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BOISE BASQUES: DREAMERS AND DOERS

by Gloria Totoricagüena Egurrola

EUSKO JAURLARITZA



GOBIERNO VASCO

LEHENKARIITZA

PRESIDENCIA

Eusko Jaurlaritzaren Argitaipen Zerbitzu Nagusia

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Mateo Arregui's ledger of credits and debits for a boarder at the Delamar Boarding House. 1923. Photo by Gloria Totoricaguena. Courtesy of the Arregui Family Collection.

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Aurkezpena

JUAN JOSÉ
IBARRETXE
MARKUARTU
Lehendakaria



1994 urtean *Eusko Legebiltzarrean Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoaz Kanpoko Euskal Gizatalde eta Etxeekiko Harremani buruzko Legea* onartu zen, kontrako botorik jaso gabe. Legebiltzarreko Taldeen jarrera bateratu hau, Euskaditik kanpora bizi diren euskal herritarrekin eta euren ondorengoekin Euskal Gizarteak duen konpromiso atzeraezinaren erakusgarri onena da. Konpromiso horrek, halaber, Euskal Etxeen aitorten ofiziala eta Euskal Erakunde Publikoekiko harremanen instituzionalizazioa ahalbidetzeko duen borondatea adierazten du.

Lege horren bidez, lau urtero egin beharreko Euskal Gizataldeen Biltzarra instituzionalizatzen da ere bai, euren helburuak betetzeko lau urteko plana prestatu ahal izan dezaten.

Ikuspegi horretatik, Euskal Etxeen eta Euskal Erakunde Publikoen arteko harremanen instituzionalizazioa, horiek etorkizunean jarraipena izateko asmoaren seinale da, ekintza bateraturako estrategiak, aldian-aldian, gaur egungo mundu gero eta globalagoaren errealitate historiko berrietara egokituz.

Hain zuzen, etorkizun asmo horrekin jardun zuten euren jaioterritik urrun elkartzea eta euren “Euskal Etxeak” sortzea erabaki zuten euskal herritar ospetsuek. Elkarri laguntza eta babesa ematea eta Kultura sustatzea zuten helburu, Euskal Herriaren partaide izatearen sentimenduak eta harrera egin zieten herrialdeekiko elkartasuna uztartuz.

Gaur, Euskal Etxeen historiaren berreskurapenean berriro lagundu nahi izan duten profesionalen ikerketa-bilduma aurkezteko ohorea dugu. Euskal Etxeak nazioarteko euskal presentziaren historia instituzionalaren zati dira eta, aldi berean, kokatuta dauden herrialdeen araberrako legediaren aitorten ofiziala izan dute.

Bilduma honetatik, milaka euskal gizon eta emakumeri elkartasunez harrera egindako herrialde horiei omenaldia egin nahi diegu, baita Euskal Etxe eta Gizataldeei ere, fundazioko helburuak betetzeko eta Euskal Herriak historian ezaugarri izan dituen baloreak defendatu nahiz zabaltzeko egindako ahaleginagatik, adibidez lanerako gogoia, nazioarteko elkartasuna, printzipio demokratikoen defentsa eta emandako hitza betetzea.

Espero dut ahalegin profesional eta instituzional berri honek Euskadiren errealitate soziopolitikoia ezagutarazten lagunduko duela, baita Euskal Etxe eta Gizataldeek Euskal Erakunde Publikoekin duten harremana estutzen ere.

Presentation

JUAN JOSÉ
IBARRETXE
MARKUARTU
Lehendakari



In 1994 the Basque Parliament passed the Law on Relations with Basque Associations and Centers with no dissenting votes. The Parliamentary Groups' unanimous attitude clearly demonstrates the desire of Basque society to lend their unequivocal support to the Basque people and their descendents residing outside of Euskadi. It also leads the way to the official recognition of Basque Centers, and to formalizing their relations with Basque Public Institutions.

The law also establishes the celebration of a World Congress of Basque Organizations every four years to draw up a four-year plan of action aimed at achieving the objectives.

From this perspective, by institutionalizing relations between the Basque Centers and Basque Public Institutions the long-standing nature of the project is understood. New joint action strategies must be adapted regularly to meet the new historic realities brought about by today's increasingly globalized world.

Far from their native land, the illustrious Basques who decided to form partnerships and create "Basque Centers" also had their sights set on the future. Spurred on by mutual support and the desire to defend and promote their culture, they managed to combine their feelings as part of the Basque nation with their feelings of solidarity towards the countries that took them in.

Today we have the honor of presenting a collection of research projects put together by experts who, once again, have made an effort to recover the history of the Basque Centers. Officially recognized in accordance with the laws of the host countries, the Basque presence around the globe is further enriched by these contributions to Basque history.

We would like this collection to be seen as a tribute to the countries that welcomed, protected and supported so many thousands of Basque people. It is also meant as a tribute to the Basque Associations and Centers themselves for their work in carrying out the organizations' objectives and in defending and disseminating the values that have characterized the Basque nation throughout history—hard-working spirit, international solidarity, defense of democratic principles and a people who keeps its word.

I trust that this new professional and institutional effort will contribute to a better understanding of the social and cultural reality of Euskadi, and to strengthen the bonds between the Basque Associations and Centers and the Basque Institutions.

Hitzaurrea

Boiseko euskal gizataldeak badu hainbat berezitasun. XIX. mende amaieratik hasita inguru hartara joandako hainbat eta hainbat euskaldunen abizenak idatzita dituzten harlauzez estalitako kalerik ez da beste inon, Boisen izan ezik. Izan ere, arbasoak omendu nahian ehundaka familia euskaldunen eskuzabaltasunari esker bihurtu ahal izan zen oinezkoentzako gune Grove Street, gaur egun kulturune ere bilakatu den hiri erdiko gunea.

Bertan dira, Basque Block deritzaionean, euskal erakunde garrantzitsuenen egoitzak; lehenengoa, kale kantoian dagoen Euskal Etxea bera (hirurogeita hamar-garren hamarkadan eraberritutako eraikuntza); eta haren alboan, gaur egun muse-oaren zati den Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga jatorrizko ostatua.

Jarraian Museoa bera dago, José Eyguren Liburutegiaz gain beste hainbat agiri-ren gordeleku ere badena, eta milaka bisitariarentzako informazio gune, eta erakus-keta areto, eta euskara ikastaroen egoitza, eta beste hainbat ekimenen bultzatzaile, Ahozko Historiaren Bilketa Lanarena, esaterako. Hurrengo etxea ere euskaldunena da: Anduiza ostatua izandakoa. Horrek ere badu bere berezitasuna, ez baitugu eza-gutzen barruan frontoia duen beste halakorik.

Boisetarrak, halere, ez dira iraganean gelditu, ez dira mugatu arbasoak gogo-ratze soilera. Aitzitik, indar handiko gizataldea osatzen dute.

Esan daiteke Boiseko euskaldunek erabateko mundu euskalduna sortzea lortu dutela, gurasoengandik jasotako ondarea seme-alaben eskuetan uzteko eran-tzukizunarekin aurkitu diren ehundaka bolondresen kemenari esker.

1995 urtean Euskal Gizataldeekiko Harremanetarako zuzendari nintzela lehe-nengoz joan nintzenetik behin eta berriz ikusi izan dut ez dela munduan beste euskal gizatalderik Boisekoak besteko lorpen eskuratu duenik: horra hor 1999ko otsailetik abian duten ikastola, 1990 urtetik hona bost urtero antolatzen duten nazioarteko Jaialdi erraldoia, edo Idahoko Legebiltzarrak onartutako 114 Senate Memoriala.

Guzti horrek adierazten du nire lagun Gloria Toticaguenak ondo baino hobeto aukeratu duela lan honetarako izenburua.

Izan ere, Munduko euskal gizataldeen historia jasotzeko ametsa egi bihurtzeko euren testigantzak eskaini dituzten guztiei luzatu nahi diegu gure eskerrona Ura-zandi bilduma honen bitartez.

IÑAKI AGUIRRE ARIZMENDI

Kanpo Harremanetarako idazkari nagusia

Preface

The Basque community in Boise enjoys a series of features which makes it quite unique. There is no other place in the world where one can walk down a street paved with stones engraved with the family names of Basques who have settled in this area since the late nineteenth century. This is a tribute to the ancestors of hundreds of families who have seen their dream come true with this semi-pedestrianized street dedicated to culture and entertainment.

It is precisely on Grove Street, on what is known as the Basque Block, where the most important Basque institutions are located, from the Basque Center on the corner (refurbished in the seventies), to the erstwhile Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga boarding house (now part of the museum).

Next door is the actual Basque Museum and Cultural Center, which houses the Joseph V. Eiguren library and its important archive collection. There is also an information center for the thousands and thousands visitors to the area, as well as an exhibit room, classroom for Euskara classes and venues for a number of other initiatives, including the Basque Oral History Project. The adjacent building, the old Anduiza boarding, is also unique as it is the only covered fronton still in use today.

The boisetarrak, however, are not stuck in the past, and they certainly don't spend all their time paying homage to their ancestors. This is an active community.

The Boise Basques have managed to keep Basque feelings and traditions alive thanks to the tenacity of the hundreds of volunteers who have taken it upon themselves to pass on to the next generation the legacy their parents handed down to them.

Since my first visit in 1995 as Director of Relations with Basque Associations, I have watched this community mark milestones like none other. It has achieved such important goals as founding an ikastola —in operation since February 1999— organizing the international Jaialdi festival —celebrated every five years since 1990— and promoting initiatives including the Senate Joint Memorial number 114 sponsored by the Idaho State Legislature.

All of this only serves to confirm the perfect title my friend Gloria Totoricagüena has chosen for this book.

This collection is meant to pay tribute to all of the people who with their testimonies have made this collection of the history of Basque Associations around the world possible.

IÑAKI AGUIRRE ARIZMENDI
General Secretary of Foreign Action

Ackno



*Wood Creek lambing camp
Grandview, Idaho 1936.*
Photo courtesy of John
Urquidi Sr. Collection.

wledgements

The Second World Congress of Basque Collectivities, held in Vitoria-Gasteiz in 1999, featured Delegates from eighteen countries representing one hundred and thirty-six Basque diaspora organizations from around the globe. Why do we use the word “diaspora”? Because it categorizes ethnic groups who have departed their homelands and settled in other host countries, yet continued to maintain their ethnic identity and ties to their homeland. Diaspora populations have dual identities; an ethnic identity and a civic identity. Over the centuries, Basques have departed *Euskal Herria* and scattered to various countries for economic and political reasons. We in Idaho have followed this same pattern and sustained our relations with our Basque relatives and homeland institutions, preserving our “Basqueness”, while simultaneously proudly declaring ourselves as American.

As a Delegate to the First, and Second Congresses, I had the opportunity to discuss at length and to collaborate with Josu Legarreta, Director of Relations with Basque Collectivities, for the Office of the Presidency of the Basque Autonomous Government, and with Benan Oregi, also of the same office. We examined the need for a major sociological and historical study of the contemporary Basque organizations, and as a result of two years of planning, the Basque Government announced the commencement of “Urazandi: Basques Across the Seas”. The oldest, largest, and most influential Basque communities were selected to participate in this series of research and publications, and Benan Oregi was chosen to coordinate the overall project.

Two more years of research and personal interviews have resulted in abundant information to produce this work. Mikel Chertudi and Daniel Chertudi expertly added new interviews of Basque immigrants to those I have collected for almost ten years, and to those of John Bieter, David Ensunsa, and Mark Bieter, Begoña Pecharroman, Lidia Elola, and Joseba Chertudi. Several hundred Basques have opened their homes and hearts to us and recounted their experiences, which for many included reliving emotionally painful events. The one hundred and ten scrapbooks kept by Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea, and now housed at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, were invaluable for verifying dates and providing photographs. Helen Berria’s genealogical research and immigration information on early Basques was also extremely beneficial. John Bastida, Gerri Achurra, Elena Marcuerquiaga Cook, Patty Miller,

Nere Lete, Linda Barinaga, Pancho Aldape, Julio Bilbao, Miren Rementería Artiach, Joe M. Uberuaga, Julian Achabal, Pete Cenarussa, Leandra Parker Jayo, Dan Ansotegui, Al Erquiaga, Jim Anderson, Rosa Mari Totorica, Tatia Baum Totorica, and Ted Totorica Sr. graciously answered numerous telephone calls and inquiries to make sure I had the correct details. However, only the love of a mother can explain Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica's patience with me through the months of piecing together dates, places, and especially the maiden surnames of our Basque women. Thank you Ama for answering the countless interruptions and making additional queries to obtain the facts we needed. This work then is a collaborative product of those people mentioned above. They have unselfishly given their time and energy to produce another project reflecting the Basques of Boise.

Many thanks to the Basque Autonomous Government for supporting this Urazandi Project, and to Joseba Chertudi, Patty Miller, and Jeff Johns at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center for so skillfully administering it. Heartfelt gratitude goes to John Kirtland and our daughter, Amaia Totoricagüena Kirtland, for their flexibility in lifestyle, acceptance of my passion for all things Basque, and for their years of encouragement.

Eskerrik asko

Formation Basque

(01)

of the Boise Community

I remember celebrating 1992 fiestas with Cathy Clarkson in the town plaza of Lesaka, Nafarroa, and her wondering aloud about the difficulties so many had encountered to depart this majestic land, their families, and their culture. “I just cannot fathom the trauma of leaving such a rich culture and environment, arriving to a train depot in the desert of Mountain Home or Boise, and being taken away and abandoned in the middle of nowhere with 2000 sheep. Things here must have been terribly desperate to have to emigrate”. They were indeed, and this exact scenario unfolded for hundreds and hundreds of Basques departing their green luscious homeland for the sagebrush prairies and mountains of Idaho. Florencio “Pancho” Aldape remembers arriving in Boise in 1935, “I assumed the Capitol building was the church, since in Euskadi the biggest building was always the church”. The day of Pancho’s arrival however, José Uberuaga put him in a taxi that drove him out to stay where his father was herding sheep. “I was fourteen years old. I cried for days”, he slowly said. José Mari Artiach hid behind a tree when he received his first letter after arriving at the sheep camp. His mother’s loving words from Muxika, Bizkaia made him “cry like a baby”.

EUSKAL HERRIA: THE BASQUE COUNTRY

The physical borders of *Euskal Herria*, Basque Country, have helped to shelter it from invasion and infiltration by other cultures and military forces, as well as provided a gateway to the rest of the world. Its major physical border is the sea, a factor that has played an important role in the history of Basque emigration and has fostered the relative ease of mobility for the population. The Basque Country is small in both territory and population. The total population (which has the lowest per capita birth rate in the European Union) is near three million. In today's political terminology, when Basques refer to "the north", *Iparralde*, they are referring to the three provinces that are in France, "to the north" of what many see as an artificial political border. "In the south", *Hegoalde*, denotes the four provinces that lie in Spain. Because those four are also administratively differentiated in the current Spanish state created with the Constitution of 1978, the Statutes of Autonomy passed in 1979 referenda established that together Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Araba make up the Basque Autonomous Community of *Euskadi*. *Nafarroa*, or Navarre, has its own separate autonomous statutes. Hence, a person may describe something in *Euskadi* and then add that it is the same in *Nafarroa*. Language is quite politicized in the world of Basque studies.

Homeland and diaspora Basques refer to themselves as "*Euskaldunak*" or "speakers of *euskera*", the Basque language. However, in the diaspora, one does not have to speak the language to be defined as *euskaldunak*; one must have Basque ancestry. Despite five centuries of speculation by linguists and philologists concerning the possible relationships between Basque and other languages, no studies have indicated a conclusive relationship between Basque and any other language (Michelena 1985; Tovar 1957; Collins 1986:8-12). This makes *euskera* unique among Western and Central European languages and is often pointed out by diaspora Basques as a sign of difference and prestige.

Claims to physiognomic distinctiveness are not unique to Basques, and certain features of the physiological makeup of the Basques point to differentiation. Basques differ from the surrounding populations in their blood types, for example; they manifest the highest rate in any European population of the blood type O, and the lowest occurrence of blood type B. They also have the highest occurrence of any population in the world of the Rh-negative factor (Cavalli-Sforza and Cavalli-Sforza 1995). This evidence suggests the Basque people have remained, over a long period of time, a small and isolated breeding population.

Basque collective myth includes the possibility of a history that stretches to cave populations and human occupation since the Stone Ages (Caro Baroja 1958). Some authorities suggest that the Basques are the direct descendants of cave painters who created works at Lascaux and Santimamiñe. Skeptics place the modern Basques in the Pyrenees from approximately 5,000 to 3,000 B.C. There are no

records describing the Basques specifically until the Romans targeted the Iberian Peninsula and wrote that the Basque population was organized into small tribal units inhabiting the valleys of the western Pyrenees- and beyond according to later linguistic studies. They originally did not form a single civic unit and spoke a variety of tribal dialects of *euskera*, whose diversity persists to the present day. Although until recently Basques have believed otherwise, the latest scientific research demonstrates that the Basque territory was indeed subject to Roman administrative, political, and military domain until approximately the 4th century A.D. (Sayas Abengoechea 1999). The Christian religion was introduced into the Basque region during these Roman times, but it scarcely spread beyond the southern fringes of lower Araba and Nafarroa.

CENTURIES OF BASQUE EMIGRATION

Basque whalers left the Bizkaian and Gipuzkoan coasts as early as the seventh century for North Atlantic hunts, and documents from 1540 demonstrate they hunted off the coasts of Greenland. Basque cod fisherman named the bays of Newfoundland with Basque names and traded with the indigenous groups from Labrador. Throughout the late middle ages, the Bay of Biscay marine economy and trade required Basques to travel and contact other cultures and societies, and Basque place-names dot the landscapes in coastal regions of Europe and Scandinavia as well (Huxley Barkham 1989; Caro Baroja 1971: 195-203). During the same centuries, Basques fought against muslims for the Reconquest of Spain, and eventually established influential colonies in Castille and the Andalusian port of Seville. The Flemish city of Bruges retains archives from the commercial consulate established there in the fifteenth century recording Bizkaian and Gipuzkoan merchants, demonstrating the trade networks between Basques in the Basque Country, the Low Countries, and England. However, notable collective numbers of Basques did not begin to leave the Basque Country permanently until the 1500s' colonial pursuits under the crown of Castile and later Spain in the Central and South Americas. Later, Basques participated in the French colonization of North America and particularly Canada. Basque mariners played important roles in most of Spain's voyages of discovery influencing outcomes with their navigating expertise, ship building, and experience in whaling and off shore fishing. Basques manned and directed expeditions of Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, and Magellan. Juan Sebastián Elcano was the first person to circumnavigate the globe when he assumed leadership after Magellan was killed in the Philippines in 1521.

In the first phase of emigration in the beginning of the sixteenth century, Spain lacked sufficient population and economic resources to pursue colonialism. Policies were heavily dependent upon two elements that predominated in the Basque region:

sea power and iron products. Without military and commercial transportation, Spain could neither maintain the Old World holdings nor develop its New World territories. Efforts to colonize would require reliable supplies of iron implements, and military campaigns would consume large amounts of weaponry. For the Basque economy the opening of the New World was an immediate stimulant.

It would not be an exaggeration to state that every major Spanish expeditionary force and every ecclesiastical or secular administration in the New World had Basques. The nature of the Basque involvement demonstrates that Basques often acted as a self-aware ethnic group, maintaining ties to each other and to their homeland. This resulted in trade networks, collective action, mutual assistance programs, schools for Basque children, and associations and societies for the maintenance of Basque language, culture, and traditions. William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao traced Basque migration through the centuries with exciting details in their 1975 publication, *“Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World”*. The transnational networks of chain migration were well established in South American countries and Basques initiated trading, religious, and employment networks based on ethnicity (Quiroz Paz-Soldan 1996). Certainly individual Basques used ethnicity instrumentally to gain political favors or employment with each other, as can be seen in Idaho as well.

Several generations of colonial expansion into the Americas were realized with Basque leadership, Basque capital, and Basque manpower (Azcona Pastor 1992; Vázquez de Prada Vallejo and Amores Carredano 1991; Gomez Prieto 1991). Basque, and especially Bizkaian, interests controlled more than shipping, they “supplied capital, equipment and goods for trade as well as many of its personnel” (Lynch 1964:35). *Iparralde* Basques also participated in the American ventures, and vessels from Donibane Lohitzun (St-Jean-de-Luz) were registered with authorities as Bizkaian. Lynch estimates that almost eighty per cent of the New World traffic between 1520 and 1580 was Basque controlled, and between 1580 and 1610 Basques interests represented at least fifty percent of the total. This accounts for nearly one hundred years of Basque domination in Spanish colonial efforts.

Spanish and French conquests provided new alternatives to Basques for overseas migration. Although France did not impose strict rules in migration, Spain did. After the independence movements of Latin American countries, it required each emigrant to apply for a license and to depart through government-established channels. Violations were numerous, however, and the majority of emigrants left Spain illegally and did not register into the administration’s official count. Many Basques simply went to the north of *Euskal Herria* and departed from the French side, benefiting from Basque preferential treatment and aid. Accurate numbers of emigrants by year or by destination are non-existent because of the lack of exact record-keeping by departure port authorities as well as non-detailed records kept by receiving authorities in the host territories that lumped Basque, Galician, Catalan

and others as simply “Spanish”. More contemporary records are no better. For example Spanish official statistics give 1,042,775 emigrants leaving Spain between 1882-1930, but the receiving states show numerous millions of immigrants from Spain for the same years (Ruíz de Azua 1992:266). The lack of consistency in data deems it unwise to infer total percentages or numbers of people leaving the Basque Country itself.

The political, economic, and social factors of migration are numerous, epoch-specific, and person-specific. New World economic and political opportunities weighed against Old World uncertainties and upheaval provided the general stimulus for emigration to the Americas, and coming to Idaho was no different. In the case of Basque emigration the most powerful push factors included Spanish colonization of the Americas and the demand for clerics, military, and tradesmen; the restricted economic opportunity in the homeland; the physical position of *Euskal Herria* between Spain and France and its use as a stage for Napoleonic military campaigns; the First Carlist War (1833-1839); and for emigration to Idaho, the Second Carlist War (1872-1876), the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and the subsequent Franco dictatorship. However, the system of primogeniture inheritance may have carried the most influence.

According to Basque anthropologist Julio Caro Baroja, the single most important element in stimulating emigration out of *Euskal Herria* was the rules of inheritance followed in rural Basque society (Caro Baroja 1958:268). Population density, high fertility and live birth rates, coupled with the scarcity of available agricultural lands and low agricultural output resulted in limited expansion potential. The lack of industrial and urban growth until the late 1800s also limited possible options for employment and movement within *Euskal Herria*. Each farmstead could support a single family in agriculture. Those who owned their property and animals kept their holdings in the same family and Basque common law discouraged fragmentation or division through sales or inheritance. Consequently, most Basque farmsteads remained unchanged for many centuries, with each generation having one single heir. This meant that in every family there were most likely three or four siblings who were candidates for emigration.

The Spanish liberalization of emigration in 1853 encouraged thousands of persons annually to depart for Latin America, as did the Basque primogeniture inheritance system and overpopulated rural areas. Many relatives in the Basque Country believed that anyone who was willing to work hard could strike it rich in the Americas. There did not seem to be any attention paid to the larger numbers of people who could not afford the passage price to return, or who did not have profits to send back home. Emigration to northern Nevada and southern Idaho commenced in the late 1800s and continued into the 1950s, consisting mainly of people looking to improve their economic fortunes. Pedro “Pete” Barinaga planned to work for three

years, save all his riches and return to Markina, Bizkaia to marry his girlfriend. “We all thought we’d make a lot of money fast and go home as soon as possible”, remembers Juan Hormaechea from Mendata. “But here we are”.

Until the beginning of the 1800s, commerce, military and religious conquests were the reasons for Basque emigration, an emigration that took place mainly inside the framework of the Spanish empire. Basque emigration to the Americas and the Philippines was the transfer of the skilled and influential from an imperial country and its regions to its colonies, a colonial diaspora. This emigration was also often temporary, young male dominated, and it was rare for an entire family to leave the Basque country together. Later, those Basques who did depart without definite contacts to receive them, knew from village folk stories that an established Basque group could be found in many of the northern Nevada and southern Idaho towns. They knew about remittances to families in their own areas and could see the construction of farmsteads, churches, and improvements in agricultural equipment as results of that money sent home. It was only natural to expect that their fellow ethnics would be helpful and useful in adapting to the new society.

During and after the French Revolution, the northern Basque provinces were subjected to military occupation and their ancient foral laws were abolished. Basques were deprived of their lands and livestock, and while some Basques were interned in camps by revolutionary officials, there was also a forced deportation of more than three thousand Basques who were accused of treason with Spain (Jacob 1994:33-35). In 1793, in Baiona (Bayonne) alone, more than sixty death penalties were pronounced for “complicity in illegal immigration or correspondence with priests in exile” (Jacob 1985:83). Emigration was obviously as risky as staying put. Napoleon’s rise to power and push to conquer the Iberian Peninsula resulted in several wars being fought in the Basque Country, with Basques themselves being recruited and conscripted by both sides. From the French side of the Basque Country, it is estimated that between 1832 and 1907 over one hundred thousand persons emigrated to Argentina alone, and that the provinces of Zuberoa and Behe Nafarroa lost between twenty and twenty-five percent of their total population. The *entire* population growth in *Iparralde* for the last half of the nineteenth century was canceled by emigration (Jacob 1994:46).

The first of the Spanish Carlist Wars commenced in 1833 with the Catholic and regionalist Basques siding with the challenger to the throne. Financing the war meant heavy taxation in most areas of the Basque Country and conscription by the Carlist forces. The defeat of the Carlists in 1839 left Basques with political and economic war debt and retribution, and six years of war had disrupted the economy and agricultural output. An estimated 8,000 war exiles fled. A corn crop failure and the famine of 1846-1847 aggravated the already dire circumstances and gave impetus for many to abandon their economic, military, and political situations and

seek relief in the Americas. The French Revolution of 1848 once again found the Basques fighting on the losing side against revolutionary goals, with memories of repercussions from the earlier rebellions encouraging departures from the area. Between 1852 and 1855 there were 1,311 French Basque military evaders (Douglass and Bilbao 1975:123). The Second Carlist War (1873-76) saw a repeat of defeat and emigration to escape hardship. Maritime archives show hundreds of military aged men avoided or deserted their obligatory three-year military service and others later fled the repercussions of the Liberals.

An exact accounting of Basque emigration in this time period does not exist. What is certain is that 1.) the preferred earlier destinations of Mexico, Venezuela, and Peru, had changed to Argentina, Uruguay, and later the United States; and, 2.) emigration during any of these time periods was by no means an unusual option, nor a last resort to remedy hardship. Like their forefathers, Basques in later centuries knew and heard of fellow Basques escaping poverty, political and economic oppression for employment and opportunity. The real key to migration may have been access to information. The choice of destinations and dates depended on homeland circumstances, family and village ties, and employment opportunities.

THE SECOND WAVE

The movements for independence in Latin American territories, compounded by the fact that Spain later lost practically all of its colonies simultaneously and finally with the Disaster of the 1898 Spanish American War, drew a line that divides the history of Basque emigration into two phases. The second phase was a part of a European wave of emigration to the former colonies in the new worlds, a transfer of people who were economically and/or politically oppressed. Dreams of economic success, civil rights and political freedoms, and asylum pulled them across the Atlantic. Some searched for opportunities, while others fled difficulties, and the Basques were no exception. They were also no exception in that they sought out other Basques and used ethnic networks in determining their destinations.

By the mid-eighteen hundreds a new destination attracted Basque emigrants to the United States, mostly in relation to the discovery of gold in California. Basques were already spread throughout the southwestern United States as a result of the colonization of lands making up Mexico. They were “Mexicans” before they were ceded to the United States and had lived in the areas of California, Arizona, and New Mexico for generations. A secondary migration of Basques came from South America, mainly Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, moving to California and then into Nevada. Before 1860, a few Basques that had found no luck in their search for gold began raising sheep flocks to feed the gold miners in the American west. Gold strikes



Early Basque boarders circa 1910. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Photo courtesy of Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

in neighboring Nevada and Idaho compounded the need for foodstuffs and Basques raised cattle and sheep inexpensively and with high profit margins on the public lands. Basques immigrating directly from the Basque Country came later, after those coming from South America. English was not necessary for agribusiness and the mixture with other non-English speaking immigrants encouraged Basques to seek each other's business and social company.

Early Basque emigrants pushed from their homelands by war, lack of economic opportunity, and political repression, could not resist the magnetism of welcoming boisterous economies, political favoritism, and extended ethnic families. Urban life in San Francisco and Donostia (San Sebastián) were comparable, and although the climate and terrain of the interior were not, rural daily life and agriculture in the American west at that time were analogous to that of *Euskal Herria*. The model of settlement and residency of these emigrants typically found Basques from Nafarroa, Behe Nafarroa, Lapurdi, and Ziberoa staying in California and southern and western Nevada, while those from Bizkaia tended to choose Idaho, eastern Oregon and northern Nevada. Regardless of the geographical location, it is significant that the majority of these Basque emigrants were involved in cattle ranching and especially sheep raising.

By the early 1900s, the typical emigrant to Idaho was a single male between 15-25 years old, sent for by relatives who needed agricultural laborers. It was also a prime age for escaping mandatory military service. Few women emigrated together with their husbands. Rarely single women, such as Lucy Aboitiz Garatea, would be sent to live and work with their kin in the Americas, usually to work in a boardinghouse, or to help cook for ranch workers. She was only fifteen years old when she left Lekeitio, alone, in 1920. More commonly, a husband would travel ahead to find work and settle in the new community, while the wife would run the homeland business or farm and raise the family. After several years of saving money, one would either send for his wife and any children, or would return to the homeland with the savings. Emigrant bachelors utilized Basque social networks to find mates and Basque endogamy rates were high. One survey showed that in the United States, of 119 Basques who immigrated to Idaho between 1889 and 1939, 114 married other Basques (Edlefsen 1948:65).

Between 1897 and 1902 there were 636 persons with definite Basque surnames that entered the country through immigration offices in New York. Eighty-six percent were male and seventy-seven percent were single. In Marie Pierre Arrizabalaga's statistical study of Basques, using the census figures of 1900 and 1910, she concluded that in 1900 there were approximately 986 Basques who answered their census questionnaires in California, Nevada, Idaho, and Wyoming, and by 1910 that number had grown to 8,398. Many more would not have known how to complete the form, or would not have known enough English to do so, or might have been completely illiterate. Other illegals would never have received the forms. Following the drought and low production years in the Basque Country from 1904-1906, of those 8,398 Basques in the United States, the year of the largest immigration was 1907. The next decade also resulted in large Basque immigration to the western States. The Spanish Council of Emigration notes that the legally registered emigrants departing from the four provinces between 1911-1915 added to 18,547 young men. There likely were many others not included in these statistics. Simon Cruz Nachiondo Achabal came in 1898 from Ispaster, jumped ship in Canada went down to San Francisco and worked in northern Nevada, later in Wyoming, before settling in Idaho. Nicasio Beristain was seventeen years old and working on a ship that traveled from Bilbao to Philadelphia delivering steel. He jumped ship in New York and after getting help from his friend at Valentin Aguirre's *Casa Vizcaína* boardinghouse, took a bus cross-country to Idaho.

The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century disrupted traditional agricultural economic activities and displaced workers from both rural and urban areas. The cheaper manufacture of products left artisans searching for markets, which waited open armed in the Americas. Though it may have provided new jobs for existing urban Basques, it simultaneously displaced many as floods of migrants from floods of migrants from *Cantabria*, *Castilla-León* and *La Rioja*, and later from *Galicia*, Andalusia and *Extremadura* made their way to the more industrialized



1934 Wedding portrait of Tomás Erquiaga and Anita Echevarria. Seated is Tomás Erquiaga. Standing are Andrés "Andrew" Erquiaga, Anita Echevarria, and Angeles Areitio. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

Basque Country seeking employment. Basques had to compete with this cheaper labor in their home territory.

Displacement from rural society, a changing urban society, unemployment, unrest, labor strikes, and arrests and imprisonments related to a lack of civil rights all preceded the cataclysm of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). After the Republican and Basque Government forces were defeated, Franco's victory guaranteed a central policy of Spanish nation-building and Basque nation-destroying. Julian Achabal remembers being punished for speaking Basque in his school in Ispaster. "We were forbidden to speak Basque and if we did, we had to stand in front of the class and hold heavy stacks of books in our tiny hands with our arms outstretched, or we had to stay after school and clean the building. But that was nothing compared to our father being in prison". Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica (Totoricagüena) survived the bombing of Gernika and recalls the names of streets were changed to Spanish war heroes, and Basque names on headstones in the cemetery were obliterated and replaced with Spanish names and spellings. The horrendous indignities suffered, the dismantling of Basque institutions, the outlawing of manifestations of Basque culture, the dictatorial repression and lack of human and civil rights, and multitudes of death warrants shoved Basques out of their homeland in pursuit of safe havens. Urban and rural dwellers, widowed mothers and children, orphaned teenagers, and republican soldiers- thousands who had the connections and the means to escape the political and military crush, did so.

Most evacuated to *Iparralde* initially, and from there decided their final destinations usually based upon family ties to regions in the New World or information they had obtained from family and village networks. Mari Carmen Endaia Azaola recalls her family's refugee train-ride into the northern Basque provinces and singing Basque songs as loudly as possible. She was not allowed to do so on the streets of Bilbao. Benito and Enrike Goitiandi's father, Francisco, was imprisoned with threat of execution, but Enrike continued with nationalist propaganda activities and remembers the Spanish Guardia Civil harassing his parents for almost three years after his departure in 1966. José Antonio Goicoechea vividly described the harsh Franco's years while growing up in Aulestia, Bizkaia, "No one had a radio, television, or telephone and it was very hard to hear about the world outside of the Franco regime's propaganda". *Generalísimo* Francisco Franco held dictatorial power for nearly four decades. The United States government was allowed military bases in Spain and consequently did not intervene in its anti-democratic policies.

CHOOSING IDAHO

Chain migration created specific patterns of Basque settlement. Fathers sent for their sons and nephews, and then their sisters, wives and daughters. Villagers



accepted fellow villagers as workers. Year after year, one immigrant at a time, Basques from the homeland made the courageous decisions to leave everything in the Basque Country for the unknown of the United States. However, that unknown actually often included relatives or acquaintances, and a shift from small-scale farming and animal care to vast ranching and farming of thousands of acres, but similar job skills. Many Basques arrived into networks of employment and housing aid.

Choosing Idaho as a destination instead of Argentina or Uruguay may seem a more traumatic experience for our parents and grandparents, and it was, but the truth is that they exchanged humid agricultural life for an arid agricultural and ranching lifestyle. They were surrounded by Basques and helped by each other as a result of chain migration and networking. Migration to the Boise region, expanding to Jordan Valley and Twin Falls areas, was basically the transplantation of rural Bizkaians from Santurtzi to Durango to Ondarroa. Interviews conducted throughout the 1970s to 2002 (D. Chertudi and M. Chertudi, Totoricagüena, Pecharroman, Elola, D. Bieter and M. Bieter, J. Chertudi) show the overwhelming number of Basques in the Boise area immigrated after a relative did so, usually a father or an uncle. Those very first Basque immigrants to the area in the 1890s set the scene, facilitating the entry of Bizkaians to Boise.



Horse drawn transportation in Boise circa 1910. Photo courtesy of the Arregui Family Collection.

Early Basques came to Idaho after the discoveries of silver in De Lamar in 1889 and Silver City in 1890. Repeating the patterns of those Basques in California and Nevada, they stayed in mining only temporarily and shifted their labors to providing foodstuffs to the mining camps. Not all miners struck silver or gold veins, but they did all need to eat! Providing beef and lamb products meant that Basque ranchers had steady customers.

Many Basques went back and forth, working until their three- or five-year contracts were up, and then returning to the Basque Country only to come back to the United States after a few years. For example, in 1906, Saturnino Iglesias Aguirre from Ea, Bizkaia came to Lovelock, Nevada to work with his uncle until 1910, and then returned to the Basque Country. He stayed there for four years, and served one year in the Spanish Navy fulfilling his requirement, and was discharged in 1915 as a Captain. Saturnino Iglesias returned to the United States in 1915 to Mountain Home, Idaho and entered into a partnership with José Bengoechea, creating for a time, one of the largest sheep companies in Idaho.

The majority of Basque emigrants to the United States were from rural towns and farmsteads and they lived an underdeveloped agricultural lifestyle. Even in the 1950s, José Antonio Goicoechea had no plumbing in his farmhouse in Aulestia and

brought in water from a nearby stream. Many of the first emigrants to Idaho likely had relatives in South America, but the economic opportunities there were beginning to dry up. Subsequently, Bizkaians began choosing the American west, especially northern Nevada and southern Idaho as their destinations. The years between 1900 and 1914 registered the largest migration to the U.S. from Europe, and Basques participated in this movement. Those Basques with formal educations or city backgrounds were more likely to emigrate to Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Venezuela, or Mexico where their Spanish language skills helped them participate immediately in their host country economy and culture.

A formal education in the Basque Country was a luxury at this time. At the beginning of the 1900s, Joaquin Arte, Agustin Abadia, Gregorio “George” Alberdi, Tom Erquiaga, and Henry “Hank” Alegria averaged four years of schooling each. Older siblings often had to stay home to help care for younger brothers and sisters. Anunci Jayo was caring for her cousins and running her aunt’s household in Elantxobe by the time she was only eight years old. Children were also needed to help on the family farmstead, *baserri*. Pedro “Pete” Barinaga worked at two *baserris* and had very little formal schooling. Mari Cruz Aguirre Bicandi thought she was going to school in Ondarroa to play, and took along a few marbles for her first day. When the teacher took them away, she pulled the teacher’s hair and hit her, trying to get her marbles back. Mari Cruz’ parents were promptly visited by two policemen.

Classes usually had a heavy dose of Catholic religion, were taught in Spanish with curriculum glorifying Spain, and most were segregated by gender. “If the town was small and there were only a few students, then they put us all together in the same room”, said Tony Arrubarrena from Mundaka, Bizkaia. Nicasio Beristain, from Motriko, Gipuzkoa, tells of how the Catholic Church frowned on activities where girls and boys would be together, “When I was seventeen years old I went to a dance at another *baserri* and when I came home my mother hit me with a broom”. Students in class were forced to sing patriotic songs to Spain. “Unfortunately I will never forget “*Cara al sol*” but there were others even worse that I hated so much that I have wiped them out of my memory”, said Simon Achabal from Ispaster. Students in his school were trained to raise their right hand and say “Viva Franco”, and recess included thirty-minute military drills with rifles. Spanish commands, “*iHabla en cristiano!*” literally, “Speak as a Christian!” were meant to demean Basques for maintaining their own language, which until the 1970s was related with a low economic status, and undereducated peasant lifestyle.

Teachers were strict and physical punishment accepted. Teodoro Toticagüena explained that teacher punishments in Gernika in the late 1920s included having students hold their fingertips and thumb nail together face-up, and then the teacher would whack them with a thick wooden paddle- driving their fingernails down into the fingers and skin. Benito Goitiandia recalls his teachers throwing hard rubber balls (*pelotas* for handball) at students for giving an incorrect answer. Until the

1920s, girls were often educated only to embroider and sew. Lucy Aboitiz Garatea was in a class of one hundred girls of all ages, but, as she pointed out, “the teacher had a big stick in the corner”.

THE JOURNEY

Many of us often forget that “the trip” from the Basque Country was not only the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. It often began days before with travel by horse and buggy from a rural town or farmhouse to Bilbao or San Sebastian. The entire next day would include a train ride north through France to its ports of Bordeaux or Le Havre. There, emigrants boarded a passenger ship if they were lucky or wealthy, and a cargo ship if they were not. Tomas Erquiaga described being “stuffed in the ship ‘Niagara’ like *txarrikuñak* (piglets)”, and vomiting for sixteen days until his arrival in New York. However, his brother Andres “Andrew” traveled on the passenger ship “La France” in third class, and still spent eleven days lying in bed seasick.

Lucy Garatea left Lekeitio for Bilbao then spent eleven days on a ship that only got as far as La Coruña in the northwest corner of Spain. Crossing the Atlantic took another ten days and then she was held at Ellis Island an additional eleven days waiting for permission to enter. Immigrants had to complete various categories of paperwork and pass health inspections. “Jesus, the quantity of paperwork! And we slept packed together. And the kinds of people I saw from all over the world! Jesus, the kinds of people we saw. We had never seen anyone from outside of Lekeitio”. She continued, “The boat ride was pretty good and we had plenty of food. We danced on the boat too”. Justa Bilbao Yturri traveled from Murueta, Bizkaia in December 1919 with her brother Basilio Bilbao. The voyage was sixteen days from Bordeaux to New York on a converted whaling ship, the “Chicago”, loaded with U.S. servicemen returning home from World War I.

Emma Lazarus’ 1883 poem in honor of the Statue of Liberty mined words of gold for Basque immigrants and their descendents:

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she*

*With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor;
Your huddles masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

The "golden door" assured nothing but the opportunity of hard work and self-reliance for economic advancement, and most Basques were quite accustomed to hard work. Emigrants arriving in New York between 1855-1890 were processed at Castle Garden- as one of eight million other arrivals. Ellis Island officially opened as an immigrant processing station in 1892 and remained active until the 1924 National Origins Act was passed by Congress, which allowed potential immigrants to undergo their inspections before they left their country of origin. There were medical inspections, and hearings from a Board of Special Inquiry for those detained at the island. In 1900 alone, 3,500 people died at Ellis Island, including 1,400 children. Unescorted women and children were detained until their "safety" was assured by the arrival of a relative, a pre-paid ticket, or the arrival of a letter or telegram from a trusted official regarding their financial ability to care for their costs. There were various other tests immigrants had to pass such as drawing a diamond shape. The test was really to see if they knew how to hold a pencil, and inferred some sort of education. Persons with physical deformities, sickness, or disease could be refused entry and sent back to their countries. Not surprisingly, there were also suicides at Ellis Island. Inspectors worked from 9am-7pm, seven days a week, and generally questioned and inspected four hundred to five hundred immigrants each day. The relief of passing the inspection and receiving the entry permission card and stamp was emotionally overwhelming for most new entries to the United States.

Once allowed to depart Ellis Island, numerous Basques were met at the docks of New York City by Valentine Aguirre or one of his sons, calling out in Basque, "*Euskaldunak emen badira?*" Hearing that simple question, "Are there any Basques here?" was incredulous, and a lifesaver for many. After so many days of physical and emotional stress, a Basque style dinner and night in a bed were absolute heaven. Over the years, thousands of Basque immigrants to the United States would seek refuge at the Valentin Aguirre boardinghouse, the *Casa Vizcaína*, and later the *Santa Lucia Hotel* and the *Jai Alai Restaurant*. Aguirre simultaneously operated a travel agency and made all of his customers' travel arrangements to cross the United States, including sacks of food cooked and packed by his wife, Benita Orbe, for the train journey. He took Pancho Aldape to the train depot and handed him "a huge box with boiled eggs, chorizos, a big chunk of bread, and cookies- enough for three days! I ate out of that box all the way across the United States". Other Basques just pointed to the food of passengers and hoped they were ordering the same thing. However, most were just plain scared of

not being able to communicate in English, and pretended to not want anything. They arrived in Idaho famished.

Bonifacio “Boni” Garmendia helped many people travel to and from the Basque Country and he communicated the need for workers from the Boise area to Valentin Aguirre, creating a network of information. The 1930s Union Pacific train fare from New York to Boise was \$54.20. A multi-stub ticket was usually pinned on the traveler with a note to the conductors asking for aid in this passenger’s transfers. It noted that they were not an English speaker. As ticket stubs were torn off at each transfer point Pancho Aldape remembers, “I knew I was getting closer to Boise as the ticket got shorter”. There were no beds on the trains, but Lucy Garatea, and hundreds like her, traveled for four days and nights before reaching Boise exhausted. Mateo Arregui was waiting for her with a car and to help with her luggage, which was “the cardboard type with rope around it”. She ate well at the Arregui’s boardinghouse the next morning with chorizo and eggs, a delicacy in her house in Lekeitio and very expensive, and started work at her aunt’s boardinghouse on her very first day in Boise.

Cirilia Armaolea Marcuerquiaga interestingly explained a married woman’s perspective of the emigration experience. Her husband, Patxi, was herding sheep in the U.S. while she was caring for their first daughter in Lekeitio at the end of the 1950s. When she went to the U.S. consulate in Bilbao to apply for immigration papers, she was insulted several times when officers insinuated her husband might be living with another woman, and then what would she do? “Get my own job”, she answered. When she was crudely asked if she had ever worked as a prostitute, she withheld her slap across his face and gave a verbal lashing instead. The final insult was the shock that she was no longer Cirilia Armaolea, but now Cirilia Marcuerquiaga. She no longer existed as a separate person with her own identity. In some ways the U.S. was modern, but in others it preserved its conservative British influences, which still seem ridiculous to many Basque women.

Evading the mandatory service to the Spanish military was also a reason for leaving the country. Hilario Larrondo, born in 1885, came to Idaho in 1909 to prevent being drafted into the Spanish Military to which he felt absolutely no allegiance and did not want to serve. Cristobal Gabiola (Mendexa, Bizkaia) could not afford to buy his way out of the Spanish military, as was allowed at the turn of the century, so he left for Boise, Idaho to stay with his brother. Julen “Julian” Achabal wanted to avoid serving in the Spanish army and left for the U.S. in 1956. Later, he proudly served in the United States Armed Forces. His brother Simon became a U.S. citizen before going back to Spain so he could not be arrested for not serving in the Spanish military.

Basques from Idaho served in the U.S. military during WWII and the Korean War. Pancho Aldape could not enlist because he was not a citizen, so he volunteered for



Going away party for Matilde Anduiza before she departed for school in the Basque Country, circa 1920. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

the draft. Many men, like Louie Echevarria who served in the Navy, practiced their English in the U.S. military. Women mentioned the radio, television, newspapers, and their children as their beginning language lesson teachers.

DISCRIMINATION: WAS IT POSITIVE? NEGATIVE? BOTH?

“I don’t remember any discrimination in Glens Ferry for being Basque”, stated Isabel Larrondo Jausoro. In Emmett before the Barber Basques moved there, Emmett Basques did feel a lot of discrimination according to John and Ruby Ysursa Basabe. Things improved when the Barber Basques moved to Emmett in 1935. It was easier having more Basques at school to help defend oneself when the name-calling started. Louie Arrizabala (Arrizabalaga) agreed, “No real prejudice later in Emmett, economic times were good and most people were happy because the economy was good. But yes, there was some prejudice, or at least name calling such as ‘black bastard Bascos’. We were dark skinned Catholics moving into WASP neighborhoods. Some people resented so many Basques having the jobs, you know there was high unemployment but because the Basques worked so hard and



were so dependable, the bosses kept the Basque workers and hired more of them”, said Louie. Teodoro Totoricagüena remembers that at the mines in Mullen, Idaho, the crew bosses walked down the line of men waiting to fill-in applications and asked if there were any Basques? “When we said, ‘yes, we are’, he took us to the front of the line”.

In Boise, Joe M. Uberuaga never experienced any discrimination personally. “I’d heard of people being called ‘black basco’, but with me it was the opposite. Everyone liked Basques. For some people it helped that they spoke Basque. They had a better chance to get a job. I always felt that Basques were respected in Boise. Never did have the feeling of discrimination, but you see we were white and looked like everybody else, not like the Chinese”, explained Joe. Because the first Basque immigrants worked hard and were generally honest people, they built up and earned respect. “Thanks go to that first generation for earning the respect of the communities where they lived. We all benefit from their hard work”, stated Horacio “Rash” Iglesias. He did suffer prejudice in Mountain Home. “We were Basque, foreigners, Catholic, spoke no English, and lived in a WASP community. We stayed on our side of the tracks. Basques are survivors. We learned”, he said. Rash vividly remembers being called “black bascos”, and that sometimes he and his friends had

to fight other kids and defend themselves, though mainly because they were Catholic and foreigners, and not necessarily because of their particular ethnicity. When Basque journalist Rafael Ossa Echaburu traveled through the United States later in the early 1960s, he published his conversations with both Basques and non-Basques. Another reporter from *The Idaho Daily Statesman* in Boise told him, “We feel very proud to have them here. They are good workers, intelligent, and formal. In our registries of delinquents, there are no Basque names” (Ossa Echaburu 1963:66).

Discrimination against a person is quite difficult to measure. There are no recorded detailed cases of numerous Basque people not being hired, or of being fired from a job specifically because they were Basque. There are no recorded cases of Basques being refused service at a business, or entrance to a school, or access to a private institution. This vacuum of documentation may be a result of earlier years practice when no matter the situation, no one filed grievances. Who would have responded? To this day, I have never found a legal case of discrimination filed in Idaho by a Basque person stating they were discriminated against *because of their Basque ethnicity*. In my study of Boise Basques conducted between 1996-1999, the overwhelming majority of participants in an anonymous questionnaire responded that they thought being Basque had actually *helped* them when applying for a job; in scholarship applications; when asking to rent an apartment or home; and when joining an organization or club. However, the current generations in Boise do believe they benefit from past generations’ activities and reputations. Basques proved themselves in the State of Idaho. It is also very important to remember that Basques worldwide mainly immigrated to Caucasian-Christian societies, and they ‘fit-in’ physically with the dominant population. There was no marker of difference in clothing or personal appearance to separate them in a crowd or at school.

Behavior of children and young adults at school, and entire societies during economic recessions, are altogether different, however. Several Basques have stated that they were resented for earning jobs when others did not. Many immigrants and first generation Basques said they were ridiculed for their English language skills and pronunciation. Others have mentioned that practicing the Catholic religion seemed to be a factor in discrimination. Basque sheepherders were often disliked and the targets of violence, but usually because of the public lands used and grazing methods utilized. It is almost impossible to know for sure if Basques received harsh treatment precisely *because they were Basque*, or if it was directed against their religion, their business practices, their lack of English, etc. When the majority of the population does not even know what “Basque” is, it is difficult to argue that they specifically treated these people differently.

“You know what? Even if there was discrimination, living here was a hell of a lot better than what they left”, Joe M. Uberuaga recalls. “There was always some kind food at home, and for some, that alone was better than their circumstance in the

Basque Country. We always slept in beds and not on the floor”. His father buying a motorcycle was an incredible accomplishment. He never would have been able to afford that in the Basque Country. He even was able to buy a five-bedroom house. “Dad bought the house at 310 Grove Street for \$5000 in the late 1930s. It had a full basement, dining room, kitchen, living room wood stove for heating, and a nice big porch where washing was done. The back door went to stairs that went to the basement. Upstairs was the family’s first *indoor* bathroom with a bathtub and toilet and a wash basin”.

COUNTING BASQUES: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSITIONS INFLUENCE AN END TO EMIGRATION

The 1970s and 1980s transition to a democratic Spain, consisting of seventeen autonomous regions with differing degrees of political and economic power, is



Uberuaga brothers and wives, circa 1920. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

being chronicled with numerous successes as well as difficulties. Much of the political oppression of Basque culture and politics publicly ceased, creating at least an expectation of democracy and political opportunity in *Euskadi* and separately in the Foral Community of *Nafarroa*- two of the seventeen autonomous communities. The entrance into the European Community and the conversion of the Basque industrial society to a post-industrial information society with a large service sector has created thousands of additional jobs. The open doors of European Union labor markets have facilitated Basques seeking employment and emigration to European countries rather than crossing the oceans to different continents where visas and work permits are required.

It is clear from interview information and questionnaire data that the latest stage of Basque emigration due to economic and political oppression has ended. Many scholars believe that without new immigration to the diaspora communities, the ability to maintain ethnic identity may become more difficult. This, however, assumes the traditional view of emigration being a one-way and one-time phenomenon; that emigration must be a physical move; that culture is stagnant; and that diaspora ethnicity necessarily must be synonymous with homeland ethnicity. This is not the case with the Basque diaspora as return migration is now becoming more common with descendants of Basques returning to *Euskal Herria* for study abroad programs, and returning to their roots. These long-term visits have resulted in various marriages of Old World with New World Basques, such as Toni Ansotegui and Alberto Bereciartu, and Michelle Alzola and José Luis Egiluz. Travel is much safer and cheaper than ever before, making visits practicable. New technology, such as the Internet, facilitates networks between Basques in *Euskal Herria* and Basques in other communities in the world. The Basque diaspora is going through a critical phase in its existence. The necessity of chain migration and the energy infused into a community by a new immigrant from *Euskal Herria* may be replaced by a surfing ‘virtual migrant’ of Internet communications and idea and information exchange. Diaspora Basques may no longer need new immigrants, nor to physically travel to the homeland. Perhaps, Basque ethnic identity, language, information etc., might be maintained through electronic communications without ever leaving one's home, a “downloading” of identity.

How many Basques are there in the United States? Census results show California has the largest Basque population by state boundaries. However, Basques are simply one more ethnic group of hundreds and are not as noticeable as they are in Idaho or Nevada where the overall population is much lower. We can examine the 2000, 1990 and 1980 Census statistics and compare the numbers of persons that have specifically defined themselves as Basque. The following table shows States with more than 800 respondents reporting themselves as “Basque”, “French-Basque”, or “Spanish-Basque”.

The total number of persons in the United States having defined themselves as Basques in 2000 was 57,793. This has increased from the numbers of 1990, which

were 47,956 and from 1980, which were 43,140. This reflects the number of people that specifically designated themselves as Basques on their Census paper form. However, in interviews with locals I have found that many people who do consider themselves as Basques did not mark it on the form. Some people did not understand the question, and others did not think it important. I would argue there are many more thousands of Basques all around the United States, although there is currently no other manner to obtain a scientific count State by State.

