

This is an interview of:

RUBY ALMA DUNNING GOLDSBERRY

by

Ronna Davis

At 1319 Susan Circle, Roseville
On May 31, 2000.

The interview is for the Rocklin Historical Society,
Rocklin,
Placer County, California.

(Note: Mrs. Goldsberry was nearly 90 years old and some of her speech was difficult to discern. Three dots denote places on the tape that were not clear.)
Ruby was married to Donald Goldsberry for about sixty years. After his death, Ruby later married a Mr. Keysor. They were married about thirteen years until his death.

Ruby, could you tell us a little about your days growing up, and what your background was like?

Oh, my background was Missouri, on a farm until I was thirteen. We were, it was not the best, but not the worst, either. We had a farm, and my dad had a small form at the very last, and uh, took the job while they were repairing the railroads, in our vicinity, and uh, that was very good and the rest, my father was in the railroad department, working, and he had four horses. He fixed the roads and repaired them, and anything that needed to be done in our area and I don't know how much our area was, but it took him all his time, practically, but he would have time, he'd make time, it seemed to me, to help my mother and son, Neil, to a, a help him with some of the field work.

So he had a farm then.

Uh huh. I didn't do anything like that, I did when I was on the farm prior, but not there. I didn't work out in the in the orchard part or any of it except maybe help milk once in a while and help feed the cattle and the horses. So I was very limited in this period, and I was fourteen then, or almost, I don't remember, I guess I was almost fourteen, and my dad decided to come to California. Things were getting pretty rough in Missouri. So we began to make plans and had a sale and sold all we had that we couldn't take with us and that was very little. We were with three other couples and we went to California. First we went south where the temperatures were quite possible. They weren't too hot, and they didn't get too cold, but didn't stay like you'd think they might. Perfect.

Who was it that went south?

My father and our family, and Ray.

There was the Strickland family that went with us: Mary, his wife and two girls, people my Father knew, and an old friend of ours, Ray Johnson, who wasn't any relation to the others.

No relation.

No, there was no relation. And then my Aunt got, couldn't stand us getting there... and she became very anxious and said,

"I'm gonna go too."

So they bought another Ford, he and Dad, between them, and we started out for California.

How old were you then?

I was thirteen, almost fourteen. Actually, I had my fourteenth birthday on the way out. It took a long time to get to that time, too.

We started in May and arrived in California about the last of July or first of August. It was the first of August, I think.

So you came out in Ford cars?

Yea, ... with side curtains and ..

Side curtains and a rain curtain?

A rain curtain, yea.

Did you carry all of your things in the car?

Yea, We put a trunk and then my Aunt was driving. And I was the co-pilot, and I drove when she wasn't driving. But she did the most driving.

You were a young driver!

Yea, but I'd been driving quite a little while.

On the farm?

Yea, I was big for my age, and a, I don't know, I just learned to drive. Many funny things happened to us, funny in one respect but not very funny in the other. She had her foot on the wrong pedal.

... Yea, because we didn't have a car until my father bought it just a few months before we left. So he put a trunk in the back end of it and ...took out the back seat, and we furnished it with what we was going to need on the trip. We had a big tent, a circus tent, it wasn't the biggest one I've ever seen; I've seen a lot bigger, but it was big. And we started out. We ate as we could in the morning, which we called breakfast, and she would cook us oatmeal and eggs and bacon if we wanted her to.

Breakfast cooked to order

We would go as far as we could and leave time to put up that big, old tent, a great big one. One of the fellows, a, Ray Johnson, he had a small tent and he put it up the first couple of nights, but after that he just stayed in ours, because ours was so big. We covered mileage in a way, but not really fast.

How far did you go each day?

I probably wrote it in the log someplace, but I can't remember. Not many, not too many. (Her daughter, Daryl Bohnstedt, told me that Ruby kept a log of their trip to California.) We made up our minds before we left, that anything that's interesting, we did that stop. We weren't gonna just drive thru. We had to dry out our tent when it got wet. We took pictures of other people. My Aunt had a camera and she took lots of pictures; post card size, too. There was a cattle disease. They didn't want us to carry it to another county. When we started out, we had all our belongings in gunnysacks. By the time we got to the California border we didn't have any gunnysacks left; they took them all away from us. We kept hearing that they were going to put us in a big tent with a fire, to kill the disease. That was in the southwest. I don't know about the eastern part.

