

AN ORAL HISTORY OF BETTY DICKINSON KENT
FOR CLARKDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

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b= Betty speaking

d= Dinah speaking

This oral history is told by Betty Dickinson Kent to the best of her recollection.

d -We are here today with Betty Dickinson Kent at the Pioneer's Home in Prescott, AZ to hear her stories of growing up in the Verde Valley and Flagstaff and whatever she wants to talk about. Thank you, Betty for doing this.

b- Thank you for coming.

d- Would you like to start by telling about your family and how they came to the Verde Valley?

b-When I was 14, my grandfather liked to talk and he told me the **stories of their trip**. I have read the history of what he told me and everything he told me came out very well verified. When he was 8 years old.....well, let me start before that. My **grandfather, Samuel Cotton Dickinson** was in Missouri and he was married and had a wife and several children. He went to the gold rush in California and he made six thousand dollars. In those days, that was equivalent to a million now. And he didn't want to come back across the Plains, the way he went over, so he took a trip around the Horn. They didn't have the Panama Canal, of course, so he went back to New York and then across country home. His

wife died and he married her cousin and proceeded to produce a bunch more kids. They had quite a big family before they moved. I think there were four boys and three girls but there could have been more. I haven't done enough digging there yet. He brought two sons with him from his previous marriage. He was wagon master or guide, whatever you want to call it and he had talked so much about the country he had seen that following the Civil War and unrest and things that he had seen, Parson Bristow put together his congregation and several others and started west. **That was in 1875.**

My grandfather was 8 years old at that time and he said that the movies showing the kids peeking out of the Conestoga was a big fib because a child's 50 pounds was equal to a sack of flour so they could walk. Most of the children walked. **There was a net across the back** of the wagon and while they were walking, they picked up dried manure of cows and buffalo or anything like sticks, leaves, twigs to make a fire that evening. I understand, I don't know but I understand that 10 to 15 miles a day was a pretty good trip for a large group of wagons being pulled by cows. 20 miles was a really good day.

You can imagine the kids really weren't being mistreated. Most kids walk more than 20 miles on any day. Granddad said they ran a lot, back and forth and up and down alongside the wagons. The women drove the wagons and small children sat on the bench with them and the men rode horse back.

He told me that crossing the muddy rivers when they were up was the worst thing they did. They had some mule-pulled wagons. He had two wagons. His two sons by the previous marriage brought one wagon and his new wife and baby brought the second wagon. And I understand that the first group to bring their horse and mules would put the mule-pulled wagons up first and they would swim the mules across to get the wagons up on the other side with the horses. When they got them over there and harnessed, they would swim back carrying a rope and they would use this rope to take a chain and they would take it and the oxen and hook the chain, there was an iron loop on the front of the tongue and they would hook the chain to that and then over to the horses and then they would put the oxen across and when they were swimming, the chain would hold

against the current. He said sometimes they were almost swimming upstream to get across. Those of us who have seen flash floods know what that must have been like. Each wagon when they got the wagon across would then hitch those oxen and put them behind the mules or horses and then hitch the next wagon.

Crossing was not only tedious, it was dangerous. Getting the kids across meant carrying them either horseback or on the wagon and they were better off being carried. He said they had no hostiles trouble. He said they saw people once in a while but they didn't have trouble.

According to **Pastor Bristow's** memoir, it is in the Camp Verde Historical Society and I have a copy, he was the hero. What he tells is primarily whether you were Confederate or Yankee. "He wore the blue. He was a good man. He wore the gray but he turned out to be a real nice fellow."

They arrived here and Chavez Trail came down off the rim down to Beaver Head Flats. And Granddad said they used trees to come down Chavez Trail. They took out the chain again and hooked it to a log behind each wagon and the men took pry poles, there's a word for it, long metal poles, I'll think of it, anyway they would block this, 3 or 4 of them and would block this log right against the wagon and let the animals pull the wagon to the extent of the train. They would set all brakes, put all the men to hold the wagon while the men moved the log up. It was that steep.

Then they got down to the **Way Station on Beaver Head Flats** and went on down to the Verde. The first stop was at Montezuma's Well. From there, they branched out. They had a tree there which they called the Marrying Tree. The people who had met and courted on the trip over or who had known each other and finally just made the decision to team up and married under that tree before they split up.

Granddad Samuel went to the Cornville area. He became the **first acting Post Master**. He was not the first appointed. And he drove the first mail stage from Beaver Head Flats to Whipple. So that was quite a.., you know. After that his older sons helped also drive that.

