

Palisade Historical Society
Oral and Video History Project
Interview

Oral History #10

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Place: Palisade Community Center, Palisade

Length: 10:04

Interviewee Geraldine Burdick

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Geraldine's Family and early years

In the early 1920s, her grandparents, Ben and Filomena Rosa, who were living in Cameo, purchased property on old Highway 6. They remodeled the house into a Spanish style and it still stands today at 3847 North River Road.

Three of her mother's siblings graduated from Palisade High School, Dan in 1925, Lena in 1928, and Yolanda in 1930. Yolanda married Edward Day, a teacher and principal at Palisade High School. The property was later sold into separate parcels and all of the peach trees were taken out.

Geraldine Malatche was born October 27, 1926 at her grandparent's house, Dr. Weidlein was the attending physician. Her parents lived in Utah while Geraldine was growing up, but her mother came to Palisade every summer to help her parents with the peach harvest.

Helping her grandparents with harvest

When Geraldine was old enough to swing a hammer, she made wooden boxes. She and the hired man would have a contest to see who could make more boxes in a day. In harvest, she would supply the packers with wooden boxes and wrapping paper. The job she disliked the most was helping to clean out the fuzz bin.

Her grandfather had a flatbed trailer drawn by an old horse, Chub. She enjoyed riding on the trailer to the orchard to pick up baskets of fruit to be brought back to the packing shed. The small orchard above the tracks is where a house now stands. It was her job to make sure no trains were coming so they could safely make it across the tracks with the load of peaches.

In the Early 1940s, her father, Dominic Malatche, purchased the Palisade Cigar Store, a 3.2 beer outlet, from James Marotta who continued to own the Liquor Store. The Cigar Store is now The Livery on Main Street.

Career

Her father knew Wayne Aspinall. Wayne learned she was working for a lawyer in Price, Utah when the Groves and Banks law firm was losing their secretary. Wayne asked if she would be interested in interviewing for the job. Her parents were anxious to get her to move to Palisade. She was hired. The law offices were on the fifth floor of the First National Bank Building in

Grand Junction Jim Groves was in the Service, so Wayne would spend afternoons in Groves office taking care of Grand Junction clients. He spent mornings in his office upstairs in the Palisades National Bank building. On Saturdays they worked in Wayne's office in Palisade.

During World War II, with gas rationing, she would carpool with Beulah Hampton Oberly. There were usually seven in a car, and it was crowded. They would take turns riding in the back seat. Ruth Davis, Mary Debelock, Helen Smith, Helen Heinley, Lucille Hampton, and occasionally Ed Beckwith, Jr. were some of the riders. None were married at the time. After Geraldine married and returned to Palisade, Wayne would call and ask if I would be secretary for the day.

In 1946, Geraldine married and left Palisade so her husband, Bob Burdick, could finish his education. In 1952, they returned to Palisade with their baby son, Bob. They purchased Roberts Hardware on Third Street and soon changed the name to the B and J Supply to end confusion with Roberts Appliance and Furniture, which Howard Roberts continued operating on the other side of Third Street.

Downtown Palisade Businesses

At the time they bought their store, there were many businesses in Downtown Palisade. Most of the buildings are still standing and many businesses have occupied them. You could purchase groceries at different outlets, clothing, drugs, shoes, dry goods, sporting goods, hardware, appliances, lumber, beer and liquor. You had the choice of two barbers to get a haircut, you could see a doctor or dentist, buy insurance, get your shoes repaired, have your clothes cleaned, get your car repaired, or have your tires fixed. You could even buy a Ford car or truck.

Business was good and even better during harvest when so many workers would come to take off the peach crop. Many families came from Kansas and Nebraska to work year after year, and then stay on to can peaches to take home. Busloads of workers came from neighboring states and filled the Labor Camp at the west end of Riverbend Park. The Police Department was small, so Mesa County sent officers to Palisade to handle the evening crowd.

Careers, Public Service and Family

Her husband, Bob, had a teaching certificate. The High School Principal, Claude Hannah, enticed him into finishing the year for a teacher who was in an accident. The next year, he finished the year for a teacher at Clifton Elementary. The following year, he signed a contract that started his 22 year teaching career. ending at Palisade High School teaching Business classes.

They continued to operate the store with the help of two employees, Donna Decker, and Florence Applegarth. It was not an easy decision, but they closed the store in 1969. The building has since been torn down and the space is now part of Family Food Town.

Sometime in the 1970s and early 1980s, her husband, Bob, served on the Town Board of Palisade for 15 years. He passed away in 2002. She was also on the Town Board from 1992 to 2004. When Dean Smith resigned as mayor, she was appointed to serve out the term as mayor.

The Burdicks built their house in 1955 at 556 west 6th Street and she continues to reside there. Their son, Bob, attended Taylor Elementary and graduated from Palisade High School in 1970. He lives in Grand Junction and is a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The United Fruit Growers Association

Geraldine went to work for the United Fruit Growers Association in 1970. Carl Hoisington was the Manager. The offices were at 144 South Kluge Avenue which is now Fruit and Wine Real Estate. The building just west of the office building was the store where sales were made for pruning supplies, sprays, fertilizer, ladders, and packing cartons. That building is now the Distillery. The next building west was where United kept an inventory of all supplies sold to the growers. That building is now used by DeBeque Canyon Winery.

Peach Harvest was a busy, busy time. Many young people were hired to work in the sheds. The start of school was often delayed because of the need for young workers. United had two sheds for packing fruit. The East Shed was located north of the railroad tracks between Kluge Avenue and Main Street. It was torn down and is now a parking lot. The West Shed was west of the office and store and north of the railroad tracks. The front part was a cooler and the back portion was where the fruit was packed. The West Shed is now used by Sara Lee Bakery. The north cooler, now a brewery, housed pallets of packed fruit to be shipped out in refrigerated trucks. Salesmen came from Florida to market the fruit. She retired in 1990 after 20 years.