

Argonaut High School  
Oral History Interview  
Biographical Sketch

Subjects full name: Teresa Dean Gonzalez  
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Telephone: Home: 223-2055 Work: 223-1786  
Date of birth: 7/3/49 Place of birth: Sacramento  
Date of marriage: 10/26/70 Place of marriage: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of spouse: \_\_\_\_\_  
date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject occupation: Waitress  
Spouse occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of mother: Pat Giurlani  
Date of birth: 7/29/29 Place of birth: Grand Junction, CO  
Occupation: Hostess

Name of father: Paul Giurlani  
Date of birth: 7/19/28 Place of birth: Sacramento  
Occupation: Bartender

Subject's children and dates of birth: Angelo Gonzales 7/22/72  
Andrea Franklin 12/8/78

Subject's brothers and sisters and dates of birth: Phillip Giurlani, 8/13/50  
Joe Giurlani, 8/12/52 Alicia Miller 12/19/53

Subject's primary and secondary education: (Schools attended and dates) Jackson

Subject's higher education: (Schools attended, graduation date, majors, degrees) Sac State 2 years

Subject's profession or occupations: (Job, dates, where)

Military service: (Branch, rank, dates of service)

Civic and community activities: (Offices held, activities, etc.)

Lions, Rotary, Womens Network, many from work

Miscellaneous information:

Prepared by:

Date:

Project:

Interview of Teresa Dean Gonzalez

A: Interviewer

B: Interviewee

A: Did you know anyone that worked in the mine?

B: Well, my grandfather worked in the mine and my grandmother cooked for the miners. She had several boarders, I think at one time she had sixty boarders. She had a bunk house and they worked 24 hours a day. They worked in three eight hour shifts. Each room had three men in it. One man would be sleeping for eight hours, one man would be recreating for eight hours, and one man would be working for eight hours. She cooked nine meals a day, seven days a week and she did their laundry and their bedding, and all the other things that that involved. I knew quite a few of the gentlemen, I lived with my grandmother. As you can see by my history there (referring to paper), my mother had four kids in four years. She just couldn't handle it, she was 24 and had four kids and none of us were in school yet. I was given to my grandmother which was right next door. We lived right there and she lived right here, so I stayed with her. My brother stayed right across the street with a gal named Any Castletcha, Philip the brother that's fifteen months younger than me.

In those days if you didn't speak Italian or Spanish you didn't communicate with

anyone. So it was a education just living, you didn't have to go to school to get an education. I knew quite a few of the miners but by the time I was aquatinted with them the mine was defunct, it wasn't active at that time. There were a lot of stories and a lot of memories. We used to play up there at the mine when we were kids and I know quite a bit about it. There's 90% of the gold left in the mine right now, but they can't reserve it because of the fact that it cost too much to take the water out, for one thing, and then where would they put it because the EPA is stringent upon the codes that they have. I think the Kennedy Mine will probably remain a historical landmark for quite a while, it will never be reactivated.

My grandmother had other boarders too from the other mines around here, she had some from Sutter Creek. When she first came out here she worked at Maloney's, there is a silver mine over there and then she worked in Amador City. At that time she worked for room and board for her and her kids. When she was well off enough to start her own little business, I think she said she charged the boarders \$2.50 a week for room and board and laundry. Most of the people in that time couldn't read or write, my grandmother couldn't even read or write Italian. She never went to school so it was different. She valued an education, she thought an education was the best thing that could happen because she didn't have one, she had to work real hard all her life.

A: Do you remember all the stores and stuff? Was there grocery stores and restaurants and all that kind of stuff here?

B: Well let's see, right down the street here was the Chicovilla Store. See this used to



be downtown Jackson. We're located in Jackson Gate right now, but this used to be downtown. The reason they call it Jackson Gate is there used to be a toll gate right here between the rocks. In order for people to pass through that gate they had to pay a toll, and this was to the Massa family. This property was land-granted to five brothers, the Massa brothers, and my grandmother bought it from them. This property has been, I guess, established officially since 1849. It was procured by the Massa brothers and my grandmother bought it for them around the turn of the century. So, it has been in existence since 1849 till 1997 and it's only been a two party owner, the original owners and my grandmother. Anyway, to get back to the Jackson Gate Road, the road came through right along the creek here and there was a gate between those two rocks down there. In order to maintain the roads they had to pay a toll to get through and they paid it to the Massa family. Then on the highway up there where it says Vogan Toll Road, there used to be another road up there and the Vogan's owned that. The Vogans owned the right of passage to the property and in order to maintain the road they charged a pittance and they had a gate and in order to pass through the gate they had to pay a toll. Right along here there's Chicazola's Store, that was one of the first general stores. In fact Teresa's Place right now as we see it as a restaurant, but it's origin was a general store, this was the Massa General Store. This front part right here, and it was all built out of this kind of rock, this is the original, it goes from the basement to the attic. When my grandmother bought it she sort of added on, different parts at different times. They had everything from shotgun shells to facial powder and food to shoes, you know. It was just

