IN THE VEIN

I hope that some of you were able to attend the “Springtime at Empire Mine” event. The attendance this year was modest, yet manageable. There was plenty of musical entertainment including the Heifer Bells, Heather MacAdam, Backporch Swing, Tad and Diane Kitada, Celtic Joy, Tim Proffitt, and Bruce Gauthier, the magician.

Complimentary cups of tea were served in the garden, which was a popular place to relax and enjoy the musical entertainment. The weather was perfect and the gardens were magnificent in all of their glory with spring blossoms budding in vibrant color. Living History docents in period costumes greeted the guests visiting the Cottage and Clubhouse.

The kids’ corner was a huge success where there were plenty of fun activities including coloring, Lincoln logs, Raggedy Anne and Andy dolls and hobby mules to play with to entertain growing minds. There was also the potting bench where children were able to making living gifts for their moms.

Food and drink were supplied by local vendors including, for the first time, the Back Porch Market, which offered sandwiches.

There was excellent pre-event publicity. The Union newspaper’s Prospector, had articles by Courtney Ferguson, as well as Hollie Grimaldi Flores who interviewed Steve Sanchez. (We even made the front cover!) Marsha Lewis and Courtney Ferguson were good radio ambassadors on station KNCO. Thanks to Sherry Sanchez for her irresistible promotional designs, and to all the volunteers who worked so hard to make this event an outstanding success.

Special thanks also to Park staff who made this event possible, and to Board members Steve Sanchez (Event Chair), Steve Ruble, and Dan McCarthy for all of their help.

Restoration of the Greenhouse will soon begin, and all of us look forward to the much needed improvements. The new golf cart purchased by EMPA has also finally arrived, and we are excited that it will be available for use at future events.

The third annual “Mine, Wine & Dine” fundraiser is slated for August 2. Tickets will be available for purchase on June 15. Board Member Steve Sanchez, who is the Chair of this event, is still looking for sponsors. If you know of anyone or any local business that would like to donate to this special event, please contact Steve at stevenrsanchez044@gmail.com.

Until next time,

Cheers,

Bri Cosbie
AN INTERVIEW WITH VINCE SECK, AKA GEORGE STARR

By Caryl Fairfull

Vince Seck has been part of Living History at Empire Mine since 1996. Many newer Living History folks may not realize his true contributions to the Empire Mine. At the age of 86, Vince plays George Starr in the Cottage, and also manages Mine Yard Living History for special days. He loves dropping back to 1905 for the Cottage, but jumps to 1930 for Mine Yard Living History. Both George Starr and Vince, aka George Starr, have the same daily concerns.

Vince always wears a vest with a ¾ ounce gold nugget fob on his chain. He wears a 1905 duster coat or a blazer, depending on the day. It turns out he owns many costume components including six hats, six vests, and various pants and boots for dress or the mine yard. He often pulls a 2.5 ounce gold nugget out of his pocket for Cottage visitors to hold.

George Starr always speaks with authority about the details of running the mine, as he should. When Vince plays George Starr, he is running the mine for our visitors. Here are some of the things that both men always had on their mind:

1) The Portal is where both visitors and miners enter the mine shaft. The portal was important to miners as it signified the beginning and end of their workday. Today, Vince has seven trained docents to interpret the life of miners underground. One of those docents, Mr. Orlo Steele, was actually a miner here at Empire Mine.

2) The Machine Shop was necessary to keep the mine running, with pulley belts connected to each machine in the shop. At first the pulleys were run by steam, but changed to electricity in 1891. The Machine Shop made all the precise metal parts for Pelton wheels and Cornish Pumps, and cams for stamp mills.

3) The Carpenter Shop built and repaired all the wooden products for the mine, including the stairs in the shaft needed for safe evacuation in case of cable malfunction. They also made boxes for gold shipment and the wooden patterns for the machine parts to be cast at the foundries and then finished at our Machine Shop.

4) The Compressor House is responsible for all air circulation in the mine and all the underground tools that run on air pressure. Other energy sources were too dangerous in the mine. It also provided air for the miners to breathe. Air was compressed to 90 psi to run drills, power hammers, and slushers (miniature hoists to move ore).

