

Oral History report April 15, 2005

Dolores Barsanti
608 West Daly
Walkerville, Montana

Question Summary

What is your maiden name and where were you born?

Who were your parents?

Can you tell me about your parents and grand parents?

What do you know about the mining of the Missoula Avenue area when you were growing up?

Can you tell me what you remember about the entertainment back then?

What do you know of the mines in Walkerville?

When did you move up here?

Well, I heard stories about the depression that it didn't hit this area nearly like it did other areas, because there was still the need for copper and so on, you know, there was at least some fraction of employment in this area. Is that true?

Can you tell me about the housing when you were young? What do you remember about the boarding houses?

What do you remember about the prevalence of drinking in the past?

Can you tell me some about the strikes you remember?

What about the violence during the strikes? What was your opinion on that?

What was the condition of the political arena when you were young?

Was there a lot of corruption in your opinion?

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Outline of Interview

Interviewees' personal information

History of interviewees' family (Ancestors in Butte)

- Silver and sons, Contractors
- Cement and secret formula
- WPA work

Missoula mine and various shafts in area.

Area theatres and stories about them

- Details and personal stories
- Dan Kallin, theatre guardian

Area Hospitals and personal stories

Walkerville Mines

- Alice and Lexington
- Open shafts from independent mines
- Grandfather as an Ore Hauler down Main St

Walkerville Bars

- Location and some info

Other area history

- Seven Eleven
- Shoemaker
- Manzas' market
- Sivelons'
- Cortese Drug Store

Bootlegging and Italian Wines

Long lost residents

- Walkerville people deceased

First Nuns and the IOH Hall

Stage coach ride and walk

Church info and miners union story

Area effects of the Great Depression

The Giant Elk Convention

Fat Jack and pushing peanuts
Bet for rain 29 days in June

Groceries and cost
Ration stamps

Orphan girl mine
Hone clusters
Midnight at noon

Walkerville miners
Housing for miners
Aunts boarding house
Old Grey Ghost

Walkerville housing and personalities

More on wine and bootlegging

North Walkerville Housing

Dalmation dog

End of story

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Dolores, as the second attempt here, I thought I would start with a couple questions. First off, would you tell me a little history about yourself, where you were born, who your parents were, that kind of stuff?

Dolores: Okay, I was born at home at 501 West Galena. My parents were Mr and Mrs. William Silver, and her maiden name was Clark and my maiden name was Dolores Silver, my maiden name was Silver.

Cliff: Okay. You were telling me stories about your mother and father and grandfather.

Dolores: Well, my grandparents, er, It was JR silver and sons, they were contractors here in Butte, they built Washington Jr high school and they built the Newrow drug and warehouse, which still stands. Washington Jr high school, they had to blast it to take it down, it was, the cement was so good in it. They had a formula for cement that nobody else had and nobody else had since, except my brother, and he took it with him when he passed away, nobody has that formula for cement, but they had a formula that lasted forever, and I guess now, they use too much sand in their cement, and, well, poured sidewalks all over the west side and some of them are still standing, with their name on the corner, and they built the bridge in elk park and down in Nissler. Then after my grandparents died and everything, my dad carried on for a while and then the depression came, we had to go on WPA and they used to work two weeks on and two weeks off and get \$72 dollars for two weeks, and mind, there was ten of us kids, but he owned a truck so they hired the truck and him, so we got a little bit more than an ordinary person working.

Cliff: What did you say, he hired out as a driver on a truck or,

Dolores: Yes, it was WPA, odds and ends, road work, you see the stones along the fence you know, along the side of the fence, you know, across the street, well they put in a lot of stuff like that, the WPA worked on roads, you know, that is what they did.

Cliff: My grandfather worked on the Melrose Dam down there.

Dolores: So, even across the street they still got those stones run down 5th street here, there still, and WPA did that, and they also worked on the streets, you know, like the county does paving and that, I think uh, the block on Waukesha or Caledonia, that they had such a hard time putting in the sewer, that was all cement , and that was all put in wpa days.

Cliff: I was reading that they were talking about Missoula avenue used to be, ah, they mined that, but they mined it with high pressure hoses back then?