My grandmother's people, the VanDerans went up the Oregon Trail and when they got up there, they decided the weather was cold and snowy and Godfry decided to come to the Verde of Arizona. He came to the Verde and on the trip down, his daughter, Ida May, my grandmother was born. And they always say, she was born in such and such California. Well bull crap (pardon me) but they didn't know for sure where they were. They didn't know where the lines were either and they just assumed they were somewhere in that vicinity. He built a house on the Verde in Cottonwood and she grew up there. It is right behind... well it is where the W- Dart Ranch headquarters are now. They bought the house and it burned down. But anyway, **Granddad Godfry settled along Oak Creek** and I don't know who owns it now but it was in the bend where the swinging bridge is. Do you know where that is?

d. The one I'm thinking of was by Tapco.

b. No, that's on the Verde. Just down from the Red School House in Cornville they had a swinging bridge across Oak Creek. **Granddad's family** settled on the land on the Cornville side of the creek. He courted my grandmother from there. One of the stories grandmother told me and you do have to understand ladies in that day did not ride astride. She said that her riding skirt had to be 4 inches beneath her heel so when she got on the horse and put her knee around the saddle horn the upper horn, it covered her ankle. She rode side-saddle and never rode astride. She had a horse that she trained that would lie down for her when she was out away from places. It would roll up, she'd get on it and it would get up and she would be mounted. And while she was courting, the grass across there, and if you go there now it is bare, but she said her horse lying down would be shielded. You couldn't see so the grass had to be quite tall. She would make her horse lie down and hide and then her beau would come riding up and he was always riding young horses. She would wait until he was very close and then jump up. His horse would buck and she said it was such a thrill to see him ride him. He was such a good rider. Then they would go on into her home where of course, they always visited at home a lot.

The two families, **the Dickinsons and the VanDerans** were both highly populated. The VanDerans claimed pound for pound to outweigh any family in the Verde Valley and the Wingfields took the challenge in Camp Verde. Mrs. Wingfield, at that time, was quite irate that anyone would claim there were more pounds of VanDerans than pounds of Wingfields.

Grandmother went to school there. Grandmother and Grandfather marry and moved to Camp Verde. Her first three sons, Don, Ralph and my dad Walter were all born in Camp Verde. Then granddad moved north and ended up in Flagstaff and settled and stayed until he was quite old. They returned when he died in the Jerome Hospital. The funny part to me, the unusual part is that where Denny's Restaurant is now in Cottonwood is where grandma and grandpa bought their last house. Grandfather left to die and grandmother moved in with her sister in Cottonwood. But down the road from Denny's is grandmother's first home in the Verde Valley. It isn't over a mile and a half so she made a circle and came back in her old age. They lived in McGuireville for a little while. Actually, at one time, granddad owned a store at Foxborough. He had a little grocery store there.

The whole family is so...I still don't know all my cousins. I am working on that now but I still don't know them all. I have no idea. I am down to the third generation. I walked into a store and I signed my name Betty Dickinson Kent as I do on my checks and this gentleman looked at me and said, "Which Dickinsons are you, the new or the old?"

I said, "I assume the old."

He said, "What was your dad's name?"

I said, "Walter."

He said, "Oh, hi cuz, I'm a VanDeran."

That wasn't his name but his mother had been. So this is what I ran into my entire life including Clarkdale but not Jerome. Jerome we didn't intermarry into at that time. My high school class was one of the first who interdated with the Jerome people. They were very secluded in their ways. They were miners and we

were farmers. Our life styles were different. There were always a few but it wasn't heavily done until I think **my graduating class of 1942** which was the largest graduating class ever to leave Clarkdale High School. We had 42 and we were a champion football team and we were champion Drum and Bugle Corps and our choir master had gone and talked to Disney. We were the Wolves and we had permission to put the big, bad wolf on our bass drum. Our girls were all dressed in maroon and white skirts only inches from the ground. Which we had Melba Shockley, who was quite short, which made it a short skirt. She was very worried about it. At that time, 90 % of the kids from Cornville, well no, from Bridgeport and some Cornville. We had a lot of kids from Cornville too, all went to Clarkdale High School. It was no wonder we had the largest graduating class.

d. How did you get to Clarkdale?

b. Oh, we had a bus. Absolutely, we were uptown. I believe we did run a bus from the Sedona area. Clarkdale was a funny little town then. They had upper town bosses and lower town workers. There was no...this is so hard to say and make people understand now. I had one class in school from the time I was 4 or 5 years old until the time I graduated and it was one segregated group. The Mexicans and Indians and Anglos all played on the same team. One of the Italian boys, who sat on the Mexican side was our class president. When Mr. Summers, who was our 9th grade teacher, segregated us, we didn't understand it at all. He claimed it was because this part took algebra and this part didn't. But we had some on this side who took algebra too. But he was from back east. He can be forgiven, barely.

