

EI-1464

**FULL NAME: MAUREEN PETERSON
BIRTHDATE: OCTOBER 10, 1944
INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 15, 2007
AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 62 YEARS OLD
RUNNING TIME:
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
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RESIDENCES:

U.S.: NEW YORK, NY

LEVINE: Today is August the fifteenth the year 2007. I'm here in the Ellis Island Oral History Studio with Maureen Peterson, who was born Maureen Donovan, and is the great granddaughter of Annie Moore. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service—and if—if we could start at the beginning—would you just say your birth date and where you were born?

M. PETERSON: Okay. My birth date is October 10, 1944 and I was born in Manhattan, New York.

LEVINE: Okay, now, how are you related?

M. PETERSON: Okay, my father's mother was Annie Moore's daughter—such I'm the great-granddaughter.

LEVINE: Okay, so your father's mother (superposed)

M. PETERSON: My father was the great—yea, my father's the grandchild. And his mother was the child of Annie Moore.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay. Now, did you know Annie Moore's mother?

M. PETERSON: No.

LEVINE: No.

M. PETERSON: No. And I didn't know Annie either, or Anne. They talk about her now like she was my friend.

LEVINE: (laughs)

M. PETERSON: She died in 1924, but her husband died in 1960 when I was sixteen. And I knew "Pop Schayer," you know. I mean we saw him at least two or three times a week growing up.

LEVINE: Okay. Great. Okay, now tell me then, do you know anything about how they met?

M. PETERSON: He was a baker. He—well he worked for his father. His father owned a bakery on Dacavia (ph) Street on the Lower East Side. And Annie and her brothers had settled down on—I believe Cherry Street. So, it was like within a couple of blocks area. And I know they were both participants—parishioners I guess—of St. James Church. So, I would assume that they met, you know.

LEVINE: Where was that?

M. PETERSON: St. James Church is on James Street in Lower Manhattan.

LEVINE: Oh—oh—okay.

M. PETERSON: And it's still there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

M. PETERSON: And you know I—I don't really know how they met. But, I assume—and they were married in 1895 in St. James and (interposed)

LEVINE: Is that a school as well?

M. PETERSON: There's a school there also. A small—a small parochial school.

LEVINE: That's where Al Smith went to school.

M. PETERSON: Yes!

LEVINE: Yea.

M. PETERSON: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay.

M. PETERSON: And um—and the Alfred E. Smith Projects now (superposed)

LEVINE: Yes.

M. PETERSON: encompasses where Annie—almost all the places that she lived with Pop Schayer. Che—90 Cherry Street; 99 Oliver Street; 90 Oliver Street. They—where the Al Smith projects stands—those streets are all lost now. But, they were in there.

LEVINE: I see.

M. PETERSON: And—and they had I believe ten or eleven children. We're not sure. And my grandmother was the oldest. There was a child born before my grandmother who died when he was about three. And then there was my grandmother. And then there were nine or ten more children. But, five died in infancy or as toddlers. And Aunt Mary died. She also died before I was born, but she was twenty-one when she died. And those children were all buried in Calvary with—well Annie Moore's actually buried with them because they died first.

LEVINE: Right.

M. PETERSON: And then she was buried with the children.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

M. PETERSON: And—but we didn't know, you know, growing up—we never thought to ask like, you know, was there a head stone cause you just didn't think about going to cemetery at that point. And Pop Schayer, who was her husband, was—he worked at the Fulton Fish Market for years.

LEVINE: Oh.

M. PETERSON: So, he had severe arthritis. And towards—I say the last five or six years of his life he was completely bed ridden. But, before that—and he walked with a cane and he was—you know—he didn't get around that much.

LEVINE: Okay. So, you're calling him Pop Shlayer?

M. PETERSON: Schayer. S-c-h-a-y-e-r, which is Annie Moore's married name.

LEVINE: Okay. And what was his first name?

M. PETERSON: Joseph.

LEVINE: Joseph.

M. PETERSON: But, they called him—well at home, you know, we called him Pop Schayer. And my father and his sisters called Annie Moore Mama Schayer.

LEVINE: Okay. So, was he a fish cutter or was he a fish worker?