Table I. Basque Population of the United States for 1980, 1990 and 2000

State	Number of Basques Counted in the United States Census		
	1980	1990	2000
1. California	15,530	19,122	20,868
2. Idaho	4,332	5,587	6,637
3. Nevada	3,378	4,840	6,096
4. Oregon	2,253	2,257	2,627
5. Washington	1,134	1,770	2,665
6. Utah	873	1,422	1,361
7. Arizona	1,100	1,316	1,655
8. New York	1,426	1,300	1,252
9. Texas	887	1,248	1,691
10. Florida	859	1,189	2,127
11. Colorado	955	955	1,674

The Jordan Valley to Gooding area makes sense as a unit of study in place of a State, because there is a high concentration of Basques, but defining Boise, or the Boise area as the largest Basque colony outside of *Euskal Herria* is factually incorrect. The problem lies in the definition of *who* and/or *what* counts as being Basque. How many define themselves as Basques? How many are being defined by others as Basque because they carry a Basque surname? Do they know they are ancestrally Basque? Do they care? Do they maintain a Basque sense of identity? Over the years, several people in the Boise community have learned to speak Basque, have learned to play *pelota* and *pala*, have lived in and visited the Basque Country repeatedly, have promoted the Basque culture with all their energy, and have dedicated years to learning Basque music and Basque instruments and performed with the choirs and dance groups. Yet these people have been categorized as non-Basques and refused membership to the Euzkaldunak Incorporated because their parents had no Basque ancestry. While another person born to an “Aguirre” who does not speak Basque, has no interest in Basque culture or history or its maintenance, and does not frequent any activities of the Basque community would be considered Basque because they were born to a Basque. Can one *become* Basque? Each of the previous questions regarding inclusivity or exclusivity will need to be addressed by and for each generation. It seems that changes are likely on the horizon.



Yellow Pine, Idaho grave marker of an unknown shepherd. Photo by Elaine Nakano 1998. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

This history of the Basque community in the Boise area will introduce you to the “dreamers” and the “doers”, and the exceptional leaders who have performed both of these functions for the preservation of Basque culture and identity in Boise. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), there are too many individuals’ to extend the study to Idaho and the focus of these pages is on Boise. This is a part of the “Urazandi: Basques Across the Seas” international project to collect and publish research regarding the establishment of Basque institutions, associations, and cultural centers around the world. Boise was chosen in addition to New York, San Francisco, Mexico City, Caracas, Buenos Aires, Rosario, Santiago de Chile, Montevideo, Australia, Barcelona, Paris, and several more may continue the project in future years. I have researched and chronicled the phenomenal institutional and personal histories that make the Boise Basque community what it is today.

The Basques of the Boise area were the first in the United States to stage sports competitions focusing on weight lifting and carrying, and *pelota*, or handball games, dating to the early 1900s; the first to organize a formal Basque folk dancing group in Emmett in 1940, and the second (after New York in 1928) to organize and build a separate Basque Center for social and cultural maintenance purposes in 1949-50. Boise’s Basque associations have the largest memberships in the United States, and except for Argentina, the largest in the world. The Oinkari Basque Dancers have

traveled and performed for more audiences in more countries than any other Basque dance group outside of the Basque Country. The Basque Museum and Cultural Center is the only Basque museum in the United States. Boise has the only permanent and State Board of Education approved *ikastola*, or Basque language school, for children in the United States. Boise's Basque Block- the Basque Center, the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, the Anduiza Fronton, the Bar Gernika, and the Basque Marketplace- is unique in the entire world outside of the Basque Country's seven provinces. Each of these achievements and the additional accomplishments recorded here have needed "dreamers" to imagine the possibilities, and "doers" to actually get the work done. There is a well known and often repeated joke mentioned at Basque activities, "Whoever sets up and takes down the most tables and chairs gets to heaven the fastest". Variations include taking tickets; frying chorizos; learning Basque ... These pages are filled with individuals who have dreamt beyond what they themselves would have thought possible of building, and credit those who have volunteered years of their lives to make sure the details were implemented. The fifty-year anniversary motto for the Euzkaldunak Incorporated was, "Because of them, we are. Because of us, they will be". This book is dedicated to the "them" and the "us", in hopes that the "they" will know and understand their past. Eskerrik asko bihotzetik.

Basque Boarding

(02)

Hotels and Houses

Basque hotels and boarding houses in the United States served as places to obtain room and board, but more importantly were utilized as institutions where new immigrants could learn to acculturate to the unfamiliar customs and expectations of society, to meet other Basques, to consume authentic Basque style food, and to update themselves and local area Basques with regard to the current events in *Euskal Herria*. Most of the Boise boarding houses exclusively served Basque customers, and owners consciously maintained an ethnic environment to preserve the Basque language and sport of handball, or *pelota*, prepared Basque style foods, and helped conserve traditions and festivals of the homeland. They sponsored dances and *mus* card tournaments for Basques only. However, they also performed numerous functions of bridging Basques to their new host country. Rose Arregui Dick remembers that the kitchen of her parents' Delamar Hotel was also an informal employment office, matchmaking center, and gossip hotline. The Delamar House was originally built for banker Christopher W. Moore. It was sold in 1891 to Captain Joseph DeLamar and was later converted into the DeLamar Hotel (also spelled Delamar).

A NEED FOR A HOME

In the American West, the life of the typical Basque laborer of the 1860s to the 1940s included ranching and farming. In 1891, the Boise City Directory listed only thirty-five Basque surnames in a population of 4,400. In the 1900 national census sixty-one Basques were identified in Idaho (J. Echeverria 1999:167). It is likely that there were many more that would not have been listed in any official city directory and many that never filled out any census forms while out on the range. The majority of the immigrants to Idaho came from rural Bizkaian backgrounds, which helped them adapt to a similar work environment. In 1910, eighty-eight percent of Basques in the western States worked in livestock as itinerant and transhumance herders and cowboys. Transhumance and itinerant animal care meant that sheepherders and cattle ranchers would take their bands and herds across the Idaho range lands, constantly moving to feed on the available grass in the dry, often desert-like, conditions. According to John Aldecoa Wilson, “There were no fenced-in corrals or fields where sheep or cattle stayed, but hundreds and hundreds of miles of empty prairies and mountainsides where the animals searched for feed”. During the winter months as snow covered the higher elevations and the mountain grasses, the animals were brought down into the valleys to graze on available plants. In the spring and summer months, the opposite occurred. As the heat dried up the range plants sheepherders took their animals higher into the hills and mountains, where the cool nights maintained water sources and plant life for animals to graze.

In Boise, boarding house and rooming house customers were most likely in the sheep business and they shared information about unfriendly and threatening cowboys and about public mandates outlawing public grazing. In 1934, the Taylor Grazing Act passed the United States Congress with the objective of protecting public lands from overgrazing by itinerant sheepherders. It stated that animal grazing on public lands would be reserved for private landowners, and this exclusion of Basque herd owners but not landowners marked the history of Basque migration. A decade earlier, Boise boarders had discussed the National Origins Act, which established quotas for new immigration based on a group’s total numbers already in the United States. The low numbers of Basque residents or citizens in the United States resulted in low numbers allowed in for new migration. By the end of the 1930s these two acts of Congress, in addition to the effects of the Depression, combined to slow Basque immigration, which slowed business to the Basque hotels and boarding houses.

“Winter months with sheep in the valleys meant the herders were in town and needed a place”, according to hotel owner Laura Arguinchona, also known as “Ama” to many of her boarders. The work cycles of the year saw spring as the time for sheep shearing in the valley, and herders and shearers needed lodging after a day’s work. Those who brought the wool into Boise to send by train to market and commercial

centers also needed a place to stay. Their patterns of work helped establish the need for boarding houses and hotels, and statistics show that in the United States, generally within five years after the first Basque entered an area and initiated a sheep business, a Basque boarding house was established. Boarding houses in Boise were generally in the same downtown area, from Idaho to Front Streets, and between Third and Fourteenth Streets. They were often located near the train stations so that newcomers could easily read the Basque names on the signs, and usually someone from the boarding house would meet the trains with greetings in *euskera*, looking to help a fellow Basque and also for possible customers. Imagine how Enrique “Henry” Alegria felt in 1911 after traveling across the Atlantic Ocean for eleven days, arriving in New York and continuing on by train to St. Louis, Ogden, Nampa, and arriving in Boise to see Agustin and Mateo Arregui waiting on the train platform and shouting to the passengers in Basque. Jack Anduiza, who owned a boarding house on 9th and Idaho and later at 619 Grove, and Benito Ysursa of the Modern Hotel, also met Basque passengers arriving in Boise to help any who needed it.

Boarding house businesses changed hands often, and also changed locations. One of Boise’s most famous boarding house owners was Mateo Arregui, from Berriatua, Bizkaia. Mateo and Adriana Arregui married in the Basque Country and upon arriving in Boise they began managing the Oregon Hotel, built by Antonio Azcuenaga in 1900, on Front Street across from the Oregon Short Line Railroad depot. Next, they managed the Capitol Rooms at 706 1/4 Idaho Street in 1905. They sold it in 1912 to José and Crusa Arostegui and Pedro and Maria Epeldi. The Arreguis then managed the Modern Rooming House at 613 Idaho Street. In 1912, the Modern Rooming House had 238 Basque herders who lived there, or left personal items, according to Arthur Hart (Statesman Sept 25, 1986). The Arreguis sold it to Ventro Urresti, who later sold to Eustaquio and Guillerma Ysursa Ormaechea, who sold in 1925 to her brothers Benito and Asunción Ysursa, and Tomas and Antonia Ysursa. Mateo Arregui then ran the DeLamar at 807 Grove Street with second wife Maria Dominga Goicoechea, and later they moved this business to 704 North 7th Street until they left the business in 1945. Laura and Hilario Arguinchona then ran the DeLamar from 1945 to 1961.

“HOME AWAY FROM HOME”

The boarding houses around Idaho were family homes of the owners and also served as family residences for the wives and children of sheepherders. Laura Arguinchona remembers how each of the boarders treated her two sons as though they were their own younger brothers. Those herders who married needed a place for their wives to stay and often those wives needed the help of a midwife to assist in the birth a child. Even hotel owners birthed their children right there in their own homes. Evangelina “Ruby” Ysursa Basabe was born at the Modern Rooming Hotel, owned by

her parents Benito and Asunción Camporredondo Yursa. Asunción Yursa, working all morning preparing food for the boarders' meals, began labor contractions and with no time to go to the hospital, delivered her daughter Ruby with the midwife help of her sister-in-law. As Ruby Basabe describes it, "Mother said that Dr. George Collister came by later to make sure Mama and baby were okay, but those Basque women were tough. I mean they never thought of complaining. They just did what they had to do and got right back to work".

Pancho Aldape lived in Uberuaga's boarding house while attending classes in Boise at Central School. Regina Echeverria Bastida came from Ondarroa and worked as a babysitter in a Mountain Home boarding house until she married in 1921. Anunci Jayo was brought to the United States with the aid of her uncle, to care for children at the Josefa and Peru Anchustegui boarding house in Mountain Home, and then later at the Capitol Hotel in Boise, where she met her husband, Anastasio. She went on to own several different boarding house businesses with Anastasio, and she also



Letemendi boarding house. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

midwived for several births. John Urquidi remembers his friend Hilario “Larry” Uriona entertaining children, “Larry used to do cartwheels across the dance floor at the houses and the silver dollars in his pockets would crash to the floor rolling in every direction and sending children scrambling to catch them”.

The Basque boarding houses in Boise’s downtown served as hospitals, sports facilities, employment agencies, interpreting and translating centers, post offices and message centers, and depositories for herders’ valuables. Many practiced their English and received help with citizenship information from Victoria Letemendi Urresti and Espe Alegria. The Basques also wanted a place to stay when they came to Boise to visit the doctor or dentist, make bank transactions, or wire money home to their families. Mateo and Adriana Arregui, owners of the Delamar hotel beginning in 1913, kept banking ledgers for their boarders with their records of bank deposits, withdrawals, and debts owed. According to granddaughter Liz Dick Hardesty, “Several of their customers would not have known how to write, and the trust they gave to the Arreguis was of all their worldly possessions”.

They were “marriage mills” where young Basque men and women met, sang, danced, and fell in love. Sisters Mary and Isabel Larrondo, originally of Glens Ferry and later living in Meridian, “came into town to dance whenever we could”. Isabel and Jim Jausoro, from Nampa, met at one of the many evenings of music and dance and began their almost 50 year relationship. Coincidentally, many of these young couples came from the same hometowns, or their farmsteads were within a few miles of each other, and they had never met in the old country. The had moved thousands of miles across the oceans and continents and ended up in the same State and same town and upon meeting at one of the Basque houses on Grove or Idaho streets, discovered they were from the same tiny valley. Luis Arrizabala’s parents, Anastasio and Gregoria, met at Madarieta’s boarding house though their hometowns are only a few miles apart. Rash Iglesias’ parents, Rufina Nachiondo and Saturnino Iglesias, met at the Mountain Home Hotel Basque boarding house. Even though their homes in Ispaster and Ea in the Basque Country are so close to each other, they probably never would have met had they stayed in *Euskal Herria*. They married in Idaho in 1918.

ENTERTAINING BASQUES

Entertainment for Basques on and near the lilac-lined Grove Street was common. Felipe Aldape played the accordion at the boarding house he owned with his wife, Maria Josefa Aspiri Aldape. In the 1930s and 1940s, John Urlezaga regularly played piano and accordion at the Anduiza and Letemendi boarding houses. Lucy Garatea remembers that decades earlier at the Star Hotel, “there was a piano to put in a nickel and so always was music to dance to, lots of people in the boarding houses



with music and dancing”. Many of the boarding houses had Christmas dances, and clients strolled from place to place: Letemendi’s to Uberuaga’s to Anduiza’s to the Modern. “The Chico Club, across the street from today’s Basque Center, was a great dancing spot”, remembers Dorothy Bicandi Aldecoa, “Basil and I went there all the time when we were dating”. Benito Ysursa taught his children, Ramon and Ruby, to Basque dance and they performed for the boarders to their father’s guitar. Benito played at his Modern Rooms every night, but once they had moved to the Valencia, he worked in the kitchen every night. Ysursa bought a recording machine to make vinyl albums and Leo Basini and Vic Arego also played for those recordings. Ruby still has his records. Ruby and Ramon and cousin Richard Iriondo even put on plays for the boarders. “There was always music and always dancing and card playing, and even a few drinks to be served”.

Prohibition did not stop Basques from making or drinking alcohol. Joe M. Uberuaga remembers, “They needed to sing with others in order to relieve worries and loneliness and they wanted to socialize, dance, and celebrate festivities. During prohibition, José Uberuaga, my uncle the owner of the Uberuaga boarding house, was jailed in the basement of the Ada County Courthouse. Oh yes, there were bootleggers”. Serafina Uberuaga Mendiguren recalls that she was allowed to visit



Oregon Rooms wedding dinner 1917. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

her father in jail on Sundays. Rash Iglesias explained, “During the depression and prohibition some Basques had to bootleg to make money. Several brought wine from Nevada and hid it in their cellars. Then would sell it by the bottle to other people. The sheriff of Elmore County, Art Stevens, would warn several of the Basques to let them know when the feds would come in. Young Basques visited other Basques that were caught and in jail for bootlegging. Art Stevens was very good to the Basque people in Elmore County. He saw how ridiculous the whole thing was”. Sebastian Salutregui was refused his “special secret” drink at Erquiaga’s boarding house in Boise because the bartender thought he was “American”. His blonde hair, blue eyes, and red mustache necessitated an older Basque vouching for him as an insider, and Sebastian got his drink. There definitely was bootlegging in the boarding houses. Joe M. Uberuaga remembers, “All of them sold liquor. Twenty-five cents for a shot of whiskey. If they had boarders, yes, it went on in every house. Now, prostitution? I don’t know. I think ‘Crooked nose Billie’ at the Belmont Rooms had prostitutes, but that was not run by Basques”.

Thousands of chips were bet, won and lost, in nightly card games of *briska* and *mus*, and later at night in games of poker. There were also wild parties such as described by Enrique “Henry” Alegria in his book *75 Years of Memoirs* (Alegria 1981).

He describes a week in the fall of 1914 or 1915 when Dionicio Leon and Pete Mendieta snatched Anastasio Jayo's tomcat and Manuel Eregoití cooked it for a "Witches Midnight Dinner" that lasted all through the night. Joe M. Uberuaga remembers walking past the Ybar house on the corner of Grove Street and Capitol Boulevard as a child, and an overflow of boarders would sit outside playing cards. "You could see the smoke coming out of the rooms and hear the chips being used in the card games. I wanted so badly to see what was going on in there! It was quite a fascinating place for a young boy". The Anduiza house boasted handball games and allowed boarders to play cards in another card room. There was a permanent long green bench in front of the Anduiza's with the boarders sitting on it, talking and socializing.

DAILY LIFE IN THE BASQUE HOTELS AND BOARDING HOUSES

Between 1891 and 1920 there were seventeen different boarding houses in Boise managed at various times by different families. During the decade of the 1920s there were thirteen. The boarding houses supplied economic opportunities for



Modern Hotel poolhall 1925. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

employment for women. These ethnic institutions served a myriad of purposes including promoting functional, emotional, and psychological well-being. Women had opportunities for financial independence and hundreds worked as supplies buyers, preparing and serving meals, finishing laundry, light house maintenance, cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea was even hired as a hostess at Eustaquio and Guillerma Ormaechea's place, Barbero's, to ensure that boarders danced, had fun playing cards, and enjoyed their stays. However, for the majority of women, working at a boarding house equaled seven days of unrelenting physical work preparing meals, laundering by hand, ironing, and cleaning up after the boarders. "Mama had fifty rooms at the Modern Rooms Hotel and we cooked family style lunches and dinners", said Ruby Basabe. Maria Josefa Aspiri Aldape spent her 1911 wedding night scrubbing the boarding house floors and preparing for the customers. The women owners and managers, such as Laura Arguinchona and Leandra Ondarza Letemendi, named "*hoteleras*" in Jeronima Echeverria's research, became surrogate mothers to hundreds who were not only dinner customers or boarders, but also close friends and confidants. Cruza Arostegui ran the Capitol boarding house for almost fifty years with the help of Maria Epeldi, and together they counseled and listened to hundreds of worried and lonely fellow Basques who were far from their homes and with no family. The boarding house environment was indeed a "home away from home" (J. Echeverria 1999).

Rufina Nachiondo Iglesias was a midwife with Josefa Anchustegui at the Mountain Home Hotel. During WWI the flu epidemic hit Idaho and Mrs. Iglesias also nursed a lot of young Basque boys. She never ever turned anyone away. During the flu epidemic of 1917 and 1918, many Basques were cared for at the Boise boarding houses as well, and children left orphaned by the flu were taken into the boarding houses, as were Henry Alegria's younger brother and sister. In the 1920s through the 1950s, when Basques were ill they called on Dr. George Collister and Dr. Pittinger. They made house calls to the boarding houses and to private residences and were respected and loved by Boise area Basques. Dr. William Koelsch was later the favorite and trusted physician before medicine in Boise expanded into specialized fields, according to Ruby Ysursa Basabe.

Born at 211 South 6th street at the Saracondi Boarding House, Joe M. Uberuaga remembers the scent of lilac trees on Grove Street marking the entrance of spring every year. Children played in the lot where the Basque Center is now. Several remember creating a game of Basque bowling with pins and a dug-out alley. The alley was the garden of the Uberuaga boarding house and included lilac bushes, fruit trees, and chicken coops. Hermenegilda Uberuaga kept a flower and vegetable garden, which produced countless jars of peas, beans, tomatoes, cherries, and peaches. Boarding house owners canned fruits and vegetables and even made their own chorizos. Families and friends all helped each other. The Uberuagas would buy a whole pig and use the entire animal for various dishes. Their in-laws at the Saracondi's would use half a pig only because they had fewer boarders at 311 Grove.

Chorizos were made once a year and kept in crocks of pig lard to preserve them. Projecting food consumption for months to a year at a time was extremely difficult but important to the business budget. Most also had a wood shed and/or a coal shed, and owners had to plan to have sufficient supplies for heat and for the kitchen use. “We had an outhouse, no indoor plumbing. Bathed in a big galvanized tub of sorts. Long table in the kitchen for meals together. Dad had a whip, but never used it”, remembers Joe M. Uberuaga.

Lucy Aboitiz Garatea remembers that the boarding house food was similar to what women prepared in the Basque Country: *tripa callos*, or animal intestine, codfish with pimentos, chicken, mashed potatoes, garbanzos and red beans, and beef. But the dishes did not always taste the same. Most Basques missed the seafood that was fresh and readily available in the Basque Country. But in Boise, it was difficult to find any kind of fresh fish and once it had been frozen it was not the same. The Chinese immigrants sold fresh vegetables right from their wagons to the boarding houses and the bakeries and dairies also sold their bread and milk directly to the kitchens of the houses. The women cooks went to small butcher shops to select their own meats.



Modern Rooming House 1920s kitchen workers. Photo courtesy of the Arregui Family Collection.

The women also made their own bread at home much of the time. Many interviewees still recall the great memories of their mothers baking bread and the aroma of hot bread is connected to their mothers, even sixty to seventy years later. Usually they would make enough bread for several days. Potatoes, beans, and soups were always part of a meal, and on Fridays, families had halibut or some sort of fish if they could afford it. If not, potato tortillas with onion and green pepper were the usual fare, along with canned fruit (lots of peaches, apples, pears and cherries) and on special occasions perhaps rice pudding with cinnamon sticks. “Eggs were quite expensive so flans and custard were special treats, but I remember every Sunday we had garbanzos”, remembers Petra Uberuaga Cengotita.

Ruby Basabe remembers cleaning the dining room of the Valencia every morning and getting it ready for the daily lunch crowd. She wore a black skirt and white blouse and worked until about 2 p.m. “We started all over again around 5 p.m.”. She loved working for her parents and being around all the Basque people. She met all the old timers and befriended many non-Basques because her mother’s cooking was so good that people from all over Boise were customers. The Yursa’s had to hire an additional cook to help their busy restaurant and Atemasio “Charlie” Ziloaga was hired to assist in the kitchen. “Sundays were especially busy downstairs in the boarding house, but we always had food prepared”.

END OF AN ERA

José and Felipa Uberuaga managed one of the first Basque businesses in Boise as the Star Rooming House at 512 Idaho Street in 1903, until they sold it to Francisco and Gabina Aguirre in 1908. The Star also had a fronton in the back of the house. Years later, Juan “Jack” and Juana Anduiza secured a building permit for a new hotel and enclosed fronton at 619 Grove Street in September, 1914. The customers’ rooms of the Anduiza boarding house are still evident where today’s offices remain, and the kitchen, dining room, and living room were in the basement next to the actual court. After closing as a boarding house, the building was owned by Briggs Engineering for almost fifty years, and then purchased by Adelia Garro Simplot and Richard Hormaechea. The upstairs rooms are now leased to private businesses and the *frontón* is again used as a court, but the former kitchen, dining and living areas remain in disrepair and are not utilized.

At the end of Basque immigration to Boise in the late 1950s, about 200 Basque herders were living and working out of the Boise boarding houses. In 1956, Julian Achabal remembers ten to fifteen people lived at the Letemendi’s house permanently, and at Christmas time there were about twenty-five to thirty people staying there. Boarders needed to hear news from recent arrivals, speak to others in their own language, and smell familiar foods. Today there are no Basque boarding



Joe, Phil, and Sav Uberuaga prepare firewood for their parents boarding house kitchen, 1930s.
Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

houses functioning in Boise. Though several of the buildings have survived “downtown redevelopment” and the wrecking ball, Basque emigration is limited to single individuals coming to study at Boise State University, or to learn English, and is not usually permanent. A few recent permanent immigrants are the results of marriage to a person from Boise, and they have arrived into an entirely different economy and social network. They have not needed a boarding house. However, there are those Basques in Boise who believe that if there was a Basque boarding house operating, additional Basques from *Euskal Herria* would come to study or visit, infusing the Basque community with updated versions of culture and current events and examples of what it means to be Basque. “Build it and they will come?” Perhaps. In the Boise Basque community, anything is possible.

Economic for Basque

(03)

Opportunities Immigrants

SHEEP OUTFITS AND SHEEPHERDING

The shepherd as a symbol of Basque ethnicity is a factor in Basque identity throughout the United States and is perpetuated by Basques as well as by non-Basques. It is also essential to note that though in the new millennium very few Basque families remain in the sheep business, the symbol of the historic Basque as shepherd continues on in the ethnic identity of Basques and is a part of a shared ethnic tradition that binds contemporary Basques. Elements of sheep raising in *Euskal Herria* and, separately, those used in Idaho have not changed much in the last century, and though the verbs used here are past tense, they could very well be present tense and still be factually correct. Shepherding techniques vary in different regions of the United States primarily because of weather patterns and seasons, geography and available grazing lands- among other factors. In southern Idaho and eastern Oregon the typical yearly cycle repeats itself each calendar year, and this repetition aided other Basques in determining their own busy seasons at the boarding houses, in the lambing sheds, hauling hay and feed, and taking lambs to market.

The United States Forest Service originally controlled regulations and fees for grazing rights to public lands. Though in early years, they were almost non-existent or not enforced. The deteriorating rangelands were arguably a result of the overgrazing of sheep and cattle, and there was a perception that Basque sheep outfits overgrazed the lands without care because they planned to return soon to the Basque Country with their profits. Serious drought conditions in the 1930s added to the tension in ranching. Encouraged by cattle ranchers in Colorado, in 1934 the U.S. Congress passed the Taylor Grazing Act, which set required fees and specific grazing periods for public lands utilization by itinerant herders, and put remaining public lands under federal control. Significantly for Basques, it also stipulated that those applying for public land use had to own a certain amount of private property to be eligible. Local ranchers who did own land determined allotments of land tracts for animal grazing, and they often shut out the itinerant Basques.

This legislation greatly changed the ability of new emigrants to work hard, save their money, and slowly purchase sheep to create their own businesses. Whereas prior to 1934, hundreds of Basques had come to the west and built their sheep businesses grazing wherever they chose to, and by systematically buying more sheep with savings from no grazing costs, now they were required to pay grazing fees, would have to stay on a certain allotted piece of land, and would have to buy land in order to qualify for these rights. Though some historians and authors have depicted this as the beginning of the end of Basque sheep businesses, several of the herders and owners interviewed commented that it was a positive step in regulating and organizing an otherwise wasteful practice. They blamed the fall of the sheep business on the Great Depression and later competition from Argentina and Australia. John Irastorza Urquidi explained, “Before the Taylor Grazing Act, more



Moving the sheepcamp and supplies. Photo courtesy of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

than five different sheep outfits sent their sheep out around the same time of year, moving their herders and bands as in a game of chess, competing for the best grazing lands”.

TRANSHUMANCE OR ITINERANT SHEEP RAISING

Basque homeland sheepherding usually involved 10-25 animals, with 100 head considered a large band, and animals grazed within walking distance of the farmstead and stayed in the same area. Very few Basque immigrants to the Boise area had any sheepherding experience at all, and if they did, their past practice of caring for a few animals while returning to their homes for lunch and at night was no help for what they were about to encounter.

Transhumance, or itinerant, sheep raising involved constantly moving the band of sheep to where the feed and water were available. High mountain pasturage in Idaho was readily available during the summer months where it was cool and there were mountain springs and creeks with available water. Sheep do not forage or dig through the snow to get to the grass; they only eat what is visible and above the snow. Therefore, the herders would have to begin their decline from the mountains toward the valleys at the first snowfall. If they were surprised by snow, workers had to haul hay to where the sheep had bedded. A blizzard or sudden heavy snowfall could result in an inability to move the sheep fast enough to find available feed and water, ending with a loss of sheep and lambs.

In the United States, each sheepherder’s band typically numbered 2000 head of sheep and lambs total, and could be as high as 3000 head. Bands and herder needed to move several miles each day because of the scarce feed, especially in the desert grazing land. Simon Achabal worked hauling water everyday. “There were 8000 sheep divided into five different bands, so there were five camp tenders with all the food and necessities, and five sheepherders with horses, moving everyday to find more feed for the animals. I filled water tanks with creek water as early in the morning as possible. I’d get one band watered and return to the creek and refill the tank and get another band watered before noon. All five bands had to drink everyday. You know sheep are like people; they have to eat and drink every day no matter what”.

One man was responsible for making certain his approximately 2000 animals were watered and fed properly, and he had to protect them from straying and from predatory animals such as coyotes, cougars, and bears. These young emigrants were completely unprepared for these responsibilities. Andres “Andrew” Erquiaga immigrated from Ispaster in the 1920s and immediately after arriving in Boise, he was taken directly to the Andy Little Sheep Company headquarters in Emmett, and

outfitted to care for his band of sheep. They took him straight to the mountains with his provisions, showed him where the sheep were, and said they would be back in a month. He cried every single night from overwhelming frustration, loneliness, and from fright at the sounds of the howling coyotes. Andres Erquiaga was sixteen years old.

Decades of Basque herders had begun in much the same manner as did Erquiaga. Potential shepherders contacted the Western Range Association to obtain a work petition for a five-year contract, which enabled them to work in the U.S. without citizenship. In later years, only a three-year contract was available. Alternatively, they entered the country with a letter of hire demonstrating they had paid employment, usually from a relative or family friend. Juan Hormaeachea arrived in New York from Mendata in 1955, but before being allowed to depart Euskadi, his hands had to pass inspection. “To prove that I was a shepherd and deserved to enter the U.S. with a shepherd’s contract, I had to show that my hands were full of calluses”. These men traveled to the western United States without any large scale ranching or farming experience, and suddenly found that the romantic dream of being their own boss and working for riches might actually be a nightmare. Leon Echevarria and Justo Larrea worked for Smokey McLeod near Delamar, and they said the worst problem to overcome was the loneliness. Teles Hormaeachea’s first pay in 1925 was \$60 a month in Stockton, California. He did not go to town for five years in order to save all his money. Hilario Larrondo worked in shepherding in the 1920s and according to his daughter, Isabel Larrondo Jausoro, often said it was, “the best place to be if you want to go crazy”.

It could also be a place of danger. Julian Larrinaga herded sheep for Ramon Iriondo near Silver City in the 1920s and had several problems with the cowboys. They stole from him, burnt his tent, and they actually shot him in the foot once. For Julian, being called “black basco” was nothing compared to that. Sebastian Salutregui recounted his problems with cowboys near Hill City. His boss had warned him that there were a few particularly mean cowboys who had lassoed a shepherd and pulled him behind their horses for quite a distance, nearly killing him. One day two cowboys appeared and threw a lasso at him. Sebastian grabbed his 30/30 rifle, loaded it and pointed it at them. They raised their hands, left, and he never saw them again.

In the sheep business, the ewes were productive and profitable for approximately eight years. Their teeth would wear down from grazing and they were slower to keep up with the constant moving of the band as they aged. The gestation period for a lamb is approximately four and a half months. Therefore, the sheep men would time the breeding of the bucks and the ewes so that their early lambing season would fall at the beginning of February. If the ewes were all impregnated within a few weeks, their lambs would also be born within a few weeks, and the organization of lambing would be much more orderly. Those sheep businesses that



Agustín Uriarte 1950.
Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea
Collection. Basque Museum
and Cultural Center.

lambing in early February had to have hay ready and build lambing sheds where the mother ewes would give birth protected from the cold. Lambing sheds generally consisted of wooden buildings, 100 feet by 25 feet in area, with small partitioned sections where mother and baby lamb, or her twin lambs, were put together so they would bond with each other. If a ewe's lamb died, the outer skin would be removed and wrapped securely over a twin that would then be separated from its mother and given for care to the first ewe. The mother ewe would think it was her own lamb because of the strong sense of smell from the skin of her deceased lamb, and would nurse and care for it. Florencio "Pancho" Aldape remembers, "I worked in the lambing sheds for three years and hated every minute of it. I was scared to death". Julian Achabal said, "The Wilbur Wilson Hammett Livestock Company had about thirty-three young men- mostly Basque- working in the lambing sheds between Bruneau and Hammett. It was very tiring and stressful work because so many things could go wrong".

Early lambing was more expensive for the sheep company because of the costs of constructing the sheds, the human labor involved in feeding and watering the ewes and their lambs, and the costs of hay. The young lambs were castrated at about three weeks old because a castrated lamb brought tastier and higher quality meat and the price would be higher at the slaughterhouse. The sheds were

down in the valleys in the lighter snowfall regions and also closer to town. The boarding house managers knew which sheep outfits had early lambing and how it would affect their businesses with extra workers coming and going and they prepared accordingly.

Late lambing was utilized more by those sheep men who grazed in the desert lands where the temperatures are a little warmer. They timed their breeding seasons by introducing the bucks to the ewes in the early winter so that their lambing season was mid April. By that time of year in the high desert, ewes could give birth to their lambs in fairly good weather conditions and no sheds were needed. There would be abundant spring grasses growing for feed, and there was no need to hire extra laborers. However, the problems came from the coyotes attacking the newborn lambs. Shepherders kept firearms for their own physical protection from wild animals and also in order to protect the lambs from predators. Agustin Abadia remembered coyotes, cougars, and snakes when herding north of Grand View. Once a cougar killed thirteen sheep in his care in just one night. With only a camp tender and a shepherd to manage a band of sheep, no chances could be taken. Owners had to decide if they wanted to take the chance of late



Wood Creek lambing sheds Grandview, Idaho 1936. Photo courtesy of John Urquidi Sr. Collection.

lambing on the range and accept the average one percent loss of new lambs to the coyotes, or, to spend the extra money for early lambing sheds, but be almost assured of safe lambs.

“Hampshire”, “Suffolk”, “Merino”, and “Ramblet”, sheep were loaded onto trucks and then into train cars and shipped to market. Merino lambs had fine wool but not a high quality of meat. Hampshires had better meat but were a weaker animal in the rough Idaho conditions. Sheepmen also had to decide if they wanted to make their profits in meat or wool, and which breeds of sheep to raise. Early lambs could be sent to market earlier, bringing in more money from heavier, fatter lambs. Chicago had the prime slaughterhouses in the 1920s and 1930s, but with the improvement in railroad transportation, Denver became a more convenient location for westerners. While before the 1930s, herders brought their livestock right down to the railway cars themselves, by the 1940s, sheep were loaded onto trucks and then taken to the rail stations. Mountain Home was one of the most important livestock loading points in the western United States. According to brothers Segundo, Urbano, Leandro and Teodoro Totorica (Toticagüena) who often accompanied their father José, sheep were shipped by rail from Mountain Home and Nampa to Green River, Wyoming where they were unloaded, fed, and watered in massive corrals right at the train junction. Guards kept watch twenty-four hours a day to prevent any mix-up between sheep bands, though most were already branded. The next day they were loaded again and sent to the slaughterhouses in Chicago. The same plan worked for those being sent to Omaha, Nebraska slaughterhouses.

It was important that the sheep arrived in good shape because the price between buyer and seller was set at the slaughterhouse when the buyer could actually see the product. In later years, sheep sent to Denver went directly to the slaughterhouses without the need for an overnight stay. “In later years, buyers came directly to Idaho and set a buying price before shipping”, according to John Aldecoa Wilson. “We had people like Harold T. ‘Buck’ Jones who came to Boise from the east coast- he later married Juanita Uranga- and worked as a wool buyer out of the Idanha Hotel”. During WWII, Buck Jones was still in the wool business working for a firm in Denver, but he eventually left it to live in Boise permanently.

Some Basque herders were swindled out of a fair salary because they were not legal immigrants and bosses knew they could pay lower wages or threaten turning them in to immigration authorities. In other cases, herders worked with no cash salary, expecting to be part owners of their own bands someday. Sebastian Salutregui explained that the first \$2500 he ever earned, he never received. After working for his boss for three years, the business went bankrupt. Other herders did not speak English well enough to understand the pay process. After Pete Barinaga’s three-year herding contract in Battle Mountain was completed, he owned a horse, a saddle, a bedroll, a duffle bag of clothes and shoes, and his boss paid him his final \$90 salary. Later bosses paid him one dollar a day, and payday



Pete Barinaga Sr. with coyote pelts. 1944 Lee, Nevada. Photo courtesy of Pete Barinaga Jr. Collection.

was once every three months. Pete earned extra money as a coyote trapper in Nevada and Idaho. Teles Hormaechea, Epifanio Aguirre, and Saturnino Lanbarri were each fired from their herding positions at Smoke Creek Sheep Company in 1924 because the outfit had hired Mexicans who were willing to work for lower salaries. They did not last, and the Basques were re-hired in the spring of 1925. Most herders sent money back to their parents and families in the Basque Country. Decades later, when José Mari Artiach starting working for Wilbur Wilson's Hammett Livestock Company he was paid once a year right before Christmas. The first year he kept only enough money for necessities for himself and sent a \$1000 cashier's check home to his father. His father was in the hospital and died shortly after from complications, but José Mari knew how extremely proud his father was to receive that gift.

The solitude of the range and mountains was broken once a week for an hour when on Sunday nights all radios tuned to hear Espe Alegria, "the voice of the Basques". Jose Mari Artiach listened to Espe's program every Sunday night no matter where he was on the range. *The Basque Program* on KGEM and then KBOI, broadcast information and current events from the Basque homeland, weather reports for herders, traditional Basque folk music as well as new contemporary Basque music

*Espectación “Espe” Alegria,
“Voice of the Basques” from
the 1950s to 1983, in her
radio broadcasting studio.*

Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea
Collection. Basque Museum
and Cultural Center.



for her audience, which included the western states, Canada, and Mexico. Espe Alegria retired May 30, 1982 after twenty-six years of broadcasting in Basque. She had continued the 1950s radio programs of Julian Lachiondo and Cecil Jayo, and Iñaki Eiguren continued after Espe. Iñaki Eiguren’s program aired at 10:30 pm on Sunday nights, also on KBOI, and was more convenient for those who normally visited the Basque Center on Sunday evenings for card playing, although some then complained that it was too late. This consistent Sunday night program was the only source of news and information for herders, and other Basques, who generally spoke no English. Area Basques who traveled to the homeland would bring back personal news about their towns and villages and bought 45 records and phonograph albums to increase Espe’s available selection.

There are many impressive economic success stories of Basques in the sheep industry such as those of Juan Bautista Achabal (who changed his name to John B. Archabal to make it easier for the existing population to say and spell) and his wife Benedicta “Bene” Aldecoa Urrusuno; J.D. Aldecoa and Sons; Totorica Sheep Company; Wood Creek Sheep Company; Aguirre and Sons; Bruneau Sheep Company; Bengochea Sheep Company; and Anchusteguis etc. Basilio Aldecoa got his start from his father, who was a partner with John Archabal since 1903. In 1933

he began working summers with his father throughout his high school years and when he graduated he commenced to working full time on the ranch. Basilio's wife Dorothy said, "He loved the sheep business. Until October 1994, Basil went to the ranch every day except Sundays. Loved it. His nephew John Wilson would take him every morning".

There are many more accounts of Basques who worked as herders for Basques and non-Basques, but who chose not to establish themselves as owners and left the sheep business as soon as they could afford to. The importance of the sheep business and of the sheepherders themselves has not been forgotten by the next generation of Basque teachers, business owners, lawyers, and engineers. They helped build the economy of the state of Idaho and provided for themselves and their families. They worked honorably and established a reputation for Basques as honest, responsible, trustworthy, frugal, and dependable. Every Memorial Day, Marie Basabe Alder and Ellie Ysursa visit Dry Creek cemetery to decorate the graves of Basque sheepherders who have no family in Boise. Ruby Ysursa Basabe said, "I am so proud of my daughter and niece for not forgetting their heritage".

THE BASQUES OF BARBER MILL TOWN

In the early 1900s, many of the Basque men who had been working in the sheep business found new employment with the Boise-Payette Lumber Company, later Boise-Cascade. A company town was created as Barber Town, Idaho in 1906 consisting of solely company workers and their families, about four miles east of Boise on the road to Luck Peak north of the present Barber Dam. Barber was a town of about 110 homes and 700 people, with its own elementary school, a hotel and pool hall, a general store and post office. During the 1920s and until the mid 1930s, the Basque families made up almost 20% of the population of the town. These Basque families were very close-knit and socialized with each other often. The Basque women guided each other with everything from grocery shopping and sewing circles to attending doctor visits and assisting the birthing of children. Former resident Luis Arrizabala remembers that his family "rented a square company house, bought supplies from the company store using script, went to church in the company school house, and took baths every Saturday night in a galvanized tub where the kids shared the same bath water heated on the wood stove" (Basque Museum and Cultural Newsletter, November 1998, p.5).

Luis Arrizabala's father, Anastasio Arrizabalaga (who dropped the letters "ga" at the end of his surname to make it easier for non-Basques), came to the American West without personally knowing anyone in Boise. "He just knew there were a lot of Basques and had a sheepherding five-year work contract. Later he got a job with the mill", explained Luis. The Arrizabala family spoke Basque at home and his parents

did not know English. Many Basque children at Barber did not pass their courses at school because they did not have the English skills. Basques from Barber came into Boise often. Luis tells stories of riding the Intermountain Railroad into Boise to visit the boarding houses on Grove Street, which were like a second home to him. Except for the Barber schoolhouse, his entire world was a Basque world.

Barber Basques had their own social gatherings and would get together to walk up into the hills and have a giant picnic together. The Basque families would also entertain each other. They walked everywhere, as no children had bicycles, and certainly no family could afford a car. Luis remembers that they usually walked the seven miles into town. “We were very clannish. We have a very unusual relationship still. We were like brothers and sisters. We were together all the time and our Basques were our family. Even to this day, there is a special relationship. I can’t explain it. Even today in 2002 we have a Barber picnic and get together”.

Luis’ father did not want him to be a shepherd or to work in the mill. He wanted his children to have an education. School was most important to him. Luis’ brother worked at the mill at 13 cents an hour when he was 12 years old to help make money for the family when his father became ill in the early 1930s, during the Depression. House rent and utilities were \$15 a month, and workers were given coupons to use at the company store, which had less expensive goods than in Boise. During the war, the younger men went to work in the shipyards and older men ran the mill, but when the war was over, the younger people returned and took all the choice jobs and the older men, his father included, were pushed aside.

In 1935, the lumber mill was closed and moved to Emmett, and the entire town was disassembled and many houses moved to Boise and Emmett, or sold privately and moved to other towns. Many Basque families followed their jobs to Emmett, as did the Anastasio Arrizabala family. Luis explained that after that, he made a few thousand dollars picking cherries and other fruits in Emmett until he moved away as a young adult. The transfer to Emmett was buffered upon finding the Basabes, Bicandis, Galdos, and many other Basque families already established there, and once again there were boarding houses to visit.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Hundreds of Basque women and men worked in farming and ranching, and hundreds of others attempted to make their fortunes in various different fields. Basques helped build the infrastructure of the western United States. For example, Julian and Juan Hormaechea’s grandfather worked on the California and Nevada railroads with other Basques in the late 1800s. José Maruri Urquidi came to the U.S. from Murelaga, Bizkaia in 1913 to serve as a water boy at the Arrow Rock Dam

construction site. Isabel Larrondo Jausoro remembers that her father, Hilario, lived at the Delamar Hotel in Boise while working at the Arrow Rock Dam in 1925. He had worked for the Slick Brothers near Glens Ferry in construction and had experience. José Mari Aspíri was a foreman on the dynamite crew at Arrowrock Dam. According to his granddaughters Angeles Aldape Murelaga and Teresa Aldape Arriola, he made three trips to the U.S. in the early 1900s, and each time had work contracts at Arrowrock. Years later, Nicasio Beristain also worked on the Lucky Peak dam for six months while living in Boise at the Letemendi's boarding house. Joaquin Rementeria, from Navarniz, Bizkaia, worked on road-paving projects in the Basque Country before coming to the U.S. Once in the U.S. in the 1930s, he was employed as a lumberjack, and then on various dam and power plant construction projects in Shoshone Falls, Swan Falls, and other work in California. He also worked in building maintenance at Boise High School and First Security Bank.

Pilar Goiri, from Elantxobe, Bizkaia, traveled from Boise to Jordan Valley in a stagecoach on a gravel road. She worked at her sister and brother-in-law's boarding house cleaning, doing laundry, and cooking. When her husband got a job logging, she went with him, living in a tent and taking care of him and other loggers, cooking and cleaning and preparing work clothes. Women also worked in farming and ranching. Felipe Aldape and Maria Josefa Aspíri Aldape had a dairy farm on Rose Hill. Later in Meridian, Maria Josefa raised turkeys. She had also learned to be a seamstress in school in the Basque Country and made all of the family's clothing. Mary Larrondo and Adelia Garro Simplot both remember working on their family dairy farms every day after school, and Adelia helped clean at her father's barbershop. Though much of recorded immigrant history focuses on men's accomplishments, Basque women also performed these tasks and maintained a household simultaneously.

Basques worked as bartenders in the boarding houses and at pool halls. They boxed groceries, served as checkers, and cleaned as custodians at Aldape's grocery store. Basques were employed at the Boise Bohemian Brewery, formerly known as Boise Best Beer, the BBB, which also delivered to the boarding houses. Iceboxes needed to be filled for the refrigeration of food at restaurants, hotels, and private homes and Basques worked at the ice lockers also. First and second generation Basques were waitresses and waiters, cooks, drivers, interpreters, salesclerks, business owners, and teachers.

Many who immigrated to Idaho began in agriculture and ranching but soon left for Boise and "urban" life. The Uberuaga brothers- Juan, José, and Domingo "Txomin"- were born in Arbacegui-Munitibar, Bizkaia. They arrived one at a time 1905, 1907, and Txomin later (no exact date known). All three spent some time as shepherders but eventually moved on to other employment. Juan married Juana Arriola in 1910 and had eight children. He worked at the Table Rock sand stone quarry, and then at McGuffin's Feed and Fuel, and then at the State Capitol Building as a



Cipriano and Juanita Barrutia and baby 1930s. Photo courtesy of Basque Museum and Cultural Center.



*Modern Hotel serving girls
1920s. Top are Angelina
Urquiaga and Juanita
Uberuaga Hormaechea.
Seated are Marie Uberuaga,
Consuelo Mallea.*
Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea
Collection. Basque Museum
and Cultural Center.

janitor. Juan and Juana also converted their house at 211 Center Street into a boarding house for several years in an attempt to increase their earnings.

José married Hermenegilda Bernedo in 1913, and after managing the Star Hotel, they established the Uberuaga boarding house at 607 Grove. Hermenegilda managed the boarding house and their three children, and José also worked in construction at the State Capitol Building, at Boise High School, and at the Marina Pool hall. José Uberuaga also worked on the Arrow Rock Dam project with many other Basques already employed there.

Alejo Martinez de Alegria, Henry and Felix Alegria's father, lived at one of the two houses at the Table Rock quarry with Ben Goicoechea. He worked there from 1908 to 1913 with Hilario "Chico" Urresti, Manuel Ergoiti, Juan Uberuaga, José Iriondo, Pedro Lejardi, Hipólito Zabala, Valentin Bidasolo, José Garate, Lee Mitchel Arrieta, and Evalisto Celaya, and Ignacio Alegria worked at the Table Rock quarry until 1934. Dorothy Bicandi Aldecoa was born at the quarry. José Iriondo and Valentin Bidasolo were both killed tragically in accidents transporting the blocks of sandstone weighing tons. Horse drawn sleds were used to carry the sandstone out for the two companies, the Capitol Building Commission and the Idaho Stone Company, and though later they switched to a rail system, work remained dangerous. Table Rock

was closed after 1940 when a limestone company from Indiana won the contract to build the new Ada County Courthouse.

There were several Basque barbershops: “Zapatero” Aguirre, Ed Garro, Garechana, Vicente Echeverria, Louie Echevarria, and Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea’s beauty salon. The Garate family had a taxi business at the Idanha Hotel. Basque women clerks were in demand at C.C. Andersons, Newberry’s, and the Cash Bazaar Department store to help translate for the euskera speaking customers. Boni Letemendi worked in the men’s clothing department at C.C. Anderson’s and Isabel Larrondo Jausoro worked at Cash Bazaar department store helping Basque clients. Many women earned sales clerk positions specifically because they were Basque and could translate for customers, especially other Basque women who, while working at home, did not have the opportunity to learn and practice English.

Manuel Sabala worked in the Silver Star mine below Ketchum in the late 1950s, and there were Basques working in the silver mines in Delamar, and in northern



Boise Company, Ada County Volunteers. All Basque regiment 1942. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

Idaho in Mullen. Teodoro Totorica (Totoricagüena) remembers that he went with four other Basque men in a taxi from Boise all the way to Mullen, Idaho, on the border with Montana. “We didn’t last long in those mines. Every dead bird they brought out was a reminder that maybe shepherding wasn’t so bad. There were no government health and safety regulations in those days and they didn’t care what happened to the workers. There were plenty more in the line behind us”.

Many Basques served in the United States military service, “that’s where most us learned English” according to Louie Echevarria. Dorothy Bicandi Aldecoa and Pilar Ansotegui were in the military service in July 1940 for nurses’ training with several Basque women from the Treasure Valley. Julian Achabal returned to Idaho after finishing his U.S. military service in 1960, and worked in building construction and with other Basques on the military missile silos project.

Guisasola Trucking from Mountain Home shipped lambs for the Hammett Livestock Company. Basques were needed as hay and oats movers and for water tank deliveries too. John Urquidi worked as a derrick driver on a hay mower in Grandview in 1938 earning between \$1.00 and \$1.50 per day. José Mari Artiach started work at a sawmill in Mountain Home and later trained to drive a truck with Joe Larrea. In 1973, José Mari started driving a truck permanently for his living and established his own hauling business. Julian Achabal worked at Garrett Freight Lines with several other Basques. There are currently numerous Basques involved in the transport business: as drivers, loaders, and owners.

Numerous second and third generation Basques became educators, counselors, and administrators in the area school systems. Pablo Aramburu, Mari Antonia Arana Bicandi, Julio Bilbao, and David Lachiondo each earned assignments as Principals of Junior High and High Schools. Sitting around the Basque Center bar, teachers Liz Lejardi Coleman, Ricardo Yanci, Teresa Aramburu, Ted and Tatia Baum Totorica, Blas and Bobbie Vincent Telleria, Mary Bieter, John and Julianna Jausoro Aldape, Steve Mendive, and Cindy Uberuaga Schaffeld talked and agreed that education had always been especially valued by their parents. Liz Coleman remembers how proud her parents were to have all their children be university graduates and that she and her sister, Teresa, were both teachers. Blas Telleria, President of the Boise Education Association (1995-2002) and its several thousand teachers, stated, “Many of our parents did not have the luxury of schooling and therefore treasured education and teaching even more. Teachers have always been respected and held in very high regard in the Basque communities here”.

This is a simple smattering of examples of employment opportunities for Basques in the Boise. When later generation Basques and military enlistees were able to attend university, education, then as now, provided another world of employment eligibility.



Basque in

(04)

Catholicism Boise

Catholicism has historically served as an influential aspect in Basque culture. In the Boise Basque community today, contemporary Basque identity is less intertwined with religion, and several interviewees mentioned they do not attend mass regularly. Others mentioned they attend the Basque Saint Ignatius mass because it is in the Basque language, or others stated they “go to listen to the Biotzetik Basque choir but I don’t really care about the religious meaning of the mass”. After the 2001 Catholic celebration, several participants agreed, “It’s such a beautiful mass. It’s like going to a theatre performance. But honestly the religious part is not so important to me”. However, in the United States surveys of Basque communities, when asked if “continuing Catholic beliefs and traditions” was of great importance, 83% agreed that the “Catholic religion is consequential to Basque culture”, and only eight percent responded that Catholicism is not of any importance. This has been evident in Boise Basque ethnic celebrations such as *Aberri Eguna*, Day of the Homeland, Santa Agueda, Saint Agatha, San Ignacio, Saint Ignatius, and *Omenaldia* (Day of Remembrance), which all have a Catholic mass component to the festival and have been well-attended. The mass for the annual Saint Ignatius feast day is standing room only and for the Jaialdi 1995 and 2000 masses, hundreds of Basques were turned away from a brimming Saint John’s Cathedral.

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Basques have been instrumental in supporting and building Catholic churches in several communities in the United States, but the Church of the Good Shepherd in Boise was the only one built with the intent to be a Basque parish with a Basque priest for a Basque congregation. In the early 1900s, there was a substantial fluid young single male population of shearers who tended to be fixated on making as much money as possible, and it was the already established Basque families that were responsible for the Good Shepherd accomplishment. The shepherd population certainly did not demand it. According to Father Ramon Echevarria, “They did not go to church. Sometimes masses were taken to the mountains, but when in town, young men did not go to church”.

In 1910 the Bishop of Boise, Alphonse Glorieux, communicated a need and desire for a priest to serve the Basque speaking population of southern Idaho and eastern Oregon. The Bishop of Araba, in the Basque Country, responded by sending Father Bernardo Arregui to the American West. Father Arregui was born in 1866 in Tolosa, Gipuzkoa, ordained in 1889 in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Araba, and served his parish in Irura, Gipuzkoa until 1911. During his studies, he learned to speak French and English (in addition to his Spanish and Basque) and even lived in London for six months during 1899. He arrived in Boise, Idaho on July 11, 1911 and administered to Basque Catholics across southern Idaho, west to Jordan Valley, Oregon, and south to McDermitt, Nevada. He conducted marriages, baptisms and confirmations, administered last rites, and celebrated funeral masses. Photographs at burial sites were often taken in order to mail the Basque Country relatives proof that their loved one had indeed received a Christian burial.

In 1916, Spanish King Alfonso XIII conferred upon Father Arregui the title of Vice Counsel of Spain to the United States, and he performed these responsibilities in addition to his religious duties. Father Arregui then became the pastor of the new Church of the Good Shepherd Basque parish in 1918, the only Basque church in United States history. Two buildings were purchased on the corner of Fifth and Idaho Streets, one to be converted to a church, and the other to function as the pastor’s private home. The Church of the Good Shepherd was built with the financial contributions of many Basques, including substantial donations from John B. and Bene Archabal, and was completed and dedicated on March 2, 1919. Bishop Daniel M. Gorman blessed it. The church sat about 100 worshippers and held daily masses, mostly attended by Basques. Rose Arregui Dick remembers passing the church’s lilac bushes when entering for mass with her father, Mateo Arregui. “He accepted no excuses for missing mass”. Mateo Arregui helped found the Good Shepherd and also convinced others to donate funds. “He was a religious man and he attended the Church of the Good Shepherd, which he helped found, every Sunday, and after it was closed he attended St. John’s”.



