GILBERT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW OF

ROSE DIVELBESS

Edited by Pat Castaneda with June Morrison

Interview by Carol Shepherd
February 19, 1990

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Gilbert Oral History Project

Carol Shepherd (Interviewer): This is the interview of Rose Divelbess at 30 E. Linda Lane, Gilbert. We are doing this on February 19, 1990. The interviewer is Carol Shephard.

Mrs. Divelbess, let's start this out with the date of your birth, your parents and ....

Rose Divelbess: Well, I was born in Kentucky on February 12, 1907. Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

Carol Shepherd: You just had a birthday!

Rose Divelbess: Right. I've always felt like I was a kind of the same type of person Lincoln was because I have always been extremely honest and a plain type of person. I've always considered myself plain, but I've always been happy about one thing, and that was that I didn't have a big mole on my face!

Carol Shepherd: That's true! What were your parents' names?

Rose Divelbess: My parents were Emil and Sally Gieszl. My dad was born in Vienna, Austria. He came to this country when he was five and a half years old.

Carol Shepherd: Through Ellis Island?

Rose Divelbess: All that bit, yes. They came through Philadelphia and stayed there a very short time, and I've never known exactly why they did go on to Kentucky. The town they lived in was just a wide place in the road. Crab Orchard was the name of it.

Carol Shepherd: Did he have a job when he came here?

Rose Divelbess: No, he was only five and a half years old.

Carol Shepherd: Did his parents have jobs here?

Rose Divelbess: Nothing. My mother said that she never saw my dad's father work, so they brought with them a lot of money, and they had owned one of these big inns which would compare to today's big motels. We have a picture of that inn. It's in all my grandkids' photo albums that I've put together for them. But, every one of the kids...there were

five...there were two girls first, and then three boys, and everyone had been taught some kind of a trade. That's typical of people from Europe, I think.

My dad was a carpenter. His younger brother was a house painter. He did gorgeous work, like in kitchens. And my mother was a teacher when they met. My dad was in a band and they went from town to town on free time and would give concerts in the park. And that's how they met. My mother went to hear the band and so they were married a short time after they met.

Carol Shepherd: And what was your maiden name?

Rose Divelbess: Gieszl.

Carol Shepherd: Your Grandmother's name?

Rose Divelbess: Sally Dickerson.

Carol Shepherd: How did they come to Arizona?

Rose Divelbess: Well, in the first place, Arizona was going to become a state in 1912, which it did of course, on the 14th of February. And then Roosevelt Dam was going to be finished about the same time, and there was all this stir all over the East about what wonderful opportunities. Well, my dad and his younger brother, who had filed on homesteads out close to Queen Creek, just south of Queen Creek, decided they would come west and get rich. And so they first came up in the Kingman area, but they saw nothing that they wanted up there, so they came down to the Valley and they went by wagon over to Florence and filed for homesteads. And they were fortunate. They each got a homestead across the road from each other, and then later, my dad filed for what was called a "desert claim." In the homestead you had to live on the property and clear it and have a well. On the desert claim all you had to do was clear it fairly well, and then you paid fifty cents an acre fee, and then you got the deed to both the homestead and the desert claim.

Carol Shepherd: How much land was involved in the homestead?

Rose Divelbess: Well, it was a quarter of a section.

Carol Shepherd: A quarter section. And then the desert claim was ...?

Rose Divelbess: Each was the same size.

Carol Shepherd: What did he do with it? Did he farm it?

Rose Divelbess: No, he never did. We three older kids were big enough to go to school, so we moved in to Gilbert in 1915 and he worked around as a carpenter for awhile, and then he inherited a little money from his father who had died, and so he bought a little ten acre piece of land to start off with, and we lived on that for a little while.

Carol Shepherd: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Rose Divelbess: We ended up with four boys and four girls.

Carol Shepherd: What were their names?

Rose Divelbess: Well, I was the oldest of the eight. My sister Christine was the second, then my brother Bill was the third one. My brother Carl, my brother Hugh, my sister Madge, brother George, and a sister, Ruth. I think that's eight.

Carol Shepherd: Who did Christine marry?

Rose Divelbess: She married a fellow by the name of Ward, Gene Ward. He became an air traffic controller. They lived in Phoenix and she taught school there. Then they moved up close to Salt Lake City and they both did the same. She was teaching and he was flight controlling, and they went to Seattle and lived up there awhile. And when they retired they came back and lived in Prescott until my sister died in 1980. Her husband is still living up there.

Carol Shepherd: And Bill, is he married?

Rose Divelbess: Oh, yes. He lives in Phoenix, he and his family. They all live in that area and he owns Maricopa County Teleworks down in the south part of Phoenix.

Carol Shepherd: What is his wife's name?

Rose Divelbess: She was Dorothy Wisdom. She lived in Tucson, went through the U. of A. supervising a small dance band. That's the way she made her money to go to school. She still plays in all the nursing homes in Phoenix and loves this old honky-tonk music. She has a honky-tonk piano

and she plays it all the time at home. She's a real musician.

Carol Shepherd: And Carl?

Rose Divelbess: Well, he became a pilot in the Navy, and then he retired after his twenty years of service. He lives in Los Altos, California.

Carol Shepherd: And his wife?

Rose Divelbess: He married Mary Appleby here in Gilbert. The Appleby family lived up on Baseline and Lindsay. They were one of the pioneer families in this area.

Carol Shepherd: And Hugh?

Rose Divelbess: Well, Hugh still lives on the same farm that we did. He married Ruth Stiles and there have been Gieszls in the school in Gilbert ever since. From 1918 clear to the present there are some. All eight of us graduated from high school here.

Carol Shepherd: What about Madge?

Rose Divelbess: She became an R.N. She is retired right now and lives in Phoenix.

Carol Shepherd: Is she married?

Rose Divelbess: Her husband died a few years ago. She has two sons who are lawyers, both of them.

Carol Shepherd: What's her married name?

Rose Divelbess: Aspey.

Carol Shepherd: And her husband's name was...?

Rose Divelbess: His name was Morris.

Carol Shepherd: And George?

Rose Divelbess: Well, George lives out at Leisure World right now. After he came out of the service-- all four of the boys volunteered and were in service. Two in the Navy and two in the Army, and they all came through without any

terrible mishaps. George really got banged up pretty bad. He got a purple heart in Germany somewhere.

Carol Shepherd: Did he marry?

Rose Divelbess: Yes, he and his wife live in Leisure World now.

Carol Shepherd: What's her name?

Rose Divelbess: Her name was Betty. Oh, dear, what was her last name? Anderson, Betty Anderson.

Carol Shepherd: And Ruth?

Rose Divelbess: Ruth is married to one of the Blakely brothers who were pioneers here in Gilbert. She is married to the middle son. There were three boys, and Ruth is married to Vincent, the middle son. And they live in Tucson.

Carol Shepherd: Do you guys get together very often?

Rose Divelbess: Well, part of us. We don't very often all get together at the same time. On my 80th birthday Ruth and Hughey gave me a big party, and that is a stack of pictures of the people who were there. There were over two hundred people there. And that's the last time we were all together. But the ones who live close enough...of course the one in California we don't see very often.

Carol Shepherd: Tell me about going to school here.

Rose Divelbess: Well, I started in third grade in the southeast room of that old elementary school, which is now Gilbert's Museum. In 1915, in September.

Carol Shepherd: Do you remember who your third grade teacher was?