M. PETERSON: I believe they said he was a salesman. But, I don't know. But, I know that like once a month—it was funny cause as we were growing up he had retired. And once a month somebody from the fish market would come up. It was almost like a retirement benefit before they had a pension. And the gentleman would come up and give him like a small check or small amount of cash. And he always came up with fish—like I guess the catch of the day you would say, you know? And we'd

have either clams at night, or you know, lobsters—whatever was the catch. And he'd come up with a whole bushel of whatever it was. And we'd have like a feast once a month (laughs).

LEVINE: Oh. Wow. So, in other words Annie Moore lost several children?

M. PETERSON: Yea.

LEVINE: Ah.

M. PETERSON: At least five.

LEVINE: At least five children. And was she a housewife?

M. PETERSON: Yes.

LEVINE: She—she didn't work?

M. PETERSON: No.

LEVINE: Did she work at all before she was married?

M. PETERSON: I—I really don't know. I—they never like (superposed)

LEVINE: Yea, talked about that.

M. PETERSON: Yea, really mentioned that. No.

LEVINE: How about Pop Schayer? Did he—did he talk about her?

M. PETERSON: Not a lot, but he never remarried. I mean—and they were both, you know, very young when she died. They were like half forties. But, he never remarried. And he—he lived with—when—while we were growing up, he lived with my grandmother. You know, who was his daughter, you know. She had—she was taking care of him and stuff, you know. But, my grandmother used to talk about her like occasionally. And about some things that, you know, like certain things that she would cook or something like, you know, Mama

Schayer did this. Like I said that's what they used to call her—Mama Schayer did that—and you know.

And it was funny cause about two or three months ago I was thinking about—like just go back and think—to when I was little when we used to come up to visit my—go to visit Pop Schayer in his room and stay for a little while. And then come out and knit and crochet with—we called my grandmother Mama Kitty (laughs). And she would knit and crochet. And her name was Mrs. Dockedy (ph). And one of the children that is buried in the plot with Annie Moore is a Dockedy. So, they were either very close friends or some kind of a family that, you know—I don't know what the family relationship is.

LEVINE: Yea.

M. PETERSON: But, everybody on the Lower East Side, you know, kind of—everybody knew everybody. And you know—like my grandmother—my mother's mother and my father's mother went to s-school at St. James together. And you know the families knew each other for like, forever.

LEVINE: Yea. Can you—can you think of any particulars that when anyone would speak about Annie—what kinds of things they'd say? Did they say anything about her personality or (interposed)?

M. PETERSON: She's fun. She's very, you know, very jovial, very happy. Even though she—you know—I mean—she had a hard—a very hard life, you know. And a lot of poverty. But, you know, and—apparently she loved [laughs]—she loved kids. But, she—she—from what they said she always seemed upbeat and stuff. And, you know, and Pop Schayer too. He wasn't like voicetrous or anything, but he's very content, very happy. And you know they seem to be satisfied with their lives. And you know my grandmother like never complained about them being poor or like, you know, when we were growing up we didn't have this or we couldn't do that. You know, there never

seemed to be any kind of like knowledge of poverty. It was just—they were like basically a happy family. And I know my grandmother—her two brothers—they died in the—I guess middle, late thirties. They were always very close. And then there was one sister that died in 1949. And my grandmother and she were very close. So, they were a close knit family.

LEVINE: Mhm.

M. PETERSON: And—and like I said we were up there. We lived about five or six blocks away growing up. And we went to my grandmother's every Monday night and every Friday night for dinner. And on Sunday I had to bring the newspaper up to Pop Schayer. So, we were there at least three times a week, if not more.

LEVINE: Mhm.

M. PETERSON: And you know—like—like—like I said—he—he was—I guess he was a quiet man in that—I think in those days they didn't talk that much about like what they went through and stuff. It's not like today.

LEVINE: Right. Right. So, were they religious?

M. PETERSON: All the children went to catholic school. And I mean—I don't know how—I'm—my grandmother was fairly religious, but you know none of their children became priests or anything. But, I think the church had a large part in the family.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, how about the two brothers, Anthony and Phillip? Did the—did they enter into your life at all? The two brothers who came with her?

M. PETERSON: They—well, Anthony died very young from what I understand. And Phillip—I didn't know—they say uncle Philly—I didn't know him. And, but we have a cousin Michael who lives down in Savy Chase (ph).