a general store. Then as time passed by, they changed the road, they made them a little more sophisticated and commerce moved down towards where Jackson is now. The town of Jackson was called "vocalia" because the miners used to drink a lot and they would pile their bottles like a high mountain of bottles, they'd just toss them out there and so that was the nickname of Jackson. There were several businesses down there at that end. Now between Jackson Gate and Jackson there was a place called Newmanville. Newmanville is right down here where I live. Remember where the Wheel Inn used to be and the Country Square Motel is right there? Okay that's starting to be Newmanville there, that is what that used to be called. You should get a hold of a gal named Caroline Campbell.

A: Yes, we work with her.

B: She would know all about this. She knows all the little idiosyncrasies and the little details and all the things that were pertinent historical information. My information is my personal, the things I have personally heard in my lifetime, I didn't see any of it, I saw the end of it, the end of an era you might say. I had boarders at that time that were fairly old that had worked in the mine. My grandmother at one time was a bootlegger and she was shut down by the FBI and my grandfather took off to Italy because he didn't want to be caught up in it. So he took all the family holdings and took off to Italy. That's a real neat story I don't know if you want to get off on a tangent like that.

At any rate, My grandmother had a lot of the old boarders around but they still weren't working in the mine because the mines became defunct. They were just sort of hanger-rounders because they didn't have any other place to go they didn't have

convalescent hospitals in those days. They didn't have homes to go to, or wives to go to, or family to go to so they just stayed at the boarding house, stayed around here. It was really neat though because they had a lot of neat stories to tell and they all their own little rituals; they all got up at a certain time, they all smoked a certain cigar, or a certain pipe, you know. It was really interesting actually. I felt out of it as a youngster because my life was completely different than anybody else's. It wasn't like I'd get up in the morning and had breakfast and had the "normal" family style life. My family was extended I had a lot of older people, I grew up with older people, so it was interesting.

A: Is most of what you know like stories and stuff or like oral tradition stuff or what?

B: You want to know about old traditions? As far as food or as far as what would happen, well it used to get so cold down here the miners would take their teeth out and put them in water over night and they would be frozen in the glass the next morning. You know things like that, that kind of stuff. If you got lice they'd tell you to take a bath of this kind of cigars in order to get rid of it, you know. Anyway, other old stories? There's a million old stories. Each person that you met had a story, of how they got here, what their history was, what motivated them to come here, what motivated them to go down in the mine and dig down there and sweat like dogs. They said that there was more money that went into the mine than come out of the mine. You know, setting it up and all the bureaucracy that went into it. A lot of times I think I got it rough, but when I look back on those days I think if they can make it, I can make it. Cause I mean there was no electricity, there was no ice, there was no plumbing, there was nothing. In fact this picture



here, they didn't have the kind of state of the art things that we have today, it was just raw living.

A: Evo Vasilovich showed us this picture, in fact this is his dad.

B: Yes, there is a lot of people here that are still alive, Morton Sullivan...

A: Well he went through it and he could only remember like two or three people that were still alive.

B: Did he show you that though (points to picture)? I thought that was cool, "Be careful it's hell to be a cripple" (laughs). You know how now-a-days they have safety requirements, you know you have to have a safety meeting every ten days and you have to do this and you have to do that. That's all they did, they posted those signs around, I thought that was cool. There is a lot of neat pictures around. My grandfather, I'm sorry I got off beat, he left for Italy, because like I said they got caught bootlegging, and he wanted to come back over but he couldn't because he had tuberculosis from working in the mine, a lot of the guys got Silicosis or Tuberculosis. This road right here was the road that used to go down to the mine. There was three eight hour shifts, like I said, 24 hour a day up there. You could here the stampmill 24 hours a day, it never stopped, it was a constant pounding (pounds table). In all the years they ran that only one man got killed. They had a lot of things, has anybody talked to you about the mules they had down in there? Have you ever read The Little Mule Story by Cybil Arata? That's a really neat story. Well anyway they used to have big mule piles around here sometimes the men would get in those mule piles and, if they had Tuberculosis or Silicosis, they would try to sweat it out