Dolores: I don't that but I remember there were shafts all over, there was one at the end of this block when my kids were little, I thought they were going to fall in. But they had prospect they had little mines all over, down, ah, in ah, what they call it there, Chicken Flats, that house set in there for so long, they call that chicken flats,

Cliff: Down by B street there?

Dolores: Yah, just down the bottom of 5th street there. They just tore that down. She lived in there, Cunningham lived there for 30 years,

Cliff: Yah, yah. Lot more buildings back then, ah, you were talking about the theatres,

Dolores: Yah, well, yah, I was just thinking, the Empress was the one that burnt on Broadway street, it was there where the pre-release has there parking lot. And then next to it was the old bus depot, but it was in that area, where the empress theatre burnt. And then there was the Amazonia, the Ameriacn, the park, the Montana, and the Fox, there was the Broadway, was a stage show, a stage show was there.

Cliff: And there were some more you didn't even know about, huh? There was one up here, I bet there was one..

Dolores: the Dream, and then that one out on Harrison, but I don't remember the name of that, but it was there where South Side Hardware was.

Cliff: I remember that, I do, I remember that being, there used have a theatre, I don't even know why I know that, but..

Dolores: Then the Rialto, you know; we used to sneak in the Rialto, we'd go in where they had the elevators, and we could sneak in,

Cliff: Which on was the Rialto?

Dolores: Right there on the corner of the park and main, where the bank is.

Cliff: Where the bank is, yah, we used to sneak in the Montana.

Yah, but, boy, Dan Kailin, he was a big man, and he used to catch us by the nap of the neck and throw us out. But then he got to liking me and my sister and my girlfriend, and he used to let us sneak in. Said "your going to get hurt, going in there, some door hit you", but he had greyhounds, he lived out there on timber butte, but he was a big man, and he was around the theatres. And, I was thinking of the hospitals, because one of my kids was born in the Murray, and then there was the Murray, the St. James and the ... Silver Bow.

Cliff: Right, the Silver Bow. Where was the Murray at?

Dolores: It was up on Copper Street. One of my, my oldest was born in the Murray hospital, I had em born at all three of them, one was born at St James, one at the Murray and one at the Silver Bow General.

Cliff: I think I remember that one,

Dolores: Yah, well now it's the rest home.

Cliff: Right, that one I remember, that's where I was born.

Dolores: It was Silver Bow General.

Cliff: Yah, they shut that down, I was old enough to remember that being a hospital.

Dolores: And then they made it a rest home..

Cliff: So there were some mines up here in Walkerville, I mean, a while back, when you could remember.

Dolores: Well yah, they had the alicie going, and the lex and the lex and they opened up the tunnel of the lex down below, that's when I,

Cliff: Those were the only three that up here, the only two at that time?

Dolores: Yah.

There was an old shaft down at the bottom of daly?

Dolores: Yah, where Kate had her store, just across, you know theres an alley or a street goes through there. Right in there some place, yah. Well I guess it would be where whats his name parks his truck now, right around the corner?... Its just an alley but that's where it was, and they had just boards across it. ?? filled that up, and I know there was down below that the kids used to get into, but they thought, I think it was down by Chicken Flats.

Cliff: Yah, I know that, at one time, like, Blue Wing was named after one of the lodes up here, a lot of the streets even were named after the mining lodes.

Dolores: My grandfather, my dads father, hauled ore from the Alice, down over Main Street, and he had eighteen horses, that pulled ore down off, you didn't have to pull it off there, it was all down hill, but, they hit those cobblestones down there, he'd pull on the brakes, he was just a little guy with a little goatee, and he'd pull on those brakes, and try to hold down that load, and the sparks would fly off the cobblestone,

And what mine was that on?

They used to take it from the Alice.

From the Alice?