And he has a sister and I've just recently got to meet them. But the family always spoke about Anna Moore, who was Michael and Pat's mother. She was the great niece of Annie Moore. So, they always spoke of Anna—her—her name was Anna Moore and they always spoke about her. And I'm pretty sure that when Pop Schayer died I remember meeting her once, when I was younger. I'm pretty sure it was when Pop Schayer died. She had come to the funeral parlor. But, they lived out—like—I don't know---out in Queens or up in Drognsnik (ph). You know, like they lived like not that close and years ago (interposed).

LEVINE: That was the distance (superposed)

M. PETERSON: Transportation wasn't—yea.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, is there anything else you can think of that anybody ever said or that you have gleaned over the years having to do with her or her husband?

M. PETERSON: Not her so much. Like I said I knew Pop Schayer. He was, you know—I mean—very gentle, very sweet man, and very family. I mean—you know—and (interposed)

LEVINE: And was he from Ireland as well?

M. PETERSON: No. He—His father was from Germany. He was—Pop Schayer was born here, but his father was from Germany. And whenever we would go up to the house—like I said he lived with my grandmother—and as soon as we walked in whether it was summer or winter—whatever it was—and my brother and I were young. I mean you just didn't say hello to anybody else first. You went straight into Pop Schayer's room and said hello to Pop Schayer and you had a sit down—spend some time with him, you know. Which we really didn't mind, you know, cause he had the t.v. in his room (laughs)!

And—and like one time—he like—he used to walk with a cane and my brother was I guess about three or four. My brother used to imitate him like, you know, like swing his hip and then imitate him. So, Pop Schayer took one of his canes and cut it down so that when he walked around the house Kevin could follow him and walk around. I mean that's the kind of man he was. He was like, you know, he—he didn't get offended or you know—children shouldn't act like that. He was just you know—really—and like—we grew up in a really close family.

M. PETERSON: And you know it—it was—it was really nice to have this come out now that, you know, that what they had been telling us all these years was true—was really nice because, you know.

LEVINE: Why don't you speak about that briefly? In other words, what had you been told? And what was the—was the fallacy about your great grandmother? (superposed)

M. PETERSON: Okay. We had always been told by basically by my grandmother I guess that, you know, that her mother was the first immigrant to set foot on Ellis Island. And that she was the younger all of about fourteen. And she had received the ten dollar gold piece as the—as a gift for setting foot, you know—being the first to set foot on Ellis Island. But we never had that because the family story is that her father took the ten dollar gold piece and spent it.

Because things I guess were, you know, really bad and stuff then. And it was—you know—and that was something to be very proud of—that she was one of the first, you know—that she was the first immigrant. And how the family had come here to look for a better life and all that stuff. And then when they were re—I don't know how—what you call it—refurbishing Ellis Island—or making it over?

LEVINE: Restoring it.

M. PETERSON: Restoring it. I had called up the National Park Service and my aunt, who was the granddaughter, and Anna Moore, who was the niece, and we had all called at different times and said that we're—we were related to Annie Moore. And they said, "No, no, no. We have the real Anna Moore. And you know she has documentation. And, you know, you can't be related to her." We had no proof. So, it was just cut and dry because we were told that this other person had proof. And then it ended up that the true story is that she was born in Illinois and emigrated to Texas! So, you know, there was no immigration. But, her daughter, when she saw the name Annie Moore some place, said, "Oh! That's my mother's name." And thought it was her mother and it just fed from there so.

So, and then Meghan (ph)—I don't know Meghan's (ph) last name. It's a long Polish kind of sounding name. She was doing a documentary on Ellis Island. And when she saw something in the Annie Moore listing that she saw, something didn't click with her. Like that this woman from Illinois was, you know, was the right Annie Moore. And she just kept researching it and researching it. It took her almost four years. But, finally she got like from one paper to another to another. And she was able to track down that this Annie Moore was the real one. And I think it was through Phillip's naturalization papers that they were able to find out—or his, you know, going into the army—that they were able to find out that she was—this is the real Annie Moore.

So, and they just made the announcement that—in September of 2006—and they made a big announcement up at the New York Genealogical Society. And we were all there—and yea it—it—it's really special because it's—it's—it's—it's nice for the kids. Cause I had always told my kids the story and—and I said you know unfortunately we had no proof. But you know this is what we were

told—whether it's true or not it's just nice to have it keep going and
(interposed)

LEVINE: So, in other words what you knew you really just knew from your mother?

