

interview with Mary Decaire

Me: I am Danny Ruokolainen. The date is December 29, 1968.

The person I am going to interview is Mary Decaire. She lives in the city of Ishpeming in Marquette County. The purpose is for My History Class. I am going to interview her about times during the Great Depression.

Me: When and Where were you born?

Mary: In Ishpeming, do I have to give you the address?

Me: No

Mary: Ok, just Ishpeming.

Me: The date,

Mary: The date January 11, 1914.

Me: How many people were in your family?

Mary: Nine, and about three had died at birth. So there were nine of us, ~~and~~ and my parents about eleven.

Me: What were your parents names?

Mary: Frank ^{Savello?} Savello and my mother's name, do you want her maiden name? Clara ~~Savello~~ and Frank Savello.

Me: Did you go to school?

Mary: Yes, as far as the 8th grade. (Laughing) Lucky to make it that far.

Me: Where did you go?

Mary: Ah, at the Convent school, St. John's.

Me: Were there a lot of kids in your class?

Mary: Ah, ya, They used to teach two grades. When I was going to school. They used to have kindergarden and first grade in both classes. It was taught by the Nuns or Sisters, whatever you want to call them.

Me: Did you like them as teachers?

Mary: ~~No~~ No, to tell you the true I never did like the convent school. They taught too much religion and not enough other subjects. That I wanted them to. No I didn't care for, (whispering) I hope they don't say anything. I didn't learn much at the convent school just religion, religion.

Me: How did you get there?

Mary: Oh, we walk from ah, you know where the Roundhouse is, that's in the Barr, it was on Carp Street. We lived on Carp Street, and we had to walk from Carp Street

Mary: to town to St. John's school. That was down
by the fire hall. So a back and forth. Hoofed it.

Me: Did it take you a long time?

Mary: Well no, we were young, and we made it good. And some-
times ah we would lose our rubbers in the snow, and
we would walk just with shoes. (Laughs) You know
when you walk all the time your ah little short
rubbers would get stuck in the snow. Oh, I losted many
pairs. Ya, it was fun though.

Me: Before you went to school did you have to do any chores?

Mary: Yes, we had to take care of dress my brothers and sisters
we used to sit on one chair, and put there shoes on and,
No it was kinda hard we had to carry wood indoors and
chunks of coal, in those days. Take care of my little sisters
or brothers.

Me: Did you have a. Did you like doing them.

Mary: We didn't mind, we thought it fun. What was there to
do nothing but work you know. ~~And I remember~~

Mary: And on Christmas I remember only once that we got. That I had a doll and then finally one fellow was living it was a double house, I don't know if I should say this, but he had made some wine and he made a crib a long crib the whole length of the room. And he had two cats one cat, and they use to put these line up candles under the crib, and the cat knock a candle or two and the whole house burned on Christmas Day. And his wine went up with to. (Laughs) And all he did is cry ~~come~~ about his wine while our house was burning. He was going my wine, my wine he never he didn't care if our house ~~was~~ burned to the ground. And us kids were outside with no shoes because it was early in the morning. And we had to run bare feet no clothes, but then a we had relatives in town. My uncle took us in so, it wasn't to bad we thought it was fun, excitement.

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Me: Did you have any hobbies when you were a kid.

Mary: Hobby, my hobby was to help my parents or carry wood indoors. No we went outdoors picking berries or help my father in the potato field. We had fun though. "To me it was fun" → possible title

Me: Do you still do any hobbies today

Mary: Oh, I do everything. I go fishing now. You know that. I go out fishing. So and go to camp. (Laughs)

Me: Did you have an allowance when you were a kid?

Mary: Never, allowance you were lucky if you had a penny to go buy ~~Nigger~~ Nigger Babies or two brownies for a penny. Ya, and shows, then as I grew we went to a show and it was a nickel to get in, and a penny for brownies. We were happy as children.

Me: How did you get the money or did you ask your parents?