5) The Hoist House contains massive drums with enough wire cable to reach 4,600 feet into the mine. One man, with a row of levers, raised and lowered the workers at a rate of 600 feet/minute at shift change. The rest of the shift, he brought ore carts out of the mine at 1,000 feet/minute. He was the highest paid miner because of his skills and responsibility.

(continued on page 3)
AN INTERVIEW WITH VINCE SECK...(continued from page 2)

6) The Cornish Pump Engine, originating in Cornwall, England, was unique and necessary to hard rock mining. It was placed at the Portal with the rod descending to the bottom of the mine, and connected to pumps located every 200-300 feet. The Cornish Pumps pump out the water to keep the mine dry. (Special Note: In 2018 a demonstrator Cornish Pump Engine was installed at the mine.)

7) Stamp mills broke up the hard rock that came to the surface in ore carts so that the gold could be extracted. There were 80 stamps in the mill. Our demonstrator stamp mill is a two-stamp, but usually five stamps were connected into a “battery of stamps.” Our visitors love seeing and hearing the stamp mill at work. We mention the noise at the Cottage.

8) In George Starr’s day, the Blacksmith Shop made tools, sharpened drill bits and made parts for mine carts. Today it is run by a dedicated team of 30 volunteers who make items for sale and it is the hub of mine yard interpretation when other shops/locations are not open.

9) The Refinery is where the gold was cast into gold bars. The retort process separates the mercury from the gold at 700-800 degrees. Then the gold is melted at 2,000 degrees, poured into bars of 1,000 ounces, and boxed for shipment to the smelter and further refining. The American Smelting Company, at Carquinez, California, did the final processing before the gold went to the San Francisco mint.

10) The Rescue Station provided first aid for miners. For serious cases, Dr. Jones came from Grass Valley Hospital. (Remember the article on Swan-Levine House last month?) Today, docents explain that Empire Mine had a superb record for worker safety and how this was accomplished with careful training.

11) The Administrative Office took care of all the paperwork such as billing or payment services. Women worked here to keep track of miners’ hours and to do the payroll. In 1930, workers had increased from 250 to 600 people, and times were changing.

Mr. Starr managed all these mining activities from 1898 to 1930. In 1930, Newmont bought the mine from Mr. Bourn and George Starr stayed on as a consultant. In 1935, the Starr home burned. Shortly afterward, the Starr family moved to San Francisco, where George Starr died in 1940.

Vince Seck, aka George Starr, provides mining expertise at the Cottage and in the Mine Yard on special days like the Springtime event and Miners Picnic. Vince organizes the 12-14 volunteers to interpret the Mine Yard stations for all special events. He strives to provide all visitors with the full story of the Empire Mine and wants to make their visit a very memorable occasion.

Vince recommends reading: “Gold Giants of Grass Valley” by Roger Lescohier, published in 1995. It is available in the Gift shop at the Park and on Amazon.

A NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

Hello to All,

A special thank you to all EMPA members, the Board, and Park staff, for helping me to perform the duties as Treasurer when I assumed this position last July. It has been a pleasure to work with everyone.

I also want to let you know that we had a “hiccup” with our Pay Pal system, therefore, if you tried to join EMPA, renew your membership or donate funds, and were unsuccessful, please try again. Your funds were refunded to your accounts, and I apologize for this irregular process. We have since corrected the problem, and hope you will try again to use this service that allows you to pay from your bank accounts and credit cards from your Pay Pal account.

If I can be of assistance to anyone in the future, don’t hesitate to contact me. Thank you again.

Nicholette Granholm (Treasurer@empiremine.org)
NEWS OF OUR FRIENDS
By Lynne Buenz

We were very sorry to learn recently that long-time Empire docent, Gloria Kenney, was leaving the area and moving to Arizona in the latter part of May. Gloria has been at Empire since 1999, so 2019 marked her 20th year as a volunteer. Her contributions during that time were numerous, and included serving as an EMPA Board member. She was also Chair of the Sunshine Committee. Additionally, she served as Assistant Treasurer, and, most recently, as Co-Program Leader of the Gift Shop.

Another docent who worked closely with Gloria described her as, “A generous and sweet lady, who opened her heart and home to many foster children, several of whom she formally adopted.”