You see, it was the Walker Brothers, they had the mines up there, that's why its called Walkerville. And Meade, was called Meaderville after Meade. But, and how the Walkerville fire department is a hundred years old. They used to , that's why the, they got the fire department up there, the acm wanted to start a fire department to control you know to protect their mines. But the Walkerville fire department is a hundred years old. And the used to have the horses, and the hoses would be on a big ?? used to run with them... and they'd get to the fire and the horses, cause that's when even Hocking, was , you know was even young when they had them. And Manza's store there, and had two merchantiles, and we had five bars in Walkerville.

I remember 4 bars... (laugh)

Well, there was the Silver Hill, the Hilltop, the friendly, and then, the, what is now pissers palace, and Schonesbergs. See the silver hill was the one the Petroni's houses are. You know, up there, I guess at the 200 block? Right on the corner, that is where the two houses where you walk in and go all the way down to the.. back door. Well, right next door, there was the Silver Hill. Louie Manzanti used to tend bar there.

Cliff: No, I know there was, well, there was a, I remember, some of those businesses up there, even when I was a kid, up by the Hilltop therè, there was a restaurant attached to that, then there, and a seven-eleven next to that.

Dolores: Seven eleven on the corner there, yah.

Cliff: When did that, was that, I mean it was already closed by the time I came of age.

Dolores: I remember that ??... Then the shuemucker, shoemaker was across the street next to Manza's..

Cliff: Yah, the shoemaker, yah that's another in a wooden shack.

Dolores: Oh another one, Sivelon's, next to the bulls, used to have a kind of a beer parlor there. Then we had a we had a .. a drug store with a they used to have a soda fountain in there, was kind of nice if you were going there...

Cliff: Where was that? You mean, across from, right next to the old Walkerville, the old fire hall, the old , the old garage...

Dolores: Corteze, Corteze run it.

Cliff: Yah.

Dolores: It was on the other side of the street. Yah.

Cliff: then there was a place next to it, that .. that opened temporarily when I was a kid, but it was something before that...

Dolores: There were lots of them .. Mrs. Sivelon was kinda cranky with the kids, she'd always run em, you know, she'd not let them hang around, but it was funny, it wasn't an open bar like the bulls you know, Schonsbergs, it was just a few old people used to congregate in there as far as I know, it wasn't around too long, and I know Mrs. Sivelon lives down in the Virginia Apartments, her sons a priest some place, he comes to visit with her so often, but I'm surprised, she's up in age, you know, she's pretty old. She's related to the Sivelons up here.

Cliff: I don't even remember that name.

Dolores: Yah, you know, Emma and I was talking about, when I came up here, theres more vacant lots up here than when I moved up here..

Cliff: When did you move up here?

Dolores: IN the early in the forties.. I have lived up here for forty years.

Cliff: You know, my grandfather moved here prior to even moving to Melrose, they lived up on Toboggan, like in '28, even before my dad was born, no after my father was born, then they lived up there then they lived in Melrose.

Dolores: Cause all those bars were running, Matt Brozovich was running Petronie's when Petronies owned it. But matt run it in the bar, see, there were so many places that used to have wine, the Italians made wine, and even boot leg days you could go to the back door, you could go in and drink the wine at their table, down in Meaderville even before it was legal.

Cliff: Yah, Yah, I don't think it really took ahold here very well. From what I read anyway.

Dolores: But you couldn't bet the Dago Red, you see, my sister had rheumatic fever, she was anemic, she had to eat raw liver, or she could substitute some by Dago Red, the Real red wine that the Italians made, but not everyone could make the same kind of wine, it was purer, you know what I mean, that and that's what we had to get for her. But we used to go down to Meaderville and go around the back doors, you know, we could sit around the kitchen and drink.

Cliff: You know, it struck me that growing up here, there seemed to be a lot of old Italians, but, up here, not sure why that was,

Dolores: they did, Mrs. Petroni's brother, whatchalit lived down the corner, um, "undecipherable..." Can't think of his name now, but he used to go up and down, Dantes brother, Dante, whats Dante's last name...

Cliff: Pinoza? Wasn't it?

Dolores: Something, well that's who, it was his brother that lived down here. On the corner. Hardly anybody left down in this neighborhood but me, you know, the older ones. Reeses mothers gone, and the grandmother, Jimmie Sheas gone, theres nobody, and MRs. Mullaney, they tore down her house next door here, and Kay Church, there, you know, there so many that's gone, theres hardly any of us left up here.