of their bodies. They would bury themselves up to their heads in manure piles, cause you know how manure ferments? There used to be one down here and one day one of the old miners was going by at sort of dusk and one guy was buried up to his head and he sort of said, "Hey how ya doing?" I guess it scared the guy so bad that he ran home and never went back to work again, you know because he thought he'd seen like a apparition or something. Those are some of the silly stories that you hear. But that is what they used to do. I guess they used to swear that was their panacea after that. It is really hard to recall everything that I know unless I see somebody or somebody triggers something. There's just so many stories, so many things that occurred historically during that era. I would say that it was exciting, to say the least. I don't know what it was spawned by, I think it was spawned by hope of a better life, cause they all came over here from Europe hoping it would be better. Like my grandmother says, "I went from the frying pan to the fire". She said she left Italy when she was sixteen to come over here to try and have a better life and it was pretty dismal for her but she had the fortitude, like I said she couldn't speak the language, she didn't know how to read or write. She didn't know anything, it was like being thrown out into the elements and she made it. This restaurant here has been in our family for five generations. So, her kind of attitude, even though she didn't have an education and she wasn't refined, maybe that's what it takes to make it.

A: Was this an only Italian boarding house or was it like Slovenian and all that kind of stuff?

B: Oh yeah, she had Mexicans, Italians, Slovenians, everything everybody. There was

quite a few artifacts that she had, in fact the ravioli cutting tool she had was made out of one of the bones from one of the chinamen that used to be around here, the handle was. There's just a lot of interesting little things like that, I'd have to walk around and show you. I could tell you a history about everything that's sitting around here, where it came from, what it was used for, why it was used, and that kind of thing. It's very interesting to me, I don't know why, you either love of history or you don't. Don't get me wrong I'm not living in the past, it's just fascinating to me, that's all. How they made it without all the things we have today, all the modern things. You know they didn't have weekly counseling sessions and they didn't have all the things that we have today, all the tools that we use today to get along in life, they just bear-flat did it. My grandmother was married three times, when she was 55 she fell in love with a 25 year old Mexican and moved to Mexico with him for two years, and he took her for all she had so she came back and started all over again. As far as the boarders go, I think they were just sort of like homeless people. They had enough through their benefits that they could afford to stay in the boarding house. It was really an education, really it was, each one of them was a pearl. They all had something to offer you about life. I could go on and on about that. About the mine, well, its the deepest mine in the world, straight down shaft it goes down a mile, did you know that? It was built by English engineers, did you know that? Yeah, they had come over from England. When we were kids we used to play up there. At that time, there was just an energy about it, but we didn't realize what it was, what it *really* was, you know. It wasn't just a really huge concern.

A: When you played up there was all the stuff still intact, like not rusted over and all that?

B: Most of it was still intact, in fact all the papers were still in the safe, all the mule halters were still hung up.

A: What about the wheels?

B: The wheels were all intact, they had been tampered with though, some local youngsters had blown up one of them. They weren't paid attention to people didn't realize what an impact it was at the time I was growing up. They didn't pay attention to it because it wasn't a priority in anybody's life. Then as time passed by they realized this was really a monumental achievement by a lot of people, if you really look at it, what they did and how it happened. It's almost unbelievable, you know somebody coming along and scratching the surface of the earth, finding gold, finally, I don't know how, getting the coordination to go a mile deep and having tunnels branch off clear up to Pine Grove all over the place, they go all over. The whole idea of mining and during that time of history, it's just phenomenal when you think about it. Over the years things were vandalized, they were destroyed, people would go up there and drink and shatter stuff and break out windows, and do all the things they do when they have pinned up aggression. Actually when Cybil had it, Cybil Arata had it for a good many years, she was a single lady and she really could never get organized enough to actually restore any of it, I don't know why, I mean surely she was motivated by a lot of things but she just never could get on track enough to get any agencies to help her or any service courts to help her restore any of it.



So that's why it has gotten so bad now. Now it is on the uphill, things are really starting to look pretty good up there. So many things have been stolen, so many things have been just taken away from it just because people want a momento. I used to ride my horse up there all the time. Have you ever been up there?

A: Yes.

B: Yeah, there's actually an energy about it isn't there? Yeah, I feel that too. Have you been around to any of the buildings and gone down in the...

A: Yeah we got a tour. We got to get out of school and got to go on a tour with the Kennedy Mine Foundation and everything. It was pretty neat.