M. PETERSON: Right. And my grandmother—just you know, family talking. There was no paper work or no, you know, documentation of it anyplace. Just, you know, oral history. One person passing it down to another.

LEVINE: And—and so why did you come to Ellis Island today?

M. PETERSON: Today? Well, my daughter and I were here before—before we knew this had happened. You know, that we were actually the direct descendents of Annie Moore. And today we came, you know, partly to re-visit it and partly because my daughter is on the committee. They're doing fundraising and stuff to raise a memorial, a headstone for Annie Moore. And they also want to try to raise money for some kind of a scholarship or some kind of social service type thing that would help other poor Irish people and to extend like Irish history among America. I guess, you know, Irish American history. And to also like try to set up something for—I mean that's—we're not here looking for anything but just that.

LEVINE: Right.

M. PETERSON: This is what they're working on. So, we decided to come. And then my cousin Michael had said that he saw a picture that looked like Annie Moore and his grandfather. And, you know, he wanted me to see it and see if I could see any recognition. We—I did see pictures of Annie Moore at home, you know, when I was growing up in my grandmother's house. But, I have no idea what happened to them.

LEVINE: Aaw.

M. PETERSON: Because like I said my grandmother had two daughters and my father. So, I guess, you know, one of the daughters probably got the pictures rather than my—because usually the daughters kind of tend to get, you know, the family history and stuff.

LEVINE: Is that possible to find out?

M. PETERSON: Well, both of my aunts are dead. And, but, I'm still looking because my mother has—my mother passed away in 2004. And my mother has a lot of old family pictures and stuff too. But, she was starting to get senile, my mother. So, like some pictures are here and some pictures are there and some she threw out. So, I just don't know where—you know, every time we look someplace else we find something.

And I'm hoping that we might find some pictures or something that would, you know, give us a better link of what she—you know. I know she was fair like the pictures that I—that I did see of her. What I remember—she was fair and kind of real, you know, that real Irish very light skin and very, very pretty blue eyes—everybody always said. And of course after having ten children she had gotten heavier. Cause when she landed, she was very thin, young, seventeen, or fourteen years old.

LEVINE: So, we have in our photo collection here at Ellis Island—we have some photos that I believe the superintendant at that time?

M. PETERSON: Yea, but there's one photo that might be Annie Moore and her two brothers. We're not sure. And in that book we had just looked at—and it was the first superintendant of national immigration.

LEVINE: Okay.

M. PETERSON: Here at Ellis—in New York that had those pictures taken. So, we're just trying to authenticate it. I don't know how we can go about that.

But, we're trying to see if we can get that authenticated, you know. It was taken like around that year or you know they might be able to date it more specifically and we would know.

LEVINE: Right. Did the—did the girl in the picture look anything look like the family?

M. PETERSON: Well, yea, that's—my daughter even said, "Mommy, she looks kind of like you when, you know, you were younger (laughs)." And I know that my aunt, my father's sister and I look a lot alike and my grandmother. So, if my daughter sees a resemblance in the picture, then it would go back that, you know, I look like my aunt. My aunt looks like her mother. And I'm sure my grandmother probably did look more like her mother than her father cause I don't remember any, you know, any real resemblance. Pop Schayer had a longer, thinner face. My grandmother had like that round cheeky Irish face.

LEVINE: What does it mean to you to have this legend—I guess you would call it—as a part of your family?

M. PETERSON: I don't—you know—you can't describe it. You really can't describe it. It's like you're so proud of it, you know. And like now that we know for sure and stuff like that—and you just mentioned it to somebody and they're like, "Oh! Wow! You know, that's great!" You know, and it's so remarkable. And, it's—it's—I—you just really can't describe it even though I knew it growing up all these years. And then like, when they said no, it wasn't true and stuff, you were kind of like, well you know sometimes family history—like you know when you're a little kid and you played that game telephone? And one person goes on and on and you know the story gets convoluted?

LEVINE: Yea

M. PETERSON: And we thought maybe that's what had happened. But, it—it's just—and it means a lot to me that my kids know this. And that they have heritage, you know. And—and—just—it's just—you know—and hopefully we're going to be able to make, you know, to help other poor Irish immigrants who are, you know, not even Irish. But, other immigrants maybe have a better start if we can do something even to help one family. It would be really nice. That's what we wanna work on, you know. Our side of the family is really interested in that.

LEVINE: How—How do you think about—about being Irish and being American? I mean just to you personally?

