.

My first day on duty was to be a test of my knowl-



*First day on duty!*



*Gerald Yongue*

edge. One of Mono's famous electrical storms appeared suddenly. The echo of thunder in Lee Vining can be likened to cannon fire. I caught the works. Gerald had just left for town when the first volley hit. He returned, fearful I might need help. When he came in I was writing up my log report, calm and ready for the next outburst. After this we knew I could handle whatever was thrown my way.

With just two of us and twelve hour shifts, there was quite a change in our lives. We gave each other two days off each week and did whatever errands or shopping were needed. It was confining; we could not go any place together but that didn't matter as there was no gas for traveling. The summer moved along, friends came and spent their vacations with us, calling our retreat a bit of heaven on earth.

In August Gerald's father in Idaho died of a heart attack. It was a traumatic time. Gerald felt he should be with his family. There was not a relief person to take his place, so after much deliberation between the two superintendents of Bishop and Mono Basin, it was decided I could take over for a week by myself, but I could not stay at the plant alone. Strangely, we had had guests all through the summer but none this week. A close lady friend volunteered to stay with me; the plans were settled, and Gerald left for Idaho. Extra gasoline was always allotted for such emergencies.

All went well, but it was the longest week of my life. It was a happy day when seven days later I saw our car coming around the last turn for home.

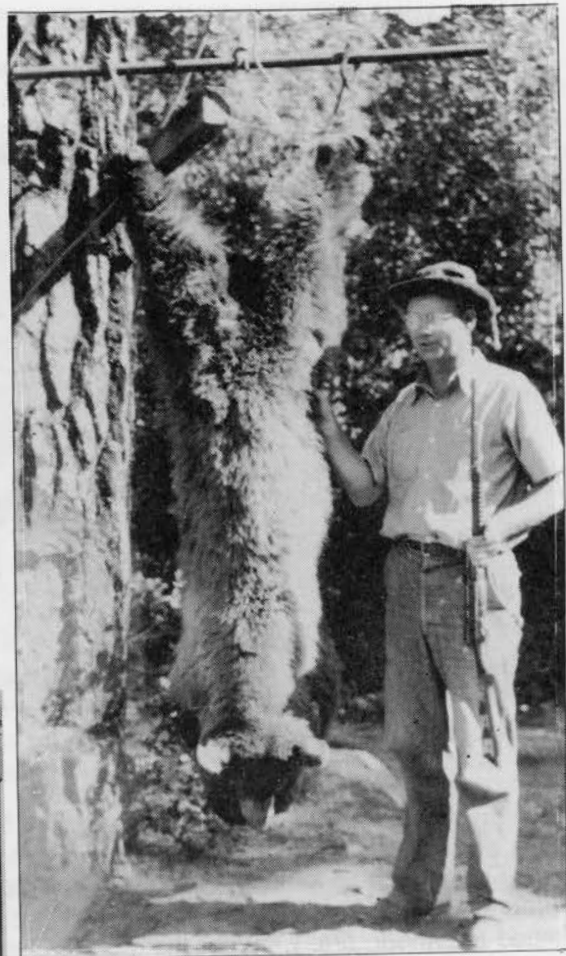
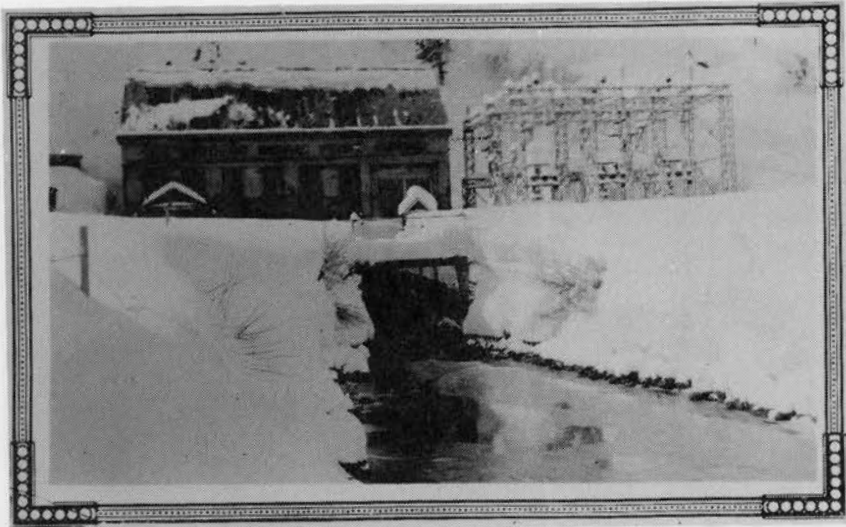
In late fall another operator arrived, and my life returned to normal. For the next two years I was vacation relief for the two operators. This ended my career as a hydro electric operator. Women have held many highly rated positions in power stations, but I was the first in a hydro electric plant. One other woman operated at Poole later in the '60s, for about a year.

#### **Late 1940**

Snow sleds were very popular. We all wished for one but the cost was prohibitive. The power company owned one and then advanced to a snow cat, so the men at Poole were offered a chance to purchase it for a dollar if they became responsible for all repairs. It carried three people and each wore bulky aviator trousers for warmth. That silly thing was in the repair shop more than on the trail. It had to be on a packed trail or it buried itself. Many times we spent more time digging out than riding.