B: Yeah it is great. You know, living so close to it I can just picture the guys walking to work every morning. At that time there really wasn't that many cars around, they used to walk to work and they'd bring their lunch. They had these little lunch buckets, I've got a couple at home. They had certain kinds of lunch buckets and they had to have their helmets and they had the carbine lanterns. Like I said, most everybody I knew growing up had worked in the mines, one of they mines, at one time in their life or other, the men. None of the women were involved in mining, that I know, not any of them. Not even in the office part, the office part I have some pictures of the mine here I took some not too long ago, of the minehouse and the safe, all the structures. It really meant a lot to me, I felt like it was going to be forgotten you know, if somebody didn't try to preserve it. At that time, this was about two, three years ago, at that time I mean who do you contact, how do you get the ball rolling? It has to sort of be a flook of fate for somebody to start

in on something, underground level and have any kind of result out of it. There's the money, there's the personal involvement, the time, you know and all that. The folks that are working up there now it's like they are possessed, they want to restore that place in the worst way and they're very self-sacrificing and very giving people. They don't want anything for their efforts at all, they get joy in seeing it come back to life. There used to be beautiful gardens up there, just beautiful gardens at one time field and fields of daffodils, fields of scotch broom, and lilac trees. I mean it was like decadence because I guess during the gold era that's what they wanted to project, you know the richness that they had in the beginning. They wanted to do it in a way people would notice it so they'd think it was really something to have a piece of gold. I don't know, really if it is worth that much or not, you know all the lives that got sacrificed. Lets see, I think 47 men got killed in the mine here, did they tell you about that?

A: The Argonaut Mine disaster?

B: Yes, the Argonaut used to pump air into the Kennedy Mine. They don't know if it was espionage or not, there's a lot of rumors it was for some reason, some type of political thing that was going on in the bureaucratic structure. The Argonaut Mine used to pump air into the Kennedy mine because they were set up for that, I guess the Kennedy Mine paid them to do it, sort of rented the facility you might say. I don't know what happened either they wanted to up the ante or I don't know what really happened along in there, but something happened and the Argonaut caught on fire and because of that they couldn't pump air down into the Kennedy Mine and 47 miners got caught down there and

suffocated to death. They tried to tunnel in on a side tunnel to get to them, by then it was too late. That really effected a lot of people in the community, I remember my aunt saying that the newspaper offices from all over the world came and stayed right here at this restaurant in order to get the story because in those days those things were really news-worthy. That was sort of the end of the mine, it shut down and it never opened again, because it would cost too much to pump out the tunnels and what would you do with the water in order to reconstruct them all. Then the war broke out and being as the war effort started in they just didn't have the man power to do it.

A: So, did your grandma lose a lot of people when those 47 miners died?

B: You know the thing of it is, is a lot of personal friends died and husbands of her persona; friends died, boarders that she had died at that time. At that point she turned this place into a public eating house, a restaurant, instead of a boarding house because, like you assumed there, the mine discontinued, that clientele wasn't there any longer. She still had boarders, they had nowhere to go, they had to relocate but they didn't do it right away. She had boarders for quite a while, in fact she had boarders clear up till the day she died, she died in 1976, she was 82. She had at least three or four boarders till the day she died, because like I said in those days you didn't have convalescent hospitals, you didn't have any place to go. Even though this was a public eating house, she had boarders at the same time. After the mine disaster, that's when she turned it into Teresa's Place the restaurant and it has been that way ever since.

A: Was there a lot of gambling?



B: Yeah, that's what the Prohibition was about too. She had slot machines, they had cards, they had gambling, they had food. She told me that there was a... you know I don't want to mention names because there are still a lot of living descendants of the people involved and I don't know how they'd take that, so I don't want to mention too much about that. It was a real livelihood bootlegging and gambling. They had a system that they used to make it work, they'd have people tell people you know he'd say, she'd say, they'd hide it when the FBI was coming around, somebody would tell them when they would, they'd pay them off, you know the usual system of how it's going to work.

A: Did she own a car?

B: Yeah, in fact it is really strange, she bought a car from George Sasrin and she never learned how to drive and in those days you could buy a car even if you didn't know how to drive. So she bought a car, I've got the receipt, she bought a car from George Sasrin, I don't remember how much she paid for it but I think it was way way under a thousand dollars. She took it out the day she got it and [she wrecked it]. Then she went down and bought a brand new one, and she made good on it. She managed to get around with that. She was only like four foot eight, four foot nine she weighed about 280 pounds. She was hard as your kneecap everywhere. You didn't want to mess with her at all. She always came across like she had nothing to lose so don't mess with her. Her car went from first gear to fourth gear, she never used the two gears in the middle (laughs). When she was going down the road it looked like a pair of hands on the steering wheel because you couldn't see her head. She had just a certain ceremony she went through; on

Friday she'd go one place, she get all her things together that she had to do, and Friday was her day to go to town. She'd drive me to church on Sunday morning. Those were the only times that she drove, Friday and Sunday, drove me to church.

