

EI-1409

DELIA DAVIS

BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 14, 1910

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 6, 2006

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 95

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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IRELAND, 1930

AGE: 19

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RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: --April the sixth, the year 2006, and I'm here in Bel Air, Maryland, with Delia Davis, who came here as a nineteen year old from County Mayo, in Ireland. And she came through Ellis Island at that time in 1930. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And if you would just say in the beginning your birth date, and where you were born.

DAVIS: My birth date is August 14th, 1910. I was born in County Mayo, Ireland.

LEVINE: Was it a little town, or village?

DAVIS: It was a little village called Cross.

LEVINE: Cross?

DAVIS: Uh-huh, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, and were you in Cross up until the time you left for the United States?

DAVIS: Yes, I was home until I left.

LEVINE: Okay, so first let's talk about life up until you were nineteen, when you were in Cross, okay?

DAVIS: Oh, well, I went to school in Cross, and then I went to—[unclear], and then I went to another school called Kilmaine.

LEVINE: How do you spell that one?

DAVIS: K-I-L-M-A-I-N-E, Kilmaine. And I graduated from there, then I went back home to my parents, and I helped them on the farm. My father—they had a farm. So I was raised on a farm.

LEVINE: Oh!

DAVIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: So did you—well, why don't you start with your father's name? What was his name?

DAVIS: My father was named Michael, Michael Hughes.

LEVINE: Michael Hughes.

DAVIS: My maiden was Hughes.

LEVINE: Hughes. And your mother?

DAVIS: My mother's name was Mary.

LEVINE: Mary, and what was her maiden name?

DAVIS: Henahan, H-E-N-E-H-A-N, Henahan.

LEVINE: Okay, and did you have brothers and sisters?

DAVIS: Oh, there was nine of us! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Ah! Where did you fall in the list?

DAVIS: Second. Second.

LEVINE: Second to the oldest?

DAVIS: Second to the oldest, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and was your oldest one a boy or a girl?

DAVIS: Girl. All the children, my mother only had two boys.

LEVINE: Oh! Seven girls, huh?

DAVIS: Yeah, seven girls.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay, well describe your father. What was your father like? His temperament, his--?

DAVIS: Well, he was—he wasn't a tall man, average height, I guess, but he had the prettiest hair, auburn curly hair. That's what I remember about him, curly hair.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah?

DAVIS: My oldest sister had the same hair. She was the only one in the family that got his hair! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, lucky, huh?

DAVIS: Yeah!

LEVINE: So in other words, what would you say his temperament was, his personality?

DAVIS: Very calm, never—when he said your full name, you know he meant business! [Laughs] If you had a nickname, and he said it, it was okay! [Laughs]

LEVINE: I see. What was your full name? Did you have a middle name, too?

DAVIS: No, but I was christened Bridget. Where they got Delia from Bridget don't ask me; I don't know. But it seemed like everybody who was christened Bridget was called Delia, [unclear]. I don't know the reason of what Delia has to do with Bridget; it must be something.

LEVINE: I see.

DAVIS: I never did find out, though, what the connection was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, if he said, what would he say if he meant business?

DAVIS: If he called you Bridget, just forget it! [Laughs] You better straighten up! I had a brother named Patrick, but we called him Pat. When he hollered Patrick, he meant business!

LEVINE: I see, I see. And how about your mother? What was she like?

DAVIS: Oh, she was calm. She never hollered at anybody! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah? And would you say your family was from that area in County Mayo, like, for generations? Like your grandfather, your grandmother, your great--?

DAVIS: Yeah, I think, yes. As far as I know, they were all from that area, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, and let's see. So you must have gone to school, but you also probably helped out on the farm?

DAVIS: Oh, yes, uh-huh. Yeah.

LEVINE: What kinds of things would you have to do?

DAVIS: We'd help with when they cut the hay; we'd help with that. And we'd help with the potatoes; we'd help with them. We'd help with most everything, yeah. Helped feed the animals, you know, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, so what did the farm have?

DAVIS: Well, they had a mixture of things. They had the part where they'd grow vegetables, just for their self, not to sell or anything. But they had cows and horses and pigs, and all that kind of stuff, and they sold them at the market, you know, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, I see, so they raised them and brought them to market?

DAVIS: Raised them, yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: What was market day like? Was there one day?

DAVIS: No, it was one day a month. Well no, I think one day a month, but not everybody had things to take on that day. When their turn came, because the animals had to be a certain age before they could sell them, you know. But like, for everybody, nobody had them at the same time, you know, so they had like once a month. But it was a big, big deal, you know, the market! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah, describe the market. What would—would you go—was it far away?

