



# Pulse of '62



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(The Saint Louis Class of 1962)  
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Volume I—Issue II

## “I HAVE A DREAM!”

### Life on a Ranch by Joe Durocher

Linda (my life long partner and best friend) and I are both “city folk” in the truest sense of the term. Having lived our entire lives on a 9,500 square foot lot we wanted some room; a small piece of land where we could be relatively self-sufficient, and be able to do as we pleased with out regard to neighbors. We found a 10-acre horse ranch on the central coast of California, in Santa Maria, and made the decision to buy it in the spring of 1998.



“Green Acres,” the old TV show, is a perfect description of our prior knowledge of ranch life. There is not enough space in an average-sized novel to describe our naïveté when we moved to the ranch. During our first winter, Linda awoke to a series of six 12-foot geysers from frozen PVC water lines where the horses are kept. I’ve learned more about real life, in these past years, than I did in 4 years of college and 2 years of graduate school.

One morning when I was walking my dog, after feeding the horses and chickens, I saw what looked like a slightly large, skinny house cat. My dog took off after it, barking. I recognized that this was no ordinary house cat and called Pume back. She instantly complied. All the while, the cat casually strolled not 25 feet from me, totally unconcerned, acting as if it owned the world. I finally realized that this animal was a bobcat and would have ripped my dog to pieces.



Another day, I was working on my drip system for a small orchard of fruit trees, and was struggling with a piece of the line that was leaking. I dug up the area to find that a 6-inch length of the flexible black tubing had been eaten through by a ground squirrel looking for water. I thought squirrels were dumb; no, I was the dumb one.

Once, just after we moved in, Linda and I took horse-riding lessons at a neighboring ranch. As we were walking to the saddling area in our western gear, we noticed a small group of Japanese tourists. The tour leader pointed at me and said, “Real American Cowboy” and the group all bowed and said “Ah so”. Good Grief!

Through the years we both have learned about our new environment. With all that said, I have to close by acknowledging that we are very blessed. “Life on a

Ranch” is a wonderful combination of work, peace and amazement. I look forward to the end of the day when I can sit on the patio and watch the horses play in their paddocks, the red tail hawks hunting overhead, and hummingbirds coming so close you could almost touch them. With



the mountains as a backdrop, the scene is one of beauty, peace and solitude. At the risk of sounding too Catholic, God is truly here at the ranch which is named Aloha ke Akua, “God is Love”.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Joe Durocher is a retired hospitality industry Information Technology executive. He & wife, Linda comprise the lead couple for the Central California Marriage Encounter chapter.*

### The World is a Stage by Jacob Vasconcellos

I had been designing and manufacturing souvenirs on Oahu since 1969. In 1979, I moved my wife, Priscilla, and 3 children to Maui for a year to establish a local Maui operation as a practice run for a planned move to Las Vegas, to establish a souvenir manufacturing business there.



In the sixties and seventies Hawaii was ground zero in the movement to shift the souvenir industry from old, dated styles and merchandising to the modern era. Men such as Don Gallagher of Coco Joe’s, John Mills of Royal Hawaiian Perfume, Don Decker of Aloha Candle Co. and Bill Robinson of W.W. Distributors transformed a sleeping souvenir industry into one that utilized upgraded packaging, in-store point-of-purchase displays, and sales rebate programs to drive sales volume. These innovations rivaled the best concepts large mainland marketers such as Revlon, Procter & Gamble, etc. had to offer.

The industry, thankfully, lost its old-fashioned image and advanced further innovations from a younger generation of entrepreneurs. Back then, there were 3 full yellow pages in the phone directory detailing all the manufacturers of souvenir and gift items. Today there is but a handful, as those jobs migrated to Asia.



In 1979, Hawaii had 3.9 million tourists and Las Vegas had 10.3 million. Like a performer, I wanted to work on a larger stage, and to prepare, I decided to work

“Off Broadway” – Maui. The year went well and in 1980 we moved to Las Vegas. The state of the industry in Vegas was old school; the market was ripe for inventive change. I employed the techniques learned in Hawaii and steadily grew, eventually employing 3 dozen people, and expanded marketing our products throughout the coastal regions of the country.