Rose Divelbess: Ruth Burns. She lived down here right west of the Gilbert First Ward. Right where the parking lot is now. That was across the street from where our little house was. One thing I remember, or think I remember, I didn't know it at the time, but I don't know if anybody these days pays any attention to Mayday. On that particular morning on our doorstep was one of these little baskets with flowers in it, and candy down in it. And there were three of us kids

at that time, and you know what that did to us? We were so happy, but we had no idea where it came from. Now, in later years, I figured out that it was my teacher who did it.

Carol Shepherd: I don't think they pay as much attention to Mayday as they did.

Rose Divelbess: No, in fact, I've only had one experience of anybody doing it ever since I came back to Gilbert in 1950, and that was one of the teachers had her kids make little May baskets, and they took them around to the different rooms. That's the only person I've known of doing it since one was given to us that time.

Carol Shepherd: Going to school-- what was it like?

Rose Divelbess: Well, I don't remember too much about it. Of course, it was such a shock to me to come into school because my mother had taught us out on the homestead, and here was this big room full of kids and I was a very shy person and it was scary to me. I never let anybody know it. But it was. And I was in that same room for two years. There were four rooms of that original building. There were two grades in each room.

Carol Shepherd: So they only really had three teachers then?

Rose Divelbess: Well, four teachers because there were four rooms. The first and second, third and fourth, fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth.

Carol Shepherd: Then you went to high school from the eighth grade?

Rose Divelbess: Well, when I was in sixth grade, they built the north wing of the school, and that was in 1918. And then, the next fall they had started building the new high school, which is right now being renovated back to its original look. And so there was no place for us to go to school. So they got two big circus tents. One was on the front lawn of what is now the front of the school, and the other one was where the parking lot is on the north side. And that's where we went to school until our high school building was finished in the next semester. You know, in 1919-20. So when we started to school in the high school building, it included all the kids from seventh grade

through twelfth. And we have a picture of that group in the museum.

Carol Shepherd: I'm going to have to come see that. And then you graduated in 19--?

Rose Divelbess: I graduated in 1925 with thirteen in my class. And we have a copy of the little graduation program with our names in it. Our class was the one who chose the...we were the first class that wore caps and gowns and they were gray.

Carol Shepherd: When you moved into the new school, were you allowed to select the colors and a motto and all of those things?

Rose Divelbess: Well, the school chose them during the year that I graduated, but it wasn't my class that did it. It was the year we graduated that they chose the black and gold and the tiger, all that stuff.

Carol Shepherd: Then what did you do?

Rose Divelbess: Well, when I finished high school I went over to ASU, which was then a normal school. Tempe Normal. And I worked in the dining hall, which was just a little small building out by itself. There were three dorms at that time. The third one had just barely been built, and I lived in East Hall, which was right in the middle of where the campus is-- the big campus is now. This was a little dorm. I worked that whole year in the dining hall. That's when I began to gain weight, because they had ice cream always on Wednesday and Sunday, and we who worked in the dining hall were allowed to eat all the ice cream we wanted. I've always said that if I had to live on one food, it would be ice cream. So that's when I started getting heavier. Well, in those days a person could go two years and then start teaching, so that's what happened.

Carol Shepherd: Where did you take your first teaching job then?

Rose Divelbess: Well, I went to Holbrook. We had a home ec teacher here in the Gilbert High School who was always a good friend of mine and, believe it or not, I'm still writing to her. She lives in Stockton, California.

Carol Shepherd: What was her name?

Rose Divelbess: Pauline Gressinger. The manual training teacher was Don Sheldon. They fell in love and were getting ready to get married, and Don had gotten a job in Holbrook as Superintendent by that time. And so one evening they came over to where I was living. The second year I was over at Tempe I didn't live in the dorm. Four of us lived in a little apartment. And they came over and asked me if I'd like to go for a ride with them, and on this ride they told me they were going to get married and that Don was going to be Superintendent in Holbrook, and would I like to go and teach up there? Of course, that was the biggest shock I could have ever had, and the nicest one-- to have a job offered without even having to apply or anything.

Carol Shepherd: Definitely! So you went to Holbrook then?

Rose Divelbess: So I went to Holbrook and I taught. My salary was $1,300, and that was more than most any school around was paying at that particular time. And I signed a contract that I would not get married, that I would not smoke, I would not drink any alcoholic beverages. And I taught for ten years, signing that same contract every year. When I quit I was earning $1,550, so in ten years I had gained $250 per year. But, anyway, I was so tired of teaching that I said I would scrub floors before I would teach again.

Carol Shepherd: What were you teaching, and what age group were you teaching?

Rose Divelbess: Well, at the time I quit I had fourth grade.

Carol Shepherd: When you started what did you have?

Rose Divelbess: Second grade for one year, and then I was asked to take sixth grade, and I was a flop-- I didn't like that age of kids. I had trouble with them. So anyway then I was given fourth and I stayed in fourth grade until I decided to quit and settle down and get married.

Carol Shepherd: That was at a time when you taught everything. You taught English, reading, math....

Rose Divelbess: Everything but music. I never had to teach music.

Carol Shepherd: Then you met your husband, I presume. Was that in this time period?

Rose Divelbess: He was married at the time that I went to Holbrook, but it was one of those marriages that didn't work at all. And so I knew him and his wife and his little girl for about ten years, up until a year before we got married. I only went with him a year. But, anyway, we got married in 1937, and then the first thing you know the war came on and we went to California and I worked as "Rosie the Riveter" in the Rohr Aircraft plant in Chula Vista, and he worked in small tools repair.

Carol Shepherd: What did you do in the factory?

Rose Divelbess: Riveting. It was on the air ducts in those B-52's or whatever they called them-- those planes that were so popular during the war. But I always said I was Rosie the Riveter.

Carol Shepherd: How long did you do that?

Rose Divelbess: For about three years. Then my husband's mother and father, well his mother died, and so the rest of the family-- the war was over by the time that this happened, and we were ready to leave California anyway. So, we went back up to Holbrook and stayed there and took care of my husband's father until he died in 1949. His father died in February, 1949, then my husband died in October of that same year. So I came back down to Gilbert and started teaching in that same room where I started in third grade.

Carol Shepherd: What grade were you teaching there then?

Rose Divelbess: Fourth grade. I taught fourth grade.

Carol Shepherd: How long did you teach in Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: Well, totally twenty-one and a half years. In the old building four years, and then in Cottage #9 for seventeen and a half years.

Carol Shepherd: Gilbert Elementary has a lot of memories for you then.

Rose Divelbess: Oh, yes.

Carol Shepherd: The cottages were fairly new then at the time?

Rose Divelbess: Well, they were built while I was here. See, I was in that room in the old building for four years, and then we moved into the cottages in the second semester of 1953-54.

Carol Shepherd: How many children did you average in your classes?

Rose Divelbess: Well, the years that I taught here in Gilbert, in the twenty-one and a half years, I had anywhere from fifteen to forty-three. Fifteen was just a special little class I had of really slow children who needed a lot of individual help. That was the reason it was kept small. But the most I ever had was in the old building. There were forty-three that year. That was when we had so many cotton picker people coming in and, oh, what a job it was to try to do anything with those kids. So many of them couldn't speak a word of English, and you had to mix them in with all the rest. It was terrible.

Carol Shepherd: There was a special Spanish school, was there not, at one time?

Rose Divelbess: Well, yes. They finally built that little building just for those transient children who couldn't speak a word of English, and then we got so much repercussion over it. They thought they were being discriminated against, and the few Mexican children who lived here fought it. Their parents fought it so hard they finally abandoned it. But, I think a lot of people do not understand we were doing our level best to help those children. But they took it the wrong way and thought they were being treated badly. But, you take kids coming in and out like that, like they were, they couldn't do anything because they didn't know a word of English, and in a class of twenty-five to thirty kids it was just impossible.

