

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

The recent passing of Gale Hutzell, an old acquaintance from years ago, brought to mind a story involving Gale, my close friend Merlin Huddleson and me. In February of Nineteen Forty Six, Merlin and I joined the Army. We were sent to Camp Beale (now Beale Air Force Base) for assignment and found Gale also awaiting his orders. Our first weekend pass was issued and it was time to head for Eureka. Scheduled transportation between the two points was non-existent so hitch hiking was in order. Three, traveling together, was not a good idea so Merlin and I teamed up and Gale decided to try it alone. Merlin and I were picked up just outside the Camp Beale Gates and rode all the way to Williams with the idea of continuing on Route Twenty through Lake County to the One O One. In Williams, we were waiting for another ride when a motorcycle passed us with Gale as passenger. Merlin and I walked Route Twenty to a point about two miles west of Williams with no cars in sight. We saw headlights coming east bound, ran across the highway and got a ride back to Williams. From there, we hitched rides on southbound Ninety Nine W (now I-Five), then over through Napa to Petaluma and north to Cloverdale where a truck driver picked us up and gave us a ride to Willits. We got out, looked across the street and there is a Greyhound Bus headed for Eureka. We bought our tickets. The bus stopped in Scotia about day light and, as we sat there looking out the window, we see Gale boarding a local bus headed for Eureka. Here is what happened to him: As I said he passed us on a motorcycle which took him quite a ways on Route Twenty into Lake County. The motorcyclist was leaving the highway in a sparsely populated area and dropped him off. Back then Route Twenty was a lonely road at night with little traffic. So, Gale is standing there in the middle of nowhere on a very cold February night, and no cars in either direction. He decides to gather some firewood and builds a fire in the middle of the highway to keep warm and to use as a signal to any motorist. Finally, after a very long time, a westbound car approached and stopped to see what was wrong. When they saw his plight, he was offered a ride. As luck would have it, they were going to Scotia. Merlin and I traveled about One Hundred and Twenty Five miles more than Gale so that gives you an idea of about how long he spent with his bon fire before being picked up. I must say that the return trip to Camp Beale on Sunday was less stressful. I wish you and yours a very Blessed Christmas and a Happy and prosperous New Year.

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