Was it safe to eat the meat?

Well, yea, we had ham and food that we brought and food that we canned. We ate canned food.

You did the canning before you left.

Oh yes.

Were there many Cars? Did you see many cars?

Oh yes. We came right to Roseville.

Where did you cross into California?

At the upper part, I can't think of the name of it.

You left in May and you arrived here in the fall.

Yea. Then two couples left us in southern California, near Pasadena, Florence and Ray Johnson and Bulah and Al Strickland.

We came to Roseville. I had an Uncle there. It was mostly our family; two cars of us came in all in one piece. We were mighty thankful for that. I started school. We stayed with our Uncle in Roseville. He and my Aunt got married. My Dad got a job in Loomis or Penryn. Say Penryn. He went to work there. In the fall Dad said, "Well, do we really want to stay here? We want everybody's vote. What do you want to do?"

I wanted to stay and go to school.

My mother didn't want to go back to hard work and less of it. My two brothers wanted to stay here and go to school, besides me. So I started high school in Roseville. My dad worked for the S.P. (Southern Pacific Railroad.)

What memories do you have of your schooling in Roseville?

There were the high eights and the low eights. They said we'll put you in the high eights and see if you can make it. We graduated, a group of about fifteen or eighteen.

When you graduated from high school, what kinds of jobs did people take?

Well, Dad bought a farm and we sold vegetables. He had grapes for sale; he had corn; he had every kind of vegetables you could name. He sold to groceries in Roseville and he also sold from the home. And that's the way we got by at first. After school I worked in the fields. Dad was determined that we get an education.

What were your goals? What did you hope that you would become?

Well, I don't know what they did. He didn't ask anything except that we graduate. I had to graduate in either three and a half years or four and a half years. I graduated in three and a half. I packed fruit in the summer, helped my Dad in the garden. We all had to work, you know. Mother had everything homemade. She wanted us to be decent looking in school. She did all our sewing and everything. We couldn't afford to sew too much because we didn't want to spend the money. She kept me clothed; I was satisfied. Let's see, I picked up a few friends, the Ruhkalas in Loomis and Rocklin; they're friends of mine, and a couple of others. We had a big old house and you could get anyone to go home with you if you wanted to.

In the summer I packed fruit.

The fruit that you packed, was it from your own farm?

No. Dad went to work for the railroad. It was handy for us; we lived in Loomis and rode the train to Rocklin. Then we moved into Rocklin and got our place there, an old house.

We liked it and we were all pleased. We lived near the school. There was a big tall palm tree in front of it and a little house along side of it.

Ruby, can you tell us how you met your husband?

Yea, I can tell you. My young brother, he liked and actually went out and bought a place and owned it, way back of us; a harvesting property, no people lived there. There was a swimming place, nothing fancy, up to the waist. And we went swimming there pretty often. The Goldsberry's were opposite that. They came in from their side and we went in from our side. We did a lot of swimming there. But this particular time my brothers wanted to go swimming. It was hot, and mother said to them,

"If you can get your sister to go with you, I'll let you go."

So I went with them. There was nobody down there but if you send a kid out there you never know what they will do. So anyway, I took my dress in and my bloomers and walked up and down and, I'd never met him, I'd met the rest of the family. then on the other bank there was a man. I thought, Oh, Oh, I was too late to try to look half decent. So I just kept on walking. So he said something about,

"Well, I hear something, ...

Something I had done. I don't know what it was.

Something you had done?

Yea, something I had done in competing with somebody.

Oh, and he had heard about it.

Yea, He started kidding me about it. And so we had a start, a beginning. We just talked. He told me what he was doing. He was driving cows there and he went up to the barn to milk. I don't know how many he had, about thirty probably. I don't know. And that's what he was doing. That was his job. Getting them from where they didn't belong. He had them up there to feed them.

Do you remember who they belonged to?

