

Oral History Assignment: Butte History HIST 3956
Interviewee: JULIUS P DALLASERRA
Interviewer: Dana Bunney
Interview Date: Saturday, October 28, 2006
Location: Dallaserra Ranch, Brown's Gulch Road, Butte, MT
Tape: 1 cassette, approximate total length 50 minutes

THE INTERVIEWEE.

Julius P Dallaserra is a 68 year-old rancher in the Brown's Gulch area of Butte, Montana. He is one of the last "old time" ranchers left in Butte. Pete, as he is known as, was born and raised in the "gulch", as he refers to the Brown's Gulch and Sheep Gulch area. He was born to Italian immigrants, Anthony and Solastica Dallaserra, the fourth of eight children. Pete was educated in the Butte schools, served in the Army, and worked for mining, construction, and butcheries in Butte. He was married, had 1 son, and later divorced. With so many brothers and sisters, Pete is an uncle to many, many nieces and nephews, and a grandfather to two granddaughters and one grandson. Many family members rely on Pete for help with numerous problems, and he is always willing to share his knowledge and guidance.

I chose Pete to interview because of the many stories he has told me in the past. He could go on for hours with how things have changed in the gulch, and sometimes not for the better. One story he told was how there was a road that went through some adjacent property that led to a chicken dinner restaurant. He always had a twinkle in his eye when he told a story, and you knew he really enjoyed telling you how it was back before your day.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW.

The interview took place at Pete's ranch in Brown's Gulch at his kitchen table. The time was seven o'clock at night, after a hard day of rounding up cattle. Pete asked that his companion, Barbara Mengon, sit with us at the table to help him if he needed assistance remembering something. His sister, Theresa Diaz, and his son, Petie, were in the front room discussing Theresa's trip to Italy that she returned from the day before. Pete is usually very busy during the day, and had been sick and in the hospital for a couple days in late September. This was the first day that worked for the two of us in about a month.

Pete was a bit nervous to do the interview, and was not himself for much of the tape. His answers were very short, and that is not like him. One thing that was on his mind was politics, since every other commercial on TV is promoting a democrat or republican. You can tell that with some of his answers. When I first asked Pete if I could interview him about his life as a rancher, he had asked me what it was that I wanted him to talk about. My reply was whatever he wanted people to know about what it was like growing up on a ranch in the forties and fifties, and what it is like now, handing the reins of the ranch over. Pete is a vivid storyteller, and some of the better stories, he told once the tape was turned off. If I could do it over again, I would set up a video camera instead of a tape recorder so you could see the animations to go along with the story. That is the

real Pete, and when you see him in action, you would understand what it is that I am talking about.

Things I learned about from this interview would be how his dad converted the old Dodge into a bus to transport the children to school. I never knew that. I always thought that he attended the old school house on Brown's Gulch Road. I also never knew how it was that he got drafted. He has told stories about his tour in Korea, how he was separated from his group, and how he and the other servicemen survived during the war. I also never knew that he bought land and cows with his brother, Eddie. I always was under the impression that Eddie had a separate business, and Pete did, too. I really enjoyed listening to Pete, he can sure tell a story.

THE INTERVIEWER.

Dana Bunney is an untraditional student at Montana Tech of the University of Montana. She is taking Butte History to fulfill her credits in History, and only needs 5 more classes to graduate in Business. Dana works at MSE, Inc. in Butte, Montana, for 15 years, and has a son, Zach.