Carol Shepherd. Were the classes taught in Spanish, or ...?

Rose Divelbess: Oh, no, no. They were taught in English. Connie Salas over here went to that school, because when they started doing it, then they put all of the Mexican children in, which was really unfair except for the fact that the people who were running this thought that they were doing the best thing for the kids. You know, trying to get

the Mexicans with the Mexicans to help them teach and, well, everyone was hoping they were doing the best, but they hated it so....

Carol Shepherd: Was that a School Board decision at the time?

Rose Divelbess: Yes.

Carol Shepherd: And there was actually a separate building constructed?

Rose Divelbess: Yes. That little building is all stripped out now. I don't know what they plan to use it for.

Carol Shepherd: Is that the second one over?

Rose Divelbess: It's just south of the old gym. See, there's the high school, the old high school was just the two stories, and then across a little street in there is the old gym and then the little Mexican building is the third building, actually, of schools. Well, it isn't either, because of that newer building that's been built since. But, anyway, it's in that school complex. It's a little four room building. I have no idea what their plans are to use it for.

Carol Shepherd: I'm not sure of that either. I don't know whether it's going to remain or not. I would think it would.

Rose Divelbess: Well, I know it's going to stay there because they have it all stripped out. If they were going to tear it down it would be down, but the ones that are stripped are to be restored.

Carol Shepherd: Did you have in your classroom children of kids that you went to school with? Did you teach children whose parents you perhaps went to school with?

Rose Divelbess: Oh, lots of them, lots of them. And even grandchildren in that length of time. There was such a cute little girl. I was walking down the sidewalk over there in between those cottages and a little tiny girl came toward me and she said, "Hi, Rosie!" And to this day I can just hear her say that. And I have not ever known who she was or why she called me that, because nobody ever called me Rosie. I just never would allow it. But, she had heard that at home,

I'm sure, and she was so cute. Of course, having lived here for so long, you know, everybody knew me as Rose. They still do. When these kids come through the museum I tell them to call me Rose because it's so much easier than to say Mrs. Divelbess.

Carol Shepherd: What was your husband's first name?

Rose Divelbess: Louis.

Carol Shepherd: I'm going to back up just a minute here. Let's back up just a little bit to your teenage years and growing up in Gilbert. What did you do for entertainment? What were some of the things that your group of friends... who were your friends?

Rose Divelbess: Well, we didn't have much time to be going to parties or anything like that. I know sometime there'd be a birthday party. I can remember one birthday party and the girl that had the birthday lived up on Baseline between where the Catholic cemetary and the mini-storage place is, in between those two things. Her name was Peterson, Wilma Peterson. And, my dad said I could go and drive the horse and little spring wagon which we owned. We didn't own a car at that time, and the neighbor that lived across the canal from us was supposed to go with me. So we went tootin' up there, clear up on Baseline, to a birthday party. And always there were picnics. That's one of the things that we did. And we would usually find a place along the canal where we could eat our lunch and swim in the canal. Of course, now it's against the law to swim in the canal, but there was always a lot of that. Swimming and....

Carol Shepherd: You obviously worked then, all of you.

Rose Divelbess: Well, I did a lot of farm work in the summertime. I'd run the hay mower and the sulky rake and the buck rake and help with the stacking hay and all that sort of stuff. My dad thought I could do anything that a boy could, and I did a lot of things like that. But all the girls did. It wasn't just me. I remember on the fourth of July once there was some hay work that had to be done and I couldn't go on the Church picnic, and I just thought I was killed because I had to work in the hay and all the rest were going swimming in Phoenix at East Lake Park. I couldn't get to go.

Carol Shepherd: What Church did you belong to?

Rose Divelbess: Well, we always went to the Methodist Church. Still do.

Carol Shepherd: That's one of the older churches in town is it not?

Rose Divelbess: Well that and the First Ward of the LDS were both built in 1918. But the very first church was the Church of Christ, which is the present Church of Christ on the same lot that the first one was built. The first one burned to the ground.

Carol Shepherd: What year was that?

Rose Divelbess: It's on that corner over there on Elm and Cullumber.

Carol Shepherd: What year did it burn? Do you know?

Rose Divelbess: Well, within a very short time. It was built in 1913. That was the first church in Gilbert. When we came to Gilbert in 1915 that was the only church building this side of Mesa, and my mother started us going to that church because in Kentucky she had belonged to the Christian Church. But they're not quite the same. So, when the Methodist Church got started, we started going there.

Here tape side changes and some of the interview is inaudible.

Carol Shepherd: What about dances and things like that?

Rose Divelbess: Well, this little building that burned recently, a year ago in May down here by the railroad-- there used to be dances in that all the time. I think every Saturday night. And a lot of the high school kids were allowed to go there, but my parents wouldn't let me go down there. I never really learned to dance until I went to Holbrook to teach. All they did in Holbrook was play cards on Wednesday and dance on Saturday. Everybody did that and if you didn't you were just out.

Carol Shepherd: What about shopping? Did you do most of your shopping in downtown Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: Well, practically all. My family, we'd go to Mesa once in a great while. And I know in the summertime we ordinarily went into Phoenix. My uncle, who had had a

homestead out there by us, had moved into Phoenix out right across from Good Samaritan Hospital. In fact, when they were building that first Good Samaritan Hospital we were there and went over and played down under the big timbers and everything. I could remember going over there, and we'd ride on the streetcars-- that was a big thrill to get to do that. But there certainly was not much entertainment outside of the churches for any kids in any way.

Carol Shepherd: What about radio when it came in?

Rose Divelbess: Well, I think the first radio we had must have been about 1920. I can remember we had one then. And from then on, of course, there was always radio around.

Carol Shepherd: Before Prohibition were there any saloons or anything in Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: Well, ever since I can remember that one on the east side of the street was there. I don't know exactly when it was built, but I know it was there for a long, long time.

Carol Shepherd: Did Prohibition change a lot in Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: I don't know much about Prohibition in Gilbert because at that time I was up in Holbrook.

Carol Shepherd: You were telling me a story about that time.

Rose Divelbess: Well, I don't even remember how long it lasted, but I know it caused an awful lot of problems, Prohibition did. But we still have the same problems with the looseness of it now, the alcohol.

Carol Shepherd: You came back here, then, in 1950.

Rose Divelbess: Right.

Carol Shepherd: What changes had you seen in Gilbert when you came back to settle?

Rose Divelbess: Well, the town had not changed an awful lot. There were still mainly the same buildings. A lot of the same buildings are still here. Of course they don't look like they did at that time, but we have pictures of almost all of those early buildings. A few of them were

made of adobe, but most of them are just little lumber buildings. A lot of people don't seem to realize that wherever there was an adobe building there was a basement, because they had to dig the dirt out and the hole was there so they made use of it by using it for a basement.

And that little old building across from the court building, the municipal court, that building was there when one of the big floods filled it. And I was in there not too long ago trying to find out if that basement was still there, and it is. That basement is still there, but they won't let anybody go down there. It is blocked off. Because when it was flooded it messed up everything.

Carol Shepherd: Were you here when that flood came through?

Rose Divelbess: Well, we had several, but most of them were on the north side of the track because the canal couldn't hold the water and it would overflow, and then the railroad would divert it down into town. But the big one, one of the biggest ones that I can ever remember, was in 1954 when they had just put in those foundations for the cottages over there. They had all the floors laid, and you could look out. You couldn't see a single floor, the water was so deep it covered all the floors. And that's the last one we ever had because they put in that Queen Creek flood control dike that makes the water go down to the reservation now. But that's the only one that I have ever known of coming on the south side of the tracks.