Mary: No, my father was pretty good he had a job ~~and~~ in the mine ~~where~~ he came from Italy. He work for the railroad and then he wasn't making to much. So he went to, at the mine. And a he use to give us what ever we asked for, you know. But then as I grew he wouldn't give money unless you helped with the chores. indoors scrub the kitchen or take care of my brothers or sisters.

Me: Housework hey.

Mary: Ya just house work Ya. So.

Me: When you finished school did you go out and try to get a job?

Mary: Yes, I signed up to go Gossard and they never took me ~~any~~ I waited and waited because money scarce.

Ah so I went away and I took up the beauty course, and it kept me going. Ya, and then at that time

when I worked, I wasn't working a year my parents were killed. In my car I had a car about 3 months

and they went to Minnesota. And they got killed coming home. They were so close to home in Champion I

believe, near Champion. So we had tragedies ~~gala~~

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Me: Did you like your job?

Mary: Oh, I like beautician, I used to do it because before I started up a shop. I used to do it home and all my relatives. And my lady friends or my girlfriends then. No, I always liked what I was doing. I enjoyed life, really, and I still do at my age

Me: Try to make it as best as you can.

Mary: Yes, so

Me: How much do you get payed for your Job?

Mary: Oh, those days you gave a set and a wash for 50¢, and a set for 25¢ and it took about 2 hours to set a persons hair and comb it out. And then by the time you ~~were done~~ pay your rent you were lucky to get by. You know that's all I could say.

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Me: Did you live here by yourself then?

Mary: No, I always lived with my parents. I always lived with them. And then I helped raise my brothers and sisters. When my parents were killed. I was only the only worker then.

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Me: So you were the oldest.

Mary: Ya, No I wasn't the oldest I have a brother. And he's living, and then a sister she passed away. But she got married before I became a beautician. So she couldn't give much help at home so I had to do all the supporting, when my parents were killed.

Me: Did you work hard at your job?

Mary: Oh, I worked from ah sometimes 8 in the morning 10 and 10:30 at night. Sometimes if someone had a death in the family I used to close the shop at 12:00.

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Mary: You tried to make as much as you could. Work was never a ~~probly~~ problem I was never afraid to work.

Me: You tried to make as much money as you could.

Mary: Ya money was scarce I remember when I got married and my husband worked three days a week. And they used to earn about 60 some dollars every two weeks. So you had ~~to~~ get by. Live on potatoes and rice and spaglett. Ya, I just got in to I was downtown. Ya, so is there anything else you wanted to ask me.



Me: Ya, were there many jobs then?

Mary: Well, no you couldn't buy a job. Tell you the true jobs were hard to get you couldn't buy one. I remember my father he never had because he was a foreigner. He ah he was working in the mine and he had to give it up I don't know why. He gave it up I can't remember that far back. But ah he tried to get in Banns and Hecker. It a good thing because that it caved in and people got killed who ever. I had a cousin that ~~was~~ was killed. He exchanges siffs with his ah brother. His brother passed away not to long ago. But ah this fella got killed. I won't mention his name but. Ya, Ya and ah and my dad couldn't get in there I don't know why.

Mary: You had to know someone real, real good to get a job those days. And then it depended on who you were.

Ah, especially a Italian people there weren't two alike.

You know when they came from Italy they had a hard time. So my dad had to I don't know if I

~~should~~ should say this but (whispering) ~~bootlegging~~ bootlegging

was I right it won't be said any where else. Well

my father had, to he couldn't find a job so to raise a

family of 11 people all together. He had to go into

bootlegging, and I had a relative from Chicago. He

ah, taught my dad how to make moonshine they call it

those days moonshine, and ah, then we started to help

others. My dad showed someone else how to make it

And ah, when we heard that the constables were in

town, my father, they said as long as they don't catch you

with the moonshine indoors, you were ok, because they

couldn't prove it out of the window it would go. They

would throw their mesh and big jugs of moonshine in the

street. But they did catch my father once, Ah with

5 or 10 gallons moonshine. I used to help my dad

how to make, ah to make it, I had to use a

thermometer to take the alcohol what do you call it

How strong it is or a. And it took it many times

if they to go somewhere I would, take the how

strong it is. I forgot how you would say this,

oh a 'skip' that I can't remember that far back.

