HISTORY OF MICHELE BODOIRA (MIKE BODO) FAMILY

As told by Vernon Ignacio Bodo, husband of Harriett Beatrice (Bea); father of Ronald Vernon (Ron), Robert Randolph (Randy) and Kristen Bea

I will begin this history of the Mike Bodo family by relating that which I remember my mother telling me about her youth. This, as you will see, has a direct bearing on the reason for my mother marrying my father and coming to America.

My mother, **Rosalia Ballegio**, was born on July 18, 1885, in the town of Cirie, county of Canavese, in the Province of Torino, Italy, approximately 16 miles from the border of France and Switzerland. In addition to her mother and father, there was her brother, **John Ballegio**, and two sisters, **Angela** and **Clara** in the household. Her father operated a barber shop and her mother ran a restaurant, all in the downstairs of the family home.

As was the custom in those days, the baby (my mother) was given to a wet nurse to raise for the first 3 years of her life. The wet nurse lived in a small village several miles farther up in the mountains where good country food and plenty of good cow's milk were available. For the first three years of her life she saw her parents and family only on very rare occasions, therefore her family were strangers to her when she finally came home to live.

She spoke very little about her early childhood, except telling of all the whippings she got while learning to do all the household chores. By the time she was 7 or 8 years old, she had to wait tables in the restaurant and also clean her father's barber shop, and always contended that she was a slave to her family.

At 10 years of age, she went to work in a textile factory. Here she worked 10 hours a day then came home and had the household chores to do and wait tables in the restaurant. She got many a whipping for being a few minutes late, and she grew up hating her family. Still, in a way, there was also some love there, but more often she spoke of them with hatred in her voice.

She had a very fine voice and sang much of the time. The town of Cirie wanted to raise money and send her to a conservatory to study voice and become an opera singer. Her sister, Angela, who was a bigoted Catholic, cried and cried that she would become a charlatan and would be appearing in the house of the devil, which is how Angela referred to the theater. Therefore, my Mother's formal schooling was only through the 3rd grade, which was considered plenty for a girl in those days.

She loved to dance and apparently was quite good, but because her sister, Angela, considered it a sin to dance and because most of the time Mother would skip out of the house to go dancing without finishing her work, she would get a whipping when she returned home. Because of the treatment which she received at home and because she felt that she was a slave to her family, she vowed that she would marry the first man that asked her to marry him and move away from her family. This is how she came to marry my father, **Michele Bodoira-Mike Bodo**.

Michele Bodoira was born in San Mauricio, in the Province of Torino, Italy, on November 6, 1882. This town was also only 15 or 16 miles from the borders of France and Switzerland. His father died when my father was quite young. His father had been married before and had a son by his first wife. This son migrated to South America as a very young man and, upon my grandfather's death, returned to Italy and eventually married my grandmother, or in other words, his step-mother. This made my father's half-brother his step-father.

My father had one brother, **Louis Bodoira**, who was about 2 or 3 years younger than he and there was born to the above union *[meaning, we think, the union between the grandmother and the half-brother/step-father?*] one son, **Frank**, and one daughter, **Victoria**. [These would be Vernon's Uncle and Aunt?] Hardly anything was ever said about the children as they grew up in San Mauricio. Dad sometimes jokingly told about how, as a young alter boy, he would pass the collection basket and then, as he set the collection behind the organ, would help himself to a few cents because the old proverb said "God helps those who help themselves".

I got the impression that their house was on the outskirts of the village and that they had a few acres of land adjoining the house since he did speak of cutting hay and grain by hand, and also threshing the grain by flailing and winnowing. The cows and the mules were housed on the ground floor of the house and the family lived upstairs. There was little fuel for heat so during the cold winters the people slept in the straw beside the cows so that the cows' body heat helped keep them warm.

My Father talked very little about his childhood. He had no formal schooling so there were no stories about other children or even about his brothers and sister. We assume that by the time he was big enough to drive a mule cart he did what he could to earn a little money to help keep the family. He told me that he would go out on the streets and roads each day with his mule and cart to pick up manure to sell to gardeners. This money, naturally, he had to turn over to his mother. He kept a few cents in order to buy a bottle of wine which he shared with his mule. Incidentally, the wine cost two cents a bottle. The mule would stick its lower lip through the window bars of the saloon and Dad would pour the wine into the mule's pursed lip.