DAVIS: No, no, you could walk, it was walking distance, yeah. Of course, everybody walked there anyway; there wasn't that much transportation, yeah. Walked or rode a bicycle. Of course, some of them had those horse cars, traps they called them, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, I see, but automobiles weren't part of it?

DAVIS: There was a few automobiles. Of course, when I left—when I was younger, but of course when I left home automobiles were coming in more, when I left.

LEVINE: So what would you do as a family? Did you have any kinds of celebrations, or--?

DAVIS: Just around holidays, Christmas, and birthdays, stuff like that.

LEVINE: Yeah, and were you closest to any particular member of your family?

DAVIS: Well, I guess—I don't know, I think my oldest brother. I think I was closer to him, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, was he the next in line to you?

DAVIS: Let's see how far down he was. No, there was my sister—he would have been the fourth in the family, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay, so you went to school; you did your work on the farm. And what did you do for fun?

DAVIS: Well, we didn't have too much. We'd visit our girlfriends, and that kind of stuff, you know. And like on Sundays we'd ride our bicycles, you know, a group.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh, yeah. And let's see, did you ever go very far from home? I mean, in other words, did you go to, I don't know what the biggest city would be?

DAVIS: There was a town called Ballen Grove [PH]. We used to go there a lot. That was the closest big town, we called it big but it wasn't big. But in our eyes at that time, it was big, you know? [Laughs] Yeah. But they had everything, you know, clothes, and other stores.

LEVINE: Oh, so you could get clothes?

DAVIS: So we could go there, yeah.

LEVINE: How about things like movies? Was this—no, I guess not.

DAVIS: Well, movies came later. They came later.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So was storytelling a big thing when you were growing up?

DAVIS: Well, my grandfather—more with the older people, like my grandfather and great-grandfather. They were the storytellers. Not the younger ones, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Can you think of any experiences with your grandparents, either one of them?

DAVIS: Well, my grandmother died when I was only six years old. And my grandfather, well, I was here when he passed away. But I wasn't around them that much, because—unless they came to visit, or we visited them. Like, when my grandmother died, my grandfather used to come every Sunday for dinner after that, you know, that stuff. So we'd see him every Sunday, yeah.

LEVINE: Was that a big thing, Sunday dinner?

DAVIS: Oh, Sunday dinner, but church and Sunday dinner was a big thing, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-hmm. And so how was it—were you the first in your family to come?

DAVIS: No, I have a sister—she passed away two years ago. I have a sister that came first.

LEVINE: Was that the oldest?

DAVIS: And that's the oldest one, Mary Ann. And she was the one that brought me out here.

LEVINE: I see. Now how was it that she came?

DAVIS: I have, my mother's uncle, his family, visited us one year, and he said, he told her—she was only fourteen when they went over there. He told her when she was old enough they would bring her out here, and they did.

LEVINE: And where was your uncle?

DAVIS: In Louisville.

LEVINE: In Louisville, Kentucky?

DAVIS: Yeah, mm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So she got to come out first because she was the oldest?

DAVIS: Yeah, she come out first, uh-huh, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, so she went to Louisville, and then did you correspond?

DAVIS: Oh, yes, all the time, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: What did she tell you? In other words, what did you know about this country?

DAVIS: I didn't—well really, that's the thing! They don't tell you much, when they write! They don't tell you much. Tell you about themselves, maybe what they're doing, but as far as what, like the place where she lived, she never said anything about that.

LEVINE: Did you have—did you want to come?

DAVIS: Yeah, I didn't mind. I didn't mind, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, so when you were nineteen, had you worked at all in Ireland?

DAVIS: Just at home, no.

LEVINE: Just at home?

DAVIS: Not too many of the girls worked, went out. There weren't that many places you could work, you know, unless you went into town somewhere, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Okay, so and how did your mother feel about first your sister, and then you coming here?

DAVIS: Well, I guess she wasn't too happy about it, but I guess she thought it was better, you know. And since my sister was here, I guess she thought I'd be company for her! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, yeah, yeah.

DAVIS: But she had already made friends, and she didn't need me! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Well, was the idea that you would have a better life?

DAVIS: I guess, I guess it was, yeah. But there was nothing wrong with the life I had, I thought [laughs].

LEVINE: So your family, they were able to get along?

DAVIS: Oh, fine! Got along fine, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Okay, so can you remember getting ready to go?

