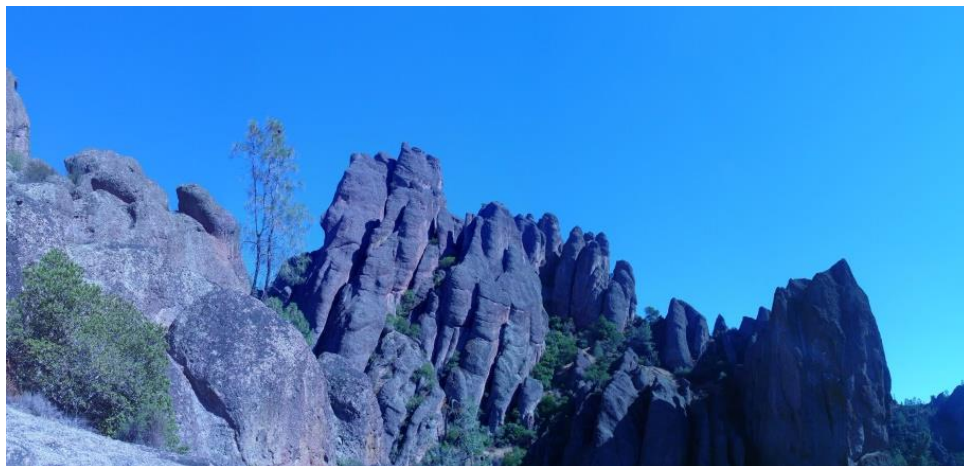


Dear relatives and friends,

Yet another year has passed and, from our very busy perspective, time seems to be accelerating. We continue to run our business, doing trade shows and maintaining the website. www.minresco.com It would seem that we are spending more time working than ever, but I am not sure if that is due to an increase in tasks or because we are slowing down. We do look forward to retirement at any time, as we have for the past ten years. But, for some unexplained reason our retirement seems to be incrementally deferred.

We have little time for vacations, but still try to get out hiking as often as we can. We often visit Alum Rock Park / Sierra Vista, a treasure in our back yard within walking distance of our home that offers access to 2,400 acres of contiguous open space. The Pinnacles National Park, just two hours drive from home is our favorite getaway.



We have made fifteen trips to the Pinnacles over the past three years and have yet to tire of the majestic views of the jagged volcanic geology of the area. How many more hikes to the lofty and difficult High Peaks that we can endure remains to be seen, but the area's magnetic charm still beckons. We did manage to get out on a couple of mineral collecting trips to San Benito County and visit our now relinquished Mina Numero Uno mining claim, accompanied by several of our Bay Area Mineralogists club friends. Collecting was productive, though at the cost of disturbing a local resident, a lone and unhappy rattlesnake. This area is vast, wild and always an adventure.



In August, our daughter Jackie, Bob, and the grandkids took us to Safari West, a 400 acre wildlife preserve in Sonoma County, CA. A fantastic BBQ and buffet was savored by all, followed by a three hour Power Wagon safari tour of the preserves. We enjoyed close up views of an amazing variety of animals that were grazing and roaming the "plains". The giraffes and cheetahs had to be everyone's favorites.



Our ride for the day



Jaydan, Alex and Sharon



Bob and Jackie

We were unable to make our trip to Oregon this year to see our daughter Sherry. She has been living central Oregon for the past five years, near Sharon's sister. The area offers access to vast wilderness areas in the Ochoco Mountains that have interesting rock collecting, photographic and hiking opportunities. Our visits have been less frequent than we would like, but hopefully we can make the trip in the coming year.



Sharon and Sherry in the Ochocos

The excitement started early this year, as our granddaughter Danielle gave birth to her third child. Skyler Thomas Hawkins was born on February 28th. Being anxious to explore the world, he is walking already. Alex and Jaydan, our other two great grandchildren are amazing and continue to make us very proud. Alex, age 13, is on the honor roll and was sent to the California-Hawaii State Math Olympics where he earned 4th place. Jaydan, age 8, also on the honor roll, continues with her gymnastics and has recently done exceedingly well in competition. Unfortunately, she recently sustained a fracture that will slow her down for a short time, but we look forward to her future progress.



Welcome to the world, Skyler



Alex at Math Olympics



Jayden shows off honors



Jaydan on the balance beam

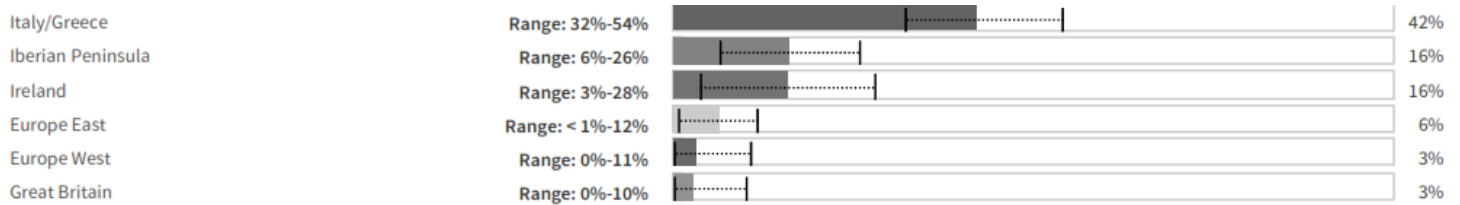
Most importantly, we continue our rigorous exercise program at the gym, where we have now been members for 32 fun (?) years. We also have exercise equipment at home to fill our few free moments. It never seems to get easier and it is apparent now, as we age, that we need to work even harder to keep fit. At our age, gains are slow to come, but we persevere. Approaching the obsessive, we look forward to having more time to invest at the gym after retirement... No pain, no gain!