Carol Shepherd: Did you have a drug store, soda fountain, anything like that?

Rose Divelbess: Well, the first drug store was on the east side of the street. It was called the Pilcher Drugstore. I want to tell you a little short story about that drugstore, because in 1918 I was in the sixth grade, as I mentioned before, and my best friend was Virginia Pine who lived up at Guadalupe and Gilbert Road. They had a nice new home-- the nicest one in the whole area. The nicest home that was ever in the whole area at that time, and so she asked me to go home with her.

My dad was going to come and pick me up. I had a dime, and she was not allowed to stop in town. She had to walk straight through town. Go right on home. Well, I was going in the drugstore to buy some gum with my ten cents, and I went in there and I waited, and I waited, and I waited, and I waited. Nobody ever came. So finally I knew Virginia was going to be clear home if I didn't get out there. So I

picked up the two packages of gum and went, and ran and caught up with her. And to this day, when I say I am honest, I always have to remember the fact that I ran off with those two packages of gum.

Carol Shepherd: That's cute.

Rose Divelbess: Well, then, I don't know what happened to that drugstore but, anyway, then the Nowell family built the one on the west side of the street, and in that they had a nice fountain. It was very pretty and had tall stools. We have a picture of the inside of that drugstore.

Carol Shepherd: The Nell family? Was that Nell?

Rose Divelbess: Nowell. And some of the descendents of that family are still around Gilbert and go to the Gilbert School. There are two of the original sons of that family that live over at Mountain Shadows in North Scottsdale.

Carol Shepherd: You had some clothing stores too? Dry goods stores?

Rose Divelbess: Well, we had one dry goods store on the east side of the street that was owned by the Aaron family, and there was a men's clothing and shoe store on the west side of the street, the Jarrett Shoe Store. Those are the only things other than grocery stores that we had in the way of stores for many, many years.

Carol Shepherd: What was the big shopping day in Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: Oh, I don't know that there was one. I suppose Saturday would be. The stores were never open on Sunday.

Carol Shepherd: What did they do in the summer? Did they close during mid-day?

Rose Divelbess: Oh, no.

Carol Shepherd: I know the Chandler stores used to close from twelve noon to four.

Rose Divelbess: I never heard of any stores in Gilbert ever closing during the day. That's a Mexican habit. For their siesta. But I never even heard of Chandler doing that.

Carol Shepherd: What did you do about the heat?

Rose Divelbess: Well, not very much you could do. At night people put their beds outside, and when they'd go to bed sometimes they'd dampen the sheet and sleep under a wet sheet. As long as it stayed wet. And, of course, an awful lot of the homes were built with a solid room inside and then all around it a screen porch where they could sleep without getting eaten up with mosquitoes. There's one of those houses still in town that was built that way. It belonged to the Nowell family and was located where the municipal court is now. In fact, it was moved so they could build that municipal court building. It's over on Vaughn Street, facing Vaughn Street now. The screen porch is all gone but the building is there. The porches are still there but no screen on them.

Carol Shepherd: What was the popular building material then, adobe or...?

Rose Divelbess: Well, a few of the buildings were adobe, but a lot of them were just lumber.

Carol Shepherd: You had a lumber yard here too.

Rose Divelbess: Yes.

Carol Shepherd: What was the name of that?

Rose Divelbess: Oh, dear. What was the name of it? Halstead. There was another name beside Halstead. There were two partners, but Halstead was part of it. I can't think of the name right now.

Carol Shepherd: Is that the one that burned?

Rose Divelbess: Yes, but it later was bought by Vaughn, and then, what is the name of the man that owned it up to the time it burned? He's still living out in Apache Junction somewhere. I can't think of his name right now. It was Foxworth for awhile. It was Foxworth and Galbraith, Foxworth-Galbraith. That's what it was when it burned. I know at the time they thought it was set by some kids that were seen running from that area. I don't know if anybody ever proved it. I never heard that they did or didn't.

Carol Shepherd: When did the Library first come into being? Do you know?

Rose Divelbess: I can't give you a definite date on that. I know Helen Nunn and several others worked very hard in the late 50's trying to get it started, and the first library was down in the basement of the Town Hall, which was flooded not too long ago. And then, oh, I don't know how many were on the committee, but a lot of people. John Warren, Ann Pace, Helen and Dorothy Ramsey. They worked very, very hard trying to get money together, too. And then, finally the Blakely boys, who were financially able, gave money to help and they got the building going. It seems like 1957 was when they finally got the library. I'm not positive of that date, but I think that's about what it was.

Carol Shepherd: Of course, Town Hall went up during...?

Rose Divelbess: Forties. The first one. In the museum we had the four looks of Town Hall. First, it was like a Spanish type, with tile roof showing. And then they put the Western fronts on in the 60's. Well, not just fronts, but made it look western. Then they went back to the tile roof, I think, and then in '82 they had the addition and inside renovation. They had their opening the same day we opened the museum. April 15, 1982.

Carol Shepherd: Are there any memorable events that you remember that stand out from either your childhood or your return to Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: Well, I remember one a lot of people enjoyed. When anybody got married they always had these chivarees, you know. And Hugh Nichols married one of the teachers. Lena Johnson was her name. She was a widow and she had a little boy, and she came to Gilbert to teach. They started going together, and then they got married. And I remember, I guess it was mainly Methodist Church people, because Lena had a little house out on East Elliot Road, and they took her and put her, I guess they put both of them, in the canal out there across the road from their house. And then they took Hugh way out to in the desert and made him walk home. I think before they did that they took both of them down through town on an old wheelbarrow or something. Anyway it was quite an event for a person like me.

One thing I can remember, when we first came into Gilbert there was nothing but just a dust road down through the middle of town. Nothing but just dust, you know, deep dust. And my mother gave me a fifty cent piece and told me to go down to the little store. It was a little wooden store and it had a porch on the front of it. I can remember

seeing that, and down right in front of Town Hall I was ambling along barefoot in this deep dust, and all at once the fifty cents was gone! And I spent, I'll bet, three hours down there trying to find that piece of money. Of course I never found it, and I was scared to death to go home because fifty cents in those days was pretty important, really. But, anyway, finally I had to go home and my mother made biscuits, and nothing was ever said about the lost fifty cents.

Carol Shepherd: They used to bring the sheep in to take them out here too, did they not?

Rose Divelbess: Yes. They'd come down here from the mountains in the winter time and eat up the remains of the alfalfa. See, alfalfa was the big crop here those early days. In fact, along 1917-18, they shipped more alfalfa hay from Gilbert than any other shipping point in the whole United States. It was going to the cavalry and the army. The alfalfa doesn't grow very much in the winter time, of course, and they couldn't produce any hay, but they would have the sheep come in and eat up the alfalfa right down close to the ground. It kept the fields in good shape then for starting with the spring crop of alfalfa.

And those sheep were walked all the way by sheep herders from the valley here, clear up to around Payson for the summer. And they had to get across the river some way, so there was a bridge built up there at Bluepoint, and it was just wide enough for one sheep to go across, so they sort of forced the sheep. They had to go one right behind the other clear across the river, and on the other side they would count them. That's one way they kept a count to see if they lost any.

In the museum we have a sheep camp that has all the original pieces of equipment that they would need. This equipment, the tent and the cot (like a folding army cot), and all their cooking equipment, dutch ovens and a keg of water, all that stuff, was carried on the backs of burros. And we have all that original equipment. It makes it real nice for a lot of people to understand how the sheep herders took care of those sheep then, all summer up in the mountains.

And they would breed them up in the mountains and bring them back down to the valley the next fall. Then they'd stay down here and the baby lambs would be born and kept until just before Easter time, and then they would be loaded onto train cars, which were double deck. We've got pictures of the sheep.

