

THE TATTOO

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At 14, she worked in a Bristol clock factory

By **KATIE JORDAN**
The Tattoo

Most of the city's teens say Bristol is boring. The usual complaint goes something like this: There's nothing to do, no place to go, no excitement.

But it hasn't always been this way, according to Mary D'Alesio, who has lived all of her 100 years in Bristol. D'Alesio knew the city in its prime.

"We had a shop on every corner," she said. "Today we have nothing in Bristol. Nothing at all."

At the age of 14, D'Alesio began working at the E. Ingraham Co., one of the factories that put Bristol on the map at the time.

D'Alesio was born to Italian immigrants in Bristol. The date was Dec. 13, 1904, she said, although her papers mistakenly have her birth date recorded as the 11th.

At 14, she said, she "had had enough of school." So she decided to quit school and find a job.

Her parents didn't give her a hard time about leaving school, D'Alesio added. "What are they going to do, string me up?"

Still, of her brother and two sisters who chose to stay in school, she said: "They were smart. They graduated."

D'Alesio applied for a job at the Ingraham clock factory, one of several factories in Bristol at the time.

"There was something about it that drew me there," she explained.

When D'Alesio went looking for a job at Ingraham's, there was no real job interview as we



Julia Cocca / The Tattoo

Mary D'Alesio reminisces about her earlier days in Bristol and at the E. Ingraham Co.

think of it today. She simply met with Mr. Porter, the superintendent, and he hired her, she said.

Not surprisingly, a job in the clock factory was hard work, especially for a 14-year-old.

"We had to work 55 hours a week," she said. "Being a kid, it

wasn't easy."

Her pay was only \$9.25 a week.

"We worked 10 hours a day and half a day Saturday," she said.

There wasn't much job training to prepare the factory workers, either. "They give you a

pair of pliers and a foot press, and they tell you what to do," said D'Alesio.

Her jobs in the factory changed over time, D'Alesio said. But she started out working on the third floor using a foot press, and spent much of her time with Ingraham's working on that floor.

She also worked in the plating room at one point. The plating room, she explained, was the room where clock parts were dipped in acid and inspected.

"Oh, my, was that terrible!" D'Alesio said. She didn't stay in that position for long. "I couldn't stand the smell."

Though the work was hard, the working conditions were fine and the employers were good people, said D'Alesio. "If you did your jobs, the bosses were wonderful," she said. "We did our jobs and we were treated good."

Even during the Depression, when "you couldn't get a job if you paid for it," D'Alesio found help at Ingraham's.

She had been out of work for five years, since 1929, and by this time she was a married woman with two children. She went to see Mr. Ingraham, who told her he couldn't do any hiring.

But Eloff Carlson, who had been D'Alesio's boss when she worked at Ingraham's before, had been promoted to superintendent. After he told another woman looking for work that there were no jobs available, he offered D'Alesio a position because she'd been such a good worker before.

This time, she worked on the fifth floor as an assembler.

Though it was a new job for D'Alesio, her boss was confident she could do it. "He said, 'You learn your jobs quick,'" she explained.

Assembling involved putting parts in the clocks. There would be 60 clocks in a wooden tray, D'Alesio said, and workers had to assemble a certain number a day and test to see if the alarms worked.

"I didn't find it hard to pick up what I had to do," said D'Alesio.

Working with children to care for was hard, though. Fortunately, her employers at Ingraham's were more understanding than employers might be today.

D'Alesio would walk home during the day to see her children. "We never had a car," the 100-year-old woman said, adding, "Walking is good for you, believe me."

Her new boss, Mr. Wines, told her she would have to try to get to work earlier. But when her children were sick, she said, "He knew how to replace me for that day."

People got along together better in those days than they do now, D'Alesio said.

There were lots of other women working at the factory, she said. She made many friends there as they worked seated together at benches. "I can't say that I ever had an argument with any of the girls."

Of course, men worked there, too – for instance, in the case shop, making cabinets for the clocks. But in those days, D'Alesio said, the men behaved themselves. "They didn't flirt with you," she said.

There was no dress code,

she said, but the women wore dresses. "We didn't dress like people today," said D'Alesio.

Both Bristol and its people were a lot different back then, according to D'Alesio.

A woman who went to work in a factory at the age of 14, she says today's youth are spoiled kids. "The luxury people live in today, they don't appreciate it," she said. "The more they get, the more they want."

