

The logo is a large black circle containing a white silhouette of a person's head and shoulders. The text is yellow and positioned above and below the silhouette.

**Nevada State
College**

**Undergraduate Oral
History Project**

Oral History of Dorothy Gallagher

An Interview

Conducted by

Ryan Crow

April 15, 2010

Nevada State College Undergraduate Oral History Project

Produced by:

Nevada State College Undergraduate Oral History Project
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Dorothy Gallagher

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The transcript received minimal editing to preserve the conversational style and content of the narrator.

This interview is from the series *Bridging the Past: Henderson through Oral History*.

Dorothy Gallagher

Oral History of Dorothy Gallagher

An Interview Conducted by Ryan Crow on April 15, 2010

Biography

Dorothy Gallagher was born in Elko and raised in Reno, Nevada. She is a fourth-generation Nevadan. She attended the University of Nevada and graduated with a pre-med degree in 1947. Before becoming part of the state Board of Regents, Gallagher managed and tended several cattle ranches while her husband practices dentistry. Gallagher also served on the Board of Directors of the Nevada National Bank.

Initially, Gallagher was hesitant about running for the Board of Regents, but the president of the Northern Nevada Community College was persistent that she should run. Her husband finally convinced her by pointing out her close and long ties to the University of Nevada, and the state of Nevada. Gallagher served on the Board of Regents for 30 years. Among her many endeavors as regent, Gallagher supported the creation of Nevada State College in Henderson, establishing the first mid-tier college in the state of Nevada.

Dorothy Gallagher

Narrator: Dorothy Gallagher
Interviewer: Ryan Crow
Interview Date: April 15, 2010
Location: Systems Office, Las Vegas, NV

Ryan Crow: If you are ready to start?

Dorothy Gallagher: I am ready.

Ryan Crow: Alright, my name is Ryan Crow, I am here doing an interview with Dorothy Gallagher. Our Regent Dorothy Gallagher for our Oral History Project on the start of Nevada State College. Today is 3/15/2010.

Dorothy Gallagher: It is 4/15.

Ryan Crow: 4/15/2010, sorry, could not think here, 4/15/2010. The time is 3:12, and we are located up in North Vegas-ish.

Dorothy Gallagher: We are at the System Office.

Ryan Crow: The System Office is the name I was looking for. And my first question would just be to tell me a little bit about yourself, where you were born, and just –

Dorothy Gallagher: Well I am a fourth generation of Nevadan. I was born in Elko and I was raised in Reno. I met my husband in college. He is also a fourth generation Nevadan. We have sons that are fifth generation, grandchildren that are six generation and great grandsons who are seventh generation.

Ryan Crow: Where did you guys go to college?

Dorothy Gallagher: UNR.

Ryan Crow: UNR.

Dorothy Gallagher: My father told me and my sister, that we were Nevadans and we would go to the University of Nevada. If we wanted to go away to school, we could go away in high school, which we both did. Then came back and both of us went to Nevada. Our grandson and granddaughter next year will be the sixteenth and seventeenth of our family to go to the University of Nevada Reno. So, we have – I graduated, my husband did his pre-dental work at – finished it up at the University of Nevada Reno. Then I graduated and we moved – got married and moved to San Francisco where he attended four years of dental school. Then we moved in 1951 back to Elko and that is where we raised our three boys. This year we will be married 63 years.

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Ryan Crow: Wow.

Dorothy Gallagher: And if you do not believe it, I do not get mad at you, because I do not believe it either.

Ryan Crow: Okay.

Ryan Crow: There are very few people who claim to be more from Nevada than you.

Dorothy Gallagher: That is true, that is true.

Ryan Crow: So when did you first become a Regent or start to get involved with that kind of – how did that start?

Dorothy Gallagher: Well I was – I had been running a 10,000-head feed lot of five cattle ranches that my husband and I owned. He was practicing dentistry and I was running the livestock part. I did that for almost 20 years. We sold out, and the President of the College, Community College in Elko then, it was just Northern Nevada Community College, came by to see if I would run for the Board of Regents, and I said no, I would not. Because I had just got out of this big ranching deal, I was to the point where I did not want to have to do anything. And I had gone through 20 years when I left home every morning at 4:30 and it took me an hour to get to the feedlot of some of the ranches. When I would leave down there at 4:30 and come back to Elko and do all the things that I was supposed to do as Mrs. Gallagher. So I was not interested in getting tied down again, so I told them no, but Bill Burns and Charles Beanhaun that came to see me. And so they went on their way.

