

---

# “This area was in the war long before the war”

The story of Jolene Dalton-Maes.

By Joshua Wheeler (Text) and [Reto Sterchi](#) (Photo), 16.10.2021



Jolene Dalton-Maes.

Jolene was only 2 years old living on the corner of Vermont and 16th in Alamogordo when the bomb went off. Alamogordo is near Trinity but there was never much talk of fallout in the town. “It was a government town,” Jolene

says. “Alamogordo and the Tularosa Basin were in the war long before the war,” she says, referring to the region’s history of military activity. She says the amount of money brought into the local economy by the military made it taboo for anyone in the area to criticize the bomb. In fact, the bomb was championed as the best thing that ever happened to Alamogordo when the city changed its nickname to “atomic city”.

Though Jolene doesn’t remember much about the actual atom bomb test, she says her family certainly got produce from rural areas and all their milk from City Dairy, which serviced most of Alamogordo using cows from rural areas near Tularosa and Three Rivers, where substantial fallout was well documented.

“There was no cancer in my family,” Jolene says, “and then my mother was 50 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Eventually she died from it at age 70. I had breast cancer. Was diagnosed at 56. Been in remission for 21 years. My younger sister had a rare ovarian cancer and died of that. My daughter is type 1 diabetic. She was 9 when she was diagnosed. I’m convinced that my exposure to radiation helped cause that.”