My mother was born in Arkansas and her father was a Cherokee and her mother was a descendent of the long line that came from the Blessed Woman. Her maiden name was England. She was a mixture of Scot, English and Cherokee. So my mother turns out to be almost, a little more than half, well quite a bit more than half Cherokee blood. But my grandmother, Johnnie... Well let's start back with Matilda. **Matilda May was my great-grandmother**, England-Randolph -Anderson and she died here at the Pioneer Home and I visited her prior to her death. She had several children with Mr. Randolph. He was a land owner,

a Mason the whole bit in Arkansas. And she said to me, “Well, I did marry down when I married Anderson.”

But mother’s mother was named Johnnie. She was great-grandmother’s third child. And she had no middle name, just Johnnie. And she married George Washington Smith, a Cherokee man and had two children, my mother and her older brother Floyd. They were born in Arkansas and came out here. They arrived in the Verde somewhere in 1905 or 6. Mother said their first night was spent with the Benedicks, in the Benedick’s barn, which is now Howser’s. Grandfather George was a top-notch cowboy and a drunkard. Jess Goddard told me that Granddad on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday was probably the top hand and Monday he was hung over. One day when he was angry at me he said, “Do you know who your grandfather was?”

I said, “Yeah, why?”

He said, “Well, he was a damn, drunk Indian.”

I said, “Yep, I knew that.”

Anyway, one day he pushed back one too far and back in the days when divorce was a no-no, Grandma Johnnie met him at the gate and told him, you’re out of here. And she divorced him.

She then married into the Reed family. **She married Uriah Reed** about a year later. They had one son, Guy Reed. And Guy travelled all over this world as a road builder. He is quite famous for it. He is my mother’s half brother, my uncle.

Mother grew up around the Verde River, somewhere up and down there. She went to school at Beaver Creek, Strawberry, Cherry so I imagine before they divorced, wherever he drank too much and they canned him and he got another job. I really don’t know. I am assuming. Grandmother Johnnie died when mother was 13 so I never knew her. I never knew any of my mother’s family except my uncle. And one Uncle Floyd I knew before he died and loved him dearly until I was 82 years old and went to Arkansas and met my mother’s youngest half –sister who was at that time 57. My grandfather had married three times and this was

his youngest, final child. I learned some of the family history from her. I visited her for a week. I have some of that but I am still putting it together.

Mother, at 13, went to Phoenix when her mother died. Apparently, she took a job at 14 as a telephone operator. And not only that, she was a raving beauty and was Miss Chandler. Somewhere along the way, she moved to Prescott and I have a clipping that says **Opal Smith is a bride**. She was well enough known here that when she surprisingly married Walter Dickinson from Flagstaff, whose family, at that time owned a good third of Flagstaff it was quite aWe didn't even know they knew each other sort of a thing.

She had one child that died and then **I was born in Flagstaff**, July 1924. In my memoirs, I said I came late, back-assward and crippled. So that made a good start. I had a bad leg. This leg turned out this way. The doctor said we are going to put her in a cast but my mother said, "No you're not. She'll learn to walk. "

He said, "She can't."

She said, "Oh, yes she can."

I was never in a cast. My leg has given me some problems during my life. For a while, it would lock up on me but I walk around pretty good. I've taken a lot of steps. When I was just over two years old, she and my dad divorced. Between 3 and 5, two years, I was with her primarily. I spent a little time with my paternal grandmother and grandfather at the Pine Hotel in Flagstaff. He had it at that time.

When I went to school at 5, they took me up to Emerson School and enrolled me. At that time, NAU was Flagstaff Teacher's College. My aunt and uncle both attended and they were learning all the stuff on how to teach kids and I was a kid so I got the benefit of their schooling. By the time I was 5 years old and ready for school, I had a book which was 11 and a half by 9, like a piece of typing paper, about 4 inches thick of nursery rhymes. I either knew them or could read every one of them. So they sent me to Kindergarten. If you know something, you raise your hand and tell the teacher. OK. Now what is this color? Does anyone in the class know? That's red! Like a dad-gum idiot, I did what I was told to do. After