In a couple of weeks they called me again and wanted to come see me and I said oh I am happy for you to come and see me, come after work, I will buy you a drink, what do you need. He said well, we want to talk to you. Fine, so they came again. And I said I have not changed my mind, what part of no do you not understand? And they said well we think you ought to do it, we have got to have somebody from this area because Molly Knudtsen is retiring, she was in Austin. And so they left again. The third time they call and they said look Dorothy, we want to come and talk to you and we want your husband there. Whatever good they thought that was going to do.

But anyway they came and we talked again and I told them that I just did not want to take on a six-year term. I had already had enough that I had to do. So after they left, Tom said to me, you know, if people like us, that have been so closely associated to the University of Nevada will not do this, how can we expect anybody else to do it. The next morning he flew me to Carson City and I filed and there was nobody more surprised in the world than I was. So that is how I got there, and that was in 1980, I was elected in 1980 and took office in

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1981. I retired for two years, somebody will have to tell you what two years, I am awful at looking back at time. I am too busy looking ahead. But I retired for two years, I thought I had an excellent replacement, someone that was very knowledgeable about Nevada. She had been Superintendent of the schools in Elko. The Governor liked her and she knew the legislators. She had been all over the state. And I thought this was a great replacement for me.

She had come to me in the airport one day and said Dorothy, when you are through being a Regent, I would like to do it. So I worked with her for two years, and then I resigned two years early so that when she ran she could run as an incumbent. And I had a deal with the Governor that he would appoint her. And so that was fine, and I walked off. Those two years I consulted for the new hospital in Elko, recruiting doctors and that sort of thing. Anyway, the morning of filing, the Assemblyman John Carpenter up there called me, and he said Marcia is not going to run, what are we going to do? And I said what do you mean we, do you have a mouse in your pocket? He said we ought to do something about this. So we spent a couple of days trying to think of some – you see with this job, when you represent rural Nevada on a statewide basis, nothing happens at home. Anytime something happens there is a meeting, you have to jump in your car, get on a plane and go. So it costs you some money, it never covers your expenses. But, more importantly, is the time commitment. So people are not really standing in line to do this job. It is very different if you are in Reno or Las Vegas, you drive across town or they know they can get on Southwest and be down here, go to the meeting and go home. It does not work that way for rural Nevada.

So I talked to people in Elko and they said well Dorothy, you have got to do that. And so I talked to Kenny Guinn who is the Governor, and I talked to Senator Raggio, the one I went to school with. And of course part of the State knew that either I was ill, that I had some strange malady that would make me quit two years early, or Tom was sick. And so when I talked to the Governor and the Senator, they both said well are you well enough to do it. And I said well I am well physically, I am not sure I can pass the mental part of it, that I am even thinking about doing this. And the Governor said if you are going to do it, you get down here in the morning and file, which I did. So then, here I go again. So but this time, when I am going to retire, I will be through at the end of this year, and that is 30 years that I have put in on this – on higher education. But I think that it is a very rewarding thing to do. When I talk to some of these young people, I encourage them as I go out in the world to do their life's work, that on the side, they find something that really needs to be done, and then go do it. And preferably do something that nobody else wants to do that really needs doing.

One of them said to me, like what, this was just the other night in Carson City. I said like running for the Board of Regents. I will go home and start on your campaign, and they all laughed. But it is important, it is our future. And

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so, at this point, we have to do the best we can. And I have encouraged all the presidents when they make these cuts to do it intelligently, but not to lose the quality. So that when we come out on the other end of this, we will have institutions that are solid, and that are excellent. And that we can rebuild on.