He also told about taking the dry cows up into Switzerland in the winter and trading them for fresh milking cows. This, he said, was a fun time since there was always much excitement and friendship with dancing and teasing with the Swiss. It took all of one day to get the cows to their destination, then he would stay for 2 or 3 days for the fun.

He told of his Swiss hosts mixing snow with good cow's cream and sugar then stirring brandy into this mixture until thy had the right taste. Then they would sit around drinking and also dancing all night. The mixture was called Crud. (In my early skiing years, I encountered the same mixture at Aspen, Colorado, in the form of a milkshake with four or eight jiggers of brandy in it and called "The Aspen Crud"). After the short stay in the Swiss Alps, he would return with his new milk cows.

Sometime during those years of his boyhood, his step-father worked in the Samplon Tunnel which connects Italy and France through the French Alps. It was this experience that brought

the family to America. During the late 1890's and early 1990's, the narrow gauge railroads had been extended to many mining towns in Colorado. Thus, with the ability of shipping the ore to the smelters, the demand for miners grew in proportion. So representatives of the mines were sent to Italy, Yugoslavia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Sweden and many other countries to recruit miners. Thus, in 1898, when my Dad was 16 years of age, his step-father was recruited to work at the Smuggler Mine at Telluride, Colorado.

He brought the family to Durango, Colorado, found a small house for them to live in and he proceeded to Telluride. He only worked at the Smuggler for about 3 months—the winter was too severe and he did not like the mine. Dad told the story about his step-father being put to high-grading ore by his boss, since they thought that he was a greenhorn and would not know valuable ore when he saw it. However, he was no fool and he managed to fill several socks full of rock containing much free gold. These he hid in a crosscut near the entrance of the mine intending to retrieve them at night. But he quit the mine and returned to Durango and never had an opportunity to return for his socks full of gold. Who knows, they may still be there today.

Upon his return to Durango, he went to work at the Durango Smelter where he worked until he returned to Italy. It was here at the smelter that the name was changed from **Michele Bodoira** to **Mike Bodo**. When the paymaster gave him his first pay envelope he couldn't pronounce Bodoira so he said "from now on your name will be Mike Bodo". My Father's naturalization papers are in the name of Mike Bodo.

My Father, at the age of 17, also went to work at the Durango Smelter but when they found out that he was only 17 years of age, they had to let him go. From there he started working in the coal mines and for the next 9 or 10 years he worked in various coal mines all over southern Colorado and northern New Mexico.

During my Dad's wanderings from coal mining town to coal mining town he "bummed" his way riding the freight trains from town to town. During this time he worked for a few days in the mine at Madrid, New Mexico. He told of seeing the rats running toward the entrance of the

mine and he said to his companion, "Let's get out of here! If the rats want out, something is going to happen". So they drew their pay and caught the train back to Trinidad. Two or three days later, there was an explosion in the mine at Madrid, killing 18 men. They always said the rats had saved their lives.

Sometime during these years, my dad and his brother, **Louis**, were about to buy a small farm in Bloomfield, New Mexico. The farm belonged to **Victor Moto** and he wanted to sell his 360 acres. My dad and **Louis** could have bought it for very little and there was an adjoining 360 acres which could be homesteaded. This was a golden opportunity for two young men, but their mother made such a scene about them wanting to move to a farm in the desert that they finally gave up the idea and went back to working in the coal mines which is what my **Uncle Louis** did for the rest of his life.

In the fall of 1903, my dad turned 21 and he could now drink legally in the saloons. He was working in a mine near Trinidad, Colorado at the time and one Saturday night, he and three other miners were in a saloon in Trinidad. He had 25 cents in his pocket so he bought four beers at 5 cents each and tossed the remaining nickel back of him on the roulette wheel. He never even looked where it landed. In a few minutes, someone tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Mike, you better take your money off the wheel". Dad turned and looked and he said he had never seen so much money in one place.

He took the money off the wheel but was afraid to leave with so much money. (He never did say how much there was.) He did say that he played roulette for awhile and lost about \$300.00. He then hired one of his friends as a bodyguard and returned to Durango where he had his mother sew pockets in his underwear where he carried the money in \$20 gold pieces.