M. PETERSON: I don't know, you know. I mean I guess cause it was so far back. It's been like three or four generations. I mean it was always—like I always considered myself an America. But, yea, like St. Patrick's Day was, you know, a really big deal at home, you know. And, but it's like I said I don't know, you know. And then I guess I mentioned to you before the family has branched out like we have a lot of different (superposed)

LEVINE: Yea, I remember you saying that.

M. PETERSON: ethnic groups in the family. My brother's wife is Chinese and Dominican. My husband is Jewish. Michael's—my cousin Michael—his father was Jewish. One of the—we have family out in Phoenix, Arizona and one of those girls is married to a Frenchman. So, we have a lot of different, you know, ethnic backgrounds and a lot of different religious backgrounds in the family. So, I think Annie would be, you know, proud of that. And happy that—you know—we—you know—we were really assimilated, you know.

And growing up on the lower east side, which is where I grew up until I got married, you know. Everybody was just—you know—everybody had a different background and you just came together. I mean it

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wasn't like one particular group in school. I—when—when I went to school they would—like coming over after World War II—like a lot of the refugees and stuff were coming over. So, we had, you know, a very diverse group of people that we grew up with.

LEVINE: **[begin edit here]** Oh! So, you had kind of a mini Ellis Island earlier Ellis Island period (interposed)

Maureen Peterson: Right! Yea. Yea. (interposed)

LEVINE: in the lower (interposed)

Maureen Peterson: Just like I grew up—I was born in '44 and I lived on the lower east side until 1969 when I got married. And my aunt who was one of umm annie moore's grandchildren she died in 2001 and she still lived on Ructer(ph) street **[listen again]**

LEVINE: Yea

Maureen Peterson: down on the lower east side. The family's always been there and we actually belong to Saint—either St. James Parish, which is down on James Street or St. Teresa's Parish, which was on Merther (ph) Street I think might be like eight or nine blocks

LEVINE: mhmm

Maureen Peterson: apart from each other. But the whole--you know the family was always down there and always umm you know and everybody knew and like I said before everybody knew everybody you know my mother's family knew my father's family before my mother and father got together you know and now that Alfred E. Smith, who is my mother's cousin, not the real Alfred E. Smith. He was named after Alfred E. Smith. That's who introduced my mother and father.

LEVINE: Ha

Maureen Peterson: so it's just you know it—it—you know it's funny and the stories are fun to relate to the kids

LEVINE: yea.

Maureen Peterson: you know. And it—it—it—it's—I like even being here today like I don't know I'm rumberling on you know

LEVINE: no

Maureen Peterson: but you know you're just so proud of it and so exciting but you just don't know how to like how to really put it in words.

LEVINE: Mhmm

Maureen Peterson: and I never shut up so that's

LEVINE: (laughs)

Maureen Peterson: So, that's—that's hard for me to do. But I—I can't —you know I can't really tell you what it means.

LEVINE: Well, now you've moved out of the lower east side

Maureen Peterson: yea. Yea.

LEVINE: and the —and the rest of the family too? Pretty much?

Maureen Peterson: Well yea my aunt was the last one uh down and she—like I said she died in 2001. And um my brother still lives in New York. He lives in Howard Beach. And um (interposed)

LEVINE: Any bu—where did everybody go? Just uh?

Maureen Peterson: Well, um, her sons—I don't know—actually I think one of her sons had moved to like Jersey City or um you know somewhere close by in Jersey. That was umm Uncle Theodore. And umm, and Aunt Julia and Uncle Jack had moved out to Queens cause at the—at the end they were only—well there were five grown children. One died on the lower east side. Then there were four children left. Two got married. My grandmother was on the lower eastside until she died.. uncle Theodore I believe like I said moved to like Jersey uh Jersey City or something. And aunt Julia and uncle Jack

lived out in Queens like Ozone (ph) Park. And then um they had two sons. One remained in New York until he died. And the other one moved out west to like Chicago and umm uh Wisconsin like out into Midwest and he lived out there until he died.

LEVINE: So, there—there are no grandchildren alive (interposed)

Maureen Peterson: No. No.

LEVINE: today?

Maureen Peterson: No, none of the grandchildren are alive.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

Maureen Peterson: But I knew—it's funny cause I knew all of her grandchildren.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

Maureen Peterson: You know actually growing up. But there was I think—there was three , four, yea it was six grandchildren.

