

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Daniel Pallante -- Family History

Personal Experience

O.H. 1254

CATHERINE PANNO

Interviewed

by

Daniel Pallante

on

July 13, 1989

DP: This is an interview with Catherine Panno for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Family History of Dan Pallante, by Daniel Pallante, at 6811 Lockwood Boulevard, on July 15, 1989, at 1:00 p.m.

Give me some information about your parents, when you first came here, the dates, where they came from, what type of people they are, their values.

CP: I do not remember when they came. She died in 1967, so what year would that be? In 1967 she was 91. She was born in 1876. She was sixteen years old when she came here, so that would be in 1892. That was my mother. Then she married Michael Gilligan.

DP: Your mother's name is Catherine Gorman?

CP: Yes. My father died in 1923 and he was 47. He was born in 1876. Let us start with him. My father was Michael Gilligan, one of ten children of Michael and Bridgette McGary Gilligan. He came to this country when he was about eighteen years old and went to McGarry, New Jersey. Excuse me, he came to this country in 1900 to Youngstown, coming to Youngstown three years later from Jersey City, New Jersey, where his relatives were who sponsored him and brought him here. My mother was Catherine Gorman Gilligan. She was also born in County Mayo, Ireland, in the year 1892. She was one of twelve children of Michael and Mary Cane Gorman. She left Ireland when she was sixteen years of age. I beg your pardon, she was born in 1876. She came to the United States in 1892, and she settled in Youngstown where some of her brothers and sisters had already settled, also coming from Ireland.

She married Michael Gilligan, who was a well known contractor at the time; highly respected and had legions of friends. They settled down on the east side of Youngstown and they had four children. The first born was John, the second was Mary, the third was Joseph, and the last was Catherine. They lived on the east side until Michael Gilligan, the father, died in August of 1923. He was survived by Catherine, his wife, and the four children. Catherine lived in the same house that Michael Gilligan built with the four children. Those were hard times because in those days there was no food stamps or any kind of relief. She would have to sign her home over to Allied Council Agency, who would then give her stamps for food and clothing for the children. She refused to do it and said that her house meant too much to her, so she would work and never do it. She raised vegetables and sold them to the grocers. She washed, ironed, and sewed, and eventually paid off the mortgage. First Federal Savings and Loan were very generous in allowing her to pay the interest.

DP: How many kids were in your dad's family?

CP: I said in the beginning he was one of ten of Michael and Bridgette McGary Gilligan.

DP: Did all ten come to the Untied States?

CP: He was 47 years old in 1923 when he passed away. He had three brothers, Don, James, and Thomas. They all lived in Ireland. His sister and two brothers Owen, and Mrs. Charlie Hecker, and Martin Gilligan migrated to Ohio and lived in Youngstown.

DP: What did he do when he first came here?

CP: He was a contractor. That is what I said in the beginning. I am reading this from the obituary in the paper when he died.

DP: Who did he work for?

CP: Himself. In fact, my father had very little education, but he was a gifted contractor . He hired the little Italian men in the neighborhood who could not speak English. Those were times when they were willing to work hard. He had the first little Ford truck in the neighborhood. He was a very generous, happy man. He would hire these Italian men and pay them according to the jobs. There are still some foundations of buildings that he built way back before he died in 1923. At one time, he was so well known among the rich who were predominately living on Wick Avenue, that Mrs. Arms -- that is now the Arms Museum -- had him install a driveway from the cars garages in the back out to Wick Avenue. He did a beautiful job. She was a little bit hard to get along with. When he had finished she would not pay him. She held his tools and his equipment. The reason she gave was he did not do a good job. That was his livelihood, so my mother sent three of us children up to beg her to give us back the tools. She reluctantly gave them to us, but she never paid him. When Catherine, who is speaking, was in high school, she went by that driveway and it was still there, as good as new.

That was the only problem he ever had with anybody. She was known to be quite frugal, and denied him his pay. He worked and trained Mr. Silvestri how to run the little cement machine that made blocks. Mr. Silvestri later became one of the leading miners and engineers in Youngstown. My father taught him and the other fellows. He would pay them all before he would come home and sometimes he would not have any pay left for my mother. Of course, that caused a little bit of a ruckus, but he was very outgoing, loving, loved people and animals, and was very witty.

DP: Where at on the east side?