He then bought a round-trip ticket to San Mauricio, Italy, and in due time met and married my mother, **Rosalia Ballegio**. Within a few days after the marriage, they sailed for America.

Here I must relate the experiences and thoughts of my mother. She was a total stranger to the outside world, not able to speak a word of English, and was put on a ship in <u>steerage</u> with a

lot of other immigrant women. I do not believe there was even another Italian woman on the ship, all were from other foreign countries. She had no one to talk to and she was seasick a good deal of the time. She said Dad would leave her in the hold (no stateroom) and he would go up on deck but she just sat there for the 10 days it took to cross the ocean. She always said that at that point, if she could have gone back she would have done so gladly.

Arriving in New York, she was held on Ellis Island for 2 or 3 days in quarantine, then they boarded a train for Denver and finally arrived in Durango. Dad took his bride to his parents' house which was in south Durango. At that time, the area was occupied by foreign immigrants from all over – mainly Mexico, Italy, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, etc. Later it became know as "Mexican Flats" and still later as "Santa Rita". The houses were small wooden shacks of no more than three rooms.

My Mother was flabbergasted by the house. Pine boards for a bedstead and two wooden apple boxes stacked one on top of the other for a dresser. No chairs, only empty apple boxes to sit on. Her mother-in-law, hated her from first sight because she was so small (only 4' 10"). She thought her son was crazy for marrying such a small woman. Needless to say, my Mother also hated her mother-in-law. Mostly because she was always making snide remarks about Mother's size and because the old lady was so stingy. She would not spend a penny that she did not absolutely have to.

Incidentally, the old man and old lady (my Mother's Bodoira in-laws), only lived in this country for eight years before they returned to Italy for the rest of their lives. They saved every penny that he made and then went back to Italy to live. They took Uncle Frank and Aunt Victoria with them. Victoria never returned to the U.S., but Uncle Frank came back almost at once.

Frank then had to return to Italy to fight in World War I, but came back as soon as the war was over and settled in Detroit, Michigan, where he lived the rest of his life doing quite well as an automobile dealer.

For a year or two, Mother endured living with her in-laws while Dad worked in the coal mines. My brother, **Mike**, was born on May 31, 1906, while they lived with the Bodoiras. Shortly thereafter they moved to the mining town of Porter where Mother ran a boarding house for about 20 miners while Dad worked in the mine there.

Mother cooked, washed clothes, made lunches and provided beds for the 20 miners—all for \$20 in gold per month from each man. She had no running water; she had to carry water from a spring and wash water had to be heated on an open fire on the cook stove. She had to work very hard and long hours. We look back and wonder how she did it.

They stayed at Porter for only about a year then moved to Scofield, Colorado (near Trinidad) where Mother again ran a boarding house and Dad worked in the mines. They only remained there for a few months and, on January 1, 1908, she gave birth to my sister, **Rose**. The same day they packed their belongings in a wagon and moved to Trinidad, Colorado. I do not know how long they lived there or when they moved back to Durango but it could not have been very long as my brother, **Archie**, was born on the Pingrey place in Durango on May 6, 1909.

The Pingrey place was a small tract of land lying east of Main Street in north Durango. Here Dad started a truck garden and raised vegetables which he and Mother picked, washed and bunched. Then Dad peddled them from door-to-door in Durango, also delivering the fresh vegetables to the Strater Hotel and a couple of other restaurants. He had by this time acquired a team of horses and a small spring wagon.

During the fall and winter, he again worked in the coal mines and was able to save a little money. After a couple of years, he was able to move to a larger piece of land which he rented from the Craigs on the Florida Mesa.

It was while they lived on the Pingrey place that one spring day, my Dad was talking to Fr. Louis of the Sacred Heart Church and Fr. Louis asked him how his vegetables were coming along. Dad said not very good as the cut-worms were eating his plants and he didn't know what to do. Fr. Louis said, "Mike, I'll come out Sunday and get rid of the cut-worms for you."

Dad said he would appreciate it but he could not see how Fr. Louis could do it. Anyhow, Fr. Louis did come out to the place as promised. He went up and down the rows swinging his incense pot and sprinkling the holy water in front of him, chanting in Latin. When he had gone over the whole garden he told Dad that the worms would leave. Sure enough, next morning Dad could not find a cut-worm. They had all moved over to his neighbor's field. Needless to say, Dad's vegetables grew fine and he had no more trouble with cut-worms.

