

Interviewed in her home 11/20/85 by Teresa Jordan

1982--living in Bend, OR. Got call from Millers. Want to come manage a bar? They had chance to buy bar from old people. Jana had been working for newspaper in Bend, but it folded so she was bartending. Liked the work, found it a good way to get into the social life of a community. Thought managing a bar sounded like a good idea. Also, father was dying of cancer, Jana wanted to get back to Montana, felt sort of trapped in Bend.

Knew Barbara Miller and Paul Driscoll from Missoula journalism school. J grew up in Lodge Grass, about 350 miles from Butte.

Moved home for summer of '82, drove dad to cancer treatments. Moved to Butte in Sept. of 82.

Owners of bar--Paul Driscoll, Barb Miller (Paul and Barb are married), Mark Miller, and Jana.

How feel about starting business at that time? Jana had met Bill Moen and Mindy Quivik at Butte Booksellers, and they were so encouraging about starting new business--they had started one year before.

Idea of bar--historic bar with entertainment. Butte had been loaded with entertainment at one time. Wanted a place for Butte to live again, for people to let it out. Felt that the Silver Dollar could fill a void.

Time in Butte before moved here--drove through Butte all the time when going to Missoula, knew Paul and Barbara when they were living in the Maley Apt House--sort of a flop house for all of us. Had partied a lot in Butte--at Luigi's, the Roadhouse, the New Deal, other places.

Opened the bar for Halloween, then closed for 2 months to work on it. Opened the week before Christmas for Paul's 10-year reunion. The SD had always been pretty much of a dive--pretty rough. Red light district, China Town. It had seen the seamier side of life.

Still have people come in, old guys, "looking for Ginger." Don't really know who she was, except that she was a girl who worked there.

Oldtimers continued to support the SD. Had a little trouble with bikers right at first, but no longer. SD changed from workingman's bar (open in the morning) to nightclub. Slow at first, but the small business people in town gave lots of support. Paul did lots of graphics work at first. Lots of advertising.

Clientele is a real mix--business people, working people, older, younger. Called the "relevant bar"--whatever that means. the bikers had called it the "granola bar."

Philosophy--real important to bring in jazz and blues. Not really top 40. But have classical music, theater, readings, art shows. Susan Rostow (Butte's artist in residence 1982-83 and 1983-84) had Art in Secret Places, and Found Art.

The music didn't make money at first but SD has earned respect. Now people know that it will be a pretty good show. And have had help around state. Like Kelley Roberti (sp?) in Bozeman helps with bookings, knows SD's capacity, what it can afford. Often, national acts will give good price. And musicians seem to like to play Butte--enjoy the people here, are surprised to find so much support for music here.

Probably biggest coup was Valerie Wellington, Chicago Blues singer. Has been here twice and will be back again..

Jana is proud of business--it's come a long way. Still not making money. At first, figured that would be in 3 to 5 years. Now, figure 5 to 8.

History of place: Knows it has been the Silver Dollar since 1934. Probably a speakeasy during prohibition. Front part was once a carriage house. Jana has found records from the midget creamery in the basement--thinks it might have been a bootleg operation. SD was a legitimate boarding house in 40's and 50's and through '63. But many have told her that in later period, "girls" worked there. Called the Lucky 7. Jana et al have found dozens of pairs of high heeled shoes from the 40's to the 60's, dresses.

Changes--lots of work inside, now working on outside. The back bar was original, but it had been painted green--that light, institutional green. Petition at front--phone as you come in door, petition that went to ceiling. Had mirror set up so bartender could see who came in. DARK! and up front where window seat is now, had janitor's closet. Jana remembers the day the partition came down--light just streamed through. First time bar had seen sunlight in don't know how long.

Lots more room--up stairs, and in the back. Would like to get back shops rentable.

Put in food? Thought about it, but would be hard to get it to code. And Jana is not a restaurateur.

Tape 1, Side B

Bar management is hard. Always pressure to drink and stay up late. Lot of pressure to join in on fun. But people drinking less. Think there is less peer pressure to drink too much. Try to cater to those who don't want to drink alcohol, too. Always one of our big desires--not have pressure on people to have to drink. Like those people to come in anyway.

Prognosis on Butte? Will be just fine. If McDonald's thinks it

will, so do I. Just lots of people are talking about a comeback. Have had some bad years--lots of people move out. But lots of people have moved in, too.

Bar started w/ \$17K initial invest. \$15K on bldg, \$2,000 improvements. Couldn't have done that elsewhere. Good thing about Butte--cheap to live here. People live on less here and are happy. Missoula is very pricey, very cliquish. Not the case here.

Division between new and old? Paul is from Butte, which is good. We are all from Montana, which is OK with people. We have been well accepted. But when first opened, rumor went around that we were from California--that may have hurt us.

Jana m. Jim Griffin last summer (1984). He raised in Great Falls and Billings. Took him over a year to find a job. Still looking--working part time as printer for the Standard. Checking out all sorts of opportunities--would like to get into Small Business Incubator that is starting up.

Wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Have bought home.

Frustrations? Money is tight. Hard to pay bills. Bar started out with three working partners, but have since had to hire people--and that puts business on different level. Have to be more successful, bring in more money.

What works in Buttes favor? Revitalization. Jana is happy with efforts going on--the changes in appearance. For a long time, things really looked bleak here. Unboarding of bldg has been very good. More useable space. The money that is available to facades and revitalization is good.

Silver Dollar qualifies. Jana doesn't know if they will use it. Must be done union; jana thinks they have enough people working for them who can do the work that it would probably be cheaper to do it that way than go union, even if only pay half.

What think about unions? Union days were before Jana's time here. Thinks they may be well on way to being over. Unions outlived themselves. What started out as a great idea ended up hurting Butte. Don't see harm in having non union if they can do the work.

One thing that impressed Jana is that people here are willing to work. They are not sitting around raking in benefits. They want to work, will do anything.

What think about Our Lady of the Rockies? Thinks it's pretty weird.

Dennis Washington? He's got the money and if he's willing to spend it on Butte, we'll see what he can do. I just hope it's not another Anaconda move. All these things seem to indicate

that somebody knows something that I don't know. Why are all these people suddenly interested in spending millions in a community that is supposedly dying? Something is going on.



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Restrictions:

11-23-85
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