

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Family History of Dan Pallante

Personal Experience

O.H. 1253

MARGARET F. PALLANTE

Interviewed

by

Dan Pallante

on

July 11, 1989

## MISS MARGARET PALLANTE

Margaret Pallante was born on May 12, 1923 in Niles, Ohio, the daughter of Joseph Pallante and Lucia Clemente. The family settled in Niles after coming from Italy, then later Brazil, where they were searching for economic resourcefulness. Margaret was they youngest of 10 children that attended St. Stephens Roman Catholic Church and Niles McKinley High School. The names of the children were Joe, Mary, John, Ralph, Anne, Robert, Larry, Paul, Don, and Margaret.

The father, Joseph, worked at the Niles Fire and Brick Company while Lucia spent all of her time rearing the children. Several of them went to college, participated in World War II, and a few died at an early age. John died at the early age of 49 in 1954, of lung cancer. Several of the boys worked in the mills just as so many men did in the Youngstown area. All of the children married except Margaret, who worked for the Trumbull County Commissioners Office for 35 years.

John married Ursula Bainbridge and moved the family to Lexington Ave. in Youngstown, and then later to Rt. 224 where the J.C. Penny Co. exists today. John and Ursula had three children whose names were John, James and Martin. All three boys attended Ursuline High School, then John went to the priesthood, James went to college to be an engineer, and Martin went to college and obtained an English degree. John passed away in 1970, and James currently lives in Boardman with his wife Monica Gilligan and

their three children Mary Ann, James and Daniel. Martin resides in Canfield with his wife, the former Sally Murphy, and their four children: John, Martin, Maureen and Bill.

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INTERVIEWEE: MARGARET F. PALLANTE

INTERVIEWER: Dan Pallante

SUBJECT: the Pallante's settlement in Niles, Ohio and the raising of their 10 children, their interaction in the community (Niles Fire Brick Co., St. Stephen's Church)

DATE: July 11, 1989

DP: This is an interview with Margaret Pallante for the Youngstown State University Oral History program on the family genealogy of Mr. Daniel Pallante Project, by Dan Pallante, at 810 Nancy Drive in Niles, Ohio, on July, 11 1989, at 1:00 p.m..

MP: They arrived in September of 1903 in New York harbor. They were quarantined and had to stay there for three months. Mary was born in December of 1903.

DP: I remember reading in the article, it said something about a measles epidemic around that time. Did they have measles themselves?

MP: No. I don't ever remember her saying, but I know there was a measles quarantine so they were delayed, and Mary was born while they were waiting.

DP: Those conditions must not have been great.

MP: [They were] from September until Mary was born in December.

DP: Who else was there?

MP: My brother Joe, the first born. Then there was John, your grandfather. He was born in 1905 because there was two years difference. Then there was Anne, Larry, and then Ralph, Paul, Robert, Donald, and myself.

DP: Do you remember all the years [that they were born]?

MP: There's two years difference all the way down until [Bob]. Then there's four years difference between Bob and Paul. All the rest have two years difference.

DP: What do you know about them coming here and first getting established?

MP: When they first came here they went over to the East end of Niles. I remember my mom's parents saying that the house--most houses then had just a dirt floor, and they had boarders to make ends meet. Dad came here and worked at the brick yard. That's the only place that he ever worked. He was involved in building Mt. Carmel Church. He was also one of the first members of Mt. Carmel Church. As the family grew, my dad decided that he wanted to get away from that side of town because there was too much traffic there, and he wanted to move out and have more ground. So, he went over to the West end of town, which was at that time mostly wooded area. He said when he moved there, there weren't too many people over there. It caused hard feelings, because he said that most of the people over on the East end were the Italian people. They always thought that my dad thought that he was better than they were, and that's why he moved, which was not the reason. So, they went over to the West Side and settled there. My dad built one house on Hunter Street and we lived there. Then, he sold that and we built another house on Hunter Street, and then sold that. Eventually, he built the house on Warren Avenue where most of us were born. The younger ones were born there. That's where we stayed until my dad died. My mother and I moved over here in 1967.

DP: What year did your dad die?

MP: My dad died in 1950 and my mom died in 1975. She was 94 when she died and my dad was 70 years old. My dad never owned a car so I remember he had to walk to work everyday down to the brickyard, which was over a mile. Of course, when the buses came out that way he took those, but most of the time, he walked back and forth to work everyday.