Although many things about the present seem to trouble D'Alesio, she still has fond memories of her past – the bustling Bristol she knew as a young woman, and the clock factory where she loved to work.

There were so many factories here when she was young that finding a place to work wasn't difficult, she said.

But of all the different jobs she worked at over the years, D'Alesio said, "Ingraham's was my favorite place."

"I miss those days," she said. "I loved the days that I spent at Ingraham's."

Recording history

In cooperation with the American Clock and Watch Museum in Bristol, *The Tattoo* is helping to collect oral histories from former clock factory workers like Mary D'Alesio.

All former factory workers willing to share their stories are encouraged to contact the museum at (860)583-6070.

Irish College offers lessons for life

By **MARESE HEFFERNAN**
The Tattoo

Over the summer, I joined other teens from across Ireland and learned a little bit more about our culture by going to Irish College.

Irish College is probably the most popular way for Irish teens to spend three weeks of their summer. Otherwise known as the Gaeltacht, Irish College is all about having fun, making friends and embracing the wide ranges of Irish culture.

There are many different colleges in various Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) areas around the country, mainly on the West Coast. Generally courses are held in June, July and August for teens aged 12 to 18, though mainly 13 to 16 year olds attend. These courses are expensive. I paid 640 euro – about \$770 – but I found it was well-worth it.

I attended this year's July course in Colaiste Chorca Dhuibhne in Kerry, Ireland. I stayed with three friends in Tigh Deborah (the house of Deborah), along with 10 other girls.

We immediately began preparations for that night's dance, a *ceili*, which would begin at 8 p.m.

The main rule in every Irish College is that students *must* speak Irish, or Gaelic, at all times. Here in Ireland, we begin learning Irish as soon as we start school, so most teenagers have been practicing it for about 10 years.

It's not an easy subject though, so speaking it fluently all the time is a very difficult task. In my college, if a student was caught speaking in

English, as we usually were, his or her name was put in the 'Black Book.' If a student's name appeared in the book three times, he or she was sent home from the college.

Our day began at 9 a.m. with classes where we learned some basic Irish that we would need for general use around the college. We also learned material that would improve our Gaelic fluency for oral exams in school. We were split up for these classes, so that we would mix with people from the other houses, including, of course, the boys' house, which we were more than happy about!

Classes ended at quarter to one, and we all went home to have dinner. This usually consisted of soup, for starters, then a traditional Irish meal – nearly *always* including baked potatoes – and an ice cream for dessert. After we ate, we were free to do whatever we wanted – go to the shop or just hang out in our rooms – until three o'clock, when we returned to the hall for sports.

We played mostly Irish sports, such as Gaelic football and hurling, but we also did basketball, table tennis, rounders and hockey. We were split into teams and there was a tournament between the teams. My team made it to the semi-final in hockey, but lost before the final.

Of course, all of these sports had to be done while speaking all Irish, which made it slightly harder. Sports were a great way of getting to know the people from the four other houses. That was when I made most of my friends, so it was a lot of fun.

Sports finished at five o'clock, and we walked home for tea-time. For this we generally ate

sausages and beans. Afterwards, we all hurried upstairs to get ready for the most exciting part of the night, the *ceili*.

At the *ceili*, instructors taught us various Irish dances, all requiring boy/girl partners. We girls always got totally dressed up for the *ceilis*, in mini-skirts and loads of make-up! We had the best time doing Irish dancing, though it doesn't sound like much fun. It was exciting waiting to be asked to dance, and seeing who would ask you. Of course, with a ridiculous imbalance of 72 girls and only 17 boys, any girl was lucky to get a *buachaill* (boy).

The *ceili* ended at 10 p.m., and after going home to a small snack – a chocolate bar or a packet of crisps – we remained in our bedrooms, talking and laughing until well into the night, something our *Bean an Ti* (Woman of the House) wasn't happy about.

Once a week, we ignored our usual timetable went on a trip for the day. We went to the nearby town of Dingle, where we went shopping in beautiful little jewelry shops, and also experienced the legendary 'Deep Fried Mars Bars,' for which Dingle is famous.

We explored the Blasket Islands, which was quite amazing. We sat in groups of friends on the top of a cliff on a beautiful day, watching the breathtaking view of the Atlantic Ocean crashing against some of Ireland's highest mountains. We also went to an aquarium, and were all excited when we saw 'Nemo!' These trips were loads of fun because the whole college got to stay together, instead of being separated as usual into groups.