DAVIS: Yeah, I just remember going to—we had to—we did all our physicals before we came. It wasn't like they did at Ellis Island. That was years ago. We had all that done before we came here.

LEVINE: Where did you have your physical?

DAVIS: In Dublin.

LEVINE: Oh, you had to go to Dublin?

DAVIS: To go to Dublin, yeah.

LEVINE: So was that the first time that you had gone?

DAVIS: That was the first time I was in Dublin, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: So how did that strike you?

DAVIS: I liked it. That's a big place. That's a small New York, I call it! [Laughs] Yeah.

LEVINE: So you went, you had your physicals, I guess you got your papers?

DAVIS: Physical, got my papers, passport, and all that thing, yeah.

LEVINE: So when you went to Dublin, did you go by yourself?

DAVIS: No, I was with a couple other—two other girls.

LEVINE: Oh, and they were coming, too?

DAVIS: And yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So when you thought about packing, what did you take with you?

DAVIS: You just take everyday clothes, that's all, because if anything else you want, you could buy it you get here. But I didn't know what kind of clothes they were wearing. [Laughs] Of course, it was summer; I brought summer clothes. It was summer time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, so was there any kind of a send-off, get together before you left?

DAVIS: Yeah, we had a get together, my aunt and her kids, and all our family, was all together, yeah. Just a dinner—just a dinner, yeah.

LEVINE: So were these girlfriends of yours that were leaving, too?

DAVIS: No, they were just girls I met on—I met. Just two girls I met on the train, and we started to talk, and we happened to find out we were going to the same place! [Laughs].

LEVINE: I see.

DAVIS: But I don't know where they were from. Somewhere around, I guess, there, but I didn't know what, they were from my county or not; I don't remember.

LEVINE: Well now, did they—were they on the ship? Did you see them on the ship?

DAVIS: No, I didn't see them on the ship.

LEVINE: Oh, it was a different ship probably.

DAVIS: Maybe, uh-huh.

LEVINE: Yeah, so let's see. How did you get to Galway?

DAVIS: Oh, my father rented a car, and the family, all that could get in the car, came! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah, and so he drove the car?

DAVIS: No, the driver. They got a driver.

LEVINE: They had a driver, I see.

DAVIS: There was no—my father never drove a car! There was no cars to drive! [Laughs] Yeah.

LEVINE: Right, right. So you had a driver, and then took as much of the family that would fit?

DAVIS: Yeah! [Laughs]

LEVINE: And was your favorite brother there, too?

DAVIS: Yeah, my mother, father, my brother, my aunt and uncle.

LEVINE: So I guess your brother was sad to see you go?

DAVIS: I imagine. But of course, being a boy, he wouldn't show it, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Can you say anything about that? Like, when you were growing up on the farm there, were the boys—was there a big difference between the way the boys were treated, and the way the girls were treated?

DAVIS: Oh, yes, big difference, yeah.

LEVINE: What was the difference?

DAVIS: Well, for one thing, one side of the school was for girls, the other side was for boys, like a double school. So the boys would be let out a half hour earlier than the girls! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Why was that?

DAVIS: I guess so they wouldn't mix; I don't know! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, I see. Was it a religious school? Was it a Catholic school?

DAVIS: They were all Catholic schools, yeah, but not with nuns—regular teachers. They were called intermediate schools. National schools, that's what they were called. National schools.

LEVINE: And were they strict?

DAVIS: Very strict, yeah, very strict.

LEVINE: So, you had finished, though? You had finished school before you left?

DAVIS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes, uh-hmm, yeah.

LEVINE: Now what was typical? How far in school would you go?

DAVIS: Well, you'd go to the eighth grade in the national school. Then if you wanted to go to high school, you went to what they called intermediate. You didn't pay for the grade school, but when you went to high school, you paid.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and was there a high school nearby?

DAVIS: Yeah, because a couple of my sisters went there. I forget what it was called. After I came here, a couple of my sisters went there, to intermediate.

LEVINE: Oh, I see, so you didn't go to high school, but you came to this country?

DAVIS: I just went to the eighth grade, that's all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, well I'm sure you got a good education.

DAVIS: Yeah, but when I went for a couple of jobs they told me that we were a year ahead of the schools here.

LEVINE: Yeah, I've heard that a lot, yeah. Okay, so when you went—how did you feel, leaving your whole family, and taking a huge ship?

DAVIS: Well, at first it was bad, and then you got on the ship, and everybody there, they're all—you're all in the same boat, you know, so you go along with it, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, so in other words, there were a lot of young women?