LEVINE: And—and so of the great grandchildren you're one

Maureen Peterson: I'm one. There's five of us.

LEVINE: There are five of you.

Maureen Peterson: Right

LEVINE: Uh huh

Maureen Peterson: There were actually six and one umm the girl that did all the research she literally couldn't find the sixth one.

LEVINE: Oh.

Maureen Peterson: and um the last time I was in touch with—his father was about ten or eleven years ago when one of the other grandchildren had died and you know we just lost contact

LEVINE: You lost touch.

Maureen Peterson: Right. And (interposed)

LEVINE: So, who are the other ones, Maureen who are left?

Maureen Peterson: Um, well the great grandchildren is myself

LEVINE: (coughs)

Maureen Peterson: my brother Kevin. His name is Kevin Donovan (ph). And then um one great granddaughter lives in Wisconsin. Her name is Pam Salm. S-a-l-m. and then the other two daughters live out in Phoenix or near—you know uh suburbia of Phoenix and umm Arizona near their mother and their umm Teresa Smith and Julia Smith and one of them is married and then the great grandchildren—great great grandchildren—I'm sorry—umm, there's my daughter and my son and my brother has two daughters. And umm, my niece has a baby.

LEVINE: mhmm. Mhmm. I see so—of the ones that are your generation—the great grandchildren

Maureen Peterson: mhmm

LEVINE: Were there any who had contact—a lot of contact with Pop Schayer or (interposed)

Maureen Peterson: No only myself and my brother.

LEVINE: I see.

Maureen Peterson: Because the other ones were like umm—Jackie and Pat had moved out to like Ar—well Pop Schraye died in 1960 and I think Pat and Jackie got married after that. That was like—Ja--Jackie was the grandson. And they got married after that and apa—apparently the girls—the three girls from out west didn't even know anything about this cause they had never heard the family history. Ummm until Meghan called them in September and said well you know i've been looking up you know—da--

doing geneal—genealogical work and you're related to the you know to Annie Moore(interposed)

LEVINE: The true Annie Moore

Maureen Peterson: Yea, and they were like—umm I mean they were all psyched about this and you know I mean like they're you know I—maybe it's—you I grew up knowing it. And my brother grew up knowing it. So we're a lot more laid back about it. and (interposed)

LEVINE: Well, is your brother older or younger than you?

MAUREEN PETERSON: He's younger than me.

LEVINE: He's younger.

MAUREEN PETERSON: Yea.

LEVINE: And. And. He remembers Pop (interposed)

MAUREEN PETERSON: He remembers Pop Schrayner too (interposed)

LEVINE: Schrayner and all of that?(interposed)

MAUREEN PETERSON: Yea.

LEVINE: Yea.

MAUREEN PETERSON: Cause like I said I was sixteen and my brother was twelve when Pop Schrayner died and (interposed)

LEVINE: Oh! Oh, okay and so wha- what's his name again?

MAUREEN PETERSON: My brother?

LEVINE: Your brother. Yea.

MAUREEN PETERSON: Kevin Donovan (ph)

LEVINE: Kenin. Kevin

MAUREEN PETERSON: Kevin

LEVINE: And is Kevin in this area?

MAUREEN PETERSON: Uh, Howard Beach.

LEVINE: Alright. Okay.

MAUREEN PETERSON: Yea, and umm, and he has two girls and my niece uh married and moved to Connecticut. And umm oh and the girl that's in umm I'm trying to take okay umm lives in you know I'm losing you know track of generations. Pam is the great granddaughter and she lives in Wisconsin and she has three children who were all—who are great great grandchildren.

LEVINE: Nice.

MAUREEN PETERSON: So, umm, and we've just recently you know since September we've gotten back in touch with Pat and the girls because Jackie and she were divorced in the early 70s and we just you know I guess it was apparently a rigid divorce and there was no--no family contact.

LEVINE: I see. Okay. Well (clears throat), I guess what is—is there anything else you can think of that we haven't covered?

MAUREEN PETERSON: I really can't (interposed)

LEVINE: That you (interposed)

MAUREEN PETERSON: My mind is like (interposed)

LEVINE: Is there anything you would like to see happen regarding your great grand—great grandmother?

MAUREEN PETERSON: Mother. Umm (interposed)

LEVINE: In the future?