She did, like I started to tell you, fall in love with a 55 year old Mexican gentleman. She did take the car down there, well after two years of living with him she decided to drive back from Mexico by herself. Her story about that was pretty insane, going through Los Angeles not be able to read the street signs, being in unfamiliar territory, not knowing where your going, just getting out and home again, but she got back up here. She drove up until about the last eight months of her life. So she did have a driving career.

A: Was she a really well respected person in the community around here?

B: I think so, she was a very big hearted woman.

A: Well known?

B: Yeah, she was pretty known. I think being well known has a lot to do with being in one place in a consistent manner for a long period of time. You know it's like you know where the bump in the road is if it's been there for a long time. Not to say that she was a bump in the road. When your in the public eye like we are here, you're here everyday and there's so many people, they share their life with you and you share you life with them. You become friends, that's the only way I can put it. She had a lot of friends because of the fact that she...face it everybody has to eat, you know, and she was a good cook. In those days the boarders and the miners didn't cook for themselves, they didn't

have the facilities to cook for themselves. It was a basic need that she provided. It was a symbiotic relationship, they helped her and she helped them. That's what life should be about, we should all help each other. Whatever talents you have use your talents to help somebody, and they can use their talents to help you back. But everything has changed, the values have changed, intentions have changed, all because of jealousy and greed, which has always existed.

I was named after my grandmother. My brother Joe was named after my grandfather. My grandfather was her second husband. He was the bartender here and he got her pregnant with my father, and the boarders made him marry her. She was 17 years younger than my grandfather. My grandmother didn't talk very much, she didn't want anybody to know her business. I mean she talked a lot, but not about her personal life. She always used to tell me, "If I tell you, you'll know" (laughs). She just didn't want anybody to know she had a bad reputation (laughs). She was quite a character, you know, she was way ahead of her time.

Evo Vasilovich, you interviewed him, he used to cut my brothers' hair when they were little kids, he used to cut my father's hair when he had hair. He and Joe Valvo and Frankie Tortorich, that's Mrs. Tortorich's father-in-law, they had a barbershop together downtown, did you know that? Yeah, that was a big treat going down there because they had all kinds of interesting things in that barbershop. They'd talk about all kinds of interesting things. They had all kinds of different kinds of bottles with different kinds of men's cologne and stuff. I mean it was a different world in those days. They were on



Main Street for years and years and years.

Eddy Swift, I don't know where his family came from, I don't know where their origin came from. They've been in town for a long time.

A: Yeah, he said they lived in Sutter Creek for a long time.

B: Yeah, his wife used to be a...

A: Allen.

B: Yes, an Allen. The Allen's owned the property as far as you could see in every direction, for miles and miles, forever. I've horseback on quite a bit of the property. I don't think that they were ever in here too much, they sort of stayed to themselves, the Allen family did. They were busy with cattle and a lot of things like that.

Evo's family, the Vasilovichs, his sister used to work in the cafeteria, she basically raised us, all us kids. The Slovenian community here was very strong, there is a lot of Slovenian ties around here. In fact down here in Newmanville was the Ladulavichs, the Danelovichs, and there was the Churichs, gosh there's a lot of them right there.

A: Well that Slavic church is right up there too, right where you said Newmanville would be.

B: Right, gosh I could go down the street there. Well there was a lot of Italians and a lot of Slovenian people in there. The Vinciguerras, the Vinciguerras were, well my grandmother's first husband was a Vinciguerra. She bought him out. Like I said her second husband was my grandfather, then she married another guy named Sam Figado, then she divorced him. Kick the bodies aside, you know (laughs). She was just, hey if it

didn't work well that's the way it went. Something else will come along (laughs).

A: About the boarding house, was she the only one that cooked the meals?

B: Yeah.

A: Did she have like a set menu?

B: She couldn't read or write so there was only one thing. You know, she only cooked one meal a day, one main course a day. It would differ from day to day, but you didn't put your order in, you got what she put on the table for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Which was always real good. If somebody had a special diet, you know like say they were diabetic or allergic, she would always make sure they got what they needed.

Towards the end of her life she became very intolerant and very resentful, pure conjecture on my part, but I think it's because she put so much into everything she did and never felt that she got the same back. I don't know sometimes you get blind and go about and don't even know if your getting more back or not, but I think she did. I'll start crying (cries). She just a really fascinating women and it just brings back a lot of memories.

A: She sounds fascinating.

B: Yeah, well she was (laughing and crying), I'll just kind of put it that way.