DAVIS: A lot of young women, and there was a couple of boys on there. I think three or four boys. But it was mostly girls—mostly girls.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and they were all doing the same thing? They were coming to this country?

DAVIS: Same thing. One girl—one girl had been here before. She was home on a vacation, and she was going back.

LEVINE: Did she tell you much about it?

DAVIS: No, she didn't, not much about it.

LEVINE: So you really didn't know very much about this country?

DAVIS: I didn't know much about it, no, no.

LEVINE: Right, right. Now what was—the name of the ship was the Cleveland, right?

DAVIS: Cleveland, uh-huh.

LEVINE: And you left from Galway?

DAVIS: Right.

LEVINE: What was the Cleveland like?

DAVIS: It was nice; it was a nice ship. I mean, we had a good time. Food was good.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DAVIS: They had dancing music and all that. There was no movies back then, so they couldn't show us any movies! [Laughs]

LEVINE: [Laughs] Well now, were you in what you call steerage, or did you have a cabin? How—do you remember where you slept?

DAVIS: We had a cabin. We had a cabin with—there was two of us, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, just two in the cabin?

DAVIS: Two in a cabin, uh-huh, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you said the food was good. Anything happen on the voyage that you recall, particularly?

DAVIS: Not a thing, just smooth sailing.

LEVINE: Smooth sailing?

DAVIS: Smooth sailing.

LEVINE: Well, you left in June, so you weren't in the middle of winter.

DAVIS: Yeah, left in June, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And would you say that most of the girls were excited about--?

DAVIS: They seemed to be, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh?

DAVIS: They seemed to be.

LEVINE: Okay, so when the ship came into the New York Harbor, do you remember that?

DAVIS: I remember coming in. I remember coming in. Of course, everybody was on deck, watching, looking, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you know what the Statue of Liberty was?

DAVIS: I'd heard about it. Yeah, sure, I'd heard. I think everybody's heard about that.

LEVINE: Yeah. And did you—well, some people didn't know. They didn't know.

DAVIS: Well, maybe they didn't. Yeah, maybe they didn't.

LEVINE: You know? Yeah, but when the ship came into New York Harbor, and the Statue of Liberty was there, did people, like, respond, react?

DAVIS: Oh, they just looked, you know, and "That's the Statue of Liberty." You know, I guess they'd heard about it, too! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Let's see, so then you must have come to Ellis Island?

DAVIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did everybody go to Ellis Island?

DAVIS: The whole ship went. That's where we docked.

LEVINE: Well, you know, the thing is, the big ships usually pull in either to, usually to Battery Park in New York, or Hoboken. Then you take a smaller ferry.

DAVIS: Uh-huh, yeah. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: That's probably what you did.

DAVIS: Right, yeah.

LEVINE: Because those big ships can't—they can't come in.

DAVIS: They can't anchor there, yeah, uh-hmm, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, so what was your Ellis Island experience like?

DAVIS: Well, we all got off the whatever the thing there, and we waited. Most everybody had somebody, you know, friends to meet them, you know. So I had friends to meet me, but they were late! [Laughs] And this young boy, I forget him, whoever was supposed to meet him was late. So these people come over and said, "Well, you have to wait here." They said, "We're going to take care of you. We're going to arrange for you to get wherever you're supposed to go." I don't know where he was going. He said, "No," he said, "I'm going out here and find a cab!" [Laughs] I don't know how he was going to find a taxi in the middle of the water! He said, "I'm going out here and find a taxi, and go back to where I'm supposed to go." It wasn't long before he was back in again! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Well now, who were the friends who were supposed to meet you?

DAVIS: Their name was Monroe. I knew them from Ireland, both of us. It was about five or ten minutes later, and they're—what did you call them people? Traveler's Aids, or something?

LEVINE: Oh, yeah, there was such a thing.

DAVIS: And they came up and said, "You know, we'll make arrangements for you to get the train to Kentucky at such and such a time." And just as she was telling me, they walked in! And he said he was here. She said, "She can't go with you. You were late; you can't go." And they wouldn't let me go! But what I should have done was say, "Okay," and when they disappeared, go with them. You know, because they would see that I got on the train, you know?

LEVINE: Sure.

DAVIS: So this was early in the day, and the train didn't come 'til night, night time.

LEVINE: So it was like a matron there at Ellis Island?

DAVIS: There wasn't a soul there. When the time come to go for, to meet the train, [unclear], I think I was the only one. Well, there was other people that were getting on the train, but I think I was the only one from the ship that was on there.