Why I got my new blue do

By **ZACH BROKENROPE**
The Tattoo

"Hold still, damn it."
"Quit pulling my hair, then."
"I'm not pulling it, I'm *massaging* it."

"Then quit *massaging* it so hard."
"There," Suzy sighs and leans back on the bathroom sink. A bead of sweat drips down her forehead. "Done."

"Well, what do you guys think?" I ask, as I look at myself in the mirror, touching my hair with my palm.

"It look good," says Marcela, the foreign exchange student from Brazil who is staying with Suzy this year.

"It looks so sweet," says Suzy as she throws her stained gloves into the sink. "I wish I had blue hair."

"There's half a bottle left," I say.

"I'm tempted," she says, grinning.

"I have to say, it does look pretty kick ass," says Max, who is sitting over in the corner.

"Well ya, that's because I did it," Suzy says, and walks over and gives him a movie-style kiss.

"My God, you two are like animals," I say.

Max and Suzy have been "dating" for at least two weeks, but have kept it

a secret in order not to upset Suzy's ex boyfriend, Ryan, one of Max's best friends.

the sophomore chronicles

The whole thing is very daytime soap opera, but then again, so is high school.

"You don't think I look like a Smurf, do you?" I ask, a bit apprehensive.

"Nah," Max pulls himself away from Suzy and says. "More like a blueberry."

"Great."

"I tink it's goot," says Marcela, who speaks in fractured English with a thick Portuguese accent.

"Dude, my parents are gonna be home any minute, we need to get cleaned up," Suzy says and jumps up.

"What do you want me to do?" I

ask, still looking in the mirror. My blue hair fascinates me.

"Here, plug the sink and pour this in it," Suzy says and hands me a bottle of bleach.

I walk over to the sink and pour in the entire bottle.

"Do you think we need any more?" I ask Suzy, as she scrambles to sweep my hair clippings off the floor.

"Uh no, that's an entire bottle..." she spins around and looks at me. The air already smells like Clorox.

"YOU Poured the ENTIRE BOTTLE IN!?" she screams, and runs to the sink. "Do you have any idea how much bleach that is!"

"I'm a boy," I say squeamishly. It's my only defense.

"Err," she grunts and walks over to the sink and empties out the bleach, then starts flushing it with water.

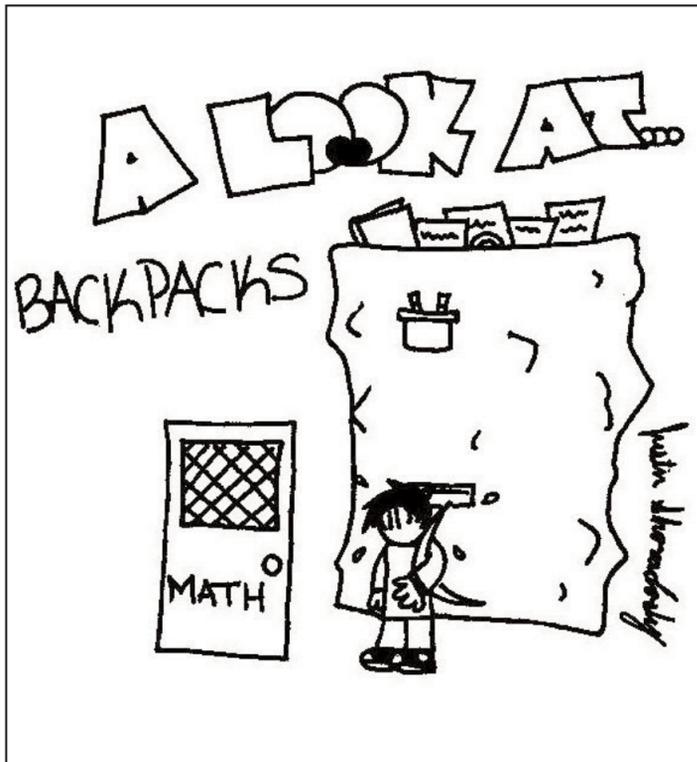
Five minutes later we're all lying on the floor in Suzy's den. AC/DC is playing on the radio. "Back in Black," I think.

"Thanks Suzy," I say.

"Anytime," she says and rests her head on Max's stomach.

So why did I dye my hair blue?

Well, it was a Friday night in Nebraska.



Justin Skaradosky / The Tattoo

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