

Palisade Historical Society  
Oral and Video History Project  
Interview

Oral History #   26  

Date: April 7, 2021.

Place: Palisade History Museum

Length: 90 min. (approx.)

Interviewee Ann Merlino Mendicelli

Phone: N/A

Interviewer Priscilla Walker/Gary Hines

Phone: N/A

**Note:** This summary began when Ann, her younger sister, Margaret, and daughter Jan Pierre came to the History Museum to talk about Ann's life and memories. Ann was 103 in September 2021 and passed away March 22, 2022.

Text in *italics* was not part of the original interview but was added for purposes of clarification.

Angelina "Ann" was the oldest daughter of Joseph and Carmella Massaro Merlino. Ann was born September 26, 1918, in Brookside, CO, where her father was a coal miner. The Merlino family came to Palisade in 1932 when Ann was 14, a freshman at Palisade High School. Her favorite teachers were the Spanish, English, and Latin teacher, Isabel Wiebelt, Jeannie Milleman, math, and Ann Sroaf. Her favorite classmate was Jane Barnes with whom she enjoyed a lifelong friendship.

Ann liked the good water that Palisade had, unlike the water in Brookside.

After graduating in 1936, she began working at the Palisade Drug Store that was owned by Bill Vaughn and later Bob Gebhardt who put in a first-class soda fountain. Ann enjoyed serving milkshakes, coke etc. to good friends like Bob Bancroft and Marion Bowman who came in often.

During the day in harvest in August, they were not busy. But after the workers stopped picking peaches and packing, they came to the soda fountain for milk shakes and soda, especially Cokes.

She also helped in the peach harvest, packing peaches for the United Fruit Growers' Association Before the Edwards Grader, packers had to sort the peaches by size as they packed. After a while, they would get a feel for what size peaches would fit in a box so they would not bruise. A lot of harvest workers came from Kansas and Texas, especially the fast professional packers.

Another job Ann had was selling tickets at the Elberta Theater, though it was not open every night.

Ann met her future husband, Joe Mendicelli, at the Midland Hotel where he was a waiter at the café. (*Which was just east of the bank building in what is now a parking lot*). Peggy Walton owned Peggy's Café for a time and was well known for making delicious pastries and bread.

They were married June 29, 1940, at St. Ann Catholic Church and moved to Los Angeles where their daughter Jo Ann was born on Nov. 13, 1941, three weeks before Pearl Harbor. Returning to Grand Junction, Joe was a long-time railroader in Grand Junction.

Their daughter, Janice, was born in 1946, son, Joseph, was born in 1953, and Christine was born in 1964, completing a beautiful family. While raising her family, Ann was very active in St. Joseph Church. The Altar and Rosary Society, St. Joseph School, Catholic Daughters, the Girl Scouts, and the Elks Ladies Auxiliary. She lost the love of her life on May 30, 2010. Ann would tell everyone she had a “very good life!”