LEVINE: So what happened? What it a matron at Ellis Island that said, "You can't go with them?"

DAVIS: The people, whoever they were, that made arrangements. I think they called them Travelers' Aids.

LEVINE: Oh, I know what you mean.

DAVIS: But then you didn't see them after that. I didn't see a soul after that!

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So in other words, you couldn't go with your friends?

DAVIS: They wouldn't let me go.

LEVINE: Oh!

DAVIS: I should have gone anyway, but I gave in too easy, you know. I thought, well, there was some reason I couldn't go, so what did I know?

LEVINE: Of course, what would you know? Right, yes, right.

DAVIS: But if it happened today, I'd say, "Get lost! I'm going!" [Laughs]

LEVINE: [Laughs] You became American, right?

DAVIS: Yeah! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Okay, so in other words, they left?

DAVIS: And they left.

LEVINE: And then what happened? How did you manage to get to the train?

DAVIS: When the time came for the train, they came over and said, "We're taking you to the train."

LEVINE: Oh, so in other words, you had to sit at Ellis Island until, like, all day long?

DAVIS: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, wow. Doesn't make sense, does it?

DAVIS: Didn't make a good impression on me at all! [Laughs]

LEVINE: No, no, it wouldn't. So, what was your day like, while you were sitting?

DAVIS: I just sat there, read some papers, [unclear], because I didn't bring any book with me or anything. But there was a lot of—plenty of reading material there, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, so did you strike up any conversations with people?

DAVIS: Yeah, some people that—they weren't from our ship, that were just there. I don't know where they were from. Just some people that were waiting, too, but not for my train, I don't think, because they wouldn't come that early, you know.

LEVINE: Well now, in 1930, was I crowded? Was Ellis Island crowded?

DAVIS: No, no it wasn't. After the ship came in, after we docked, everybody left. It wasn't crowded. There were people going around, [unclear], but it wasn't really crowded.

LEVINE: Was it clean?

DAVIS: Yes, it was. It was clean.

LEVINE: And were you given a meal?

DAVIS: There was—no, there was a little place. I think I paid for my own, but I had a little, like a snack bar, like, you know. You sat on stools; you could get something to eat.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And let's see. So you didn't have to go through any examinations or anything there, because that was all done?

DAVIS: No, not there, no. That was all done before we left home.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay. So, you finally were taken to the train?

DAVIS: Yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And do you know if you went to Grand Central Station, or Penn Station? Do you remember where you got the train?

DAVIS: I don't remember which one. At that time, I didn't pay much attention.

LEVINE: Sure, right. Well, okay, so you got on the train—?

DAVIS: It had to be one of them, you know, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: You got on the train, and how did you feel?

DAVIS: Glad I was on that train! [Laughs]

LEVINE: [Laughs] Were you scared at all?

DAVIS: No, no, I wasn't, no.

LEVINE: Were you excited? Yeah, so were there any first impressions? You know, after you left Ellis Island, and you actually--?

DAVIS: I thought New York was terrible! [Laughs] I couldn't see much of anything, and I thought, "Well, this is a terrible place! I'll get on that ship and go back home!" [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. Well, was it dark by the time you--?

DAVIS: It was dark, yeah. It was dark, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, that's too bad. Okay, so you got on the train. And what was the train trip like?

DAVIS: It was a long trip, but it was okay. It had dining cars, and all you could eat, and whatever. My sister and friend met me at the—

LEVINE: How long a trip was it, about?

DAVIS: I don't know how many hours it was. It's a long trip. I don't know how many hours it was; I can't remember.

LEVINE: Well, you got on at night?

DAVIS: I got on at night; we got there, in fact, I think about noon time, or something like that.

LEVINE: The next day?

DAVIS: The next day.

LEVINE: So you slept in the seat?

DAVIS: Yeah, I just slept in the seat, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and did you meet anybody on the train?

DAVIS: I talked to some people, but I didn't get any names or anything.

LEVINE: Un-huh, were these people who were coming to this country, too?

DAVIS: No, I think they were just—I don't think they were. I think they were just travelers somewhere.

LEVINE: Traveling. Okay, so what was it like when you met your sister, then?

DAVIS: Well, it was nice. We were excited. My sister, well she was there about two years, I think, before that. It was nice to meet them all. You know, my aunt was there, and my mother's uncle. But when you came there, you had to have a sponsor, you know, so he had sponsored us both, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. So, Mary Ann, that was your sister?

DAVIS: Yeah, we ended up just calling her Mary [laughs].

LEVINE: Mary, okay. Well what was Mary doing for work?