include
fisher
wants this in the story

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Mary: But my dad done quiet a bit of bootlegging. He used to charge 25¢ for 1/2 pint. And ah 1/2 pint and 50¢ a pint. And we used to sell to a saloon keepers and there were doctors and lawyers that would come there. But someone in the neighborhood did squeal on my father, and he had to serve 5 years in prison for it. There was quiet a few guys ~~into~~ then in Ishpeming that were caught. There was a 5th or 6th. He was in prison at Grand Rapids. Pardon me. what were you saying?

Me: Did you have to buy groceries with the money that you got from the.

Mary: Oh ya, we my father there wasn't much money by the time he payed for the stuff he had to use. We just about barely made it to eat you know. We weren't in luxury that's for sure. Ya

Me: About how much were groceries then.

Mary: well groceries, I remember going over to Tesson's. Those days things were cheaper. Hamburger was 10¢ a pound 15¢ a pound. Butter was 25¢ or 50¢ and oleo 15¢ to 25¢. So we made our own butter, and my father used to get butter from a farmer. exchange for moonshine

Mary: Used to get, they had to exchange quite a bit
then so. No it was really we really didn't have a
Depression because we always had money coming in
you knew. So it wasn't too bad. Those days when you
got sick you stayed home. Ya so.

Me: were there many doctors around then

Mary: Oh we had so many doctors, oh God and they
were so good. If they knew that you were
having a hard time they never send you a
bill. They give their service up for nothing.
We had Dr. Barnett, Dr. Peacock, Dr. Heart and oh
they were good. Never gave, Dr. Corkland, he never
sent us a bill. But ah, wasn't too bad.

Me: Did the government help out at all? Did they
give out any food or rice or that?

Mary: If we, if my father asked for food, They would ask
him the first thing they would, Do you own
your home. And my father would say yes. He said
well sell your home, and then you get help.
But where were we going to live without a home,
so they never had cars or things like that. I ↓
Christmas came there was only one toy and
that was a sleigh. On Christmas and the whole
family used the sleigh, And use cardboard to
slide to have a good time and ah they a.
boys made their own fun and we did

Mary: Oh I remember, I don't know if I should say this, they used to give out candy at one time at the big tree. Across from the Mather Inn. And they used to give boxes of candy out. About 1 pound boxes of candy. And I used to make a hole in my pocket and then you stand in line to go and get a box of candy. I stick my candy

include in my box and it would down to the hem of my ~~jacket~~ coat. I used and that guy would say you been here before. I said no I haven't you see I don't have any candy. Here it was in my coat. Oh we had fun, those days cheating.

(Laughs) Ya mother used to when I was young

*** She used to keep ~~borders~~ *boarders* to. That's why, it wasn't too bad because she kept boarder and she used to wash their clothes and they slept. And they ate ~~and~~ whoever came from Italy stayed at our house. My mother and dad had a big double house. And they stayed with us.

Me: Were your mom and dad the first ones in your family to come to America?

Mary Ya my mother and father, my father came first then he sent for his brother. And then my dad knew my mother from the old country he sent for my mother.

Emphasize strong Italian heritage

Mary: And then my mother would send money for others to come here. And they used to borrow my mother's wedding dress to. Ya Is there any more questions?

Me: What was time like was it hard?