Ryan Crow: So in your amazing 30 years of the Board of Regents, is there some accomplishments, some major accomplishments that stand out in particular across the –

Dorothy Gallagher: Oh, in a job like this there are a lot of things accomplished, but you never do it alone. And that is why I am very hesitant about some of the honors that I have been awarded because a whole lot of people should be standing there with me, because you do not do it alone. But I have seen tremendous change of course in 30 years. And we have built a lot of quality into the system, and it makes me very sad to think about what we are going to have to do now, but we have to do it, in a way that we can recover when things straighten up.

Ryan Crow: Moving more to the State College, when did you first hear about Nevada State College, like when was the idea –

Dorothy Gallagher: The idea of a State College came about with the Chancellor then who was Richard Jarvis. And he said to me, Dorothy, there has to be a State College to make the system of higher education complete for the people that stayed in Nevada. He was convinced, and he convinced me, that there was no need for everyone that wanted a bachelorette degree to go to a research university. That a State College that would award a bachelorette degree would fill the need that those particular people had. So I was – he left then, moved on, and we talked with some people in Henderson about it. Now my feeling was that Henderson is now the second biggest town in Nevada. At that point it was the third biggest after Reno. But a community needs an institution of higher learning and I felt that the system really owed it to Henderson to do that. And we taught – people in Henderson picked up the idea and ran with it. And those were some of the people that I am telling you about, like Selma Bartlett and Jim Gibson. And the politicians got interested too, that was a good idea. And then some of them got on board, and that is how the State College came about.

Dorothy Gallagher: Some of those people can give you a good idea of what happened when they decided to do it.

Ryan Crow: So in serving the college, you have named some of the major political players, were there other major players within the community that were pushing and looking to assist in any other financial or – different –

Dorothy Gallagher: I am sure there were, I would not know, Jim get the, he is Mayor, he could tell you that. And Selma too. Selma is a very accomplished woman, I mean she is

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pretty old, I think she is even older than I am. There are fewer people all the time that are older than I am. But she has been an outstanding woman, she has done a lot of things for the community. And she is a good resource for you.

Ryan Crow: I will have to get her contact information.

Dorothy Gallagher: I just happen to have it.

Ryan Crow: Thank you very much.

Dorothy Gallagher: Okay.

Ryan Crow: That will be very helpful. We are going to have the greatest historical ledger throughout college, in the country.

Dorothy Gallagher: You can have really. And you can also – I would suggest that you talk to Senator Raggio, he was one of the movers and shakers that helped us get it through the legislature, the funding for it. So now where are we.

Ryan Crow: We are – okay, well I want to hear a little bit about your reaction to the idea of the State College and sort of your – because I understand it was presented with the Rand Study Proposal about a middle tiered system. So want to just try to get a feel of your first reaction with that kind of information and how it was.

Dorothy Gallagher: I was very supportive of it from day one, before they did the study. And it made great sense to me and I, from day one, I was very supportive. And I was not too verbal about it because a northern Regent should not be down here in the middle of something like that. I did a lot of talking about. Do not put anything in this that is going to get me out of the way.

Ryan Crow: I will do no such thing.

Ryan Crow: So when you had the reaction, were there – do you recall any drawbacks that people mentioned that might be a challenge to start up the college.

Dorothy Gallagher: Let me tell you this, and you be very careful in the way you do this. Because you know he was a very impulsive President of UNLV, he was very opposed, and that just made people more determined to do it. And I have no idea what or how the faculty at UNLV feel about the State College now. Of course to begin with, it was like the two universities when we started the Community College system. That first college was in Elko. And the universities absolutely did not want Community Colleges because they felt that the funding that came from the legislature, that would be divided up, the pie would be smaller, or their part of it would be smaller because of the Community College. And so they were very opposed to it. It was the same thing, I looked at it again, I

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do not know, 20 years later, and it was the same thing, except that the University in Reno was very supportive. And as a result, UNR was the one that was, I do not know, you will have to find the proper phrasing for this, but they were the ones that were the mentor that helped get Nevada State started.

Ryan Crow: Yes, they carried their accreditation for UNR.

Dorothy Gallagher: There is a woman in Reno, and I think she is still at UNR, her name is Pat Miltenberger, she is another good source for you because she worked on getting it set up and she can give you the whole scoop on that. Any of these people, feel free to tell them that I gave you their names so they will not think that you just are out there in a cloud.

Ryan Crow: Like throwing darts at a phone book.