about a week of that, I got kicked out. I may be the only kid who was kicked out of kindergarten. They sent me home. I spent another year being tutored by my aunt and uncle that kindergarten year. So that summer, I went with mother and then come fall I was back at the Pine Hotel, back at Emerson School and I did the first grade. I had no trouble. In fact, I didn't even know I was in school half the time. Then I spent that summer with mother again. When I was in second grade, I went back to school and spent about two weeks in the second grade. Miss Kinsey, who was the principal, came in and said, "Clean out your desk." I thought I was being kicked out again. I didn't know what I had done wrong but that was what happened to me the first time. So I cleaned out my desk and Laura Kinsey walked down that hall. I hope I never have to walk the last mile but it was only a half mile by comparison. We walked into the other room and she didn't tell me who the teacher was. She just said, "Here she is, good luck."

I went through the third grade, no problem.

The year, when I was 6, my mother and I visited **my Uncle Floyd** and his wife, Aunt Hattie. He was an assistant ranger in Long Valley. I went to my first forest fire with him, one lone tree burning. I have wonderful memories of the Underwood family were the head rangers. They had three daughters and I met their youngest daughter again here in Prescott. But I do remember Alice and Paul. We played together. **I had a playmate.** At the hotel, I didn't have many playmates. My best playmate was our maid's daughter, Rosa. Our laundry company's daughter, Margaret Wong, a wonderful girl and I never gave her full justice. I met her again when I was a senior and I was embarrassed because I didn't know how to introduce her family to my family and friends. I had another friend when I was at Flagstaff, Mary Jo Eden. Her parents ran a little restaurant next door to the Pine Hotel. It was a coffee-pie place. Actually, it was a diner. She sang on the Flagstaff radio. She sang Betty Boop. I had a few friends but compared to most kids who played on the playground, not many.

Mother had re-met a man by the name of **Logan Lee Langdon**. Nobody ever called him Logan but one time in my whole life. That was Bum Langdon. And

Bum and mother started dating. We were staying with Uncle Floyd and one day Mr. Langdon and sat down in a chair and said, "I need to talk to you."

I said, "What about?"

He said, "I have proposed to your mother and she has agreed to marry me. I want to marry you too. **I want you to be my daughter.**"

I said, "Oh."

He said, "I will do the best I can to be a good father to you."

I said, "OK, alright." So mother and I married him. The wedding day was something I have even written about. Uncle Floyd and Daddy Bum got in the front seat of an old fashioned touring car. Mother and Aunt Hattie and I were in the back. We started for Prescott. They were married in Prescott. We went down Blue Grade, and there was a **herd of cattle** going down the hill. Well both Floyd and Daddy Bum had punched cows and they knew that wasn't something you could just go through. So we followed them all the way down Blue Grade. We got to the bottom of the hill and they didn't move aside when there was room to let us go through. Uncle Floyd beeped his horn at them a little bit. The guy in the back looked at us and although they didn't throw birds in those days, he would have. He just kept the cattle right in the middle of the road. Uncle Floyd was not a big man. He was probably between 5'11 and 6 ft but he was built like he should have been. He let the car roll up and bumped this man's horse hocks and the horse bucked. The guy got off his horse and came back, rolling up his sleeves and cussing like a blue streak.

Uncle Floyd said, "We have ladies in the car and it would be better if you don't use that kind of language."

He said, "I don't know who you think you are."

Well the men were both dressed in suits going to a wedding. The ladies were dressed up going to a wedding. Apparently, he thought he had a carload of dudes and Uncle Floyd looked at him and said, "Well, I guess you will have it." And he unbuttoned his shirt sleeve and turned his white sleeve up and there is his brown,

well- muscled arm. The second one up and this guy looks up and said, "Move the cattle over boys, move the cattle." And they moved the cattle over and we head on. I spent that night on the Benedict farm at Grandpa Reed's and his second wife, Grandma Emma's house. Well I spent the day there while they left to go and get married. So I repeated history so to speak.

Grandpa Uriah, mother's step-father had re-married, as I said. He had married and this is a rather interesting antidote. He wrote back to Tennessee and said I am a widow with an 18 month old son and I need a wife. Grandma Emma got on the train and came to Flagstaff. He met her at the train and took her to the JP's office, married her and took her home. They were a beautiful couple. They had no children but they raised Uncle Guy. She was a housekeeper who would have made a scrub nurse look dirty. She cleaned everything.

