

TAPE #17GLADYS SPINETTI

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My Fater was a miner from the time he was 18 years old. His Father came here in 1869 and my Father came here in 1889. He worked from that time until he died in 1938. He worked all that time in the Mother Lode mines. And he loved it. We moved to Oakland in 1918 and he couldn't wait to get back. I remember the morning he got a letter from Mr. Christianson; he was asked to come back and open the Bunker Hill Mine again. That was in 1921, and my Dad couldn't pack fast enough. He didn't answer the letter; he just came.

(You made reference to the mine the Fremont came from. What was it?)
It was the Grover.

My Dad worked at the Grover in 1889. When he came here. It was open then. And the Fremont was probably sunk sometime in the 1890's.

(did anyone complain about the mine conditions?)

Yes, but you couldn't do anything about it. In those days the men worked, and they worked seven days a week. Sometimes they worked ten hours a day. Lots of times my Father worked ten hours. Now, my Father wouldn't work in the Argonaut Mine. They wanted him to be foreman there at one time. This was probably 45 years ago (1932?) and he came over and went down in that mine. And he said, any miner who has to work without a shirt on wasn't for him. He said it was no place for a human being, and he didn't take the job. He said it was the hottest mine he was ever in.

(You made reference to a disaster in the Fremont Mine. What happened?)

Eighteen men burned to death. It was between 1900 and 1910.

My Father went to work there in 1910, and it was before that.

I was very small then, but I can remember the grief.

I lived in Amador City at the time of the Argonaut disaster.

(You grew up in Sutter Creek?)

I lived there until I was 12. Then we moved to the Fremont Mine, but my Dad didn't take us there right away. He went there to work in 1910 and we didn't move there until 1911. I lived with my Grandmother and went to school a couple of years and then went to the Mine when I was 12 years old.

We lived right at the Mine. Lived there for six years. There were 11 families there with a boarding house. And it was just like one big family. We celebrated our Christmas' together, and valentine's day and everything together. I had a wonderful childhood, and I think about teen-agers today---we had no problems them. Because we made our own good times. We used to have hard time parties and singing around the piano. Sunday nights we ~~xx~~ would sit on the front porch and talk all the time. We didn't even have to have a bottle of coke to be happy. It was just a simple time; growing up.

I have three brothers, and that was wonderful.

On Sunday evenings---and this was almost a ritual---we'd go over to the mine where the Gallis Frame is, and they had a tram way that ran ~~up~~ into the mill. The Fremont came one way, and the Grover Mine came the other way. And we'd walk right across the tramway, right over to the Grover Mine. Then we'd turn around and go back again.

We could only do it on Sunday because that's when the mule wasn't going back and forth. He hauled the ore, you know.

And on Sunday afternoons we always had a ballgame. Both the boys and the girls played; I fell down more times.

I was in my teens before I saw Jackson. Because, you know, we had no transportation. My Father bought his first car in 1914. It was a model T Ford. It was heavenly, even if it took us four hours to go to Sacramento. We had to wear ~~bankers~~ dusters and things over our heads. And we always had a blowout. It wouldn't seem like Sunday afternoon, if we didn't have one. Or push the car up the hill.

And every Saturday night was a dance. And we had hard time parties and dressed up in the most awful looking clothes. And birthday parties; we celebrated everybody's birthday. It was really a happy time. We made our own fun.

And as for sex---we never even thought of it. And if the boys did they kept it to themselves.

(Where did you go to school?)

My first years were in Sutter Creek. I went there to the fifth grade, and I finished school in Drytown. That's when I went to school in the surrey. I walked for the first years, but the last year I went in the surrey.

We used to play hookey every spring. As soon as the grass came through the ground, and it was a beautiful day, we'd play hookey. We had to stay afterschool for a week, but the 20 minutes we had to stay was worth it.

And it was only the children from the Fremont Mine who did it!

(As a child, what were your chores?)

Everyone learned to work. My brother Arthur, he went out and piled wood. And he also got a job at the hotel taking out beds. All the beds had bed-bugs you know. He'd clean the mattresses with turpentine.

They had to do that every spring. Any kind of a job that the boys could do, they'd do.