Dad ran his vegetable business from the Florida Mesa during the year of 1911. That was the year of the big flood. That flood washed out all the bridges on the Animas River except the one that crossed just below the Mexican Flats. This bridge was high above the river and survived, but the bridge at Carbon Junction was washed out and was never rebuilt.

During the winter of 1911-1912, Dad agreed to go to work for Woods and Morgan bailing hay in Ridges Basin. While bailing hay there, Mr. Woods offered to lease their land in Ridges Basin to Dad. The land Dad leased was 14 acres where the house sat and 18 acres across the road where the barn and corrals were. This was called the Morgan Field as long as they lived there. This was all hay land except for a small garden patch near the house.

Incidentally, the house was the old "**Two Cross**" headquarters house when the Two Cross was a big cattle spread in the late 1800's. The Two Cross range was from the La Plata River to the Animas River and from the confluence of these rivers to the top of the La Plata mountains.

The old house was in poor shape and my Dad was not one to care how the house looked. He moved the family to the Basin on May 1, 1912, and the next morning they awoke to a foot of new snow. The house had broken windows and floor boards were broken in places. Dad only fixed up enough to get by and Mother had to make do the best she could.

Here in this house, on August 9, 1912, at about 4:00 p.m.—without benefit of doctor or midwife—I was born!! By the time Dad came home, I was all wrapped up on the bed and Mother was cooking supper. In those days, it was the Italian custom to wrap a baby from

shoulder to torso in a long band with the arms straight along the sides. I was wrapped thusly and when Dad saw this, he took the end of the wrap and rolled me out of it on the bed and said to Mother, "He's been in prison long enough, turn him loose." So Mother never wrapped me up again.

As the years went by after 1912, my dad continued to farm in the basin. When he moved the family there, only five families lived in the basin. As the years progressed and as each family would leave, Dad would rent the land they had farmed. As I mentioned, the land originally belonged mostly to Woods and Morgan and a part belonged to the Thompsons (the last of the Two Cross spread). But since it was all considered coal land, it was bought up one piece at a time by the "Porter Fuel Company" which later became the "Hesperus Fuel Company" and was administered by Mr. Frank Gifford who lived at Hesperus. Later in the 1920's, the Southern Pacific Railroad was to build a line into Durango and on through to connect the railroad at Thompson, Utah. The Southern Pacific RR purchased all the holdings of the Hesperus Fuel Company and became the owners of the Ridges Basin, Porter pasture and much other land along what was to be the right-of-way for the railroad.

My memory begins with the blast of a dynamite cap. I was 4 years old in August 1916, and this happened about the last week in September during the La Plata County Fair. A county road crew had been building a bridge about 100 yards from our house. They had quit work for the day and had all left the bridge.

My brother, **Archie**, and I went to look at the project and found two of these shiny metal objects that looked like empty .22 shells. We each took one home with us. Archie tried to set a match to his but the wind kept blowing out the matches so he got mad and threw his into the pond. I waited until the next afternoon when no one was around and then I tried the same thing. I can remember striking the matches on the stone walk in front of the kitchen and sticking the burning end into the cap. About the 4th or 5th match, it went off and mangled my left hand. The thumb was blown off at the first joint and the index finger was blown off at the base.

There was nobody at home, so my Mother put my hand into a small pail of salt water and ran to the neighbors, the Thompsons, who lived about 300 yards from our place. Bert Thompson hitched up the spring wagon and took Mother and I toward town. Mother had called Dr. Terrell's office but he was out of town so she was referred to Dr. Nocoli. He met us half-way to town and took us to the hospital in his car. During the next 6 weeks, I was in surgery 5 times before they finally got the had stabilized. They removed the index finger completely and cut the thumb back to the first knuckle. My Dad insisted that they leave me a stub of a thumb which proved to be the right thing to do as, my entire life, I have been able to use my left hand as if it were complete.