I believe they belonged to people by the name of Humphrey.

But my husband's name is Donald Goldsberry, from South Dakota. So and eventually I went with him. And in the meantime I was not in school. I rode on the train and got off in Roseville and caught the train home at night. ... We had a house, no, we had a bungalow, and it was on the small size. I worked a mile out of town and I went to the railroad track and they picked me up. It was that sort of thing.

But you didn't go on the bus to school.

No, we rode the train to school, "the skunk", we called it. Then I was with a bunch from Rocklin, too. I got well acquainted with them.

What kinds of dates did you have? What activities were there for you to do then, as a young woman?

Oh, I had a regular schedule, just like anybody in high school.

But I mean on your own time. What kind of things did you do when you did not have to work?

Well, I generally had some sewing to do. I crocheted a little. I had strawberries to pick or blackberries to pick. ...I worked with my dad.

When you were dating Donald, what activities did you do? What kinds of things did you do? Were there dances? Or socials? Or what?

Not the dances as they do now...Up in Forest Hill. It was in a picnic yard they fixed up. ... It had a good orchestra.

Then we broke up and I had another boyfriend from Loomis.

I can't remember what we did; I suppose the same old thing.

But somehow you got back together with Donald.

I went back to packing fruit for my Dad, tomatoes; we were getting the stuff ready to go to market.

What time did you have to get up?

Not bad, it was early, I know, and then I'd have to ride down with him to get to school. I had to do that too.

When you started dating Donald again, how long was it before you decided to marry him?

Well, we had our ups and downs and there was quite a little period there, a year or two. I was too young to get married. I hadn't graduated from high school long.

This is after you graduated.

Yes, Married? How did we get married? Oh, he gave me an ultimatum. That when he had a thousand dollars in the bank...

I was nineteen. We were married over fifty years.

As soon as we got married, we bought an old mill. It had been a lumber mill. He said he'd do the best that I can with what I have. So he decided to build himself a lift. The very first day that I was on the job he had to let the neighbors know all over the countryside that he was open. He had stuff on the trucks in case someone needed something right then. It had taken him all day. Someone came in and said, "You have a load of grain that has been dumped along the roadside."

I think the train had hashed it under... I don't know. (fallen off a train?) Some fella came in with a truckload and wanted to know if we could clean it. And I said, yes, we'd clean it. So I helped him. He got it in thru a side opening, and we dumped so much at a time into the grinder. We threw everything in. We (cleaned it) and put it back on the truck. Then we thought, what in the world are we gonna charge? We never thought about cleaning grain before. About then it was quitten time. But Don came along about that time. So you get lucky sometimes....

When did you decide to buy the Barundoni Building, the Palace Meat Market?

We went all up and down. We were looking in Auburn. We knew all about the country around there, you know? And Don said, I cannot get all the feed I need. I made it (and) it would have to come down to Rocklin. That would be a waste of time.

I understand your husband was a millwright so he could mix the feed; that he could custom make all the feed.

Yes, he had a regular register, a regular...

A certificate.

Yea, he had a ticket about that big. People would often rely on him. I can't think of all the titles they gave him.

So he served the city, too.

He had too many things; he couldn't handle them all.

Somebody told me that the floor of your feed store had the grindings of some of the feed on it and it made it kind of slippery and a good dance floor.

He put in some stairs and we started to have some dances there. It wasn't a very good idea though.

He had to have equipment up there, though....

He could do almost anything he wanted to.

I understand he was very, very versatile.

He could do it; he had a lot of room up there. He liked to do it too.

If he had something go wrong, why he would repair it. Then, later on, he had a heart attack.... He quit and retired.

You opened your own variety store. Tell us about that.

Well, we needed one because there was nothing. You couldn't buy a spool of thread. I knew that when the war was over it was going to be kaput. People were driving to Sacramento for a spool of thread. We had thread and a few other things.

People were tired of driving to Sacramento for a spool of thread.

We couldn't do it anymore; too much gas. People were running out of gas. We had most anything. I had a friend or two. They were interested in the variety store and they helped me anyway they could. And they sure did.