Gloria herself expressed sadness about moving, and added that she would welcome continued contact from any of her many friends. She added, “I will miss you all and always love you. Thanks for the wonderful 20 years of fun.” Gloria’s new contact information is as follows: 2685 Lass Avenue, Kingman, AZ 86409; telephone remains the same at 530-477-8783.
A QUIET AMERICAN'S WORST DAY 75 YEARS AGO

By Gage McKinney

Charlie Martini's experience with mining explosives led him 75 years ago to the worst day of his life. It was D-Day, June 6, 1944, and before dawn, Charlie found himself nearing the coast of Normandy in a rubber boat.

Charlie had been born in Sierra County among peaks reminiscent of the Italian Alps. The family settled permanently in Grass Valley where Charlie, his father and brother worked in local mines. Charlie had stints in the North Star, Bullion, Idaho Maryland, Golden Center and Empire mines. He was thirty-one when he joined the U.S. Navy in World War II, hoping his background in mining and explosives might land him with the Navy’s Construction Battalion, the Seabees.

Charlie completed dynamiting and demolition training at Camp Perry, Virginia where he volunteered for the Navy’s newly-organized Naval Combat Demolition Unit. The new unit proceeded to Chesapeake Bay, where Charlie and his fellow sailors took an improvised course in sailing rubber boats, blowing channels through sandbars and placing explosive charges around underwater obstacles. Intensive physical training followed at Fort Pierce, Florida where Charlie spent 8 to 12 hours a day amid heat, humidity, sand-flies and mosquitoes, sailing and setting practice explosives.

Charlie’s six-man team -- six being the capacity of a rubber boat -- arrived in Falmouth, Cornwall for more training in assault tactics alongside the Royal Navy. In Charlie’s boat were three other men from Nevada County: Clarence Nettleton, a miner who lodged on Mill Street, and Carl and Louis Netz, sons of a stone cutter.

Before dawn on D-Day, Charlie and his mates steered their rubber boat toward a Normandy beach. Charlie and company were the first men to reach the sand; the full might of the Allied Forces would arrive on the rising tide. They landed while the tide was low to clear obstacles which otherwise, as the sea rose, would lurk just below the water and impede the invasion.

Once on the beach, Charlie and his mates were under fire, machine guns crackling above them and shells bursting around them. They hurriedly loaded obstacles on the beach with explosives. Charlie’s comrade, Carl Netz, had the task of threading the trunk lines of detonator cords between the obstacles with two reels, one on each arm. “I ran a zigzag pattern [to avoid enemy fire] and prayed to God to help me,” he said. Two Allied destroyers approached to fire on enemy gun emplacements on the bluff above the beach. Further clearing of land mines and barbed wire opened a clear though dangerous path for the infantry. After the U.S. soldiers landed, and then moved over and beyond the bluff, Charlie and his mates tended to and evacuated the wounded left behind.

Though some Navy Demolition Units suffered over 50% casualties on that terrible day, Charlie and his mates came through. This earned them commendations and a cruise to the Mediterranean, where in August 1944 they cleared a beach in Southern France before another infantry assault. They then returned to the United States and were training for the invasion of Japan when the war ended.

Gunner Mate Charlie Martini returned from the war to Grass Valley where he leased a pitch at the Empire Mine. “He was a quiet man who was shy even around his family,” remembered his nephew, Empire docent Jerry Martini. Charlie Martini lived out his life respected around the town and mines for his service in a war which made heroes of quiet men.
UPDATE ON THE FORMATION OF THE
SIERRA GOLD PARKS FOUNDATION

By Brianna Cosbie

At the end of April, members from the Empire Mine Park Association (EMPA), South Yuba River Park Association (SYRPA) and the Friends of North Bloomfield and Malakoff Diggins (FNBMD), as well as a representative from the California Department of Parks and Recreation, met to discuss terms for establishing a new, single organization to support all three parks. The working name for this new organization is the Sierra Gold Parks Foundation (SGPF). The target date for establishment of this new organization is the end of October 2019. The meeting was very productive, and agreement was reached on the following:

1) Each park agreed that a set amount of funds will be designated to the park that they originated from and are to be spent within a 10-year time limit. The balance of available funds are to be absorbed into the new foundation.