In my early Vegas days, when weekly servicing stores, I would hear comments “Boy, you sure come to town often.”. There were no local companies, as out-of-town firms supplied the industry. It took awhile to convince people I actually lived here. Some of my early customers never did believe me.



With the growth of the casino industry throughout the nation in the past 10 years came a new market for our items. Las Vegas was the epicenter for gaming, and by inference, the souvenir firms in Vegas were sought to fill the newly developed retail operations in these casinos. Today we supply over 350 casinos throughout the USA, Canada, and South America.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*Jacob & Priscilla Vasconcellos operate Casino Gifts & Games. Jacob is a refugee from Upper Palolo, his wife a refugee from Upper Aina Haina.*

**Life on Alaska’s Kenai Peninsula  
by Alvin Chong**

I loved fishing for Sockeye, Silvers, Kings, Rainbow Trout, and Dolly Varden on the banks of the Kenai River. My two-week vacations began in 1989. My son &



and his wife joined me, and very soon thereafter, my fishing ohana grew to 15 more friends who shared my annual adventure of fishing, cleaning fish, cooking, eating, and building memories while bonding. **Robert Escalera**, a classmate and special friend, was among the first. We booked the

same room for his next year but Robert faced health issues and, sadly, his illness claimed his life. I’m glad I have my recollections of our time together.

My dream was born in 1996 when I purchased three acres of land off Keystone Drive to someday have a fishing retreat. When the 9-11-2001 tragedy forced HEI Power Corp, a branch of HECO, to close its doors, my wife Bunny became unemployed. I asked Bunny, “If I build you a log home in Alaska, would you live there?” Bunny didn’t want to leave family, and thought log homes weren’t built where it snows, but she said YES to support my dream! So I did!



Logs must be cured for one year. I contracted a Canadian company to use my design, build our home, then

disassemble and truck those cured logs from Canada for reassembly on our property. The house had to be ready before Bunny got cold feet. So after 39 years, 7 months of service with HECO, I retired on July 10, 2002 as Senior Supervisor of Maintenance, and divided that Alaskan vacation between fishing, checking construction progress, and laying ceramic floor tile with our fishing ohana.

Bunny & I left family and our Hawaii, and landed in Anchorage on November 3, 2002. We checked into Dimond Center Hotel, picked up our Astro van, then headed to Sadler’s to buy furniture. While there, the chandeliers and ceiling signs started swaying. Bunny asked why Sadlers did that and the salesman answered, “We’re not doing anything – we’re having an earthquake.” Then the floor started to sway like we were standing on waves. Our arrival was accentuated by that 7-minute 7.9 earthquake, plus the breathtaking scenic view during our 4-hour drive, and finally by our beautiful new log home in Soldotna.

Looking skyward we enjoy falling snow, ravens, eagles, gray jays, robins, stellar jays, and swallows. We



watch ermine, squirrels, moose, caribou herds during migration, bears, rabbits, and porcupines walk across our yard. No cockroaches! I fish with a passion, still enjoy archery, and now carry guns for protection. Working with my hands sparks my creative juices and relaxes me, so I started using Birch from my property to carve bears, etc., and I sew feather lei hat-

bands. Most significantly, our Alaskan friendships keep growing beyond our humble expectations – our journey is God’s gift!

We share the Aloha Spirit by hosting a luau annually to thank all those in our journey as MORE blessings from God.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*Raised in Kapahulu, Alvin Chong received a Technical Mechanical Engineering Degree from ICS in 1991, after 4 years of home study, and hopes to make a difference and live long enough to collect all his social security contributions!*

**Invitation to Respond:**

It is the objective of “Pulse of ‘62” to present a broad cross section of contemporary subjects & views that will stimulate interest & promote positive response from our classmates. You are invited to respond by e-mail ([garydemello@yahoo.com](mailto:garydemello@yahoo.com) or postal service (SLS Class of ’62, 4207 Carnation Place, Honolulu, HI 96816-3905).

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