My mother had a very hard life. She had a brother who lived on the East end of town. He had seven children, and their mother, his wife, had been ill. My mother used to go down there two and three times a week to cook and clean the house and take care of the children.

My mother was a person that never partied or never went out to eat. Most of her life was just spent raising her children and staying home. Having seven sons in the time that she reared those sons, when people didn't have electric washers or driers--of course, they did hand washing and hung their wash on the line--and my mother had seven sons who all wore white shirts. It was all known in the neighborhood, and everybody used to talk about Mrs. Pallante's line of white shirts for her seven sons hanging on the line. She walked downtown everyday to get groceries--fresh fruits, vegetables. We did not have refrigerators so it was a daily walk for her.

DP: How long did most of the kids stay at home?

MP: They were all there until they married or went to college. When the war came, the four youngest boys were home. Larry, Don, Paul, and Bob all went in the service at the same time.

DP: This is the Second World War?

MP: Yeah. They all went into the service at the same time. Two in the Navy and two in the Army, all enlisted. So at that time, it was just waiting for them. They all came back and eventually they married. But my parents never took room or board, they never took any money from the children. My dad said when they earned money, he wanted them to save what they could. Three of the boys--Don and Paul and Larry--all went to college on their own with us sending them a little bit of money now and then. Ralph and Bob started college, but they didn't finish. They decided they'd rather do something else; college wasn't for them. I think your grandfather even went to college for awhile.

DP: Do you know where Joe worked?

MP: Joe worked at Youngstown Steel Car in Niles. Bob started Youngstown Steel, and then moved to Baltimore. He moved his family to Baltimore in the 1960s.

DP: Where did Joe settle at?

MP: Joe settled in Niles. Bob was the only one that moved out. Everybody else remained in Niles, and John went to the Youngstown area.

DP: Do you think that all of you received pressure to stay here?

MP: No, no. There wasn't any question of anybody else moving away. You just married and settled here. The boys got jobs at the local schools in the area, and we just stayed.

DP: Don went into education?

MP: Paul was in education. Larry was in education.

DP: Did they teach in Niles?

MP: Paul taught in Austintown, and Larry and Don are in Niles.

DP: With all those kids in the house, what would you do for entertainment and stuff?

MP: Entertainment? I remember when we were young listening to the radio with my dad, listening to mystery stories. On Saturday nights, my dad was a great card player, and we played cards. [We] gathered around the great big kitchen table. There or in the dining room, and we'd play cards.

DP: Did he usually work five days a week?

MP: My dad worked five days a week and during the Depression, he worked every day; he was never out of work.

DP: So you don't think the Depression affected you too much?

MP: No, we were very fortunate. I can remember going down to the soup line with one of my neighbors. And to this day, when she used to see friends of ours and talk about it, she says, "I can always remember the Palante's because they always had butter on the table while the rest of us had oleo." We had no problems. When he [dad] came home, he gave the check to my mother and he would take 50 cents a week for his tobacco. Or when he wanted to go to the club to play cards on Sundays, he would take 50 cents. He used to go play poker down at Bagnola Card Club. That's what he'd spend every week, 50 cents.

DP: With the establishment of the church--I just noticed, I saw an article today--what was that like, the celebration?

MP: When my dad left the East side and went to the West side, then we went to St. Stephen's church. Because we had no cars and we had to walk, we went to the Irish church. I remember him saying he always felt out of

place because if you were a foreigner, you always sat in the back of the church rather than the front of the church.

DP: Was there much discrimination because you were Italian?

MP: Yes, yes, there was. That was one of them right there. Then he used to tell us--and I can remember being small--about the Klu Klux Klan. We would sit in the dining room, and my dad used to tell us--of course, I said I was very young--stories about it and what happened. So yes, there was very much discrimination.

DP: Can you remember anything specific?

MP: I don't know off hand. When we moved to the West Side, there were no Italian people over there. There were a lot of English people. I never had any friends or playmates that were Italian. Everybody that I ever ran around with were different nationalities than I. I always had it thrown up to me, more or less, because as I said, people thought we were better than some of the Italian people because we never mingled with the Italian people. It wasn't that, it was just that we had moved away to a different part of town and all our friends were over on the West side. I think when Larry started school and Don was going to be principal at the time, he was afraid he wouldn't be considered for it because of his nationality.

DP: When was that? What year was that when he became principal?

MP: I don't know. I don't remember exactly. You'll have to ask Don because he went to school after he got out of the service, so he started to teach in the 1950s. But it was in the 1960s when he became principal.

DP: Even then, he thought he wouldn't get it because of that?