Cliff: Right, there all gone. You know there used to be a far more going concern up here, it was, you know, you said, there a lot of bars and merchantiles and grocery stores and shoe makers, and..

Dolores: My mother remembered when she lived on Montana street, she was going to St patricks, the first nuns that came up here, had to come by stage coach, and they were scared to death, it would go to Daly and Main and it would stop and they would have to walk down to the IOH hall, right by the Catholic, the irish until the churches were built,

Cliff: Where was that at?

Dolores: Up here in Walkerville,

Cliff: The IOH hall? Where was it at?

Dolores: On Main Street.

Cliff: On Main?

Dolores: Yah, North Main, not to far, just around by Centerville. You see, the St Lawrence had a church before, and it burnt. That isn't the original one, the, the nuns' house and everything. But anyway, they had another, they had to build another one, so that isn't the school, its' not the same one, I guess it was the school, but anyway, my kids went to St Lawrence. And then the St Mary's, St Marys, their church used to be on Wyoming Street. But we had, oh, like I say, churches all over this town. We gone backwards, instead of forwards, we have lost so much, schools, churches, hospitals, and everything. And theatres, and there is no place for the kids to go anymore. The Miners Union used to have a dance every weekend, we could go to the dance at the miners union hall. That was a mens club, and my mothers brother put the first refrigerator in there. In the mens club. Yah, we never heard what happened to him after the , the depression came, it changed a whole lot of families. He left town and he went to work for Westinghouse, used to send money to gramma and when he couldn't send it anymore, we didn't hear anymore. We don't know to this day..

Cliff: Well, I heard stories about the depression that it didn't hit this area nearly like it did other areas, because there was still the need for copper and so on, you know, there was at least some fraction of employment in this area.

Dolores: But there were still a lot cause my uncle had to leave here on account of it. Then he was the one that put the elk on Broadway street during the elks convention and the bridge on Montana Power that went over, they had a thing in there that he fixed like a little creek, and a bridge went over it, and all that stuff just lasted during the Elks convention and then they tore everything down.

Cliff: What did they make that elk out of?

Dolores: Oh, I don't know....

Cliff: Was it wood?

Dolores: Well, skins and stuff, yah, it was a big one, you seen pictures of it. And they had a stone, in the rear end, under the tail of it, it was a big one, somebody stole that, it was worth a lot of money.

Cliff: Oh, really.

Dolores: My mother used to talk about Fat Jack had a push a peanut across Broadway Street with his nose. With uh, if they, they had a bet on it, if it didn't rain 23, 28 days in June. ... He had to push a peanut across Broadway Street with his nose (laugh). They had a lot of characters my mother talked about. My husband worked in the mines, and he's been gone just over 50 years. You know \$14000 would be low, but they only made, for a year, \$1400, that he filed on. \$1400 a year.

Cliff: Yah, yah...

Dolores: But, ah, we went to the grocery store, and if our grocery bill at the end of the week was \$12, that was a lot. You would get 2 pounds of hamburger for a quarter, and 10 cents a loaf for a big loaf of bread, and eggs were cheap, everything was cheap, and then they came out with those trading stamps, you were only allowed so many, you know.

Cliff: Ration stamps?

Dolores: Ration, yah. But, really, what happened with the copper hill, with the copper deal, was Chile, that copper was cheaper to buy copper in Chile. When that happened, it took a long time for us to revive. And all the mines that were going... gollie. Art worked in the Leonard in Meaderville, and he worked at the Steward, and the bel, Ah, not the Belmont, but the Anselmo. That is where he got hurt, at the Anselmo.

Cliff: They said that one of the ones up here, was one of the popular ones, I don't remember which one now, cause it was so much cooler to work in than the other mines.