There was a stock yards just down east of Gilbert, between Gilbert Road and Elliot where that catty-cornered railroad goes across. And the town dump was down there right by the stockyards. They'd scrape out a hole in the ground and people would carry their garbage down there and put it in, and then with the scraper thing they'd put dirt over it. We wonder a lot of times, if we dig down in there, what we might find. Went the way of history.

Carol Shepherd: What is there now?

Rose Divelbess: Well, you can't see anything. It was all filled over with dirt. And the stock pens are gone. Everything is gone now. You can see the wide place from the railroad where the stock pens were but there's nothing there anymore.

Carol Shepherd: They did have a train station, did they not?

Rose Divelbess: We had a depot down there, just on the north side of the track. This little park is there now, on the west side of Gilbert Road.

Carol Shepherd: Did the train stop like once or twice a day?

Rose Divelbess: It went straight through. It didn't stop at all except to let off cars on the side track. That's the only time anything would stop. But they built that side track so they could load hay or anything that needed to come in or out of Gilbert. Now, when the Nowell family came in here, they were mentioned awhile ago, they brought cows and horses and wagons and lumber to build houses and whatever they thought they might want. All that was shipped into Gilbert by train. I believe they came from Missouri, somewhere in that area.

But the trains, you know, it meant an awful lot. Mail was brought out on the train from Phoenix in sacks and dumped off. There would be one of those high railway carts, I guess you'd call it, sitting by the track and then somebody on the train would put the mail sack off on that cart and then somebody from a little store downtown would walk up and get the mailsack and carry it down to the store. The post office was in one of the stores. I think it was moved about five or six times before they ever got a building for the post office.

Carol Shepherd: But if you wanted to ride the train you had to go to Phoenix and catch it.

Rose Divelbess: Right. When I went to Holbrook, I always had to go on the train, but my dad always took me into...I could put my trunk on here, take it down to the depot and it would be loaded here. I had a big metal trunk and I carried my stuff back and forth to Holbrook. We went up to Ash Fork, and then east on Santa Fe. This, of course, was Southern Pacific. But when the two tracks were joined, it was such an important thing to people in this area that my dad took us kids that were old enough all the way into Phoenix in our little spring wagon to see those two trains come and touch each other in Phoenix. That's always stood out in my mind. I can't tell you what year it was.

Carol Shepherd: Which two railroads was that?

Rose Divelbess: The Santa Fe, which went across the north part of Arizona and the Southern Pacific, which went across the south part. When we came to Arizona, my mother came with us three kids on the Southern Pacific train, and the railroad car that we were on was let off out here at Maricopa and then was pulled over to Tempe, and my dad met us in Tempe.

Carol Shepherd: He had come out ahead of time?

Rose Divelbess: Yes. He had come out and got the homestead lined up, and a little house built for us to live in. All that stuff.

Carol Shepherd: How long did that take him from the time he left you?

Rose Divelbess: Well they, he and his brother, met up at Kingman. I think I mentioned that at the beginning. Then by October my Mother came with us, so it went pretty fast.

Carol Shepherd: And they came from what town?

Rose Divelbess: Crab Orchard, Kentucky. It's still there. Little town. Very close to Livingston.

Carol Shepherd: Did he ever sell the homestead in the desert?

Rose Divelbess: No, he didn't, but my mother did after my father died. There were some bills that had been hanging, and so she wanted all that cleared up. By that time my dad had bought the property which is now owned by my brother Hugh, and she wanted to clear that, so she sold the homestead property and the desert claim to the Ellsworths. It was a big corporation. I don't know too much about it. I have no idea how much she got out of it, but not a whole lot. By that time...my father died in 1946...and so she sold it, I think, within two years, anyway, after he was gone.

Carol Shepherd: You grew hay. You've mentioned that another time. Did your family ever get into cotton farming?

Rose Divelbess: Oh, yes.

Carol Shepherd: What about irrigating?

Rose Divelbess: Well, that all went with either one of them. You had to irrigate to raise it here. There's no other way.

Carol Shepherd: You bought your irrigation by inches, didn't you? And hours?

Rose Divelbess: By acre feet.

Carol Shepherd: And then that water was turned into your field by the zanjero?

Rose Divelbess: Zanjero, yes. But it wasn't turned in, it was turned on a long way from the farm. But it came down the ditch, and then the person that owned the farm had to take care of turning it in, and turning it to somebody else, and all that part of it.

Carol Shepherd: You knew what to....

Rose Divelbess: But the zanjero was the boss, and you knew what time to turn it on. You had to take the water. They'd call it at a certain time.

Carol Shepherd: How did you order it? Did your dad just tell him how many acre feet he was going to need between dates and...?

Rose Divelbess: Well, I believe at that time they had to go into Mesa to order it. They may still have an office in Mesa, too. I don't know too much about it really. He always did all that. But I know where the office was. It was down on South McDonald for a long time. I don't know where it is now.

Carol Shepherd: Well, it took you a little while to get into Mesa to do these things early on, didn't it?

Rose Divelbess: Oh, yes. To go seven miles with a little old horse and wagon took quite awhile, and that meant going to the doctor or dentist or whatever you had to do.

Carol Shepherd: You didn't have either in Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: No. My dad bought the first Ford Model T that was ever sold in Gilbert, and it was sold by Charles Blakely. He started a Ford garage. The little Blakely Garage was located where that big red brick building now is, the Gilbert Deli. They tore down the old garage when they built that deli, and it was built for a "Pay and Take It" store, that didn't get very far in Gilbert. I guess it was too modern for Gilbert people. I don't know any other reason.

Carol Shepherd: A "Pay and Take It" store? What kind of store was that?

Rose Divelbess: Well, it was sort of like Safeway. In fact, I'm not too sure but what it was bought out by Safeway. But, for a long time it was used for public things. There was a theatre in there for awhile, and the Methodist Church met in there for awhile, when their building was abandoned and they built this new one down south of town. It had a lot of different kinds of business. There was a lamp business in there for awhile, and then there was a carpet business in there. It's had a lot of different businesses. It's never been very lucrative, I'm sure.

I don't know if anybody has told you about Gilbert's first doctor, have they?

Carol Shepherd: No.

Rose Divelbess: Dr. Tompkins, Lucius P. Tompkins. Lucius M. Tompkins-- I'm sorry. He was a great big fat man, and he came here in 1919 out of World War I.

Carol Shepherd: Had he been an Army doctor?

Rose Divelbess: I guess. He hadn't been out of school very long 'cause he was quite young. And he came in here and started up a little business and he started going with one of the school teachers. He always had a big black cigar or was smoking it, and he stayed in Gilbert as a doctor right up 'til not long before he died in 1964. And he and his wife never had any children. They adopted a boy who, when he was a teenager became almost blind. Eventually, he went completely blind. There was something wrong with his eyes when they adopted him, and for many years he worked in the blind school down at Tucson. And he married a lady, young woman, who was also blind. He came back to Gilbert one time to visit, and he wanted to go over and see the school, so they each had their stick with the white...was it white and red, or what?

Carol Shepherd: I can't remember either.

Rose Divelbess: I'm not sure. Anyway, they kept themselves synchronized. They joined elbows together and they would walk across the fields. I can see the two of them, he and his wife, walking across that field. And they would swing their sticks like this, back and forth, seeing if they were clear to take another step or two you know. It was very, very interesting to watch them get along like that.

Carol Shepherd: What was his name?

Rose Divelbess: John. John Tompkins.

Carol Shepherd: And his mother's maiden name was Ruth (Burns?).