Well, the extraordinary event of the year is saved for last and is told from Gene's perspective.

This past year (2016) has presented me with an amazing and life changing discovery of a family secret that was carefully kept from me for 77 years. The unraveling of the secret



started with a simple gift. I gave Sharon a DNA test for Christmas last year and she had fun verifying her ethnicity, which turned out to be fairly close to what she had expected. She then reciprocated and purchased a test for me, as we were uncertain as to my father's actual ethnicity. After weeks of waiting and curious anticipation, the test finally came back and to our surprise, my ethnicity was nothing close to what we expected. We were puzzled by the fact that none of the DNA markers matched my father's expected ethnicity, as he was a descendant of many generations from a remote area in Mexico. We were definitely perplexed and conjectured several possible explanations, but none seemed to be of merit. We diligently pondered the following results.



Because of the gross discrepancy in my expected ethnicity, we considered that my DNA results were perhaps tainted or mixed up with someone else's. But Ancestry.com, along with the DNA ethnicity analysis, also matches people with common DNA markers according to relationship and the probability of that relationship. Within a day, I received an Ancestry.com message from one of my matches, asking who I was. He was on my match list as a nephew or cousin with very high confidence. He and I were both puzzled. Long suppressed thoughts flashed into my mind and after more than 70 years I broke my silence and began to tell Sharon of the secret that my mother told me, as a child, never to speak of. I recalled a man from my very early childhood; I was perhaps three years old. The reason that I remember him is that he was a fireman and he took me down the fire pole riding on his shoulders, which made an enormous and lasting impression on me as a young boy. I also remember being in the fire engine with him. I related to Sharon much more than I will say here, but fireman John was around at least until I started school. There were a couple of other times, when I was older, that I believe he was also present. This man was so significant in my early life that I never forgot him, but I had never suspected fireman John's real significance in my life.

I searched the family tree of the person who had messaged me, looking for a man named John. I almost immediately found a man named John and there was even a very small thumbnail photo of him. Closer scrutiny revealed that he had a hat on, like a fireman's hat. Sharon said "don't get excited, it could just as well be a chauffeur's hat". A little more searching of the site revealed a much larger version of the photo. Overwhelmed by my discovery, I called Sharon. When she saw the photo, she immediately shouted "it's you"! The resemblance was uncanny and John the fireman was without a doubt my biological father and the grandfather of the person who had contacted me via Ancestry.com.

Over the next weeks, I seriously questioned who I was and how and why my mother and step-father had kept this secret from me. Many unexplained incidents, at least to me, that took place over the years suddenly began to fall into place and make sense. Shook to my core but trying to remain positive, I tried to rationalize that this was a blessing. And indeed it turned out to be, as I subsequently found relatives that I had always longed for as an only child. I have now met one of my three sisters who is still living, as well as two nephews, a niece and their families. It is deeply heartfelt that I have been graciously welcomed into my newfound family. I have yet to meet one more nephew and his family.

There was more to be revealed. The family historian had researched our family tree going back to the 1600s in detail and a colorful and exciting history it was. My great great grandfather Jose Joaquin Bernal, educated in Barcelona Spain, was sent to Mexico and New Spain (now California) in 1769 by Carlos III of Spain to investigate the mineral wealth of the country as a mining engineer and assayer. He was a member of the DeAnza expedition that explored a vast expanse of California. For the valuable services he gave his sovereign, he was granted favors and had his pick of land grants in California. He selected Rancho Santa Teresa, which consisted of 10,000 acres, in Santa Clara County, CA. Over the following years, the Bernal family held approximately 80,000 acres of Central California land through land grants and

indirectly through marriages to other land grant holders, such as Sunol, Chaboya, Moraga and Berryessa. I was indeed amazed by the rich history of the Bernal family, which is well documented in volumes of early California history. There was still more! The family historian has explained that as the last living male, in this branch of the Bernal family line, I am the last heir of the title of Don. How good does it get?

My ancestry discovery has been life changing and my only regret is that the secret was kept from me for 77 years. How different would my life have been, had I known earlier? I will never know, but I can say that I have been very fortunate in my life and, even more fortunate now.

I look forward to the future and sharing life experiences with my newfound relatives and sister, who is 12 years my senior, and fondly refers to me as her "little brother".

To say that this has been an amazing year would be an understatement!



Fireman John ~1975



Gene 2016



Gene, nephew, niece, grandnieces and kids



Fireman John as I remember him

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
Gene and Sharon Cisneros - 2016