MP: Yeah, even then. Because I remember my brother Ralph saying that he was afraid there might be a question about it. I don't think there had ever been an Italian principal at the high school, that I can think of.

DP: Did the war affect anything at home other than the boys gone? Did it change anything at home?

MP: Yeah. I was the only one at home and I felt that my dad didn't want me to go to college or anything. He wanted me to put that on hold because there was no one home but me and my mother and dad. So I did not go to college; I just put it on the back burner. Then when

Paul and them came back, they wanted me to go to school and they said they'd help me, but I had gotten a job then and it was nice job, and I didn't want to go.

DP: What did Mary do?

MP: Mary quit school very young. Mary never did graduate. She nor Joe graduated because they went to work. My dad had a shoe store. He built the Park Building in Niles and he had a shoe store there, and Mary and Joe worked in the shoe store.

DP: Was he (dad) still working at the brick company then?

MP: Yeah. They tore that building down in the 1970s I think, when they had the renovation of Niles. He built it and then they had a restaurant there. He rented it out after that, and it was a restaurant.

DP: Did he always work at the brick yard?

MP: He always worked at the brick yard. Then he retired when he retired, and then Ralph had the restaurant; he went into the restaurant business. My dad used to work there part-time. My mother used to make spaghetti sauce every week for them.

DP: Where did Anne work?

MP: Anne never worked. She stayed home; she didn't work. My dad didn't want her to go to work. She had a job at the pottery, but he wouldn't let her go. She was always at home until she got married.

DP: Who did Joe marry?

MP: Charlotte George.

DP: What about Mary?

MP: Anthony Bernard.

DP: From Girard?

MP: Yeah.

DP: Anne?

MP: [She] married Louis Marinelli.

DP: Larry?

MP: Larry married Beverly Williams. Then he was divorced and married Eileen Blackstone.

DP: Ralph?

MP: Helene Gildea.

DP: Paul?

MP: Alma Gibson.

DP: Bob?

MP: Thelma Gibson. They were sisters. Two brothers married two sisters. And Don married Gloria Markle.

DP: What do you think made the family stay so tight and stayed together?

MP: I think the way we were brought up. We were always taught to show respect for our parents. I never remember any spankings or my dad ever touching a hand to us. We were always told by my dad, all he would say, "Don't ever let me hear you say anything bad to your mother. Don't be nasty to your mother." Of course [we] never swore at home or used bad language at home. They were the type of persons, especially the boys, who always called mom and told her they were going to be late if they weren't coming home on time. The doors were always open when we went to bed at night, and when the boys came in, the last one in would lock the door. Mom said she knows that pop never closed his eyes until he heard that last person come in at night. He always worried about them.

DP: How much age difference is there between you and John if he was born in 1905.

MP: I was born in 1923, so 18 [years].

DP: Do you remember much about him?

MP: Oh yes. He used to come down . . . he worked at McDonald Mill, and he would come have his lunch hour. He used to come over and see his mother at lunch time. He would take me home on weekends. As I said, I spent a great deal of my youth at his home. I remember the time he said to my mother, "Let me take Margaret home to live with us." Mom said, "No, you can't have her." But he would come down all the time.

DP: He would have gone to Niles, right?

MP: Yes. I think he started college. I'm certain he went to college for a little bit.

DP: But he went to work right in the mills at McDonald?

MP: Yeah, I think he went right to the mills to work.

DP: Anything more about him? Do you remember when he met Ursula or how?

MP: No. I don't know that. I was young. Mary would probably remember that.

DP: When did he start to get sick?

MP: Let's see, John died in 1954. I don't think he had cancer too long. I know he was a person that smoked all the time. I remember Father John in Cleveland after he had his dad there, and I remember the boys were smoking and the doctor said, "Let this be a lesson to you about smoking." I don't think they paid any attention, though. John smoked and out of all the brothers, John was the only one that smoked.

DP: Where did he die at?

MP: At St. Elizabeth's. He died in March.

(Interview interrupted. Question not on tape when resumed.)

MP: Going to parties. . . . My dad went to all the weddings and parties, and my mother said she always went to the funerals. They never . . . I don't ever remember them going out to dances or anything. When we were young, they would take us to parks. [They would] pack picnic baskets and go down to Central Park for picnics and watch fireworks on the holidays. We did things like that as a family. Every Sunday my mother would cook a big family dinner. My dad insisted that the children eat first, that they got the meat and he would take what was left over. He always made sure that the children were fed first. But we all sat down for family meals together. My mother would get up every morning and make breakfast for the children going to school. She made bread every week. As we grew older and as the grandchildren started to come, they would come down every Saturday night, and grandma would have pizza for them and hot rolls. Some of my sister-in-laws would come down and we'd sit around and play cards with my dad. We'd play 500, which was his favorite card game.