DAVIS: Oh, she was a cook. She went up with some family and was their cook.

LEVINE: And right in St. Louis? No, not St. Louis—

DAVIS: Louisville.

LEVINE: Louisville.

DAVIS: Yeah, in Louisville, yeah.

LEVINE: Right in Louisville?

DAVIS: Yeah, uh-hmm, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And so, what happened? You got off the train; your uncle, your aunt, and your sister met you, and then where'd you go?

DAVIS: Then I went to my uncle's, and we stayed after that for about a week. Then I went and looked for work. [Laughs] Yeah.

LEVINE: And did you find something?

DAVIS: Taking care of children, because that was the middle of the Depression.

LEVINE: Oh, right.

DAVIS: Yeah, it was the middle of the Depression; there wasn't much work. So I got a job taking care of two little kids [laughs].

LEVINE: Now did you live with them? Did you live in their house?

DAVIS: Yes, I stayed there, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and your sister, too? Did she live where she did the cooking?

DAVIS: Yeah, I think she did, yeah. I think she did.

LEVINE: Now, was there a little Irish community there?

DAVIS: Not that I know of. Not that I know of, no. I met some Irish girls while I was there, but, and some guys from Ireland, but there was no active community, like here they have a Polish community, Italian community. There was nothing like that there.

LEVINE: But did you run into other people who had come from Ireland?

DAVIS: Oh, yes, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Besides your sister and--?

DAVIS: Oh, yeah, um-hmm, yeah. Because in the mean time, my sister had met them, so then I met them there.

LEVINE: Yeah, so did you socialize? Did you go out dancing and things?

DAVIS: Oh, yes, yeah, uh-hmm, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, okay. So how did it strike you, this country, compared to what you were used to?

DAVIS: Oh, it was a lot different. All the green and everything I was used to, yeah! [Laughs] Of course, Kentucky was nice because it was kind of country where they were living, and a lot of trees and everything. So it was kind of nice, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were you homesick?

DAVIS: At first, yes. But you get over that fast! [Laughs] You have to work!

LEVINE: Yeah, and did you enjoy these two little kids?

DAVIS: Yeah, I did, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And let's see. So, well, you didn't have to learn English, that's for sure!

DAVIS: No, that's for sure, yeah.

LEVINE: So you would work—did you have like days off?

DAVIS: Oh, yes, yeah. I had weekends off. One day during the week, and then weekends off.

LEVINE: Oh!

DAVIS: So it wasn't bad.

LEVINE: Yeah, so what would you do on your time off?

DAVIS: Oh, we'd go out, go to dinner, go to a movie, something like that, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: So when did you start feeling comfortable, like you didn't want to go back?

DAVIS: Oh, I don't know. I've been back three times.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, but I mean, to stay?

DAVIS: To stay, oh, after I got married, I guess, and had kids! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah, well that will make a difference! How did you meet your husband?

DAVIS: Well, I went back to New York to visit some friends—the friends that were supposed to meet me at the boat [laughs] are back to New York later. First I went back on vacation, and then they asked me to come up and stay, so I did go up there and stay. I was there about a year, I guess, and I met my husband. We went out on a blind date! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness! Now, in New York you met him?

DAVIS: In New York, yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: So what did you like about him?

DAVIS: Oh, I don't know. Just, he was Bohemian, so he was from Czechoslovakia.

LEVINE: Oh!

DAVIS: But he'd been here a lot longer than I was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what was his name. Davis, I guess? His first name?

DAVIS: Davis, yeah, John Davis.

LEVINE: John Davis, uh-huh. So now did you stay in New York then, or did you--?

DAVIS: We stayed—well, I've traveled so much. We stayed in New York, I stayed in New York, and then we got, the following Christmas we went to—he had a brother who lived in California, who worked for M.G.M., I think. And he decided we'd go out there to see his brother! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Well, did you get married soon after you met him?

DAVIS: Let's see, yeah, about a year. About a year, yeah.

LEVINE: So you were in New York then?

DAVIS: I was in New York, yeah.

LEVINE: And were you working in New York?

DAVIS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I was working. There was a little store that sold children's clothes. That's all they sold. It was really nice. It was nice, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Yeah, and where in New York were you?

DAVIS: I can't remember, but I stayed with friends, the friends that I was supposed to meet. And I can't remember their address.

LEVINE: Was it in Manhattan?

DAVIS: It was in Manhattan, which was on the East Side, I think, you know, those houses they have there. I think they had two—they lived on the, there was a couple of families, and they lived on the first floor. In some of them there's three or four floors [laughs].

LEVINE: Yeah, right, yeah. Okay, well, so did you enjoy your time in New York?

DAVIS: I liked New York; I really did. I really did, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

END OF SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: --a lot different?

DAVIS: Oh yes, entirely different, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Well, you had some nice experiences! Different ones, huh?

DAVIS: Yeah [laughs].

LEVINE: So then you went with your husband to California?

DAVIS: California. My two girls were born there.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness, uh-huh. So what are their names, your two girls?

DAVIS: Mary Louise, and Vivian. But she didn't like Vivian; she called herself Vicky!
[Laughs]

LEVINE: Okay, well, I guess you should be able to call yourself what you want, right?

DAVIS: Yeah, what you want, that's right!

LEVINE: Okay, so you had your two girls, and then did you settle—you must have settled there, with two children?

DAVIS: Yeah, we did, yeah.

LEVINE: Where in California?

DAVIS: When we first went there, we were two blocks from Hollywood Boulevard.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness!

DAVIS: You'd go down Hollywood Boulevard, you'd see the movies stars riding around in their cars, you know, yeah. We were out there about a year, and my sister came out. She stayed. She married, there, too.

LEVINE: Your sister married?

DAVIS: She married there, too, in California, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Well now, let me just—how long did you stay in Kentucky, in Louisville?

DAVIS: Oh, about three years.

LEVINE: Three years, and then you came to New York?

DAVIS: I went to New York, yeah.

LEVINE: And you were in New York around a year or so?

DAVIS: Yeah. About two years there. Then we went to—

LEVINE: Two years in New York, and then you went to California?

DAVIS: California, yeah.

LEVINE: And you were there around a year? How long--?

DAVIS: California? I was there longer, there about three years, I think, yeah. About three years, yeah.

LEVINE: About three years, I see. So did any of the rest of your family come out, besides you and Mary?

DAVIS: No, no, none of the rest came out.

LEVINE: And so when was the first time you went back to Ireland?

DAVIS: I'm trying to think.

LEVINE: Did you have more children besides Mary Louise and Vicky?

DAVIS: Yeah, I had six children all together.

LEVINE: Six, uh-huh.

DAVIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you go out before your children were older?

DAVIS: Yeah, oh yeah. I went, the first I went, they were—[telephone rings]

LEVINE: Okay, we're going to pause here. [Tape off/on] Talking about when you went back for the first time, what was the occasion? Do you remember why you went back that first time?

DAVIS: Just to see the family. I was here five years when I went back.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, so uh-huh. And you went back—did you go by yourself, or did you go with--?

DAVIS: I went on tour. There was a group. I didn't know anybody until I got on the plane, but then I got acquainted with people. It was a tour, a planned tour. We visited different places, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh!

DAVIS: But the other two times I went back it was just—

LEVINE: To see your family?

DAVIS: Just to visit the family, yeah. But I visited them, too, but I skipped some of the things we were supposed to see to go to see them! [Laughs]

LEVINE: I see, so it was a tour going to Ireland?

DAVIS: Yeah, just going to Ireland.

LEVINE: And you went different places?

DAVIS: Oh, yeah, we went all over, yeah.

LEVINE: So you saw other parts of Ireland--?

DAVIS: That I had never seen before! [Laughs]

LEVINE: I see! So, just to think back a bit, how did you start to change? Can you think about, like, how you changed over the time, when you first came?

DAVIS: I don't know. You're young, and you don't think about it. You just do it, I think. Yeah, go along with what's going on, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. So after three years in California, where'd you go?

DAVIS: We came back here, to Maryland.

LEVINE: Oh, to Maryland?

DAVIS: Uh-huh, yeah.

LEVINE: Why did you come to Maryland?

DAVIS: Well, my husband—I don't know if you're familiar with the Bata Shoe Company. They built a factory here in Maryland, Aberdeen, called Bellcamp. And my husband knew him from overseas, so that was a chance for a good job. So that's why. He knew he would get a good job if he came here, so he did.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So how do you spell the name of the shoe company?

DAVIS: B-A-T-A, I think, Bata.

LEVINE: B-A-T-A?

DAVIS: I'm pretty sure, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and so your husband worked—

DAVIS: Worked for them, yeah.

LEVINE: For them?

DAVIS: An electrician.

LEVINE: Electrician, uh-huh. So did you settle here in Bel Air?

DAVIS: No, I've only been out here in Bel Air about ten years, I guess.

LEVINE: Where were you before?