How did you decide what to buy and where did you purchase the goods for the store?

A regular salesman.

A salesman came around and you purchased from him.

Your store was just down the street from the Barundoni building. (Their feed store). It was right there on Front Street. Your variety store is now an insurance office, the Withers insurance office. (5220 Front Street)

It was a variety store, I call it: Ruby's Variety Store.

And then the mail was on down a little farther.

Yes, the post office was further down at the end.

Yes, that was down by the roundhouse.

The post office was down near Bottemly's.

When you had your variety store, was the post office in the old Trott Hotel?

Everybody said it was the roundhouse.

Yes, right across from the roundhouse. Do you remember the roundhouse?

I don't remember it but I remember where it was built. ...It slowly disappeared.

How were the things you had in your store delivered to you?

By bus. We had some grain for the mill delivered by boxcar. We had to have so much hay. Don would be out buying it. We used a lot of hay.

Your daughter, Daryl, told me that she used to love to open the packages that arrived for your variety store. She was about ten years old when you purchased the store in 1948.

She said it was like Christmas for her.

She had to be very careful.

Tape 2

Ruby, can you tell me a little bit about your children? Maybe how old you were when you had them, any special family celebrations or special times with them.

Well, a lot of things, the most important things, I guess. Our house was high up off the ground. In the back it was a long ways up and in the front it wasn't up so far. My kids were little and I couldn't do too much but I'd take them with me when I could. If I had to haul feed out of Sacramento, I'd take them with me. They had to mind or they would have had broken necks, probably. I don't know how I ever got Daryl bred. She was always one of these people that was nosy and into everything. If she wanted to do anything, she wanted to do it by herself. She didn't need any help so I just let her. One day she wanted to bake a cake. I said, "Daryl, you don't want to forget..." She said "Mother, you don't have to remind me, I'm gonna do it."

It didn't do what it was supposed to do. I said,
"Well, then you didn't do what you were supposed to do."
She told me. She left out the ..

The baking powder? So it wouldn't rise?

Yea, she used the wrong one.

I let her run around. We had three acres. I had one pasture. He kept my horse. Whenever I had any spare time it was nice to ride. My daughter loved to ride too. She'd do anything.

She was about ten years old when you bought your variety store. You bought the store in about 1947.

Tell me about your son.

I want to tell you about my daughter.

O.K.

I made a law. They couldn't go out around the quarry hole. It was so deep, deep, deep. I said, "You can go once in a while, but you must ask me. They came home one afternoon. It was hotter than Hades. They wanted to ride by the quarry over there. I said,
" All right, you go ahead, but don't let's forget the rule. So I was kinda dozing off and I heard a

"Help!"

I could hear it; I couldn't hear it very good, but I could hear it. I ran to the window and I heard more shouts. I ran out in my bra and panties. I took off down the back steps, which were about ten foot high. I went down those steps and I don't know how many I missed. There she was a floating. She didn't know much about floating. I was teaching her to swim but she was too little. She was yelling. She would have been dead if I hadn't gotten there. I pushed her up on a rock. Then I couldn't get out. I couldn't reach him. Dale got the water pumped back out of her mouth. He did, he was good. He did what I told him to do. If she's gone down there would have been no hope.

We raised turkeys once. We had a little building and made a turkey house out of it.

Was this after Donald's heart attack? Uh huh.

It was heavy work, especially in the summer. Vern Newton was one that helped him a lot.

Vern was one of your employees in the feed store. Did he work there a long time?

Yes, he didn't work there a lot. well, quite a lot, but he always worked there at night.

Was he your main employee?

We had a young boy about twelve. He came to work for us. He was good; he was a good little worker.

Did you know his Family?

Yes.

Do you remember their names? Is the family still in Rocklin?

I can't remember.

Where is your son now?

He's on the east coast.

Ruby, going back to some of your memories of your variety store, when your children were growing up, did you have people working for you? Were some of your friends working with you?

Once in a while. My husband could run up and help me if it got really crowded there.

What kinds of things did you sell there?

About anything that anybody needed, really: Lingerie and underclothes, hosiery.

Did they shop there for gifts?