DP: So the Sunday dinner was pretty big?

MP: The Sunday dinner always consisted of some form of spaghetti, veal breast with dressing, meatballs, and bracirole. That was my dad who wanted that. Every holiday, Thanksgiving and Christmas, he wanted everybody at home, didn't want anybody to cook but my

mother. It's not like today when one person will bring one thing and another person brings another thing. He said, "No mother would do all the cooking." Everybody just came. We would have tables in the living room and in the dining room for everybody. We always finished the meal with fruit and nuts, which was a family tradition, Italian tradition. Then after my dad died, that sort of stopped. It seems that when he died, some of the traditions didn't carry on. It made a difference.

My mother lost her four sons and she lost a husband, but she said the hardest thing to do was to lose a son.

DP: Who exactly did she lose?

MP: John was the first son who died in 1954. Joe died in 1958. Ralph died in 1973, and Bob died in 1978.

DP: What did Joe die of?

MP: Joe died of a ruptured aorta. John had the cancer. Ralph died of a stroke and a heart attack. Bob died of cancer.

DP: Everyone else is still living?

MP: Yes. There are three boys and three girls living.

DP: What things stand out most in your life, like big events or crises?

MP: I remember Christmas when . . . today Christmas is all together different. When we were young, we each got a present. My dad would bring one present home and we got fruit and we always had a Christmas tree. Today it's, more or less, a lot of presents for children. It was the closeness that was a little different. Everybody came home and the big time was Christmas Eve, when my mother would cook all kinds of fish. There'd be squid and macaroni with spaghetti sauce or clam sauce and different kinds of Italian fishes, which was the main meal on Christmas Eve. Some of the boys and the wives used to come down and eat that. That was always tradition.

As I said, everybody came home for the holidays. It was like those old stories that you read, waiting for them to come home. During the service when the boys were away, my dad would not have a Christmas tree, he did not want a Christmas tree. Christmas was always very quiet during the war time. One year Don came home unexpected for Christmas. As soon as he came home my dad said, "Go out and get a Christmas tree." He wanted to have a Christmas tree that year. Everything revolved around the children. My parents were happy

when the children were there and when they weren't there, they worried about them. That was their main lives; that's what they lived for.

DP: Did all the children go to the same church?

MP: Yes, all down to St. Stephen's.

DP: Do they all still go there now?

MP: Some of them now are back to Mt. Carmel. I'm the only one now that goes to St. Stephen's, but most of them come back to Mt. Carmel. I still stay down here.

DP: Did your mother stay going to St. Stephen's?

MP: Yeah, and my dad. They were both buried from St. Stephen's.

DP: Do you think that the Italians changed a little bit?

MP: No. I just said it was the location. I mean, we could not walk that far to Mt. Carmel. We had no way of transportation. We could walk to St. Stephen's, and my dad just went down there because it was close to home. That was it, it was right in the neighborhood so to speak.

DP: Did they ever talk about why they came to America?

MP: My grandfather, of course, came here and as that thing [the bio sheet] said, he went back. People came here for work, more or less. But my dad used to come here when he was a young boy. He started to work here at the brick yard when he was 13 off and on. They went to Brazil for awhile and worked in the coffee fields. Then most of them wanted to come to America because of work. At the time, I remember my dad saying. . . . People either came to Niles or they went to New Jersey and New York. My dad had a brother and a sister who were twins, and they stayed in New Jersey, and my dad migrated to Niles where his father was. My mother's two brothers came to Niles and that's where their families were raised.

DP: What attracted your grandfather to Niles?

MP: They heard about the work, the Niles Fire and Brick Company. He went back and told people that there was a lot of work here, and that's why people came to Niles because of working conditions. And I understand that the house where my mother was born is still standing. I believe my cousins go back (to Italy) and they said that people still live in the house where she was born and it's very well kept. It's in the mountains.

DP: Did your parents speak Italian a lot around the house?