DAVIS: I was in Baltimore City, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. And how was Baltimore, compared to New York, California, Louisville? [Laughs]

DAVIS: At one time it was really nice. It had a really nice downtown area. But that's all gone. That's all gone. It had nice stores in it, but that's been gone, because they built all these malls.

LEVINE: Yeah, right. So you had your first two children in California?

DAVIS: Uh-huh, yeah.

LEVINE: And then you had the other four here?

DAVIS: Four here, uh-huh, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, so take it you didn't work? You took care of the children?

DAVIS: Oh, no, no, no. I worked later on, but not while they were—when the youngest went to school, I went to work.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So let's see. Your children grew up here, and then you say after they were old enough you went back to work?

DAVIS: I went to work, yeah.

LEVINE: And what'd you do then?

DAVIS: I was working for a cafeteria. At the General Motors building they had a cafeteria. Just a concession; it didn't belong to them, but it was there for the men, you know. So I worked there as a cashier for a lifetime! [Laughs]

LEVINE: [Laughs] A long time, huh?

DAVIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, and what would you say, when you think back, what gives you great satisfaction, that you've done? Makes you feel proud, or good?

DAVIS: That I raised good kids, maybe.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh, yeah. And how do you think about yourself, as being Irish, as being American?

DAVIS: Well, like I said, I went for a job one time, and this man said, "What nationality are you?" I said, "Irish." He said, "Are you a citizen?" I said, "Yes." "Well, then you're Irish American!" [Laughs]

LEVINE: So that's what you think of yourself as, Irish American?

DAVIS: Yeah! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. And do you keep any of your ways?

DAVIS: I don't think I do.

LEVINE: Your Irish--?

DAVIS: Don't think I do. I have a friend here. She's in a nursing home now, but she did live here, and she'd been here probably as long as I have. But she's still like she's back in Ireland, a lot of the things she says and does, you know? [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. But you're not that way?

DAVIS: No, but she came a lot later than I did. She was, I think, forty-two years old when she came here. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. Well I guess then—

DAVIS: She was more set in her ways back there, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. So, now you told me Mary Louise and Vivian, or Vicky. And what are the names of your other children?

DAVIS: I have Tony, John, Michael, and Richard. [Laughs]

LEVINE: So you had four boys?

DAVIS: Four boys, and two girls.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, are they around here?

DAVIS: All but one. Richard lives in California, but all the rest are in this area.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, so let's see. Is there anything else you can think of about—do you think it made a difference to you, in your own personality, or way of being, the fact that you grew up in Ireland, and when you were nineteen, you came and put down roots here?

DAVIS: Oh, I'm sure it did. I'm sure it did, yeah.

LEVINE: Can you think of how that might have affected you? Like, just the fact of it, how it might have left an impression on you?

DAVIS: I'm sure it has, because you know, the customs are entirely different, you know. But I guess it did; I don't know.

LEVINE: Yeah, you probably would have been a different kind of person. I don't know, a different kind of person.

DAVIS: I'd probably be married with ten kids! [Laughs] But they don't have those big families over there anymore. They got smart! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah. Were you a religious family growing up?

DAVIS: Yeah, wherever I was, everybody was, yeah.

LEVINE: And do you keep that up over here?

DAVIS: Yeah, I go to church, all right.

LEVINE: Okay, well is there anything else you want to say before we close?

DAVIS: Not that I can—I think we just about covered most everything, I think. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah, well, and what are you looking forward to now?

DAVIS: Well, there's not much! [Laughs] I'm ninety-five years old—what's left? [Laughs]

LEVINE: You're amazing! I mean, look, you're so vital! You're so alive! I mean, I would assume, are you healthy? You look it.

DAVIS: Oh, yes, uh-hmm, yeah.

LEVINE: Good for you! So, you've still got a lot of good things to look forward to!

DAVIS: I hope so! [Laughs]

LEVINE: Okay, well it's been a pleasure talking with you.

DAVIS: It's nice talking, nice meeting you. What did you say your name was?

LEVINE: Janet. Janet Levine.

DAVIS: Janet, yeah.

LEVINE: And I'm speaking with Delia Davis, and she came in 1930 when she was nineteen years old, and is ninety-five at the time of this interview, which is amazing! I mean, you're amazing, for ninety-five! It's wonderful!

DAVIS: There's a lady here. We have her—last August we gave her a party; she was a hundred years old. And she's still going strong!

LEVINE: Well, there you go! [Laughs] Okay, well this is Janet Levine, and I'm signing off now.

END OF INTERVIEW