I do not know how my Mother could take the strain as she sat in the hospital room with me day and night for the six weeks that I was confined. When I left the hospital, we stayed at a friend's house (the John Bandinos) for another two weeks until my hand was healed enough so that we could go back to the ranch. We didn't have automobiles, so our trip to the doctor once a week to have the dressings changed on my hand took a whole day because we had to go with a team and spring wagon.

It has been called to my attention that by 1916, my Mother had become fed up with the hard life which she was forced to lead and she had decided to return to Italy with her four children on the pretense of wanting to see her folks again. But really, she had no intention of returning to the ranch. In other words, she was going to leave my Dad. When I blew my fingers off with the dynamite cap, this took all the money which they had saved and she decided to wait awhile. The opportunity never presented itself again and she lived the rest of her life on the ranch. Who can say but that losing my fingers was meant to keep Mother and Dad together. The Lord works in strange ways.

Thus far Mike Bodo was a farmer and within a few years he had leased most of the farm land in the basin. He held all of the irrigated land and had the only water rights on the Pine Ridge Ditch which let to the basin. Dad let the Harpers have water for their garden and also Frank Hodgson, who lived west of us. Our ditch ran through his place but he had no water rights so

Dad always let him have water for his garden. The gophers provided him with irrigation for his 12 acres of alfalfa which lay below our ditch.

In the early 1920's, Dad bought his first bunch of cattle—some longhorns from New Mexico. He knew that he could never ship these cattle in railroad cars with horns like that so the first thing he did was to de-horn them and brand them with the original <u>DB</u>. My brother, Mike, being the oldest, got one of these cows. I can still see the blood all over the men as they sawed the horns off. They left about 4-to-6 inch stubs on each animal. All of the animals lived and were eventually shipped to Denver and, of course, Dad and Mike now started to build up the quality of their herd.

By 1923 or 1924, they started taking the cattle to the mountains for the summer. My brother, Mike, would stay with them all summer then we would all help him gather the cattle and drive them back to the ranch in the fall.

Our finest cattle range was on the Walter Wrightman place on the Florida river just above the Listner place. Dad and Mike ran the cattle here for 2 summers, then they got a forest permit to run on the Carbonate basin above Miller Mountain. They summered here for 3 or 4 years. Then the U.S. Forest Service moved their permit to the Hermosa Mountains above the Hermosa river, first near Dutch Creek then later to Little Elk Creek and Big Lick. The last straw was when the government split our herd and put us on Little Elk with 260 head and on the Graham range on the Florida with 90 head. That would not have been so bad except that they took a New Mexico man with 90 head and put him on Little Elk and one with 260 head and put him on the Graham range.

This made Mike so mad he vowed that he would acquire enough land to run his own cattle. The land surrounding the ranch was sheep pasture and badly grazed off. Mike started by leasing all the land he could get and forcing the sheep men to stay on their small parcels. This soon proved unsuitable to the sheep men so they abandoned their small acreage which Mike would also lease. Soon he found that there was a lot of privately-owned, small parcels of land around the ranch that had not had the taxes paid on them for years. These he acquired by

paying up the taxes and through quit claim deeds. Thus, he started putting together the Ridges Basin Ranch.

By 1928, when the depression hit, the ranch was well established as a cattle ranch and the brand had been changed to X (called **X Swinging Cross**). Mike was the cattle man and Dad raised or bought and fattened some pigs. Also Dad bought an old Case threshing machine which included an old Case steam tractor and he began to do custom threshing in the fall. He hired an engineer and a water man and went out in the country, west of our ranch and then east of Durango to thresh the farmers' grain.

He used the old steam tractor for 2 years but found it very hard to maintain. Then in 1936, he bought a new Case Model L gasoline tractor which, incidentally, did all the heavy work on the ranch for the next 30 years and was still going strong when the ranch machinery was sold at auction in 1974.

In 1931 he bought a new threshing machine and I followed my brother, Archie, as engineer on the threshing crew. This was a great time of year for me. We usually started out about August 10th and, some years, would not finish until December 1st. We threshed all over the Florida and the Fort Lewis mesas, the Red mesa, the dry side, the Animas Valley and all other points of the county that were within reach.

At this point, let me go back and give some of the history of my brothers and sister.