Dolores: Well, that's the one they say, the one, the only one was the Orphan Girl was the cool mine, and all the rest were hot, they been talking about that, but I heard about that. That's why the Orphan girl, they call it the orphan girl, she so far away from the rest of the mines, you know, and it was the only cool mine around, they said. But the Stewart, it was supposed to be the hottest one. It was really hot, and they built the houses in clusters all around the mines you know, cause they had no showers in the mines. So, they'd have to go home, they would come out soaking wet, you know, working in the mines. Some of them, with drips, the water was pouring down on them, you know, coming out of the sides of the drifts, and the raises you know, and they would be hot, or they would be wet, and they would go home, and they didn't go home to showers, they would go home to tubs, or wash tubs or whatever they could get in, but they had no showers then. and the smoke was so bad, when they would fire up in the morning, at 8 o'clock, my mother lived up on North Main, or Montana, so, my grandma would have to put her across the street and let her hang on the fence and she would feel her way to Saint Patricks. And then at four O'clock in the afternoon, they would fire up again, and the smoke was so bad they even had bells on the horses, because they couldn't see them.

Cliff: Yah, I heard that it was so dark during the day, it looked like the middle of the night.

Dolores: Well, it was just early in the morning, and then it would clear out a little bit, and just about it got a little clear, they would fire up again. But, the houses were built so close together, you could reach over and shake hands with your neighbor. They were, you know, they was just all in clusters, and some of them still are, you know, down around the Con and..

Cliff: Yah, I think everywhere, you know, you look at, I think these ones on Daly are more spread out than other areas,

Dolores: They cant survey this, because everybody is over a foot on everybody elses property. Its not true, they don't have a true survey of the houses, that's what they said.

Cliff: Now, I know, looking over an old picture of Walkerville, looking over the Terrace, up Main Street around 1900, and it was building on building on building..there was one next to my dads on Main Street, it was like a three story building, boarding house.

Dolores: yah, yes.

Cliff: I vaguely remember that, I must not have been very old when they tore it down.

Dolores: Oh, they had boarding houses all over, they, well, they had so many miners, and a lot of them came from other places, other countries, that come to work at Butte. They weren't all from Butte. Of course there were a hundred thousand people lived in Butte at one time, and ten thousand miners. But a lot of them came here that didn't have families. They migrated into here and they lived, there was rooming houses, in fact my aunt, she run a rooming house, and she was,

and some of those guys, they would get out and drinking a little of that hooch, you know, that moonshine, and they would get a little rambunctious, and she would take a poker to them. She'd beat them with a poker, they were scared to death. Of Course, she was a twin to my grandmother, but, she was just rugged, just opposite of my grandmother, was meek and used to complain, "yah, I always had to go home and do Maggies work, she, she was so delicate, Theo, she was burly and meaner than the dickens, she didn't back down from anybody, she ran an boarding house, and then they had the one, down on Copper Street, where that bed and breakfast is there?

Cliff: Yah.

Dolores: that was a rooming house. Had boaring houses all over.

Cliff: I can even remember, there was, you know, there was the "old grey ghost" , up there, I guess it was a hotel.

Dolores: Yah.

Cliff: And a boarding house at one point.

Dolores: Then they said, yah, the ghost.

Cliff: I don't know, that is what we called it. But I don't know if it had a name or what.

Dolores: Oh, it must a, but it was the grey ghost. Uh, Holmes, used to tease em, tell em about the ghost, but they used to ah, up north, they used to wanted to see em , well I would put them in my car and take them up to see where the hermit was. But he was always exaggerating, had everybody scared to pass the grey ghost. And then, Tommy Tracy, his car got away from him, and he landed up side down in there, and I, the girl got hurt pretty bad, with glass, I don't know how many stitches were in here, she was a dandy. And I got her in my car to take here down to the hospital, and Monk Cannon, I'd gone down and I was so nervous, cause everybody got in the car with me, we took her instead of taking an ambulance, you didn't call an ambulance in those days. You didn't even to go the doctor or nothing. The doctor made house calls, in those days. But anyway, instead of turning down Idaho Street, I missed the street, and Monk hit me in the head with a flashlight. (laugh) He was madder than hell because, he wanted to drive and it was my car, and I was going to drive. But anyway, that Tommy Tracy, he ended up down in there. But that was vacant there as long as I was up here.