MP: My dad told my mother they were not to speak Italian in the house. All they could speak was English to the children, which they did. Consequently, none of us ever learned to speak Italian or understand Italian. The only one who understands a few words is my sister Mary, because her in-laws spoke it all the time. But my mother and father, they did not speak Italian in the house. My dad said, "This is where they live now. They have to speak English." When other Italians came to this country, my dad had a school--not a regular, but he opened a house or went to people's houses--and taught them how to speak and how to read and write. He had very beautiful handwriting. So, he did help people learn the English language.

DP: Where did he learn to speak English?

MP: Probably through his father coming here. My dad spoke very good English. My mother had a little accent, but she never spoke Italian to us. When other people came to visit her, they would start in the Italian language. She would speak Italian to them, but never to her children. Now as we look back on it, it was wrong to do that, because people nowadays want to speak a second language. We were deprived of that because my dad did not think it was proper at the time.

DP: How many of the kids married outside of Italian families?

MP: The boys all married outside. None of the boys married Italian. My two sisters married Italian men, but none of my brothers married Italians. They had English and Irish and Welsh and mixtures, but none of them married Italian girls.

DP: Do you think that bothered your mom and dad at all?

MP: No it did not. My mother and dad always told them, "When you marry, your wife or your husband come first. We come second, it's your choice." They never had one word to say. My mother never bothered any of the children in their marriages, she was a very quiet person. She said, "If I love my children, then I love who they marry." That was what she always said.

DP: Was your big educational process at home, as far as the church?

MP: We went to Sunday school and we went to church all the time. My dad--of course, when they were raised, an eighth grade education in Italy was equivalent to a

graduate here. My dad was a very intelligent person. My mother read all the time. She read the paper. Both of them [did] all the time. She could read either English or Italian. My father used to help us with our school work. I know a lot of times he'd help me. He always stressed that we should learn. He was always happy that his boys were doing so well, that they made good lives for themselves. He was always very pleased with his children.

DP: Why do you think he was so successful during the Depression? Did the brick company do that well during the Depression?

MP: Yes, yes. We were one of the few, as I said. My dad never missed a days work. My mother said she never had to worry about money. Somehow or another, money was always there. She always told me that. She was a person that never believed in charge accounts. If she couldn't pay for something, she wouldn't buy it. We always had money enough to buy clothes. We always had clothes and food.

DP: Did most of the kids help out around the house?

MP: The girls, yeah. As I said, my older sister helped with the children because there were so many children. Mary, more or less, helped grandma raise children.

DP: How big was the house on Warren?

MP: It was a red brick house. We had two lots and just three bedrooms. Of course, there was only one bath. [It was a] two story house--kitchen, living room, dining room. [It was] not like today with a lot of baths. There was one bath, and you had to stand in line. I, being the only girl home at one time, really had to wait for the boys because there were four boys at home and I was the only girl. They had the big bedroom and two double beds for the boys. Then eventually, they married. It dwindled down to three and then two. . . .

DP: How often did you take a bath.

MP: I can remember taking baths all the time. I don't think that had any effect, because we always had inside plumbing. There were houses around us that didn't have [indoor plumbing], but we always had inside plumbing. We had neighbors that had outside, but we never did.

DP: Is the house still there?

MP: No. We sold it to the Allied Metals in 1966, when we bought this house, and they eventually tore it down. It was a brick home. They tore it down to make an office out of it. We have pictures of it someplace. That's where we played all our games when we were young. We played ball on the streets and everything was fun. We listened to the radio and records all the time. We did a lot of reading. A lot of time, I said, my dad spent with us. Neighbors gathered to tell stories and it was just a good neighborhood. We used to play in the yards and [in] the streets. My dad and mother always had a great big garden and raised all their vegetables. We had a lot of fruit trees in the yard; we had plums and apples and peaches. We had a big lot in back of our house, so we had trees in the back. We had a lot of flowers, rose bushes. . . . My mother worked, but she never let my dad do anything. He never did anything in the house; she did all the work. She would get up early in the morning, 5 o'clock, and in the winter time, she'd put the coal in the furnace. She said his job was to bring home money and she did all the other work. They'd work together in the garden.

DP: But she never worked?

MP: She never worked, no. She worked in the house. She canned all the time; they did a lot of canning. My dad would just work in the brick yard, get up at 5 o'clock in the morning and go to work and come home at 4 o'clock or 4:30 at night. By the time he'd get home, it'd be 5 o'clock and supper would be on the table. Supper would always be at 5 o'clock. He'd go in and put the radio on, read the newspaper, and smoke his pipe. That was it.

DP: Do you have pictures?

MP: Not right now that I could put my hand on.

DP: Well, thank you.

MP: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW