



Middletown Days Pioneer Award Recipient The Dennis Family

Sixty-five years ago, when Margaret Delfino was just 14 years old, her family moved to Lake County from Alameda. Her father used to come up here to hunt and liked the area so much the family relocated. Initially, they bought property on Spruce Grove Road by Soda Creek, but getting the kids to school from there would have been too hard on a mom who didn't drive so they worked cattle on the property instead. The family settled in on Santa Barbara Avenue, not too far from where the Dennis family would live a few years later.

The Dennises were farmers. They owned their farm in Hayward as far back as the mid 1800s. A series of events including eminent domain to build Hwy 880 prompted them to look for property elsewhere. Hazen was an M.P. in the Army at the time. During the Korean war he was stationed in France and Germany. After his discharge the family looked at property in Bodega Bay, Napa, and finally fell in love with Middletown. "It was spring and everything was green." Hazen, his dad and his aunt went in on the purchase of the property not too far from the Delfinos. "Dad always said it was meant

to be. And, Dad didn't say too much."

Fate and her parents' friends, the former owners of the ranch, arranged for Hazen 22 and Margaret 16 to meet. The grandfathers hit it off as they both loved hunting and working with cattle. And, Margaret and Hazen immediately hit it off, as well. A few years later in 1956 they were married. A year later came Joe, then Kathy, and then Dan.

For a time the family lived at Diamond D Ranch where Hazen also worked. In 1965 he got a job with the County Road

Department and the family moved to the Dennis family property.

The family didn't have much, but the kids remember a great childhood. Margaret was den mother for the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. And she was very active in the PTA. The kids also played sports and back then someone would have to volunteer to be referee. Often it was Hazen.

Hazen belonged to the Lake county Rod & Gun Club and the family would participate regularly in the Lions Club trap shoots. He encouraged all the kids to ride (horses and motor cross), trap shoot, fish and hunt. They hunted dove and quail on the property and the family would always come up for dove season. Margaret cooked up whatever they brought home. Her kids still reminisce fondly about her jack rabbit stew and pheasant casserole.█



In order to take the family camping trips the family loved, Hazen and all the kids would cut and stack firewood to make extra money. "We all hated cutting and stacking, but our dad was an animal." Their camping trips were long and usually to Idaho, though they did incorporate a side trip to the World's Fair in Spokane Washington in 1974.

Margaret and Hazen also loved to bowl and often Margaret found time to belong to a team in Clearlake that met while the kids were in school.

Most of all, Hazen loved to garden. He wasn't in to flowers, but he could grow vegetables. As long as Hazen had his garden there was no need to go to the store for them. In fact, it was his love of gardening that kept them in Middletown. After the kids all graduated Hazen wanted to go to the "middle of no where" and chose Alaska. After a visit he decided against it as it was so cold he couldn't grow his vegetables.

In 2015, along with so many others, the family home was lost to the Valley Fire. And, while the fire took the family's possessions, it could not take the fond memories of their life here in Middletown.

Thank you Dennis Family for being a part of our Middletown heritage.