

Interview with Mae Gallagher

Lisa Gallagher
J. Harrington
4-09-02
History of Butte

This is Lisa Gallagher and I interviewed Mae Gallagher, my great grandmother, who is 102 years old, in Anaconda.

Mae Gallagher (Great): Well, my dad went to Marcus Daly about building a new church – St. Paul's was getting to small so he asked if he would give him the plot on 4th and Ash. So then he went around and got donations for the church. The town was growing at this time. My dad he was great. They built the church and they got along just fine. He told Bishop Rondell if you don't like it, I have the keys to the church in my pocket and you won't get in at all. He was stubborn, but they got along just fine. Then there were two churches. St. Paul's was were I was born, got my first communion and confirmation and I was married in that church.

Lisa Gallagher (Lisa): What did you dad do Great?

Great: He had a store on the main drag on Front Street, close to the railroad and then as it grew it had a place in a little log cabin, and he came over to Park Street and this building is still there where the Eagles Lodge is. That was the block that he built and it said on it "George Barrish Block"

Lisa: Is that still there or not?

Great: No, I just think it says Block, there was a rooming house upstairs that people used to come and stay.

Lisa: He just owned a general store?

Great: He had groceries on one side and clothing on the other and then he phased out the clothing. He then put a saloon in there. I remember there were four blocks, there were four saloons, one on each side of the block, and they made their money hand over fist.

Lisa: My dad was telling me something about people being sent to your dad's store, in company of George Barrish and he would get them a job.

Great: Ya

Lisa: Can you tell me about that?

Great: I now that he had what they called cash folks. He would keep track of what they bought and it was the same way with the meat. My sister Freda, I have two sisters, Freda and Emma, and my sister Freda said to my dad why did you give me such a name as Freda and he said well I asked you what name you wanted but you wouldn't answer so I had to give you what name I wanted and it was Freda. And Emma was named after the Queen of Holland.

Lisa: Really

Great: But they said Freda's name was Fredericka. She graduated and I bet you could still find it in the old papers, one of the ladies came to me and said oh you should be so proud and I asked her what on earth are you talking about, and she said I have been looking at these old papers and it said Freda Barrish graduated from high school before she was sixteen years old and then she went and took a job at the Washoe Meat Market when she was sixteen years old. She was very smart and of course, they are all gone and I am 102. My mother had ten kids, two girls next to me and one brother next to me wanted to be a dentist, and then he wanted to specialize so he went back to Evanston, Chicago, and took a course and he was an orthodontist and he even wrote a couple of articles for their paper. Then, Frank who was just normal stayed here and worked and another brother his name was Rudolph. My mother used to say there were eight sisters and one girl. And that was Rudolph, and every boy in town with that name was named after him. Coming down to Rudy – Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer.

Lisa: So did your mom just stay home and take care of you guys? Or did she do other stuff on the side too?

Great: She just stayed home, there was no such thing as having a job on the side.

Lisa: Did she take in boarders?

Great: No. She didn't but lots of people did. It was a great thing back then you know the boarders. She had all she could do to just take care of her family. I never ate in the kitchen until after I was married. We all ate in the dining room. It was an oblong table and set with a white linen table cloth and we all sat down at the same time and the soup was brought to us at the table in a turnin and we used a ladle to serve it and the soup was served on to soup plates, not soup bowls, but soup plates and she would dish that up and everyone would eat their soup first and then it was the food from the kitchen and it was never anything real fancy. We just did what we could, we back our own bread, homemade brat and that was it.

Lisa: What age did you get married at?

Great: 18

Lisa: And what did your husband do?

Great: He was a mechanist on the smelter

Lisa: For the Anaconda Company?

Great: Ya – uh huh- He got along just fine until he was the master mechanic. He was 21 and I was 18.

Lisa: So how long did he work for the Anaconda Company?

Great: Oh I couldn't tell you – About 30 years.

Lisa: Did he enjoy his work?

Great: Oh ya he just loved it. He used to work on these great big lathes that would fall down and one time when he was working it came down and banded his finger (ring). At that time you went to the hospital to have anything taken care of and it was just hanging from a string his finger, and when he got up there, they said we will just take that right off and he said no you won't sow it back on. So they did sow it back on. He said I would rather have a finger than no have any.

Lisa: Did it work then?

Great: Oh ya it had no feeling I it or anything but, he had a finger anyway.

Lisa: Did he just work on the lathes? What else did he do up there?

Great: Well he just did the usual work that a mechanic would do, everything, like I told you he worked himself up to master mechanic in that division and that meant a whole lot.

Lisa: What kind of hours did he work?

Great: He would go to work at 7:30 and got off at 3:30 and they took lunch at noon.