Rose Divelbess: Yes. We have pictures of Dr. Tompkins, and we have a whole bunch of his doctor tools in the museum. Like the blood pressure band and the stethoscope and, oh, just quite a few of his things. One of the things that interests a lot of the people is the baby scales. They're only about that long, not over ten inches, and he would put the baby on it when it was first born, on the diaper and tie a knot up here, and then hang it on that little scale. It's a little tiny scale. It's a cute little thing.
We had to beg for that thing a long time. There was a woman way out toward Apache Junction that had taken care of Dr. Tompkins in his last years when he was unable to take care of himself, and his wife had died. She had gotten a

lot of his belongings, and we begged her for that little scale. She gave us quite a few things that had belonged to him. We're real proud of that display.

Carol Shepherd: You should be. Where did he have his offices?

Rose Divelbess: Well, his first office...do you know where that little Mexican church is on Page Avenue just east of that red brick building? Well, his office was the little white house just east of that church on the same side of the street. He and his wife lived there for many years, but he had his office in there. Then later, around the corner here, next door to Town Hall, is a kind of yellowish building. The Tompkins' built that for their home. And then there is a little separate, small building next to it that was his office for many, many years. There was a man, I don't know if he's still living there. I should know his name but I can't think of it right now. But, anyway, that Mexican family who bought that house rented that little building that was Doc Tompkins' office for many years.

There was a woman from Chandler Heights who called me once, oh, maybe two or three years ago, and she asked me questions about Dr. Tompkins. She was trying to get a birth certificate. She had never had one and she knew that Dr. Tompkins had delivered her, and she was telling me that she needed proof, you know, that she was born and that he was the doctor. And so I said, "Well, I knew one thing about him. He always had this black cigar with him and he liked his bottle." He tipped the bottle, and she said yes, she was told that when she was born her dad called the doctor, and when he came to deliver her that he smelled of liquor. I said that that was typical.

Carol Shepherd: Have there been any other doctors that have had practices?

Rose Divelbess: Well, not until just the past few years. Actually, he was the only one for many, many years. 1919. Of course, he was not practicing the little while he wasn't in Gilbert. I'm pretty sure he died in 1964. So he was here from 1919 up until, I would say, the early '60's.

Carol Shepherd: You had at least one pharmacist apparently, always.

Rose Divelbess: Always. From 1918 on. Well, and I guess that Pilcher Drugstore that I mentioned was even before

that. The little one on the east side of the street. We have a picture of the Pilcher Drugstore. The sign is on the front of the building.

Carol Shepherd: Did you have more than one at a time?

Rose Divelbess: No. And then that building that is now the bank. I don't mean the original bank building. You know which one?

Carol Shepherd: Yes, First Interstate.

Rose Divelbess: No, it was....

Carol Shepherd: Red Carpet Realty.

Rose Divelbess: Yes, it was. It's been sold. I mean the Red Carpet is not in there anymore.

Carol Shepherd: No.

Rose Divelbess: Somebody owns that building. A Mexican name. Luis, is it? Anyway, the business that's in there has changed in the last year or so. But there was a drug store in there for awhile called the Weber Drugstore.

Carol Shepherd: Was this after Pilcher?

Rose Divelbess: Yes.

Carol Shepherd: When did the bank go in there?

Rose Divelbess: 1917 it was built. It went broke in, I guess, the early '30's. It was a branch of a Chandler bank for awhile.

Carol Shepherd: Do you remember what the name of it was in the beginning?

Rose Divelbess: It was just called the Bank of Gilbert. I think that's what's on the sign on the front of the building. We've got a picture of the building as it looked when it was first built. Or it may say Chandler Bank, I'm not sure. You're going to have to come over and check up on some of these things I'm telling you!

Carol Shepherd: When we get the transcript done, I'll bring you a copy to go over so you can read it.

Rose Divelbess: Well, when I'm trying to tell these things, a lot of things don't come back to me as clear as they should to put it in records. If I tell them wrong...I don't want to!

Carol Shepherd: We know that. It sounds as though you spent a lot of time on the farm and doing the chores that were necessary.

Rose Divelbess: Well, everybody did.

Carol Shepherd: Did your dad ever keep livestock, too?

Rose Divelbess: Well, my mother always had chickens, and we always raised two or three pigs for winter meat. And she always had a few turkeys for meat. We always had at least two cows, and then my dad had horses to pull the machinery for harvesting the alfalfa, cutting the hay and stacking it.

Carol Shepherd: What did you do for migrant labor or laborers in the cotton fields?

Rose Divelbess: Well, for the cotton picking season there were always these transients coming in who would come in droves, and the farmer would have tents usually set up along the ditch bank so they could get canal water to use. That was their water supply, actually, and they would live in there in the tents while they were picking the cotton. I know one time my dad had, I don't know, four or five tents along the ditch bank, and after this one bunch of pickers moved...they weren't always Mexican. A lot of them were, but some of them were Oklahoma people, and different groups of people.

But after they had left, my sister and, I guess, the younger boys, went out and played out in one of those tents. Well, the first thing you know my sister got a good case of lice in her hair, and my mother just about had a fit. I don't know how she got rid of them but, of course, she didn't want anybody to know that Christine had gotten the bugs. But any of that sort of thing happened a lot.

Carol Shepherd: How long were the migrants here each season?

Rose Divelbess: Well, actually, the cotton they would start picking in the early fall. It would be out pretty good by October. I think maybe they may have picked a little bit, but it didn't get really fluffy so they could pick it real

well until in October. And then it usually was all finished. In fact, for many years now it's had to all be cleared off by the first of January, or right in that part of the year anyway, to get rid of the bollworms. Boll weevil. They have to scratch up all those stalks and get them plowed under. There is a deadline. I'm not sure exactly what that is right now, though.

Carol Shepherd: You had your own kitchen gardens, too, then didn't you?

Rose Divelbess: We never had a garden, actually.

Carol Shepherd: Orchard?

Rose Divelbess: We bought fruit rather than try to have an orchard. You could buy any kind of fruit, like Thompson seedless grapes, or peaches or apricots for five cents a pound. My mother would get a washtub full, which was ordinarily about a hundred pounds for five dollars, and then we would spend two or three days getting it ready and canning it. And then we'd have dozens and dozens of jars of canned fruit. In the winter time, when they would kill a pig or a calf, a young animal, then she would cook a lot of the meat and put it down in the fat to keep it. Because that was the only way. There was no such thing as refrigeration in those days anywhere in this area.

Carol Shepherd: Did Gilbert ever get an icehouse where they made ice?

Rose Divelbess: No. The ice that was delivered to Gilbert people was owned by the Blakely's and it was inside of that second Blakely garage which is now the part of Norwood's which has the curve on it. And there was an ice house in there and the three Blakely boys would deliver ice to the homes all over the Gilbert area. They had a little old truck. They would bring the ice out from Mesa and store it in that ice house in their garage. And they had the big black card that had the numbers twenty-five, fifty, seventy-five and one hundred, and you hung that in your window where they could see it, and they would bring in the size block that you wanted. Twenty-five pounds would be twenty cents, and a fifty-pound block would be forty cents. And the old ice box we have in the museum, we show the kids how to put the ice in the top and then it would melt and drip down into a pan underneath, and you had to always make

sure that pan was drained before it ran over, or else you had a mess to clean up.

Carol Shepherd: That could have been a busy job in the summer.

Rose Divelbess: Well, it was a nuisance, but then it had to be done and that was the only way to keep anything cool. Some of the houses had little spaces...like if they had a basement where it was cooler than the house itself, they'd have. I know one of the houses we lived in, it's back of where my brother lives now, in the corner of the kitchen was this place with slatted shelves, and the cool air from down in the basement would come up through and they'd put the wet burlap around so that it would cool.