My brother, **Mike Bodo**, was the oldest, having been born May 31, 1906. He attended country grade school through the 8th grade. Then, because he was needed to help on the ranch, he only attended high school for part of one winter. He was quite musically inclined and received a full credit in music for the short time he attended classes. He later enrolled in a business school completing a course in business management and bookkeeping.

He read quite a lot and therefore was mostly self-educated. He taught himself to play the piano accordion and became quite good. He played the accordion for his own amusement from the time he was 15 until his death. He always said that the accordion was his best friend. Sometime during his teen years he injured his back when a horse fell on him. This gave him a curvature of the spine which bothered him the rest of his life. Mike never married, always claiming that he had too little time to devote to women. He said that "women are like wood fires, you have to sit up with them or they will go out on you." And besides, Mother was always scolding him for one thing or another and he claimed he couldn't stand two women jawing at him.

He was a smart man and much credit must be given him for all the hard work he did on the ranch and for putting together the 8,000 acre Bodo Ranch. He was well liked by everyone and a more honest person never lived. Many people in Durango and La Plata County admired him. He was president of his branch of the Cattlemen's Association. He researched and wrote some articles on the cattle business in southwestern Colorado. He passed away November 8, 1971.

My sister, **Rose Bodo**, was born January 1, 1908. She also attended country grade schools through the 8th grade. Then she went to town and worked for her room and board while she attended Durango High School, graduating in 1926. She then went to Denver where she attended business college, went to work in Denver and has lived there ever since. She married John W. Hoeffner and they have one (adopted) daughter, Joan. (Note: Rose died in January 1995 in Denver.)

My brother, **Archie Bodo**, was born May 6, 1909. He also attended country schools through the 8th grade then went to Durango High School but did not graduate. He quit school in his junior year. He worked for a month of the Silverton Railroad snow slides. When that work was over, he went to Detroit, Michigan and attended Ford's School of Tool and Die Making where he learned the machinist trade. He then worked in Ford's Tool and Die shop until he was laid

off during the depression. In 1930, he returned to Durango and married Hazel Lemon in 1931. They have lived in Durango ever since where he has operated his automotive machine ship for the past 30 years or more. They have no children.

Vernon I. Bodo: I was born August 9, 1912, in Ridges Basin and grew up there on the ranch. I, too, attended country school but only through 5th grade. The school was then abandoned and I had to ride horseback into town to go to school. I was in the 6th grade when Archie was a freshman in high school. We rode the 3-1/2 or 4 miles to where we left our horses then walked the 1-1/2 miles to school.

The winters were cold and the ride to school was not always pleasant, especially not the early mornings. We left the ranch by 6:00 or 6:30 a.m. and, when the weather was 20 to 25 degrees below zero, we would almost freeze by the time we got to where we would leave our horses, then we had to walk for a mile and a half in that cold. We were never tardy and only absent if we were sick.

I continued to ride thusly until I was a junior in high school, the year that Dad bought his first automobile—a 1926 Gardner touring car. In the spring and fall, when the weather was good, I could take the car but during the winter and on rainy days, I had to ride horseback. When Dad bought his second car, a 1928 Studebaker sedan, I fell heir to the Gardner. I removed the top and from then on I drove an open car. I would part it in front of the school and, at any time of the day, the Gardner was always full of kids just sitting there laughing and having a good time. My car was always painted with signs which the kids thought were funny.

I graduated from High School in 1930 and in 1931, I went to a Dental Technician School in Chicago. I returned to Durango in June of 1931 and worked on the ranch until the fall of 1936 when I got a job in a garage in town. On January 10, 1937, I married Harriet Beatrice Rowe (Bea). During the next 17 years, we were blessed with three children, Ronald, Randy and Kristen. In 1955 we moved to Albuquerque, NM and have lived here ever since.

The depression years were hard times for the farmers and ranchers in La Plata County but my Dad was not one to sit back and complain and do nothing about it. He complained about prices but he raised wheat and oats and fattened hogs, all of which were cash crops, no matter how little. By borrowing from the bank, he was able to maintain the ranch and by 1937 was in better shape financially than lots of other farmers and ranchers in the area.