The company held safety meetings monthly at Lee Vining substation. All men off duty were expected to attend; overtime was credited as incentive. Now that Poole had a snow sled, the men were expected to attend.

One sunny February day a safety meeting was scheduled for 10 a.m. There was a packed trail for the sled to Lee Vining. The other couple from Poole was staying in town on their days off and Gerald would return alone. By noon a severe storm blew in, becoming a blizzard within the hour; Gerald started for home. Within three miles he could not find the trail. He was becoming exhausted from fighting to keep the snow sled



*When it snowed, it snowed, but who cared?  
Except the bear who later paid for picnicking  
on chicken in the snow tunnel.*



from burying itself in the fresh snow. This day, of all days, he forgot the snowshoes he usually carried in case of trouble and he was two miles from our emergency cabin at headquarters camp. At 2 p.m. when I had not heard from him I knew he must be in trouble. The storm was a true blizzard, blowing the snow so hard one could only see a few feet. I quickly got into my winter gear. With a pack sack and snow shoes, I was off to find my lost one.

The wind was so loud, that as Jewel called to me from the house, I could only hear one word, "careful." It was tough skiing. I made it to headquarters and found no sign of Gerald. I forged on for a mile where I found him, exhausted from forging through the snow drifts. He was mighty glad to see me. He put on the snow shoes and then it was an easy trek back to the cabin. After a good rest by a warm fire and cups of hot soup, he revived and we set out for Poole, three miles away. The storm was still raging and darkness had set upon us, but we fought our way along and within an hour we were safely there. What a day.

### **Union Changes**

The war was over and unions began regulating operations of the power plants, causing many changes in working conditions. No more nine to twelve hour shifts and an additional operator at Poole. No more restrictions on the company wives. Although I didn't continue with the power company I did find work at once and enjoyed working for the pumice plant, Lee Vining Market, Nicely's Restaurant, and retirement after 30 years.

We had a good life and enjoyed 22 years at Poole Plant with congenial people and very good working conditions. With months of vacation each year there was time to pursue our hobbies of rock collecting, cutting and polishing. I also made and sold some of our work in jewelry. We had a new car when needed and a chance to see all of the western states.

### **1954**

We transferred to Lee Vining Substation. This was like coming out of the dark into bright sunlight. Life was so relaxed and easy; no more winter orders or snow closed roads. Friends could visit any time, and we could pursue a happier social life. We enjoyed 25 years of belonging to the Masons and Eastern Star, going through the chairs many times, until our lodge in Bridgeport closed.

Television was introduced to Lee Vining, a fragile procedure; signals were hard to find and receive. There was much care to the system and no money to pay for outside help. Gerald volunteered to take care of it for free. He wanted everyone to have a television. This con-

tinued for over ten years until a company servicing all of Mono County took over.

We decided that Lee Vining would be our retirement home. Our roots had set deep; no other place held as much appeal to us. We purchased Forest Service property, then learned any improvements must be made under Forest Service rules. Colors had to be white with green trim, and rental leases were changing. It was impossible for Lee Vining to grow, with no new business and existing buildings in poor repair.

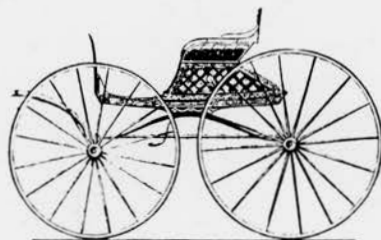
We heard of land trades, although several people had tried with no success. Gerald was determined; he organized people and the first steps were taken to make land available to purchase, but the Forest Service kept wanting more and more money. This continued for five and a half years; people were ready to give up. The turning point came when the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power donated the balance of land needed so that thirteen lots became private property; ours was one of these. Lee Vining began to grow: new schools, paved roads, sidewalks, street lights, sewer systems, and the best water on earth. Old buildings were taken down and replaced with beautiful hotels, landscaped with lawns, flowers and trees. Fine restaurants opened, businesses built flower boxes to adorn entrances. Without a street sweeper each store owner swept the street in front of his business. Pride was taken in keeping a pretty village to greet visitors at the entrance to Yosemite Park.

### **October 1965**

The 15 years at the substation passed happily and quickly. Our home was built and ready for our retirement move on October 1, 1968, overlooking beautiful Mono Lake and surrounded by the towering Sierra with a canopy of bright blue sky. We now had more time to travel, this time abroad, absorbing the sights and pleasures of Central Europe, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Mexico, South America and the South Pacific. In 1977 we toured Hawaii, including six islands, fell in love again and returned many times. We rented an apartment on Oahu in 1980 and decided this would be the place for us to spend our winters. In 1986 we purchased our second home, a condominium just two blocks from the beach.

### **Postscript:**

In June, 1994, Gerald Yongue died, leaving his wife of 64 years. He co-authored "Mysterious Mono Basin," a book about the geology of the area surrounding Lee Vining, and authored "Roots of Middle Valley," on the early history and pioneers of Midvale, Idaho. After his retirement, he worked for the Forest Service for 17 years and was honored with a public drinking fountain dedicated in his name. \*



*THE ALBUM*  
*Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono*