

Area priest has trip of a lifetime

By LAURA YANDELL

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ROCK HILL — The Rev. John Gallagher of the Oratory in Rock Hill has spent the last 36 years of his life visiting different churches in South Carolina to preach on Sunday.

All that time, he has been working and saving his money toward a trip to Southern Ireland to see the land his parents had migrated from in the early 1900s and to meet relatives he had never seen.

In August, Gallagher's long-awaited dream was realized as he and his sister Mary Hines of New Britain, Conn. traveled through three counties of Southern Ireland visiting cousins who make their livings there by farming.

Gallagher, 55, found himself amazed at the differences between Ireland and the United States.

He was surprised mainly by the poverty and the lack of conveniences found in homes.

"Farming is the main line of em-

ployment over there," Gallagher said. "But the seasons have been so wet and damp that the major crop, hay, is in trouble."

Gallagher said the bad weather had caused other economical problems for many farmers and their produce. He said a farmer's annual income reaches about \$3,000.

Another feature of Irish life was the lack of plumbing in many of the homes, Gallagher said.

"They used rain water to bath in and to wash their dishes, he said. "But they always seemed to have plenty of water for tea which must be their favorite beverage. You can't leave a house without having a cup."

Meals consisted mostly of vegetables and bread, Gallagher said, since refrigeration was rare.

"If you wanted meat to eat, you had to buy it fresh at the market," he said. "There wasn't any ice either."

That missing ice and refrigeration showed up even more when Gallagher went with friends to the local

pubs, tavern-like businesses popular in practically every town.

The beer was served hot, according to Gallagher, and when he had a coke he had to drink it lukewarm, too.

"I saw men drink four or five mugs of that beer and not seem affected," he said. "I guess what they say about the Irish being heavy drinkers is true."

Gallagher described the beer as being as thick as molasses. He also saw teenagers occasionally dispense the liquid for the customers.

"They don't have any liquor laws over there," Gallagher said, noting that such action would be illegal in the U.S.

Gallagher and his sister rented a small car and bought gas for \$2.50 per gallon as they traveled about County Clare, County Killarney and County Monaghan.

One day they traveled 200 miles to the city of Dublin to sight-see.

"You can see cows grazing on the rocky hillsides," Gallagher said.

"It's a pretty sight but not a very practical one for the farmers since they can't farm that kind of land."

"We even passed some farmers driving their cattle along the road to market. That's something we don't see anymore in our country."

Gallagher was also surprised to learn that a large majority of the people in Southern Ireland are uninformed about what's happening in their own country.

"Most of the people I talked with seemed unconcerned about the war between the Protestants and the Catholics in Northern Ireland," he said, adding that Southern Ireland is 98 per cent Catholic.

"One man did say that if England would withdraw her support to the Protestants then maybe the affair could be settled," Gallagher said. "But I never saw a single newspaper while I was there so I could read anymore about the war."

Gallagher also mentioned that television seemed to be a luxury. Broadcasting lasted only four hours daily.



Evening Herald photo by Andy Burris

RAIN WATER USED TO WASH DISHES AND SELF
Oratory priest John Gallagher recalls Irish homelife