And then we had those funny looking old, you can't call it a refrigerator, but that's what it really was. We'd put it out under a tree with the water tub, washtub, up overhanging on a limb over the thing. It looked like an outdoor toilet, is what it looked like. Burlap was all around it over the top and down the sides, and the water from the tub would drip on it and cool it and you could keep milk overnight even, and it would not spoil. Tomatoes, watermelons, any kinds of melons would stay cold enough to stay alright overnight. People that live now do not realize what the early people went through to live in this area.

Carol Shepherd: Do you remember anything about the first air conditioning to come into town?

Rose Divelbess: Well, I know that it came into our house the very first thing that anybody would use for air conditioning. I know right outside our dining room window my dad opened the window and put up baled hay and then he put a hose with the water dripping down through that baled hay and the air would come in through and be much cooler. Everybody wanted to sit in front of that window where this cool air came in. That's the first air conditioning I can remember.

Carol Shepherd: Hard to believe, isn't it?

Rose Divelbess: Yes, but it's amazing what people can figure out and do when the necessity is there, you know? That's what other people had, too. This thing to put the food in was the same principle as the baled hay by the window. The cool air coming through the moisture.

Carol Shepherd: The advent of refrigeration, though, didn't come until the mid-Fifties, did it?

Rose Divelbess: Well, our first, what you could call a refrigerator, was I think, General Electric. It had the big circle of pipes of some sort on top of it. This man that lives across the street has one, and he promised me he would give it to us for the museum, but they took it out to some other house somewhere and were going to, what he calls, restore it. We've never gotten it. But I can remember that ugly thing sitting in our dining room after the baled hay. Then we got that refrigerator. I'm sure you've seen them in stores. That big, old monster with a bunch of coils on top.

Carol Shepherd: Interesting that it was in your dining room.

Rose Divelbess: Well, it's because the dining room in that house where my family lived at the time that we got it was...there was a basement under the house. The original house was adobe, and then my dad built some on to it--lumber parts on around it on two sides. But the dining room was a great big room over the basement, and the cooler air was down in the basement and it would come up through there.

Carol Shepherd: Sounds like you lived in a number of houses in Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: Well, we moved several times before we finally settled up there where my brother bought, after my mother died. Hugh bought that property from the estate. And then he had some more adjoining clear down to Gilbert Road.

Carol Shepherd: What about characters in town? The doctor certainly qualified. There are several stories about Gilbert and the way the town got named.

Rose Divelbess: Well, I never saw Gilbert, Bobby Gilbert. And his name was not Bobby or Robert. I believe nobody ever has known why he was called Bobby. His name was Michael.

Carol Shepherd: Michael Gilbert.

Rose Divelbess: But, I never saw him to know him. We have a bunch of material that came from the people who are descendents, and it's from a bibliography written about the Gilbert family. He evidently was from Kentucky, and he fell

in love in the bluegrass section where they have all the racehorses, you know, in that beautiful part of Kentucky. And he fell in love with this girl, and she jilted him and so he went...the story that I've heard and believe pretty much to be the facts...he went to Missouri where some of his relatives were. I guess sort of for consolation.

And I actually do not know how he got out here, except that in Mesa there was a Gilbert family that had come out here and homesteaded. And there was a Dr. Gilbert that a lot of Gilbert people used to go to. A lot of the information that we have for the museum has come through this Dr. Gilbert's family, and this Bobby Gilbert was supposed to have been a nephew of the Dr. Gilbert in Mesa.

But he sort of became a, I don't know what you'd call him. He didn't care how he looked. He was dirty all the time. He lived in a tent down there in South Mesa somewhere, so I've been told. But he loved little kids, and he always had a bag of candy in his pockets, and he'd go around and, you know, entertain himself by giving kids a piece of candy.

My mother said she saw him, and when she saw him he had a big black hat on. I guess like a cowboy hat. That's the only thing I can remember of any personal contact to know anything about him. And we have his picture that was given to us by the descendents in Mesa.

Carol Shepherd: Did he ever marry?

Rose Divelbess: No. This teacher that was trying to write a history on him, he always wrote the degrading things that he could pick up about Gilbert. And he said that he had an Indian woman living with him. But nobody I've ever talked to anywhere around has ever known anything like that. I have no idea. People do it all the time now. Why couldn't he have? You know. It doesn't make any difference to me if he did or didn't. The only thing that is fact, he had this homestead, and he donated the land for the train to go across.

And the Pines, who had a homestead joining his to the north, offered land, but there was already a Pine in northern Arizona. So, they decided to use Gilbert's piece of land. And the requisite was that whoever gave the land would have the name, their name, be the name of the siting is all that it amounted to in those days, until they got the depot and the side track and all that. But, in the beginning, it was just space for a train to go zooming through.

Carol Shepherd: So it became Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: Yes.

Carol Shepherd: Were there buildings here by that time?

Rose Divelbess: Well, Ruth Gieszl's mother, Nellie Stiles, came to Arizona in 1907. Brass. Now I've lost her first name. Anyway, her parents had, you know the corner where you turn to go to Chandler at Ray Road? There's a house there, a trailer house I think it is, a mobile home. Anyway, that was Brass property and they homesteaded. Then the Lamoreaux bought the property later. And in a taped interview, Mrs. Stiles said that she remembers when they came and they were living there on that homestead, they were going to Mesa. They went north on Gilbert Road clear up to Baseline before they turned west, and she said the only building on the whole way was the depot.

Now, we have a brick that came from the depot when it was torn down. A man by the name of Ruiz, Jesus Ruiz, gave us this brick and two chandeliers that came out of the depot. He had the contract to haul away, or do whatever he wanted to, with those bricks just to get rid of them. And so he found this brick in the first row of bricks above the foundation. That has 1905 scratched on it, so we are assuming that the depot was built in 1905, and that holds with Mrs. Stiles story of 1907 that that building was the only building from Ray Road clear to Baseline. And that is on a taped interview that Ann Pace got from Ruth's mother.

Now, Ruth can tell you some early memories of her parents, you know, and the Brass family. We have a history of a good many of the families, if you'd like to use one of mine. I want it returned, but I would be glad to have you take it and read it. It might give you some ideas of who you could talk to.

Carol Shepherd: I'd love to.

Rose Divelbess: Let me go get one of those. I think I can get one without too much trouble.

Carol Shepherd: Don't hurt yourself.

Rose Divelbess: The town was incorporated. The reason they got it incorporated was they wanted to float a bond issue so they could put in a water system so they could fight fires. Too many buildings had burned to the ground.

Carol Shepherd: With the conditions, fire would be a problem for them.

Rose Divelbess: Several buildings burned to the ground. That little old building that's across from the Municipal Court, besides getting flooded and the basement being ruined, that building burned to the ground. The beginning building, the first building and then the Liberty Market, half of it burned at one time. I think it was in the early 40's, and we had that little fire engine that put out that fire. We have a picture of the fire engine putting out the fire.

Carol Shepherd: You had a volunteer department?

Rose Divelbess: Yes. We haven't had anything but volunteer up until not too many years ago.

Carol Shepherd: With the number of framed buildings, though, it was.... Water was carried in a tank? That was a tank?

Rose Divelbess: Yes.

Carol Shepherd: How soon did you get the water tower in Gilbert?

Rose Divelbess: I can't tell you when that was put in, actually.

Carol Shepherd: That may not be the original that's there now.