Cliff: Was it? It was vacant for a long time there then, cause it was vacant and up when I was a kid.

Dolores: Oh, yah. But nobody was in it for years and years and years. And I lived here a long time. OH, it was a long time.

Cliff: Like I said, the one next to my parents house, that was, I remember it being a giant looming building there, and you can see it in that picture there that it totally takes over.

Dolores: Now who was it that had the candy store there next door? Mama Deeni?

Cliff: I don't know.

Dolores: There was a candy store next door, I think one of those houses along there, used to be a candy store didn't it?

Cliff: I don't know, not in my lifetime.

Dolores: You don't remember what was next door to your mothers house there?

Cliff: Yah, there was just that huge three story and that was right next door. That is the yard now.

Dolores: There was a candy store there, and I thought Mama Deeni

Cliff: There was.....(blank spot), ... I don't know what that was.

Dolores: It might have been a stable, because they had so many.

Cliff: It might have been a blacksmiths shop, is what I had in my mind,

Dolores: Ah huh.. Well, I know Mama Deeni had that store, and she always did a little bootlegging too I thought.

Cliff: Well, there were, on the other side of the street there were those three houses, that were, you know, Lauras, and then, Salvagni's and the one next door to it. And I don't remember who lived in that one, but they were all carbon copies of each other. And then the bar and the restaurant and then the Mercantile.

Dolores: Gee, I wish the heck, like I always say..(laughing) ...

Cliff: Can't remember everything, huh...

Dolores: But yah, the candy store was in there, because of Mama Deeni..

Cliff: Was it in the bottom of that big building?

Dolores: Because there was nothing, there was just the shack, the house you know, just like yours. And it was a candy store. It was right down from the, .. I think there was a lot in-between.

Cliff: Well, there was an empty lot there that had that wooden thing in it, whatever it was, and then there was , you know, ah, Chaizers house, which is my sisters now and, my dads house and that great big monolith. Yah, you know, what, there might have been enough room for a little tiny one in there, but,

Dolores: It was just a little house, just a little house. And it was a candy store. And it was Mama Deeni, cause she kept candy for the kids, but I think she did a little bootlegging.

Cliff: Yah, that was well before my time,

Dolores: There was a lot of bootlegging around here.

Cliff: I think like every Italian, like you said they all made some version of, of Dago red or grappa, or something.

Dolores: And you know, North Walkerville, there was a lot of houses, up there too. From the Lex, you know, the people who worked in the Lex, and there was Ruby Street and Pearl Street, and the streets up there. And Ann Tamietti's brother, McCafferin, he lived up here, and him and Hocking and them run around together, oh them and Tom Collins and all of them. Anyway, Anyway, he moved to Whitehall, he had a cow and the cow got up on the railroad tracks and got killed, and he went to court and he told the judge that it wiped out his whole herd. (Laugh)

Cliff: I believe that.

Dolores: They were characters. We had a lot of characters up here. Potsi had one of those, what do you call them, the spotted dogs?

Cliff: Oh, a Dalmation, yah.

Dolores: Dalmation. And they would get drunk, and the dog would nudge them when they would get off the road, and so, they would get drunk and the dog would actually drive home. One time, I don't think it was Collins, but, ... oh, Ned Holly. The cops stopped him, and he was driving, the cops stopped him, and said he was driving bad, and he said, no, I wasn't, the dog was driving. He insisted to the cop, the dog was in the drivers side. But the cop got him pulled over and he must of moved over, because the dog was behind the wheel.

Cliff: Liquor was a lot more prevalent then than it is now, I mean, everybody drank and drank a lot, from what I remember.

Dolores: Oh, yah,

Cliff: And I am sure it was worse and not better...

Dolores: Oh, it was right until not ?? all closed now, Now there is only Pissers. The only one open now.

Cliff: You know that was the basis of most of the stories up here was somebody drinking too much and doing something stupid.

Dolores: Oh, they were, and I mean, and there were that bunch that run, Collins and them they were.. something else.

Cliff: My dad was always running someone in for this or that.

Cliff: Well, I think that will do it. Thank you Dolores, for your time.