At this time, the Southern Pacific Railroad Company decided to sell all their holdings in southwestern Colorado. This, of course, included all the land which Dad and Mike had been leasing from them plus the Porter pasture which lay between the highway in Wildcat Canyon and the northern ranch boundary. Dad and Mike had first refusal of this land at the price which was set for it by the company. They bought the land for somewhere under forty thousand dollars which seemed like a fortune in those days. Mother was worried that, at their ages, they would never be able to pay for it. As it turned out, they paid for the ranch and then some with the timber which they had logged from the Porter pasture.

Now Mike had put together enough land for his cattle operation. He now embarked on the project of fencing, around the entire ranch, 4-strand barbed wire around the outside parameter and 36" hog wire with 3-strand barbed wire on both sides of the road through the ranch. He never wanted to see another sheep on his land.

During World War II, I again worked on the ranch for four years. Since my job in town with the sporting goods store was unimportant, the Manpower Commission told me to work for Dad and Mike since they had applied to the Commission for help. During the war and for a few years thereafter, cattle and farm prices were good in comparison to the cost of production so by 1951, Dad and Mike had done well financially. Also during those years, Mike had electricity brought into the ranch and put in a water system. So for the first time in her life, Mother had running water in the house and an indoor bathroom.

During these years and into the 1950's, Mike had two wells drilled near the house trying to get good water. But all they could find was sulfur water out of the coal veins. There were at least

15 layers of coal under the ranch. He spent \$10,000 trying to develop and purify the sulfur water but was never successful. In the 1960's, he bought a mobile home, set it on the ranch and piped the sulfur water into it. This water ruined the copper pipes and so was not successful. My son, Ron, and his wife, Judy, lived in the trailer while he finished school at Fort Lewis College.

About 1958, Dad began to get sick. He began to see double so we brought him to Albuquerque and had him examined at the Lovelace Clinic. They found that he had cancer in his head behind and above his nasal passages which was a location that could not be operated upon. They treated him with Cobalt which did succeed in dissipating the mass and lengthened his life by almost two years. The cancer finally came back and spread to other parts of his body. He finally passed away on April 13, 1960.

Thus ended an era in the life of a hard-working Italian immigrant. He came to this country as an uneducated boy. By hard work and perseverance carved a sizable fortune out of the land. One day he said to me "If I had stayed in Italy, I would still be picking up manure on the streets with a mule and cart. Compare that with what I have here----is not America indeed the land of opportunity?" A fitting epitaph was what Dave McGraw said to me after Dad's death. "La Plata County and Durango are better places for his having lived here."

Mike now fell heir to all the land in the ranch. He continued the operation mostly by himself with one hired man and, during the summers, my boys—first Ron and, from the time he was 10 years old, Randy helped on the ranch. My Mother continued to live there and cook and keep house for Mike and the hired man until shortly before she passed away on March 25, 1968. She would never move away from the ranch. Although Dad had bought a house in town for her and later had built another house in town for her, she still would not move. Also my brother, Archie, fixed up the back of his house into an apartment for her but she would not leave the ranch.

During the years after my Dad's death, Mike continued to build up his herd of Cattle. They had always believed in quality so they bought the best bulls that they could afford thus steadily

improving the quality of the herd. In 1966, Mike became ill and, after a lot of tests in Durango, he was sent to two doctors in Albuquerque. They diagnosed his ailment as emphysema and advised him to sell out and move to a lower altitude and warmer climate. That fall, he went to Florida to see how he might like it there. He returned very disappointed and decided to cut down his herd in order to take it a little easier and to try to regain the use of his lungs.

He did succeed in regaining almost complete use of his lungs and his blood oxygen count went back up to almost normal. All this encouraged him to stay in the cattle business and he built his herd back up to capacity. He continued to work the land with just one hired man and seemed to be doing fine.

The morning of November 8, 1971, Randy went to the ranch to work and found Mike dead in bed. He had passed away in his sleep at the age of 65. The life of a good and honest cow man had come to an end.

Since this brings the family up to date, I will close this history. The greater part of the ranch was sold to the Nature Conservancy people who bought it for the State of Colorado. It is now the "Bodo Wildlife Area". The 250 acres that was sold to the Durango industrial developers is now the "Bodo Industrial Ranches", thus the Bodo name has been perpetuated.

Written by Vernon Ignacio Bodo with the help of his beloved wife, Beatrice, and dedicated to the Bodo heirs now living and those to come. May they always bring honor to the name.