2) A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and proposed set of bylaws for the new foundation were agreed upon, with a few amendments. (Special thanks to Robert Coats from SYRPA for drafting these important documents.)

3) Funds raised from special fundraisers and events, which are scheduled before the merger is complete, will remain with the park that raised them. Once the merger is complete, all funds raised from any of the three parks will go to the new foundation, and decisions concerning their use will be made by the foundation’s Board of Directors.

4) All present members of EMPA, SYRPA and FNBMD will become members of the Sierra Gold Parks Foundation.

Moving forward, a lot of work remains to be done. There will be more meetings, and additional agreements will need to be reached. I will keep you updated as new information becomes available.

Thanks to all members of the working group for all of their hard work and the passion to make this process productive, which will ensure a successful transition for all three state parks.

(Editor’s Note: EMPA’s representatives on the working group are: Brianna Cosbie (EMPA President), Troy Hammer (Vice President), as well as Board members, Steve Ruble, and Steve Sanchez.)
From an interview of Phil Keast, Master Mechanic and Mechanical Engineer, Empire Mine 1920-1957.  Interview date 5/3/87.

When I started in 1920, the wire rope would last about five months. Then we got some better wire rope and it would last about a year. We got about double the life out of it.

There were 156 rollers from the collar of the mine down to the bottom. It would take 5,000 feet of rope off the drum to get down to the bottom which left about 12 or 15 turns on the second layer on the drum. The reason why they bought 6,200 feet of rope was because leaving a layer on the drum helps stop drum wear.

I remember one time the skip jumped the track about two in the afternoon. It went down the shaft and ran over the other rope coming up. It ruined that rope; we had to put on two ropes in one day. We got through around midnight putting those two ropes on.

Another time we had a rope that had stretched so bad. It was wearing so bad I sent a piece in for a test. It broke under the minimum stress that was supposed to be for a one-inch cable, so we had to change that rope.

When you put on a new rope, it will stretch for two or three days. You have to keep changing the indicator on the drum hoist so the skip will stop at the right place. We had one rope that was on for eight months when it had a second stretch. One night the shift engineer told me at 10 minutes to seven that he had to keep changing the markings on the wheel so that the skip would stop at the right place down in the mine. He told me that the rope stretched over a turn since yesterday.

I said," Don’t let anybody go down on it. “ I saw Fred Nobs over in the yard. I told him that “The rope is gone.” “You put 36 men down with that rope and we will probably lose them.” He said, “Don’t let them go.” Bill Rowe, who was the mine foreman, was hot under the collar about it because we had to put them down one skip at a time. I said, “Nothing doing.” “I am not going to have that responsibility hung on me if something happens with 36 lives hung on that rope.”

From an interview of Nancy Licon Levensaler, George and Libby Starr’s granddaughter. Interview date 6/85.

When I was about nine, my grandfather took me down into the mine; one of the upper levels, not deep down. I can remember walking through the tunnels, the dripping water, the mules and the cars that were in the tunnel.

He thought I should learn how to drive at 14 so he said, “Nancy, you are not going to drive one of my cars.” So he bought me a Dodge coupe. So I learned to drive in Grass Valley with my own Dodge coupe. It was a terrible mistake, because I was a little scary with it. In San Francisco I bumped into somebody else, and that was the end of my Dodge coupe.
A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

By Lynne Buenz

Among the reference books on a shelf at home is a copy of The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition, 1992. I purchased this volume while I was still working, and found it to be an invaluable resource whenever a question arose about the correct spelling of a word, as well as its definition and correct usage. Recently, I have been giving some thought to the word “volunteer,” so I decided to look up the definition, which is, “A person who performs or offers to perform a service of his or her own free will.” That seemed to define the word very well. I then began to think about why people volunteer and what they derive from doing so.

Some time ago, I read an article, which I thought was in a publication from AARP, about how older Americans volunteer at a greater rate than any other age group. However, when I tried to find the article, or at least information to support what I remembered, all I could find was information about a 2015 report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics stating that the 35-54 age category volunteered the most.

That surprised me somewhat, and I then began to reflect on my own experience, and recalled that even while I was still working full-time, I volunteered at church in various capacities including serving on the church council, in the choir, and providing lay person support to the pastor during the weekly church service.