I remember the first money my oldest brother made. He bought my mother an electric iron, because she used those old flat-irons. The boys were real thoughtful of their parents in those days, (Did the kids read much?)

I'll tell you, they didn't read much. But our mothers read to us. That would go on for quite a few years, and we loved it.

And we never went anywhere without each other. We'd go on picnics and we were always together. And we'd go camping. And when we went to the movies, we went as a family.

...I was wondering about the stores. And I worked on a list that is walking down Main Street in Sutter Creek.

...Now, the old building I'm going to talk about is the building between the Pioneer Bar and the Mother Lode Market. Ed Kelly owned the building from 1899 to 1905. In the front part of the building Kelly had a dry goods store. In the rear of the store, his sister Kate Delahyde, and her daughter, Mamie, had a millinery shop.

In those days the hats were hand-made. Mr. Sanguinetti and Mr. Ginnocchio purchased the building around 1905. Fred and Etta Budy, with Ida Ginnocchio Gibson, opened an ice cream parlor, but it didn't do too well. Lina & Spagnoli bought the business from them and made it a tea room. It was very successful; I remember little round tables set for two or four people. Courting couples used to go there, and that's why I remember it so well. And all the court house people ate there.

(Can you tell us about the Fremont Mine boarding house?)

It had about forty boarders. It was just across from where the homes were. And right up on the hillside were the bunk-houses. They had three

bunk-houses. They got up at six in the morning and had their breakfast. And on holidays Mrs. Molinini, she was the cook, would sent all the families a platter of Ravioli for Christmas. Every year---and if it was some other holiday, she'd send us something. Sometimes it was rice, sometimes it was ^opalenta, and sometimes it was fried chicken. And that was living in a small community of just eleven families.

We had Italians and we had Spanish men---we had one Spaniard there who played the piano.

(What did you eat for breakfast?)

Oh, we had ham and eggs and bacon and eggs and hot cakes, just like now. Sometimes they's eat six eggs. Those were working men.

(Showing pictures:)

This is the Little Amador; right in Amador City. This is the Keystone Mine, and it's right in Amador City.

And this is the Gover Mine, and they had a cyanida plant right there. The Gover was kept open so if anything happened in the Fremont they could go in the other way.

And here is the Fremont; they had a big fire there, and all that's left is the Gallis Frame.

When I was a little girl I went down to what is called the lighthouse. This place generated the electricity for the Sutter Creek people. It was right across the street from the Methodist Church. We would sit all in a row, under this porch, waiting for the people to come out of church. When the Cornish miners came out they would begin to sing. It was the most beautiful singing you ever heard in your life. My grandfather, Samuel Henry Hoskins, came to this country from Cornwall in 1869. He left his family in New Jersey and came to Amador County to work in the Gover Mine. When his son, Samuel,

My Father, became 18 years old he too came west to work in the Mines. Young Samuel married Cordida Hoskins in Sonora and Gladys was born in Sutter Creek in 1899. Both of ~~My Grandfathers~~ my Grandfathers died in mine accidents. Samuel Henry Hoskins died in the copper mine between Ione and Martell. The skip got away from the engineer and fell to the bottom of the shaft. Her other Grandfather, William Hocking, died in the Sonora Mine at 31 years. He was working his last shift before returning to Cornwall to get his wife and family. She had sold all her furniture and was all packed and ready to come. In spite of these accidents my Father was fascinated by the mines and never enjoyed any other kind of work. He served a long career as a mine supervisor.

When I was small there were a lot of Cornish people here. But then when the first war came, it just swept everybody out of the county. The mines closed and there was nothing for them. And the second war cleaned out what was left.

The Italians came here very early. Most of them ranched. And homesteaded. The Slovonians came in, and they were miners and they had their houses of prostitution too. I moved to Jackson in 1948 and everything was wide open then. It was really something. I'm glad they closed down! We had a big scandal in 1951/52, where the police were giving people little cards and telling them where to go.

(If Jackson was wide open why didn't it turn into a place like stateline?) Well, then called it Little Reno. But they kept it sort of down. When it was really booming was when they were building salt springs reservoir. The town was booming then, because every man on the project ended up in Jackson.

We lived in Sutter Creek at the time, and we'd drive over at night and just sit around and watch the goings-on.