Daddy Bum, I called him Daddy Bum for a long time, worked for the Forest Service building the roads on **the Mogollon Rim**. So we camped all across northern Arizona. The first winter, mother decided I didn't have to go to school. I had made two grades and she didn't want me graduating too young. So she took me with her that whole year. I had summer, winter and summer and we went to Bloody Basin. I rode burros. Oh, this is wonderful. I had learned to ride or have been on a horse since I was two. Mother rode and I was horse simple like you can't believe. So I would ride a burro. I also fell off and got blood nose but that doesn't count. I met Grandville Norris and Wendell DeSpain there. They were kids. Daddy stayed with the Forest Service and we moved. I went to Sedona School, to Crown King School., to Camp Verde School and I went to Clemenceau School. Just wherever he moved, we moved. One year I moved six times. It was OK. I had no trouble.

The year I was starting junior high and the 6th grade, he said, "I quit." He had a wonderful job. One time he had been a foreman with the CCC when they were formed and he had a position that was pretty well anchored. But he said to mother, "She doesn't need to move since she is going into the upper grades." So he quit and went to work for Phelps Dodge and **worked in the smelter** at Clarkdale.

I became somewhat familiar with the smelter then because half of the men who worked there were either breaking horses at home and working at the smelter or farming at home and working at the smelter because money was good but it was tight. It was just after the depression and money was tight. I remember being the only child in my school who carried a regular lunch. The other kids were lucky if they had a fried egg and salt pork. So I shared my lunch. That was one of the places where the teacher wouldn't let me do it anymore. It was almost pathetic. Mother had Parkinson's so she couldn't do a lot of things. So that year, Daddy or I made my sandwiches. I made a relish-Miracle Whip sandwich and I would carry a can of **Vienna Sausages**, a cookie and a piece of fruit. They used to make the most wonderful relish which you can't even buy anymore. I put it on white bread. Well you know most people were eating biscuits then. I'd get to school and open my Vienna sausage with a key, this was in the 4th grade. I would start to pour the liquid out and this one girl would say, "No, wait a minute." She would get a cup and take the liquid and drink it. That was the first time that I knew that everybody didn't have this. Nobody said, nah, nah, nah. We just did what we did. I just wasn't observant and didn't see she wanted the liquid. I said, "Why?"

She said, "I want to drink it."

I said, "Why?"

She said, "I've never had a Vienna sausage."

So I opened my can and gave her a Vienna sausage. She couldn't believe it.

Another little girl said, "What makes her special?"

I think I ate one Vienna sausage that day but it was alright. I wasn't hungry.

The next day, Socks Brewer and Buzz, I don't know Socks first name but Buzz was Arlondo and he put a table up of an old door and we had my **very first pot-luck**. Everybody put what they had out to eat. They cut their sandwiches and I had my first taste of a biscuit, salt pork and scrambled egg sandwich. I had never had that. When I cut my Vienna sausages up, I cut them in half this way and then again that way and then so they went around and I cut my white bread in eighths.

I thought it was great. It was so nice for them to like what I had and the teacher found out about it and wouldn't let us do it anymore. She said my mother would have raised cane. Well my mother wouldn't have raised cane and my step-father would have put an extra sandwich in. Who knows, you don't tell things always.

We went from this to smelter wages and they were good but they weren't that good. I have to tell a little side thing here. My mother divorced my father at 27. She had thirteen pairs of shoes in her closet. She went from that to...well she grew up with mud between her toes and she went back to it. She never complained. I never heard my mother complain about that sort of thing. In fact, I never heard her complain about much of anything. So daddy went to work at the smelter but then it was against the law but all of the smelter men would take a ladle and drop it very gently into the boiling copper and then jerk it up. Have you seen those **bowls they made?**

d. We've seen ashtrays they made.

b. They're not the same thing. I had one but I gave it to my kids. I wish I had it here for you to see. They took a map of Arizona cast in steel and dropped it and when it came up it was a map of Arizona with the counties all over it. I was afraid someone would "like" it so I gave it to one of my kids. You would get fired if you got caught but they had a value for trade when you got away from there. My mother having been orphaned at thirteen and making her own living having everything and then literally not having everything. I was nine years old when my baby sister was born. Mother was afraid daddy would settle on his daughter and I would be out in the cold.

She asked him and he said, "No, sister is the oldest. She'll need more"

That was the way it went until he died. I was never anything but sister from there on. My mother said he owes you nothing. My father was supposed to pay a child support and it was pretty high priced. My step-father wrote him a letter and said cut it in half at the time of the Depression. He not only cut it in half but he cut it all together. I got no more until I was in high school. Mother said, "You are going to be on your own so you had better learn to pay for yourself."