Mary: It was sad. That was when Pearl Harbor was bombed it was then hey. I remember that day that happen. I was pregnant ooh, about 8 or 9 months pregnant. And I was making cookies. And I happen to have the radio on that's all we had those days was the radio. And I heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed. At first I was shocked. I didn't know any thing about Pearl Harbor because I didn't have too much schooling. And when I heard it oh I was anxious for my husband to get home. I knew so as he got home he would have to go in the service. So ah but he got out of it because I was pregnant. So I saved his life then. But ah then everything started to be rationed. They gave us tokens and they gave us stamps. And you had to so we couldn't hardly have fresh meat. The only meat we ate was then Spam and that was going over seas. Spam and boiled bones, neck bones. To make soup and peroni to make sauce for the spaghetti. And clothes we didn't have too much clothes.

Mary: But it wasn't a, That's all a could remember.

Gosh, that was in 1940 something. ¹⁹⁴¹ Va at the beginning of 1942 or 43 when Pearl Harbor was bombed. And then we had to stand in line, when we went to get meat if you were lucky to get meat. We used to stand in line at the Dutch Shop. And go with these Tolpens and sometimes ran out of meat you were lucky to get bones to make soup or stew. And shows were only 5¢ did I tell you that before. And shows were 5¢ during um or then they went up to 7¢.

But I don't know during the war it was a we star. I would say we were. I don't know we always waited for bad news all the time. But um I don't know what else to say about that. And we waited to see if my husband would get a draft notice, which he never got. I don't what else.

Mes: Were there alot of people drafted?

Mary: Oh, my brother ~~Bruno~~ Bruno was drafted. My brother Tutue was crossing the Rive Rhine. And he was in a tank infantry. And he sitting in the tank when you sit there, you sit next with the driver. And then there's a guy that watches he manoeuvres he feet on the driver's shoulders and he showed the guy if he had to turn right or ~~left~~ straight ahead.

Mary: And then finally when they were crossing the river
 my brother ^{Tudy's?} Tuttee got shot. (very explicit) One
 eye ~~got shot right away~~ blew right out the
 eye came right out he tried to put it in but he
 didn't know what he was doing. But the driver
 we killed in his flesh and it all over my
 brother Tuttee. You should hear him tell you the
 story gives you the creeps, Ya his partner and then
 he managed to get out of the truck. And he owes
 his life really to a colored guy. That colored guy
 took him from one red cross tent to another and
 they were all too busy fixing, repairing the
 wounded. And poor Tuttee finally did get a some
 what you-call, a Hentian or whatever. And a But
 a one eye is gone. But a he was in Germany.
 Ya it was terrible when they were crossing the
 river He never forgets it. Now the other
 eye is bothering him so. You know my brother
 Tuttee remember it was he has a little
 stone in the Barnum by the round house.
 And they said who shot (phone rings)

me: What was war like during WWII what was Christmas like?

Mary: Oh Christmas, well, it was there was nothing
 wrong we had a good time. Christmas was
 christmss regardless during the war. Because it
 didn't affect me you know.



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Mary: When I got married on ARter? Now Christmas when I lived at home with my parents it was same as it is today. I can't say nothing bad about it. Because we never had nothing and we never got nothing. You could wish for something but you never got it. Because our parents had to feed a family so and then after I got married we lived like normal people we never wished for anything. I don't know.

Me: We you happy when the war ended?

Mary: Oh yes I was that day I came home. I had Jimmy then and I came home and the war ended. And we drank, we celebrated I had company. We were it was really different. I don't know it gave you such a funny feeling. That the, that it made you happy one way. I really can't nothing about then. About the war when it ended, we had a good time. We celebrated for two days or three days. I believe I didn't go to work the next day. I had the beauty shop then. And people never said much. If they had something on their mind they never let it out. You know ya I had Jimmy and Joanne then, so

childhood - ~~blue~~ yellow

working - red

tragedies - purple

War - Green

~~School~~ blue

hobbies - orange

prohibition - black

family - Brown

childhood

working

tragedies

World War II

School

Hobbies

Prohibition

Family

During Marriage

when she was

married - Pink