

TAPE #3

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THELMA PIEROVICH

References: Early days in Jackson

I'll just tell it how it is. My Mom and Dad were born and raised in Madera County. They were on cattle ranches and all. The ranches were neighboring and so my Mom and Dad were married. My Dad came from a family with eight children and his older sister was married and ran a halfway house like they had where they were hauling lumber out of the mountains. And they had this station where they fed the men and took care of the horses. And my Dad worked for her because her husband was killed in a runaway team. ...Anyway, Mom and Dad were married and they lived there about a year. In the meantime, my Uncle, William Hipkins, was born and raised in Pine Grove and he came down in that country, mining, and he met my Dad's sister and she came back to Amador County with him. So after about a year, through that association, my Mother and Dad moved here. Uncle Bill was working for the PG&E, and my father went to work for the PG&E. I was a year old when we came here, and we lived up on top of the Petty Reservoir, you know the steep incline coming from Electra. We lived there until I was about five years old. I started school at Milligan, and Mary Zucuni was the teacher. It was her last year. We used to walk about three miles to school and back. There was always the quail and the wild life to interest us and, of course, I was an only child. But the Hipkins family had three girls, so I always had a hard time getting home from school. I was always more interested in going home with them than in going home and being all alone.

But we lived there until I was ready to start school. That was at the time there was a big turmoil at PG&E. Over wages or something. I think it was one of the first labor disputes. Anyway, my Father and Uncle Bill left the PG&E and moved to Jackson, which was a big thing. So I started school when Fred Ball was Principal. I had Mary Jenks and Miss McKasky and Miss Zucuni was teaching school then. I guess I was just a normal child; my biggest problem was being alone and an only child and drifting off where the other kids were. I was always in trouble because I never wanted to be home.

I remember walking to school; I feel that schools in later years with the cafeterias and the busses coming in and hauling the kids back and forth---and I think, gee, we used to walk to school and walk home for lunch and didn't think anything about it. We didn't have to have a lot of rules and regulations to keep us out of trouble either.

I can remember the girls' basketball team was a big thing, and we wore those big black bloomers---I was tops in basketball because I was head and shoulders over everyone else.

...Carlton Ball, Fred Ball's son, what is he a sculptor? He used to sit in school with a bar of soap and carve horses and animals and anything but books. We always said he got through school and couldn't even spell his name. But he was a true artist, right from the beginning. And it's kinda fun to look back and make comparisons like between what Mary McKasky taught and how she taught and the modern day techniques. I think sometimes that we try to organize

and regulate people too much, instead of letting them be on their own.

And how you had to organize your own fun. I think during summer vacations all the young people on our street would get together and compose a play. We'd have our parts, and then we'd spend another few weeks getting our costumes made out of crepe paper.

The big event of the summer was to put on a show for the neighborhood.

...What do I go to next?

Graduation from grammar school in those days was a big thing. The girls had to make their own dresses and sew them. The graduation was at Pravenhoff(?) Hall. And high school graduations were at the Jackson Theater on the stage. I remember having a lot of fun! (John Pierovich breaks in.)

First football game I ever saw was out at Zyla(?) Field. Ernie Tam, he was older than me, he organized a football team, and nobody knew anything about it. But he wanted me to go play football. I didn't know what the Hell football was! I'll never forget that. (Back to Thelma Pierovich.)

I can remember biology class once. The teacher was telling us a story and we had two or three of the boys who were really kids in chemisrty and biology and all. And something happened in class, and I remember her saying its a lot more fun being a big fish in a small pond...I think of that every once in a while all through life. Ireally just remember it as a fun time.

Course the big recreation then was school dances and public dances. Saturday night dances were the big thing. Especially at Love Hall, that was just a swinging time. And my Mother was always very lenient

and trusting and all. I didn't have any problems growing up. I guess I was just a lucky, uninteresting kid.

(What was available to girls in those days?)

It was all self made. Whatever we decided to do for fun for ourselves was it. You made your own fun. And I was always interested in sewing and piddling around; I'm still that way today.

I can remember going to school, and where this Latang Gas Works was---well, I lived over on Bright Ave. And the Hipkins lived on top of the hill, and I'd come up the alley way and meet them. And the big thing when we got down by Cossages was do we go around the street or, well, it was a real shady thing to go down and go through Latangs Gas place, and it seemed like if anybody dared anybody to do anything I was the one to do it. Course we didn't know what all the secrecy was really about---but it was a very daring thing to do.

I guess I was kind of a tomboy, because we used to go up by the golf links and climb trees. We'd build roller coasters, too. And we were always collection wheels.

...I graduated in 1929...

(What were days like the 4th of July to you...and the Italian Picnic?)

Oh, the 4th was a big thing. You went down town by the National and they had flags, and programs, and there were always races.

(John Pierovich butts in again.)

She can't tell you anything about God damn history...she's just a young punk. I was an old man when I was courting her.

(Back to Thelma.)

The Italian Picnic, well, we would go in the Hipkins car and

we'd save our nickels for the merry-go-round and just have general fun.

After we moved to Jackson both my Dad and Uncle Bill went to work for the Argonaut. Dad did electrical repair in the mine. He was on the rescue team, and he was hit in the head with a skip, they were repairing wires or something. And when one skip went down another would come up. Well, he got caught in the back of the head by one. He wasn't hurt seriously we thought, but after that he developed headaches and a year and a half later he was operated on for a brain tumor. And in those days there wasn't too much that they could do. He was just 39 years old when it killed him. And in those days the mine wasn't at fault. There was no compensation then or anything.

(Do you remember fireworks on the 4th?)

No, I don't think they had any until later. It was a greased pig and speeches and the gunny sack races for kids and things like that. Sparklers is all I remember. There wern't any organized fireworks.