So I was babysitting from the time **I was thirteen making 25 cents** an hour and thinking I was getting rich. I worked all through high school. I worked at various stores in Cottonwood. Then I went to Clarkdale and then when I graduated, I applied for a job at the lower school and got it. But I also had no car and the wages weren't very high. My step-father was going to teach me to drive. I think he had hopes of getting me a car but I was driving a Model A Ford and I hit a lady and knocked the knee out of her knee action wheel and it cost him. So he couldn't get me a car.

But I did have a horse I bought myself and it was probably the most expensive horse I ever owned. It cost \$25. I bought it when I was making 25 cents an hour. I have seldom bought a horse that I paid 100 hours' worth of wages for it. I bought it and so when I got this job, I would get up and **saddle my horse and ride over to Butcherville**, just below the school in Clarkdale where I knew a lady and I would leave my horse in her fence patch. It wasn't a corral, just a fence patch but it was grass. I'd go into her house and put on hose and heels and walk to the school to work. I did this for a couple of months.

d. What was your job at the school?

B I was a secretary. At that time, I had learned my secretarial skills at Clarkdale High. I could type about 45 words per minute and take short hand. So I got a job there. I heard that they were looking for somebody at the smelter so applied and I got a job at Phelps Dodge Smelter in the Safety and Personnel Office. My boss was Jack Hardy and Paul Keefe. And Paul Keefe was President of the Arizona State Senate at that time. We were into WWII and I graduated in 1942. As I recall, we got into war in '41 so already had E cans for effort and so forth. I was working at Clarkdale **and I met Walter Kent**. He was a cowboy and owned a little bunch of cattle up on the side of Mingus, the W-Dart Ranch. He joined **the Navy**. He came back in uniform and you know the way things were, I knew him from about maybe early fall until March. **We were married in March**. I was still working at Phelps Dodge when I married. One of my co-workers was one of his ex-girlfriends. Walter was eleven years older than I. I would tell anybody

think twice. That is quite a step, it really is. Because his friends were not the people I associated with and he had no desire to associate with my friends.

d. Did he work at the smelter?

b. He had worked at the smelter and also worked up on Giant's Grave when they had a fire station up there. I had gone up there with another boyfriend so I had been up there where he had worked but I didn't know that. He had worked there until after we were married. About April or May I decided I didn't want to be an absentee bride. I had been saving some money because I wanted to go to college. I had several war bonds and I had a pretty good savings account. So I bought a ticket to San Diego and I went to be a war bride in San Diego. I lived there for two years. I lost my first child and had my oldest child there. My daughter says I wasn't born in Arizona but I was conceived there. We came back for round-up every year. When he was shipped overseas, finally right at the very end, he was on the **USS Baratavia** and it was a torpedo ship. He was an aerial torpedo man and he went overseas. He had moved me to El Cajon to be with his family but I just picked up my tricks and traps and came home. I bought a house and I rode on the W Dart Cattle and raised my daughter. I bought a cute little house but my dear husband came home and decided he didn't want it and he didn't even try to sell the equity to anybody, he just walked out.

d. Where was the house?

B We call in Smelter City now. It was just outside of Cottonwood. He bought the **Slaughter House** in the foothills of Jerome. It took us two years to go broke. Norman Fain and Mr. McCrite from Phoenix were our partners in the Slaughter House and when we went broke, McCrite especially, they just cleaned us out. We didn't even have a car to drive. I walked out with a milk cow and the only reason is I told them they had better be damn sure they paid their insurance before they came and tried to get my cow. I sat down and took a beating until they tried to take my cow away from me and then I fought back and I kept her until she died. In fact, I kept quite a few of her off-spring too, come to think of it. She had a calf every eleven months so I stayed in milk pretty well.

d. Were you living at the Slaughter House?

B Oh, of course, in shacks and God knows what all. We kind of camped there. I learned to skin cold calves, I learned to run the sausage kitchen. I could cut down a carcass and help load it and I did the bookkeeping for a while. And then my brother-in-law got a divorce and brought his two sons and gave them to me to take care of and they became my bookkeeper. So I did that until he re-married for one day and then she took the kids and left. It was a mess. Anyway, Walter and I moved from there and we were going to go to work for Norman who was my cousin. He and Norman had a fight after I got half moved and he informed me I had to move out. I was pregnant with my second child and so I moved to my old friend, Aunt Bess Siler and rented a house in Clemenceau. We moved back there. We lived in Clemenceau several months. His younger brother wrote and said he was coming with his new bride so we bought a house on the edge of Cottonwood, just between Mexican Town and Lower Town or Main Street.

d Where is Mexican Town in Cottonwood?

b It is up on the ridge between Cottonwood and Clemenceau there across from the Church and the school. Then they came down and they had a few houses on the gulch and we had one of the houses on the gulch.