Lisa: And he was part of the union

Great: Oh yes it was always union in those days, and I don't know if that was a good thing or bad thing. Never the less that is the way that it was. My brother worked in the office, and the streetcars, those were the days of the streetcars. Take those to work and come home for lunch and then ride that back to work.

Lisa: And that was, when was, you were talking about the horse and buggy, the doctor would come on the horse and buggy, when was that?

Great: I can't really remember

Lisa: Was that when you were a kid?

Great: Yes, I was a kid, six or seven years old.

Lisa: And he would make house calls in his horse and buggy?

Great: What

Lisa: Would the doctor make house calls in his horse and buggy?

Great: Yes, that is what he did, it was house calls at that time, we had a horse that we had for the grocery store, his name was Prince, and I think just like all of the horse at the time were named Prince, he was beautiful, white, and I just remember that, I haven't even thought about that in years either.

Lisa: How did your dad get his stuff for his store here?

Great: What

Lisa: How did they ship in the goods for your dad's store? Was it by train?

Great: Yes

Lisa: They used the train?

Great: Oh ya they used the train for everything.

Lisa: The train that ran between here and Butte, could you ride it or not?

Great: Oh yes

Lisa: Do you remember riding that?

Great: Oh yes, it was a beautiful ride. Even my son was an engineer; he worked on the railroad.

Lisa: And what did you do? Did you just take care of your kids?

Great: Yes that was it.

Lisa: Did you work?

Great: No I never worked a day in my life, just at home.

Lisa: Well that is work. You never worked outside the home though?

Great: Oh no.

Lisa: Do you remember any woman who did work outside the home.

Great: No one ever worked outside the home. It was unheard of. I don't remember what year the woman began to work outside the house. They had to have two jobs to keep up with the Jones', I guess.

Lisa: Ya. Was there any kind of employment that a woman could do?

Great: What?

Lisa: Was there any kind of employment that a woman could do?

Great: I don't know, no because no one ever did. No one even thought about doing such a thing.

Lisa: What about the secretaries for the Anaconda Company, were they men?

Great: Mostly, yes, and eventually the woman began to work and became the secretaries.

Lisa: And what else do you remember about this area? How has it changed? Where did you live growing up?

Great: I was born and raised at 408 Cedar St. and the house is still there today. The dividing line between east and west was Alder St. and east of Alder was east and everything west of Alder St. was west. We anyways went to St. Paul's church.

Lisa: What were the big main events or your time? How did the depression effect this area?

Great: Oh the depression was awful, but everyone was in the same boat, so we didn't mind it too much. Every so often, they would bring a certain amount of meat and there was a place that you would go and get a piece of meat, a piece of this and a piece of that. It was very bad.

Lisa: Did your dad still have his store at that time?

Great: What?

Lisa: Did your dad still have his store at that time?

Great: Oh yes

Lisa: When did you finally close his store?

Great: I couldn't even tell you what year. I was born in 1888, and he opened his store the year that I was born, so I have seen three generations.

Lisa: Ya, that is amazing.

Great: I suppose that there are a few people that are still around likeself, I don't know though.

Lisa: Not very many

Great: Not very many, my birthday is on the 26th of May, and the family is planning a big party for the whole family.

Lisa: Ya that will be fun, what else do you remember about back then that is really different from today? Where there streets or were they just dirt trails?

Great: There were streets, they were regular streets. And there were divided into certain ones. We had the sidewalks; first of all, they were dirt sidewalks and then the board sidewalks and eventually the cement sidewalks. I remember that we had a girl's bicycle at that time and oh course I was bound and determined to learn to uh, ride that bicycle and so they put me one that bicycle and just pushed me, it was sink or swim. But I learned to ride anyway.

Lisa: How come you never got your driver's license?

Great: There was never any need for it at that time.

Lisa: Anyone could just ride at that time?

Great: And I never did learn to drive a car. My husband was always after me to learn to drive, but I never took any interest in learning how, but anyway my husband was a big hunter and fisherman too. We used to go up to Rock Creek and uh, he would park the car there, and he would say within an hour, he would walk and go fish and within a hour get in the car and shift, and he set the car and just showed me how to go and that was the only driving that I ever did.

Lisa: To just meet him down the river.

Great: Ya, it was a beautiful river, beautiful fish. You could get any amount of fish out of there and every Monday was fish day in our house, because I didn't like the fish that were left over, he would come home from work at 4:00 o'clock and start in on those fish, he never ever brought a fish home that was not cleaned, he would clean them, when he got too many fish he would throw them back in the river. So of the fish were just little you know and he could just fry those fish to a turn. For some of the family that cared for fish, we would have them to dinner, and you could just bite into the backbone of those fish, nothing to it. So good, then there were the fish that were too small and were too hurt so you couldn't throw them back in, he used to just, I just loved those fish, we would eat the head, tail and the whole bit.

Lisa: The whole fish.

Great: Ya

Lisa: Where they trout?