CP: It was originally Maple Avenue. It would be on Wick Avenue, then the railroad tracks started at Wick Avenue, at the corner where McVean's funeral home is now. Fred Todd lived there at the time, and Maple Avenue extended across the railroad tracks, across Albert Street, and up to what they called the sand bank in

those days, where the McGuffey Mall now stands. Later years, I do not know the reason, but they renamed Maple Avenue on the east side of the tracks. That was back in the 1930s. The other side was left Maple. Now it is some other street. My mother was a different type entirely. She was used to hard work, widowed with four little ones. She was more the silent, in the background, type of person. She did not want to impress anybody. She was very religious and taught her children a love of God.

DP: Where did they go to church?

CP: We all went to the Immaculate Conception Grade School on Oak Street in Youngstown, and we also attended Immaculate Conception Church. That was an elementary school. When John graduated from Immaculate he went to Lincoln Junior High, which is on the east side of Youngstown on Bruce Street, I believe. When Mary graduated from Immaculate she had an Uncle Frank Gorman who put her through Ursuline. It was a two year secretarial course. That was the Ursuline High School on Wick Avenue. It has now been dismantled. It was a stone building. When the new high school was built it was dismantled.

Joseph, the third one, did not graduate from Immaculate because in the eighth grade he went completely blind because of a vitamin deficiency; B-12. He was actually blind for two years. We did not have money. I used to take him downtown twice a week to Dr. Hill and Dr. Hake who were in the Keith Albee Building, which is also dismantled now. He was given injections of vitamin B-12. In two years he regained his sight, not twenty-twenty vision, but he had to wear corrective glasses, which he did. Catherine graduated from Immaculate and went to East High School. That was the year of the Depression. There was no money for any kind of a private school. In her final year, which was in 1932, the Depression hit and I did not have money for clothes for the prom and so forth, so I got a little job. I did not receive my diploma from high school.

DP: How did the Depression affect everyone?

CP: The Depression affected us in this way: it was very hard. Everybody we knew was in the same boat as we were, so we did not know anything. The churches at Christmas would invite us downtown to the Paramount Theater, which was on East Federal Street, one block east of the square. We waited to see Santa Claus. He would give us one of those little boxes of candy like the animal crackers came in. We never rode to school, we never had hot lunches. We would walk to school, walk home for lunch and walk back, which was a half a mile each way. We would walk down there and be so happy with that little bit of a gift. That is the only gift we got. My mother used to hang four big socks on Christmas Eve and there was never anything in them. We never thought anything of it.

We did little jobs. I would baby sit for ten cents a day when I was in my

teens. My brothers John and Joe got little jobs in the neighborhood. We were all too young to work and there was no work. We would play. The boys would make a bonfire at night. If we would get a potato we would go out and put it in the bonfire. If there was one kid with a neighborhood with a sled, they shared it very willingly. This one girl, her mother had a store and she had skates. We would share the skates. The first time I got on them I could not skate. I was not going to lose my chance. We had a well in the neighborhood, a spring rather. We used to get delicious water from it. Of course, that is gone.

DP: What did people eat during the Depression?

CP: They canned. My father had relatives in New Bedford, PA. They had a farm. They would call him down after harvest season and they would give him smoked hams and things. They had a smoke house. We would have that in the winter. Every fall my father would take us in his little truck and we would go out what we thought was miles away, but was only Lansdowne Boulevard, which was all forests then. We would gather apples and nuts. We had those all winter. For the black walnuts, we would put them up in the attic to eat in the winter with the apples. There was a wonderful feeling of caring in the neighborhood. If my mother got something and the woman across the street who had eight kids did not have anything, she would share what she had. There was a comrade ship within the east side no matter where you go. In fact, Boardman, Austintown, Poland, anyone of those is comprised of former east-siders. They cared about each other and do not let anyone say anything about them. They will stand up and defend.

DP: Were most of the people Catholic, Italian?

CP: When my parents moved there, my father built his first home along with the help for a lot of Irish friends who came over from Ireland with him. It was a little frame structure. It was at 1116 Maple Avenue. It was predominantly Irish at the time. They used to call it Bottle Hill. There was a tavern on the next block, but they never abused it. They would go there for social hour, then come home. There was never any abuse to the children. It was caring, predominantly Catholic. Then as the years went on, the Italians moved into the area and the Irish moved to what they call The Hill, which comprised Bruce Street, Lincoln Park Drive. They used to call those the Lace Curtain Irish. In fact, Bishop Malone's mother lived on the next block. Catherine McGuire was her name. She knew my mother Catherine Gilligan real well. That is the present Bishop Malone's parents. There was the Mr. and Mrs. McHughes, the McHughes, all Irish.