Dorothy Gallagher: Right.

Ryan Crow: So I guess as far as that, and within the Board of Regents at this time that this was being brought up, were there any other major issues that the Regents were dealing with at the time, that could have had an impact on the start of the State College? Either helping it or drawing it back.

Dorothy Gallagher: Oh I suppose under hypnosis I could remember who was for it and who was against it. And of course there was some disagreement about it. But it went through the board. And I do not remember what the votes were but after the June – well you are going to have to do this earlier than that but this is all a matter of public record. All I was interested in was getting it in.

Dorothy Gallagher: Anytime something new comes along, anytime there is any threatened change, there are people who cannot handle it. And people in Academia are very slow to take on anything new. I have said often that selling something new to the Academy was like turning your battleship around on a parking lot, it took a long time and a great deal of effort, and it does. They do not take to change kindly. So of course, through the system, when I was first a Regent, and this just – it is the same feeling that people had about the State College, I was working with a committee on articulation because our Community College credits could be taken on by California, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, but they would not transfer to UNR, UNLV. So I was taking that on big time. And at one meeting, I received a note from a professor who said that he would never take a Community College credit into his department. And I was brand new Regent and this all seemed so stupid to me. So I wrote it on the bottom of his note, perhaps you have outlived your usefulness to the system, signed my name and sent it back to him. We did not hear any more from him. But that is kind of the – you could almost put the State College in that situation. It is a matter of not welcoming change.

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Ryan Crow: I mean outside of people who obviously had an interest for them, their own university, this was their – was there any other kind of public reaction that you recall as far as public support, maybe like representatives from Henderson?

Dorothy Gallagher: Oh, Henderson has always been very supportive and some of these people can give you a better clue about that, who was and who helped, but they all jumped on board and were all very supportive.

Ryan Crow: Okay.

Dorothy Gallagher: And just think of how many people have gone, even at this time, as young as it is, how many people have gotten baccalaureate degrees that maybe could not have someplace else. So I think that it – that the college has done everything that we wanted it to do and hoped it would do.

Ryan Crow: What were some of those challenges that they had, once they were started up, when they first started running, and the president said to go report to you, and was there – what kind of challenges did they face and overcome, or how did they face them.

Dorothy Gallagher: Well I think the challenge they started with was lack of funding, and that building that they moved into that was –

Ryan Crow: The factory.

Dorothy Gallagher: Yes. And you know I look back and they invited me to come to something, but a couple of the students took me on a tour, and they were so proud of everything. We walked in and here is this huge workhouse room. And the two of them looked at me and said Regent Gallagher, this is the great hall. And I thought at that time, they got the right idea, and they were very proud of it, everything that was being done. And that was before there was a new building, anything like that. But I have seen it carry on just like with the students, and the administrators that we have had there, have done a remarkable job. I think Fred Maryanski has done a tremendous job making the students proud of the college and where it is going. And I think I will be down here for the graduation. But it is a very warm feeling.

Ryan Crow: I will be graduating too.

Dorothy Gallagher: You will, good.

Ryan Crow: If there is anything else just in regards to the college that you would like to add that you –

Dorothy Gallagher: You see I – after we extended the board, there are more regions down here,

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and I am spending a lot of time covering the northern part of the state because there are four institutions up there and very few regions. So I feel that there are enough regions down here to support these institutions and I can, when I can. And this year I will be going to all the graduations. For years I never did miss a graduation. I said that is the time that you get your batteries recharged. You realize why you are doing it. I think it is a great time, May is a great month in higher education in Nevada. I have often thought that May came along just in time to keep me from telling somebody what they could do with their good job they had given me. Because it is when you look and you see why you go through the things that you do. But it is – I think it is a very, very good thing, it was fun. And I cannot say enough about the people Henderson, because it is my understanding that they are coming to the floor right now to be sure that the college is having what it needs. So that is a good feeling.

Ryan Crow: Okay, well thank you so much for taking the time for this interview.

Dorothy Gallagher: You are very welcome.

Ryan Crow: Great.

Dorothy Gallagher: If you think of anything else that you need.

Ryan Crow: Oh yeah.

Dorothy Gallagher: You obviously have my phone number.

[End of audio]