

By Ernie Lehman

## GRAVEL ROADS

As I've grown older, living a life totally different from that I lived as a young boy, I can look back and really appreciate the simple things that I really liked as the kid. As a kid I was fascinated with bridges, but I also was fascinated by roads, specifically gravel roads.

In Capay we had Highway 16 and two streets that were paved--sort of; everything else was gravel. Anytime you traveled someplace there was a good chance that you would end up on a gravel road—which in some cases turned into a dirt road. Or you would be driving on a very old paved narrow road—which might eventually turn into gravel and or dirt.

When I was 13, I worked for a farmer who had acres and acres of barley. I was in charge of the silos that the farmer had, and when they had a truck loaded with grain, I was to keep an eye on the elevator that put the grain in the silos. I would often climb up to the scary top of the silos and could see the truck traveling on a gravel road several miles away moving down the road with dust flying out of the back of it, which would make me think of a jet airplane. Wonderful stuff our imaginations and memories!

To go to *deer camp* we would be on Highway 16 for a few miles, then a gravel road and eventually dirt. I loved that trip because as soon as we hit the gravel road, we kids took turns riding on the front fenders of the old Chevy trucks. The blinker lights were mounted on top of the fender and we straddled them—for our idea of safety! I would pretend I was writing a horse.

I learned to drive by myself on a gravel road by the Capay Bridge along Cache Creek. I used to steel my dad's pickup and sneak out and drive around on gravel roads. I feel I must've also walked at least 1000 miles on gravel and dirt roads as a kid. I find myself getting excited if I happen to see a gravel road these days. There is something about the looks of long, straight roads--gravel or paved, no matter what surrounds it, it still intrigues me.