DP: Even when the Italian's moved in, did most of the Catholic's go to Immaculate Conception?

CP: Yes, because in those days they got along beautifully, but they resented them

using their church, which was the Immaculate Conception, because it was built by the Irish. The funds were scrapped together and built. At that time, our Lady-of Mount Carmel was in existence, and they went. Neighbor-wise, they got along beautifully. They were helpful, they shared their crops. They were great gardeners. They had fig trees, grapes, vegetables. They would share them with my mother and our family. My mother canned everything. She would start canning from the end of August until there were no more things on the trees.

DP: Did you see much discrimination because of being Irish or Catholic?

CP: The generation that came from Ireland resented inter-marriage with anyone but Irish. They did not like their children to marry an Italian. That was the only ethnic group in the neighborhood at the time. I do not know whether they would have objected to Germans. On the East Side there was a German settlement. The Germans lived on what they called Madison Avenue at the time, which was later known as McGuffey Road, and on Bennington. They had the German Hall over there. In those days they used to settle in little groups. When they would bring their relatives, they would settle there. The Italians were coming over in such numbers, their little group which was up at Smokey Hollow, there was no more room. They migrated over to the east side and blended in with the Irish. My father got along very well. They were hard workers willing to do anything for very little pay.

My mother's family, she was one of twelve. She died at 91 with all of her senses. She had a slight stroke on April 1. She maintained her speech and everything until Thursday of that week. She died on April 7, 1967. She could read and write. She had a third grade education. In fact, when I was in Ireland in 1971, I visited the area where she lived and there was an elderly man there that remembered her as a little girl. He took us to the little village where Guinness Stout now has most of the land. They had these salmon hatcheries that they are developing. This gentleman showed me a bridge that my Uncle Pat, my mother's brother, built way back in the 1800s. It was over a nice little brook. It is still in perfect condition. It was made of brick and cement block, and it was curved. I wish I would have taken a picture of it. This elderly gentleman said that he used to make caskets for the dead. He was such a good craftsman.

My mother's house did not have a ceiling in it. It was a two room cottage with an attached garage where they kept the cattle in the back. Her mother and father slept in bunk beds next to the hearth. The rest of all those children slept in the other bedroom. They tell me that her mother died at 99. My mother said when they were little she was in poor health and all the neighbors would take the children and bring them home. In the winter when it was cold, she would bring the little sheep in and the cow and put them in the living room. They had a terrific love of nature, both of my parents.

This elderly gentleman told me all of this. He had a beautiful roof in his cottage because he was the bailiff at the time and he had pretty good pay. He had this beautiful lacquered ceiling because it was all just one floor. My uncle

Pat did that. Mr. Frank Gorman was head of a very responsible job with the New York Central Railroad. He was a very learned man. He was a school teacher in Ireland. When his fiancé died, he came to America and got this good job with New York Central Railroad.

DP: Why do you think most of the people came to the United States?

P: I asked this elderly gentleman because there was the Lupis and the rhododendron growing wild. There is no pollution. It is nothing but scenery that you never saw before. The lake across from where my mother lived was as blue as the sky was on a clear day. Salmon was their food, and vegetables and potatoes.

DP: Why do you think they would leave that?

P: I asked Mr. Lavelle, "Why did my mother leave this beautiful place?" He said, "Because she was hungry." The older generation were used to cold and stoves, no warmth in the winter and eating potatoes. They cannot grow any tropical fruit because of the damp climate. It is all imported from New Zealand or Australia. There cabbage, greens, livestock, pigs, cows, and every house had a big dog that was loved as much as the children. They had separated their lots, not by a surveyor. They would say, "You could have this land up to here. Put a stone wall up." They get the ones out of the mountains. They used to heat and cook with turf. They would go out and dig that. With twelve kids, they could not live like that as they grew up. That is why so many Irish migrated to the Americas. It is going on now because unemployment is so high over where they are living. The young cannot live on what the parents did, cows and selling the milk. England was very cruel to them, too. When England came for the taxes, if the people did not have the money, which they did not -- they lived by the work of their own hands -- they would take their best cow or pig or their home for taxes. There was no mercy shown to them at all. They would take that for taxes.