Rose Divelbess: It probably isn't.
But I know we had two merchants who fought over which one was right. That little old adobe building that's there, you know. They call it the little old jail. And the fight was always, was it built for a jail or was it a pump house? Well, Mr. Clare owned the little business that sits back from Gilbert Road on the east side. It's just north of the big brick building. It was a flower business last, I think. The sign on it now says "For Rent." But this man did sheet metal work, and he had his business right in front of that building that's there now. That was their home and business for a long time. I guess it must still be there. The floor was cement and you could still see the cement floor there. And, he was quite an inventor. They say he built the first outdoor sun heat. What am I trying to say?

Carol Shepherd: Solar?

Rose Divelbess: Solar heat. Yes. He made a water tank outside for the Blakely family that was heated with solar heat.

Carol Shepherd: Interesting.

Rose Divelbess: And that house faces Elm Street, at Page. Page and Elm Street.

Carol Shepherd: What did they fight about?

Rose Divelbess: Whether it was really built for a jail or whether it was the pump house. It really wasn't fighting, but one was very sure it was built for a jail. The other was very, very sure that it was just, you know, they kept supplies in there and called it a pump house. Well, then the Town left the darn thing leak and it almost ruined the building. Then they wanted the historical society to take it, move it away from there, even take it down on our property, and here it would have fallen apart!

This man across the street, Leon Cowart? He is a mover. That's his business. So I talked to him about it, and he said it would probably cost from $9,000 - $15,000 dollars. You'd have to build two walls on each side of it to keep it together because it was so deteriorated from this leak. Anyway, we just had to say no.

And then to get it on the historic register, they wanted that done. And, you know, it's nice to ask somebody else to do these things, but it costs a lot of money, an awful lot of know-how and a lot of energy. You know we should get some help for that. Everything that is done there is volunteer work. Labor, everything is volunteer. And, we've gotten very, very little help from the Town. Very little.

Carol Shepherd: Your hay rake and your equipment looks nice.

Rose Divelbess: Well, it doesn't show up as well as we hoped it would. The lighting isn't right yet. The first week we had the lights in, some little smart aleck shot them out. But, oh, that's been the aim of some of our members for a long time, was to get something out there in front to get attention. A lot of people still don't even know we're there. I don't know what to do unless you go from house to house and tell everybody. It's been in the paper so many times, you know.

Carol Shepherd: I know. But do you know which one it was built for? Whether it was built for a jail or whether it was built for a...?

Rose Divelbess: Oh, no, it was just a little pumphouse.

Carol Shepherd: Did they ever use it for a jail?

Rose Divelbess: Well, you could say yes for the fact that if somebody was drunk on the street and they didn't know what to do with them, they'd put them in there. They had a cot in there and they put them in there and left the door open. The next morning they'd get up and walk out. Now, if you want to call that a jail, okay. But that's what it was.

Carol Shepherd: Sounds like it was just a place to put somebody.

Rose Divelbess: Well, it was just used that way. It wasn't built for that purpose, but it served its purpose because other than that, the next best thing was to take them to Chandler.

Carol Shepherd: You didn't have a formal police force then?

Rose Divelbess: No. Well, we had a night marshall. In fact, we have his picture. It was the first officer. Hubert Harmon was our only officer for many years.

Carol Shepherd: Then you developed a formal police department?

Rose Divelbess: I don't know when that started.

Carol Shepherd: Did you have many trouble makers or problems other than...were there problems when you had the migrant workers in and out of town?

Rose Divelbess: I don't really think so. I'm sure we had these little places where they could buy their liquor, you know. We had, I think, for many, many, many years we've had three in town. They're still here, the same ones. I'm sure there were a few people now and then that got tipsy and had to go into that little old place and sleep it off. And then, of course, the next thing was that corner of Town Hall that still is there. I don't know if they ever put anybody...I guess they still put people down there if they have to. I don't know for sure. I see cars parked there

once in awhile and people sitting there on the little fence like they're waiting. Of course, that doesn't mean that's where they went in, but.... I don't know very much about it really.

Of course, we had the Justice of the Peace, Mr. McConnell, who was so badly crippled for many, many years. His wife would keep the books, and if somebody got a ticket for driving through town too fast or something like that, the fines were $2.50. And now I see the fines that they're getting for drunk driving or speeding or anything are sometimes several hundred dollars.

Carol Shepherd: Yes.

Rose Divelbess: I think Skousen is pretty tough on them.

Carol Shepherd: He has that reputation! You've given me all three children then?

Rose Divelbess: My oldest son is Leon. And then John is building a new home on White Fence Farms out here. They're just going to move in in a few days now. I had a picture right around here. I tilted the camera so it looks like the house is drunk, but it was me!

Carol Shepherd: Oh, what a pretty house!

Rose Divelbess: Yes, it's beautiful inside.

Carol Shepherd: Oh, I bet. It's gorgeous. It's kind of nice to have him close to you, then.

Rose Divelbess: Yes, and he's so good to me. I have this big bedroom that I built for my two boys when I put the addition on this. I bought this little house, two bedrooms, when the kids were little. And I paid $7,250 for the thing, and then I had the addition for the boys put on. Anyway, it's a big, big room and the women at the Methodist Church were making a big...what it's meant to be is a bedspread, and we made blocks, about this big square, and embroidered forty-two of those blocks. And now they're ready to quilt it. They didn't have a space so I offered that room. So I've got to get it all finished, ready for them. I had John over yesterday and he helped me to get the stuff out of it so that they could use it and.... Anyway, you might not realize it, but I am a very busy person!

Carol Shepherd: I know you are. You are a busy lady.

Rose Divelbess: I get phone calls all the time from people wanting to know things. The Library, you know, refers people to me. And then that Maria, how do you say her last name? Cadaba? She called and wanted the addresses of all....

Carol Shepherd: I know who you mean.

Rose Divelbess: Cadavi. Cadiva, I think. I don't know how to say it. But, anyway, she called and wanted addresses of all the Board of Directors of the Historical Society. So that was the last call I had. Sometimes I wonder that people think my brain is still working enough to do all of these things.

Carol Shepherd: You need a secretary.

Rose Divelbess: And all the questions that I get from the Chamber of Commerce. I don't know. Sometimes I think people don't realize how old I am!

Carol Shepherd: You bought this house, though, when?

Rose Divelbess: In 1950. Yes. We moved in here-- no, actually, when we moved in it was '52. On Easter Sunday we moved in, in 1952. I don't know if you noticed those narcissus that are growing. Well, we moved in, as I said, on Easter and those were blooming right along the walk on each side. A pretty row. The people who had bought it-- it was a teacher and his wife who had two boys. They had planted those narcissus. One of the women that still lives in Gilbert came down the street and she stopped and asked me if she could have a few of those. She said, "They are so beautiful." And they have been out there since 1952, blooming.

And so I said to my daughter-in-law, I said, "You know, they have struggled all these years. They've spread out all over the lawn and unless the mower cuts them off they just keep going." So I said, "I'm going to let them get to the stage where they dry up and then dig up some of those bulbs and you take them out to your new home and plant them." Let them struggle out there! But, because they've been here all these years, some of them have moved clear out around the corner of the house. You know, it's unbelievable.

Carol Shepherd: Did you buy this house, though, following your husband's death?

Rose Divelbess: Well, when he died...he died in 1949, and I came back down here. I lacked five credits of having my four year degree. And so I had to go back to school a semester. Well, I only needed five credits, but I went a full semester so I could get my certificate again...renewed and everything. And so I bought the house about a year after we came back to Gilbert. Actually, he died in 1949, in October, and we came back down to Gilbert on the first day of November, and I started then at ASU for the full semester in 1950. I started teaching in the fall of 1950 and taught twenty-one and a half years here in Gilbert.