

# MIGUEL ERRECA, RESIDENT OF ORANGE COUNTY FOR 63 YEARS, RECALLS COLORFUL OLD DAYS

By MALCOLM BOSTWICK

After laying aside his thoughts of a happy childhood and young manhood high atop the Pyrenees on the borderline between Spain and France, to help make history in Orange county for more than 50 years, old Miguel Erreca, who lives alone in a quaint little house at 715 North Shelton street, once more takes up those thoughts as he approaches his 82nd year.

Still bright-eyed and energetic among his chickens, garden and old picture-laden house, old Miguel is ready any time to while away the hours discussing old times with his friends or chatting over a cup of home-made claret wine. You know, the old Basque born on the top of the Pyrenees August 10, 1854, this week is, in his now easy-going way, celebrating his arrival in Orange county—63 years ago.

"I arrived in San Francisco on February 9, 1873 by way of the first railroad across the country," he said. "I was just 18 and my brother, Juan, and I came to make our fortunes. Juan was 20. Soon we came down to San Juan Capistrano and entered the kind of business we always knew at home—raising sheep.

### Recalls Old Days

"It was great back there in the Pyrenees. How well I remember the wonderful times and hard work—but I've always worked hard and hard work is what gets you somewhere. But it wasn't all hard work. We had our parties with our friends and enjoyed our dancing and card-playing and wine. Wine? Yes, I enjoy a little glass of wine before meals, but no one in his whole life has ever seen me with too much of it."

Why did Miguel and his brother come here? He explains the original reason was to seek a fortune and to keep from "wasting too much time" in compulsory military duty.

"It was simple for us Basques who lived right on the border between Spain and France, to do about as we pleased, because all of the babies born on the Spanish side were registered on the French side," the old man said. "You see, when Spain wanted us for routine military duty, she didn't have the birth records, and when France wanted us, we were living on the Spanish side of the mountains. We just left and came to California because it was a simple matter to leave."

### Leased Trabuco Ranch

Coming to Orange county, Miguel and Juan leased the Trabuco rancho, near El Toro, 25,000 acres, and the neighboring 48,000 Mission rancho, and went to work he said. Assisted by his faithful sheep dogs, Miguel herded 2500 to 3000 head of sheep between Orange county and San Francisco upon three different occasions, during those early days. A good sheep dog is a better sheep herder than any man, says Miguel. He owned one once for which he wouldn't take \$1000. "He never got his orders mixed," was Miguel's simple explanation.

In the early days Miguel and Juan were considered the strongest men in Southern California, Miguel weighing 240 pounds and his brother, 300 to 350.

"We worked hard, mighty hard," the aged Basque, now retired, declared. "But it was good. For eight years, I lived in the open, on the ground under sheepskins. Sometimes we had tents but when

the winds came, goodbye tents. With added population, farming grew and finally we sold out; Juan went back to the Pyrenees and I became a farmer myself." Miguel was an Orange county farmer for 44 years.

### Doesn't Get Lonely

Miguel, who has lived at his present address for the past eight or nine years alone and whose wife died 41 years ago this month, doesn't seem to get lonely. Herders of sheep don't often get lonely; they just get used to being alone.

By hard work and good investments throughout the county, including Huntington Beach, Placentia, Fullerton and other places about the county, Miguel became known hereabouts as a "proven leader." He was worth \$200,000 at one time. At one time, he was the county's greatest farmer, operating successfully, 1500 acres of wheat, barley and bean land at Huntington Beach, and 2500 acres at Placentia, both at the same time. He has worked on both the Irvine and Bastanchury ranches.

### Depression Hit Him

But the depression smacked up on him. Now he's broke financially, but feeling fine otherwise. He's got mighty good digestion and gets hungry regularly. Cooking? He does it himself and will proclaim to the world that it's an art and he knows the art. He likes a Spanish food diet—peppers, a touch of garlic, enchiladas and others of the "hot stuff" family of foods.

Now, Miguel Erreca, Orange county's most energetic citizen at one time, who then won 21 law suits without losing a case, likes his rest. He's getting up in years. He retires at 6 or 7 p. m. and arises about 8 or 3. He claims rest is pleasant for an old man, but still enjoys regular visitors, whoever they may be. His daughter, Juanita (Mrs. Lemon L. Conkle of Garden Grove), visits him every week and his daughter, Marcelina, of San Francisco, sometimes, too.

### SPEAKS ON PENSION

GARDEN GROVE, Feb. 19.—G. H. Welsh of Costa Mesa, spoke on the subject, "How the Townsend Plan Will Operate When it Becomes Law" at the meeting of Garden Grove Townsman club No. 1 held in Lorton hall this week.

Old time numbers were furnished by the Townsman orchestra composed of A. J. Kelly, Dewey Hubbard, violins; E. E. Stevens, banjo, and O. Rutledge, piano. A full musical program is being planned for the evening of February 24 when the Hargrove sisters of Anaheim will present dancing numbers. Refreshments of pie and coffee were served to 100 persons.



Clipped By:



m\_gariador  
Sat, Apr 8, 2017