Walter decided to do farming so he went to work for Mr. Fuller and we moved to Cornville. From there on, we hop-scotched all over the Verde Valley. Walter came into the Valley in 1924 which is when I was born. He moved to Clarkdale and lived there for a year. His father worked for Phelps Dodge and they got the Haskell Ranch. They moved out there and the kids were all raised at Haskell until the war and when they picked up the route to El Cajon. So he was essentially a Clarkdale person and knew everybody in Clarkdale. I remember one time he said he **rode his horse** into the Pool room on Main Street in Clarkdale.

When my daughter was ready to go to college, **we moved back to Flagstaff**. We were up there from '55-to'75 and I got a divorce in that length of time and then moved back to the Verde Valley in '75. I bought a place in Rim Rock from the Selnas and they were wonderful. Having a house and moving to this place

(Pioneer Home) is a lot of red tape so I gave the house to my son but it served its purpose. I remarried Walter at the children's request; demand would be a better word, after being divorced for seven years. I took care of him until he died here in the home. I had to put him in the home because I could not take care of him. Then I lived on the hill (Rimrock) until I was 86 and I was injured and they thought I was going to die and so I came here. I lived on the hill where I could watch the drunks stagger out of the saloon there in McGuireville.

It has been good. It has been a **very different life**. I ran the San Francisco Peaks Riding and Hunt Club in Flagstaff, owned part of it. I taught horsemanship at NAU and I am sorry to say, it was wonderful but I should have finished it a little better than I did. They did not know that I had a nervous breakdown. My daughter picked me up and moved to me to the Verde in '75. Nobody told them at the college so that was really a no-no and a bad thing. But nine years prior to that, the U of A took my program, it was that good. I taught horsemanship on private lessons for years and years and years. When I had that nervous breakdown and came down, one of my students brought her horse and her husband had his horse and said you are going to give us a lesson. I said, "No, I am not. I quit."

She said, "Oh, what's for supper?" She was staying until she got her lesson. So I went back to teaching again. My daughter has taken it up and she is such a good teacher.

D What is your daughter's name?

b Sherry DeVillier. She uses Sherry Kent DeVillier. She is 74 and still winning ribbons riding barrel races. My only son is Walter Norman Kent and he became a petroleum geologist. He has been at work in Alaska for 17 years. He discovered one of the biggest oil production bases up there. After Prudhoe Bay, it was the next one over. The output was comparable. Then he went to Syria. He lived in Syria with his wife and children for two and a half years. He came back and worked in the states but traveled and I probably won't get them all but he has had jobs in China, India, Iraq, and been in Iran but not technically, you know. He worked in the state department as a geologist during the Iranian conflict when his

son was sent. He has two sons both of them in the ROTC. One is still in the ROTC and he is a Major. I do not know whether the oldest one is or not but I presume he is.

My next son is a cowboy and he has been a ranch manager and is now is currently working for Babbitts. And my third son is a self-employed contractor and a top notch carpenter and builder. I also helped raise three of my grandchildren. One of them is a spectacular builder, a real unusual person. One is back working cattle and my oldest granddaughter is in Oklahoma, married and has children and ranch. They are scattered. My oldest great grandchild is here in Prescott and visits me a couple of times a month at least. She is only 27. I have another great grandchild who is on the way and due here soon.

They say it is a long road with no turning back. I agree. There have been a lot of turns. I have been, should we say, financially stable and I have been pretty cotton-pickin' poor and it didn't seem to bother me much either way. You do what you have to do. **I have worked** at probably let's see: you start with babysitting, we go to secretary, cow punching, dime store and furniture store and ice cream parlor too, worked as adjustment agency for insurance, Northern Arizona Gas, worked at Monte Vista Hotel. I was a waitress and taught waiting tables by two very good Harvey Girls before I got married and it has always been a good job. You can always get a good job if you can wait tables. I've been head waitress, I have owned an employment agency, owned part of a Hunt Club and owned my own riding academy. I've been from hither to yon. I cow punched for wages, right after the war when we couldn't get anybody. I've schooled horses for money and taught riding lessons. I never cleaned house for wages. It is funny. The few things...it was all I could do to keep my own table and I didn't always.

d. What about Yavapai College?

b. Yes, I **taught 20 years at Yavapai College** for knit, tat and crochet. I am still teaching people to tat and crochet if they want to learn. They asked me to list my accomplishments for Yavapai College. I was picked as Woman of the Year one year and my list was about three inches long. I've left out a score but every time my husband moved, he would say, "Quit your job, I need you."