Yea, they did a lot of *shopping* for gifts there because they couldn't afford to go to Sacramento and they didn't want what was in Roseville.

Did you carry material and bolts of cloth as well for sewing?

Yes. I still have pieces of them. I sewed a lot of my couches with them. Yes, I had material and I sewed everything under the sun that I could for our selves.

Was it mostly cotton material?

Yes, once in a while I'd find a beautiful bolt of something. I didn't make a habit of it.

You can get too much of that.

About how much would that cost per yard?

I don't remember much; I think the cheapest would be around thirty-nine cents or forty-nine cents, seventy-nine cents.

Do you mean about seventy-nine cents a yard?

Yes. I sold quite a lot of material and I sold underclothes.

What were your busiest times? When did people come in to do their shopping?

People were mostly friends and they liked to stop and talk. I always thought of it as a very pleasant time.

When we sold the house, that's when I sold the store, don't seem to remember why. We were trying to get ahead.

What were the things that people held very dear then or treasured or wanted to have?

Well, for children as soon as school was out, it was candy. Candy every night and then they'd go thru and buy little trinkets, cars and little small items.

So you carried some toys, also.

Yea, I carried quite a lot. During the sale, I, at Christmas, I carried a lot. That first Christmas was a doozie.

What were the toys made out of?

Plastic, mostly.

Did most people drive to your store or did they walk?

Oh yea, a lot of people drove to my store.

You said your first Christmas was a doozie. What did you mean by that?

Well, there are some people who steal.

Did you have extra people at Christmas time to help you?

Yes, My girlfriend Evelyn Ruhkala, she helped me get started. The two girls helped me get started, Evelyn and Elsie.

What did you like best about owning the store?

Oh, visiting with everybody. You were never lonesome. Even if you don't have anybody for half a day, I had work to do for Eastern Star. I had more than a little to do. I could do my studying there.

I was so sad; I don't get sad. but I was disappointed not to be able to be at the celebration in Roseville, the Order of the Eastern Star a while back. They wanted me to say a word or two, and I was looking forward to old time friends, but I had my operation on my legs. Not that it did much good. I can swing my feet a little but I can't stand on them.

You said you held offices in the Eastern Star. What kinds of things did you do?

Yes, I held all the offices in there and was Matron one year.

That's a lot of work.

That was in Roseville. I did whatever they needed.

That's a real contribution

I'd work now if I could.

If you could give any advice or recommendations to people that will read about your life, Ruby, what would they be?

Well, I think people ought to think seriously about their life early on, not too late; about what they do and don't do; about where it would count some. Where they could help somebody and not get paid for it; just say,

"Here, I'll help you". And there are people who really need it. I hauled a man from Rocklin to San Francisco and didn't charge him. I had to haul a truck in. He was right across the street from us. I hauled him and his furniture to San Francisco. I had to back up on a corner; and here was a street and here was another street. I had to get the truck into position so he could unload his furniture. That was one of the hardest things I did.

Well, it wasn't so hard, but you have so many things to watch. I took the kids along. That was another nice thing about me having the store. If I was delivering feed or no matter what you did, with the children, you could take them along, if you could make them behave, you know. And so that was an advantage.

As you look back over the years, Ruby, what do you consider to be one of the happiest times of your life?

Hmm, the happiest. Well, I think when I opened the store, really. I got what I wanted and I made plans and they worked out. And I haven't made a lot of money to speak of, and yet we had a living, always. We had a good living. I thought I had done pretty good when I reached the point I could order a new car. And then the big old house. I ordered the car. We got our ticket, went back, picked up the car and drove it home. We took a month off.... Mother was always handy too. She could always be counted on.

Where was she?

She was in Loomis. We picked up the car then went into New York. We did a lot of sight seeing; I enjoyed that.

Then you drove out to California.

Yea, my son ran the feed store the whole time. So we tried to have him do things so it was simpler. When he was a little squirt he could do pretty good, at cooking or anything like that. We had a house left when we got back. He didn't let it burn down!

I want to thank you so much, Ruby. This has been very fine. Thank you.

Nothing to it; it was fun, really.