

Colusa Good Friday 1947

I remember my Good Friday afternoon in Colusa, 57 years ago. It comes flooding back to me as if it happened only yesterday.

I sat outside the sacristy door of the Catholic Church in the southeast corner, where two church walls joined together. The Good Friday religious services were over and my altar boy duties were finished. The sun was warm. I could hear people still praying inside the church. The town itself was as quiet as the three hours of Good Friday were supposed to be.

The fragrance of the spring roses, the lush stands of calla lilies, and honeysuckle blossoms almost too pungent for comfort were all close at hand. It was peaceful where I sat, the small town of Colusa perched on the Sacramento River was peaceful, the entire world of 1947 seemed to be at peace, the war was over, no trouble anywhere. I could stay for as long as I wanted, there was no place I had to go, no unfinished chore waiting for me, I was free to sit by myself in the corner of the church building. Because Sunday would be Easter, I had already had my hair cut, my weekly confession was behind me, and my shoes were shined. I felt primed.

I sat quietly, basking in the sun, thinking to myself. I did not want to talk with anyone and didn't have to, because the other altar boy had already left for home. I heard the murmuring prayers from inside the church, but they seemed distant and far off. I was not yet 13, just a boy sitting alone, warming himself in the Colusa sun.

Even as an old man, I sometimes miss that carefree and innocent day of my Holy Week childhood. How can that be? I know better. It will never be again. That day is only a distant memory sparked now and again by the warmth of a Spring sun, a stand of calla lilies just so, or the sweet fragrance of early roses.

I have no such pleasant memories about any childhood Christmas times, nor do I miss them. Doesn't that sound strange? It does to me.