I've worked on the combine, I've sewed sacks, I've driven truck. I'll give you an idea. This is terribly funny. While we were at the Slaughter House, I was in the office and my husband called me. He said, "Betty, I'm at the Fain Ranch in Lonesome Valley. Bring the cattle truck. I just bought some cattle so come on over."

I said, "Walter, I have never driven that cattle truck. And I have never driven over Mingus Mountain."

He said, "Get Frankie to fix that." It was a two-gear shift. "He set one gear shift OK and the other one you can drive. Drive it under that one gear at a time and come on."

So, I did. This is the way my life ran. I never knew today what I might do tomorrow. But that was OK. I had fun.

There's a piece of my tatting up there. (pointing to tatting on the wall)

d. Oh, it's beautiful.

b. I have worked for the fair. I helped found the theater group in Flagstaff. I was on the constitution committee. I helped found and was chairman and president of the Northern Arizona Horseman's Association which still functions. In my hunt club, we changed the name to High Country Hounds and I believe it still functions. Wonderful people. We didn't chase foxes but we chased coyotes. Let me tell you something. Those coyotes are smarter than the fox. They would come and ask to be run. In our hunt club days, we'd have red coats and hunting caps and English saddles and the whole bit, jumped fences etc.

d. You did it all.

b. Well I haven't but I sure made a try at it. I have regrets but they aren't enough to cripple me. I have memories that ...they just don't come that way anymore. I rode with a huntsman on the hunt job near Denver. Mr. Wright gave me a mare that nodded and at the end of the day, he told me "I've ridden on four continents and I've never ridden with anyone with any better hands than you have."

Well, I'm telling you, I walked on air for five days. Dan Fain said that he would punch cattle with me any day when I was punching cattle. I walked on air for ten days after that. These are good memories. Some of them are funny.

The reason I got the compliment from Dan Grandville, he liked to be called Dan. He was married to my grandfather's niece. Walter and I came home from the Navy to go through round-up. I was riding a really superb little, half Arab horse and we gathered cattle that day. It was a pretty good sized herd right in the middle of what is now Prescott Valley. I could see that hill, we called it Old Baldy, and he said to me, "You'll hold it. You've the touch."

I'd never held any cut. I had never been around a big cow ranch. I'm trying to hold the regular cut, the regular herd, and the yearling. I went and got it and held it when they tried to cut in and stopped it and went by the herd where Bill Graham was and he said, "Betty, you stay with the yearlings." I said, "OK."

Well normally when they hold the yearling cut, they cut a cow and a calf so the yearlings are less trotty. Dan didn't do that. He took me out five yearlings and I did some plain and fancy riding. I was riding the horse I could do it with but I held them. Later he told me that he was quite impressed. So was I, no more than he.

Later he said, "What Dickinson are you?"

I said, "Walter."

He said, "Opal? You the side wash!"

I later told my husband he had better handle me with care as my mother's temper was pretty well known. As I said, she was a beauty queen and she could afford to have a temper. I was just a little old brat so I couldn't afford to have a temper.

d. Sounds like a wonderful life and thank you so much for telling all these stories.

b. Well telling you quite honestly, I am writing my memoirs and I have the first thirty minutes dictated of our talk. This tape takes over a hundred pages which you never get read in fifteen minutes. Some of the stories are pretty good and I am hoping to get it finished and published before I kick the bucket. I won't make

any promises but incidentally, in 1980 I was going to be entering college and I bought my first computer. I took word processing at the college. My son, Norman taught me all about the tree and the branches etc. I almost learned it and then I bought a new computer and I had to learn all over again. This one I've got now are just beginning to be friends. The kids bought me Dragon two years ago where I could talk to it. Now I am using Office 365 where you talk to a microphone. You don't have to type and it's great. The only trouble is their vocabulary and mine....I don't think they ever heard of castrating a calf. So, I never did castrate a calf but I castrated a lot of goats and a couple of calves but that's the end of it. I doctored a lot that were and so I worked with the livestock. I can give a shot, it doesn't bother me but I don't give intravenous, I give subcutaneous. But you walk in my door with a needle and I'll be out that window. I cannot tolerate a needle on me. Give it to me and I'll show you how it's done. So I guess that is kind of the story of my life. As long as I'm not getting jabbed with a needle, I can handle it.

d. Thank you very much for your time and sharing your stories.