Great: Yes, I was so spoiled that I could not eat anything but trout.

Lisa: How many brothers and sisters did your husband have?

Great: Well I had two sisters and I had Fred, and Frank and Rudy. Three brothers and two sisters.

Lisa: No how many brothers and sisters did your husband have?

Great: What?

Lisa: How many did your husband have?

Great: Well you see they were born in the old country.

Lisa: Where is that?

Great: In Austria, like I told you my mother used to say there were eight sisters in her family and one girl, I think nine or ten.

Lisa: When did your husband come here? Did he live her in Anaconda?

Great: Oh sure, but you know I don't know, which I should, what city or what ever it was that they came from in Austria, it must have been closer to the Germany side, because they spoke mostly German at the time. As far as I was concerned, I knew more German than Austrian.

Lisa: How did you meet your husband?

Great: At the skating rink.

Lisa: At the Kennedy Commons.

Great: uh huh, we would go skating all the time, we never missed, and of course at that time you know we wore dresses and long stocking, it was pretty cold you know, around there, but never the less it was recreation.

Lisa: So did you just bump into him skating?

Great: Yes

Lisa: What else did you do for recreation? Did you go skiing?

Great: What

Lisa: Did you go skiing?

Great: There was no such thing as skiing at that time, no I think that skiing has taken over the skating don't you?

Lisa: Ya. What else did you do? Did you go swimming?

Great: No, I never learned how to swim, there was only one place to go swimming that was down at Fairmont, it was Gregson that time you see, and it wasn't very easy to get down there so I didn't swim at all.

Lisa: Was there other stuff to do in town? Like could you go to a movie?

Great: No

Lisa: When did the Washoe Theater open? Do you remember that?

Great: I should remember that but I don't remember that. I don't know any dates or anything, oh that was a beautiful theater, before that there was another theater where they used to play basketball, and basketball was a girl, what do you call it?

Lisa: Sport

Great: Ya, I never played basketball, I don't know why, my brother was a great basketball player.

Lisa: Do you remember Marcus Daly's house up there?

Great: Oh yes, and that was such a beautiful place, they never should have taken that place down.

Lisa: Did you ever go in it?

Great: Oh yes, I remember it was two stories, and there was a dance floor on the top, and there was a dance floor at the Montana Hotel, there was one there too.

Lisa: Do you have one last story you want to tell me about. Something back in the olden days?

Great: I can't think of anything.

Lisa: Do you remember hearing about the Titanic?

Great: Oh yes, oh that made such an impression on me, was that in 1906?

Lisa: I think it was in 1914 or 1912, ya 1912.

Great: It was the earthquake in 1906, was it the earthquake in 1906?

Lisa: It could have been.

Great: That made such an impression on me.

Lisa: How did you find out about it? The newspaper.

Great: Ya, that was the only way that you could. We didn't have anything else at that time.

Lisa: What newspaper? Was it the Butte paper?

Great: Ya,

Lisa: Did Anaconda have a paper?

Great: No, It was the Butte Daily Post.

Lisa: Anaconda did not have a paper?

Great: No

Lisa: Did you go to Butte often?

Great: No, we just got it here.

Lisa: Did your dad carrying it at his store?

Great: Ya,

Lisa: Did you help your dad out much at his store?

Great: No I didn't but my sister, she was the bookkeeper. She kept his books and the books for the Coal Country and other places.

Lisa: What was the Coal Country?

Great: I don't know, but she kept the books for it, and other places too. She was my oldest sister.

Lisa: How much older was she than you?

Great: She was 13 years older than I, and my sister Freda was 10, or 7 years older than me, and I had those brothers in between. I used to want to go places with them and I was just the little nuisance.

Lisa: They never wanted to take you?

Great: Not very much. To much difference in the ages.

Lisa: How old was the oldest? What was the split in your family? How much older was your older brother?

Great: She was, I told you before, 13 years older than I.

Lisa: Was she the oldest?

Great: Yes then my brother came next Rudolph, Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer.

Lisa: So were there 8 or 10 or you?

Great: There were ten?

Lisa: So ten in thirteen years, that is pretty good.

Great: Ya, I will say it sure is, and I was so spoiled because they all just catered to me, and I think that I must have been born with bronchitis I was coughing badly and anyway one time, I just had two children, a boy and a girl, anyway one time I had take my daughter to the doctor and that was back at the time when they had a fluoroscope that

they could look at your lungs, and after she was done she said oh mother you step in there so they can see what we saw in you, well anyway I stepped in there and he said oh, oh, your mother had child tuberculosis her lungs are all spotted, he said you have nothing to worry about they are all healed, and here I am. They must be all right.

Lisa: Ya, Ok I think that is about it, useless you want to tell me one last thing.

Great: I can't think of anything else, I don't think that I told you very much.

Lisa: Oh you did.