In addition, for several years (actually several decades), I was a member of a professional organization, and served in leadership positions at both the local and state-wide level. The “hands on” experience gained from this greatly enhanced my career and increased my skill level, which impressed my employers and led to advancement opportunities.

As the above illustrates, volunteers are needed in nearly every organization, covering all aspects of modern life. Volunteers are often called upon to do the “heavy lifting” to make things work and get the job done. Without volunteers most, if not all, non-profit organizations would not be able to fulfill their mission. Conversely, the experience gained from volunteering greatly enhances the quality of one’s life, often leading to lasting friendships and other opportunities. Another article I read recently stated that volunteering provides valuable health benefits, especially for older people who have retired from the work-a-day world but still want to make a contribution in their community and to remain physically and mentally active.

Years ago I met a woman who became a mentor to me and many others, as she modeled professionalism and was a strong leader. To encourage participation in an activity, she would often say, “Try it; you will like it and it will be good for you.” Looking back, I realize how truly prophetic these words have been for me.

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Empire Mine State Park
Volunteer Program Leaders

Interpretive Program Leaders

**Tour Guides**
- Kyle Ingram
  - Kyle.Ingram@ca.parks.gov
- Marilyn Sakowicz
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**Note:** Changes in directory listings on this and the following page should be sent to Lynne Buenz, Editor/Publisher, at la_buenz@hotmail.com
Empire Mine Park Association

*Thanks to these folks for taking the lead in making the Empire Mine State Historic Park such a unique and enjoyable experience!

EMPA Board of Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Brianna Cosbie</td>
<td>559-7468</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bpacillo@gmail.com">bpacillo@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Pres.</td>
<td>Troy Hammer</td>
<td>575-9155</td>
<td><a href="mailto:troypheus@yahoo.com">troypheus@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Jacie Volek</td>
<td>955-5321</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jaciecv@gmail.com">jaciecv@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Nicholette Granholm</td>
<td>272-7328</td>
<td><a href="mailto:negranholm@att.net">negranholm@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, Forrest Cureton</td>
<td>268-8578</td>
<td><a href="mailto:curetonbk@gmail.com">curetonbk@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, Sean Gilleran</td>
<td>477-1700</td>
<td><a href="mailto:s.gilleran@goldminersinn.com">s.gilleran@goldminersinn.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director Patricia (Patty) Gizzi</td>
<td>925-628-8278</td>
<td><a href="mailto:timote7@aol.com">timote7@aol.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director Dan McCarthy</td>
<td>615-4354</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mentorcad@comcast.net">mentorcad@comcast.net</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director Steve Ruble</td>
<td>650-773-0160</td>
<td><a href="mailto:steve.ruble@gmail.com">steve.ruble@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, Steve Sanchez</td>
<td>273-8235</td>
<td><a href="mailto:stevensanchez044@gmail.com">stevensanchez044@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director Rick Sweringen</td>
<td>408-202-3470</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rsweringen@cs.com">rsweringen@cs.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not a voting member of the Board.

Special Note: The Board presently has two open Director positions.

EMPA Administration & Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>(Vacant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections</td>
<td>Troy Hammer</td>
<td>575-9155</td>
<td><a href="mailto:troypheus@yahoo.com">troypheus@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Event</td>
<td>Troy Hammer</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:troypheus@yahoo.com">troypheus@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:s.gilleran@goldminersinn.com">s.gilleran@goldminersinn.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><a href="mailto:rsweringen@cs.com">rsweringen@cs.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominating</td>
<td>Troy Hammer</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:troypheus@yahoo.com">troypheus@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miners Picnic</td>
<td>Steve Sanchez</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift Shop</td>
<td>Chrysan Silence</td>
<td>477-6659</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cmsilence@hotmail.com">cmsilence@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine</td>
<td>Pat Coe</td>
<td>274-2675</td>
<td><a href="mailto:patcoe@sbcglobal.net">patcoe@sbcglobal.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webmaster</td>
<td>Brianna Cosbie</td>
<td>559-7468</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bpacillo@gmail.com">bpacillo@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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THE EMPIRE STAR

This Newsletter is a Cooperative venture between the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the Empire Mine Park Association.

On the web at www.empiremine.org