

For all of us there are memories,
small spaces of time which sparkle
in our minds and in our hearts.
These magical moments are not always
recalled in factual details, but
rather in fantasy-like fogs with
the rougher edges smoothed away.

What is to follow is more from my
heart than my mind. It is my
dream-recollection of a time gone
by which held for me the innocence
of childhood.

Also included with this reminiscence
is a wonderful piece of history -
captured forever!

Merry Christmas!

V. Traverso Co.

My grandfather, John A. Traverso, Jack to his friends and business acquaintances, is the third son of Italian immigrants. Born in San Francisco in 1902, he grew up on Telegraph Hill and graduated from Lowell High School. Jack's oldest brother, Bill, was sent to law school to become an attorney so that he could help in a legal way with the family business. Later, he became a Superior Court Judge in San Francisco. Vic was given an education in accounting. The business required someone with good bookkeeping skills. Jack, being the youngest, remained a high school graduate and entered the family business as the manager.

I think he always resented not being able to get a college education. Sometimes he'll make a remark about always wanting to be an attorney like Brother Bill.

When I was a child, I remember visiting Grandpa's building. It was so big to me then; a three-story brick building, built after the 1906 quake and it stood among many others similar in architecture on Battery Street. Behind this building was another with painted letters on the brick wall which spelled - Libby's Food Products. And across the alleyway was another large building with "Planters Pennant Salted Peanuts" painted all along the top. Grandpa's building also had words painted on the brick walls - V. Traverso Co. Wholesale Grocers. Atop his building stood a large sign which proudly carried the words, V. Traverso Co., Headquarters Rainbow Stores.

There were long canvas awnings which protected the inside from the rays of the setting sun. The many-paned window openings were at least eight feet high and twenty feet long, one opening on each side of the front door which could be entered only after stepping up a couple of times. The two doors leading into the lobby of this building were long and narrow with panes

of glass which had been painted white so that no one could see in or out. Carefully and boldly painted on the glass doors were the same words found on the large sign on top of the building. The floors were made of wood and worn by many years of salesmen and delivery men and customers.

On the street, many people in trucks and cars would drive by; busily making their deliveries or selling their products. People working steadily, unloaded their trucks hastily so they could return to refill and make connections elsewhere. Most of the people, I remember, were men who wore dark, baggy trousers, belted with thin strips of leather, and white shirts, sleeves rolled up past their elbows. Big men, with strong-looking arms, lifted boxes from their trucks onto hand-trucks and entered the building from the alley.

Grandpa's building was one of many and men, lifting and carrying, pushing and pulling, were scattered throughout the street and alley. Trucks would back up to loading docks and pull away. Horns would blow, men would yell, "Hello," and "How's the wife?"

This was a magical place. As a child, I can remember my excitement each summer vacation when I would come to visit Grandma and Grandpa. There would be one day set aside to spend at the warehouse. We would rise early, before the sun came up and eat a hearty breakfast before leaving their home on the Peninsula. The drive in has filled with wonderful sights of sparkling lights, airplanes landing and taking off as we passed the airport, the other commuters on their way to work. I thought Grandpa was so lucky to be able to experience all these marvels each day.

We would arrive at the warehouse early, always before anyone else. Grandpa would make everything ready for the busy day ahead by turning on heaters and lights, opening doors and flipping switches. His office was on the street level and boasted a large safe in one corner. On his desk had been carefully placed a picture of Grandma and one which showed my mom and

the three of us girls. I remember feeling so proud to have had such high status in this grand place. On the desk there were many papers, neatly arranged in piles and an adding machine with big black buttons and a black handle on its side. The walls were all wood and on them hung pictures of large groups of people and some important looking framed pieces of paper with a lot of words printed on them. This room smelled of Grandpa's cigars and it was somewhat damp to me. I felt transported.

Across the lobby was another office with a counter where the salesmen would transact their business. Through the swinging wooden gate, I would walk from the lobby, through the office area and into a small room. On two of the walls there were shelves from the floor to the ceiling. Each shelf held boxes of candy: Snickers, Milky Ways, Abazabas, Paydays. I felt I had died and gone to heaven. This room was definitely in another dimension. The rich smells of chocolate and sugar and peanuts permeated the air. The most exciting part of visiting Grandpa's warehouse was being able to enter this paradise and come out with a whole box of candy as evidence I had been there.

The memories we carry of people are often linked to places. Whenever I think about my grandfather, his warehouse always penetrates my thoughts. I remember how impressed I was with his power and control and am sure his employees feared him alittle, just as I had. His warehouse still stands, but now it houses offices. It has been listed as an historical monument and will forever evade the demolishing ball. It stands as a symbol of part of my childhood...a magical time, when imagination had more control than did intellect.

Lou Thompson
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