When we were there we were in this beautiful castle. This was in 1971 when we were visiting. I noticed the construction. We went all through it. The guide was telling us about different features of it. I noticed about four feet from the top the original brick was different. It was a different color. I asked why it was different, if it was restored. He said, "No, in those days when there was nothing more for the English to take, if you had a roof on you, you had to pay it somehow. What they did was took the roofs off. In the castles they would just put stuff over it because that was the English law: If you had a roof you had to pay taxes somehow or be jailed. They had a hard life under English rule. I think it was in the 1930s when Eamon DeVelhre declared the Irish a free state in the south of the island. The kingdom would not give up Belfast in the north. That is what is causing the strikes. They would not give Catholics who lived in that area, who could not afford to move out of it, they were treated worse than garbage. They could not get a job with the government. They were suppressed in every

way imaginable. I have some books on that here.

DP: Let us go to the kids of Michael and Catherine Gorman Gilligan.

CP: John was a very handsome man. He was very skilled at baseball. He played for the East Side Civics, which was a sandlot game. There was not too many in those days. East Side Civics were considered one of the best in the valley. He played the outfield. He had the skills, but there was something about John that he did not want anybody to know, how good he was. He played it cool, in other words. If a fly ball came out where he was, if he did not want to catch it he would saunter up to it. He had the skill. In fact, they wanted him to pursue baseball, but he was just not interested. He was a good person.

My mother, Mary, and Joe were all down in bed with diphtheria. Those were the days when they put the sign on the door, a red sign. You were not allowed in, you were not allowed out unless you were of the medic profession. I was eight years old at the time when I took care of them. The nurse came in and said, "There is a boy here by the name of John. Where is he?" You could get arrested if you went out with germs. I said, "He is down in the basement." She said, "Okay," and left. He was a very kind person, very religious person. He served mass until he was in his late twenties at Immaculate Conception at 11:30 mass.

DP: He went to East?

CP: No, he went to Lincoln. After Immaculate he went to Lincoln Junior High. It was two years.

DP: That was all the higher he went?

CP: Yes, that was it. He had a Ford convertible, a roadster they called them. He got a job in the office with a sheet and tube company. It had to be about in 1929. He was working at the Sheet and Tube office. They got laid off during the depression. Mary took a two year course at Ursuline High School in secretarial work. In her second year Senator Eugene Roberts and Senator Niles P. Johnson, both deceased now, they used to go to Ursuline to pick out the better scholars. It was an all girls school. Senator Eugene Roberts picked Mary Gilligan, my sister, to go to Columbus to be his secretary. Niles Johnson also used her as a secretary. She was only seventeen at the time. She had never been away from home, but she went down to Columbus and Mr. Eugene Roberts, who was a native of Hubbard, was the Senator from this area. He introduced her to one of his secretaries and she took her to a nice boarding house. She stayed there for the two years she was working as a secretary to the senators in Columbus. We did not have any money to go see her, and she did not have any money to come home. It was all letter writing.

When she came home, that was during the Depression. Things were bad

and she got a job in one of the ten cents stores. She worked there, then she got a job with an Interstate Development Company. They were building a lot of buildings on the East Side, the Germans; Mr. Cuddy and Mr. Tosky. She worked there until they closed. They let her have the office. She was a notary, and some days she would bring home \$.50 a week, sometimes \$.75 during the Depression. Fred Kapp Insurance was on the same floor. His girl quit and he hired Mary to work in the insurance office. He paid her something like \$10.00 a week. She could keep her notary fees. She walked back and forth to work and gave my mother all the money. She carried her lunch.

She got married in 1933, I believe. In 1934 she decided that she was leaving home and retired from Fred Kapp Insurance. I was not working, a lot of odd jobs like baby-sitting and house cleaning, so I went and took the job with Fred Kapp Insurance. I worked for \$7.50, walked back and forth to work, winter and summer, carried my lunch. We did not have any coffee breaks in those days. You went to the restroom on your lunch hour. You worked from nine to five, six days a week, on Saturday's. Two years later he raised my salary to \$10.00. Prior to that, I worked in McCrory's and I got \$11.00 a week the first week. I almost ran home to show my mother that I got \$11.00, walked back for lunch and you had to sit on a barrel in the stock room to eat your lunch. That is what we put up with in those days.

Joe got a job at Republic Steel. He had this little odd job helping a man that owned a tavern. He would do cleaning, the bar and things like that. Then he got a job with Republic Steel. He worked there until he retired. He moved to Massillon and married a woman who lived in Massillon. He died in 1977. John died in 1973. Mary is still living, but her husband passed away in 1980. The entire Gilligan family of ten are all deceased, and the entire Gorman family of twelve are all deceased. The two remaining members of the Gilligan/Gorman marriage is Mary Swogger and Catherine Panno who live in Boardman. Catherine's husband, James R. Panno, was a state representative and passed away in June, 1970.

End of Interview