Basque children after making their First Holy Communion with Father Bernardo Arregui. Circa 1920s.
Photo courtesy of Arregui Family Collection.

Basques celebrated their baptisms, weddings, and funerals at the Church of the Good Shepherd. Juan Bastida from Ereño, and Regina Echevarria from Ondarroa, were married there in 1921. Lucy Garatea remembers attending mass at the Good Shepherd and recalls that there were Basques that never went to mass because they no longer had to worry about any village priest's ridicule. No one cared if they went to mass or not, "this is a free country". Joe M. Uberuaga recalls, "Most Basque men were anti-clerical. Dad always talked bad about the nuns and the priests, but my mother insisted that we get confirmed. We kids did not make our own kids go to mass though". Many Basque girls went to St. Teresa's Catholic school, and boys started at St. Joseph's. In later years, Basques left for the public schools, though still to this day, Basque children make up a disproportionate number of the student body at St. Joseph's, St. Mark's, St. Mary's, Sacred Heart, and Bishop Kelly High School.

A new leader, Bishop Edward Kelly, closed the Basque Church of the Good Shepherd in 1928 with the goal of encouraging a unified United States Catholic Church and putting an end to separate ethnic parishes. Father Ramon Echeverria remembers hearing that many Basques were angry when the Church of the Good Shepherd was closed without any consultation- after they had paid for it themselves. Many Basques saw this as another example of totalitarian control and authoritarianism in the Catholic hierarchy. Basques from that era were still complaining to him about this incident in 1978 when he was transferred out of Boise. The Church of the Good Shepherd building became Bishop Kelly's private chapel and most Basques living downtown began attending the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, just a few blocks away.

BASQUE PRIESTS INFLUENCE THE BOISE COMMUNITY

During the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the following years, it was almost impossible for Basques to dam the pro-Spanish media flood of misinformation defining Basques as communists and anti-Catholic. The United States Catholic clergy praised the Spanish dictator Franco from the pulpit as the savior of religion in traditionally Catholic Spain, and Boise Basque Catholics heard a similar sermon. Diaspora Basques were worried about the red scare and the blackballing of individuals suspected of being communist sympathizers. Yet knowing the truth that they were not, Basques could not help but defend their families in the four Spanish provinces. Father Ramon Echevarria, of Boise, explained that numerous Basques around the world left the Catholic Church in opposition to their institutional hierarchy, and in Boise, as a result of the Church's abandonment of Basque Catholics during the Franco years in Spain (1939-75).

Father Echevarria taught among the Basques in Idaho for decades and categorized them into three groups: 1). Basques that believe everything the Church



*Father Ramon Echevarria
ordination portrait.
Boise, Idaho 1958.*

Photo courtesy of James B.
Echevarria Collection.

tells them, 2). A generation of people who were critical and questioned almost everything the Church stood for, and, 3). A majority of the older immigrant generation that completely quit active participation in the church when they came to Idaho. “My parents told me that in the beginning there were (sic) a group of four or five older Basques who had rejected the Church and used to mentor the young shepherders as they came over not to go to Church, because this was a Protestant country and if they wished to be socially acceptable they would not be defined, or single out as Catholics”. He continued explaining that the majority of immigrant generation Basques quit going to church except to receive the sacraments. “One Irish priest used to call this, ‘hatch, match and dispatch’ Catholicism”.

The immigrants most likely had previously received the sacraments precisely to be socially acceptable in their small villages in the Basque Country. Once they got away from home, they no longer felt any need to go to church because there were no sanctions for not attending mass. Many from this generation were also poorly educated in religious teachings. They were unprepared to instruct their own children in Catholic beliefs because they had not been properly taught themselves, and education is important to dedication and spiritual devotion. Physical isolation also made it difficult for rural area Basques to practice Catholic Church participation. Many began church attendance again when they moved into towns.

Family and friends discouraged Father Echevarria from joining the clergy. There was an anti-clericalism that was prevalent in the Basque community. Many thought priests were lazy, selfish and money-hungry. Several priests in Idaho even questioned Father Echevarria about the Basques' devotion to the Church. They were worried about the Basques and whether they were atheists or whether they were believers, because of their known anti-clericalism. Father Ramon Echevarria believed in a democratic and participatory Church. He actually even disliked being called "Father". He believed *all* humans were born "priests" and he treasured the quest for knowledge. "I was taught to let the questions nourish me more so than the answers".

Also in the 1960s and 1970s, Father Santos Recalde and Father Juan Garatea served the Basque Catholics of Idaho. Father Recalde's assignment lasted only a few years and Juana Mendazona Odiaga told of how he once made a tape recording of her and upon his return to the Basque Country, took it to her sister in Ispaster enabling her to hear her sister's voice again for the first time in decades. John Bastida remembers Father Recalde and Father Garatea going around to the sheepcamps and having mass for the Basque shepherders in *euskera*. John and Mark Bieter report in their book, *An Enduring Legacy*, that Father Recalde tried to organize a labor union



Basque funeral procession circa 1930. Photo courtesy of the Arregui Family Collection.

among contract shearers, and that he described shepherding as “inhumane and exploitative” (Bieter and Bieter 2000:140).

Since the 1960s, the Bishopric of Baiona, Lapurdi has facilitated a Basque chaplain to the American west. The United States Catholic Conference actually sponsors the priest and the Bishop of Baiona chooses the priest. Father Jean Pierre Cachenaud traveled through the western Basque communities from 1977 to 1986 and besides performing religious duties of festivals, weddings, baptisms and funerals, also promoted Basque language usage wherever he went. “Basque people must speak Basque”, he repeated year after year. “It is a sin not to share knowledge, and parents must teach their children our ancient language”. Father Jean Etcheverry, Father Jean Eliçagaray, and Father Marcel Tillous have each driven thousands of miles to celebrate religious feasts in the western U.S. Each has also participated in the annual San Ignacio festival in Boise, usually hosted by Jim and Isabel Jausoro, and become well-known among Boise’s Catholic Basques. Father Marcel Tillous became the Basque Chaplain in the United States in 1994. In 2002, Father Tillous continues ministering to the religious needs and desires of the Basque communities, traveling nearly 100,000 miles per year. While living in San



Aberri Eguna Mass at the Basque Center 1974. Father Echevarria and Father Garatea. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.



*San Ignacio statue carried
by Oinkari Dancers at Saint
John's Cathedral. 1981.*

Photo by Gloria Totoricagüena.

Francisco, California, Father Tillous, like other Basque priests before him, travels to perform masses at the many Basque festivals in California, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado. Father is also a txistulari and performs with the San Francisco Zazpiak Bat Dancers. He directs the San Francisco Elgarrekin Choir and also helps teach txistu and music at the annual music camp “Udaleku” of the North American Basque Organizations.

THE BASQUE CHAPEL OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

The Chapel of the Children of God is located inside the Church of the Sacred Heart in Boise. The south wall displays a Basque flag, or *ikurriña*, donated by the Basque Girl's Club in memory of Domingo Ansotegui. There is a Book of Remembrance with the names of children deceased set atop a small table, brought from Markina, Bizkaia and donated by Joanne Uberuaga. She also donated two priest chairs from the Church of San Juan in Gernika, Bizkaia. The Church of San Juan was destroyed by the Nazi bombing ordered by General Francisco Franco (depicted in the famous painting “Guernica” by Pablo Picasso, who was born in Malaga) during the Spanish Civil War. One chair is a part of the chapel and the other is kept in the church priest's private

home. In addition to these pieces, Joanne Uberuaga also purchased a small carved wooden chest from the coastal town of Lekeitio, Bizkaia, and this serves as a credence table.

Father W. Thomas Faucher purchased the altar in Markina, Bizkaia from José Mari Arriaga. The altar is a composite of at least two and probably three separate wood pieces. José Mari Arriaga found the pieces in a church in Pamplona, Nafarroa and they are estimated to be from the middle 1600s. Some of the carvings are original, and Arriaga added others. The carvings include *lauburu*, or four heads, which is a symbol thought to represent the four seasons, or rays of the sun. It is found on funerary stones centuries old and in various Basque cultural artistic representations. Today for Basques it also symbolizes the four Basque provinces, and is also called a Basque cross.

The statue of Saint Ignatius, the patron saint of the Basques, is displayed together with Our Lady of Begoñe, the patron saint of Bizkaia, in the Basque chapel. For the 1995 Jaialdi celebration, Father Joseph Currie, a Jesuit priest from Loyola University in New Orleans, was invited to present his research regarding the life and work of the Basque Saint Ignatius of Loyola. The statue of Saint Ignatius is loaned to Sacred Heart Parish by its owners, the Oinkari Basque Dancers, who purchased it in Italy for \$2000, in 1986. Father Jean Pierre Cachenaud dedicated it to Jimmy Jausoro and Domingo Ansotegui in a special mass in July 1986. The statue remains in the chapel except for the weekend celebration of Saint Ignatius, when it is removed and displayed as a part of a religious procession to Saint John's Cathedral for the annual Basque mass. Michele Gallastegui of Gipuzkoa carved the statue of Our Lady of Begoñe. It is a representation of the patron saint of the province of Bizkaia and was donated to Sacred Heart Church by the Bernie Rakozy family in memory of their son, Steve. It rests upon the original altar salvaged from Boise's Church of the Good Shepherd. The altar was cut down and re-fashioned by Joe Miller according to the architectural plan of Charles Hummel.

The first Omenaldia Mass to remember loved ones who have passed away during the year was held in 1996. The annual Catholic mass and potluck dinner have been celebrated at Sacred Heart Church with the meal following in the church's reception area of Faith Hall. Basques from the Boise area submit the names of their departed family members and friends, which are then read aloud during the mass. A representative from their family comes forward to light a candle from the Basque funerary candleholder, *argizaiola*, the flame being symbolic of that person's life. The Bihotzetik Basque Choir provides religious, emotional, and joyful music, and the Oinkari Basque Dancers perform in the church as well. Toward the end of the mass the families are requested to let their loved ones go, and each candle is extinguished to represent the end of physical life.

Andrak:

(05)

Women

AMERICAN BASQUE FRATERNITY AUXILIARY

Escolástica Arriandiaga Ondarza was born in Elantxobe, Bizkaia in 1890. She emigrated to Idaho to marry sheepman José Alastrá-Ondarza in 1907, and thus began a decade of cooking, campending, shepherding and ranching at Spring Valley Ranch. They sold their ranch in 1916 and moved into Boise, where they assimilated into “city” life and the Basque community. By the 1920s, there were two private insurance societies established for men only, which would pay a death benefit, hospital care, and repatriation costs for those indigent and needing to return to the Basque Country. Escolástica Ondarza saw the need for a Basque women’s club, similar to the Basque men’s *La Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos* (1908), or Mutual Aid Society, which had approximately 200 members, and *La Fraternidad Vasca Americana* (1928), or American Basque Fraternity, and helped form the American Basque Fraternity Auxiliary group for women in 1930. Escolástica Arriandiaga Ondarza served as its President for thirteen years. The women created their own *ikurriña* with materials and supplies ordered from Bilbao, Bizkaia, and upon their arrival, Antonia Ysursa began her two-year sewing project in 1930. She hand-sewed the flag, made of silk, and hand embroidered a Tree of Gernika and a gold fringe around the edges. The flag of the American Basque Fraternity Auxiliary was even blessed by a Catholic missionary from Denver on August 15, 1934. Exactly forty-one



American Basque Fraternity Auxiliary 1933. Juanita Ueberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

years later, Escolástica Ondarza and Asunción Camporredondo Yursa represented the Auxiliary members when they presented the flag to Arthur Hart, Director of the Idaho State Historical Society.

The Men's Mutual Aid Society, *Socorros Mutuos*, was a private insurance fund created in 1908 for medical emergencies, funeral costs for those unable to afford the expenses, and for long-term disabilities. *La Organización Independiente Sociale*, (the correct Spanish spelling is actually "Social") the Social Independent Organization, which was formed in 1933, was more the women's counterpart of the *Socorros Mutuos*. Their annual fee for benefits was \$2.00. According to its 2002 Treasurer, Audrey Arregui Groff, "It remains strictly an insurance fund to which members now pay a yearly fee of \$15.00, and there is a death benefit of \$750.00. We have 147 members, all Basque or married to a Basque, that pay their annual fee. We used to have card parties, rummage sales, and dances to raise money for the fund to make sure we had enough to pay these funeral benefits, but we haven't needed to raise money anymore. The dues are sufficient to pay the \$750.00 benefit. We don't have any legal contracts or anything. We have a handshake, and our word. That's it".

The men's *La Fraternidad Vasca Americana*, Basque American Fraternity, formed in 1928, gave financial assistance but also included different areas of promoting United States citizenship, learning English, and promoting Americanization of Basques. The women's American Basque Fraternity Auxiliary was formed in 1930 with the same goals of learning about the United States, becoming and being good citizens, and promoting learning English. Joe M. Uberuaga remembers his mother, Juana, preparing for the Basque Fraternity Auxiliary meetings every month or so. "It was a chance for the women to get out of the house and have some fun. I know they gossiped about everyone and everything because Mother always had lots of stories to tell the next day. People used to tell me how funny Mother was, how funny she was at their meetings. I never knew she was funny. But they also helped solve each other's problems of getting around in the community. You know, getting to the dentist, making bank deposits, learning how the schools functioned in the United States- those kinds of things". However, no one seems to remember anyone practicing any English at these meetings.

THE BASQUE GIRLS' CLUB

The "Basque Girls' Club", "Basque Girls' Sewing Club", and the "Basque Girls' Knitting Club" are all actually the same group of women. Formed in 1936 with mostly second generation Basque members, these women wanted to create their own social network separate from their mothers'. This collection of friends, led by President Sue Letemendi, met every Tuesday night in the 1930s and 1940s and



organized an annual Halloween costume party and an annual dinner and dance for members and their dates. They arranged dance classes and parties at Hyde Park for the Basque children of the community, and held competitions to carry buckets of water on their heads, and taught the children how to play the spoons. The Basque Girls' Club also had dinners and dances where the general public was invited and Jimmy Jausoro and his Orchestra entertained. Jim was actually the only male ever granted membership.

In the 1950s, the women volunteers catered dinners at the Basque Center to raise money for the building construction. The Basque Girl's Club originated the Euzkaldunak's November Basque Center *Mortzilla* Dinner and Carnival Bazaar, where all enjoy Basque cuisine and Basque foods are sold to the public. Children play various games and make art projects at the carnival and adults play BINGO for hours, hoping to win a prize while raising money for the Euzkaldunak, Inc. Prizes are donated by local businesses and Euzkaldunak members make additional items. There is nothing distinctly "Basque" about the event anymore except for the cuisine and *mortzillak*, blood sausages, and the ethnically Basque customers.

At one time, there were thirty-three members in this women's club, but in 2002, the group has eight active members still living who continue to meet monthly.



The Basque Girls' Club volunteers for an Euzkaldunak dinner 1950. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

These Basque women have volunteered in community projects such as the Red Cross bandage rolling effort for WWII. They also sent correspondence to United States military troops during World War II to help lift spirits. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea kept a copy of a letter she sent to a United States military squadron explaining who she and her club were, and how they were “so very very proud to be Basque in America where all individuals are respected. You are all in our prayers”. The Basque Girl’s Club participated in fund drives for the Lung Association, and assisted at the Nampa Idaho State School and Hospital with volunteers. After the 1970s, members’ activities turned to mostly social events such as day outings to Idaho City, picnics and barbecues, dinners and birthday parties. Mary Larrondo joined the Basque Girl’s Club in the 1950s after she moved to Meridian from Glens Ferry. “Oh, we’ve had a great time over the years. You know there are only a few of us still alive but boy did we have a good time. We volunteered for many activities and put on some fantastic parties. Jay’s scrapbooks have pictures of us at our Halloween parties. Maybe that’s not such a good thing. We were crazy!” Indeed, Juanita Hormaechea’s collection of more than one hundred photo albums are overflowing with evidence of their friendship, sisterhood, humor, and pride in culture and Basque identity. To have such intimate friends for so many decades is certainly a blessing.



AIZTAN ARTEAN

The next generation women's club, The Aiztan Artean, Among Sisters, is composed of younger Basque women who volunteer to support Basque fundraisers, events, groups, and activities in the Boise area. The club commenced meeting in 1972 and is a social-service group of women who are of Basque heritage or are married to Basques. The founding young Basque women pledged to support the Basque Center activities and to further activities for younger members of the Basque community. They are the next generation of females after the Basque Girl's Club. Gloria Subisarreta Miller, Toni Murelaga Achabal, Clarine Anchustegui Villeneuve, Liz Dinse, Leandra Jayo Parker, Julie Egurrola Bilbao, and Chris Bideganeta LaRocco accepted leadership roles for the initial year and hosted an informal reception at the Basque Center in March 1973 to welcome and encourage additional women to join.

The Aiztan Artean club members sponsored Basque cuisine cooking classes at the Euzkaldunak Basque Center during the months of March, April, and May of 1975. The fifteen to twenty women at each session learned the intricacies of food preparation from Basque Center cook Sabina Arteta Oleaga. Each week a different



*Aiztan Artean girls' night
out dinner 2000.*

Photo by Bryan Day.

menu was prepared which included codfish, tripe, ink fish, *brazo de gitano* cake, rice pudding, and flan custard. Sabina Oleaga would demonstrate each of the steps of food preparation and cooking, and then the participants enjoyed the presentation and the tasting afterwards. Several of the new cooks were emigrants themselves, such as Celestina Totoricagüena Arana, who said, "There is always something new to learn, or a good trick that makes it easier to prepare. Just because we are from the old country doesn't mean we know everything!" Teresa Mendazona Aramburu, Lou Guisasola Echevarria, and Clarine Anchustegui Villeneuve agreed with Frances Uberuaga Schaffeld. "Our mothers were great cooks but we never paid any attention, so it's about time we do our share to keep this part of our heritage".

Today, the more than forty members host Basque Center dinners, a Mothers' Day Luncheon, and monthly meetings at private homes. They also organize and host a Girls' Night Out, and a Sweethearts' Dinner. The Aiztan Artean help with a children's carnival that is a part of the November Mortzillak Dinner and Carnival Bazaar. Basque youth have their faces painted with artistic figures, they decorate cookies, which they then can eat on the spot or take home. They participate in carnival games of "fishing" for prizes behind a screen, and "spin the wheel" for prizes- all organized by the women of the Aiztan Artean.

Euskera

(06)

Maintenance

Basque language knowledge, usage, and literacy in the United States are comparatively higher than other Basque diaspora communities because of the influence of recent immigration and because of second and third generation Basques participating in study abroad programs in Oñati, Gipuzkoa, and San Sebastian-Donostia, Gipuzkoa. Several individuals have also traveled separately and participated in total immersion language programs in Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. Survey research data show that in the United States Basque diaspora communities, 59% of respondents can understand a basic conversation, speak with little difficulty, or are fluent in Basque, and 41% “know a few words” or “none” at all. However, 67% stated they “only use Basque for special phrases”, or not at all. Those that know Basque but do not utilize it represent the problem in language maintenance. “I know for some people it is embarrassing, but we’ve got to try”, pleaded Basque language teacher Steve Mendive. Sociolinguists who study language planning, language shift, and language vitality point to these examples as factors in language death (Fishman 1997).

GENERATIONS OF *EUSKERA*

Another problem for *euskera* results from the generational differences in attitudes toward the status of the language. In many families, it was the immigrant parents who wanted to erase their connections to a language with a low social status that was connected to negative punishment. In the Basque Country itself, until the death of Franco in 1975 and the creation of the autonomous governments of Euskadi and Nafarroa in the early 1980s, *euskera* was considered a peasant language for uneducated farmers. The Basque language was lost in the cities and in the provinces of Araba and most of Nafarroa by the 1800s. Many of the Basques who immigrated to Idaho were from rural areas where Basque was still spoken at home and with trusted friends, though Spanish was mandatory at schools. Most Basque emigrants in Boise remember being punished at school for speaking in their native language.

Simon Achabal tells the story of how in his hometown of Ispaster, Bizkaia, in the 1930s and 1940s, school children caught speaking Basque were made to hold a key or a metal ring. Each time a child was caught the ring was passed on to them. When it was time for recess, the child left holding the ring was punished with no playtime and made to clean the classrooms. Children were encouraged to tell on each other, indoctrinating the idea that speaking Basque was a bad thing. It was an effective way for the Spanish teachers to turn the students against each other and to keep them from speaking Basque.

It was not any better for some children in the United States who went to school only knowing Basque. In Mountain Home, Helen Anchustegui took Rash Iglesias to the American Legion Hall to enroll him in school. He did not speak English. His first teacher had Basque students that could not speak English and was kind and involved in their second language development. However, other teachers beat them with a rubber hose for not knowing English or not being able to complete the lessons. One teacher hit Rash across the nose with a book because he did not know the answer to a question. The problem was that he did not understand the English language question. In the case of the Iglesias family, Rash remembers, “School was very tough for those Basque kids, but our parents insisted we go to school. They knew the value of education because they didn’t have the advantages of it”.

Basque parents had to decide whether to communicate with their children in Basque or in Spanish. Some chose Basque because they “knew it better than Spanish” or because it was their “own maternal language” and they “felt more comfortable speaking intimately in Basque”. “We spoke Basque at home always. Some kids were held back in school because they didn’t know enough English, and some parents learned English from their kids”, explained Lydia Sillonis Jausoro. In other households, married couples spoke to each other in Basque and to their children in Spanish. They wanted their children to have the employment advantages of being bilingual in

Spanish. In the earlier decades of the 1930s and 1940s, when almost all of the Basque emigrants spoke Basque and a few did not speak Spanish at all, several Boise department stores did specifically hire Basque speakers to serve their immigrant customers. But when new immigration began to decline in the 1960s, there was no longer a need for Basque interpreters in the Treasure Valley business world.

Children born in the United States often served as their parents' translators and interpreters and this role reversal was especially difficult for the self-esteem of the mothers. Children assumed the position of educator and determined what was important enough to tell parents. Many Basque women did not learn English as quickly because they worked so hard at home and did not come into contact with English speaking workers or clients. Juana Arriola Uberuaga and Juan Uberuaga "always spoke euskera at home", according to son Joe. "Mother spoke less English because she did not leave the house, and neither knew how to read or write. We children would help them, and other Basque women that could speak English would accompany the ones who could not and help them at the doctors' and at the grocery stores". Many children did not want to speak Basque in public and some were embarrassed by their parents' accents, according to Mary Aberasturi Cantrell.

In some families as late as the 1970s, the parents spoke Basque to the children and the children answered in Basque until their teenage years. Simon Achabal described his disappointment when his young daughter, Lisa, came home one day and asked him not to talk to her in Basque any more in front of her friends, saying, "They made fun of me". For almost every child, the desire to fit in is so overwhelming that this pattern was repeated in thousands of Basque households over the decades. "We should have taught them anyway. They would have understood soon enough how important it is. Now we regret it", said Simon Achabal.

A GENERATION GAP

In Basque writer Bernardo Atxaga's short story set in Boise, Idaho, "*Bi letter jaso nituen oso denbora gutxian*" (Atxaga 1984), the Basque immigrant to Boise, "Old Martin", cannot communicate well with his grandson "Jimmy". Old Martin's son has married an English-speaking immigrant from Ireland and the grandson speaks no Basque or Spanish. Old Martin, the grandfather, wishes to relay to Jimmy the story of two letters he receives from his hometown. His anguish and frustration with his inability to communicate and to have a loving relationship with his own grandson is a situation well understood by hundreds of *amumas*, or grandmothers, and *aitxitxes*, or grandfathers, in the Boise area. This exceptional piece of literature captures the psychological and emotional crisis of communication barriers. Old Martin thinks in Basque with English words thrown in. He portrays the real-life circumstances of many of Idaho's first generation Basques who never learned to read or write, and some

even to speak, in English because they never had a chance to learn and practice. Julian Achabal remembers, “There were no night classes or bilingual education for any of us. We learned by making embarrassing mistakes and out of necessity to get jobs. The sheep in Idaho spoke Basque, but the people didn’t”.

Intermarriage with non-Basques, or with Basques who did not speak euskera, usually resulted in the children able to understand a few isolated phrases and words but unable to converse fluently. The exceptions were those children that were raised in or near the Basque boarding houses in the center of Boise. Their constant exposure to monolingual Basque speakers necessitated their ability to speak Basque. “We had to if we wanted to make ourselves understood”, said Delphina Urresti Arnold. If there were consistent customers and visitors who did not speak English, the children were forced to speak in Basque or Spanish to get what they wanted. Evangelina “Ruby” Yursa Basabe was raised in the Modern Hotel and later at the Valencia with her parents Asunción and Benito Yursa. Her parents spoke to her in Spanish so that she could communicate with boarders who were Basque, but spoke only Spanish. Interestingly, her parents spoke to her brother, Ramón, in both Basque and Spanish and so he fortunately learned both.

Emigrants who attempted to send letters home had several problems with which to contend. They might be illiterate themselves, and/or their parents might be illiterate. They often relied on Boise Basque speakers who were able to write letters for them and expected their parents to find others who could read it upon its arrival. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea often aided sheepherders by writing letters home for them.

Isabel Larrondo Jausoro and Jimmy Jausoro both grew up speaking Basque at home with their immigrant parents, and were fluent Basque speakers when they met each other at a Boise boarding house. However, because they met in English and began their relationship in English, they continued this communication into their marriage and family life. Isabel spoke Basque to their children, Marie and Anita, when her own mother was visiting and the girls grew up hearing assorted phrases and the correct pronunciation, etc. Marie later attended the year-long Basque studies program in Oñati, Gipuzkoa and studied Basque formally. Now her own daughter, Danielle Jausoro Day attends the Boise Ikastola Basque language school. These three generations of women represent numerous others who are attempting to revive Basque language learning and more importantly, usage, in Boise.

“LEARNING A LANGUAGE FROM A BOOK IS NEVER THE SAME AS LEARNING FROM YOUR MOTHER”

In 1996, Joseph V. Eiguren was posthumously selected for a Governor’s Award in the Arts in recognition of his endless work to teach and maintain Basque language.

The State of Idaho celebrated Joe's endeavors to write the first Basque-English dictionary, for the countless hours spent instructing language classes, and for his many writings and tutorship in Basque history. Joe Eiguren began teaching Basque language in September 1963 in the upstairs card room of the Basque Center. He had been asked by several Oinkari Dancers to please provide them with *euskera* instruction so that they could better represent the Basques of Idaho at their public performances. He had absolutely no written materials and was living in Homedale at the time. Those of us fortunate enough to have known Joe in our lifetimes also know that neither of these circumstances would serve as excuses to stop him from spreading his knowledge and enthusiasm for all things Basque.

Father Brennan, the parish priest in Homedale, lent Joe a Basque grammar book written in Basque and Spanish, and Joe set out to translate the essential sections for use in his class. His first class had fifty-seven students enrolled, and the course continued into the next year. In 1965 he wrote the second ever Basque language manual in English. The Euzkaldunak, Inc. charged rent for classes to be taught and student fees paid this expense. Most students thought it was ridiculous that they should be charged to utilize the Center for their language classes, as did Joe, but they paid the money and continued. The Idaho Basque Studies Center was responsible for reprinting Joe Eiguren's methods booklet on how to study Basque, "*Euskera itzketan zelan ikasi*" in 1973, and planted the seeds for his compilation of vocabulary for his Basque-to-English, and English-to-Basque dictionary. Joe, aided by Julie Bilbao and Paki Sarria, completed the dictionary in 1974. According to Joe, "Classes ended because it became too difficult to travel all the way to Boise every week, and students became bored when they found out how hard it is to learn another language".

During 1971 and 1972, Miren Rementeria Artiach taught Basque language classes for twenty to thirty students on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Students had varying levels of understanding, and their interests ranged from speaking simple greetings, to requesting explanations of complex Basque grammar. The success of Miren's program encouraged a plan for a comprehensive set of Basque educational and cultural activities. The Idaho Basque Studies Center (IBSC) later offered scholarships for students wishing to participate in the 1972 summer session in the Basque Country. The IBSC's hopes were to energize Basque studies by assisting students to study in the homeland. The Idaho Basque Studies Center, and the Basque Studies Program of the University of Nevada Reno jointly sponsored a group of students and teachers for three weeks in Ustaritz and then in Arantzazu for three more weeks. One of the instructors was Jon Oñatibia, who had lived in New York in the 1950s and taught *txistu*, dance, *euskera*, and singing to Basques of the New York Euzko Etxea community. Later he was instrumental in creating Boise's first ikastola for children, as well as instructing in the Oñati university program. "Our driving goal was to preserve the Basque language", stated IBSC Chairperson, Dr. Julio Bilbao.

In the summer of 1973, Jon Oñatibia, traveled from Oiarzun, Gipuzkoa to Boise and, among other projects, established a children's program to learn the Basque language through song and dance. Oñatibia's musical method for language instruction was recorded by KVID educational television and the program was aired as a current events special. The IBSC and Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak: Idaho Friends of the Basques began plans for a pre-school and elementary language program to teach Basque, and began advertising for students among the members of the Euzkaldunak, Inc. Boise's first *ikastola*, Basque language school, was designed after the Oñatibia methods of learning basic Basque grammar in tunes and for several years later was carried on by Mari Carmen Totorica and her daughter Dolores Totorica, and Julie Egurrola Bilbao. In the spring of 1975, seventeen children attended the *ikastola* sponsored by the Euzko Zaleak. With *Andereño*, teacher, Julie and *Andereño* Carmen, the twenty lessons designed by Jon Oñatibia were taught with music in after school sessions at the Basque Center basement. Children learned a variety of popular and traditional Basque songs to txistu and accordion tapes. They learned the numbers, the names of foods, how to ask certain questions, and to describe themselves and their houses in Basque. The first Idaho *ikastola* was also publicized and congratulated in the Basque Country with an article in the journal *Zeruko Argia*. Teachers utilized music, songs, handmade posters and visual aids as the main teaching tools. The methods were successful because they were active and fun for the children. The *ikastola* was repeated in 1976, with classes after school twice a week for nine weeks with instruction and games by Mari Carmen and daughter Dolores Totorica. Mari Carmen Totorica and Mary Lou Murelaga Guerricabeitia continued teaching children these Basque songs every Tuesday night at the Boise'ko Gazteak practices for three more decades. Another generation of students had learned beginning Basque.

STUDIES ABROAD

The first Basque Studies Abroad Program was organized for the summer of 1970. It was sponsored by the Basque Studies Program founded in 1967 at the University of Nevada Reno (UNR), now named the Center for Basque Studies. Outside the town of Uztaritz, Lapurdi at Landagoyen, Iparralde, students met to study Basque language, history, and culture from specialist Jon Oñatibia. Several of the students, including Miren Rementeria Artiach, had learned Basque at home from their parents but had never studied it formally to become literate. These students also encountered the many regionalisms and pronunciations of *euskera* for the first time. It was a life changing experience for most and they returned to the United States committed to making a difference in their Basque communities. Miren Rementeria Artiach returned to Boise to teach Basque language through Boise Schools Community Education classes, volunteering countless hours to preserving *euskera*. She even presented lessons and examples of Basque language in the issues of *Voice*

of the Basques, a monthly newspaper published in Boise by John Street and Brian Wardle in the mid 1970s.

In 1972, the UNR Basque Studies Summer Program was co-sponsored as a six-week study course with the Idaho Basque Studies Center of Boise. By 1973, the UNR program had expanded to an eight-week program including weekend excursions to each of the seven provinces and courses taught in English by world specialists Jon Bilbao, Jon Oñatibia, Angeles Arrien, Juan Magunagoicoechea, and Rudolf de Rijk. The summer programs were so popular they had to be limited to twenty-five students in order to maintain the high quality of personal instruction.

In the summer of 1972, Dr. Patrick Bieter visited the Basque Country with this summer workshop of studying the Basque language and culture. He was so impressed by and deeply in love with the Basque Country and its people that, with the leaders of the Idaho Basque Studies Center, he began to plan an academic year abroad program for United States students. It took two years of planning, communications, and meetings with institutions in the Basque Country and with Boise State College to prepare the first academic year. “That’s impossible” was not a part of either Pat or Eloise Garmendia Bieter’s vocabulary, and neither did they like to hear it from others. Francisco Franco’s Spain continued under the *Generalísimo*’s dictatorship, and the red tape of Spanish government surrounded Boise State College’s attempts to finalize accommodations and classroom facilities. The town of Oñati, Gipuzkoa was also suspicious of why a group of American students would choose to go to their valley in the Basque Country. “What did they want? Were they really C.I.A.? Who were they trying to infiltrate? These were the topics of conversation at the bars”, remembers Oñati native Iñaki Kortabarria, who later married one of those Boise students, Sheila Fritz.

Dr. Bieter and teacher Joe Eiguren spent countless hours explaining to the town leaders that the students would be there to learn Basque. Eventually they had a citywide meeting open to all residents to explain the objectives of the year abroad program and the motive for these young students to learn about the Basque culture and language. In January 1973, Joe Eiguren, Pat Bieter, and the IBSC board members prepared a presentation to the Idaho State Board of Education that proposed a nine month academic program for students to study Basque language, culture, history, and politics in Oñati, Gipuzkoa. The answer was yes.

Ninety American students, faculty, and staff from the first Boise State College studies abroad program in the Basque Country invaded Oñati, a town of ten thousand people, during the 1974-75 academic year. The “living laboratory” was an experiment allowing United States students (most of whom were of Basque descent) to submerge themselves into the Basque language and culture by creating a campus in Oñati, Gipuzkoa. Courses were taught in Spanish and Basque history, culture, Spanish and Basque language, European literature, anthropology, poetry and art, and each student was allowed to construct their own individual

independent course of study for their subject majors. The site became a satellite campus of Boise State College and students earned transferable credits for their respective university degrees.

The first program had students ranging in age from nineteen to twenty-four years old along with the entire Pat and Eloise Bieter family, Chris, Mary, Dave, John, and Mark. Students were provided with dormitory style living arrangements, which were “primitive compared to the luxuries of the United States”, and all celebrated in late November when the repairs for the first wall heaters were installed after three months of damp cold at their San Lorenzo site.

Part of the international learning experience was to live under dictatorship and understand the animosity between the Spanish *Guardia Civil* and the Basque civilians. First year student Mike Brunelle wrote, “An American cannot fully appreciate his personal freedoms and rights until he witnesses a situation such as that in the Basque Country. There, people are harassed, beaten, thrown into jail without being told why, for any amount of time, their friends and relatives only knowing that the police had taken them away. Homes are searched without warrants, and being ‘picked up for questioning’ means that you are going to get a terrible beating”. Over the years of studies abroad programs in the Basque Country, the hundreds of participants have all been affected by the political differences, and most have gained an understanding of Basque history and nationalism. Students have studied Basque language and have also learned much about Basque culture and contemporary issues.

By the end of the first year, most of Oñati’s residents no longer suspected “the Americans” of any negative plans but actually respected their attempts to learn Basque and Spanish. Teachers Jon Oñatibia, Joe Eiguren, and Carmelo Urza had been quite effective with their instructional methods and many of the students were successfully communicating with the town’s people in Spanish and Basque. Over the next three decades, hundreds of students have studied Basque in the Basque Country on programs established by UNR. “The Basque Country campuses are the most popular in the entire United Studies Abroad Consortium 2001 program”, stated its Director, Dr. Carmelo Urza.

RECENT ACTIVITIES TO PRESERVE *EUSKERA*

Joe Eiguren returned to teaching *euskera* in 1981 after he had moved from Jordan Valley to Boise. Euzkaldunak members joined the four months of Wednesday night classes to learn the basics of the Basque language and Basque country history. Mary Bieter and John Bieter taught basic Basque in 1986 to a handful of eager learners. Basque language instruction in Boise in the 1990s was sporadic due to immigration visa problems and availability of qualified teachers. Olatz Bourgeaud, from Zornotza-

Euskera, Basque language, classes at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center. 2001. Jill Aldape instructor. Photo courtesy of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center.



Amorebieta, Bizkaia, was selected by the Basque Government to teach Basque at Boise State University. In addition, she also taught the Basque language classes for the general community at the Basque Cultural Center (BMCC) in 1991 and 1992. From 1993 through the spring of 1996, besides the full semester courses given at Boise State University, short courses were offered by Nere Lete at the BMCC, with the exception of the spring of 1995. In 1996, Rosita Anakabe Solabarrieta taught beginning Basque and Nere Lete taught level II and level III courses, with classes held once a week for two hours. Judy Aldape Lemmon stated, “We didn’t care who the teacher was, just so that there was a teacher”. Unfortunately, there were periods with no classes for months at a time. However, students remained dedicated to learning and practicing their language skills.

Izarne Garmendia’s selection as Boise’s *ikastola* teacher was extremely fortunate because, although she taught at the *Ikastola* during the day, she also stored abundant energy to continue in the evenings with adults at the BMCC during 2000-2001. Her enthusiasm was contagious. Jill Aldape and Amaia Biain also offered their talents for beginning classes. In 2001 and 2002, again the *ikastola teacher*, Nere Inda, graciously continued her instruction into the night by helping the adults with their *euskera*.

Language students have continued their studies and love of *euskera*. Many have asked for help comparing their knowledge of the Bizkaian dialect to the unified Basque, *batua*, which is taught around the world now. The point of creating a unified Basque language was specifically so that Basques from Boise could communicate with Basques in Argentina, Bizkaia, or Zuberoa, utilizing the same terminology, even if the pronunciations are a little different. A Texan, an Australian, and an Indian can understand a New Yorker...usually. And a new Basque speaker, *euskaldunberri*, can read any Basque language newspaper and understand the same vocabulary. The maintenance of Basque language is a defining factor of ethnic identity for many in the community and their work depicted in this book is commendable. “Cathy Clarkson is a great example for all of us, and whenever we get discouraged we think of how she had no background and now is fluent”, said student Frank Berria. “Basque culture is more and more popular. If a lot of the old timers could see us now, see what is happening at this Basque Center and at the Museum, they would be dancing!” exclaimed Julian Achabal.

BOISE IKASTOLA

The Boise community enjoys the benefits of a Basque language pre-school, *ikastola*, as a result of the persistent work of several area Basques and their spouses. Nere Lete remembers that as a child in the Basque Country, the first years of school in an *ikastola* might have been held in a church, a garage, at a kitchen table, or in a house basement. Because Basque language education was funded privately without any Spanish government aid, Basque families did whatever it took to educate their children in their own native language, even if it could result in political problems. Today, the children laughing playfully at the Boise *ikastola* would never imagine such a thing. They are taught exactly the opposite attitude. “*Ni euskalduna naiz!*” they shouted with pride at a musical performance, literally, “I am one who has the Basque language!” Rash Iglesias, grandfather to an *ikastola* student, swelled with pride, “Indeed they are”.

PERPETUAL OPTIMISTS

Nere Lete’s perseverance in promoting *euskera* traveled with her to the United States as a student and carried into her adult life as a parent. In 1990, Nere and husband, Chris Bieter, began talking seriously with parents of young children about the dream of creating a Basque language school in order for children to be exposed to, and learn, Basque. Initially, there was the hope of using the Basque Center itself, and others pursued possibilities of buildings near the Basque Center, such as the Basque Museum and Cultural Center. However, because of building safety

regulations and health regulations for food preparation and sanitation, those possibilities were eliminated.

Relying on a grant from the Basque Government of Euskadi, Chris Bieter and wife Nere Lete, Janice Mainvil Kaltenecker, James Sangroniz and wife Cathy Doherty, and Toni Ansotegui began contacting parents of young children who might be interested in enrolling their children in such an experiment. Sister David at the Saint Paul's Catholic Newman Center agreed to help investigate the possibilities of using their building as a site. Mary Smith, former Director of the Children's School, gave invaluable advice and suggestions for organization and administrative ideas. Tom Zabala consulted several government agencies regarding zoning and neighborhood codes for the placement of such a school. Dan and Chrissy Ralston Ansotegui arranged fundraising activities. Chris Bieter and the Uranga & Uranga law offices donated their time to research work visas for a teacher, and separately State of Idaho educational requirements. After hundreds of communications and thousands of hours dedicated to creating the pre-school institution, Chris Bieter and Nere Lete, with the help of Nere's father, Jose Mari Lete, worked successfully



Boise Ikastola students and Basque Government visitors with teacher Nere Inda. 2002. Photo by Gloria Totoricagüena.

with the Education Department of the Basque Government to ensure their aid and participation in providing a Basque teacher, materials, and financial support for the *ikastola* project.

The Boise *Ikastola* was inaugurated and officially opened with great joy by Boise's Mayor Brett Coles on October 5th, 1998 with its first eleven students; Mikel Asla, Hailey Berriochoa, Alex Betts, Joseba Bidaburu, Madalen Lete Bieter, Logan Schibior-Grothe, Celia Harrington, Jill Kaltenecker, Osana Moad, Taylor Owen, and Mikel Sangroniz. Several parents and grandparents held back tears of pride at the incredible accomplishment of having a Basque language school in Boise, Idaho, so far away from their homeland. Referring to Basque ancestors Jeanne Alzola declared, "If they could just see us now! You know our parents and grandparents came here to escape political and economic problems. Many were not allowed to speak Basque. Well, look at this. This is a memorial to them". A space was leased at the St. Paul's Catholic Student Center across from the Boise State University campus and classes have continued at that location.

James Sangroniz, Cathy Doherty, Janice Kaltenecker, Chris Bieter, Nere Lete, and Patty Miller, the Director of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, formed a Board of Directors, which legally represented the *ikastola* in the Basque Government grants program. The *ikastola* is technically considered an educational program of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center and as such qualifies to receive funding from the Basque Government, which requires that grant appropriations for foreign projects be administered by a Basque organization officially recognized under their Public Law 8/1994. Being a part of the Museum and Cultural Center also allows the *ikastola* to qualify for other grants, donations, and educational status subsequent to their non-profit status under Idaho law.

Jeanne Alzola served as the first interim Director of the newly established school, with assistance from Toni Ansotegui who helped clean and prepare the location for pre-school instruction. Elena Marcuerquiaga-Cook was selected in December of 1998 to permanently fill the position of *Ikastola* Director. The numerous factors to be addressed have included immigration issues, Boise City planning and zoning, licensing with the State Board of Education as well as passing health and safety inspections by other Idaho State agencies. Sister David assisted with the rental agreements for St. Paul's Catholic Center and with the Catholic Dioceses of Idaho. Parents have volunteered for various special activities, and Sean Aucutt served as a teacher's aide 1998-1999. By 2000 there were sixteen students enrolled and Geneva Ayarra, an Education major at Boise State University, was hired to assist the *irakaslea*, teacher, from 1999-2001.

The Basque Government financed the children's first teacher, Itziar Apaolaza (1998-99), as well as Izarne Garmendia (February 2000 – May 2001), and Nere Inda (August 2001- May 2002) and the latest instructional methods and pedagogical theories are utilized. The teachers have earned Early Childhood Education

degrees and are selected by the University of the Basque Country. The *ikastola* is fully licensed by the City of Boise municipal government as a pre-school. Along with homeland published educational materials from *Haurtxo-Elkar GIE* and *Urtxintxa-Elkarlanean SI*: teachers use early learning materials such as computer programs, books, audio and video tapes, art supplies, and manipulatives. The students also benefit from Internet communications with other *ikastolas* in the Basque Country itself.

The Euzkaldunak Incorporated advertises and encourages parents to consider the *ikastola* for their children, and informational newsletters highlight the benefits of bilingualism and preserving the Basque language. The Boise Basque Center has supported *ikastola* programs through its advertising, mailing lists, use of the Center for programs, dinners, and fundraisers, and financial assistance for special events.

Elena Marcuerquiaga-Cook believes, “the success of the school has depended on the generosity of the Basque Government, volunteerism, patience, participation of the parents, the Euzkaldunak Incorporated, Patty Miller and the Board of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, and other individuals who have unselfishly given of their time and homes”. For example, Itziar Apaolaza was



Ikastolan bazkaltzen. Photo by Benan Oregi.



Nere Inda. Photo by Benan Oregi.

housed by Ramon and Begonia Hormaetxea Ysursa; Izarne Garmendia by Cathy Clarkson, and Nere Inda also accommodated by Ramon and Begonia Hormaetxea Ysursa. Tens of thousands of dollars have been donated in labor, expertise, and accommodations.

NI IKASLEA NAIZ

A typical day at the Basque language pre-school welcomes children arriving at 7:30 a.m., and there is a free period for play and open interaction until 8:30 a.m. There are both formal group and individualized instruction including creative art projects; learning the alphabet and to form and pre-write letters; numbers and math; recognizing and matching objects; music and dancing; and storytime. The students especially loved Izarne Garmendia's button accordion talents. Teachers exemplify social skills of listening, self-control, sharing, and manners etc., which are all modeled and explained in Basque. Students enjoy a break for a snack from 9:45-10:00 a.m., and a quick recess for outside play before returning for more instruction. Lunch is from 11:30-12:30 p.m. and students follow it with either a nap, or more playtime until after 3:00 p.m. when they can be collected by their parents. The official

hours of the ikastola are from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., which makes afternoon day care convenient for working parents. Educational fieldtrips include riding the public bus, a day at the Boise Zoo, going to a pizza parlor, and playing at the park – while always maintaining Basque language communications.

The instructors speak only Basque to the students, as do the parent volunteers if they know it. The children often speak to each other in a combination of English and Basque, understanding both. However, their continued practice depends on their parents' knowledge of euskera and their usage of it in the home. Of the thirty-two students attending in the three academic years 1998-2001, six students had no Basque ancestry whatsoever. The other twenty-six students ranged from first generation born in the United States to fourth generation. Regardless of their parents' language skills, the children are learning Basque pronunciation, vocabulary, and songs, and they are enriched as a result of their ability to communicate and/or understand another language.

In the fall of 2000, five of the *ikastola's* first graduates moved on to an English language kindergarten class together at Saint Joseph's Catholic School, and their instructor was asked to evaluate their academic performance. Each of the evaluations reported that the child was above average and that there was no confusion regarding language skills or with the communication skills of any of the five students. They were actually above the average ranges in vocabulary and language skills in English even though they had been studying in Basque. Early acquisition of Basque language in Boise seems to have followed numerous linguistics studies demonstrating that children acquire additional language without the difficulties of adults. The *ikastola* has sponsored parents who wish to take the adult Basque language classes offered at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center and promotes the idea of preserving Basque language usage in these young families.

Though adding more grades or levels is not part of the near future plans for the school, the *ikastola* may need to move to a larger facility because of the increasing number in student enrollment. In addition, the Basque Government and the *ikastola* have decided to duplicate an Argentinean program of sending young teachers to the Basque Country to perfect their teaching and language skills in order to return to Argentina to teach Basque to others. To begin preparing for the future and supporting Boise's own teacher, aide Geneva Ayarra studied in a Basque Country *barnetegi*, a total immersion Basque language school and accommodation setting for adults, during 2001-2002. She is perfecting her Basque language and *ikastola* teaching methods to augment her Bachelor's Degree in Education earned at Boise State University, and it is hoped that she will be able to permanently carry on the teaching duties for the Boise Ikastola. Geneva Ayarra enthusiastically explained that she looks forward to "combining educational expertise with a love for all things Basque. Can a person possibly have a better job?"

EKINTZAK

Several of the pre-school participants have traveled with their families to the Basque Country and during their visits have attended *ikastolas* there. Parents and teachers reported no problems and children were comfortable understanding the Basque of the children from the Basque Country. According to Nere Lete, “this is the greatest way to measure the success of the Boise Ikastola”. The Boise Ikastola has a sister school in Errenteria, Gipuzkoa and also communicates with *ikastolas* in Donostia-San Sebastián and Irura, Gipuzkoa. The children exchange artwork, photographs, and videos with each other.

Boise’s Basque school also participates in the internationally celebrated “Ikastola Day”, known as “*Kilometroak*” in the Basque Country. To commemorate the First Anniversary of the Boise ikastola, and to celebrate the *Kilometroak* and the Basque language, a live international satellite conference was held to demonstrate the commitment of maintaining Basque in the United States and Argentine Basque populations. Beginning at 3:00 am Mountain Standard Time, Nere Lete, Elena Marcuerquiaga-Cook, and Itziar Apaolaza contributed to the international press conference televised throughout the Basque Country. Nere Lete also produced a video of the ikastola activities and interviews that was televised as a documentary in the Basque Country during the *Kilometroak* festivities.

In 2000, the widely popular Basque television clowns “Takolo, Pirritx eta Porrotx” traveled to Boise with financial support from the Euzkaldunak Incorporated to perform their humorous skits and musical plays for the *ikastola* children and parents, and the Basque community in general. They performed for the Boise’ko Gazteak Basque dancers and their families at the Basque Center and although many did not understand the exact Basque vocabulary, the language of humor is international. Each child at the pre-school was gifted with wigs matching the Basque clowns, which several used for their Halloween costumes. Unfortunately, the autumn 2001 *Kilometroak* celebration in Boise was postponed due to the violent events of September 11th in New York, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania. For the spring of 2002, the “Txotxongilo” Basque group of puppeteers is scheduled to visit the Boise Basque community and again celebrate the Basque language.

The *ikastola*’s parent volunteers participate in the annual San Ignacio Festival in Boise at the end of July and sponsor children’s games such as face painting, cookie decorating, Basque puppet shows, Basque computer games on CD, and several arts and crafts. They organize ikastola family dinners and barbecues and several other socials during the year. Elena Marcuerquiaga-Cook has scheduled several children play days during the summer months to facilitate continued friendships and for the families of new incoming students to meet each other.

Parents- Rosa Mari Totorica, Miren Lete, Marie Jausoro Day, and Chris Bieter-agreed, “the ikastola is successfully serving another segment of the Basque population that might not necessarily attend Basque Center events, but now are interconnected with others in the Basque community”. In a 1991 interview, Joe Eiguren clearly stated the opinions of many when he said, “If people spend millions of dollars preserving endangered animals, they should also do so with languages. It is the most valuable relic of antiquity because it is still alive”.

Basque the *Boise'ko*

(07)

Dancing and *Gazteak*

Because of the organization and attention focused on the Oinkari Basque Dancers group, many in today's generation assume that the Oinkaris were the first Basque dance troupe in the Boise area. However, their establishment resulted from a fortified foundation of generations of Basque dancing. Many Basque wedding, baptismal, and funeral celebrations were held at the boarding houses complete with ethnic music. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the boarding houses in Boise sponsored regular dances with accordionists, txistularis, and piano players. Though these earlier demonstrations of Basque dance were informal and part of social gatherings, Luis Arrizabala remembers his experiences with the dance group in Emmett, Idaho, organized by Cipri and Julia Barroetabena, who were assisted by Lucy Aboitiz Garatea and Joe Villanueva. "The group of Basque dancers practiced together, with txistulari Ambrosio Aparicio, for over a year to prepare for the 1940 performance at the Western Idaho Fair. There weren't enough Basque kids in town to complete some dances so we also included two non-Basque kids. We had eight girls and nine boys, all teenagers. We were the Emmett Basque Dancers", explained Luis. Julia Barroetabena and Lucy Garatea sewed and embroidered girls' vests and skirts, and boys' *gerrikos* and *txapelas* were borrowed. World War II interrupted most people's lives in various ways, and in Emmett, different priorities and preoccupations added to a lack of time and commitment. Eventually, the Emmett Basque Dancers disbanded as the first formal Basque dance group in Idaho.



Domingo Ansotegui, Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea, and Jimmy Jausoro 1976. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

JUANITA UBERUAGA HORMAECHEA AND OUR FIRST DANCERS

Towards the end of the 1940s in Boise, at the annual Christmas Balls sponsored by the local Basques, several people noticed that the younger generations could not perform the ethnic dances and that part of the Basque culture was slipping from their shared traditions. Juanita “Jay” Arriola Uberuaga Hormaechea decided that the time for talking and complaining had passed and the time for action had arrived. She proposed to teach the children of local Basques the ethnic dances as she had learned them during her years working with emigrants in the boarding houses. What had been created in Emmett could also be duplicated in Boise. Rose Arregui Dick remembers taking her children to dancing lessons with Jay in 1948 at the Western Square Dance Hall in what is today Hyde Park. Dave Eiguren remembers being one of the dancers and the fun they eventually had. “All ages were together. There weren’t that many of us to begin with”. Dave’s training helped him to go on to the Oinkari Dancers and to participate for years with that group. Eventually he returned to the “little kids group” as a young father and the boys’ dance director for decades. His son Tony Eiguren took over when Dave retired from the Boise’ko Gazteak.



Boise Music Week performance 1948. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

Although the “little kids group”, as it was known for years, started with a few dozen dancers, it soon blossomed. Angeles Larrinaga, Domingo Ansotegui, Jimmy Jausoro, and Sabin Landaluze accompanied Jay Uberuaga Hormaechea each Sunday with their accordions and txistu. In 1949, Jay was asked to consider creating a Basque music and dance production for the Boise Music Week annual celebration in May. She produced *The Song of the Basque*, an actual musical play with almost two hundred dancers, musicians, and singers of all ages. The Boise High School auditorium stage was decorated for several scene changes and the production was executed beautifully. The May 9th performance was the highlight of the Boise community. It was a sold-out performance for two thousand spectators, and an estimated one thousand people attended the dress rehearsal. Music Week officials requested a repeat performance for those thousands who were not able to see it the first time, and on May 20th another sell-out audience cheered their approval and praise. Recognition from the non-Basque community was positive. The Basques had ended their performance with “God Bless America” sung in Basque, “*Gora America*”, and had stated their appreciation to the Boise community for being accepted. Praise was abundant in the media and Basque leaders were on a roll.

Pancho Aldape remembers these years as the start of what would become the Boise Basque Center. Basques had been organized for decades and had worked together for dances, picnics, and special celebrations, but now they wanted their own physical social center. “The next year after Jay’s teaching dancing and getting people excited, more and more people came. We started renting the Elks Club, the Eagle’s Hall, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Halls on weekends to have dances. We had more and more people so we decided we needed to have a membership. We started there first. Then we went to the sheep camps to sign up sheepherders too. We decided we needed our own place but had no money”. By 1950, Boise area Basques had collected sufficient funds in the form of bonds to construct the first phase of the Basque Center, which included the bar, restrooms, and an upstairs card room. Dancing lessons for children began on the new wooden floor, above the bar where their parents socialized and enjoyed their Sunday afternoons.

By 1951, the main dance hall and basements had been constructed and Sunday afternoons found the dance hall floor of the Basque Center crammed with rows of adolescents listening to Jay. Years later it would be Anne Boyd and Bonnie Ansotegui Kerns, “Sidekick, one, two, three. Shoulders back now and chin up! Turn, two, three, one, two, three. Be proud!” By 1973, coordinator Isabel Larrondo Jausoro reported that over 100 children between the ages of five and fourteen were participating every Tuesday night. During 1973 and 1974, Harley Rott also instructed fifteen students in accordion before their dancing lessons began for the night.

TODAY'S *BOISE'KO GAZTEAK*

The *Boise'ko Gazteak* combines approximately 180 children between the ages of four and fourteen years old to teach traditional Basque dance and song. They are divided into four different age groups and utilize seventeen teachers and seven musicians. Every Tuesday night, the Basque Center, the adjacent Basque Museum and Cultural Center, and next-door handball court are filled with the energy of youth, music and dance. It is an important part of the construction of ethnic identity for the youth to meet each other as children and make friends at the Basque events. The dancers' parents wait in the Basque Center bar, or the Bar Gernika just a few buildings away, where they also become friends and are more likely to continue to participate in Basque Center functions. Many of these children continue on to dance with the Oinkari Basque Dancers because of the friends they have made and the desire to carry on with Basque dance and music.



Boise'ko Gazteak Txikitxuak, ages 4-6. 2000. Photo by Bryan Day.

The *Boise'ko Gazteak* is divided into four separate age groups “so that we don't completely lose our sanity”, said teacher Anne Marie Mansidor. The “Txikitxuak” are 4-6 years old; the “Azkarrak” are 6-8 years old; the “Txulitos” are 8-11 years old; and the “Nagusiak” are 11-14 years old. Each division has its own army of teachers and musicians and the children have different dance costumes to keep them easily recognizable. Each group also performs different dances as well. The children learn basic words and phrases in Basque and also enjoy singing traditional Basque songs, which are taught to broaden their cultural awareness of music and language. Jimmy Jausoro, Domingo Ansotegui, and Juan Zulaica served as musicians for decades and Jimmy Jausoro and Juan Zulaica continue performing with the older Nagusiak. Additional musicians and choir teachers have included Joe Eguia (deceased in 2000), James Sangroniz, Dan Ansotegui, Janice Mainvil Kaltenecker, Chris Bieter, Patrick Barinaga Williams, Josie Barinaga Williams, Mary Lou Murelaga Guerricabeitia, Miren Lete, and Ana Lete. Singing teachers Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica, Coro Goitiandia, Mary Lou Murelaga Guerricabeitia, Miren Artiach, Gina Ansotegui Urquidi, and Toni Ansotegui have maintained Basque language songs.

The children perform for community functions mainly in Boise but also have danced in Nampa, Meridian, Caldwell and Mountain Home. The money earned goes to the group to help defray costs for props and equipment, photocopies, special performances, and for the Children's Christmas Party held at the Basque Center every year after the Christmas performance. This party is as old as the Basque Center itself, originating with the first children's group dancing with Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea. This performance is attended by the children's extended families and Euzkaldunak members as well, with a visit from Santa Claus and the Basque Father Christmas, *Olentzero*. Gifts from the *Olentzero* arrive after the children sing in Basque, calling for his appearance, and then all are treated to homemade candies, cookies, and cakes brought by the parents of the dancers. Over the years, Domingo Ansotegui, Dave Eiguren, and Francis “Patxi” Lostra unfortunately have disappeared for a few hours right at the time that Santa or the *Olentzero* arrived.

During the years 1950-1996, these Christmas shows were held in the upstairs dancehall of the Basque Center with more than 300 chairs crammed together and at least another hundred people left standing along the walls and back toward the bar. By this time there were also so many dancers that they needed a larger area in which to perform. Whereas in the past perhaps eight *txikis* performed a dance, now there were enough for three of four groups of eight to dance side-by-side. After much debate about splitting up the groups to perform on different nights, or limiting seats to a certain number of tickets to be sold, a group of parents investigated the possibility of moving the annual performance to another site. Some parents wanted to keep the celebration at the Basque Center because of the symbolic importance, while others argued that the logistics of organizing and

moving 175 dancers in and out of a performance area as well as trying to seat the audience and have them actually be able to see the performance made continuing with only one performance at the Basque Center impossible.

In 1996, the decision was made to change the venue to the Bishop Kelly High School gymnasium in order to provide easy parking, additional bleacher seating where every seat has a view, and a larger dance space for the performing groups. In 2001, in addition to the 175 dancers, more than five hundred family and friends attended the Christmas performance of the Boise'ko Gazteak. Teacher Cindy Schaffeld commented, "We would never fit into the Basque Center for this performance today. I guess it's a good kind of problem to have. Too many people is a good thing". Following the Sunday afternoon performance at Bishop Kelly, the Christmas celebration continues at the Basque Center with a visit from the Olentzero. He distributes gifts to the dancers and other children of members of the Euzkaldunak, and desserts for all are enjoyed in the downstairs reception area of the Center.

Following each of the Jaialdi International Basque Cultural Festivals held in Boise, there has been a marked increase in the number of new members joining the



Boise'ko Gazteak Azkarrak, ages 6-10. 2000 Photo by Bryan Day.

Euzkaldunak Incorporated organization. The new members have also enrolled their young children in the dancing lessons held every Tuesday night. Consequently, every year there are experienced dancers from prior years, combined with many first time dancers who have never heard Francis “Patxi” Lostra, Jeremy Malone, or Tony Eiguren counting out the beats, “side kick- one, two, three. Left kick- one, two, three”, or had Gina Ansotegui Urquidi smile at them with a reminder, “arms up, chin up, and smile babe”. Through the decades, the all-volunteer groups of teachers have provided the foundation for the future of the Euzkaldunak, Incorporated. Their commitment to the Basque community’s children is impressive.

The children’s costumes are quite expensive after adding up the costs of special *alpargata* shoes and wool socks from the Basque Country, pants, shirts, vests, *gerrikos* and *txapelas* for the boys, and skirts, shirts, vests, head and shoulder scarves for the girls. Each autumn there is a “uniform swap” encouraging the parents to sell or trade parts or entire costumes of children who have outgrown them. If a dancer’s family could not afford the expense of the entire uniform, Dance Director Linda Barinaga has made sure that each of the pieces of the uniform eventually was given to a dancer from other families whose children had outgrown their costumes.



Boise'ko Gazteak Nagusiak, ages 10-14. 2000. Photo by Bryan Day.

Each of the four Boise'ko Gazteak groups performs for the public at senior citizens' centers, business and social banquets, tourism events, and arts and cultural celebrations held around the Treasure Valley. Performances of between thirty minutes to one hour are rewarded with monetary donations of anywhere from \$50 to \$350. This money is utilized to pay for dance equipment, accessories and props, and for dancers' and musicians' expenses to attend the annual North American Basque Organizations Music Camp, "Udaleku".

Boise'ko Gazteak's musicians each make a serious time commitment to the group. Patrick Barinaga Williams began studying the piano at age ten, the accordion at twelve, and at thirteen began lessons with Jimmy Jausoro. He was selected for the Idaho Commission on the Arts Master Apprentice Program and soaked up as much as possible from Jimmy's decades of experience. Patrick played for the Boise'ko group until leaving for university in 1999. Josie Barinaga Williams followed a similar path and after playing for the 6-10 year olds for two years, she is currently dancing and also playing accordion for the Oinkari Basque Dancers.

Linda Barinaga manages teachers, musicians, costumes, practice and performance schedules, and Sue Urquidi serves as an administrative assistant for communications. According to Linda, "We have quite an elaborate calling tree system so that each person only has to call three or four other people with dates, places, and times of events. So far it has worked well. But any outsider that walks past the Basque Center on a Tuesday night would think all hell had broken loose. They'd hear and see boys hitting each other's sticks, girls swinging baskets of fish, kids hitting tambourines, shouting 'gora' and 'bera' and 'aurrera' as parts of various dances. It looks like complete chaos but it's not. It's the Basque way of organizing things and the kids love it".

Basque Choirs, and

(08)

Musicians, Ensembles

LEGACIES TO A PEOPLE AND A CULTURE

Any discussion of Basque music in Boise automatically turns to Jimmy Jausoro and Domingo Ansotegui. Jimmy began playing the accordion in 1932 at age twelve, learning from the many Basque boarders at his parents' boarding house, the Spanish Hotel, in Nampa, Idaho. When he was only fifteen years old, he was asked to play at several boarding houses to entertain for dances and parties. During his WWII naval service, he took his accordion along and learned to play other types of what he called "modern music". In the 1940s, Jimmy, John Anduiza, Domingo Ansotegui, Frank Arego, Joe Villanueva, Angeles Murelaga, and Ray Mansisidor were several of the performing accordionists.

Jimmy Jausoro and Domingo Ansotegui began playing for Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea in 1947 when she requested musicians' help to teach young children Basque dancing. They also traveled around southern Idaho playing at boarding houses and Basque dances. In 1957, they formed the "Jim Jausoro & his Orchestra Band", which played both Basque and contemporary music for dances, weddings, picnics, and Basque festivals around southern Idaho and northern Nevada. Each of the musicians had their own day jobs: Jim worked for the railroad and Domingo for Interstate Electric. By night, they practiced for upcoming billings. They began their decades-long career together at the Euzkaldunak Incorporated Anniversary Dinner

and Dance on November 16, 1957. The Jim Jausoro dance band consisted of members Domingo Ansotegui on the drums and tambourine, John Arregui on the also saxophone, Dick Lenhardt on the trumpet and trombone, and Jimmy Jausoro on the accordion. No one knows, or even ventures a guess, as to how many thousands of miles these four men and their wives traveled together. From December through April, most Friday and Saturday nights were booked at Basque dances and Shepherders Balls in Jerome, Twin Falls, Elko, Ely, Winnemucca, Gooding, Grandview, Bruneau, Mountain Home, Caldwell, Marsing, Kuna, Melba, Jordan Valley, and Ontario. May gave them enough time for a quick breath before the wedding season and the Basque picnics and festivals started up again June through September. Isabelle Larrondo Jausoro managed her husband's business and booking arrangements, and still does.

In October 1972, the Euzkaldunak, Inc. honored Domingo Ansotegui and Jim Jausoro with special plaques commemorating their service to the Basque community. Their hours of entertainment included performances with the Oinkaris at the Seattle World's Fair, New York World's Fair, the Smithsonian Institute Folk Festival in Washington D.C., and the Montreal World's Fair as representatives of the United States State Department. In the April 1975 issue of *Voice of the Basques*, editor Brian Wardle pointed out the work of more than 25 years of Jimmy and Domingo in providing music and entertainment for the Basque folk dance groups of children and the Oinkaris. Another twenty-five years later, Jimmy tirelessly continues to provide



Jimmy Jausoro and his Orchestra 1977: Jimmy Jausoro, Dick Leonhardt, Ramon "Skip" Hoover, Domingo Ansotegui. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

music accompaniment to the Boise'ko Gazteak and to the Oinkari Basque Dancers with his tambourine player, Juan Zulaica.

President Jim Ithurralde of Elko presented NABO's first ever annual Basque of the Year Award jointly to Jim Jausoro and Domingo Ansotegui on November 29, 1975. Their selection was unanimous among all of the delegates. Amazingly, this award was kept a secret and Jimmy and Domingo thought it was going to be another of many performances they had prepared at the Basque Center. When the Oinkaris finished their performance, Julie Lachiondo Literas and brother Dave Lachiondo announced from the stage that actually this was not another regular Oinkari performance but in fact it was a special night to celebrate and thank the musicians for their service. Letters and telegrams had arrived from all over the United States and the Basque Country, and there were personal words of praise from Idaho Senators Frank Church and James McClure, Governor Cecil Andrus, Idaho Representatives Steve Symms and George Hansen, Bishop Sylvester Treinen, Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa, Boise Mayor Richard "Dick" Eardley, and a special telegram from Jon Oñatibia from *Euskal Herria*. NABO President Ithurralde, and Vice President Frank Maitia, of Bakersfield, and several other NABO delegates traveled to Boise to personally thank these icons of Basque culture. The following are excerpts from the December 1975 (Volume 2, Number 1) of *Voice of the Basques* as editor Brian Wardle described this magical night:

For more than thirty years Jim and Domingo have worked with the Basque children of Boise Valley. In their own quiet way these two men have contributed in a great way to America's awareness of the Basque people and their heritage through their music. The program that night not only brought back many fond memories and misty eyes to the men being honored, but to the many in the audience as well. Many guests provided humorous insights into the lives of these fine men ... including Jimmy's first, third and sixth grade teachers, Domingo's accordion teacher and the man that gave him his first drum lesson. Jimmy's two brothers from Seattle, Tony and Joe, even gave a surprise appearance. Jim's and Dom's employers also participated to congratulate them for their many accomplishments. Debbie Navarro Smith, Karen Luque Rost, Gloria Garatea Lejardi, and Tammy Achurra told stories of Oinkari practices, performances and trips, bringing back many memories for the hundreds of guests present. The former Oinkari singing group, accompanied by Jimmy and Domingo, presented songs that they had not sung for many years. Al Erquiaga stated after they had finished their number, "not bad, considering that we had not sung together for sixteen years..".

Jim and Domingo have spent countless hours away from their families and used their vacation days from work to travel with the Oinkaris. As Jimmy and Domingo received congratulations from the crowd they were met with a standing ovation from the hall's filled to capacity audience. The applause continued for their wives, Isabel Jausoro and Dorothy Ansotegui, who were presented with roses and corsages.

The Oinkaris presented wristwatches to the musicians on behalf of the dance group. Euzkaldunak President Julian Achabal presented each with an oil painting, in a collage, depicting different parts of each man's life. Frank Maitia, on behalf of the Kern County Basque Club in Bakersfield, presented the men with berets and scarves from France. Tomasa Erquiaga from the Basque Girls' Club also presented gifts to Domingo and Jimmy".

Former Oinkaris had met for a few informal practices- and drinks- at the Basque Center, and their performance surprised even themselves! The women fit into their old costumes beautifully and the men wore their white shirts, *txapelas*, and *gerrikos* with a pair of jeans that fit their current waistlines. Under the chairmanship of Al Erquiaga, this exceptional celebration was indeed unforgettable for those hundreds of guests who were fortunate enough to attend.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Jimmy Jausoro and Domingo Ansotegui continued playing for Basque dances all around the western United States, the Oinkari Basque Dancers and the Boise'ko Gazteak. After Domingo's death in 1984, Juan Zulaica assumed the position of Jimmy's partner and tambourine player, and Domingo's son, Dan, took his chair behind the drum set in the dance band. In 1985 the Oinkaris made a 25th Anniversary tour of the Basque Country and highlighted the significance of these dedicated musicians, and the same year Jim Jausoro was selected for the national Endowment of the Arts National Heritage Award. Oinkari President John Aldape III wrote, "The entire structure of Basque activities in Boise would be so different were it not for the contributions of Jimmy Jausoro". In 1988, he won the Mayor's Award for Excellence in the Arts from the Boise City Arts Commission and in 1994 was inducted into the Society of Basque Studies in America Basque Hall of Fame. Gloria Garatea Lejardi praised him, "When I hear of someone dedicating their lives to a cause, I always think of Jim and what he has done for the Basque community..". Jim Jausoro was again singled out for his dedication in 2000 when he was chosen for the Idaho Commission on the Arts Fellowship Award and the Idaho Commission on the Arts Governor's Award. Jimmy's humble personality and desire to keep Basque music alive have kept him enthusiastic all these years. Boise'ko Gazteak Director Linda Barinaga captured what all of us believe: "What a legacy to a people and a culture!"

ABESLARIAK: SINGERS

The first Basque choir that practiced regularly and formally performed for outside groups was actually the Oinkari Basque Dancers. Beginning with their performances in 1961, they added songs to their presentations and continued singing until the beginning of the 1970s. Jimmy Jausoro played his accordion to accompany the fourteen-member choir. He played for Toni Murelaga Achabal, Nancy Echeverria, Terry Aldape, Jeannie Aldape Eiguren, Anne Boyd, Sylvia Urquidi, Al

Erquiaga, Simon Achabal, Alice Urlezaga, Dave Eiguren, Julie Lachiondo Literas, Toni Arana Bicandi, Phil Aldape, and Mike Luque, and as time passed others joined while some retired. “I don’t know why they quit singing. It was such a beautiful part of our performances. Even if our choices of songs were kind of rudimentary, we learned some Basque and the audiences loved it”, recalls Juliana Jausoro Aldape.

The next formal Basque choir was the Abeslari Singers, which was formed by Father Ramon Echevarria in 1972 to perform for the Holiday Basque Festival organized by the Idaho Basque Studies Center. After practicing for the summer festival and performing for a few Basque functions, the choir slowly dissipated and disbanded a year later. Father Echevarria’s enthusiasm had been instrumental in forming and maintaining the group of young musicians. His new religious assignment and relocation out of Boise left the group without an experienced choral director.

The next year, interested participants were revived and with many of the same singers formed anew as the Anaiak Danok Basque Choir, Brothers All, which



Anaiak Danok Choir 1974 Aberri Eguna celebration. Jim Anderson director. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

performed at Basque masses, Aberri Eguna celebrations, and the Saint Ignatius festival at the end of July each year. Dr. Pat Bieter recruited a Music Education student he had at Boise State College, Linda Schmidt, to direct the singers. The senior in college turned out to be quite an influence and even arranged several pieces, such as *Uso Zuria*, and *Maritxu Nora Zoaz*. Linda Schmidt stayed on to play piano and accompany the Anaiak Danok Choir when Jim Anderson was approached by Justo Sarria to permanently serve as the musical conductor. Jim was an elementary school music teacher in Boise at the time and agreed to volunteer his services to direct the newly formed choir. “We practiced at Madison Elementary school because Paki Sarria’s father was the custodian there and could let us in to use a classroom with a piano”, said Jim. “I don’t think anyone knew how to read music or had any experience of training with a choir except for Miren Azaola [Eiguren]. But they had big hearts and wanted to sing so I taught them the best I could”.

By the summer of 1973 the Anaiak Danok choir was under the sole direction of Jim Anderson and their first significant performance was for the “Basque Music Night” at the Western Idaho Fair on August 26th. Sharing the stage with the Oinkari Basque Dancers, this performance raised \$1600, which was designated to cover initial start-up costs of the North American Basque Organizations (NABO) federation. From April through June, Jon Oñatibia had worked with Director Jim Anderson and members of the choir to determine which pieces of music were ready for performance possibilities, and the audience obviously agreed. “The whole night was such a success and we were so proud of the new choir”, remembers Basque Music Night coordinator Lou Guisasola.

The Anaiak Danok Choir performed at the San Ignacio festival mass in Municipal Park in July, and continued their practices at Madison School and later at the Basque Center. “Justo Sarria and Pat Bieter did most of the work to keep us together. Sometimes practices were kind of undisciplined because singers wanted to socialize with each other, but for the most part we worked hard and still had a great time together”, said Jim. The next important performance was for the June 14, 1974 Basque Music Night in memory of Lynne Fereday. Jon Oñatibia returned to Boise to direct and produce the Basque music show to a full house at the South Junior High School auditorium. The Anaiak Danok choir added to groups honoring Lynne Fereday’s love of Basque language and culture with performances of *Maitia Nun Zira*, *Kaiku*, *Binbili-Bonbolo*, and others. Sylvia Eiguren and Miren Azaola Eiguren performed solos, the children’s *ikastola* group sang, *Oñatibia’s txistulari* students played, and the Oinkaris danced. The finale incorporated all of the performers on the stage and the standing audience proudly singing *Gernika’ko Arbola*.

The Anaiak Danok Choir had twenty-five consistent singers, and a repertoire of about fifteen songs. At the beginning, obtaining choral music with soprano, alto,

tenor, and bass parts written together was difficult. Jon Oñatibia had presented the available musical arrangements during his stay in Boise in 1973. During his several months in Boise he simultaneously taught txistu, Basque dance to Oinkaris, established the Basque language program for children with Mari Carmen Totorica, and worked with Jim Anderson to improve the choir. He also aided with Basque language pronunciation and music selection. Jon Oñatibia built a special relationship with Jim and they even considered possibly working together to collect, arrange and publish historic Basque music preserved in the small villages of *Euskal Herria*. Tragically, Jon Oñatibia was killed in an automobile accident in 1979 and his expertise, enthusiasm, and love for Basque music were missed by thousands of people who had the honor to meet and know him.

There is no one reason the choir dissolved in 1975. Some singers lost interest, others like Anita Anacabe, graduated from Boise State College and returned to their hometowns. Iciar Azaola moved to New York and Kepa Chertudi moved to Utah. One by one, participants had other commitments with their young children and the group decided to discontinue the choir. As the Boise area Basques were accustomed to for decades, the music continued informally. It might have been a weekend of singing to Jimmy's accordion in the Jausoro family backyard, or a younger group of Oinkaris singing to the Bieter's guitars on their back steps- but at the end of the 1970s there were always twenty to thirty singers ready to perform for a Basque wedding, at the Aberri Eguna Easter celebrations, and at the San Ignacio festival mass.

BIOTZETIK BASQUE CHOIR

The Euzkaldunak newsletter of November 1986 included a small announcement inviting all those interested in participating in a Basque choir to meet at the Center on Wednesdays, "No singing experience necessary". A few months earlier, Dave Bieter, Chris Bieter, and Mari Carmen Totorica had discussed the necessity of organizing another Basque choir. During the early 1980s, Justo Sarria had gathered voices for the annual singing at the Aberri Eguna celebrations, and in 1984 and 1985, Victoria Oleaga Arrubarrena had helped encourage a small group to perform at the January dinner for Santa Agueda. These were one-time performances and did not constitute an ongoing choir. "Dave and Chris agreed that if I could convince Ted to be the director, they would help organize everything. Well of course, Ted is my son, so he agreed to be the director and get the choir started", said Mari Carmen Totorica.

The Biotzetik Basque Choir was formed in 1986 under its first musical Director Ted Totorica (Totoricagüena) Jr. He was finishing his senior year in Music Education at



Boise State University (BSU) and agreed to direct and conduct until his departure for the Basque Country the following year. By December, twenty singers had joined and their first performance was for the Euzkaldunak membership at the Shepherders' Ball. "Oh, I cried actually. All the songs were sung in Basque and performed beautifully. And now their traditional costumes are spectacular", said Lucy Berriochoa Bauman. The Biotzetik performed *Agur Jaunak*, *Dringilin Dron*, and *Hator Hator* at the Shepherders' Ball before a crowd of several hundred spectators (who actually remained quiet) and received tremendous applause and congratulations.

Justo Sarria and Jim Anderson had remained friends after the break-up of the Anaik Danok Choir and when they chanced upon each other in November of 1986 Justo explained to Jim that the Basque Center had begun a new Basque choir. "I told Justo that I'd be happy to be a part of it again and to call me if they needed anything. Well Ted was leaving for the Basque Country, so Justo called and there I was that Spring, directing the Basque choir again", said Jim. Jim Anderson directed the performance of the Biotzetik Basque Choir at the Aberri Eguna Basque flag raising ceremony at the State Capitol grounds in 1987 and continued his voluntary leadership until retiring as director in 1998.



Biotzetik Basque Choir 2000.

Photo by Bryan Day.

Ted Totorica researched Basque music archives while in *Euskal Herria* and returned with folders full of choral music for Jim Anderson. The choir's performance schedule filled with concerts for such groups as the Governor's Conference on Tourism, various Jaialdi performances, and requests for weddings and funerals. In 1988 the President of the Basque Autonomous Community of Euskadi visited Idaho and the Biotzetik Choir welcomed José Antonio Ardanza and his wife, Gloria, at the Boise airport and again at a formal program at the Boise State University Ballroom. In 1988 and 1991 the choir traveled to Gardnerville-Minden, Nevada for the NABO Kantari Eguna, Day of Song, festival "and we finally performed for people that could understand the words!" laughed Maite Bengoa.

In 1988 the Basque Government's Department of Culture was approached about the possibility of Jim Anderson being sent to the Basque Country to study choral directing with Basque specialists. The Basque Government decided instead to send a Basque choral conductor to Boise in order to work directly with the Biotzetik singers. José Luis Eguiluz was selected to travel to Boise, and his eagerness and assurance kept choir members practicing several days a week for hours at a time. The San Ignacio festival performances he directed included new music not previously

performed in Boise and further impressed the Basque audiences. “That fall we had about forty singers coming to practice regularly and we were already looking forward to the 1990 Jaialdi”, remembers Irene Eaton. “We also sang at the ordination of the Bishop in the spring of 1989”.

In December 1990, A.J. Achabal furnished a bus for the choir and they traveled to various Basque persons homes, caroling in *euskera* and English. In February 1991, they repeated the private home caroling tour to celebrate the custom for Santa Agueda and these have become annual events. That fall, the Western Folklife Center of Utah presented “Voices W.E.S.T.: Western Ensemble Singing Traditions” at the Salt Lake City Symphony Hall and Arts Center. The Biotzetik choir was invited to perform and participate in workshops in order to share their ethnic music with other performing groups. “I think we were at our best when preparing for the Salt Lake festival”, remembered Jim Anderson. Choir members worked selling chorizos and lamb-k-bobs at various community functions to raise money for their travels and for the costs of copying and printing their songbooks. In May 1992 the Boise Master Chorale invited the Basque choir to perform in their special presentation “Of the People”, and Biotzetik performed twelve different selections.

The first Omenaldia Mass, Day of Remembrance Mass, to remember loved ones who have passed away during the year was held in 1996. The annual Catholic mass and potluck dinner has been organized by the choir and celebrated at Sacred Heart Church with the meal following in the church’s reception area of Faith Hall. The Biotzetik Basque Choir provides religious, emotional, and joyful music, and the Oinkari Basque Dancers perform an Agurra farewell dance. “The women of Euzkaldunak and the choir provide most of the food and all of the organizing”, said Merche Urrutia. In April 1997 the choir hosted a fundraiser, its first “Kantari Afaría”, Musical Dinner, with an elaborate Basque meal and musical entertainment at the gymnasium of Bishop Kelly High School, and this event has now become an annual celebration. They sang at the grand re-opening of the Jordan Valley historic fronton in September 1997, and for the re-opening of the Mountain Home fronton in August 2001.

Approximately half of the Biotzetik Choir traveled to the Basque Country to perform at various venues in early summer of 2001. They performed for government officials of the Gernika City Council and the Bizkaia provincial administration, Catholic masses, festival celebrations, and informally in several town plazas. “I was thrilled to finally see all the places I have heard so much about. I took my daughter and grandkids too!” said Elaine Nakano. Many audiences were surprised to learn they were from the United States and singing Basque songs- except for those attending the plaza performances where several Biotzetik singers were dressed in shorts and tennis shoes. The “American” dress gave them away.

When Jim Anderson retired, Patty Gabica Haas took over the leadership of the choir as artistic and musical director, and Biotzetik has continued on its road of excellence. Her enthusiasm and years of experience with Biotzetik facilitated a fluid

transition. Each wedding and funeral mass performance draws abundant praise for those singers who have kept Basque choral music alive in the Treasure Valley. Delphina Urresti Arnold commented, “You know they have really accomplished so much in such a short time. You’d think most of them are professionals. We are so so proud I just can’t tell you how good my heart feels”.

RECOGNIZING BASQUE MUSIC

In 1994 the Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Community Folklife Program and the Fund for Culture awarded the Basque Museum and Cultural Center (BMCC) monies to create a recording of Boise Basque musicians. The result was a professional recording of local Basque artists including a vintage recording of the Jim Jausoro Orchestra, singers Patty Miller and Chris Bieter; accordionists Dave Lachiondo, Angeles Aldape Murelaga, Mary Lou Murelaga Guericabeitia, Dan Ansotegui, and Ray Mansisor; tambourinists Morrie Berriochoa and Sean Aucutt; txistularis Cathy Clarkson, Josie Bilbao, Janice Mainvil Kaltenecker, and Dan Ansotegui; and the Biotzetik Basque Choir. One thousand cassettes and one thousand CDs were produced for sale at the BMCC gift shop. One of the txistu band’s medleys from this recording was even selected by the Microsoft Corporation for their software on folk music. Microsoft paid the Basque Museum and Cultural Center \$250 for a nonexclusive license to use thirty seconds of the txistu music in their multimedia product.

The Basque Music Archives were officially established at the BMCC in 1995. The President of the Idaho Arts Archives and Research Center, Teddy Keeton, requested and received a series of grants for “Discovery: the Tapestry of Basque Music”. This investigation gathered recordings, written music, and other pertinent information from the United States and the Basque Country to be housed for public use at the Boise Basque Museum and Cultural Center. These archives include the collections of Espe Alegria and the Lachiondo family of Boise, José Mendive of Elko, and Pedro Juan Etchamendy of Chino. A reception on September 23, 1995 formally recognized Jim Jausoro, Espe Alegria, Angeles Aldape Murelaga, Pedro Juan Etchamendy, José Mendive, and Cathy Clarkson for their outstanding efforts to preserve and promote the continuation of Basque music in the United States. Cathy Clarkson may not be Basque by descent, but she has been adopted by the Basque community as “one of us”. As a junior high school student in the 1970s, she regularly attended *pala* and *pelota* workshops with friends and continues playing with the Fronton Association. Cathy spent one year in Oñati, Gipuzkoa on the Boise State University Basque Studies Program and trained in txistu with the master musician Jon Oñatibia. Later she lived in Gernika and received individualized instruction from Martín Urrutia. For twenty years Cathy Clarkson has played txistu for the Oinkaris, in musical ensembles for special performances such as Jaialdi Festivals, and she has dedicated



Basque Museum and Cultural Center "Paseo" musicians Mary Lou Murelaga Guericabeitia and Ray Mansisidor, 1994.
Courtesy of Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

thousands of hours to txistu instruction, teaching about the Basque Country and Basque topics, and helping others learn and practice their Basque language. She is fluent in Basque, French, Spanish, and of course English. Her txistu students have included Edu Sarria, Nagore Goitiandia, Iker Goitiandia, Tony Eiguren, Joie Gratton, and Cristina Watson.

BASQUE MUSIC ENSEMBLES

Formed in 1996 with several Basque and non-Basque musicians who have been playing Basque music for years, *Gaupasa*, All Night, has performed promoting Basque music in Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, California and also for the 1997 National Folk Festival in Dayton, Ohio. They entertain at many Basque weddings and cultural events with the *trikitixa* (button accordion), *txistu* (Basque flute), *pandereta* (tambourine), guitars, mandolin, violin, bass, saxophone, and drums. Typically songs are sung in Basque and both the youthful and elderly crowds gather to sing and dance with the mixture of Basque and English lyrics. *Gaupasa* adds a

The Txantxangorriak musical instrument group was formed in 2001. Photo by Gloria Totoricagüena.



fundamental element to the Basque community, enticing young people to learn and practice their Basque language in a social setting. They give Basque language and Basque folk music a high status among the viewers and serve as examples for other young musicians. Current musicians Cathy Clarkson, Josie Bilbao, Patty Miller, Dan Ansotegui, Sean Aucutt, Chris Bieter, Morrie Berriochoa, and Nick Elguizabal have, between themselves, numerous years of experience living in the Basque Country, and have established many networks with homeland artists. Teenagers in the dancing crowds can sing along with many of the Basque songs while not understanding a single word of the *euskera* they have just vocalized. If they could, they might comprehend the nationalist lyrics and meanings behind them.

Jim Jausoro's Dance Band has been playing together for decades and has served as a mainstay for Basque festivals, Shepherders' Balls, San Ignacio celebrations, weddings, and other Basque community occasions. As younger Basques, many remember growing up to the music of the 1930s and 1940s "Basque Band" including José Yriondo, Ricardo Ondarza, Alfonso Aldecoa, Juan Asumendi, Fidel Uranga, Juan Luque, José Uberuaga, Juan Lejardi, Ramon Yursa, Manuel Aldecoa, Rose Asumendi, and Benedicta Aldecoa Wilson, who as teenagers and young adults had played flutes, clarinets, saxophones, drums, trumpets, trombones, and banjos for

entertainment. Playing a combination of big band music and traditional Basque festival dance music to the enjoyment of all ages, the Jim Jausoro Band has fulfilled the significant role of maintaining a presence of Basque music at all celebrations. At any typical Basque dance today, the Jim Jausoro Dance Band will commence the evening with waltzes and jitterbugs and warm-up the crowd while especially pleasing the senior citizens, and *Gaupasa* will finish the night with the younger people dancing and singing the lyrics to the Basque rock music. “What a blessing it’s been to have Jimmy, Skip, Dick and Domingo and now Dan, all these years. They have raised generations of dancers you know. Basque culture in this area would never have been as strong without them”, said Rosemarie Salutregui Achabal.

The most recent group of musicians includes a combination of approximately fifteen students learning to play the *trikitixa*, or diatonic accordion, and the *pandereta*, tambourine. The Txantxangorriak, red-breasted robins, were organized in April 2001 by Ana Mendiola and Gina Ansotegui Urquidi to encourage children and adults to learn to play these instruments. Ana asked, “We have a fantastic choir, we have the dancers, we have handball, and we need musicians. Gina and I watched at the 2000 Jaialdi as the Txorimaluak Soinu Taldea kids from the Basque Country entertained us with their tambourines and accordions. They were really something else, and we thought, why can’t we do something like that here?” She spoke to the Euzkaldunak Board of Directors and presented and sold the idea of buying eight accordions and three tambourines for a total expenditure of \$8000. The Euzkaldunak would own the musical equipment and the students could utilize them for their weekly lessons. “You know it’s a big investment to buy an accordion if you don’t know if you really want to stay with it. So this plan allows the students to play for a while and decide what they want to do. Some of them drop out, but in just one year six people have decided to buy their own accordions and continue on seriously”, explained Ana Mendiola. Dan Ansotegui serves as the accordion instructor and Sean Aucutt teaches tambourine.

The first performance for the Txantxangorriak was the San Ignacio street festival in July 2001. Aided by experienced players Miren Lete and Ana Lete, the collection of adults and children playing music together exemplified what the Basque community has always encouraged: intergenerational maintenance of Basque culture and traditions. Their second performance was in March 2002 at the Spring Show of the Boise’ko Gazteak, where they performed five arrangements. Because six players have decided to buy their own instruments, six more accordions are now open for six new students. In the fall of 2001 there were three people on a waiting list that will now be able to join the group and hopefully three more will come forward. Dan Ansotegui, Ana Mendiola, and Gina Urquidi are three more examples of ‘dreamers that do.’ Once they had the idea, they began arming themselves with funding for accordions and tambourines, sheet music and stands. The future of the Oinkaris, the Boise’ko Gazteak, and the festival dances depends on these young musicians. This will likely be the most meaningful \$8000 investment the Euzkaldunak, Inc. has made in decades.



Oinkari: “One
with feet”,

(09)

who does or Dancer

Mar del Plata, Argentina is many thousands of miles away from Boise, Idaho. The ocean beaches and flat prairie lands contrast with Boise's deserts, forests, and mountains. Yet in November 2001, Mar del Plata was converted to the Argentine National Basque Week "Basque land", almost exactly in the same way Boise is every five years for the Jaialdi International Basque Festival. For the first time in Oinkari history, the Basque dancers traveled to represent the Treasure Valley area Basques to another foreign Basque community not in Euskal Herria. Though the Oinkaris had traveled to the World's Fair in Montreal, and toured in the Basque Country, this was the first Basque diaspora-to-Basque diaspora project for the young dancers and their musicians. "I know our daughter Cristina would never have had the opportunity to travel to Argentina and meet other Basques in the way she did on this trip. Being in Oinkaris has opened our eyes to other Basque communities around the world", commented parents John and Susan Thackaberry Gamboa. Clay, Kelsi and Deitra Haylett made friends quickly with Argentine Basques and have continued an email dialogue. Dance Director Jill Aldape reported that there were even a few international romances and emotional hugs and tears shed the day of departure for the airport of Buenos Aires. Today, the Oinkari Basque Dancers are truly an international phenomenon. However, their commencement was much more humble.

ESTABLISHING A DANCE GROUP

The beginnings of the Oinkari Basque Dancers actually resulted from a decades-old foundation of generations of Basque dancers. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the boarding houses in Boise sponsored regular dances with accordionists, guitarists, txistularis, and piano players. The annual Boise Music Week often highlighted Basque dancers and musicians in the 1920s and 1930s, and in 1934, the Fort Boise Centennial Days' celebration highlight was the "Basque Village" on Grove Street. Many Basque celebrations were held at the boarding houses, complete with ethnic music and dancing. Though these earlier demonstrations of Basque dance were a once a year performance, or informal and part of social gatherings, a 1940s dance group emerged in Emmett, Idaho, organized by Cipri and Julia Barroetabena, and Lucy Garatea. Non-Basques filled gaps to make sure a sufficient number of dancers existed, and to the txistu music of Jon Bilbao, the Basque dancers practiced together for over a year to prepare for the 1940 performance at the Western Idaho Fair. The Emmett Basque Dancers were actually the first formally organized Basque dance group of the western United States. With the onset of World War II, between 1941-1945 many of these dancers found themselves preoccupied with other responsibilities, and the Emmett group eventually quit meeting.

The Shepherders' Ball gatherings gave many opportunities for Basques to demonstrate their knowledge of ethnic folk dances, but as the years passed, fewer



Oinkari Basque Dancers 1962. Musicians Domingo Ansotegui with tambourine; Jimmy Jausoro with accordion; Sabin Landaluce with txistu and "danborra".

and fewer people remembered the steps to perform. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea began teaching children, and occasionally also organized classes for adults, in the 1940s and 1950s. Al Erquiaga was one of those students who participated into his teenaged years. Today's Oinkari Basque Dancers were established after a group of friends from Boise traveled to *Euskal Herria* in 1960 to visit their relatives and experience the Basque Country for the first time. Al Erquiaga, Delphina Urresti Arnold and sister Diana Urresti Sabala, Toni Murelaga Achabal, Simon Achabal, Dolores Hormaechea Chapman, and Bea Solosabal departed for a summer vacation in the homeland of their Basque ancestors. Simon Achabal had been born in Bizkaia and was the only one who had been in the Basque Country before. Ibon Fresnero was living in Pasajes-Pasaia, Gipuzkoa in the summer of 1960 when his cousins Simon and Julian Achabal were visiting the Basque Country. Ibon introduced the American Basques to the Oinkari dance group of Pasaia. The Boiseans filmed practices and footwork and recorded performances in full costume as well. That footage was later used to learn those dances and perform them in Boise. After practicing and learning several dances, the "Americans" shared their ideas of organizing a permanent adult Basque dance troupe in the United States. The new friends from the Basque Country's dance group, "Oinkari", suggested that the Boise Basques adopt the name as their own and continue Basque ethnic dance in the United States. They did exactly that.

The Boiseans returned to Idaho energized and ready to assume the name of Oinkaris. Now they had to convince Basque teenagers and other graduates of Juanita Hormaechea's dance classes to dedicate themselves to practicing, learning, and perfecting the demonstrations of Basque dance they had promised to preserve. Al Erquiaga and Diana Urresti Sabala provided the know-how and determination as the Oinkaris' first Dance Directors. Jimmy Jausoro learned the music for accordion from listening to the tapes and making his own notes and Sabin Landaluce accompanied on the txistu. After months of practices and rehearsals the anticipated night to perform for the first time arrived at the winter Shepherders' Ball Dance in 1960. More than forty years worth of "new kids" can imagine that first performance at the Boise Shepherders' Ball, when "girls re-tie the laces of their dance shoes twenty times, and the boys re-wrap their waist *gerrikos* twenty times because it's their first big performance and one of the largest crowds of the year", remembers Carmelo Urza. Ellie Ysursa wondered, "Just imagine what it must have been like on that very first night".

In various interviews over the years, the original Oinkaris have recalled that the cheering and clapping thundered to a point where they could not even hear the music while they were dancing. Spectators in the crowd wept with pride and many parents were convinced that their own children should join in the fun. Musicians Domingo Ansotegui, Jimmy Jausoro, and Sabin Landaluce accompanied the Oinkaris with tambourine, accordion, and txistu. After this magical night, the young dancers were catapulted into ethnic leadership roles in the community that resulted in a

region-wide education and promotion of Basque culture. The fall of 1961 initiated the first group of “new kids”, including Mike Berriatua, Juliana Jausoro Aldape, Toni Arana Bicandi, Dave Eiguren, Dave Lachiondo, and Anne Boyd Miller.

Simon Achabal recalls that in the first ten years of the existence of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., most members of the Basque Center were middle-aged and older people. When the Oinkaris was formed as a subgroup of the Euzkaldunak, the Board of Directors decided to make a minimum age to join the parent organization in order to get additional younger people at the Basque Center. Once a dancer reached 18 years of age, one would be required to become a member of the Basque Center in order to continue dancing in the group. In these early years, non-members were also coming to the dance group practices. The rule was made therefore, that to join the Oinkaris, one’s parents were required to join the Basque Center. This was considered a mutually beneficial arrangement and kept the Oinkaris exclusively for members and for Basques.

The Oinkari Basque Dancers proudly represented Idaho at the Seattle World’s Fair in 1962, the New York World’s Fair in 1964, the Montreal World’s Fair in 1971, and the Spokane World’s Fair in 1974. They also organized a six state tour of the western United States performing at ten different venues in 1972. This decade of frenzied activity witnessed numerous fundraisers with the women of the Euzkaldunak, Inc. cooking and selling thousands of chorizos and tortillas for customers at local grocery stores, and numerous dinners at the Basque Center, according to Antonia Arana Bicandi. Local businesses, politicians, teachers, and professionals also promoted the trips of the Oinkaris. When the Oinkaris were selected to represent the entire state of Idaho at the 1964 World’s Fair in New York City, the support ranged from Coeur d’Alene in the north, to Idaho Falls in the east. Governor Robert E. Smilie even proclaimed May 23, 1964 as “Basque Day” in Idaho. Oinkari performances and activities were almost a weekly occurrence with favorable press coverage in the print, radio, and television media, and the young Basques had become the darlings of Idaho.

In the spring of 1975, the Oinkaris received a \$5,246 grant from the Idaho Commission on the Arts and Humanities that went toward their expenses for a trip to Wolftrap, Virginia. They were the first group from Idaho ever to have been invited to the United States National Folk Festival. The grant came with the stipulation that the amount had to be matched through local fundraising events. Therefore, the Oinkaris increased their number of paid performances in the Treasure Valley area, and resumed their consistent fundraisers of earlier years. A special ninety-minute performance was given at the Capital High School Auditorium on June 26, 1975 to raise money and serve as a dress rehearsal for the same performance to be given at Wolftrap. Admission was \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children.

BASQUE DANCING TAKES A LEAP FORWARD

John Aldape and Juliana Jausoro Aldape remember that during the first decade of the dance troupe's performances, the repertoire and dress included four different costumes for the girls, while for the boys, the changes came in adding leg bells or changing the color of the *gerriko* or *txapela*. Each performance was an entire program with Masters of Ceremonies (M.C.) Sylvia Urquidi, Mary K. Jones Aucutt, and Cecilia Sillonis Lodzinski. The Oinkaris also sang several songs as a part of every performance and during costume changes, the M.C. educated the audience about the Basque Country, the language, history, dance, and emigration of Basques to Idaho, etc. Later in the 1970s and 1980s, with the interaction of Oinkaris and other Basque dance groups from Nevada and California- and several dancers traveling to the Basque Country- dancers initiated learning additional choreographies and representations of Basque dance outside of those mainly from the province of Bizkaia. Several key figures played prominent roles in taking the Oinkaris to an even higher level of excellence.



Boise Music Week Parade 1950 Basque dancers' parade float. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

Philologist, historian, dancer and musician, Jon Oñatibia was instrumental in teaching new dances and raising the quality of the Oinkaris in 1976. Oñatibia had created the New York "Euzkadi" dance troupe which had toured the United States, Canada, and Cuba in the 1950s, and his experience with numerous dance groups in the Basque Country was exhaustive. Linda Achurra Lane and Miren Arrubarrena Arozamena described the summer workshops on the Boise State University campus with the dance specialist, "We practiced non-stop until we had it exactly right. Oñatibia was a great teacher, a perfectionist, and even though we were just teenagers, we knew that what we were learning was something that the Oinkaris would preserve forever". The influx of new dances kept interest high among the participants and the usually informal practices were transformed into three and four hour rehearsals. According to Cindy Schaffeld, "we had to go to every practice for sure because we were learning so much so fast we would be left behind for the next performance". Dance practice often consisted of three hours detailing the same dance over and over, one section at a time. The musicians also were enthusiastic, and Domingo Ansotegui and Jimmy Jausoro challenged themselves with the new pieces, which they perfected with ease. Performances continued alongside twice-weekly practices, and the Oinkaris shared their music and dance at various senior citizens centers, business conventions, banquets, charity benefits, and Basque functions and celebrations. "Oñatibia's love for anything that was Basque was a strong factor in motivating us", remembers Mary Bieter. "We knew we were learning from the best".

In 1979, the Oinkaris traveled to Seattle, Washington to perform at the Northwest Regional Folklife Festival. However, gone was the need for months of fundraisers because the chorizos sales at the Western Idaho Fair every August brought in thousands of dollars in profits for the group. During the late 1970s through the early 1990s, the dancers made enough money from paid performances, usually \$200 to \$400 dollars for a forty-five minute performance, and from chorizo sales once a year during the week-long state fair, to pay all expenses for the group's travels. "It was important to us that being in Oinkari not be just for those kids whose families had enough money to pay for everything", said former President Debbie Navarro Smith. "Each dancer had to buy their own costume, but the group funds bought all the equipment, special costumes for special dances, and paid all the bus fares and meals on all of our trips from Winnemucca to Disneyland", she explained. The several-piece uniform for the girls cost approximately seventy-five to one hundred dollars to sew. For the boys, the shirt, pants, *gerriko* and *txapela* could be purchased for approximately fifty dollars. This kept the individual financial commitment relatively low during these years. "I remember that we voted 'yes' to almost every paid performance, and we saved money wherever possible", said Bonnie Ansotegui Kearns. Changes in the collection of dances, costumes, equipment and lower earnings in annual chorizo sales resulted in financial changes to the Oinkari group in the latter half of the 1990s.

With the establishment of university programs to the Basque Country, over the years, several Oinkaris spent an academic year in Oñati, Gipuzkoa, Donostia-San Sebastián, Gipuzkoa, or Bilbao, Bizkaia. In addition to studying their selected courses, they spent time with the local dance troupes learning, practicing, and even performing with them. Gloria Garatea Lejardi lived in Oñati in 1974-75 for the first Boise State Basque Studies Program and upon her return continued dancing and directing the Oinkaris. “Her hints, changes, and interpretations of choreography moves improved the Oinkari performances tremendously”, said Ana Lete. “We stood tall, chins up, arms high, and toes pointed, when dancing for Gloria. If we didn’t, we would do it again until everyone got it right”. Joanna Totorica Aspitarte agreed, “The Oinkaris were probably at their best in the years that Gloria Garatea was the Director”.

The entire Pat and Eloise Garmendia Bieter family had participated in the same first university program in Oñati, and the influence of Chris, Mary, Dave, John, and Mark was evident for the next decade. Chris, Mary, and Dave convinced the group that they should include singing Basque traditional songs in their practices and performances, and that dancers should be learning about their ethnic history and language. Although there were a few who disagreed, Chris brought his guitar to the Basque Center every week and dancers became singers for the last half hour of Sunday’s practice. The issue at hand was the beginning of the debate: What does it mean to be Basque? What does it take to be Basque? A few dancers argued that they did not have to do more things to prove their “Basqueness” and that this was a dancing group, not a choir. Their idea of maintaining their Basque ethnicity did not include needing to become a specialist in Basque culture, history, language,



Oinkari girls perform “Makil Txiki Dantza” at the Mountain Home Basque picnic 1982. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

anthropology etc. Others argued that it was a Basque group, albeit a dance group, and that the participants should know more about their own culture, or at least “the basics”. The farther the generation from the actual immigrant, generally the less the person knew about their homeland, even though at this time in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the majority of the dancers were first and second generation born in the United States. The majority ruled, and though a few dancers quit, the weekly singing continued with scattered informational segments of five to ten minutes to explain aspects of the lyrics, or to practice phrases or words in euskara.

Dan Ansotegui, Mark Guerry, Ben Berriochoa, and John Ysursa studied videotapes of the Oñati Dancers performing the dances of San Miguel and then with the help of Jesus Alcelay (who was from Oñati and had danced with the Oñati dancers), instructed the Boise dancers. The boys performed parts of the total dance in the park at the Elko National Basque Festival in July 1980, and later decided to reserve the dances for only special occasions such as the St. Ignatius celebration each year in Boise, and later the funerals of Domingo Ansotegui, and Senator Frank Church.

In 1982 and 1983, Juan Carlos “Kalin” Agirre, from Oñati, spent a year in Boise working with the Oinkaris to authenticate costumes for certain dances and to teach new dances and perfect others. His years of expertise dancing in Oñati and participating in exchanges with other Basque Country troupes bestowed upon the Boise group methods for costume changes, hair and jewelry adornment, and dance prop utilization. During his year in Boise, Mary Anne Schaffeld, Megan Donahue Overgaard, Vitoria Oleaga Arrubarrena, Mari Legarreta, and Merche Urrutia kept their sewing machines stitching new black skirts, colorful shoulder scarves and chest sashes, headscarves, white peasant blouses, green skirts and black aprons for the girls, and reversible vests, knickers, peasant shirts, and chest sashes for the boys.

Previously, the females’ costumes consisted of the traditional white long-sleeve shirt with a black vest and black apron over a red skirt with three black stripes at the hem. The male wore a white long sleeve shirt with white pants and a green or red waist sash, or *gerriko*, with a red beret, or *txapela*. The boys also strapped customary bell pads to their shins, representative of scaring away the evil spirits. The Oinkaris utilized a peasant costume for several dances that depicted agricultural themes. The girls wore long sleeve shirts and long gathered skirts in a dark blue print with very fine white polka dots, with a dark blue apron and matching head and shoulder scarves. The boys’ peasant costume consisted of dark blue pants, a black *gerriko*, and a white shirt with sleeves rolled up.

According to Dan Ansotegui and Ben Berriochoa, the improvements achieved during the 1980s were again due in large part to John Ysursa, Gloria Garatea Lejardi, Chris and Dave Bieter, and Kalin Aguirre and later, other dancers who traveled in the Basque Country photographing and noting costume and dance details. Every group

of volunteers has certain people that are willing to dedicate themselves to excellence and give of their time in order to further the cause. John Ysursa was one such person whose imagination and intrigue with Basque dancing motivated himself and others to pursue a higher standard of ethnicity maintenance through dance. Today's Oinkaris owe much to him and the others mentioned, who took it upon themselves to film and learn the dances of *Euskal Herria*, much in the same way the original seven pioneers had twenty-five years before.

OINKARIS CELEBRATE TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF DANCING AND SINGING

To commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the Oinkaris, leaders of the dance group set about to plan a dance tour of the Basque Country and charter an airplane for over 200 persons from the southwestern Idaho area. President Patty Miller was joined by Oinkari Board members Aitor Amuchastegui, John Ysursa, Gina Ansotegui, Gloria Totoricagüena, and Dave Baumann in planning fund raisers, schedules of performances, and implementing the plans for the "Nundik Nora: The Basques in America" musical play performed at the Morrison Center theatre. "Nundik Nora" was, and remains to this day, the largest cast and largest audience production of a staged theatrical performance by any Basque community in United States history. After the 2014 seat main auditorium advanced tickets sold-out, additional entries were sold for an afternoon dress rehearsal performance, where only a few seats remained empty. The emigration story of "Kepa" and "Nekane" illustrated old world Basque customs and the emotional and financial difficulties involved in the decision to leave the Basque provinces. The two and one half hour production was not merely a play for many in the audience; it was the real story of their lives.

As in previous years, the entire Basque community became involved in more than a year of fundraising events ranging from an all night dance-a-thon at Sacred Heart Church gym, to a Casino Night, to corporate sponsorships, and the most impressive proceeds earner: the theatrical performance of "Nundik Nora". Chorizos sale profits from the 1983 Western Idaho Fair opened the "return to the Basque Country" bank account with \$10,000. The 1984 Fair added another \$13,000. Performances during 1984 and 1985, special dinners, and dances added another \$16,000, and the "Nundik Nora" Morrison Center performance an additional \$14,000. This night revived memories of the 1948 and 1949 Boise Music Week performances that gathered more than 100 people to create the musical play. During this more than a year of fundraising, (in addition to four to five hour practices and several performances a month) the Oinkaris earned \$84,000. The expenses to get the group to the Basque Country summed to \$80,000.



Dan Ansotegui in a ballet tutu practicing for the 1985 Morrison Center performance of "Nundik Nora". Oinkari Basque Dancers Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

The Basque community, as well as the greater Treasure Valley region, bolstered the dedication of the dancers and musicians and their families. As they had in the 1960s, the Oinkaris worked non-stop to promote Basque culture in general, and music, song, and dance specifically for all of their audiences. The emotional day of departure found the Boise Municipal Airport brimming with well-wishers and congratulators, and all were reminded that this trip was dedicated in loving memory of Domingo Ansotegui and in honor of Jimmy Jausoro and their endless devotion to the Oinkaris.

The group of sixty dancers and musicians made the Silver Anniversary return voyage tour to *Euskal Herria* from June 17- July 11, 1985, visiting all seven provinces and performing for the surprised crowds. "Surprised" because many in the audience could not believe the quality performance of these dancers from Boise, Idaho. Most had never seen a group from the diaspora perform in the Basque Country and were incredulous that the surnames included not only Donahue, Baumann, Miller, and Clarkson etc. but also Arrubarrena, Echevarria, Amuchastegui, Lete, Almirantearena, and Urrutia. Years of my conversations with Basques in the homeland and those in the diaspora exemplify a mutual ignorance of each other. For some, this extends to apathy, as they do not expect their paths ever to cross. Often homeland Basques do not define diaspora-born Basques as "Basques", while those in the United States

make no differentiation of where a person was born or where they live. A person of Basque ancestry born in Boise is Basque equally to a person of Basque ancestry born in Bilbao, or Buenos Aires. Conversations are often confusing because those born in the Basque Country use “Basque” for those actually born in the Basque County. After a performance in Vitoria-Gasteiz when Morrie Berriochoa was asked if he was Basque, his answer, “Yes, from the United States”, did not fit into the homeland Basques’ schema of definitions.

The unbelievably successful tour included visits and performances for the President of the Basque Autonomous Community, Euskadi, José Antonio Ardanza, various Mayors and Basque Government officials as well as officials of the autonomous Foral Community of Navarre, and those of the northern provinces of Lapurdi, Behe Nafarroa, and Zuberoa. Eight course meals in private Basque gastronomy societies; first-rate tours of historic sites; and endless singing and dancing were daily activities. The Boise Oinkaris were bestowed with a special emotional treat when several of the original Pasaia Oinkaris traveled to meet with them in Zarautz, Gipuzkoa. “It was overwhelming”, remembered chaperones Gerri and Hank Achurra. Toni Murelaga Achabal, Simon Achabal, and Al Erquiaga, three of the dancers who had innocently traveled and made friends twenty-five years ago, agreed.

A few months after returning to the United States, the Oinkaris again flew east, this time to accompany Jimmy Jausoro when he was presented with a National Commemoration from the National Endowment for the Arts. In the years immediately following the Basque Country tour, many “retired” from the group because of commitments to family, university, and employment. However, those remaining continued on with practices and performances and renewed the initiation of annual waves of “new kids”. Musicians Jimmy Jausoro, Juan Zulaica, Cathy Clarkson, Josie Bilbao, and Janice Mainvil Kaltenecker remained steadfastly dedicated to providing music for the dancers.

REJUVENATING AND MAINTAINING A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

The Jaialdi 1987 International Basque Festival invited the Goizaldi Dance Troupe from Donostia-San Sebastián to perform for the opening night ceremonies in the Boise High School auditorium. During their stay, they held intense practices with Oinkaris to teach new dances and again perfect other steps. In 1990, Goizaldi was again invited, and in 1995 and 2000, Arkaitz Dantza Taldea from Donostia-San Sebastián performed. These ties and communications with homeland dance groups have served several purposes. “Well, they sure are a good reminder to the Oinkaris that we are not as good as we think we are! It’s important to see the real thing as often as possible”, declared long-time dancer and txistulari Edu Sarria. Robert

Larrinaga mentioned, “The Oinkaris have had a history of being isolated and a bit arrogant toward the other dance groups in the U.S. These groups from the Basque Country tend to put us in our place”. Though the groups that have traveled to Boise for Jaialdi have generally only stayed for 7-10 days, in 1990 two of the dancers stayed on for several weeks to give instruction. Even during the extremely hectic days before Jaialdi hits town, Oinkaris have found time to meet for practices with the dancers from the Basque Country.

The friendships established have facilitated information exchange for buying equipment and created lasting relationships across the ocean. “Besides falling in love with at least five of their dancers, I made friends with all of the girls. And when I was in Donostia for Christmas in 2000, they organized a night out for me in the *parte vieja*”, laughed Amaia Totoricagüena Kirtland. Delphina Krakow and Diana Lachiondo each spent one year in the Basque Country and kept friendships with dancers they had met at the Boise Jaialdi. “Each trip I take to Euskadi, I have more people I am supposed to call, and in the end I just can’t see everyone. I have made so many new friends from the dancers’ exchanges we had in Oinkaris, that it seems like I know people everywhere I go”, said Ricardo Yanci. Though many dancers have traveled to spend a few months in the Basque Country, Jill Aldape’s proposal to specifically study Basque dance was selected for a 1998-99 Fulbright Grant, whereby upon her return, she taught what she had learned to the present Oinkaris.

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Oinkari: “One who does with feet”, or Dancer

More than 100 Oinkari dancers have visited or lived in the Basque Country at one time or another. They have brought back to Boise additional dances, authentic costumes, music, and new energy for Basque ethnic expression through dance and music. More importantly, they have updated the Boise community’s comprehension of contemporary issues in the Basque Country and infused the number of new speakers of Basque, “*euskaldunberri*”. Toni Lawson believes it is essential to maintain close ties with current events in the homeland. “Some of our kids don’t even know there are seven provinces. They don’t really know the history of the Basque Country at all, and that is very embarrassing. We have to do a better job of educating ourselves”.

Joining the Oinkaris has served in a capacity of Basque initiation for several of its members. Albert Totorica agrees that he “probably would not have been so interested in maintaining my Basqueness if it had not been for the experiences I had with my brothers and sisters and others in Oinkaris”. The family of Urbano and Juanita Bengoetxea Totorica (Totoricagüena) is one of the few that can boast seven children as dancers in the group. Antonio “Tony”, Albert, Louis, Cristina, Joanna, Ronnie, and Daniel all participated and invested years of their lives to the preservation of Basque dance and culture.

Oinkari history is brimming with families and often those who were dancers think of others according to their families. Ray Anchustegui, who served as President and Dance Director during the 1980s, remembers the importance of the

families, “the Schaffelds (Cindy, Dan ‘Butch’, Mary Anne, Chris, and Mark), the Bieters (Chris, Mary, Dave, John, and Mark), the Ansoteguis (Bonnie, Chris, Gina, Dan, and Toni), and so many Totoricas that no one was sure which were siblings to each other and which were cousins. We knew that every September when the new kids started there would be a good crop if they were half as good as their older brothers and sisters”. Over the years there have been thirty-four Oinkari Dancers from the Totorica (Totoricagüena) family.

Individuals have also shown tremendous dedication, as did Joe Eguia in the 1980s and 1990s when he would drive more than eighty miles each Sunday to arrive on time for dancing lessons, and the same eighty miles to return home. Eguia’s interest in his Basque culture was so great that he taught himself the Basque language by studying grammar books and dictionaries, and he also learned to play the *txistu*, Basque flute, and *tamboril*, drum. He was a committed musician to the Oinkaris and the Boise’ko Gazteak for years before his death in 2000. Dancers have demonstrated their dedication by regularly driving to Boise practices and performances from Mountain Home, Nampa, Caldwell, Homedale, Marsing, and Notus. Janice, Joanne, Linda, and Louise Mainvil even drove back and forth to Boise from far away Weiser for every Sunday practice and weekday performances.

Hundreds of young people between the ages of 14-30 have been a part of the ethnic socialization process of this dance troupe, becoming life-long friends, and even marriage partners. At least ten marriages resulted from Oinkari relationships. The Oinkari wedding shower for Marguerite Eiguren celebrated her coming marriage to Robert Larrinaga, both Oinkari Dancers for ten years. Until the 1980s, when dancers married, they usually quit the Oinkaris but Gloria Garatea Lejardi blazed a new path and stayed for several years after her wedding. Eventually, even several pregnant dancers continued for as long as they could fit into their costumes. “As long as we wore our peasant costumes I was okay”, remembers Beni Lizaso Amuchastegui. The girls’ blue and white polka dot peasant costumes had elastic waistbands. Gloria Totoricagüena and Cindy Schaffeld laughed about covering up their growing bodies by loosening the vest ties and leaving their skirt waistbands open under their covering black aprons. “Good thing we always had extra girls and eventually I’d just put these *kokolas* in the lineup for Ikurriña. No fast dances”, said director Gina Ansotegui Urquidi.

THE LATEST GENERATION OF OINKARIS

In 1996, the Oinkaris were invited to participate in a unique cultural exchange with the Lummi Native American tribe near Bellingham, Washington. Each year a different group was selected to travel to Bellingham and interact with the Lummi. Susan Uberuaga, a teacher working at the school, nominated the Oinkaris who were



Oinkari Basque Dancers perform “Zortziko” at the 1987 Jaialdi Festival at the Old Penitentiary. Oinkari Basque Dancers Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

eventually selected for the three-day experience. The next year in June, the Gaupasa band and the Oinkaris were invited to the National Folk Festival in Dayton, Ohio. The three-day event highlighted traditional and contemporary folk music and both groups represented Idaho enthusiastically. “Unfortunately most people in the United States don’t know what Basque is, so we answered a lot of questions and explained as much as we could”, commented txistulari Cathy Clarkson.

Oinkaris also maintain a schedule of performing for western Basque festivals. These young people, especially the teenagers, are influenced by their other Basque friends and families, and they create ties with dancers from other Basque groups around the western United States. Angela Harris believes, “Some of my very best friends are people I met in Oinkaris, and I expect they are friends for life”. For adolescents, the summer tours of Basque festivals have proven to be a powerful marker in maintaining interest in the Basque culture when witnessing hundreds of others their own age participating in these cultural events. It is “cool” to be ethnic, and the positive social status is reinforced at each Basque event. When the Oinkaris traveled to New York City for the Columbus Day Parade in October 2000, they also performed at the New York Euzko Etxea in Brooklyn. “We were amazed and so very proud to see all these young people maintaining their Basque identity”, stated Dr. Emilia Sarriugarte Doyaga.

The Oinkaris continue to be self-financed and earn money for travel to Basque festivals across the United States by performing for business functions, conferences, and conventions, and by selling thousands of chorizo and *solomo*, pork loin, sandwiches every year at community fairs and carnivals. However, beginning in the late 1990s, for several of the more expensive trips such as Elko, New York, and Mar del Plata, dancers have been expected to personally pay part of their expenses. If there is such a thing as ‘frequent bus rider miles’, the Oinkaris have earned hundreds of free trips after decades of driving throughout Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and California for a plethora of performances. Business managers, Gerri Achurra, John M. Kirtland, and Miren Rementeria Artiach, each worked to promote the dance group and obtain invitations for performances, as well as advertise activities, and keep records for the non-profit organization. In 2002, more than forty dancers and their current musicians, Jimmy Jausoro, Juan Zulaica, and Edu Sarria, give countless volunteer hours to promote this aspect of Basque culture. In addition to Sabin Landaluce, Domingo Ansotegui, Ray Mansisidor, Cathy Clarkson, Josie Bilbao, Janice Mainvil Kaltenecker, Sean Aucutt, Dan Ansotegui, Josie Barinaga Williams, Patrick Barinaga Williams, and Joe Eguia, today’s musicians have created the energetic atmosphere of the performances with live music that unites dance and song from the seven provinces.

The Idaho Studies

(10)

Basque Center

THE IDAHO BASQUE STUDIES CENTER AND THE *IDAHO'KO EUZKO ZALEAK*

Most members of the Boise area Basque community's various institutions and organizations are completely unaware of the significance and impact of an entity known as the Idaho Basque Studies Center (IBSC). The overwhelming majority of those questioned had never heard of it, some thought it was an actual physical place, others thought I meant the Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno. The IBSC's small group of volunteers dedicated to the preservation and resurgence of Basque language and ethnic identity maintenance demonstrated their optimism and confidence in the Basque people with momentous effects on Basques in the Treasure Valley and throughout the United States. They were dreamers and doers, and their efforts and foresight in the 1970s constructed the foundation upon which many of our Basque activities in the new millennium firmly stand.

According to Miren Rementeria Artiach, in 1969 the Division of Continuing Education of the Idaho State Department of Education began discussing the idea for a Basque Studies Center for Idaho. Dr. Clifford M. Trump and Dr. David H. Grover at the Division of Continuing Education launched the first Basque class in 1971 through contacts with professors Dr. William A. Douglass and Dr. Jon Bilbao in the Basque Studies Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, and Dr. Julio Bilbao and

Father Ramon Echevarria in Boise. In the fall of 1971, Miren Rementeria Artiach taught Basque language classes in the boardroom of the State Board of Education Building on Idaho Street and a program of Basque educational and cultural activities was created.

That year, the Division of Continuing Education, with the assistance of William A. Douglass, Jon Bilbao, Julio Bilbao, and Fr. Ramon Echevarria, developed and submitted a proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in Washington D.C. The idea was to create a Basque Cultural Appreciation Program calling for various activities including: (1) formal university level instruction in various aspects of Basque culture, (2) a six-week summer session in the Basque Country for university credit, (3) informal educational and cultural activities designed to interest adults, (4) development of a basic library of materials relating to the Basques and their culture, and (5) publication of a newsletter containing information about Basque culture in general and this Idaho program in particular. “It is significant that really we were ‘outsiders’, relatively speaking”, explained Dr. Julio Bilbao. “Bill Douglass and Jon Bilbao were in Reno, Ray was in Pocatello, I was from Cascade and a transplant to Boise, and Pat was from Minnesota and not Basque. The Basque Center community had settled into a social club role and was not looking ahead at Basque culture in the next generation”. Dr. Pat Bieter also mentioned in interviews with his sons, that he did not feel welcomed by the Basque community, and that many second generation Basques were offended that he knew more about Basque culture than they did. Others on the committee also felt that there was not initial enthusiasm from local Basques for their efforts, but it resulted more from the general Boise community. “We had big ideas and lots of dreams, and now it was time to do something about them”, said Julio.

In October of 1971, volunteers celebrated the National Endowment two-year grant of \$52,285 to the Division of Continuing Education to carry out the above listed activities and programs. The National Endowment for the Humanities also stipulated that an additional \$10,000 of federal monies would be given if matching funds of \$10,000 could be raised locally in support of the project. Now leaders needed commitments of time and energy from numerous people to actually establish and administer the programs, and an Executive Directorate was created. The initial Directors were Chairperson Dr. Julio Bilbao, Father Ramon Echevarria, and Dr. Patrick Bieter. The board was enlarged to add Joe Eiguren and Al Erquiaga, Miren Rementeria Artiach was hired as the Executive Secretary, and the official date of the founding of the Idaho Basque Studies Center was February 1, 1972. In 1973, three more directors were added: Diana Urresti Sabala, Nicasio Beristain, and Anton Chacartegui, while Father Echevarria left the leadership role because of an out-of-state religious assignment. For record keeping and grant administering purposes, the State Board of Education established the “Idaho Basque Studies Center” of the Idaho State System of Higher Education. It was the official entity through which the federal grant was to be administered, and the group dove in to work immediately.

During 1972, the Idaho Basque Studies Center (IBSC) continued the *euskera* language classes taught by Miren Artiach on Tuesday and Thursday nights; offered scholarships for students wishing to participate in the summer session in the Basque Country; restored the Anduiza handball court on Grove Street; published the first issue of its newsletter *Euzko'taran Abotza*; acquired several library materials; and initiated the planning for an oral history project. The whirlwind of activity was completed due to many volunteers and the steady leadership of Julio Bilbao —a rare example of a dreamer who does—. Joseba Chertudi was hired to interview Basque emigrants about their immigration and acculturation experiences in the United States. Although it took a few years of start-and-stop to get the project going, eventually Chertudi and others completed the interviews in 1975 and 1976 under the leadership of Dave Lachiondo. Today, they are available at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center together with the next generation of taped interviews conducted in 2001 and 2002 by Joseba and Elizabeth Chertudi's sons, Daniel and Mikel Chertudi. In 1972, the IBSC also created Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak: Idaho Friends of the Basques, and organized Boise's first international Basque festival.

THE 1972 HOLIDAY BASQUE FESTIVAL

Al Erquiaga accepted the responsibility of attempting to raise the needed \$10,000 matching funds from local supporters, even though he was given only a few months to accomplish the task. His brilliant idea was to create a separate and permanent non-profit private corporation, "Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak: Idaho Friends of the Basques", as an educational and philanthropic foundation. In April 1972, the National Endowment for the Humanities approved the Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak as an effective means of transmitting local contributions, with the approval of the Internal Revenue Service as a non-profit organization. The Idaho Basque Studies Center would complete its two-year commitments with the grant from the NEH, but the Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak could carry on to be a permanent organization. The official incorporation of Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak was on April 26, 1972. Then, to raise additional monies to meet the goal of \$10,000, the Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak sponsored the 1972 Holiday Basque Festival in Boise, with the profits going to the Idaho Basque Studies Center. Al Erquiaga and Diana Urresti Sabala co-chaired plans for the big event in June.

"This event was the precursor to today's Jaialdi, and the direct result of Al Erquiaga's vision", remarked Dr. Julio Bilbao. The three-day event included a cultural night at the Capital High School gymnasium, filled with music and dance and a competition for "Basque Festival Queen" and a festival crowning of an "Amuma". Sylvia Eiguren was crowned Holiday Basque Festival Queen after performing her impressive singing talent, and the 98 year-old Leandra Letemendi was presented a weighty bouquet of red and white carnations to a standing ovation of applause and



Clarine Anchustegui Villeneuve crowns Leandra Letemendi as the official "Amuma" of the 1972 Holiday Basque Festival organized by the Idaho Basque Studies Center and the Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak: Idaho Friends of the Basques. June 4, 1972.

Photo courtesy of the Idaho Statesman.

admiration. A choir of thirty-three, the "Abeslari Basque Singers" performed, as did soloists Miren Azaola Eiguren on guitar, Al Eiguren on piano, and Louis Michel Irigaray- known as the "Singing Shepherd" and also as the "Basque Balladeer". The Oinkaris performed, txistularis played, and Kattalin Noblia danced a solo wine glass dance.

The Saturday morning began at the newly cleaned and painted Anduiza pelota court with an incredible 100 players, some traveling from as far away as Biarritz in the northern Basque provinces. One of these pairs eventually won the championship. A morning parade marched through downtown Boise with the eight queen candidates displayed in separate convertibles following the Basque Grandmother "Amuma" contestants in theirs as well. The participating Basque dance groups marched in their costumes and the musicians entertained the watching crowds. Saturday's festivities moved to the Western Idaho State Fairgrounds for viewings of videos, "The Bombing of Guernica", and "País Vasco". Pete and Saxon Uberuaga provided slide shows and commentary on the Basque Country itself, and Dr. Jon Bilbao presented a lecture and slide series, "The Basque in South America". Visitors were treated to other video viewings of the Walt Disney production "Greta the Misfit Greyhound", which included Basque shepherders, the "Oinkari Basque Dancers- New York Fair Trip- 1964", and "Northern Highlights", by Iberia Airlines. Father Ramon Echevarria directed the

“Abeslariak” Song Fest later in the day, demonstrating again for the community one of his many talents.

Peter Echeverria of Reno, Nevada, entertained as the Master of Ceremonies and announced a children’s costume competition, the dance competition, and bota-drinking contests. The Ariñak Dancers from Elko performed with musicians Bernardo and Estefania Yanci, as did a group from Shoshone, Idaho under the direction of Marian Oneida. The three Arrien sisters from Juntura, Oregon (who performed with the Lawrence Welk Traveling Show) sang a selection of Basque songs. Reg Griffin from Dixon, California, featured a sheep dog exhibition with dogs he had previously shown corralling sheep at the National Basque Festival in Elko. Another delegation of Basques came from New York, including txistulari Angel Viña, originally of Bilbao, who entertained crowds well after the end of the formal programs. Manuel Ocamica and Chapo Sorrosua traveled from Burns, Oregon to perform on the button accordion and the tambourine. Saturday night saw a continuation of activities with performances by the Basque dance groups, and dancing music for all by Jim Jausoro and his Orchestra.

Sunday morning began with a Catholic mass celebrated in Basque by Father Garatea and Father Echevarria. The Abeslariak choir and Yon de Luisa, a txistulari from the Mexico City Delegation, provided music. Later in the day, the Royal Restaurant sponsored a women’s water bucket carrying contest to see who could balance a bucket of water on her head while walking as fast as possible to the finish line. Hendren’s Furniture sponsored an art contest, and several businesses sponsored *pelota* games. Weightlifting, weight carrying, and wood chopping thrilled the crowds, and the winners were presented their trophies and prize money at a special ceremony on Sunday. Sunday’s events repeated several of those from the previous day and included an afternoon barbecue for hundreds before the closing ceremonies. The fifty-cent souvenir program was full of advertisements from Idaho, Oregon, and Nevada and many were from sheep businesses. The overwhelming success and \$7,000 profit was due to the volunteer work of Al Erquiaga, Diana Urresti Sabala and their committee of fifty-eight volunteers who chaired different booths and activities for Boise’s first major Basque festival. “Most of the volunteers were members of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., and were extremely excited to help. We really had a ball”, laughs Al Erquiaga. “We had never done anything like this before and I’ll tell you, Boise sure woke up to the Basque culture!”

“I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO GO TO *EUSKAL HERRIA*”

That same summer of 1972, the Idaho Basque Studies Center and the Basque Studies Program of the University of Nevada Reno jointly sponsored a group of students and teachers for a six-week summer session in *Euskal Herria*. The Idaho

students and teachers were partially sponsored with the NEH grant funds. They studied for three weeks in Ustaritz and then went on to Arantzazu for three more weeks. Besides formal instruction and sight seeing, session participants met many Basques that were politically active, such as Telesforo Monzón and members of the Basque President José Antonio Aguirre's family in exile. These connections encouraged other political activists such as José Luis Alvarez Emparanza "Txillardegi", the leader of the original Euzkadi 'ta Askatasuna (ETA) to later visit Boise. One of the instructors for the six weeks was Jon Oñatibia, who had lived in New York in the 1950s and taught txistu, dance, euskera, and singing to Basques of the New York Euzko Etxea community. He proved to be a very important contact for future Basque cultural activities around the United States.

During the fall of 1972, these activists continued working non-stop. Miren Artiach consistently wrote, edited, published, and distributed the *Euzko'taran Abotza*; Julio Bilbao wrote and produced slide series and printed narratives for use to educate local community groups and students; and volunteers continued their work cleaning and painting the Anduiza fronton. In January 1973, Joe Eiguren, Pat Bieter, and the IBSC board members prepared a presentation to the Idaho State Board of Education that proposed an academic year program for students to study Basque language, culture, history, and politics in Oñati, Gipuzkoa. The site eventually became a satellite campus of Boise State College and students earned transferable credits for their respective university degrees. This was another idea begun in discussions of the IBSC, which when implemented, changed the lives the hundreds of people and their families.



Abeslari Basque Singers at the 1972 Holiday Basque Festival. Idaho Statesman photo June 4, 1972.

THE FIRST BASQUE MUSIC CAMP IN THE UNITED STATES

The Basque Music and Culture Camp, established in the summer of 1973, focused on Basque dance and music because the board of directors of the Idaho Basque Studies Center considered these two factors to be the most important for teenagers' ethnic identity maintenance. The Executive Directorate of the IBSC believed it was essential to train young Basques to be musicians for future generations. Jimmy and Isabel Larrondo Jausoro organized the fourteen-day camp, with assistance from Anes Jayo Mendiola, Dean Hammond, and Harley Rott of Boise, and Angel and Alys Viña from New York. The camp included instruction in accordion, txistu, and traditional Basque folk dancing, and additional workshops introduced Basque language, singing, and cooking. Accordion instructors were Jim Jausoro and Harley Rott, and the txistu instructor was Angel Viña of the New York Basque Club Euzko-Etxea, and Gloria Garatea Lejardi, Tom Wickham, and Julianne Chacartegui Lostra taught Basque traditional folk dances.

Thirty participants from California, Nevada, and Oregon joined teenagers from Idaho for the intensive instruction in the lodges of the Bogus Basin Ski Resort. The youngest musician was nine years old and joined the others in all classes and games, and all fell exhausted into their sleeping bags at night. To celebrate their two weeks of training, the young Basques gave a final performance open to the public. Many Basques from the Treasure Valley area drove up to two hours in order to see what the future of the Basque communities would look like in the next generation, and they were not disappointed. Alain Erdozaincy, of San Francisco, went on to become the musician and instructor for the San Francisco adult and children's dance groups, and most others returned to their respective communities, having re-charged their Basque batteries. Harley Rott continued giving accordion instruction at the Basque Center, and in the fall of 1973 had fifteen students at the beginners' level who continued lessons until May 1974.

The 1973 Music Camp cost \$4100 to implement and was covered mainly with the NEH grant funds. Isabel Jausoro remembers that in 1974, Boise co-sponsored the music camp with the newly created North American Basque Organizations (NABO) federation of Basque associations, and it was held on the Boise State University campus. NABO also sponsored small camps in Reno and San Francisco. Instructor Jon Oñatibia was brought from Oiarzun, Gipuzkoa to teach language, dance, and txistu at all three separate camps. For a 1975 repeat music camp, the first sponsored by NABO, participants were asked for an \$80 tuition and accommodation fee, and clubs were asked to sponsor their young dancers and musicians. From 1975 on, NABO assumed the role of organizing and implementing the annual music camps for Basque adolescents every summer. The project begun in Boise by the Idaho Basque Studies Center continues to this day and has impacted the lives of nearly a thousand young Basques. The past Director of the Boise children's group, Boise'ko Gazteak,

Bonnie Ansotegui Kerns, described music camp participants as, “much improved dancers, but more importantly they met other teenagers from the western U.S. and realized how ‘cool’ it is to be Basque”.

Educating the community about Basque topics continued and Miren Rementeria Artiach offered courses in Basque language through the Boise Schools Continuing Education in 1972 and 1973, and Fr. Ray Echevarria arranged for Idaho’s three universities to offer an upper-division anthropology course in Old World Basque Culture. Students were allowed to take the courses for credit, or for audit. Reaching a greater audience was another goal of the grant and, together with KAID Public Television, the preliminary work on creating an educational and instructional documentary on Basque history, culture, and traditions was begun. The plan was for this video was to be aired on local television and then distributed nationally, as well as distributed for classroom instruction. Julio Bilbao wrote the script, Joe Eiguren narrated the video, and with PBS and KAID assistance from Jeff Seward, the video was completed and aired in 1976.

The Basque Center was (and still is) constantly being called for information, guest speakers, and presentations for community events such as Rotary Club and Optimists meetings. The Boise School District regularly requested guest presentations for high school Spanish, French, and European History classes, and for elementary Social Studies Idaho History curriculum units. Consequently, Julio Bilbao also created a slide show (with more than 120 slides) about the Basque country, and Joe Eiguren, Miren Artiach, Julie Egurrola Bilbao, and Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica donated countless hours fulfilling these requests to church and civic organizations not just in Boise, but also around the Treasure Valley. Mari Carmen Totorica ultimately served as a Boise Schools Volunteer for thirty years, giving presentations on everything from her survival of the bombing of Gernika, to teaching Basque language, to cooking paellas and tortillas for classes of thirty students.

The Idaho Basque Studies Center was also responsible for printing Joe Eiguren’s methods booklet on how to study Basque, “*Euskera itzketan zelan ikasi*” in 1973, and prepared his compilation of vocabulary for his Basque-to-English, and English-to-Basque dictionary. Many bookshelves of Basque homes in Boise still have the bright limegreen paperback reference- with the corners well worn. This publication is still available for sale at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

At the beginning of the 1970s the Anduiza *pelota fronton*, or handball court, had been in disrepair and utilized as a warehouse and storage area for more than three decades. It was owned by the Carl Briggs family and the Briggs Engineering firm. With a desire to foster a greater appreciation for the traditional sports of *pelota*, handball, and *pala*, similar to paddleball, the IBSC renovated the fronton by cleaning and painting the walls and surfaces, replacing the lights for night time practice and games, and building a screen to protect the spectators from being hit by errant balls. These efforts followed those of volunteers Dave and Jeanne Aldape

Eiguren, Justo Sarria, Julio Bilbao, Lino Zabala, José Mari Artiach, and Pat and Chris Bieter, who had to make several trips to the Seaman's Gulch landfill after removing years of trash and accumulated Briggs storage in order to clean out the fronton. By 1973, experienced handball players were recruited to put on exhibition games on Saturday nights. José Mari Artiach, Lino Zabala, Juan (Pipas) Ibarra, Jaime Ibarra, Pedro Mari Odiaga, Javier Arrieta, José Luis Arrieta, Juan Egaña, Jesus Careaga, Justo Mendiola, and Iñaki Mendiola drew crowds of more than 100 spectators. For many, these games and gatherings brought back the memories of the decades when the boarding houses were full of emigrants and the sound of a ball repeatedly smacking a cold hard wall was an everyday occurrence.

At this time, the fronton was opened to the public seven days a week from about 5 p.m., to 9 or 10 p.m., depending on the number of players present, and there were usually younger teenagers "hanging around learning from the pros", as Juan Manuel Oleaga remembers. Don Mendiola, John Aldecoa Wilson, Dan Ansotegui, Mike Moad, Robert Larrinaga, Ray Anchustegui, Chris Bieter, and Dave Bieter were just a few of those who admired these established homeland *pelotaris*. The keys were readily available from bartenders Luis or Miren Foruria Barquin, and in later years from Faustino or Sabina Arteta Oleaga, at the Basque Center bar- encouraging easy access for new players. Players paid one dollar a month to help defray the expenses of lighting and for the purchase of additional equipment. "Old timers" Henry Alegria, Phillip Uberuaga, and Eugenio Aramburu gave pelota and pala workshops for children on Saturdays and also served as referees for matches.

Julio Bilbao, then a teacher at South Junior High, recalls giving a presentation and informational session to students in the seventh grade history classes, inviting them to visit the Basque Center and the *pelota* court. A few weekends later he recognized one of those adolescent students learning to play *pala*. "I remember you from the history class. What's your name?" he asked. "Cathy Clarkson", she responded. This teenager went on to play pala and pelota competitively in numerous tournaments; study in *Euskal Herria* and learn fluent Spanish and Basque; learn to play the *txistu* with master musicians; accompany the Oinkari Basque Dancers for fifteen years; help form the *Ordago* and *Gaupasa* Basque folk rock bands; and volunteer thousands of hours maintaining Basque culture and Basque studies in numerous forms.

CREATING COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN BASQUES: THE NORTH AMERICAN BASQUE ORGANIZATIONS

Discussion at board meetings of the IBSC included the desire to coordinate efforts with other Basque communities preserving their culture, and to increase

communications to assist each other's activities. Through their knowledge of Jon Bilbao and William Douglass' work in South America, members were aware of the Federation of Basque Entities in Argentina (Federación de Entidades Vascas Argentinas, FEVA), which at that time included approximately thirty organizations, and agreed United States Basques could also benefit from one centralized coordinating entity. In early February of 1973, the IBSC contacted the various Basque organizations and community representatives in New York, Oregon, Nevada, Colorado, Utah, and California proposing the idea of establishing an umbrella organization to create a federation of Basque associations. Boise leaders set March 9 and 10, 1973 as the meeting dates at Ascuaga's Nugget in Reno, Nevada for Basques representing their respective communities.

Forty-six Basques attended the two-day convention led by Al Erquiaga, moderated by Peter Echevarria of Reno, and recorded by Miren Artiach as secretary. Professor Jon Bilbao gave an introductory presentation reviewing the FEVA constitution and organizational structure. Discussions in Reno mirrored a debate held in Independence Hall in Philadelphia in 1787. Delegates had to decide if representation of clubs would be according to population (number of members), or if there would be an equal number of votes per club. Should the Boise center, with 800 members, receive the same number of votes as Ely, Nevada, which had forty-one members? Delegates proposed a bicameral body for decision-making but could not agree on what would be the differences between the two "houses". They also discussed creating three or four geographical regions, each with a "Basque headquarters" to which individual clubs would go first, and then this regional headquarter would discuss the issue with the national federation headquarter. This structure would create two tiers of authority and delegates decided it would be too cumbersome. At the end of hours of discussions, delegates agreed to elect a temporary President, who would select his or her own secretary to initiate federation activities as soon as possible, and for delegates to return to their respective communities with the ideas for further and final approval. Al Erquiaga was unanimously elected as acting President and he selected Miren Artiach as secretary. Bob Goicoechea of Elko, Nevada was directed to gather various examples of organizational by-laws for a "Western Basque Club Federation", which would be formulated for approval by the delegates at its first Annual Convention on August 18-19, 1973.

This initial meeting was entitled the "Western Basque Convention of 1973" and its purpose was to establish the federation and create the decision-making model for its functions. After several planning meetings and under the leadership of Al Erquiaga, delegates expanded their visions and the "North American Basque Organizations, Incorporated" (NABO) became a reality. The purpose of the federation was to coordinate information and communications between Basque organizations in the entire United States, and potentially Mexico. Though none of the original organizers had any links to Basques in Canada, they knew there were Basque

emigrants there and the door was left open for their collaboration. It was hoped that NABO could also carry out several of the programs initiated by the Idaho Basque Studies Center, such as the music camp, and dissemination of information.

The North American Basque Organizations officially incorporated under Nevada State laws on April 19, 1974, and delegates began their work of creating networks of communication and assistance between Basque clubs. Founding clubs included San Francisco Basque Club, Ely Basque Club, Kern County Basque Club of Bakersfield, Emmett Basque Club, Basque Girls' Club of Ontario, and the Euzkaldunak, Inc. Boise Basques held a fundraiser known as "Basque Night" at the 1973 Western Idaho Fair at the Les Bois Park stage in order to benefit the start-up costs of NABO. The Anaiak Danok Choir, Louis Michel Irigaray, the Oinkari Basque Dancers, and others entertained the audience. The event, chaired by Lu Guisasola and Liz Dinse Hammer, raised \$1600 to donate to NABO. NABO's 2002 President Pierre Etcharren, a founding delegate from San Francisco, stated, "Al Erquiaga convinced us of his dream, and thanks to those Boise Basque volunteers we have been able to accomplish much, much more than we ever could have separately".

EDUCATING BASQUES AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

To inform Treasure Valley area Basques and non-Basques interested in the ethnic culture, Dr. Bilbao and Fr. Echevarria organized a series of eight lectures to be presented at Boise State College and the College of Idaho in Caldwell, alternating between sites, during the fall of 1973 and spring of 1974. Featured speakers discussed themes such as, "Basque Ethnicity Maintenance", "Basque Participation in the Spanish Civil War", "Basques in South America", and "Basque Nationalism in Present Day Spain". Their academic fields ranged from PhDs in Anthropology, to Joe Eiguren's school of life experience. The lectures were given in English and attended by more non-Basques than by Basques themselves. Students could also register for university credit for ten dollars.

A free informational newsletter "*Euzko'taran Abotza*" (Voice of the Basques) was mailed out to the Boise area Basque families, and also to other Basque communities in the western United States and those in New York. Miren Artiach personally wrote and distributed the bulletin on a periodic basis. "I remember that I went through local and area phone books to come up with a mailing list of Basque persons. It was easy to find the Basque surnames but very, very time consuming", she wrote. By the end of 1973, the readership had neared nine hundred mailing addresses. The *Euzko'taran Abotza* gave dates of upcoming Basque events and asked for feedback from readers about what the Basque community needed at that time. Espe Alegria also advertised these Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak activities on her weekly Basque Program that aired every Sunday night on the radio. Later, when the NEH grant period finished, this



Txistulari Jon Oñatibia playing for the 1974 Aberri Eguna celebration. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

newsletter was begun anew thanks to John Street, and later edited by Brian Wardle of Boise as “*Voice of the Basques*”.

John Street and Brian Wardle, both of Boise, began thinking of the possibility of a Basque newspaper in 1971. They contacted Basques in the Boise community and then traveled to the Basque Clubs of the western United States asking for ideas, opinions, criticisms, and suggestions. After four years of planning and talking, they used the initial *Euzko'taran Abotza* model and name, and it was time for action. The final issue, Number 8, of *Euzko'taran Abotza* was distributed in January 1974, and John Street and Brian Wardle published the first edition of *Voice of the Basques* in December 1974, in Boise, Idaho.

In the summer of 1974, Jon Oñatibia, traveled to Boise from Oiarzun, Gipuzkoa, and with Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica, offered a children's program to learn the Basque language through music. Julio Bilbao had met Oñatibia in the Basque Country in 1972 and knew “he was the perfect instructor”. The IBSC and Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak began plans for a pre-school program to teach Basque, and began advertising for students. The idea of a pre-school was soon changed to an after-school program for elementary school aged children. Boise's first *ikastola*, Basque language school, was designed after the Oñatibia methods of learning basic Basque grammar in tunes and for several years was maintained by Mari Carmen Totorica, and her daughter Dolores Totorica, and Julie Egurrola Bilbao. Fifteen years later student Jennifer Elordi Warfel can still sing the only Basque she knows, “*Zu mutilla al zara? Ez, ez, ez. Zu gizona al zara? Ez, ez, ez. Zer zara, zer zara, zer zara ba zu? Neska, neska, neska naiz ni.* I'll never forget Mari Carmen and Julie, and I'll never forget that song”, Jennifer laughs.

In 1975 during the months of April and May, seventeen children attended the repeated *ikastola* sponsored by the Euzko Zaleak. The first year's students of Boise's initial *ikastola* were Alex and Angie Homaechevarria; Josie Bilbao; Carmen Lizaso; Mary Alice Beristain; David Jayo; Tony and Rosa Mari Arrubarrena; Arantxa Basterrechea; Maria, Angie, Joe, and Tina Iglesias; Molly Artis; Tonia Galdos; and Miren and Leandra Aburusa. The *ikastola* was repeated again in 1976 on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. for nine weeks. The classes were sponsored by Euzko Zaleak and later, Anaiak Danok, and were open to the public. The cost was \$10 per child, or \$15 per family.

CONCLUDING THE IDAHO BASQUE STUDIES CENTER GRANT

In the summer of 1974, the Idaho Basque Studies Center had completed its requirements for the National Endowment for the Humanities grant to the Basque Cultural Appreciation Program. Several members of the IBSC Executive Directorate

continued on with the Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak: Idaho Friends of the Basques. The group continued its work of promoting the maintenance of Basque language through its Directors, including: Miren Artiach, Muriel "Mia" Fereday, Anton Chacartegui, Dr. Pat Bieter, Nicasio Beristain, Joe Eiguren, Dr. Cliff Trump, Mary Fran Aguirre, Justo Sarria, Al Eiguren, Diana Sabala, Dr. Julio Bilbao, Kepa Chertudi, and Antonia Arana Bicandi. In 1975, Miren Artiach proceeded with the Basque language classes; Joe Eiguren's Basque-English-Basque dictionary was finished and published; and the two-month ikastola program for after-school instruction of Basque to children was successfully repeated.

"It is highly unlikely that the NEH has ever experienced any other grants gifted that produced so many meaningful activities and on-going programs affecting the high number of people as did this one", estimated Julio Bilbao. Prior to the 1972 Holiday Basque Festival, the activities of the Euzkaldunak, Inc. had remained generally closed to the public, and educating the greater community about the Basque culture was not a priority. The language classes and university courses opened up the Basque world to non-Basques, but also were inviting to Basques who had never learned their own history. The restoration of the Anduiza fronton resuscitated the sports of *pelota* and *pala* and kept another aspect of Basque culture alive especially for those youth not interested in dancing with the Oinkaris.

The Abeslari Basque choir, organized to perform for the 1972 Holiday Basque Festival under the directorship of Father Ramon Echevarria, was another successful endeavor of the IBSC. Their talent initiated invitations to perform publicly for Boise area civic organizations, and members met for weekly practices to build their repertoire of traditional Basque folk songs. In 1973, singers continued on after the festival as the Anaiak Danok Choir, practicing each Monday evening under the professional leadership of musical director Jim Anderson, and performing at special dinners, the San Ignacio festival mass in Municipal Park, and for Aberri Eguna celebrations.

The establishment of ties with other Basque organizations around the United States through the creation of NABO ignited a synergistic movement of intercommunication and awareness between the generally Bizkaian Basque populations in southwestern Idaho, eastern Oregon, and northern Nevada, with the Navarrese Basques of southern Nevada and eastern California, and those Basques from the northern *Iparalde* provinces throughout California. Today the North American Basque Organizations network of communications and exchange is essential to maintaining Basque ethnic identity in the United States. There are thirty-eight member organizations, and separate affiliations with Basques in Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay, Australia, Chile, France, and Spain. The relations between NABO and the Basque provinces have grown exponentially since the ongoing restoration of democracy in Spain and the development of Basque governmental institutions. "I think it is important to dream big", said Al Erquiaga. Basques around the United States are certainly thankful that he did.



The Basque Cultural

(11)

Museum and Center

The Basque Museum and Cultural Center is the only Basque museum in the entire United States, and volunteers work diligently to give its thousands of visitors an accurate understanding of Basques in the American West and those around the world. It serves as a tribute to the memory of the many sheepherders, serving girls, and other Basques who passed through, and worked in, the boarding houses of Boise while searching for a better life than the hardship they left in *Euskal Herria*. Many Basques who have lost touch with their heritage enter to ask about genealogy and the history of *Euskal Herria*. Director Patty Miller records that in 2000 over 20,000 people visited or were served by the Basque Museum and Cultural Center and its many events. Even in a non-Jaialdi International Festival year of 2001, some 18,000 people either entered the hall to the exhibits and activities, or participated off-sight. The foresight, initiative, and dedication from hundreds of volunteers have produced a reality of the dream envisioned by Adelia Garro Simplot. Any outsider reading about the development of the Basque community in this book would have to reach at least two conclusions: (1) the Boise area Basque community has benefited greatly from a deep pool of potent and dedicated leadership; and (2) volunteers for Basque causes are not afraid of hard work.

ACQUIRING, RESTORING, AND RENOVATING BRICKS AND MORTAR

The Basque Museum and Cultural Center encompasses an original Basque boarding house, the Cyrus Jacobs Uberuaga Boarding House, which functioned mostly for sheepherders from 1910 to 1969 and was operated by the Uberuaga family. The Cyrus Jacobs Uberuaga Boarding House is the oldest brick dwelling in Boise, Idaho. It was constructed as a family home for Cyrus Jacobs in 1864 and later functioned as a boarding house- first run by the Galdos and Bicandi families beginning in 1910, and then operated by the Uberuaga family from 1917 until 1969. The Uberuaga's actually bought the house from Cyrus Jacob's daughter-in-law in 1928. The *etxeoandra*, or woman of the house, was Hermenegilda Uberuaga who cooked, cleaned, and managed a wide range of affairs for her boarders. She assisted with banking issues, doctor and dentist visits, children boarders attending school, and employment information as a few of her specialties. These Basque establishments helped new immigrants acclimate to their unknown surroundings with familiar Basque language, cuisine, networking, music, and dance.

The museum is a living memorial. The original boarding house is preserved with period furniture, linens, and tableware, and visitors can see how sheepherders lived in the winter months when coming down from the mountains and off the range into Boise. In the early years of its existence, the museum's original kitchen was used for special dinners that were prepared in the house for exclusive guests. Today, many dedicated volunteers and directors who give their time and expertise in everything from language and cooking classes to building repairs and landscaping have nurtured Adelia Garro Simplot's vision to restore Grove Street to a Basque Block.

Adelia Garro Simplot first purchased the Jacobs Uberuaga Boarding House at 607 Grove Street in 1983 with the idea to preserve the building and its historical importance to the Basque population. She purchased this former boarding house from owners Serafina Uberuaga Mendiguren, Joe Uberuaga, and Julia Uberuaga Coleman (son and daughters of Hermenegilda and José Uberuaga who managed the Uberuaga Boarding House), on November 28, 1983 for \$60,000. The property included another structure behind the boarding house that was built as a cold storage and distillery. Sometime in the 1870s, Cyrus Jacobs built one section of the structure from thick cubes of sandstone, which were designed to hold in the cold of the blocks of winter ice brought from local ponds. The other two-thirds of the building has walls of brick, manufactured in Boise. After the turn of the century, the storage/distillery was converted into additional living quarters with an apartment on one side and a separate room that was occupied by the Uberuaga children or additional guests if the boardinghouse was too full.

Two years after Garro Simplot's purchase, she asked a group of interested Basques and non-Basques with whom she had worked in the community to join to create a non-profit entity. This entity became the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho,



Adelia Ann Calista Garro Simplot 1994. Founder Basque Museum and Cultural Center. Photo courtesy of Adelia Garro Simplot.

Inc., with Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws dated November 8, 1985. The Articles of Incorporation define the educational and charitable purposes to “...stimulate the interest of the public... in the development and offering of Basque literature and language studies, history, and the assembling and maintenance of a collection of Basque related artifacts...”. The Registered Regent of the Corporation was Adelia Garro Simplot. The Articles also state that if there should ever be a dissolution of the corporation, the property and any proceeds would be distributed first to the Euzkaldunak, Inc., or if the Euzkaldunak was not in existence, secondly to a corporation, trust, or foundation organized and operated exclusively for cultural or educational purposes.

The Cultural Center was officially established with over a thousand people attending an Open House on October 5, 1986. Many of those came to meet Nevada Basque author Robert Laxalt, who autographed numerous copies of his latest book *A Cup of Tea in Pamplona*- nominated for a 1986 Pulitzer Prize. The Basque Girls’ Club also celebrated their 50-year anniversary that day at the open house of the Museum. The first public information appeared in an Idaho Statesman article published June 12, 1986, giving readers a brief introduction to Garro Simplot’s intended restoration and relaying her requests for help. Senator James McClure toured the house in 1986 and expressed his appreciation for the efforts being made to preserve the boarding house and the Basque culture simultaneously. The next year the museum was selected as a recipient of the Paint the Town project to give a new coat of paint to older buildings and residences in Boise. Specialists and volunteers helped produce a fresh appearance for the boarding house. Wayne and Susan Garro Meuleman, and Roxanne Beach headed the gardening committee that cared for the grounds of the boarding house museum. Josephine Aburusa made requests of donations for specialized items for the house such as period dishes, silverware, linens etc. and one item at a time, the historic boarding house was filled to demonstrate representations of daily life in Boise during the early 1900s. In the 1980s, a women’s craft group fashioned items to be sold at the Gift Shop inside the museum.

Adelia Garro Simplot personally made the mortgage payments for the boarding house property from November 1983 to December 1986 and with her husband, Richard R. Simplot, made a Deed of Gift, “For and in consideration of our love and affection for the Basque heritage and history in the State of Idaho . . .”. donating it to the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho, Inc., which in turn assumed the loan payments beginning January 1987. The official dedication ceremony was held on June 19, 1987, with numerous newspaper articles appearing locally and even in the Basque historic territories in Spain and France. Josu Legarreta Bilbao, Director of Relations with Basque Communities, represented the Basque Autonomous Community’s Government with his attendance at this ceremony.

The end of the 1980s, and in particular 1987, proved to be a watershed period for Basque culture in Boise. Al Erquiaga and Jesus Alcelay opened the Oñati Basque

Restaurant; the Euzkaldunak, Inc., sponsored and the public experienced the first Jaialdi International Basque Festival; and the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho opened its doors. Volunteers initiated a newsletter in April 1987 to inform members of coming activities and in December the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho established the Basque Museum Auxiliary and a Junior Auxiliary (which functioned separately for several years). By the end of the first year the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho boasted 274 members.

The first ever visit of a President of the Basque Government to Idaho was by *Lehendakari* José Antonio Ardanza when he visited Boise in 1988. During his visit he planted a seedling of the Tree of Gernika in the front yard of the boarding house garden. Participants wept openly with joy and pride and reveled at the symbolism of what was unfolding before their eyes. Over the decades, many had escaped a Basque Country in political turmoil of civil war and the Franco dictatorship, and had come to seek solace and economic stability in the democratic security of the United States. Severiano Legarreta rejoiced with others as they sang the hymn *Gernika'ko Arbola* celebrating an elected President of an autonomous Basque government here among the flowers in the peaceful garden of Hermenegilda Uberuaga. She could never have imagined such an honor being bestowed to her home.

In the first three years of the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho, 5000 visitors stepped into the historic boarding house. Architect Tom Zabala led the first restoration of the Jacobs Uberuaga building and was invaluable for subsequent structural remodels and construction projects. His expertise and quiet leadership for two decades guided decision-making worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The purchase of the next building, 611 Grove Street, which is today the actual Basque Museum and Cultural Center (BMCC) exhibition building and offices, was completed on December 1, 1988 after extensive meetings and discussions with its owner Robert F. Barney, the Boise City Council, and the Boise Historic Preservation Commission. The final purchase price was \$125,000. Barney had intended to tear down the older section of the building and create a parking lot, and then remodel the area that is now the exhibit hall of the BMCC. Adelia and Patty Miller remember many visits to the Boise City Council and the Boise Historic Preservation Commission with Chris Bieter and Mary K. Jones Aucutt to argue for the preservation of the historic aspects of the Grove Street buildings. Had Barney been allowed to build his parking lot, it would have come dangerously close to the porch of the boarding house property. The area was a part of the Old Boise Historic District, and the group of Basques and non-Basques wanted to preserve it as such. This purchase by the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho, Inc. completed a stretch of then three buildings dedicated to Basque ethnic preservation.

The structure at 611 Grove Street was originally part of the old Martin's Rooming House, which later became the Parker Rooming House, built in 1920 and utilized as a boarding house, (usually with non-Basque clientele). In the early 1960s an addition



Anduiza Fronton and Basque Museum and Cultural Center on Grove Street 1993. Photo courtesy of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

was built and then this structure was utilized as office space. The building was vacant from 1972 to 1988 when the Board of Directors of the Basque Museum voted to purchase the property. In September 1989, the BMCC expanded with its finalized purchase of this building (now where the exhibit hall and offices and classroom are). Between 1988 and 1991 the roof was replaced and the exhibit hall cleaned and painted. In 1990, the Idaho Commission on the Arts awarded the Basque Cultural Center a \$10,000 cash match grant to construct a handicapped access ramp for the front entry to the building and for the public restrooms. It also received a \$1400 Institute of Museum Services grant to bring in a museum consultant to work with the Board for long range planning, goal setting, and fund raising. Newsletters asked members for donations of books for the library and financial support for the \$100,000 matching donation from J.R. Simplot. Diana Nicholson chaired a fundraising dinner and auction that raised \$55,000 and Boise City also awarded monies for storefront renovation of the 611 Grove building. Subsequent dinners were chaired by Leandra Parker Jayo and Chris Bideganeta LaRocco, and Diane DeChambeau, which added to the initial successes. Following this phenomenal flurry of activity the Basque Cultural Center was off and running under administrators Barbara Perry Bauer and Molly McCollough, and leaders Adelia Garro Simplot, David J. Navarro, Richard Hormaechea, Patty A. Miller, Tom Zabala, Dianne Tullis, Eloise

Garmendia Bieter, and Leandra Jayo Parker. Romaine Galey Hon added her media expertise to promoting Basque cuisine and special events in the Idaho Statesman, in addition to her experience in historical preservation of the Ada Theatre and the Bishop's House.

Volunteers have always cared for the building, porch, and surrounding grounds of this institution. Passersby regularly commented on the guarded green spot surrounded by asphalt and cement. Susan Garro Mueleman and husband Wayne chaired this committee for years with help from Dale and Ramona Garro Higer, Marylu Burns, Katie Bergquist, Cornelio Totoricagüena, Julia Ford, and Iñaki Eiguren. During 1991 and 1992, Iñaki Eiguren spearheaded the streetscape project to beautify the Basque side of Grove Street between 6th Street and Capitol Boulevard. With Juan José Oleaga, Faustino Oleaga, Julian Lete, and Iñaki Eiguren, Weast Excavating removed the concrete pavement that covered the ground from the indented sidewalks another approximately six feet to the road curb. This was removed and implanted with sod donated by Cloverdale Nursery. Boise City donated seven trees to be planted and three old fashioned street lamps were installed. The Euzkaldunak, Inc. paid for one, Warren McCain personally donated a second, and West One Bank funded the third one. The front panels of the Cultural Center building were painted by Dianne Pierce, Patty Miller, David Navarro, Molly McCullough, and Judy Webb and updated from an interesting 1950s turquoise blue. Various “clean-up days” have been successful over the years with numerous volunteers assisting in moving office furniture, library shelves and materials, and in stripping, cleaning, and painting.

In 1993, the gift shop and offices were moved to the 611 building, and the initial permanent exhibits were installed. General renovation work including new flooring and painting were finished throughout the building. Later the original rooming house section of the building was converted into a library, classroom, archival storage for the collections, and office space for museum volunteers and visiting researchers. The sections that had held boarders are now offices with computers and Internet hook-up, shelves of videotapes, oral history tapes, and over 100 scrapbooks and several thousand additional books.

The 1995 restoration of the Jacobs Uberuaga Boarding House was directed by Carlos Bilbao as many volunteers donated hundreds of hours to paint, plaster, sand, varnish, wax, and plumb, among other skills, in preparation of authenticating the boarding house. The Uberuaga family, along with Foy Blackburn, paid to cover the costs to rewire the entire electrical system. Next door at the Cultural Center, José Amuchastegui led the plaster and drywall attack while Josephine Miller and Joanne Aldrich painted the walls and trim. This prepared the facility for the hundreds of donated items from the University of Idaho Basque Studies Collection, and for office preparation. The BMCC's strength has always been its volunteers and this project of several months could not have succeeded without Al Erquiaga, Dan Hornbuckle, Ted Miller, Dianne Pierce, Bill Synder, Keith Whittaker, Louie Larrinaga, Fred and Fran

Gooding, Joanne Aldrich, Josephine Lecona Miller, Carlos Bilbao, José Amuchastegui, and of course Patty Miller's initiative. In 1998 even the picket fence, an historic reproduction surrounding the garden and Tree of Gernika, was reconstructed and painted again by Jeff Johns and a group of dedicated volunteers.

In 1998 and 1999, the former renter vacated the converted apartment behind the museum boarding house and major repairs were necessary to meet specific residence building and health codes. Jeff Johns acted as project manager and construction worker. José Amuchastegui's master plastering skills and Ed Groff's carpentry were accompanied by hours and hours of additional volunteer work from Elaine Nakano, Josephine Miller, Patty Miller, and Cathy Clarkson. Image National Sign Company donated \$3,000, which was used to help refurbish this apartment.

THE GERNIKA BASQUE PUB & EATERY

The old Cub Tavern at 202 South Capitol Boulevard and the corner of Grove Street was established in 1948 after a history of being a Chinese laundry, the "Boulevard Lunch", the "Chin Joe Restaurant", and the "Trade Dollar Bar". In January 1990, the Oppenheimer Development Corporation purchased the building and property with the intent to demolish it and construct a new facility. It would allow for two to four more parking spaces for a bank to be built adjacent. With the foresight and efforts of Adelia Garro Simplot and Romaine Galey Hon, and under the legal advise of Willis E. Sullivan III, in March of 1990 the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho Inc. and the Oppenheimer Development Corporation agreed to save the building. The Basque Cultural Center would lease it to Dan Ansotegui for his "Shepherd's Son" restaurant and bar business. The original idea for the name for the proposed business was soon changed to the "Bar Gernika", and later officially to the "Gernika Basque Pub & Eatery".

The agreement in reality allowed the BMCC to trade six parking spaces behind the main exhibit hall in exchange for use of the building and its lease, expiring November 1, 2015. The legal agreement was between Mountain West Savings Bank, later Security Pacific Bank and then Bank of America (the landlord) and the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho (the tenant who subleases it) with Oppenheimer Development Corporation as the property manager. January 23, 1991, the BMCC and Dan Ansotegui agreed to a commercial sublease with Dan Ansotegui taking full responsibility for all the renovation costs and materials, additions and improvements to the established building. In 1996, the Bar Gernika initiated discussions to expand the building and in 1998 the Bank of America and the BMCC agreed to a property exchange. The Bank of America conveyed a section of the Capitol Boulevard property plus one parking space to the BMCC in order that the Bar Gernika to be able to expand. In exchange for the Bar Gernika property, the BMCC traded its parking lot

behind the main exhibit hall to the bank with several agreements for easements for each other's use. Should the bank ever want to sell the parking lot behind the BMCC exhibit hall, the BMCC has first right to purchase for a set price of \$40,000, regardless of the current market value. Though Dan Ansotegui has offered to purchase the Gernika Basque Pub & Eatery property, the Board of Directors of the BMCC has decided to retain ownership.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES: “THE STRENGTH OF THE MUSEUM COMES FROM ITS VOLUNTEERS”

The Basque community has always been conscious of involving as many young people in its activities as possible, and in encouraging them to participate in leadership positions. The Junior Volunteers were established when Susan Garro



Uberuaga Boarding House. Photo by Mikel Chertudi.

Meuleman sent notices to the area junior and senior high schools inviting students to volunteer their time at the Basque Cultural Center. They received twenty immediate responses. One of the significant differences between the Basque Cultural Center and the Euzkaldunak, Inc., is that from its inception, the BMCC has encouraged the membership and participation of non-Basques. This allowed Basque and non-Basque students to volunteer serving dinners, answering telephones, helping in the gift shop, cleaning and organizing materials, and performing secretarial and communications duties such as helping write a newsletter. In 1987-1990 there were a total of four bulletins, and beginning in 1991 a more consistent newsletter informed its readers two or four times each year regarding fundraisers and past and future activities.

In 1987, Clarine Villeneuve and Dorothy Aldecoa organized a gift shop at the front entrance of the Museum with Thursday, Friday, and Saturday hours run by volunteer sales clerks. Dorothy Aldecoa and her army of volunteers, including Nancy Anchustegui, Victoria Alonso, Lil and Lou Jausoro, Carmen and Joe Larrondo, Petra and John Asumendi, and Gloria and Frank Gamboa, and Alice Bastida Tullis, managed the original gift shop. Items for sale included objects purchased in the Basque Country and brought back to Boise by many travelers, as well as handmade arts and crafts with Basque ethnic themes, or, with red, white, and green colors. Marie Badiola took over as gift shop coordinator in 1995 and with Dorothy Aldecoa and Justo Sarria's help, she strengthened a network of ordering goods directly from the Basque Country. One of the gift shop's annual events was its participation in the Saint Alphonsus Hospital Christmas Festival of Trees until 1999. A donation of 20% of total sales was made to benefit various programs of the hospital, such as the Life Flight program, and the remaining proceeds returned to the BMCC. For example: in 1996, thirty-four volunteers worked the Basque booth to educate the public about Basque activities while selling items from the gift shop and earning \$2,525. Mary Ann Uberuaga Artis was hired as the shop manager that year as the responsibilities of merchandise purchase, marketing and sales, and working with volunteers and special projects created a permanent part-time job.

The sign above the gift shop reads "*Boiseko Euskal Azoka*". The Museum gift shop supplies dancers with their *txapelak*, or berets, the *gerriko*, or waist sash, for the boys, and both boys' and girls' shoes, or *abarkak*. This equipment is imported from the Basque Country with other artisan crafts. Current Director, Christy Echevarria, explains that the location of the gift shop at the front lobby of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center requires that its purpose encompass many varied objectives. The majority of people who enter the BMCC on a daily basis are not Basque, and their first contact is with the clerk of the gift shop. "They ask many basic questions about the Basque Country, the language, and the people. We give information about all of our gift items but that also extends to general information about many, many Basque topics. We have to know a little about everything, or at least know where to get the information", commented Christy Echevarria.

During the Jaialdi year of 2000, the gift shop gross sales equaled \$136,000, and in the following non-Jaialdi year of 2001, it sold \$76,000 worth of goods. It is one of the significant revenue generating factors of the BMCC along with membership dues, memorials, and grants. Dorothy Bicandi Aldecoa, Marie Badiola, Katrina Aldape Lemmon, Mary Ann Uberuaga Artis, and Christy Echevarria have each managed the gift shop, which is very popular with jewelry of *lauburus* (a Basque symbol), dancers, provincial coats-of-arms, and Catholic religious symbols. Basque ethnic music on tape and CD promote the works of Oskorri, Imanol, Kepa Junkera, Tapia eta Leturia, Enrike Zelaia, Xabier Lete, Txomin Artola eta Amaia Zubiria. There are abundant red, white and green linens, woodcrafts, books, T-shirts and other items from *Euskal Herria* and from Boise with Basque themes. Books from the University of Nevada Press Basque Book Series fill the shelves and are popular gift items. Basques from the United States are very proud to advertise their ethnic heritage and to decorate their homes with representations of their ancestral homeland. Their public manifestations of ethnonationalism are cultural and not usually political, as noticed in the events of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., and the Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

The educational objectives for the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho expanded in 1991-92 and it hosted what it called “Twilight Talks” with specialists such as Joe Eiguren on Basque history, Justo Sarria on Basque politics, and Steve Mendive on Basque language. Its educational mission continues to be fundamental with language, cooking, pelota, txistu, and accordion classes. Joe Eiguren even provided a service of genealogical heraldry whereby he would help people translate the meaning of their Basque surnames and then conduct research on their family crest.

Basque language instruction in the 1990s was sporadic due to immigration visa problems and availability of teachers in the Boise area. Olatz Bourgeaud, from Zornotza-Amorebieta, Bizkaia, was selected by the Basque Government to teach Basque at Boise State University, in addition she also taught the first formal Basque language classes of the Basque Cultural Center in 1991 and 1992. From 1993 through the spring of 1996, in addition to the full semester courses given at Boise State University, short courses were offered by Nere Lete at the BMCC with the exception of the spring of 1995. In 1996, Rosita Anakabe Solabarrieta taught beginning Basque and Nere Lete taught level II and level III courses, with classes held once a week for two hours. Though there were no classes for months at a time, students remained dedicated to learning and practicing their language skills. For several months in 1998, two visitors from the Basque Country, Naiara Zarraga and Aitziber Urigüen volunteered their time to teach classes. Izarne Garmendia’s selection as Boise’s *ikastola* teacher was extremely fortunate because although she taught at the *Ikastola* during the day, she also stored abundant energy to continue in the evenings with adults at the BMCC during 2000-2001. Jill Aldape and Amaia Biain also offered their talents for beginning classes. In 2001 and 2002, again the *ikastola* teacher, Nere Inda, has graciously continued her instruction into the night.

Though several students have found it very difficult to adjust to the irregular course offerings and the many different teachers and methods of instruction, one vocabulary word they have learned is *burugogor*, or stubborn. They stubbornly persist and continue in their study and love of *euskera*. Nere Lete's devotion to the continuation of the Basque language is evident from her years of sharing her expertise and, especially, the precious time of a young mother. The Basque Museum and Cultural Center also is the supporting organization for the Boise'ko Ikastola Basque Language Pre-School. The maintenance of Basque language is a defining factor of ethnic identity for many in the community and their work depicted in this book is laudable.

Leandra Jayo Parker, Chairperson of the Long Range Planning Committee, Dianne Tullis, President of the Basque Cultural Center, and Nancy Adrian facilitated a crucial weekend retreat in McCall to significantly mark the future of the Basque Cultural Center in October 1993. After months of meetings, debates, discussions, and research, Leandra Jayo Parker, Adelia Garro Simplot, Patty Miller, Al Erquiaga, Claire Artis Bissell, Dianne Tullis, Gloria Totoricagüena, Dave Navarro, and Arthur Hart detailed, defined, and completed plans and objectives for the future of the institution. They formally established the structure for organization and governance of the BMCC and designed and prioritized the goals, objectives, and implementation of such. Permanent standing committees created included the Library, Gift Shop, Garden, Employment, Education, Exhibits and Collections, Insurance, Membership, Museum, Facilities and Furnishings, Special Events, Long-Range Planning, Bylaws, and Volunteers. Utilizing the renovated properties, and under the new administrative leadership of Patty A. Miller hired in 1993, the BMCC rocketed into numerous projects. The Long Range Plan was revised in 1998 and again in 2002 to ensure proper planning and growth for the organization.

Joseph "Joe" V. Eiguren was the first Chairman of the Library Committee and he immediately began collecting and asking for donations of books for teaching and learning *euskera*, as well as history and anthropology books. His energy and efforts on behalf of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center helped establish the foundation for what it has become. The proceeds from his book, "The Basque History", are directed to the Boise State University Foundation for the Ansotegui-Fereday Memorial Scholarship to send students to the Basque Country. The proceeds from two additional works he authored, one an autobiography, "Kashpar", and separately a methodology for learning to speak Basque and directed their earnings to support programs at the BMCC.

The library committee begun by Joe Eiguren and later managed by Muriel "Mia" Fereday worked diligently to sort and catalogue the materials donated from the José Villanueva Collection, from Emmett, Idaho, as well as those from Camille and Kent Power, Governor Cecil and Carol Andrus, the Basque Government and provincial and municipal governments in the Basque Country, and the University of Idaho. The

University of Idaho Collection alone includes 3,600 pieces of literature. These and many other publications are utilized by researchers and are open for any members' perusal- housed in the Joseph V. Eiguren Library at the Cultural Center. The contents include fiction, history, anthropology, political science, diaspora studies, linguistics, parts of the 55 volume General Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Basque Country –the *Enciclopedia Auñamendi*–, and periodicals and more than 600 books sent by the Autonomous Basque Government of Euskadi and by the Foral Government of Navarre, as well as cookbooks, art and poetry. Many recently published English language materials by the University of Nevada Press are utilized by local students for research.

Also fundamental to anyone conducting research on the Basques in Idaho are the over 100 scrapbooks of the Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection, dedicated in April, 1997 with a reception in Juanita's honor. For more than fifty years, "Jay" collected photographs, newspaper and magazine articles about Basque people, and



Patty A. Miller, Basque Museum and Cultural Center Director. 2000. Courtesy of Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

mentos of Basques' personal lives, all telling the story of Basque families in the Treasure Valley area. There is an entire book for just wedding invitations she received from Basque families. Another complete book is dedicated to funeral announcements and rosary prayer cards. Her painstaking compilations have registered the public record of mostly Treasure Valley area Basques, though she also kept information sent to her from the New York Euzko-Etxea, and Basque organizations in Nevada, and California. The thousands of articles and photographs chronicle the development of the Basque organizations and have been utilized for numerous academic research projects.

Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea's spirit lives in these pages as she documents the Basque community from photographs of the boarding houses, to Idaho Statesman articles covering their demolitions. The books dedicated to the 1940s and 1950s depict the embarkation of a movement toward additional associations of Basques in the Treasure Valley area. The functions of the Basque mutual aid societies were not social, and with a slowdown in new immigration the boarding houses were closing. What the Basques needed was their own building to go to in order to socialize, to dance, and to have dinners. As written in this book's section on the establishment of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., Jay's books illustrate the event-by-event growth of the Basque organizations. Her historical registry is indeed the most valuable inheritance left to all of her admirers.

Another project of historical and general research significance found Helen Elguezabal Berria heading the Genealogy Committee, which worked to collect census information on Basque emigrants. In just one year Helen and committee members, Jeanne Alzola, Rash Iglesias, Luis Arrizabala, Coro Gil Goitandia, John Barrutia, Carlos Bilbao, and Mary Thomas collected census data on 125 emigrants, and information on 1000 individuals connected to those 125 emigrants. US West Communications donated a computer and printer to the genealogical archive room and Jeanne Alzola donated the computer software and hours necessary to enter the data for future research. This ongoing endeavor has salvaged an essential link in the research on Basque immigration. Researchers from the Basque Country and from various universities have found these data invaluable to their work. Future plans include the possibility of purchasing records from Basque Country churches copied by the Church of Latter Day Saints and currently stored in Salt Lake City, Utah. According to volunteer, Marce Arriola Gerlach, "People come in here all the time wondering about their family history. Having a genealogical center would be extremely beneficial".

Basque style preparation of foods is an art that has lost its significance with the generations of intercultural marriages and lack of time on the part of adults working and caring for children. Another major factor is the lack of emphasis on the familial and social importance of meals and mealtime in United States culture as compared to the same in Basque culture. The rituals and traditions of the main meal, which in

the Basque Country is lunch, were typically tended to by the woman of the family and most Basque emigrant and many first generation women in the United States maintained these traditions. Although the main meal became dinner, numerous women interviewees stated that until approximately the 1970s, they maintained the traditions of extensive preparations and maintenance of Basque style food preparation. However, “With one child at football practice and another one leaving for a concert, they don’t even appreciate all the time I spent to make these dinners. ‘Forget it,’ I’d say”, mentioned Teresa Mendazona Aramburu. Many working parents have agreed with her, and their lack of time and desire to spend free time in the kitchen has resulted in another generation of cooks lost. Thus it has been necessary to have Basque cuisine cooking classes, and each time the Euzkaldunak, Inc., or the BMCC has offered classes, they have filled immediately with students.

In 1994, Jesus Alcelay, Sabina Arteta Oleaga, and Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica each selected a menu and on different nights instructed the participants in selecting and preparing the ingredients. Students then watched and took notes as these experts finished and garnished their cuisine- though the best part of each night was eating the prepared meals! Ben Plaza, of the Ontario Basque Club, videotaped each session for future cooking sessions as well. These courses in Basque cuisine continued on throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium. Dan and Chrissy Ansotegui’s specialty foods and catering business, the “Basque Market”, also offers regular classes that are filled to capacity with Basque and non-Basque cooks.

This interest has extended to the Basque Country and Boise was fortunate to have chefs Iñaki Pikabea and Jon Eizaguirre visit and conduct a cooking class and tapas display at the BMCC in January 1995. The Hotel Londres in San Sebastián-Donostia sponsored a competition of the Basque Country’s best chefs and the winners enjoyed a trip to the United States including visits to the Basque communities in Reno, Boise, and San Francisco. The shared recipes provided delicious tapas for fundraising get-togethers at the Museum at other future activities.

Many adults have expressed their desires to learn Basque dances, though perhaps not at the same quick pace as the younger Oinkaris. In the late 1980s through early 1990s, Diana Echeverria and Gloria Totoricagüena taught basic jotás and porrusaldas to the parents of children coming to their own dancing lessons on Tuesday nights, and later, Jean Louis Cihigoyenetche also taught Basque dances to adults twice a month at the BMCC. These offerings are another example of simple efforts to involve and educate a few more people at a time. However, there are other activities that involve hundreds of individuals and years of preparation.

The Basque Government’s Director of Relations with Basque Collectivities, Josu Legarreta, announced the opening of a special grant project at the February 2001 NABO meeting in San Francisco. The Basque Autonomous Government presented “Urazandi: Basques Across the Seas” as an opportunity to research and publish

histories of Basque institutions in approximately fifteen selected communities throughout the world. Boise, San Francisco, and New York were three selected from the United States. Each publication also includes oral histories of Basque immigrants and the development of Basque ethnic associations, organizations, and institutions. Patty Miller, Joseba Chertudi, and Gloria Totoricagüena directed this project, which included over 200 oral histories, interviewing another sixty-five persons in addition to the tapes already in possession at the BMCC, and collecting documentation of all the Basque institutions in Boise.

In 2002, the Basque Museum and Cultural Center continued working on the recording, indexing, and future transcription of over 200 oral histories of Basques who immigrated to the area. Much of this had been accomplished with committees of volunteers and people who believe in the future of Basque studies. In 2001, the Basque Museum and Cultural Center received a grant from the Basque Government to research and publish this book about the Boise area Basque community, and simultaneously to index past recorded interviews and to record and index another sixty-five interviews with emigrants and first generation Basques. The current oral histories project director, Joseba Chertudi, managed his two employees and sons, Daniel and Mikel, with the help of Museum Director Patty Miller. Patty Miller, Daniel Chertudi, and Mikel Chertudi interviewed sixty-five additional persons and created indexes of names, places, and important topics so that in the future, family members and researchers will have access to an audiotape and printed index of subjects mentioned by the interviewee. These recordings have been added to a series of tapes completed by social anthropologist Begonia Pecharroman, University of the Basque Country, who during 1997-1999 investigated Basque women in southern Idaho and eastern Oregon. The Chertudi brothers also finished indexing interviews given to brothers John Bieter and Mark Bieter during the 1990s. Historian Lidia Elola also contributed information from interviews she conducted in the Treasure Valley for her PhD dissertation in the Basque Country.

Joseba Chertudi had conducted similar interviews himself with emigrant Basques in 1975 and 1976. A 1972 grant awarded to the Idaho State Department of Education Division of Continuing Education from the National Endowment for the Humanities created the Idaho Basque Studies Center. One of the projects of the Idaho Basque Studies Center included employing Joseba Chertudi to conduct personal interviews with Basque emigrants about their immigration and acculturation experiences. Committee member, Justo Sarria stored these tapes until the end of the 1980s when John Bieter began his research of Basque emigrants. The tapes were then transferred to the BMCC for future researchers. Since the early 1990s, several volunteers have worked sporadically to transcribe a few of the tapes. Finally in 2000, Joseba Chertudi also returned to the project and headed a committee of Basque, Spanish, and English speaking volunteers to index the highlights of remaining tapes. Coro Goitiandia, Miren Artiach, Iñigo Serna, Leandra Aburusa, Nere Lete, Conchi Urriolabeitia, Shannon Grange, Chris Bernaski, Katie Battazzo, Nikki

Bass, Julianna Aldape, and Miren Aburusa indexed tapes during 2000-2001. As is often the case, retaining volunteers with these specific language skills and dedication to give the time necessary was extremely difficult, and the grant from the Basque Government allowed the BMCC to hire the two Chertudi sons, Nere Lete, and Lisa Corcostegui, as professionals.

Colleen Bermensolo and Josephine Miller duplicated a total of literally hundreds and hundreds of tapes, the masters of which are stored at the Idaho State Library and Archives. Lisa Corcostegui trained Daniel and Mikel Chertudi to digitize this information and create webpages complete with photographs and audio sound excerpts from the original interviews. This project is in collaboration also with the University of Nevada Reno Center for Basque Studies “Oroitzapenak-Memories” oral history project.

The general educational mission has always been fundamental to the success of the BMCC. During a typical calendar year Patty Miller travels to numerous schools and educational conferences throughout the State of Idaho. Hundreds of school children, along with their teachers and parents, come to the BMCC to tour the historic boardinghouse, the Cultural Center, and the frontón. Christy Echevarria tells various stories about telephone calls inquiring for everything from leg of lamb recipes to research on Basque blood types. People seek out advice about conducting genealogical and heraldry research for their family’ coat-of-arms. Visitors conduct research varying from that of PhD dissertations and professional publications, to simply wanting to see a detailed map of the Basque Country to find their grandmother’s hometown. The energy of Patty Miller and Christy Echevarria, the valuable oral history tape collection, the Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection, the Joseph V. Eiguren Library, the Basque Music Archives, the traveling educational photographic collection, and the smiling faces of volunteers Luis Arrizabala, Josephine Miller, Coro Goitiandia, Marce Arriola Gerlach, Gloria Bidart, Miren Zubizareta, and Melissa Dodworth combine to answer a daily flood of questions regarding Basque issues.

The ongoing activities of the BMCC also include opening its doors to the Gaupasa Basque Folk Music Band, who practice at the Museum, and to the Txikitxuak Dancers from the Boise’ko Gazteak. There simply is not enough space available at the Basque Center for the 180 children of all age groups and they are spread from both floors of the Center, to the Museum and to the frontón handball court building. “What a wonderful problem to have”, said John Zabala. “We have so many people involved in the Euzkaldunak programs that we need all of the buildings on this side of Grove Street, especially the bars for the parents on both ends”. The cooperation between the various Basque groups means that open communications and willingness to work with each other is essential to maintaining programs for Basque culture.

EXHIBITS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

One of the first celebrations held was the 1988 “Etxea Atzera- Home Again” Cultural Basque Retrospective Art Exhibit at the Basque Cultural Center, September 15-18. It was actually an encore presentation of an exhibit organized 33 years prior in 1955, by Espectación “Espe” Yzarra Alegria. In 1989, the organization hosted a dinner for the first ever meeting of the advisers to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Basque Cultural Center of Idaho began advertising itself as open to host group dinners inside the boarding house for 12-24 people, catered by Jesus Alcelay.

In 1990, museum Director Barbara Perry Bauer toured the Basque Country and visited eight Basque museums in order to establish ties and promote goodwill and communications with the Basque Cultural Center. She laid the groundwork for, and encouraged exchanges with, homeland institutions. By the fall of 1991, Molly McCullough was serving as the administrator for all projects, for committees of volunteers, for fundraisers, and for care of the properties. Art exhibits, cooking classes, and a movie premier were organized that year.

Music has served as an extremely effective means of transmitting Basque language and culture in the Boise area and the volunteers of the Basque Cultural Center have ceaselessly worked to ensure its continuance. The North American Basque Organizations’ Music Camp descended upon Boise in July of 1992 with seventy-six adolescents participating in various kinds of instruction for txistu, accordion, dance, cooking, language, history, and mus. The Euzkaldunak, Inc. sponsored the camp and the museum volunteers welcomed them to BMCC facilities for language and cooking classes. With a smile every morning, Eloise Bieter made sure the mischief of teenagers remained harmless. Later in the autumn, the *La Tuna Universitaria* singing group from the Public University of Navarre in Pamplona, Navarra visited Boise and celebrated the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival in the Americas. The all-male group of singers and musicians entertained on Columbus Day, October 12, 1992, with mandolins, guitars, and tambourines. Thanks to volunteers Helen and Frank Berria, Steve Mendive, Mercedes (Merche) Urrutia, Susan Meuleman, Dolores Totorica, Maite Bengoa, and Mari Goitiandia Amuchastegui, the public enjoyed a performance of medieval love songs by the troubadours dressed in their 15th century capes and caps.

The Basque Museum and Cultural Center has hosted many, many exhibits and receptions over the years, but several stand out in the memories of participants. On July 23, 1992, Governor Cecil D. Andrus and his wife Carol hosted a reception at the BMCC to share their experiences from their official state visit to the Basque Country in reciprocation of Basque President Ardanza’s prior visit to Boise. “All your relatives told me to tell you hello”, said Governor Cecil Andrus to the hundreds of people that

participated in the reception. Governor Andrus was consistently recognized during his political years as a friend of the Basques, and remained so after he left elected office. He annually retains his membership to the Basque Museum and Cultural Center. He was the first foreign statesman ever to address the Basque Autonomous Community Parliament in Vitoria-Gasteiz. Governor and Carol Andrus visited the historic seat of the Basque government in Gernika where they were re-introduced to the history of the Basque democratic political representation system and of the *fueros*, or foral law based on customs and traditions. They also were the guests of honor at an official reception at the Foral Palace in Bilbao, Bizkaia and at the University of Oñati, Gipuzkoa, where students and faculty of the Boise State University Basque studies abroad program attended welcoming ceremonies. Upon these visits, Governor and Carol Andrus were presented with many gifts and during this reception they very graciously donated them to the President of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., John Aldecoa Wilson, and to Adelia Garro Simplot, President of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

The BMCC bestowed a Citation for Cultural Achievement Award to Juanita “Jay” Uberuaga Hormaechea, Joseph V. Eiguren, and Espectación “Espe” Yzarra Alegria (posthumously) February 26, 1993 at the annual fundraising dinner and auction. These are three individuals who helped imagine, build and maintain the Basque community as we know it today. Meant to be a continuing award, it was never given again, and these three remain the only persons to be singled out for this recognition.

The thousands of visitors to the museum have enjoyed a wide array of photography and art. Basque Country photographer Pedro Luis Ormazabal exhibited in 1991. Jose Mari Sarasua featured his art exhibit at the BMCC in May 1994. Basque coats-of-arms were also available for order by visitors and painted by Sarasua. Photographer Joanna Pinneo, of *National Geographic*, displayed her works in 1998 during the San Ignacio Basque festival in July. Mary Anne Uberuaga Schaffeld, Tony Uberuaga, Kris Moen, Ed Labadie, and Sean Aucutt also displayed at the end of the 1990s. The new millennium began with Linda Dufurrena’s slide show, lecture and photo exhibit, followed by the opening of the Eulalia Abaitua Allende-Salazar photography exhibit on loan from the Basque Archaeological, Ethnographic and Historical Museum of Bilbao. This extraordinary display featured photography taken between 1873 and 1939 in the Basque Country by Eulalia Abaitua. Her black and white pictures represent the socioeconomic changes resulting from industrialization. She depicted rural and urban settings showing life on the traditional family farm as opposed to life on the city streets of Bilbao.

The 2001 photography of Peter Oberlindacher was displayed with “Inner Strength: Portraits of Basque Immigrant Women”. Organized by Meggan Laxalt and Patty Miller, his collaboration with the female interviewees of researcher Begonia Pecharroman established a photographic documentary of Basque women who left their homeland and settled in the Treasure Valley. He captured the impressions they

left with him including, “graciousness, enthusiasm, and pride”. Oberlindacher writes that photographs “are, along with language and tradition, an important part of keeping the Basque history alive”. That is precisely what the BMCC intends.

While restoration seems to be an on-going factor of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, the initial renovations allowed the administrative offices, gift shop, library, and exhibits to be moved to the 611 Grove building, now the actual Cultural Center, in 1993. This allowed the Jacobs-Uberuaga Boarding house at 607 Grove to function as a living history museum. Phase One of the exhibit, created by Arthur A. Hart, Joseph V. Eiguren, Dr. Patrick Bieter, and Willis Sullivan III, was envisioned as an introduction to the Basques and panels gave examples of famous Basques in history and contemporary society. Director Emeritus of the Idaho Historical Society and original board member of the BMCC, Arthur A. Hart donated hundreds of hours to designing and producing these initial and permanent exhibits. Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Simon Bolivar, Pablo de Sarasate, José Maria Olazabal, Jean Borotra, and Miguel Indurain are a few of the Basques exemplified at the entry of the hall. Basil and Dorothy Bicandi Aldecoa donated an authentic sheep camp wagon with saddles, cooking equipment, and hand tools to create a permanent exhibit depicting the daily life of the Basque shepherd. School children attending field trips to the Basque Cultural Center can hardly believe that anyone could live in such a manner. Basques with decades of experience in shepherding such as José Luis Arrieta (30 years of personal experience) and Segundo Totorica (Totoricagüena) (80 years of family business) have preferred to use the word “exist”. “We existed in those sheepcamps but we came back to life when we had a chance to be with other Basques in the boarding houses in Mountain Home and Boise”, stated Segundo Totorica.

Arthur Hart also traveled throughout Idaho and eastern Oregon the next year with an exhibit co-sponsored by the BMCC and the Idaho Humanities Council informing audiences about Basque history and culture. He and his wife and assistant, Novella D. Hart, gave slide show presentations and left a mobile exhibit with illustrations, photographs and an interpretive explanation for one month at each stop. Later in 1995 the US West Foundation awarded the BMCC a grant of \$1300 to produce a “Basque History and Culture in a Trunk” series for schools. The idea of this trunk is to provide lesson plans, informational materials, videos, slides, posters, and sports equipment with the goal of having a portable unit that teachers could borrow and return to the BMCC. This will provide expert information and accessibility to educational lessons for schools around Idaho and eastern Oregon, and the trunk will generally be used in elementary grades for history of Idaho units, as well as in Spanish and French language courses for units on Basque culture. Although the trunk has not been completed, it is another on-going project of volunteers.

The “*Amerikanuak!* Basques in the High Desert” exhibit was on display at the BMCC from June 1 to November 16, 1996. Curator of Western Heritage for the High

Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, Robert G. Boyd produced the overwhelmingly successful exhibit in consultation with Dr. William A. Douglass, Dr. Richard W. Etulain, Dr. Jeronima Echeverria, Robert Echeverria, and Steve Mendive. Original photographs, immigration papers, baptismal gowns, marriage certificates, farming implements, sheep camp equipment, boardinghouse furnishings and other personal details told a story of Basque immigration to the American west and specifically the High Desert of southern Oregon and Idaho, northeastern California, most of Nevada, and western Utah. This display of historical documents and personal items depicted the hardships of leaving one's home country, family, language and culture, and the challenges of a new society. Each panel or display box exemplified another aspect of how Basque emigrants had worked to acculturate into the United States greater society, yet simultaneously maintain their Basque ethnic identity. This very special traveling exhibit about the Basques in the western States was accompanied by special guest lectures from Dr. Richard Etulain and Arthur Hart, as well as a performance by the Oinkari Basque Dancers. After its debut in Bend and opening in Boise, the exhibit continued on through the western United States. In the winter of 2001-2002 several of these photographs were also displayed as a part of a larger exhibit on Basque emigration at the Basque Archaeological, Ethnographic and Historical Museum in Bilbao, Bizkaia.

Immediately following this exhibit the BMCC received the University of Idaho Press sponsored exhibit "Hemingway in Idaho", with Dr. Mike Reynolds, the pre-eminent living biographer of Ernest Hemingway, presenting a lecture, "Hemingway and the Basques". Hemingway's first trip to Spain was in 1923 and he later served as a Spanish Civil War correspondent during 1937-38. His novels, "The Sun Also Rises" and "For Whom the Bell Tolls", involve his experiences in Spain and the Basque Country, and according to Reynolds, Hemingway's admiration for the Basques was intense.

An emotion-provoking exhibit was displayed in the Cultural Center halls during April of 1997. Gernika bombing survivors Adela Bengoechea Olavarria, Trinidad (Trini) Mintegua Rementeria, Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica, Mari Barquin Martiartu, and Margarita Berrojalbiz Urresti listened with approximately seventy-five others as Professor Orville Cope discussed the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the bombing of Gernika in 1937. Commemorating the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Gernika by Hitler Germany's Condor Legion flying in the services of Franco's Spanish Nationalist forces, the city of Gernika arranged for a special exhibit to travel to Basque communities in the United States. Organized by the Gernikazarra Historia Taldea, three separate sections of five panels each depicted photographs which gave visual representations to the personal accounts given by the survivors, though several found it too painful to discuss publicly.

The first section began with the origins of Gernika and foundation of the town in 1366, the significance of the Tree of Gernika, and a view of Gernika before the

bombing. The second group of panels referred to the Spanish Civil War and the foundation of the first Basque Government. It described the destruction and the significance of the bombing of the civilian population. One panel included a declaration from the Basque President, or *Lehendakari*, José Antonio Aguirre, “Before God and History, I affirm that during three hours and a half, German planes bombed with unknown cruelty the defenseless civilians of the historical village of Gernika, reducing the town to ashes, and machine-gunning women and children, killing a great number of them...” The final section began with Picasso’s painting “Guernica”, and showed the reconstruction of the town and the current reality.

The presentation and exhibition were very enlightening and participants remarked on the importance of sharing this information. Over the years, many of the senior Basques have stated their worries about the younger generations losing their own ethnic history. The audience for this free public presentation was also all adults and not even Basque youth in leadership positions in Basque Center or Oinkari activities attended. “We need to educate the general public, but we also need to educate our own children about our own history”, said Julian Achabal.

Other exhibits are lighter hearted and more festive such as the Children’s Art Show and Cultural Night chaired by Meggan Laxalt in May 1999. To celebrate the Euzkaldunak, Inc.’s, 50th Anniversary, the BMCC hosted a very special night for school children from Boise, Meridian, and Eagle schools. Students had entered their own pieces about Basque culture to a competitive art show. The top thirty contestants’ works were framed and exhibited at the Cultural Center and a silent auction followed with proceeds going to awards and to the BMCC.

In October of 1994, the BMCC organized a “Paseo”. This Sunday event included a buffet lunch, pala exhibitions, sheep shearing demonstration, performance by the Biotzetik Basque Choir, and an art display. Visitors could also enjoy the miniature Gernika “Batzar Etxea” exhibit created by J. Manuel Loza Alday of Gernika. It is an exact replica of the actual Casa de Juntas, or General Assembly meeting place, and Tree of Gernika grounds. Anita Anacabe and Mike Franzoia, Iñaki Eiguren, and Dorothy and Basil Aldecoa each played a part in preparing the permanent exhibit. The sunny afternoon included live music by Mary Lou Murelaga Guerricabeitia, Ray Mansisor, and Sean Aucutt.

A STREETScape FOR THE BASQUE BLOCK

A study funded by a grant to the Basque Neighborhood Marketplace, Inc., laid the groundwork for the Basque Block that resulted from an incredible coincidence of circumstances and timing, according to Patty Miller. Related to preserving the historic Basque areas around Grove Street, in March of 1987, another group of volunteers, led by Mary K. Jones Aucutt and Francis “Patxi” Lostra, secured a grant

worth approximately \$13,000 and formed an association called the Basque Neighborhood Marketplace, Inc. Its purpose was to rejuvenate and restore the neighborhood area on Grove Street and to further Basque culture. The Board consisted of members of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., the Oinkaris, and the Basque Museum and Cultural Center. They held monthly meetings to discuss the possibility of renovating a four block area, including Grove Street, and produced a professional study by city planner Jerome Mapp. The two-years and more than 500 pages of research demonstrated the seriousness of the Basque community's intentions to renovate and restore the area near the Euzkaldunak Basque Center and the Basque Museum and Cultural Center. Though the exact plan was never carried through, the next few years witnessed a major transformation to the Grove Street between Sixth and Capitol Boulevard.

Between 1989 and 1993, the Museum had continued to expand to include the 611 Grove building and the Gernika Pub & Eatery property at the far corner. Separately, Adelia Garro Simplot and Richard Hormaechea had privately purchased the Anduiza frontón at 619 Grove. These purchases were not systematic but instead were precipitated by the fact that the buildings were going to be destroyed or greatly modified. This had piqued Adelia Garro Simplot's lifelong interest in saving historic properties and she had mobilized herself and others to rescue their historic value. By the end of 1993, all of the buildings on the south side block of Grove Street were owned by various Basque entities: The Euzkaldunak, Inc., Basque Center; the Jacobs-Uberuaga Basque Boarding House museum; the Basque Museum and Cultural Center offices, gift shop, classroom and exhibit hall; the Anduiza building fronton and offices; and the Gernika Basque Pub & Eatery.

The transformation of Grove Street to the Basque Block unfortunately began with a tragic event. Sorrowfully, in January of 1999, Pat and Eloise Bieter were both killed in an automobile accident. Within days, Karen Bubb of the Boise City Arts Commission contacted the BMCC to discuss the possibility of a major piece of public art for Grove Street- the purpose being to celebrate the Basques of Boise and to honor the devotion to Basque culture of Pat and Eloise Bieter. The City of Boise was prepared to appropriate \$28,000 to beautify Grove Street. Meetings were held to discuss the public art project and at a Basque block meeting of business owners the subject of redesigning the streetscape arose. The Capitol City Development Corporation (CCDC) pledged funding to conduct a study and produce a plan for a streetscape renovation. Numerous meetings occurred with architects and property owners to determine the future look of the street and an agreed upon presentation was made to the Ada County Highway District in May 1999. Photographs of Basque Country streetscapes taken by Marianne Uberuaga Schaffeld aided in envisioning the possibilities for the Basque Block.

At the same time, the warehouse building across Grove Street from the BMCC was vacated by July 1999 for renovation and remodeling as the BardeNay Restaurant

& Distillery and Saffron-Grove Street Place. The CCDC pledged \$100,000 for the street renovation, and soon after civil engineering surveys were conducted. In August, the property owners agreed to provide their proportionate share of expenses with \$100,000. In a span of less than eight months, the city government, Grove Street businesses, and the Basque community had united to produce a new streetscape plan, securing over \$200,000 for its completion, and had finalized the details of a call for proposals for the public art on the same street.

Thirteen artists submitted proposals for the Basque Block public art and the finalist was selected in mid-December. Ward Hooper's entryway sculpture "Laiak" would create a lasting memorial to Pat and Eloise Bieter and welcome visitors to the Basque Block. In 2000, the light turned green. The CCDC committed \$117,522 to construction costs for the project. The businesses maintained their \$100,000 pledge. The City of Boise put out another \$100,000, and the Ada County Highway District paid \$50,000. On May 20, 2000, the removal of old pavement and asphalt commenced and the countdown to completion before Jaialdi at the end of July was nerve-wracking.

The Grove Street streetscape and public art projects in front of the Euzkaldunak Basque Center, the boarding house, the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, the Anduiza frontón and offices, and the Bar Gernika combined the desires of the businesses, the City, and the Basque community. It was landscaped with red and green flowers; red and green colored cement was poured in the shape of *lauburus*. Under Ed Groff's direction, twelve granite stones were installed with the engraved surnames of Basques from the Treasure Valley area, four with the lyrics to Basque songs, and six with coats-of arms of the home country provinces. The \$16,000 granite stone project was paid in full by individual donations. Twenty-eight trees were planted and resting benches installed to complete the beautification of the sidewalk zones.

Another public art piece named "The Herder", by Jerry Snodgrass, was not selected by the city, but was so popular that it is expected to be installed at the opposite end of the Basque Block near the corner of the Basque Center. The life-size bronze representation of a male shepherd has \$6000 backing from memorials to the Bieters and the remaining \$22,000 will come from other memorials and private donations. The Basque Block is closed to automobile traffic for outdoor Basque and other civic celebrations, but regularly opened to one-way traffic. This is another example of Basques from Boise volunteering together to accomplish a community goal that benefits the city of Boise, and also educates the larger community of non-Basques. They have reached out to the local businesses and governmental agencies to work together to promote the city's awareness of Basque ethnicity. However, according to Mayor Brent Coles, these accomplishments were a direct result of the leadership and persistence of Patty Miller and the volunteers of the Basque community.

Laiak sculpture on the Basque Block 2000. Photo by Patty A. Miller. Courtesy of Basque Museum and Cultural Center.



By the beginning of the new millennium, the use of the Cultural Center for various functions was at an all time high and the Jaialdi celebration of July meant several thousands of visitors within a seven-day period would be walking Grove Street. A rush to finish the streetscape proved successful, with completion in July 2000. The sixteen feet tall gateway markers welcome visitors from Capitol Boulevard while representing the *laiak*, a soil-turning tool used in farming in the Basque Country. The artist, Ward Hooper, adorned each *laia* with seven metal ribbons representing the seven provinces and a single oak leaf symbolizing the Tree of Gernika. The title plaque includes a photograph by Eulalia Abaitua, which illustrates women poised and ready for work. It reads, “LAIAK”, and the inscription, “In loving memory of Pat and Eloise Bieter and all who have sown a love of the Basque culture to be reaped for generations”.

Artists Noel Weber, Bill Hueg, and a team of muralists from across the United States, known as the “Letterheads”, designed an impressive outdoor mural and attached it on the side of the frontón wall behind the Gernika Basque Pub & Eatery. The enormous forty-eight by eight feet display includes representations of José Luis Arrieta weightlifting, Juanita Hormaechea, Jimmy Jausoro with accordion, the Tree of Gernika, Saint John’s Cathedral, a scene from Picasso’s “Guernica”, and a flock of

sheep. It was completed in a three-day marathon and installed July 16, with its own inauguration and unveiling.

The Jaialdi International Basque Festival events introduced thousands to the new look of the Basque Block with the official opening on Friday, July 28, 2000. Mayor Brent Coles and the Basque Government Minister of Culture, Mari Karmen Garmendia Lasa, added their remarks to others' as almost one thousand people stood in the midday heat. Celebrating and giving thanks for the lives of Pat and Eloise Bieter, the Mayor credited Patty Miller and the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, the Euzkaldunak, Inc., business owners, and Boise City for developing the vision of the Basque Block. The street was officially dedicated and then blessed by the Auxiliary Bishop of Bilbao, Karmelo Etxenagusia. Other events at the BMCC that week included a special book signing by Mark and John Bieter of their work, "An Enduring Legacy: The Story of the Basques in Idaho". Numerous interviewees and the administration of Helen Berria, Mary K. Jones Aucutt, and the BMCC assisted this ten-year project.



Painted mural on the outer wall of the Anduiza Fronton. 2000. Photo by Patty A. Miller. Courtesy of Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

Mike Urquidi, 2001 President of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., remembers Jaialdi 2000 and the streetscape changes with wonder. “When you look at how fast everything developed and how many different people were involved, it’s just amazing how beautifully it all turned out”. The finished streetscape and Basque Block is indeed an amazing accomplishment and itself a monument to cooperation and collaboration. Dan Ansotegui remarked that open communications and understanding are necessary to mutual benefit for all the Basque Block merchants and property owners. Although perhaps with the passing of years the reverence for it may dissipate, there are still many who will not drive on that section of Grove Street. They drive around several blocks of one-way streets to get to their destinations but refuse to drive over the red and green lauburus out of respect for what they represent. “This is not just any street. This is *our* street”, said Anita Jausoro.

In the following months of recuperation after street construction and Jaialdi 2000, activities continued with additional authors spending time with a BMCC audience describing their works. Chris Echeverria Bender released her book of fiction “Challenge the Wind”, about a young Basque explorer who set sail with Christopher Columbus in 1492. His experiences in Lekeitio and the traditions of whaling in oral histories handed down in his family become invaluable information on the voyage. Internationally re-known author Mark Kurlansky presented his “The Basque History of the World” to an eager audience at his lecture and book signing in March 2001. His writing blends historical narrative with personal stories, folklore, and anecdotes about the Basque people and the Basque Country. He shared his passion for the Basque people while discussing the contradiction of Europe’s oldest people never having established a political state. Audience members asked numerous questions and the discussion could have continued for hours. It was obvious that the Boise community is interested in Basque topics and supports intellectual discussions about current events in the homeland.

INTERNS

In the 1990s, the BMCC and Boise State University (BSU) cooperated to create a collaborative program for interns from the History Department to work on a project that would benefit the BMCC while the student would simultaneously earn university credits for their finished work. Several students worked on the newsletter, others worked on slide shows, the gift shop, or the library. Jeffrey D. Johns, a history major at Boise State University developed an exhibit renovation and expansion project, and helped write several successful large grants. He was later hired permanently as the BMCC Curator in 2002. Stephanie Itza, an Anthropology student from BSU, began the cleaning, accessioning, and storage process for the Basque Music Archives. Joe and Odile Relk, Technical Communication graduate students from BSU, designed the Gift

Shop's mail order catalogue and a promotional brochure. Katrina Aldape Lemmon, also from BSU, worked in the Gift Shop.

Roy and Miren Azaola Eiguren, and Pete and Freda Cenarrusa joined forces in March 2001 to create the Cenarrusa Eiguren Endowment at the University of Idaho. Each family pledged a gift of \$250,000 in memory of the Cenarrusas' son, Joe, and in memory of Roy's brother, Al, and his parents, Joe and Aurora. The endowment beneficiaries include the Policy Analysis Center for Western Public Lands in the College of Agriculture, the College of Law and a special stipend to fund a student to work at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center each year. Their generosity creates an opportunity each year for a student to experience working in a variety of programs and extending their skills at the BMCC. It adds another full-time assistant to the staff for their myriad of responsibilities and furthers Basque studies in Idaho.

FUNDRAISING AND GRANTS

Because the BMCC has a special 501(c) (3) non-profit organization tax status with the federal government Internal Revenue Code of 1954, donations may be made with tax benefits to the donor. Each donation can be subtracted from the donor's taxable income. This also enables the BMCC to qualify to receive grants and donations without paying any sort of an income tax on these monies. In 1990, a major fundraising drive was undertaken by the Board of Directors, led by Adelia Garro Simplot and assisted by Richard Hormaechea, to raise \$100,000. This money was matched by a \$100,000 donation by J.R. Simplot. Generous donors included the Albertson's Incorporation, Joe Albertson, John and Ruby Ysursa Basabe, Harry Bettis, Dan Bilbao, First Security Bank, Richard Hormaechea, and J.L. Scott. By the fall of 1991 contributions had reached \$91,500 and eventually donations passed the \$100,000 mark and J.R. Simplot fulfilled his promise to match that amount.

Wine and cheese tastings were usual fundraisers enjoyed by members and non-members alike in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The October 2000 "WineFest" wine tasting and silent auction netted nearly \$10,000 and the 2001 event, though held just a few days after the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York, was an overwhelming success raising another \$16,000 and breaking all records for attendance. Chairperson Christy Echevarria reported that over 500 people attended the outdoor "Wine and Art Fest", sampling 100 different selections from sixteen wineries. The fine wines, fantastic foods, and silent auction combined for a memorable event.

Josephine (Jo) Lecona Miller voluntarily worked in the 1990s to organize a Memorials Committee and over the years the BMCC has received thousands of dollars in donations made in memory of deceased family members and friends.

Depending on how many persons passed away that year and how well known each was, the amount of money received could be substantial. As more and more people became aware of the possibility or the family request to donate money to the Museum rather than send flowers to a funeral service, funds have allowed the BMCC to improve facilities and Basque educational services to the community. For example donations have increased over the years from 1996- \$2,207; to 1997- \$4,256; in 1998 \$8,843; in 1999- \$25,412; in 2000 \$14,944 and in 2001- \$18,321. The family members of the deceased person may have a specific item they would like to see purchased, for example, they may ask to have monies given to the *ikastola* Basque language school, or for a certain art project for the streetscape. If the family members do not have any specific project they prefer, the Museum Board then designates these monies. These funds have been utilized to purchase a digital camera for photographing interviewees of the oral history project and for historical documents; they have funded landscaping for the Grove Street streetscape, they have been utilized for frontón clean-up, painting, and maintenance costs. They have covered the costs of a kitchen remodel, a copy machine, planters for flowerbeds, and a bronze sculpture of “The Herder” to be placed on the Basque Block.

The BMCC has been very fortunate to receive many special grants from various philanthropic and public institutions and they have been a crucial factor in the success of the institution. Grants from the Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation, Idaho Commission on the Arts, Government of the Basque Autonomous Community, US Bancorp, Idaho Historical Society, Idaho Heritage Trust, Kathryn Albertson Foundation, Idaho Travel Council, FUNDSY 2000, Hewlett Packard, Idaho Power, and the Troxell Fund have each been responsible for individual projects, or for building restoration and renovation. Between the years 1991-2001, over \$400,000 worth of grant money has been awarded to the Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

In 1998, the BMCC was selected as a future recipient of \$105,000 from the FUNDSY 2000 project. This Boise community based effort emerges every two years to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for non-profit organizations. Local businesses donate goods and services and enough money for a chairperson’s salary. The mission remains to help non-profit groups find money to improve their structures. In 1998, the Basque Museum and Cultural Center was selected to be the 2000 recipient and these funds will help to cover the costs of various improvements to the exhibits and the actual buildings.

Jeffrey Johns was hired in 2002 as the first professional Curator for the Basque Museum and Cultural Center thanks to a generous grant from the Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation and donations from Museum members and patrons. His duties include preparing a collections management policy; inventory of collections; exhibits and expansion of exhibits plans; and creating a preservation plan for the historic buildings and plans for safeguarding and utilizing the BMCC collections of music, photographs, oral histories, and scrapbooks.

The Basque Museum and Cultural Center can also be rented by businesses and civic groups for their own events and this helps the institution earn money and service the Boise area for social functions. Many anniversary dinners, private parties, and funeral and rosary receptions are held at the Cultural Center's reception area.

CONCLUSIONS

When one enters the Basque Museum and Cultural Center today, it is likely that the voice of Joe Eiguren can be heard as visitors listen to the introductory videotape written by son Roy Eiguren, and produced by Brad Larrondo and Diane Tullis. Joe provided the heart and soul of early efforts to develop the BMCC. Black and white photographs line the walls as a segment of the Begonia Pecharroman "Inner Strength" exhibit on Basque emigrant women, and one can imagine the sacrifices and perseverance read in the faces of our women such as Francisca Hormaechea Lejardi, Matilde Maruri Lasuen, Belen Gabiola Arbulu, and Justa Bilbao Yturri. The BMCC's mission "to preserve, to perpetuate, and to promote awareness of Basque history and culture through education and social activities for present and future generations" is being completed through daily programs of vigorous schedules.

One aspect of the success of the BMCC is absolutely certain according to Gift Shop manager Christy Echevarria, "There is no way this institution could function at the level it does without the numerous people who volunteer their time and donate their money to our ongoing projects. This Cultural Center goes forward because of its volunteers who do everything from stuffing envelopes and cleaning restrooms to gardening or setting up outdoor exhibit tents and calling businesses to donate products and services for fundraisers". Louie Arrizabala and Josephine Miller are two of these invaluable people. Like all the Basque ethnic organizations in this area, the Basque Museum and Cultural Center is a non-profit organization. However, it differs in that it encourages memberships from the wider community of those who are not ancestrally Basque. "I've been adopted", says volunteer Muriel (Mia) Fereday. "I love the Basque culture and traditions and my family adores the Basque people". The Basque people also love the Russ and Mia Fereday family and thank them for their enthusiasm, countless hours of volunteerism, and financial support. "Patty always has something for me to do and I know that my volunteering is meaningful", remarked Coro Gil Goitiandia. These assistants aided the more than 325 separate activities held at the BMCC in 2001.

The organization that began as the Basque Cultural Center of Idaho, Inc., changed its name officially on May 24, 1996 to the Basque Museum & Cultural Center, Inc. Though its name has changed, the names of the people involved with this dream and the goals of the institution itself have remained the same and many more

have been added. The Museums of Boise Idaho brochure states, “The Basque Museum and Cultural Center interprets the history of the Basques in Idaho and their old-world origins”. Indeed it does. On October 7, 1995, the Society of Basque Studies in America honored Adelia Garro Simplot as Founder and Chair of the Basque Museum and Cultural Center at a dinner reception at the Red Lion Riverside in Boise. She was selected among Basques of the world for induction into the Society’s Basque Hall of Fame. The applause and cheers from the audience demonstrated gratitude and respect for a woman who has realized her passion. “Adelia simply does not accept no as an answer when she has made up her mind to accomplish something”, said Patty Miller. This author would like to add that neither does Patty Miller. This dynamic marriage of leadership, energy, and devotion to advancing Basque causes has forever transformed the Boise community. Those interested in Basque issues have a fountain of information and activity at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center. For those not yet aware of Basque ethnicity, Adelia, Patty, and the Board of Directors are most likely concocting a grand scheme right now to ensnare their interests.

Feats and

(12)

of Strength Endurance

Traditional athletic competitions in the Basque Country tend to pertain to what are categorized as agricultural or rural sports. Several have to do with weight lifting, pulling, or carrying. In the past, competition tended to revolve around the work of everyday life either on land by farmers, or at sea by the fishermen. Contests are representations of the historical Basque way of life and are very popular at town fiestas. Most of the Basque coastal towns hold rowing regatta races, an event that Boise Basques have never tried to duplicate in any nearby lakes or rivers. However, according to John Zabala, “Hey, there’s always a first time for everything. Maybe it could be a part of the Boise River Festival!” Other demonstrations of strength, endurance, and finesse are more easily portable and reproducible, relatively speaking. And Basques are not only interested in, and participate in, traditional “Basque sports”. For example: most Basques at the Basque Center today have no idea how important boxing was to Boise Basque history.

BETTER FIGHTS INCORPORATED

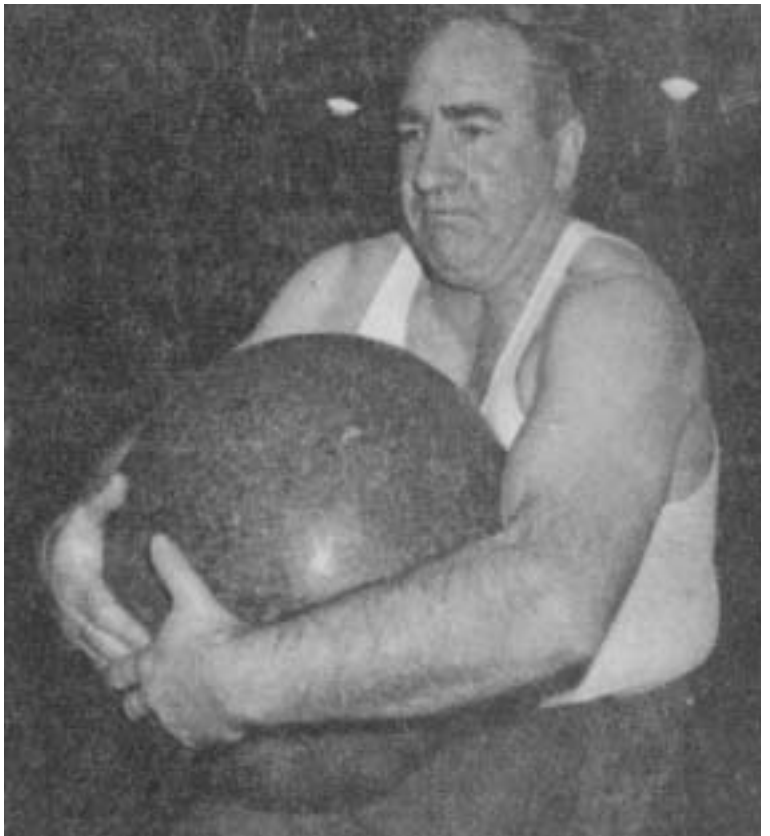
The Boise Euzkaldunak Incorporated contributed to the promotion of professional boxing in Boise from the 1950s to the early 1970s. In 1954, John Bastida, Zenon Ysaguirre, and Teles Hormaechea each donated \$1000 of their own money to contract Vicente Echeverria to come to Boise from the Basque Country and box for sport entertainment. Vicente Echeverria was the welter-weight champion of all of Spain and was highly rated in Europe as well. His matches in Boise were a highlight for the Basques in the standing room only crowds at the Fairgrounds. Al Berro was hired to manage his fights. At the time, Tex Hager was the only boxing promoter in Boise, with his matches sponsored under the franchise of the Disabled American Veterans. The Euzkaldunak, Inc. Board of Directors approved plans for seeking a license, and under the name “Better Fights Incorporated”, sponsored monthly boxing matches in Boise. They were held at the old Ada County Fairgrounds on Fairview Avenue. John Bastida filed a formal application for a license with the Idaho State Athletic Commission in August 1954. He remembers, “The early years resulted in loads of work and responsibility, but little profit in beer and popcorn sales. One night, we had fifty-five cases of beer sold and made five bucks profit. You see we had a little in-house drinking going on. So Joe Aldape and Franny Boyd took over and gave each seller an apron with thirty dollars in change and kept track of how many bottles each one sold. The change had to be right at the end of the night. That solved that problem right away”. The Euzkaldunak paid thirty-five cents per bottle of beer and sold them for seventy-five cents, with all the profits going to the Basque Center. During the 1960s and early 1970s, an average of ten thousand dollars of profit were made in the beer sales annually.

Betting on the fights was illegal but several pool halls in Boise, such as “Snowball’s”, displayed blackboards that relayed individual bet information. General admission was \$2.00 and ringside was \$3.00 for the spectators who came to see the fights from as far away as Elko, Nevada. Although John Bastida, Zenon Ysaguirre, and Teles Hormaechea had donated their own personal funds to establish the Better Fights Incorporated, these profits went directly to the Basque Center and paid for building renovations, paint, and general maintenance.

Interest in boxing began to wane in the early 1970s when finding local talent became quite difficult. Boxers who were indeed quality athletes usually left the Treasure Valley looking for opportunities in Nevada and California, and bigger cities in the east. “It became more and more difficult for us to get a match contracted that people would pay money to come and see. We just ran out of boxers. Al Berro was the only one left promoting boxing in Boise and we just ran out of fighters willing to box”, explained John Bastida. Better Fights Incorporated ended its promotion of professional boxing in Boise in 1974, and a chapter of the Boise Euzkaldunak Incorporated closed.

Benito Goitiandia lifts the granite ball in a sporting exhibition during the San Ignacio Festival of 1977.

Photo courtesy of the Idaho Statesman.



WEIGHTLIFTING, WEIGHT CARRYING, AND WEIGHT PULLING

Weightlifting, or *Arrijasoketa*, in Basque homeland traditional culture, includes cylinder shaped stones, cubes, and granite balls that are lifted from the ground, up the legs, and hoisted to the shoulders and neck. The cylinder has two indentations, which allow for a handgrip to aid in lifting and swinging it over the shoulder, and then dropping it back to a mat on the ground in front of the weightlifter. From the 1980s to the present, Iñaki Perurena Garciarena, José Antonio “Zelai” Gizazola, Agustín Ostolasa, and Juan José “Goenatxo” Unanue are a few of the professionals who have traveled to the United States from *Euskal Herria* and exhibited their strengths in Boise. “Zelai” holds the world record of seventy-five lifts of a 125-kilo cylinder in just ten minutes. Boise area competitors have included José Ignacio “Iñaki” Mendiola, Joe “Patxi” Amuchastegui, Santi Basterrechea, Benito Goitiandia, José Luis Arrieta, Veleró “Gitano” Etchepare, José “Joe” Urquidi, and Juan Barrenechea. Officials were Anastasio Urza and John Bastida.

Weight lifting traditions are more prominent in Boise than in other United States Basque communities. Thanks to John Bastida, who was responsible for piloting and financing flights for weightlifters in the 1970s and 1980s such as Benito Goitiandia,



1990 Jaialdi Festival cube lifting competition. Photo by Gloria Totoricagüena.

José Luis Arrieta, and Iñaki Mendiola and others, Basque festivals around the American west were also able to witness and promote Basque style weight lifting, which heightened an awareness of this tradition.

In a weightlifting exhibition at the fronton in March 1976, José Luis Arrieta, a non-professional living in Boise, lifted a 255-pound cylinder twenty times in two minutes, and there was hardly any competition. Today, there is apprehension about the continuation of this sport because no locals have stepped forward to attempt the strenuous demands. When asked about trying to lift a lighter stone, Aitor Amuchastegui, an assistant to the actual lifters declared, “Are you crazy? Who is willing to risk breaking their back doing that? You have to have strength, stamina, and much skill. You have to know how to do it correctly or you’ll surely hurt yourself. These guys are all professionals now”.

Cubes range in weight from 250 to 500 pounds and are also lifted to the shoulders and around the neck as many times as possible in a certain time limit. One Basque immigrant known only as “Amoto”, gave exhibitions of weightlifting with the cube in the 1940s and 1950s. Santi Basterrechea from the Sun Valley area also competed in the cube lifting in the late 1950s and 1960s. The cube that is Boise’s own weighs 280 pounds. The granite ball competition is particularly tricky because it can



*José Ramón Legarreta
carrying the txingak during
the San Ignacio picnic
competition 1980.*

Photo by Dolores Totorica.
Courtesy Mari Carmen
Egurrola Totorica Collection.

become slippery from perspiration. The athletes lift the ball from a floor mat to their torsos and then shoulders, and with that 225-300 pound ball, encircle their necks as many times as possible within the time limit.

Brothers-in-law José Mari Artiach and Lino Zabala, Rich Urresti, and Euzkaldunak, Inc. Charter Member John Bastida have supported Basque sports in the Boise community for decades. They all agreed, “These young men are mostly professionals now with corporate sponsorships and athletic trainers. For someone from Boise to lift seriously a few times a year and try to compete would be impossible. Maybe if we had lighter weights the kids could practice just for exhibition”. At a weightlifting exhibition in 1976, there was an option for competitors to lift three 100 pound sacks filled with sand. Perhaps if they were allowed to lift just one or two, more of the younger Basques would participate.

Txingak are weights that are carried, one 105 pound weight with a handle in each hand, and the object of the competition is to walk and carry the weights as far as possible without allowing them to slip through one’s fingers and drop to the ground. Two posts are stuck into the ground approximately 15 to 20 yards apart. The contestant picks up the weights and begins to walk to the opposite post, circling it and returning, and repeating this without stopping for as long as he can hold on to the

weights. Basque picnics since the 1940s have sponsored competitions of *txingak* carrying. John Bastida recollects, “I remember John Uberuaga was particularly good in the late 40s and then in the 50s”. José Ramón Legarreta, Moises Oleaga, Dave Eiguren, Robert Larrinaga, Joe “Patxi” Amuchastegui, Aitor Amuchastegui, David Goitiandia, Mike Moad, Don Mendiola, and Dan “Butch” Schaffeld were each participants that thrilled summer picnic crowds with the *txingak* carrying competitions.

Stone dragging, or *proba*, competitions include those stones pulled by oxen, *Idi Proba*, and those pulled by humans, *Gizon Proba*. The Boise Basque Center has such a *Gizon Proba* stone weighing 1,550 pounds that men have pulled by themselves. Individual participants are each given ten minutes to pull the rock as far as they can. In the 1970s and 1980s these competitions were held on the sidewalk in front of the Basque Center as a part of the Aberri Eguna and San Ignacio celebrations. Jose Luis Arrieta, Dave Eiguren, Benito Goitiandia, Lino Zabala, Miguel Aizpitarte, José Telleria, and Iñaki Mendiola were the brave participants. Today the stone rests inside the



José Luis Arrieta pulling the probak stone 1974. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

fronton building. Children play on it and jump from its top, but none have seen anyone from Boise pull it for years. Julian Lete and Steve Mendive joked about the *probak*. “When you think of working out to be healthy and getting in shape, you don’t normally think of going out and pulling a 1,550 pound block of cement. That’s what you do if you’re trying to give yourself a heart attack. Only Basques would ever think of such a competition”.

These competitions revolving around weights reflect the nature of historic competitions between neighbors who would have been gathering large and heavy rocks for home construction, or removing stones in order to plow a field, or build a road. “We have to remind today’s audiences that these sports have historical meaning besides their cultural showmanship”, commented Mark Guerry.

WOODCHOPPERS

Log cutters, or *aizkolariak*, race to chop through five separate tree trunks and the two man team finishing first is declared the winner. Individual choppers also compete against each other, cutting into halves, from three to seven logs. The San Ignacio Basque picnic, held the last weekend of July, had woodchoppers as a part of the afternoon entertainment during the 1950s through 1970s. Loggers often came from Elko to give exhibitions to the Boise crowds. Locals Joaquin Arana and Joe Lete represented the Boise Valley against the Elko teams, though none were professional loggers. The preparation for the exhibitions was lengthy. Juan Hormaechea, Teles Hormaechea, Tom Berriz, Tom Bilbao, Angel Uriarte, and John Bastida made several trips to the Hailey, Idaho area to select the best logs. Tom Berriz and Angel “Mañaria” Uriarte were professional loggers with logging chainsaws and they would cut the trees down. But then it was left to the others to measure the correct sizes and lengths and “skin” the logs by peeling the outer layer with a hand axe. John Bastida described the scene, “After we selected and cut down the trees, we had to make sure they were measured and were the same diameter. We’d use hand axes to peel off the outer layers of the trunk and then we had to build the cradles that would hold the logs steady and perfectly flat to the ground. It would be dangerous for the woodchoppers and for the audience if it wasn’t just right. Oh, that was a lot of work! And these guys would step right up and just chop right through them in a matter in a few minutes!”

The crowds have always enjoyed this competition. Though dangerous, the flying chips were an exciting aspect of the sport, and over the years hundreds of children and adults collected pieces of wood on which they asked for the autograph of the *aizkolari*. The yearly San Ignacio picnic no longer has competitors who are willing, or able, to exhibit their logging expertise. The exhibitions now are seen only once every five years during the Jaialdi International Basque Cultural Festival celebration, and these *aizkolariak* are brought from the Basque Country and are not local Basques.



Wood choppers from the Basque Country at the Jaialdi Festival 1990. Photo by Gloria Totoricagüena.

Angel Arrospide Aurkia, Donato Larretxea Lizardi, Florencio Nazabel Leiza, and José Mari Mendizabal have performed in Boise. “They are the best of the seven provinces, and you are going to see quite a show”, commented José Mari Artiach. The audiences are thrilled with the sound of the axe slicing the air before hitting the solid tree trunk. Now we will also remember to thank those who have worked so hard to prepare the logs for the exhibition.

Soka-Tira, or tug-of-war, seems to be an international concept and one enjoyed by children and adults. The summer Basque picnic includes tug-of-wars within various age groups, competitions between families, and between groups of men. The winning team’s prize over the years could be anything from \$100.00 cash to a twenty-four pack of Coca Cola. Euzkaldunak, Inc. President Mike Urquidi helped organize the picnic games in 2001 and laughed about how the Basque picnic in July has not changed for decades. “Our children are competing in the same *soka-tira* that we did, and that our parents did. It might even be the same rope”.

Every year at the Boise San Ignacio picnic celebration on the last weekend of July, there are competitions of *txinga*, and *soka-tira*, though not weight lifting or wood chopping anymore. It has been difficult to find replacements for first generation weight lifters and woodchoppers. Basque Government grants have paid for

exhibitions by sportsmen from *Euskal Herria*, and for many festival attendees these unique agricultural sports exhibitions are the highlight of the festival. The Mutriku Soka-tira Taldea, a rural sports exhibition team of almost twenty men, plus three weight lifters and three woodchoppers, was brought from the Basque Country to provide this aspect of the Jaialdi 2000 festival. This ritual of competitive sport symbolizes another variable in a collective past for Basques and serves as an integral part of the diaspora festival.

PELOTA

There is only one remaining fronton of the four that were built in Boise. The Anduiza court was originally constructed in 1914-15 as a part of a Basque boarding house for shepherders. However, this indoor fronton is home for approximately twenty *pala*, similar to paddleball, and *pelota*, or handball, players that are keeping their love of Basque sport alive. They hold regular fundraisers to help pay for maintenance and expenses. However, many are worried about the continuance of the sport. Despite the encouragement from the crowds, the physical hardship of playing by the Basque rules of no hand protection discourages younger *pelota* players from learning when they see the mature players' numb and swollen fingers and hands. During the Jaialdi 2000 Festival, the NABO Championships were held in Boise for men's and women's *pala* and *pelota*. The small fronton has very limited space for spectators, but the hundreds who were able to squeeze in for a match invigorated the players and the rivalries between Basque Centers.

John Anduiza explained that in the 1920s through 1940s, there were daily matches of *pelota* at his parents' boarding house. Some boarders played for fun, but others were quite serious and trained regularly for important matches. "*Pelota* was popular entertainment for boarders and some games could reach a pot of one hundred dollars". That is no exaggeration because it was John Anduiza who held the money. John Bastida remembers watching matches in which Henry Alegria played. "Oh, they were good all right. Lots of times a new guy made it to town and thought he could whip these *amerikanuak*. They thought because we were here in Boise that we'd be no good you see. An awful lot of them learned their lessons right there at Anduiza's". Before Anduiza's they played at the Iberia Hotel or at Domingo Zabala's fronton, the first built in Boise, both in 1910. Because *pelota* was so popular, it drew crowds and also drew customers. The Star Rooming House also added a fronton in 1911. The complete enclosure of the Anduiza fronton made it the only indoor fronton in the western United States until the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center fronton was built in 1982.

The frontons fell out of use as the years passed and Basque immigration slowed to a trickle. One by one, the boarding houses closed and the Anduiza boarding house



and fronton was closed in 1943 and sold to the Briggs Engineering firm, who utilized the fronton space for equipment storage. In 1972, the Idaho Basque Studies Center and Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak: Idaho Friends of the Basques reached an agreement with the Briggs family allowing the Basques to once again utilize the fronton as a handball court. But the Basque volunteer group had to do all the cleaning and preparing to renovate the fronton to a usable court. "Oh, you just can't imagine what we hauled out of there", said Miren Rementeria Artiach. "I know we filled Lino's pick-up several times with trash for the dump". The volunteers did re-roof, clean, and paint the fronton to prepare for their first pelota practices, classes, matches, and the eventual tournament in June 1972. Once again, Boise's handball players would have a venue.

At the 1976 *pelota* tournament sponsored by Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak and Anaiak Danok (another group of people interested in maintaining Basque culture and current events), the champions were Juan Egaña and P.M. Odiaga, with second place going to José Careaga and Lino Zabala with the score 22-21. Judges were José Maguregui and José Luis Guerricabeitia, and organizers were Segundo Nachiondo and Justo Sarria. Almost 100 people attended and the proceeds from the spectators' fees were donated to charities in the Boise area. At the Aberri Eguna Tournament at Easter, Juan Egaña and Jaime Ibarra played Lino Zabala and José Mari Artiach.



*1977 Anaiak Danok Tournament
pelotarís at the Anduiza Fronton.*

Photo by Paul Acorda. Juanita
Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection.
Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

In 1982, players included Joseba and Manuel Uriarte, Juan Egaña, Jesus Careaga, Benito Goitiandia (Handball Chairman), Lino Zabala, José Luis Arrieta, Antonio Ibarra, Jaime Ibarra, and José Mari Artiach. They were playing regular schedules of games open to the public and *pelota* was again often enjoyed in Boise. For the San Ignacio handball games, Benito Goitiandia and sons David and Ramon provided cleaning and preparation. However, spectators noted that not many younger people were attempting to play, and that all of these players were immigrants themselves. There were no United States born Basques playing in competitions. Dave Eiguren decided to encourage players by inviting them to play racquetball. In the 1980s the Euzkaldunak newsletter invited racquetball players to meet at the fronton to play. “Not many wanted to play handball and hurt their hands, but they were meeting to play paddleball and racquetball”. In 1984, the Boise Pala Association was formed and held their first Boise City Pala Goma Tournament with four teams from Boise and one from Salt Lake City. Jerry Aldape, John Aldape Jr. and Lino Zabala helped organize a pala league for practice and play during the weeknights.

At the end of the 1980s, the Briggs family decided to stop their open use policy of their fronton. Keys were missing frequently and once the back door had been left open for an entire weekend. They were also worried about liability for accidents that

might occur during a practice or public match and they closed the fronton to the Basque community.

In 1991 and 1992 the Euzkaldunak, Inc. formed a special committee of Directors, Diana Echeverria, Toni Berria, and Gloria Totoricagüena, with Bradley Shelden as Treasurer, Joe Aldape as Pledge Chairman, and Chris Bieter and Patty Miller as Fundraising Chairpersons, with the goal of purchasing the old Anduiza Hotel and Fronton. The members of the Euzkaldunak, Inc. voted to attempt an aggressive pledge campaign with a series of fundraising events to secure \$255,000 by June of 1992. Donors could potentially give more money because they could pay over the years, and the Euzkaldunak would not incur any liabilities for reimbursement. The hope was for continued commitments of donations over a period of four years. Contribution suggestions included levels from “*Abeslari*”, or Singer, \$1-499, to “*Txapeldun*”, or Champion, of more than \$10,000. The Basque Center planned to utilize the fronton for Basque sports and to rent out the former herders’ bedrooms as office space, and/or use them as classrooms, or maintain them as bedrooms for visitors from the Basque Country as they had originally been used. A restored functioning boarding house for students from the Basque Country was another possibility. Though some members of the Euzkaldunak suggested selling bonds as had been done to build the Basque Center, the bonds would have to be paid back, and there were numerous people willing to donate their pledges instead. Therefore, the committee decided to try the pledges as a means of raising the money.

The sales price from the Briggs was \$255,000 and therefore this amount was the immediate goal. The Basque Center was willing to put down \$50,000 and another \$205,000 would have to be raised. On October 5, 1991 the specifics of the plan were presented to the membership at a meeting at the Basque Center, which they approved after discussion and debate. Telemarketing strategies were utilized with “phone calling nights” asking for pledges. Volunteers met and telephoned members and businesses asking for a four-year pledge to donate funds for the Anduiza purchase. There was an amazingly positive response. Two hundred and thirty-one people pledged to donate funds equaling \$111,595.00. However, even with the \$50,000.00 to be given by the Basque Center, this was not enough to buy the building. After months of negotiations and fundraisers, the Briggs then also refused to allow the Euzkaldunak, Inc. to have the building inspected by its own engineers to check for problems. The lack of sufficient funding added to fear of structural damage and future costs were enough to convince the committee and the membership of the Euzkaldunak to end the project and not purchase the Anduiza building, and it sat in disrepair for several more years.

Adelia Garro Simplot and Richard Hormaechea stepped forward and privately purchased the Anduiza Fronton building from Carl Briggs in 1993. The new owners encouraged players to utilize the *frontón* for *pelota* and *pala* practice and games, and

interested players formed the Fronton Association (F.A.) in 1993. The first Board of Directors included Chris Bieter, Dave Bieter, Cathy Clarkson, Tony Eiguren, Jeremy Malone, Mike Mansidor, and James Sangroniz, all United States born. Volunteers carried on *pala* instruction in 1994. Dave Bieter, Chris Bieter, Morrie Berriochoa, Jeremy Malone, Tony Eiguren, Lino Zabala, Jose Mari Sarasua, and James Sangroniz gave exhibitions of *pala* and *pelota* at events during the year, and sadly there were many teenagers in the audience who had never seen a live game played in Boise. In 1997, the fronton of Jordan Valley was restored and in 2001, the Mountain Home Basque Club finished renovation of their historic fronton and park. The resurgence in saving the historic buildings and frontons is significantly impressive. The problem is the lack of players and especially a vacuum of younger people interested in learning to play. The twenty or so that do continue, maintain another aspect of Basque culture that is sincerely appreciated by the entire community.

“WE ARE HAVING WHAT KIND OF TOURNAMENT?”

Is an action taken defined as a “Basque” action because it is something traditionally done in the Basque Country, or is it “Basque” because the people doing it are Basque? Is a golf tournament a “Basque thing”? When discussions began regarding the possibility of organizing a golf tournament to be hosted by the Euzkaldunak, Inc., several members did not want to put forth the effort for something that was “not Basque”. Many agreed, “Why would the Basque Center host a golf tournament? Golf is not a Basque sport”. This is representative of the on-going questions regarding Basque identity. Am I Basque because of ancestry only? Do I have to maintain a traditional Basque culture to be Basque? Can I not help to maintain a contemporary Basque culture? Jose Mari Olazabal won the Masters Golf Tournament and he is Basque. Many Basques in the Basque Country play golf, so can we not say that golf is also a Basque sport, or at least a sport that Basques play? Discussions and debates respecting these questions are a usual part of new events introduced into the Euzkaldunak calendar. The numerous questions are often reduced to the individual’s understanding of what it means to be Basque. Some define “Basqueness” in historical terms and consider actions and traditions to be Basque only if they were practiced several centuries ago in the Basque Country. In this case, the contemporary thinkers won out, and by 2002 the Euzkaldunak Incorporated Annual Golf Tournament had become one of the most popular events of the year.

In 1982, Manuel Aburusa began discussing with his co-worker, Jerry Aldape, the possibility of establishing a golf tournament for the Basque community. He wanted to create an event that would be enjoyed by Basques and those married to Basques, who would participate in a day of golfing fun. According to Jerry Aldape, “Manuel’s

idea was to have the Euzkaldunak host a golf tournament the day before the San Ignacio Basque picnic the last weekend of July. It could be a fundraiser for the Euzkaldunak's Basque Charities Association, and it would bring in a lot of people that don't usually come around to the Basque Center". The then Euzkaldunak President, Dave Yraguen, said, "There are many Basques who are too old for the Oinkaris, do not sing, and do not play *pelota*. They don't know how to play briska or mus. So what is there to do for them? I agreed that a golf tournament would be a great way to bring in new members and create a new tradition and a new event at the Basque Center". The Board of Directors agreed and gave the go-ahead to Jerry Aldape and Manuel Aburusa to organize a golf tournament. In later years, they added the stipulation that players had to actually join the Euzkaldunak in order to play in the tournament.

The first year's tournament barely broke even as the list of players remained scarce. "We ended up with about eighty players, but that was after making numerous phone calls begging people to play. Players paid \$20.00 that covered all their green fees, drinks, food, etc. and good thing we sold the golf hats because that helped us break even". Good news travels fast and the stories of fun and laughter, great food and abundant drink spread to the next year's players. In 1983, Aburusa and Aldape had the help of Greg Goodson, Joe Bastida, and Rich Urresti, and players lists were almost full. The Saturday before the Basque picnic started with chorizos and coffee and whiskey at 7am on the golf course. "There was only one rule for this four-person scramble: 'There are NO rules'. That's it. We decided there would be no rules and to keep it as simple and as fun as possible. Sometimes we let a five-person team play if one is elderly or doesn't have much experience, but we don't have any problems with any rules. There is no reason to cheat anyway. Do you know what the winning team gets? Bota bags. They all get one bota bag. We play for the great fun we have and to be with friends and family. That's it", explained Jerry Aldape.

The 2002 roster was full and players were turned away. The 144 women and men golfers enjoyed the new eighteen-hole Falcon Crest Golf Course, owned by George Totorica. For \$50.00 they enjoy a day of golf with all the drinks and food included, and then are treated to a full sit-down dinner at the Basque Center with prizes and raffles. Rich Urresti donates and solicits prizes from area businesses, which range from expensive golf clubs and golf equipment, to weekend holidays, to ten-pound bags of chorizos. Everyone's favorite is the "door prize" which is "awarded to an individual, or a team, for a particularly bad shot or a really stupid move we may have caught them making. It's great! They have to paint the door for next year's recipients and add their names to the ongoing list on the back", laughs Leandra Parker Jayo.

Although there were initial doubts about whether or not the Basque Center should host an event that "wasn't really Basque", the majority of members tend to agree that the Euzkaldunak has to provide activities and events that are interesting for its members, and that does not necessarily mean it will include *txistus* or a folk dancer.

The golf tournament has created a different interest and many new memberships and brought into the Basque community several Basques who would not have participated in the more traditional activities of the Euzkaldunak, Inc, or of the Boise Basque Museum and Cultural Center. In the same way that in the past boxing brought many Basques together to enjoy athletic events, the Basque Golf Tournament remains the preferred participant sport among Basques in the Boise area.

Euzkaldunak

The Boise

(13)

Incorporated: Basque Center

The most numerous and most significant presence in maintaining Basque culture and identity in all of Idaho is the Euzkaldunak Incorporated, the Boise Basque Center. For more than fifty years, generations of Basques have preserved their language, cuisine, history, dance, instrumental and choral music, sport, and communications with their homeland through activities and relations of the Euzkaldunak organization. This institution has also benefited greatly from a cadre of dreamers and doers who have unselfishly dedicated themselves to the preservation of “Basqueness”. Ethnic identity in the diaspora is one that is generally practiced collectively. The social aspects to all Euzkaldunak functions facilitate meeting other Basques and maintaining the original goals of creating a social organization where Basques would gather to practice their traditions and preserve familial and friendship links among themselves. To conclude this chronicled examination of the Boise Basque community I now analyze the pioneer force that blazed the trail for Basques in the American West.

EARLY BASQUE ASSOCIATIONISM

Basque associationism in Boise was institutionally established in 1908 with the creation of *La Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos*, The Mutual Aid Society. This endeavor resulted from individual cases of Basques who could not afford their own medical expenses, had suffered disabling accidents that left them without any income or support, or from funeral expenses for herders who had no family in the Boise area to cover the costs. Prior to this organization, those who could afford to would donate money to indigent care or to special charity cases to help a friend get home to the Basque Country after an accident. Basques in Boise attempted to help pay each other's emergency costs. However, by 1908, several boarding house operators decided it might be a better idea and more efficient to establish a mutual aid society to which members would pay an initiation fee and then an annual dues in exchange for insurance that would cover medical emergencies, a stipend for a long term disability, or even pay funeral expenses when necessary. Basque immigrants united to pool their funds and create a financial safety net for themselves that was open to all Spanish and Basque males. Basque women were funded free beds if they were a "poverty case". After the flu epidemic in 1918 many more joined the mutual aid service. Associates had two affiliated doctors from Boise, Dr. Pettinger and Dr. Collister, and were provided extensive health insurance.

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John Anduiza played the drums from 1932-37 for a Basque orchestra that performed at benefit dances for those unable to afford their own healthcare. He specifically remembers that the insurance would not cover costs of any venereal diseases. In 1933, Basque women formed *La Organización Independiente Sociale* as its own separate insurance group similar to the *Socorros Mutuos*. Dr. Koelsch was the society doctor and members received a reduced rate for health care from him. *La Organización Independiente Sociale* continues in 2002 with 147 women who pay a \$15.00 annual fee and in turn receive a \$750.00 death benefit to help pay for funeral costs. This association has no social or cultural gatherings other than their annual financial business meeting, and is strictly an insurance cooperative, now with a death benefit only.

La Fraternidad Vasca Americana, the Basque American Fraternity was established for Basque men in 1928 and gave financial assistance to its members. Basque men were urged to learn English, and the Fraternity also worked to "encourage, foster and promote Americanization of its members, by aiding and assisting those who are not naturalized citizens of the United States to familiarize themselves with its constitution and laws and become citizens thereof". The American Basque Fraternity arranged social functions and organized the first Boise Basque picnic according to Laura Arguinchona. In 1930, the American Basque Fraternity Auxiliary was formed for Basque women to reach the same goals of

learning English and becoming citizens. Many women were members of both the American Basque Fraternity Auxiliary and the *Sociedad Independiente Sociale*.

The mobilization and organization of the Basques –together as Basques– was similar to other Basque communities in the United States. At this time in the first decades of the twentieth century, Basques in New York, California, and Nevada were also organized in their boarding houses, sporting events, group celebrations, and in employment networks. Basques in New York created the *Central Vasco-Americano Sociedad de Beneficencia y Recreo*, incorporating in 1913 and buying the building for their *Central Vasco Americano* at 48 Cherry Street in lower Manhattan, in 1928. Basques in California and Nevada established networks of information between the



1950s Shepherders' Ball. Photo by Roland Studio. Courtesy of John Odiaga Collection.

boarding houses for employment opportunities. These associations were the precursors to the Basque Centers, and their collective affiliations strengthened the feeling of ethnic group responsibility to care for each other. In other Basque communities around the world, the phenomenon of the Basque mutual aid society also prevailed in Mexico, Guatemala, Cuba, Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Australia, and Belgium.

In Idaho, Basques were well-known throughout the valley and in Boise the Grove Street area had gained notoriety for its enthusiastic participation in the 1934 Fort Boise Centennial Days. The Shepherders' Ball was an annual Christmas event from 1929, and summer picnics with sporting competitions, dancers, and live music began to grow in popularity. The Mode Country Club served as the site for early Basque picnics from the 1930s. Basque musicians and dancers had participated in the annual Music Week performances and parade since the 1920s, and during 1938 and 1939, the city newspaper, *Boise Capital News*, even published a weekly section on local Basque activities in English, Basque, and Spanish.

In 1941, the United States entered WWII and Basques who were not drafted organized their own civil defense regiment as a part of the volunteer reserves. The "Boise Company, Ada County Volunteers" was an all-Basque unit who met to train for civilian defense, should the theatres of war expand to the United States mainland. It was never called up for action.

INVENTING A BASQUE CLUB

The idea to establish some sort of permanent institution for Basque social functions arose at the end of the 1940s. Most Basques had moved out of the boarding houses upon marrying and starting their own families, but still needed to socialize and share their culture with other Basques. Juanita Hormaechea's dancing lessons for children in 1948 and the Music Week performances of 1949 and 1950 drew attention to the fact that the Basque population was sufficient to warrant having its own building and one unified social club. Organizers of dances had to pay rent for every event they arranged, and parents of children taking the dancing classes had to pay a fee to cover the cost of rental facilities. Teles Hormaechea, John Asumendi, John Bastida, and Tom Bicandi began meeting at each other's homes to discuss the possibilities of devising an ethnic social club. According to the first Membership Secretary and Treasurer, Rash Iglesias, John Bastida provided ample leadership and was the main instigator. The group commenced to collecting money and establishing guidelines for their association in 1949. Luis Madarieta was selected as the first President, Pete Leguineche, from Gooding, was selected as the attorney to draw up the articles of incorporation, and subsequently he went to the Idaho Secretary of State's office to ask that the legal articles be approved.

John Bastida and Rash Iglesias applied to the Internal Revenue Service for a non-profit organization status, which would be important for fundraising. “Bastida came up with the idea to sell bonds to people at 4% interest. Banks were only paying 2.5% then so it was a good deal”, said Rash Iglesias. “We got a P.O. Box 2613 and started explaining to people what we wanted to do”. They had not yet agreed on a name for this club: *Euzkaldunak*? Basque Club? Basque Center? In the end they agreed on “*Euzkaldunak*” as the official name. Rash remembers visiting one family and explaining the concept of the *Euzkaldunak* and the ten year bonds with a guaranteed 4% return to purchase the land and building. “One lady bought \$4000 worth at once with cash she had in her basement. The money was in twenty-dollar bills in her basement. She didn’t even want a receipt. She trusted me because she was Basque and I was Basque”.

Within a year, “We raised \$40,000 from the bonds. We had no bank loans, no grants, no help from anyone else. They did it themselves. We had some opposition, but it worked out okay”, explained Rash. The opposition came from boarding house operators who perceived the new Basque social center as competition. New Basque immigration of potential boarding house clients had already begun to diminish to just a few new people per year. If Basques had a clubhouse with its own bar and reception room for dances and card playing, they might stop attending functions at the boarding houses and this would end a source of revenue upon which the boarding house owners depended. There is no written record of any general community opposition, nor did any of the people interviewed for this book remember any prejudiced opposition claiming clannishness or exclusiveness against the Basques for creating their own ethnic organization. It seems the opposition originated with certain Basques themselves, and derived from economic fears of losing business customers. To date there is no empirical research demonstrating whether the opening of the Basque Center caused the final blow to the boarding houses, or if the decline of the boarding houses caused the Basques to rally around the Basque Center idea. It is also possible that there was no causal relationship whatsoever. However, historical data, informal interviews with clients, boarding house operators, and Basque Center promoters, seem to point to the explanation that as new immigration declined, the boarding houses were already in economic trouble. Second generation Basques did not necessarily feel completely comfortable going to the boarding houses, and by the 1940s there were only a handful remaining in operation. By this decade there were hundreds of Basques that attended the dances and picnics and would never have fit into a boarding house. The solution was to build their own building with a grand salon for receptions and a bar where anyone could drop by on any day and still find other Basques. The dance hall could accommodate their own larger functions and Basques would avoid paying rent to Boise’s other reception halls.

The dreamers plowed forward, encouraging membership and holding dances to raise money. Basque benefit dances at the Elks Club, Eagle’s Hall, Veterans of Foreign



Basque Center 1950. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

Wars Hall, and the Miramar were popular, as were picnics at the park. Membership to the new Euzkaldunak, Incorporated club was a \$5.00 annual fee and soon there was sufficient funding from \$200,000 in bonds sales to purchase the corner lot at 6th and Grove Streets from Hermenegilda and José Uberuaga. The Uberuagas sold the land for \$8000. The Uberuaga boarding house garden- and sometimes children's bowling alley- nourished fruit trees, lilac flowers and vegetables. Chicken coops with fresh eggs stood at the back of the lot (where the alley is today). It was the perfect downtown location near the Basque boarding houses and in the historic Basque neighborhood. By the end of 1949 there were nearly 500 registered members and the groundbreaking began with John Bastida, personally excavating with his own construction company equipment, leveling chicken coops and uprooting cherry trees. The dreamers were now doing the volunteer work.

The first phase of the Boise Basque Center was constructed in 1949, with the voluntary labor of members, and included the bar and upstairs card room only. Pancho Aldape explained, "Jay was teaching dancing and getting people excited, and more and more people came. So we decided we needed to have a membership, and started with the dancers' parents first. Then we went to the sheep camps to



José and Hermenegilda Uberuaga give the deed of property to Rash Iglesias and John Bastida for the land purchased for the Basque Center site. 1951.

Photo courtesy of the Rash Iglesias Collection.

sign up shepherders too. Got together a board with a lawyer and a banker who wrote the by-laws and thought we could sell \$300 bonds to build our own building. Each person could buy as many \$300 bonds as they wanted. Some people bought six or seven, even ten. We sold enough to buy the lot and start the construction of the building with our own bar and area for playing cards. There were even wedding receptions in the upstairs”. Several of the charter members donated their bond money to the organization and declined reimbursement. John Bastida estimates that approximately twenty-five percent of the bond buyers did not want their money back.

The Basque men worked without pay to dig, construct, and finish off the actual building, and the women initiated and implemented the fundraising. Rash Iglesias served as Treasurer and Membership Secretary from 1950-55, and he specifically praised the women for all their volunteer work and non-stop efforts at fundraisers for the Center. Once the walls were up and the building was functioning as a social center, the utilities and maintenance fees had to be paid and the fundraising never stopped. It continues to this day. He added, “People around here can thank John Bastida [President in 1951, 1952, 1957, 1984] and those women for what we have today, all of it. He was the guy. He made things happen”.

The basement dining hall and kitchen, and the ground floor dancehall and stage were completed in 1951. Bishop Edward Kelly, Monsignor Kenneth F. Rowe, Father Francisco Guerry, Father John C. Cregan, and Father Raymond J. Peplinski blessed the completed Basque Center building at 601 Grove Street in March 1952. This was the first attempt from Basques on the west coast to jointly build a collective ethnic organization that would not be privately owned, but instead collectively owned and operated according to democratic principals of electing Directors.

The first by-laws instituted a Board of Directors with a staggered three-year term; each year three different people were elected for a three-year period. This system maintained a Board of Directors, which in effect “trained” the three new people to carry-on the activities that the more experienced directors had already administered in previous years. Later in the 1980s, Rosemarie Salutregui Achabal even created notebooks of information for annual activities and events that facilitated names, businesses, and contact telephone numbers and spelled out exactly how the activities had been carried out the year before. The director in charge of that



John Bastida and the blessing of the Basque Center in 1952. Photo courtesy of James Jausoro Collection.

particular event only had to utilize the information to basically reproduce the same celebration. Serving on the board was, and remains, a “team proposition”. The elected person and their spouse, or partner, generally work equally hard.

Today, the Board of Directors of the Euzkaldunak Incorporated is composed of volunteers who are democratically elected from the membership for a two-year term. In the early 1990s it was becoming increasingly difficult to find members who were willing to commit themselves to serve for three consecutive years. The original three-year term was shortened to two years in order to increase the number of people interested in serving on the board, and since then, there has never been an election without a sufficient number of candidates. Open to all members, which includes the non-Basque spouses of those who are ancestrally Basque, there have been serious disagreements in the past regarding non-Basques serving as Directors, and still today, non-Basques cannot become members of the organization unless they are married to a Basque. Though there are people in the Boise colony who have learned the Basque language, married a Basque, and lived in the Basque Country for years, they are still categorized as “non-Basque”. For some, there exists a spectrum of “Basqueness”, and they speak of the children of certain unions as “half-Basque”, or “quarter-Basque”, and often in a hierarchical manner. Others use this terminology only to inform the listener that one of the parents is non-Basque, but place no evaluation on the category. This traditional concept of Basqueness follows ancestral paradigms and definitions of ethnicity based on biological heritage, and the majority of Boise area Basques continue to define “being Basque” strictly as those people who have Basque surnames, or were born to someone with a Basque surname. This is not the same as the majority opinion coming from the seven provinces of the homeland where Basques there define as “Basque” all those who live and work in the Basque Country, and strive to protect and preserve Basque culture and traditions.

THE FIRST DECADES

The first decade of the Basque Center focused on raising money and increasing membership in order to pay off the bonds. Petra Uberuaga Cengotita, charter member of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., remembers, “It was a great social place for immigrants to meet other Basque people here in Boise. A place to help each other. Particularly for the older generations, the Basque Center was very important. They came down often to play cards on Sunday evenings and always attended all the dinners and dances”. Juanita Hormaechea had a beautiful new wooden dance floor for her children’s dance practices and a stage from which to demonstrate. The members slowly filled an ample kitchen with appliances, cooking equipment, and dinnerware for their regular banquets.



On November 18, 1960 the Idaho Evening Statesman reported that the annual “Farmers” ball (also known as the Shepherders’ Ball) would get underway the next day at the Euzkaldunak Basque Center. Dinner was served and both dinner and dance were opened to the public. It was the night of the first performance of the newly constituted, and Euzkaldunak supported, Oinkari Basque Dancers. Their highly publicized travels and performances throughout the United States in the next years brought immeasurable attention to the Basques in Idaho. Area Basques were again thrust into the spotlight in 1963, when Elmore County Basques were featured in a Walt Disney production named, “Greta, The Misfit Greyhound”. “Greta”, a dog abandoned to the desert, is adopted into a Basque sheepcamp and attempts to become a sheepdog. John “Tacolo” Chacartegui played the principal part of the shepherd, and the movie was filmed on the Aguirre and Sons ranch at Smith Prairie north of Mountain Home. Several shepherders were also presented in the film, which was shown on KTVB television in January 1963. “We were really becoming famous and even if the depictions were a bit simplistic, people were learning about the Basques”, said Dorothy Inchausti Ansotegui.

Boise Basques continued volunteering their time and expertise for Basque Center activities throughout the 1960s, and directed their energies toward promoting



Second Board of the Euzkaldunak Incorporated 1951. Photo courtesy of Rash Iglesias Collection.

the newly formed Oinkari Basque Dancers. Euzkaldunak members fried and sold thousands of chorizo sandwiches and organized numerous dinners, dances, and other events to raise funds for Oinkari travels. Carmen Solosabal volunteered as the Membership Secretary from throughout the 1960s into the 1980s and collected the fees for new and continuing members. She had an especially difficult time collecting fees from Oinkaris, but the rule was that to join Oinkaris, the dancer had to join Euzkaldunak, or, if they were under eighteen years old, at least one of their parents would have to join the club. Carmen spent countless hours sitting at her membership table at the Basque Center dinners and also when attending Oinkari practice to make sure participants had their Euzkaldunak, Inc. cards. The difficulty of tracking teenagers seems to be constant across cultures and generations.

Briska and mus card playing tournaments were instigated and Sunday afternoons and nights found the Basque Center card room and bar area filled with tables of four, sounds of plastic chips clicking, and the odor of cigarette and cigar smoke. The San Ignacio festival celebration, the Shepherders' Ball, the Carnival Bazaar and Mortzillak Dinner, and sports competitions extended invitations to Basques to join the Center and social functions of the Basque community. According to Victoria "Vicki" Letemendi Urresti, the twentieth anniversary gala of the

Euzkaldunak Incorporated served to praise and congratulate the hundreds of members who had labored tirelessly to produce an unquestionable and extraordinary success.

THE SAN IGNACIO FESTIVAL WEEKEND

Since the 1920s, Basques had gathered for group picnics in various locations including the Mode Country Club, the Archabal ranch, and the hills near Barber, among other sites. In the 1930s, the American Basque Fraternity organized a Fourth of July picnic, which was then switched to the end of July commemorating the Basque patron saint, San Ignacio of Loyola. The San Ignacio weekend in the 1960s through early 1980s typically began with a Friday night dance at the Western Idaho Fairgrounds Pavilion on Chinden Boulevard. The Jim Jausoro Dance Band entertained the crowd from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. with an intermission performance by the Oinkari



San Ignacio Festival Picnic women's three-legged race 1947. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

Basque Dancers. The band's extensive repertoire of music included European and United States classics that middle aged and senior dancers enjoyed, as well as Basque *jotas* and *porrusaldas*, and serpentine dances for the teenagers.

Saturday afternoon crowds gathered for weightlifting and pulling on the sidewalk outside of the Basque Center. Stringent open container laws for alcoholic beverages were not strictly enforced and most spectators enjoyed several cold beers as they cheered on Prudencio "Txapel" Albizu, Benedicto Goitiandia, José Manuel Arriaga, Joe "Patxi" Amuchastegui, Iñaki Mendiola, Justo Mendiola, José Luis Arrieta, and Dave Eiguren. The San Ignacio festival of 1975 introduced the athletic competition of *probak*. Hundreds of people lined the sidewalks of the Basque Center to get a view of the 1550-pound concrete weight. Contestants were given fifteen minutes to pull the weight, by a connected metal chain, as far as they could by dragging it across the sidewalk. First Place prize was usually \$100.00, Second Place prize \$50.00 and Third Place prize \$25.000. People who had traveled to the Basque Country had seen this event at the fiestas, but the majority of the second generation Boise crowd was surprised. Mike Moad remarked, "Only Basque people could think of something as crazy as this. I can't believe they are going to pull that thing!" "They" included José Mari Arriaga, Dave Eiguren, Justo Mendiola, and José Luis Arrieta- who won the event that year by pulling the *probak* block 126 feet and 7 inches. The rules are such that the block itself weighs 1550 pounds. The contestants are weighed and for every pound that he (no woman has competed in Boise) weighs over 180 pounds, two more pounds are added on top of the block! Therefore, when Dave Eiguren weighed in at 20 pounds over the limit (he was 200 pounds) he had to pull 1590 pounds on his attempt. The new sport was so popular that they performed again that year at the Western Idaho Fairgrounds preceding the Shepherders' Ball. Only Dave Eiguren knows how the *probak* stone was moved from Grove Street into his pick-up truck and out again to get it onto the fairgrounds pavilion floor. Or perhaps he pulled it there.

The celebration of the Saint Ignatius mass was formerly held at Municipal Park at noon on the Sunday of the festival weekend in a relaxed atmosphere with the altar atop a decorated flatbed truck. Father Juan Garatea and Father Ramon Echevarria concelebrated the masses. An informal choir of current and ex-Oinkaris and other volunteers would sing with the guitars of Father Echevarria, Elizabeth Bilbao, Chris Bieter, and Patty Miller, and the accordion of Jim Jausoro. Father Echevarria, Sylvia Eiguren, and Justo Sarria sang solos. The atmosphere of green grass and shade trees of beautiful Municipal Park, children participating, and one or two newborns crying out reminded many of the importance of the togetherness of the families. "Well St. John's is a beautiful church. But I always liked the mass in the park because of the natural setting you know. It was the only outdoor mass we had and it reminds us of what God made for us. I liked seeing the kids playing and not having to keep everyone so quiet and formal", said Tomasa "Tommie" Goitiandia.

After mass, families returned to their picnic tables, much as we still do, for a feast of homemade Basque specialties. For many Basque women, Saturday night and early Sunday morning had been spent cleaning, preparing, and cooking Sunday's "picnic" meal. Albertson's potato salad in plastic containers was nowhere to be found, and neither were packaged fruit trays or cookies. Instead, the tables were covered with platters of freshly fried chicken from Mama's frying pan, fried codfish—perhaps with tomato and peppers *a la Bizkaina*—, potato tortillas with lots of olive oil and garlic, cheeses, paella with ham and *chorizo*, *croquetas*, fried pork loin, *solomo*, and various vegetable salads. "The only things from Albertson's would be the wine, soft drinks, and warm French bread", said Dave Navarro.

Starting in 1981, the Mass was changed to St. John's Cathedral and organizer Mary Bieter initiated the idea of a procession of dancers and musicians from the newly planted seedling of the Tree of Gernika at the Capitol Building to the Cathedral. NABO Delegates, dancers from four groups, and the Klika band from San Francisco (their first performance in Boise) led the colorful walk up Eighth Street to the Sunday morning Mass. Today, this Mass is celebrated with the same beginning procession, but on the Saturday evening of the festival.

THE SHEPHERDERS' BALL

The first unified regional Basque dance was held in Boise in 1929, after John Archabal convinced the two Basque men's organizations to combine their annual Christmas dances to one. No one is positive when it was officially named the "Shepherders' Ball", but the idea was always the same: an annual Christmas dance for Basques that allowed the shepherders to socialize with the ladies that they had not seen for months while on the range. Throughout the 1930s to the 1970s, the night was attended by approximately 600 Basques and was the paramount event of the year. The December 1974 Euzkaldunak Shepherders' Ball was the first one opened to the general public and the attendance hit 1000 revelers. Basil and Dorothy Bicandi Aldecoa donated a lamb for the annual lamb auction for charity, which earned \$2,205 from sixteen different bidders. The Elks Rehabilitation Children's Department, and the Breast Cancer Detection Center each received \$1,000 from the Euzkaldunak club. A non-Basque President led the Euzkaldunak Incorporated for the first time in 1974. Don Dick (married to Anita Solosabal) was elected by the Board of Directors to lead the Basque Center and its functions. Though a few members were nervous about the prospect of non-Basques running the Basque Center, those worries were soon put aside when they witnessed Don Dick's dedication and hard work for the organization. His final message to the membership showed his appreciation for their trust:

I believe that no outgoing President of Euzkaldunak has finished his term of office with better, happier memories than I. As your first non-Basque (Gringo) President, it has indeed been an honor to serve my fellow members and a pleasure

to work with such a competent Board of Directors. For three years I have served with Gloria Gamboa and Ted Totorica. The new board members elected to the three-year task will be hard pressed to equal their loyalty to the Center and hard work on the Board. I wish to thank them and my other six members for making my job a productive, exciting one. I feel the members of Euzkaldunak should be proud of their Board last year and expect many and new exciting happenings this year. Give them your support and support your Center. I wish to thank the members for the honor of serving on their governing board and the faith of my fellow board members for electing me their President for the year 1974. Good luck to the new board members and God Bless the incumbent ones.

I Remain Respectfully Yours,
Don Dick

The next year's 1975 Shepherders' Ball had a 1500 person attendance. Gross receipts totaled \$9,602.65, which included the entrance fees, food and auction receipts. Thousands of chorizos were fried and wrapped by Marie Aberasturi, Vicki Urresti, Rosie Arana Totoricagüena, Ruth Arrizabalaga, Victoria Basabe Alonso, and Laura Arguinchona. The expenses came to \$5,266.00, which included a \$1200 donation each to Glenn Repp and Juan Zulaica. The total profit from the dance equaled \$4,335.66, which was considered a huge success. The 1978 Shepherders' Ball showcased between 60-70 regular dancers in the Oinkari group and a crowd of approximately 800 people. The 1979 lamb auction for leukemia child victim Iker Larrazabal of Boise raised \$4,750, which was much higher than the usual \$2500 to \$3000 donated.

In those days, the dance was held at the Western Idaho Fairgrounds pavilion and many teenaged friends of the Oinkaris knew they could drink alcohol at Basque events without being asked for their ID to show they were nineteen, the legal drinking age. In 1980, the Board of Directors voted to require anyone younger than nineteen years to be accompanied by a parent, except for the dancers of the Oinkari group. In 1981, the Board began thinking of changing the venue of the Shepherders' Ball and trying to decrease the number of people attending. "Well it was just becoming too big to control. Young kids were getting too drunk and the Basque Center would have the legal liability if there were an accident", explained President Ike Echeverria. The Shepherders' Ball was moved to the Mardi Gras dance hall for a few years and then in 1985 to the Basque Center itself for "Basques and non-Basques accompanied by Basques" according to the December 1985 newsletter. The idea was to return to the "good old days" when the event was for Basques and their guests only. The Board called for men to wear jeans and white shirts and the women to wear cotton dresses or pants, as they had in the 1930s through the 1950s. Throughout the 1990s and in the new millennium, the Shepherders' Ball is held annually the last Saturday night before Christmas, at the Basque Center, for Basques and their guests. However, no one checks a membership list, or asks for proof of "Basqueness", or asks whose guest the entering person is. The attendance hovers between 500- 600 people.

The Basque Charities Association is another group internal to the Euzkaldunak, Inc. It raises money throughout the year from funeral donations and from the annual sheep auction at the Shepherders' Ball Dance. This money is then donated to Basques and non-Basques in the Boise area that are in need of relief from medical bills. Basque Charities Association has purchased wheelchairs, paid for dental work, physical therapy, surgeries and hospital bills for more than 100 people over the years. Decades ago, the *Socorros Mutuos* functioned in a similar manner while also helping pay for repatriation to the Basque Country for Basques who could not financially afford their return trips home. When the Euzkaldunak incorporated in 1950, they received an exemption from federal income taxes as a social and recreational club. However, with the later change in tax codes, people wishing to make a donation to the organization could not receive any tax deduction for their contributions. It became increasingly difficult to raise money through contributions and in 1981, Julian Achabal convinced the Board of Directors to form the Basque Charities Association. The Internal Revenue Service granted a favorable ruling to the Basque Charities Association as exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) and therefore all donations could be deducted from the contributor's income tax liability. In 1982, the Annual Charity Lamb Auction raised \$6,300 for the fund with Dan Bilbao of the Stockman's Hotel in Elko, Nevada donating \$1,000. All members of the Euzkaldunak, Inc. automatically were made members of the Basque Charities Association, and the Euzkaldunak Board continues to act for both entities. The move simply facilitated asking for donations and kept charitable work separate from the Euzkaldunak's record keeping. The Shepherders' Ball lamb auction donations continue to go directly to the Basque Charities Association, instead of to the general funds of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., and from there are given as donations to needy individuals and their families.

MORTZILLAK AND BINGO

The Annual Basque Bazaar and Mortzillak Dinner has been held at the Basque Center in November for decades. Initiated by the Basque Girls' Club, the dinner, crafts and foods bazaar, bingo, and children's carnival has been financially profitable every single year, and more importantly has drawn together Basque families for dinner and games. Tirelessly, Carmen Subisarreta, Tomasa Erquiaga, Dave and Jeannie Eiguren, Gloria and Terry Miller, Paul and Eleanor Acorda, Rich and Rita Ondarza, Julian and Rosemarie Salutregui Achabal, Manuel and Grace Sabala, and Domingo and Ruth Arrizabalaga- among others- worked year after year to ask for donations for the bingo prizes. In the 1970s and 1980s, businesses donated valuable prizes worth more than \$100.00. For example, in 1975, seventy-three Boise businesses donated airline tickets, furniture, jewelry, flowers, and hundreds of pounds of chorizos and meats. Currently, in the 1990s and 2000s the Oinkaris are responsible for gathering

donations for the bingo games, and prizes range from homemade arts and crafts to furniture. Laura Arguinchona, Begoña Ysursa, Trini Rementeria, Mari Carmen Totorica, Coro Gil Goitiandia, and Rosa Mari Zenarrusabeitia Guerricabeitia have organized the home-cooked foods booth, where one must arrive early to buy any fried pudding *tostadas*, Cornelio Totoricagüena's sheepherder bread, or Mercedes Urrutia's *canutillo* desserts. In the 1970s through the early 2000s, the Aiztan Artean has sponsored a Country Store led in various years by Juanita Aberasturi Yribar, Petra Asumendi, Flora Aldape, Connie Aldape, Iciar Aldazabal Totorica, and Aurora Iturriaga. Arts and crafts with Basque themes or symbols are sold and often given as Christmas presents the next month.

The specialty of the night is clearly the availability of homemade *mortzilla*, blood sausage, for the dinner and for sale in take-home packages. Basques from as far away as Gooding and Elko drive for hours in order to enjoy the Basque cuisine. Boise Basques joke that one can smell the garlic, onion, and leek cooking at the Basque Center from at least that far away. Flora Ysursa said, "I always have a shirt and pants ready to wear that I will throw away when I am finished. There is no way to get the



1972 Basque Center in preparation for exterior renovation. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.



Basque Center remodeling, painting, and cleaning crew. May 22, 1971. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

smell of onion, leek, and garlic out of those clothes. No way”. This is another Euzkaldunak operation that requires hundreds of hours of volunteer labor, and members always step forward. For decades, Benito and Tomasa Goitiandia, Julian and Rosemarie Achabal, Basilio and Dorothy Aldecoa and José Luis and Rita Astorquia Zabala have donated garlic, leeks and onions. Head cooks have included Marie Arregui, Sabina Oleaga, Cornelio Totoricagüena, Flora Aldazabal Ysursa and Carmen Lete, and assistants to cut onion and leek and fill sausage casings have been numerous. José Ramon Legarreta has volunteered for more than thirty years. “I am lucky I don’t work in an office where they’d throw me out if I came in smelling like onions like we do. You know, after three days of chopping that juice gets into your skin and hair. No way to get it out. I think we cut a few thousand leeks and onions”, he said. In 1986, over three thousand (3019 to be exact) *mortzillak* were made, and then eaten or sold.

The children’s carnival games keep the young ones busy while their parents listen for bingo numbers. Organizer Begoñe Rementería Zabala explained, “We like to have special things for the kids for two reasons. One, because they don’t usually like the *mortzillak*. So while their parents are downstairs eating we entertain them upstairs. And two, it’s a Basque function, and that means the entire family celebrates together. We love having the kids here. That’s the purpose of this Center”.

*Euzkaldunak, Inc. Briska
tournament players 1973.*

Photo by Paul Acorda. Juanita
Uberuaga Hormaechea
Collection. Basque Museum
and Cultural Center.



BRISKA AND MUS

Playing cards has always been a favorite pastime in Basque homes and gatherings and was, and remains, popular at the Basque Center. *Mus* players regularly frequent the Basque Center and hold tournaments annually to see who will represent the Euzkaldunak for the NABO tournament and the World *Mus* Tournament. In 1975, thirty-eight players participated in the annual Euzkaldunak *Mus* Tournament and Fernando “Fergie” Larrondo, the official scorekeeper for more than 25 years, kept track of points and winning teams. Fourteen couples played *briska*. Card playing was already popular among those who grew up near the boarding houses and watched their parents play regularly, but for those who had not, or those who belonged to a later generation who had never learned, the Euzkaldunak decided to provide classes. Each year’s tournaments had basically the same players and no newer or younger players were joining in the card playing activities. Iñaki Eiguren volunteered to teach the new players the tricks of the game, including clue-giving eye movements and facial gestures. In the 1980s, and again in the fall of 1993, Iñaki Eiguren conducted six weeks of *mus* instruction, which covered the intricacies of keeping points and sending secret messages to one’s partner without the opponents noticing. There were forty-two players in the 2001 tournament. Everyday

at the Basque Center, retired Basques come to play, continue friendships, and re-tell stories of their youth. The Euzkaldunak has participated in NABO Junior *Mus* Tournaments and continues to hold classes to teach the younger generations the rules and tricks of the card game, and ten to fifteen people under the age of twenty participate in the Junior *Mus*.

Briska players also meet Sunday nights at the Center to enjoy each other's company and share several laughs in Basque while playing cards. However, there are not many players under sixty years of age, and this could mean the end of *briska* tournaments if a younger generation does not show an interest in learning and playing together at the Basque Center. In the 2001 Euzkaldunak tournament, twenty-four members played *briska*. Obviously, the actual playing of cards is not the important socialization factor, but the friendships established, the sharing of Basque language, and continued participation in Basque Center programs do perpetuate Basque identity in the participants.

EXPANDING THE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES

As the next generation of Basques entered the organization, additional projects were introduced. The Euzkaldunak sponsored annual "Rummage Sales", of donated used items, that were extremely successful from 1974 to 1981. Hundreds of people donated thousands of items including used clothing, furniture, kitchenware, appliances, jewelry, books and games. The sale was open to the public all day Saturday and Sunday, with items displayed outside on the sidewalk in front of the Basque Center, as well as inside on the dancehall floor. Dorothy Aldecoa chaired the autumn event with the help of Marcia Bengoechea. They received, arranged, and priced items, and even drove to people's houses to collect their donated articles. Eventually, although there were many customers who came to browse through donated belongings, members had not participated by bringing in their items, and the 1981 sale was the last one organized by the Euzkaldunak.

The educational focus of many activities has been unmistakable. During October 1975, Sabina Oleaga gave Basque cuisine cooking classes. The second and third generation daughters of Basque immigrants (no men participated) wanted to maintain their mothers' traditions of Basque food preparation. These classes sporadically continued on with other talent from Carmen Lete, Jesus Alcelay, Flora Aldazabal, and Mari Carmen Totorica. Gina Ansotegui Urquidi and Dave Eiguren gave jota lessons for members, and the general public, for the six weeks prior to the Shepherders' Ball. In 1976, the Euzkaldunak sponsored English classes for Basque speakers. Miren Rementeria Artiach taught a twelve-week course consisting of a two-hour class each week for members and non-members who wanted to learn more English, and practice their reading and writing skills in English. During the same time

period Miren was also teaching Basque language courses. Euzkaldunak President, Mari Carmen Totorica, took charge of organizing a series of educational classes for the 665 members, which were held throughout 1980. She scheduled Basque language courses, adult jota instruction, *mus* and *briska* classes, singing sessions, and cooking, with an average of twenty to thirty participants each Wednesday night for a total of twenty-two different lessons. Elizabeth Bilbao, Gina Ansotegui Urquidi, Joe Eiguren, Iñaki Eiguren, Mari Carmen Totorica, and Domingo Ansotegui and Jim Jausoro volunteered as instructors.

By 1975, the average number of members at the monthly dinners was approximately 200 persons. The buffet style dinners were usually held in the basement reception room with menus combining several of the following: oven baked halibut, pork chops with pimientos, salads, paella, white rice with clams, fried chicken, codfish, bread rolls, rice pudding, pear and apple wine *compota*, cake, Jell-o with whipped cream, ice cream, wine and coffee. Waitress Rosa Mari Arrubarrena Colburn remembers a dinner when a woman asked for a glass of milk. “I didn’t know what to do. Of course we didn’t have any milk! In all the years I worked at those dinners, no one *ever* drank anything but red wine”. Paul Acorda acted as official photographer for dinners and his prints were available for sale at the Basque Center bar the next Sunday night. He created a pictorial historical record for the Euzkaldunak and his years of volunteering this special talent made many of the photos in this publication possible.

The membership Christmas Dinner was established and has followed the tradition of each male and female bringing an anonymous gift to exchange for another. Each person would bring a wrapped gift valued under \$5.00 and place it on the appropriate “For Him” or “For Her” table. At the end of the dinner each person would then select a different gift and be surprised with the contents. Several of those gifts on the “For Him” table looked conspicuously like bottles of wine, which were, not surprisingly, the first items selected. Women usually gave and received stationary, perfumes, lotions, jewelry, gloves, or music tapes. Santa Agueda Dinners were held each February at the Chuck Wagon on Vista Avenue with interested members singing and caroling following Basque Country traditions. The annual Mother’s Day Dinner at the Basque Center continues to be a special celebration for the membership. Youngest, oldest, and newest mothers are congratulated, and the mother with the most children and the *Amuma* with the most grandchildren are celebrated. Over the years, mothers have been presented with flowers, wine, or chocolates, but always given sincere thanks for raising the next generation to carry on in the Basque community.

The private rental of the Basque Center facility was becoming so popular that in 1975, the Board of Directors decided to hire a member for that position as a permanent employee. Previously, Ramon Ysursa had acted as Secretary-Treasurer, organizer of the charter flights and travel arrangements the Euzkaldunak sponsored

during the 1970s, and also handled the rentals. Later, hall rental managers included Victoria Letemendi Urresti, Ramon Ysursa, Cecil Jayo, Teresa Elordi Warfel, Dave Navarro, Teodoro Totorica, Julian Lete, and Tony Arrubarrena. The dance hall was, and remains to this day, one of the largest open space reception areas in Boise, and is rented for receptions, dances, dinners, and conferences at least one night per week. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, business parties, wedding receptions, and company Christmas dinners were frequent clients of the Basque Center and of Sabina Arteta Oleaga and Faustino Oleaga's cooking and bartending. Sabina Oleaga, Nati Anchustegui, and Emili Basterrechea managed dinners for up to five hundred guests with the usual work crew of Juan Oleaga, Didi Larrondo, Miren Arrubarrena Arozamena, Rosa Mari Arrubarrena Colburn, Anita Jausoro, Marie Jausoro Day, Marguerite Eiguren Larrinaga, Joanna Totorica Aspitarte, Rosa Mari Totorica, Gloria Toticagüena, Arantxa Basterrechea, and Andrea Epeldi. In 1982, 288 additional settings of silverware and 150 folding chairs were added to the Basque Center



Basque Center kitchen cooks and servers 1979. Juan Oleaga, Nati Anchustegui, Emili Basterrechea, Sabina Oleaga, Rosa Mari Totorica, Marie Jausoro Day, Marguerite Eiguren Larrinaga, Joanna Totorica Aspitarte. Photo by Paul Acorda. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

inventory in order to better accommodate rental requests for large events. A few Basque weddings seated more than 500 people for dinner in the dancehall. After Sabina and Faustino Oleaga retired from the Basque Center, Louie Mendiola was hired to tend bar and cook the members dinners. Other event cooks included Carmen Lete, Kalin Agirre, and Jon Arozamena in the early 1980s. Flora Churruca Aldazabal Ysursa was hired as the full-time professional cook and part-time bartender in the mid 1980s, and she continues in 2002.

By the beginning of the 1980s, handball players were competing against other Basque clubs for NABO tournament championships, and the Oinkaris were traveling throughout the western United States to Basque festivals. Iñaki and Carmen Eiguren helped coordinate a group trip to the Basque Country, as Ramon Ysursa had done in the previous decade. The Basque Center property was included in the Boise Historic District and considered one of the buildings for the Old Boise historic preservation. Toni Achabal, Josephine Miller, Clarine Villeneuve, and Gerri Achurra were writing, editing, and distributing the Euzkaldunak newsletter and Ester Anchustegui Bidaureta produced the Basque Center activities publicity. Dave Eiguren, Bonnie Ansotegui Kerns, and Gina Ansotegui Urquidi were the Directors and dance instructors for the “little kids” (later named Boise’ko Gazteak), and the Euzkaldunak, Inc. continued to expand its activities.

The Boise Basque Center’s involvement in the North American Basque Organizations owes many thanks to initial leaders Al Erquiaga, Miren Rementeria Artiach, Julio Bilbao, Joe Eiguren, Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea, John Bastida, Dorothy Bicandi Aldecoa, Dave Eiguren, and Henry “Hank” Achurra. By constantly inviting other clubs to participate in Boise activities and encouraging Basques from Boise to do the same with other Basque clubs, personal friendships were established and strengthened. After NABO’s founding in 1974, the Euzkaldunak sponsored a bus to travel to the Bakersfield Basque picnic for the last weekend of May 1976. The chartered bus left 6th and Grove at 6 p.m. and drove straight through the night to Bakersfield, California. The cost was \$38.00 per person roundtrip. Most of the travelers had never been to a Basque festival in California and learned much from seeing the influences of Iparralde. Julie Ansotegui Abraham was “thrilled to see the colorful costumes and make several new friends with French Basque accents”. Boise Basques had grown accustomed to their own Bizkaian dances, music, and foods, and this festival was a tremendous opportunity to expand their knowledge regarding other Basques in the United States.

The Children’s Annual Christmas Party continued on as it had for more than thirty years with singing and dancing performances by the “little kids”, and a visit from Santa Ray Larrondo and Olentzero Patxi Lostra to distribute the gifts. The handwriting on each child’s nametag looked amazingly like their own parents’ writing, and even the wrapping paper sometimes appeared familiar from home. Lino and Begoñe Rementeria Zabala enjoyed the help of Miren Artiach, Josune Urkijo

Arrieta, and Coro Goitiandia to prepare sweets and treats for the children and parents after they tore through gift-wrap to see what Santa had brought them.

New Years Eve Dances were quite popular during the 1960s through the 1990s and the Basque Center dance hall was decorated exquisitely. Parachute nets with balloons, crepe paper streamers, and festive Christmas lights created a party atmosphere topped off by the Jim Jausoro and his Orchestra music, and later with Ordago and then Gaupasa bands. Euzkaldunak volunteers prepared and sold chorizos during the night, and provided confetti, hats, and noisemakers for the partiers. After midnight and the end of the dance, volunteers served garlic soup and codfish in the basement reception hall to welcome in the new year, “and sober up a few people”, according to Jeannie Eiguren and Gerri Achurra. In 1982, twelve Polish refugees were the special guests of the Euzkaldunak dance and many immigrant members sympathized with the plight of the Polish because of their own first hand experience in previous years. In the 1990s, Russian, Croatian, Romanian, and Bosnian refugees also attended events at the Basque Center. The Bosnian community used the Basque Museum and Cultural Center as their meeting place for dance practices and cultural get-togethers and even had a day of exchange with the Oinkaris. “We want to show them our support in the same way the Boise community supported the Oinkaris when we first got started”, commented Dance Director Jill Aldape. The New Year’s Eve dance was dropped from the annual schedule at the end of the 1990s when the Oinkaris began performing for the December 31st “First Night” city celebration. Fewer Euzkaldunak members were attending this dance, and it was difficult for the Oinkaris to schedule their performance and to contract a band to play.

In the 1980s, the Euzkaldunak, Inc. sponsored a float for the Boise Annual Christmas Parade in November, also known as the Fairyland Parade and now called the Boise Holiday Parade. In 1981, their entry won a trophy. The Basque Center sponsored a pre-parade picnic for the participants before their two-hour long ride, “and we just prayed that the kids wouldn’t freeze to death, or need to use a restroom”, said Josune Arrieta. The Basque dancers and singers rode the decorated flatbed truck float in their costumes and Oinkaris performed on the moving stage to live music. Dave Eiguren and Teresa Elordi Warfel directed the parents’ decorating the donated Army National Guard truck and trailer.

The total membership in 1982 was 690 individuals and annual dues were \$15.00. After years of having the Center open seven days a week for eight to twelve hours each day, in 1982 the Basque Center Board decided to close the Basque Center on Mondays, now called “blue Mondays” in some families. On February 21, 1982, the storage room on the left side of the dance hall stage caught fire, completely destroying the Oinkari Dancers’ equipment and file cabinets with years of Basque Center records, ruining the furnace, and causing smoke damage throughout the hall. The entire hall had to be repainted, the ceiling tiles replaced, a new furnace installed, as well as downstairs ceiling tiles replaced and painted because of water damage.

Gerri Achurra and Jeannie Eiguren took responsibility for coordinating volunteer work crews to complete the renovation, cleaning, and painting of the entire basement and dance hall walls and ceilings. Once again, volunteers had stepped forward to care for their *euskal etxea*, Basque house.

Members continued to enjoy the established annual events and activities and also augmented and developed additional entertainment. Manuel Aburusa and Jerry Aldape initiated the Euzkaldunak Annual Golf Tournament in 1982. Euzkaldunak members were treated to a special musical performance by professionals Valentín Aguirre, tenor, and pianist Josu Gallastegui in October 1984. Nearly 200 members attended the concert in the main dancehall. In 1985, Delphina Urresti Arnold instigated an exercise group for members who met at the Center for volleyball, aerobics, dancing, and stretching. They even had their own booth at the Bazaar that November. John Bastida, Ada County Clerk, with Dave Navarro and Ramon Yursa facilitated passport applications and photos for Euzkaldunak members traveling with the Oinkaris to the Basque Country in 1985.



Euzkaldunak membership monthly dinner, 1973. Photo by Paul Acorda. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

The Euzkaldunak's membership jumped to 765 individuals paying a twenty-dollar annual fee by 1986. Mary Bieter and John Bieter offered one-hour Basque language lessons each Sunday. The Basque Girl's Club celebrated its 50th Anniversary with twenty-one members still active. Members' monthly dinner tickets cost \$7.00 and pre-dinner drinks were offered at two for one dollar. Typical discussions at the Board meetings regarded annual activities, and keeping underage children (the legal age for alcohol is 21) out of the bar. "There has always been a perception among the Boise Basques that the rules just don't apply to us", mentioned bartender Julian Lete. "They think nothing will happen, that no way would the Center lose its liquor license just for having some kids in here playing pool. Wrong". Because the Basque Center focuses on family activities and functions, children often run into the bar to announce the end of dancing lessons and time to go home. Parents also take their children into the Basque Center via the bar door instead of the main entrance to the dance hall. Both are against the laws of Idaho, which state that no person under the age of twenty-one is allowed in a bar at any time. "This is the Basque Center. The police know that we do everything in families. I doubt they would actually bring a case against the Center, but it's not worth the trouble to find out", said Hank Achurra.

In 1988, Basque Government representative, Iñaki Goikoetxeta, made an official visit to the Euzkaldunak, Inc. on behalf of the Presidency in Vitoria-Gasteiz. However, as a part of a personal mission he asked that during his visit he have enough time to visit the grave of his grandfather in Morris Hill Cemetery. After numerous days and inquiring calls to locate the grave, Dolores Totorica discovered that there was no marker for this deceased Basque, and that in fact the records of Morris Hill showed that there were several burials of Basques that could not afford headstones and remained unmarked. An anonymous donor paid for the rush ordered headstone and upon Iñaki Goikoetxeta's visit, he was able to stop and reflect at the marked place of burial. In 1995 and 1996, Liz Dick Hardesty researched non-stop until she was able to locate as much detail as possible about the Basques buried without recognition at Morris Hill. She worked tirelessly until obtaining funds from an anonymous donor to devise and produce a monument to these forgotten Basques who died isolated from their families and homeland.

She organized a remembrance program and unveiling ceremony for June 23, 1996. Numerous Basques and non-Basques followed and listened intently as she pointed out unmarked graves and recounted as much as she had found about that particular person. Participants also enjoyed the unveiling of a single monument carved with *ikurriñas* and *lauburus* and the names of the individuals formerly unrecognized. Her efforts continued the idea and community spirit of the *Socorros Mutuos* that her grandfather, Mateo Arregui, had helped to design. Two generations later, Liz Arregui Dick Hardesty had fulfilled the Basque community's commitment to provide for each other's needs.



*Morris Hill Cemetery 1996.
Monument for unmarked
Basque graves. Photo by Liz
Arregui Hardesty. Courtesy
Arregui Family Collection.*

POLITICS AND THE BOISE BASQUES

Little aid came from the United States Basque communities in the west for the Basque military cause during and after the Spanish Civil War, but humanitarian war relief was provided. For example, the proceeds from the Shepherders' Ball were used to purchase one thousand blankets for Basque women prisoners in Spain (Douglass and Bilbao 1975:361). As the United States was drawn into the Second World War, Franco's identification with Hitler and Mussolini prompted United States government support for the exiled Basque government. The Basque government maintained a delegation in New York City, and for three years published *Basques. Bulletin of the Basque Delegation in the USA*. In 1937, the Basque Government Delegate to the United States, Ramón de la Sota, visited Boise in order to inform the Basque community and attempt to raise money for the Basque war effort. Though many Basques attended events to hear news from the Basque Country, he was unable to create enough interest for financial support. In a 1938 letter to Basque Government-in-exile President José Antonio de Aguirre y Lecube, Basque Government Delegate to the United States Antonio de Irala wrote in regards to the

Basques of Idaho, “there is a lack of national consciousness... and their mentality in regards to patriotism is American” (my translation from San Sebastián 1991:236). In 1940, a Basque Delegation emissary, Juan M. (Jon) Bilbao, was sent to Idaho and Nevada, but found no significant interest in political mobilization, and his Boise office was short-lived.

The Basque communities in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Venezuela, Cuba, and Mexico, however, did raise private funds to be sent to the Basque Government-in-exile and later, after the war, enthusiastically received the Basque Government-in-exile delegations and thousands of political exiles. The final collapse of the Spanish Republic in 1939 recorded an estimated 150,000 Basques exiled in *Iparralde* alone, and additionally, several thousand children who had been evacuated to other countries throughout Europe, and Mexico and Cuba. Those political exiles significantly influenced the diaspora communities’ definitions and involvement in Basque identity maintenance by transporting the contemporary homeland nationalism of the day, something which was almost non-existent or dormant in Boise.

The events of the 1970 Trial of Burgos of sixteen suspected ETA participants set the world’s media to reporting the reality of political repression in Spain. Sixteen Basques were tried and found guilty of the murder of a Spanish police officer, after the most basic procedural rights of accused persons were abandoned. Governments and interest groups around the world demanded that Franco commute the six death sentences which resulted from the questionable procedures of the Spanish military tribunal. Pete Cenarrusa worked with the Idaho Congressional Delegation in an attempt to influence the United States State Department to pressure for Spanish government constraint. Idaho Governor, Don Samuelson, sent a cable to General Franco pointing out the democratic principles of trying civilians in civilian courts and not military courts, and asking that the trials be moved. After the death sentences were announced, Cenarrusa coordinated a gathering at the Basque Center, attended by over 200 Basques, to sign a declaration asking Franco to commute the death sentences, and they also organized a benefit dance as a fundraiser for the sixteen families. The Pope communicated to Franco his desire for a decrease in the punishment. On December 30, 1970, one day before the first executions were to be implemented, Franco decreased the sentences to thirty years in prison. There were those members of the Euzkaldunak that steadfastly did not want to involve themselves with homeland politics, even when the circumstances were egregiously oppressive.

Several members over the years have not been only apolitical they have been *anti*-political. Under the Presidency of Ron Sabala and the insistence of Julian Achabal, the Board of Directors for the first time agreed to fly the *ikurriña*, Basque flag, from the exterior of the Basque Center building in 1972. According to Julian, “People thought it was political –just to have our own flag showing– and they



*Basque Government-in-exile
Delegation visits Boise
1938.* Juanita Uberuaga
Hormaechea Collection.
Basque Museum and Cultural
Center.

complained. To me it was important to show that Basques were proud of our country. The Basque Center had a flag inside, so now we hung one outside. They were a little more conservative and thought it would cause problems, but in the end they were glad and are now proud of those flags and the others on the Basque Block Street. There was a Basque flag hanging inside the Idaho Capitol Building under a U.S. flag, and Pete Cenarrusa had a Basque flag in his office. Why wouldn't the Basque Center have its own *ikurriña* flying?" This gesture, which caused an uproar in 1972, is trivial to today's Basques who have *ikurriña* car bumper stickers, t-shirts, backpacks, belt buckles, patio tables, earrings, and tattoos.

ANAIK DANOK: BROTHERS ALL

This non-profit organization emerged from within the Euzkaldunak, the Idaho Basque Studies Center, and the Idaho'ko Euzko Zaleak, with members who were especially interested in current political events in the Basque homeland, maintaining ties and communications with Basques in *Euskal Herria*, and in promoting Basque language preservation. Severiano Legarreta, Jose Ramon Legarreta, Miren Artiach,

Juan Luis Achabal, Joe Eiguren, Roy Eiguren, Julian and Rosemarie Achabal, Pete and Freda Coates Cenarrusa, Nicasio Beristain, Carmen and Ted Totorica Sr., Kepa Chertudi, Justo and Paki Sarria, Emeteria Jayo, Mari Jayo Egaña, Segundo and Anna Iriondo Nachiondo, and John and Elena Iriondo Yribar led discussions and activities, and regular meetings, which were usually held at the Sarria residence.

The Anaiak Danok sponsored the first official Idaho celebration of *Aberri Eguna*, or Day of the Homeland, on Easter Sunday April 14, 1974. *Aberri Eguna* is a Basque national holiday celebrated on Easter Sunday because of the symbolism involved with the resurrection of Christ, and restoration of the Basque Country traditions and language. Basques around the world celebrate their ethnic identity, culture, and homeland in the spring if not exactly on Easter Sunday. The Governor of Idaho, Cecil D. Andrus, signed an Executive Department Proclamation proclaiming Easter Sunday as “Basque Day” in Idaho. The Mayor of the City of Boise, Richard “Dick” Eardley, wrote a similar proclamation celebrating *Aberri Eguna* with the Basques of Idaho. The proceeds of \$500 from the day’s events were donated to the Anai Artea organization in Donibane Lohitzune-St. Jean de Luz, Lapurdi to help with costs of housing and feeding and providing medical care for Basque political refugees in the French Basque provinces of *Iparralde*. The Anai Artea was a refugee house that aided Basques who were persecuted under the Franco regime. They cared for children, and helped adults with clothing, housing, medical needs, and employment in France and Belgium.

In 1975, Anaiak Danok held their General Meeting in January and invited all Basques to the Basque Center to participate. The 1975 officers were President, Justo Sarria; Vice President Kepa Chertudi; and Secretary Treasurer, John Yribar. That year’s goals were to promote the emerging Society of Basque Studies in America, which is now based in New York and Chicago. The club sponsored dances, pelota games and tournaments. The March 30, 1975 *Aberri Eguna* was celebrated with a mass by Father Garatea after creating an altar on the dance floor stage, complete with Basque religious music by txistulari Alain Erdozaincy from San Francisco. A Basque dinner was served to two hundred and sixty persons and afterwards the Oinkaris performed with Jim Jausoro and Domingo Ansotegui. Sylvia Eiguren and Justo Sarria sang solos for the audience. Later, all moved down Grove Street to the fronton for the weightlifting exhibitions by Joe “Patxi” Amuchastegui and Benito Goitiandia, and *pelota* games inside at the Anduiza court. The food remaining from the dinner was donated to the Boise Children’s Home, and all proceeds from the day’s activities were donated to the emerging Basque language schools, *ikastolas*, in the Basque Country.

The Anaiak Danok sponsored pelota instruction for youth between the ages of eight and eighteen in April of 1975. Enrique “Henry” Alegria and Phillip Uberuaga taught the classes and organized the practices, and at the end of the two-week training held a tournament for the new pelotaris. Cathy Clarkson, Trish Severance,

Jane Severance, Andrea Kooch, Dan “Butch” Schaffeld, Chris Schaffeld, Mark Schaffeld, Phil Iriondo, Mike Urizar, and Andy Artis participated in the training and tournaments. The adult season finale pelota tournament was played in August under the leadership of Segundo Nachiondo, Severiano Legarreta, and Henry Alegria, with exciting scores of 22 to 21, and 22 to 20 creating a three-team tie for first place. In the final championship match Juan Egaña and Jesus Careaga beat José Luis Arrieta and José Mari Artiach. The proceeds from the games were used to buy a color television, which the Anaiak Danok donated to Juan Zulaica who had been injured and partially paralyzed in a logging accident.



Anaiak Danok leadership meeting 1973. Photo courtesy of Mari Carmen Egurrola Totorica Collection.

In the homeland, the 1975 executions of two Basques convicted of killing Spanish police again called the Spanish court system into question. Members of the Anaiak Danok organized for action to request the United States join sixteen other countries which, in protest, had removed their Ambassadors from Spain. Anaiak Danok met with U.S. Senator Frank Church to ask him to research the Basque conflict, and Senator Church, and wife Bethine, visited the Basque Country in 1978, with a hero's welcome.

In October 1975, the Anaiak Danok received a request for urgent aid from their friends in the Basque Country, Anai Artea. Bombings and repression in the southern provinces in Spain resulted in overflowing rooms at the refugee house. The women of Anaiak Danok launched a campaign in Boise to gather donations of money, and green and gold stamp books, in order to send a Christmas package to their fellow Basques, which accepted it gratefully. Paki Jayo Sarria, Emeteria Jayo, Mari Jayo Egaña, Mari Carmen Totorica, Freda Cenarrusa, Rosemarie Achabal, Elena Yribar, and Anna Nachiondo organized the effort. In Los Angeles and San Francisco, hundreds of Basques marched and protested at the Spanish Consulates to denounce the undemocratic regime and the political oppression in the Basque Country. Anna Nachiondo, Secretary of Anaiak Danok, wrote a letter to the editor of *Voice of the Basques* informing its readers about current political oppression and civil rights abuses in the Basque Country.

In 1976, José Alvarez Emparantza “Txillardegi”, and Jon Celaya Letemendi traveled throughout North and South America visiting Basque communities to inform them of the political situation of their homeland. “Txillardegi” was one of the founders of the organization Euskadi ta Askatasuna, ETA, or Basque Homeland and Liberty. The original ETA movement focused on Basque language preservation and cultural maintenance in the face of the Franco dictatorship, where Spanish nation-building included the eradication of Basque language, ethnic traditions, culture, and identity. He left the group in 1967 because of the internal political changes and the influences of Marxism, and Frederico Krutwig’s focus on escalating violence. On their visit to Boise, Emparantza and Celaya emphasized in a press conference that there were many political problems in Spain and in the Basque Country, none of which had a single or easy answer. However, they encouraged Basques to become knowledgeable about their own history and contemporary situation in their homeland, *Euskal Herria*. Boise’s earlier emigrants had not experienced the oppression of the Civil War and the Franco era and many did not understand the later emigrants who were politically active and informed, according to Nicasio Beristain. However, most Basque interviewees from the 1990s concurred that the original cultural goals and purpose of ETA were justifiable, but that today’s political problems should be solved in the political arena, and not through violence.

The 1976 Aberri Eguna celebration, sponsored by Anaiak Danok, featured an Easter morning Basque mass at the Basque Center, and reading of a “Basque Day”

proclamation from the Governor's Office. Bertsolari Manu Basabe sang impromptu verses for the audience. The lunch including traditional roast lamb and was followed by musical and dance performances by the Oinkari Basque Dancers. Late in the afternoon, spectators moved down Grove Street to the Anduiza Fronton for pelota competition, and weightlifting from Benito Goitiandia, Juan Barrenechea, José Urquidi, and Iñaki Mendiola. After the presentation of the trophies at the Basque Center, Pete Cenarrusa announced that the event proceeds would be sent to several *ikastolas* in the Basque Country to financially aid the maintenance of the Basque language. In 1977, Anaiak Danok donated \$750.00 for scholarships to the NABO music camp and \$350.00 for Basque language class materials. Due to personality conflicts, differences of opinion, and lack of time and interest, the organization dissolved in 1978.

POLITICAL VOTING AND PARTICIPATION

Though several Basques have served as political candidates and elected officials in Idaho government, the United States diaspora Basque Centers and organizations are basically non-partisan and non-political. They do not affiliate with United States political parties or allow partisan projects to be a part of the Center's functions and they do not endorse candidates or parties for elections, referendums, or initiatives. Though members are free to endorse the issues, parties, and candidates of their choices, the Basque Center itself does not get involved with either. However, ethnicity seems to be a significant factor of voting behavior for many Basques in Idaho as they report crossing party lines to vote for Basque candidates in local and State elections. Several interviewees described themselves as “registered Democrats” but stated they crossed over to vote for Basque Republican candidates such as Pete Cenarrusa and Ben Ysursa for Secretary of State of Idaho, or John Bastida, Dave Navarro, or Gary Bermensolo in Ada County government. Others, who identified themselves as “normally Republican”, stated they crossed party lines to vote for Pat Bieter and Dave Bieter for the Idaho Legislature.

Though most do not participate in the homeland elections, many Basque-Americans have the right to do so. There are tens of thousands of persons in the worldwide Basque diaspora that hold citizenship rights in Euskadi and 32,858 are qualified to vote in homeland elections. There are an additional 12,690 Navarrese eligible to vote in elections in Navarre. Though there is no specific breakdown by city or State, in 1999 there were 2,010 people in the United States who were registered to vote in the Basque Autonomous Government elections. Anonymous questionnaire results from Basque communities in the United States demonstrate that more than 40% admit they do not know enough about homeland politics to choose a homeland political party preference. For those that do, the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (Basque Nationalist Party) consistently ranks first. In general, Basques in Idaho are not as

interested in homeland politics because the majority are economic emigrants and their descendents; generally they are not political refugees. This is opposed to Mexico, Venezuela, or Argentina, to where thousands of nationalist political refugees immigrated during, and after, the Spanish Civil War. This immigration affected the existing Basques and their Basque Centers.

In the early 1980s, with the return of democratic government in Euskadi and Navarre, homeland politicians made tours through the United States visiting the Basque Centers, and one such junket included representatives from five homeland political parties. The Boise Basques' interest in the presentation proved to be dismal. Out of a membership of approximately 700 families, less than twenty people attended. No Basque Country politicians have since returned to the Euzkaldunak Incorporated to request any time whatsoever to discuss partisan politics.

Young Basques who have visited or lived in *Euskal Herria* often return to the U.S. with increased interest in politics and the future of the seven provinces. Some wear T-shirts advertising "*Askatasuna*", Liberty, but few have a clear understanding of the numerous political factors influencing the future of the Basque Country. Neither the Euzkaldunak Incorporated Board of Directors nor the NABO Delegate conventions discuss homeland political parties, elections, or future political projects as a part of any meetings. Both organizations do have good relations with the government of Basque Autonomous Community and the Office of Relations with Basque Communities Abroad in the *Lehendakaritza*, Presidency, of the Basque Government. There are no official relations with the Foral Government of Nafarroa, nor are there any official institutional ties with any public or governmental entities in the northern provinces of *Iparralde*.

RELATIONS WITH HOMELAND INSTITUTIONS

Xabier Arzallus, President of the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, Basque Nationalist Party, visited Boise in November 1980, with Basque Parliamentarians Senator Mitxel Unzueta Uzcanga and Senator Juan Maria Ollora Ochoa De Aspuru. Although these men represented the newly formed democratic government emerging in the Basque Country after four decades of Franco dictatorship, Boise Basques were lukewarm in their reception. A majority maintained their distance from political issues and did not have the knowledge of current events in their homeland. Boise Basques remained interested in cultural activities, but were "nervous" about political involvement.

More than 200 Basques celebrated the planting of the seedling of the Tree of Gernika in Boise at the State Capitol Building on April 18, 1981. Beginning approximately two thousand years ago and ending in 1839, members of the

legislative body of this Basque region in the homeland met under the Tree of Gernika and its offspring to enact the laws of the area according to the local customs and traditions, known as the *fueros*. The tree is a symbol of freedom and democracy and has especially emotional significance because during the Franco ordered Nazi bombing of the town of Gernika in 1937, the Tree of Gernika and the historical Basque Parliament building withstood the bombing and were not destroyed even though almost all of the surrounding buildings were razed to the ground. The Basque Delegation selected to bring the gifted seedling on behalf of the *Lehendakari*, President, Carlos Garaikoetxea, included Joxe Miguel Zabala, Minister of Agriculture, and Alberto Amorrortu, Minister of Culture and Education, and both Deputies of the Provincial Parliament of Bizkaia. Governor John Evans, Bishop Sylvester Treinen, and Secretary of State Pete Cenarrusa were in attendance for the planting ceremony. “What a great day this is when we have such an historic symbol of representative government and democracy given to the people of Idaho”, said Pete Cenarrusa. The ikurriña flew over the Capitol Building next to the flag of the United States and Justo Sarria directed a choir to sing “*Gernika’ko Arbola*” after the Oinkaris danced on the lawn. Txistulari Sabin Landaluce provided additional music. The Gernika Arbola Committee consisted of Joe Eiguren, Roy Eiguren, Iñaki Eiguren, Julian Achabal, John Bastida, Mari Carmen Totorica and Pete Cenarrusa. They also organized an open house and *amaiketako*, eleven o’clock snack, at the Basque Center following the ceremony with the State of Idaho officials, and a lunch at the Basque restaurant, the Boarding House.

To everyone’s disbelief and frustration, the tree was stolen two days later. Groundskeeper Severiano Legarreta was crushed when he discovered the seedling missing and, even after a police investigation, it was never found. Fortunately the Basque Delegation had brought two more seedlings, which had been planted safely in the Capitol grounds nursery. They were kept there for several years until they were large enough to be planted outside and too large to be vandalized, and today, the Tree of Gernika grows on the west side of the Capitol Building gardens.

Jokin Intxausti Larrauri, of the Department of Culture and Tourism, was the first visiting representative to the diaspora from the Basque Autonomous Community of Euskadi. He began his tour of the seventeen NABO clubs of the United States in February 1986, with his initial reception at the NABO meeting in Salt Lake City. When he arrived in Boise, the Euzkaldunak Board and Oinkaris greeted and welcomed him with a reception, gifts, and dances. He was particularly interested in meeting with the membership of the Euzkaldunak, and spent hours interviewing and listening to many Basques of different ages and interests. Jokin Intxausti also met with Boise Basque business leaders such as Phil Murelaga, and with Secretary of State, Pete Cenarrusa, who arranged for him to speak to members of the Idaho Legislature. The Euzkaldunak’s fruitful relationship with the Basque Government evolved from personal friendships with Intxausti and his later successors.

Pete T. Cenarrusa, Adelia Garro Simplot, and Michelle Alzola, President of the Boise-Gernika Sister City Committee, visited Gernika-Lumo in 1993 to officially open Sister City relations between Boise and Gernika-Lumo. In July of 1994, Mayor of Gernika, Eduardo Vallejo de Olejua, and a delegation from city government visited the Boise San Ignacio festival. Throughout the 1990s, Boise and Gernika-Lumo have scheduled exchanges of politicians, business professionals, students, and artisans. Although the sister city program is only symbolic in the United States, and the City of Boise has no real funding for the exchange programs, the Euzkaldunak Basque Center has organized and funded the Boise side of the projects. The symbolism of twinning with Gernika-Lumo is significant because of the large population from the Gernika area now living in Boise, and the large number of people living in Gernika that once worked and lived in the Boise area.

The Basque Autonomous Community government in Vitoria-Gasteiz has designed several programs for intercommunication among Basques around the world. In 1990, Steve Achabal and Anne Marie Mansidor were selected as Boise's delegates to the first annual program gathering Basque youth from around the diapora. In 1996, this program officially was named *Gaztemundu, World of Youth*. This conference introduces Basques, aged between 20-30 and from all the world's Basque diaspora communities, to contemporary *Euskal Herria*, and to each other. It attempts to update folkloric and outdated images of the Basque provinces held by so many later generations of Basques who have never traveled to the homeland. Participants are required to create and present plans for possible economic development for future Basque Government projects, and for culture and tourism. In 1999, four young Basques were chosen to represent Boise: Sage Benintendi, Geneva Ayarra, Katrina Lemmon, and Tony Lemmon. In 2000, Angela Guerricabeitia participated with other young leaders from Basque organizations of Australia, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico, and Canada.

During the Jaialdi Festival of 2000, the Basque Government delegation was received by the President of the Euzkaldunak, Inc., Bryan Day, the Chairperson of Jaialdi, David Eiguren, the Governor of the State of Idaho, Dirk Kempthorne, the Secretary of State, Pete Cenarrusa, and the Mayor of the City of Boise, Brent Coles. Each mentioned the importance of the Basque emigration to Idaho and the positive reputation and status of Basques as "honest, hard-working, industrious, courteous, loyal people", and that Idaho has "pride in her Basque people" who have enriched it with "unique language, cuisine, sport, music, dancing and cultural events". A proclamation by Governor Kempthorne stated that the Basque people have earned the respect and admiration of their fellow Idahoans while becoming outstanding citizens and preserving the best of their Basque heritage. He called upon all Idahoans to "give recognition to the Basque heritage and culture which play such an important part in our State and to share with our Basque citizens during this week of international significance by joining them in celebrating Jaialdi 2000- the Basque Cultural Festival". The positive reception of the Basque Government delegation was

also extended by the common participants, and many waited in reception lines to introduce themselves to the representatives and to welcome them to the United States and to Boise.

Most Euzkaldunak, Inc. members receive a home subscription of *Euskal Etxeak*, Basque Centers, published and distributed by the Basque Autonomous Government for the diaspora four to five times per year. This extremely popular periodical shares information regarding the homeland and other diaspora communities in other countries and is received in the United States in English or Spanish. Interviewees from Boise consistently mention this publication as a factor in their increased information about the homeland and the worldwide Basque diaspora. Several decades ago, the continuing migration to the United States from the Basque Country meant that there were readily available news and updates about the issues in the Basque Country, and that many people consistently traveled back and forth to visit family. However, for those interested in more in-depth understanding of the Basque economy, social issues and culture, the *Euskal Etxeak* provides an entertaining and informative link to the homeland and other diaspora communities.

BASQUE HALL OF FAME

The Society of Basque Studies in America began their annual selections of three persons to the Basque Hall of Fame in 1981. The first Boise Basque to be selected for recognition was Pete Cenarrusa, in 1983, for his decades of elected public service and pursuit to bring peace to the Basque Country. Domingo Ansotegui was inducted posthumously in 1984 as a self-taught musician and composer, and for his commitment to Basque music and dance. The Euzkaldunak membership reached 723 in 1985, and the same year three members of the Boise Basque community were inducted into the Society of Basque Studies in America Basque Hall of Fame. Juanita Uberuaga Hormaechea, John Bastida, and posthumously John Archabal (Juan Achabal) Sr. were praised for their separate dreams of initiating cohesive and energetic Basque ethnicity maintenance projects. Representing the Society, Dr. Emilia Doyaga, Gloria Aberasturi, and José Ramón Cengotitabengoa extolled and applauded each individual's years of dedication, and the hundreds of appreciative guests in the audience emotionally showed their gratitude to "Jay" and John, and to John Archabal's son, Dan.

In 1994, Senator Frank Church posthumously, Joseph V. Eiguren, Jim Jausoro, and the Euzkaldunak Incorporated in its entirety were named for recognition. Senator Church distinguished himself in his support for the Basque Human Rights Resolution and his raising awareness of the United States population to the oppression of the Basques in the homeland. Joe Eiguren was a teacher, author and scholar of Basque studies, and Jimmy Jausoro was selected for his dedication to preserving Basque

music and accompanying the Oinkari Basque Dancers, the Boise'ko Gazteak, and the Caldwell Basque Dancers for decades. Adelia Garro Simplot was honored in 1995 for her contributions to preserving the historic Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga boarding house and establishing the Basque Museum and Cultural Center. In 1998, Dr. Carmelo Urza, formerly of Boise and now at the University of Nevada, Reno, was inducted for his published works, and leadership in developing and administering the University Studies Abroad Consortium, which has facilitated study in the Basque Country for thousands of students.

JIALDI: AN INTERNATIONAL BASQUE FESTIVAL

An estimated 30,000 people from the western United States, New York, Florida, Canada, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Australia, and hundreds more from the Basque Country itself, descended onto Boise, Idaho for the Jaialdi 2000 International Basque Festival. The first Jaialdi Festival was sponsored jointly by the Euzkaldunak, Inc. and the Oinkari Basque Dancers and celebrated in 1987 under the leadership of Albert Erquiaga and Gerri Achurra and hundreds of volunteers from the Boise Basque Center. Erquiaga and Achurra had met the Basque Autonomous Government's international representative, Jokin Intxausti, at a North American Basque Organizations meeting in 1985, and he had encouraged them to organize and produce an international event to celebrate and promote Basque culture. The original idea was to highlight local and Basque Country artisans, sportsmen, and dance and music groups. Because of the significant success in numbers of people that attended from all around the United States as well as Basques from *Euskal Herria*, Mexico and Canada, the festival was again announced for 1990. Jaialdi 1987 had covered all of its expenses and actually also made a financial profit for the Euzkaldunak, Inc.

The Jaialdi Festival of 1990 experienced such an incremental growth in numbers of people attending that for 1995, the location had to be changed from the Idaho Historical Penitentiary to the Western Idaho Fairgrounds. Every five years the reputation has grown as additional Basques from around the United States travel to Boise to celebrate with friends from other States. At Jaialdi 2000, fourteen different Basque dancing troupes participated, fifteen singing or musical instrument groups entertained, and one choir and one combined *klika* welcomed the crowds. Basques traveled from Idaho, Oregon, Washington, California, Nevada, Texas, Utah, Wyoming, Florida, New York, and Maryland to participate and share their festival with friends and family.

The partying for the Jaialdi Festival actually began informally the week before the scheduled events with the arrivals of dignitaries and guests from around the world and family and friends from the various United States. The Basque Block was alive

with *euskera*, and the Basque Center's jukebox music of Oskorri, Ruper Ordorika, and Ganbara. The Basque Museum and Cultural Center was full of visitors experiencing the photography and historical exhibits displayed, and the Basque Center and the Bar Gernika were "packed like sardines" and spilling onto the streets, making it impossible for even one more person to enter. Basques from around the world were meeting for the first time, while others were renewing friendships from the 1995 Jaialdi. Some found relatives and most made new friends.

The official program began on Thursday, July 27th, with a special Sports Night, which had so many spectators that there were no seats remaining, and only standing room in every corner of the large exhibition hall. After approximately eight thousand spectators had entered, ticket-takers decided not to charge incoming spectators because there were no seats remaining and they likely would not be able to see any of the events. Regardless, more people continued to enter. Demonstrations included weight lifting, weight dragging, and weight carrying. Those in the crowds who had never seen these displays of strength were amazed at the quantity lifted by the athletes - "Zelai" Gisasola, José Ramón Iruretagoyena, and "Goenatxo" Unanue. Most non-Basque spectators from the United States were also surprised at the cube and granite ball shapes of the weights, and the endurance of the men.

The crowds had to distance themselves from the stages during the wood chopping, and children scrambled for pieces of flying wood on which they later requested the autographs of Donato Larretxea Lizardi, Angel Arrospide Aurkia, and Floren Nazabal Leiza. The cadence of axes slicing through the air excited the crowds to cheer for their preferred competitor and this event was favored throughout the weekend. Because seating was limited to only several thousand people at this particular venue, others "had to stand on chairs, ladders, stage sound systems and anything they could find, in order to give themselves more height to witness the competition", according to event announcer Joseba Chertudi.

The Mutriku Soka-Tira Taldea educated the crowds with agricultural and work-based sports and contests, such as lifting bales of hay by pulleys, *soka-tira*, swinging and carrying weights. The originality of their sports also amazed non-Basques and there were several local television and newspaper reports in the media for this first night of the festival. The positive social status of Basques in the Boise area has generally resulted in high media visibility and positive coverage.

Friday brought the official opening of the Basque Block and inauguration of the sculptures of Basque *laiak* by Minister Mari Karmen Garmendia. The all day affair included *pelota* and *pala* championships, live music by accordionists Iker Laucirica and Unai Mezo, Roberto eta Kepa, Tapia eta Leturia, and the Txorimaloak Soinu Taldea. Food and beverage were abundant and the hot weather (41 °C/ 105F) encouraged the need for cold beer. Attendees visited the Euzkaldunak Basque Center, the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, the Anduiza fronton, the Bar

Gernika, and the several exhibition tents where performers played. The Friday night theatre spectacular included performances by bertsolaris Jon Enbeitia and Irineo Ajuria; the Arkaitz Dantza Taldea of Donostia, the Oinkari Basque Dancers of Boise, and the instrumentals of Txorimaloak Soinu Taldea, Tapia eta Leturia and Arkaitz Minor, and Roberto eta Kepa.

Thoroughly enjoyed by the audience, it was another dose of traditional Basque culture. The abundance of accordions, tambourines, and txistus, and the absence of electric guitars, synthesizers, and drums were evident. The bertsolaris sang of missing the homeland, of the old traditional *baserria*, farmstead, lifestyle, and of nationalist themes. Approximately half of the audience could understand their poetry. Organizers have been criticized in the past for not portraying a more realistic and representative picture of Basque music. However, if no new people step forward to volunteer to take charge, the festival continues with the same symbolic themes.

Saturday's events commenced with a procession of several hundred participants, which was followed by an all day ethnic production of music, sports, dancing, singing, card playing, and eating and drinking. Exhibition booths included the Basque Book Series by the University of Nevada Press in Reno, and information regarding the Center for Basque Studies Internet on-line courses on Basque themes. Photography displays by Linda Dufurrena, and Marianne Uberuaga Schaffeld, and several art and book displays, Basque gift and souvenir booths were kept busy by thousands of customers and spectators.

An especially significant and educational display for this festival was that of four authentic sheep wagons in which sheepherders once lived- complete with live sheep corralled in a landscaped area to duplicate the aspen groves of Idaho and Nevada. Another area displayed a tent used by sheepherders. Designed and constructed by Ramon Aldamiz Yursa and George Lejarcegui Totorica (both sons of former sheepherders), the sheepherder camp was visited with great interest by those who had once lived in such a manner, and equally by those who have only read about or seen their parents' histories in photographs. Former sheepherders readily told stories to their families and friends of their memories of the difficult life on the range. It was obvious from the tears shed that many relatives finally understood for the first time the depth of what those sheepherders had suffered. Basques visiting from *Euskal Herria* also were impressed with the rough lifestyle endured, and mentioned that they had had no idea of how their emigrant relatives had suffered. "There is still quite a misconception in the Basque Country that emigrants abandoned their homeland to arrive in the Americas and immediately became wealthy", commented John Bieter. Though there are very few remaining Basque sheepherders in the United States, sheepherder culture remains an important factor in the collective identity and collective history of United States Basques. It is a significant variable in United States Basque diaspora identity and is used as a defining element by Basques themselves and by non-Basques as well.

For eight hours, over twenty performing groups of dancers, musicians, sportsmen, and singers rotated between three different stages while approximately 20,000 family members, friends, and spectators relaxed and enjoyed the entertainment. The aromas of chorizo, solomo, pimientos, lamb, croquetas, as well as hamburgers and hotdogs, tempted most to try the Basque style recipes. These activities were repeated again all day Sunday for many thousands more. Sportsmen, musicians, singers, dancers, and visitors from Euskal Herria, Peru, Uruguay, Australia, Canada, and Mexico all interchanged with Basques from the United States and new networks of communication have been created. The transnational identity, a feeling of belonging in several different physical places, has taken a strong hold in many people that attended the festival. Hundreds of postal addresses and e-mail addresses were exchanged and the Basque international network of communications was fortified. A salient observation by Basques visiting Jaialdi 2000 from the homeland regarded the lack of division between the “French-Basques” and “Spanish-Basques” and their descendants in the United States. Though this is a phenomenon of the last twenty years, the efforts to integrate and collaborate between Basque Centers in the United States have been the domain of the North American Basque Organizations.

Dave Eiguren, Chair of the 2000 Jaialdi, summarized the phenomenal success of the Jaialdi and the Euzkaldunak and its activities, “This Basque Center has always, and will always, function with unselfish volunteers who care about being Basque. We have a responsibility to the next generation to do what our parents did for us. That’s why we’ll always succeed. We thank our past, and we believe in our future”.

A FEW LAST WORDS

Scientists say the sense of smell is the most powerful invoker of memory. The scents of the desert floor sprinkled with a fresh spring rain, wet wool, canned peaches, lilac bushes, leek and onions, and the smell of mama’s bread are a few of the scents these Basques will never forget. Throughout its more than fifty years, the success of this ethnic social-cultural organization has resulted from volunteer work, private donations, and endless public fundraisers. Established in 1949 with 500 charter members, the Euzkaldunak Incorporated, Boise Basque Center, was created as a place to be utilized for Basque dance practice, to hold dinners for the membership’s social gatherings, to play the card games of *mus* and *briska*, and most importantly to connect with other Basques and share language, food, and camaraderie. Its significance as an agglutinating variable in the Boise area Basque community cannot be overstated. José Luis Arrieta explained, “All my friends are here in this house. All my wife’s friends are here. Lots of bascos would’ve died from loneliness without this Basque house”.

Today the Euzkaldunak, Inc. has nearly 900 registered members who are from all seven provinces of the Basque Country. The factors of chain migration have influenced a very heavy emphasis from Bizkaia, and most are first, second and third generation. Because of the relatively more recent immigration to Idaho there is still much *euskera* spoken by emigrants, and *euskera batua*, the unified official Basque language, spoken by latter generations who have attended classes or have lived in the Basque Country.

The Boise Euzkaldunak Incorporated has continued to sponsor monthly dinners for members and a newsletter sent to 635 families and institutions with information about members and upcoming Basque Center events. There are BINGO games, dances, *mus* and *briska* card tournaments, cooking classes, language classes, dancing classes, photography exhibits, celebrations of *Aberri Eguna*, Santa Agueda and San Ignacio, blood drives, participation in “Paint the Town” and “Rake up Boise”, a Christmas dinner with a food and crafts bazaar, and teams of volunteers for telethons raising money for community service. Athletes also continue to enjoy golf tournaments, *pala*, *pelota*, and racquetball tournaments.



Past Presidents of the Euzkaldunak Incorporated at the 30th Anniversary celebration 1979.
Juanita Ueberuaga Hormaechea Collection. Basque Museum and Cultural Center.

The commendable accomplishments of the dreamers and doers of the Boise area Basque community have resulted from generations of volunteers who have put their collective interests ahead of individual desires. Each generation has also unselfishly put the future generation as the priority in Euzkaldunak, Inc. activities. The Basque Center is currently undertaking its 2002 project: a sidewalk renovation to beautify the front entrance to our *euskal etxea*, Basque home. Hopefully, there will be space to plant a few young lilac trees next to the name bricks of Bicandi, Gamboa, Eiguren, Barquin, Jayo, Bastida, Arana, Garatea, Madariaga, Hormaechea, Achurra...



Euzkaldunak Incorporated Basque Center 2000. Photo by Bryan Day.

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