MAUREEN PETERSON: No. Like I said you know they—they plan to put up the headstone and then umm we uh (unclear) you know asking for donations like umm corporate America and like family and friends and stuff like that and umm umm basically the —the—we call them the Phoenix contingency. Their more interested in raising the headstone and putting up this you know monument and they're—they're going like you know going (interposed)

LEVINE: They wanna go (interposed)

MAUREEN PETERSON: Back. Yea. And I feel that doing something like a scholarship or you know helping another family or you know doing something to help a family in Ireland maybe you know in Annie's memory. To me I think that would be more important because knowing Pop Schayer and I think that's what he would want and I think you know since he was married to her I think that's what she would want. They would be more you know acceptable to helping somebody cause they had it so hard I mean they had ten children and lost five you know by the time they were three or four so i—I think she would really like the idea of helping somebody.

LEVINE: Yes.

MAUREEN PETERSON: and um that's—that's kind of my priority and um but they are raising money for a headstone and they plan to put it up around St. Patrick's day of this year. And they're having umm the granite imported from Ireland.

LEVINE: Oh.

MAUREEN PETERSON: It's—you know there's just different styles I guess you know (interposed)

LEVINE: I was just gonna say when they're more than one person (interposed)

MAUREEN PETERSON: Yea, yea, yea

LEVINE: that's going to be more than a one opinion. So—

MAUREEN PETERSON: You know going along like or not going along with them for what they originally wanted to do like I got it kind of scaled down to within you know a normal (interposed)

LEVINE: Okay.

MAUREEN PETERSON: Perspective, you know. But I you know maybe I'm wrong but I just feel that doing something to help somebody else would be more in line of what she would wanna do.

LEVINE: Okay. Have you or anyone else gone to Queenstown to I guess it was called at the time (interposed)

MAUREEN PETERSON: I think (interposed)

LEVINE: to visit the statue that's where she left from?

MAUREEN PETERSON: I don't know if Pat and the girls had been there those are the people—you know my cousins from Phoenix that I'm pretty sure that Michael said either he—that's the—the nephew from umm Chubby Chase in Washington—I don't know if he—if he himself was there or if—I know his mother had gone and saw the statue and stuff like that and they had —and they even had a—an address of where Annie had lived (interposed)

LEVINE: Oh.

MAUREEN PETERSON: when she was over there because apparently they had that family bible I guess from Uncle Phillip and umm some of that information was in there but even through all that information we were still told that you know it wasn't the correct one. So umm and none of us nobody certainly now had gotten a chance to meet Annie Moore. My father I believed—was—he was born in '17. My father was about seven when she died. So, I—I you know—I'm sure he would have remembered her but I don't think either of sisters did.

LEVINE: I see. Okay.

MAUREEN PETERSON: So (interposed)

LEVINE: Alright well what I'm thinking is we'll close here and we'll call your daughter in—

MAUREEN PETERSON: Okay.

LEVINE: to say a few words. We'll put that on the tape too.

MAUREEN PETERSON: okay.

LEVINE: okay?

MAUREEN PETERSON: okay

LEVINE: okay. We're going to continue with this interview. The—I've been speaking with Maureen Peterson and now we're gonna—I'm gonna speak with Sheleen Peterson who is Maureen and Sheldon Peterson's daughter and that makes her the great great granddaughter of Annie Moore and she's here with her mother and father today. And it sounds like you have an official position as far as your great great grandmother's concerned now.

SHELEEN PETERSON: Yes. I'm working on the Annie Moore memorial project steering committee as the family's historian and I'm also part of the education committee for that.

LEVINE: Great. And has that been in existence for a while or when did it start?

SHELEEN PETERSON: They signed the paperwork around St. Patrick's Day of this year to bring that into existence as a non-profit organization to raise money for umm—we were originally told a scholarship and a headstone although it seems to be going more towards the headstone (either Janet or Marleen giggle in background). Umm we're hoping to gear it eventually more towards scholarship eventually. Umm (interposed)

LEVINE: once the (interposed)

SHELEEN PETERSON: that's how I feel.

LEVINE: Once the headstone is done and up will this non-profit organization continue and then you can do whatever else you would like to do in her memory.

SHELEEN PETERSON: myself and my cousin Adrian (ph) who are—whose the east coast liaison want that very much and that's what we see happening umm do we see that as the other side of this family's plan at this point? Not necessarily.

LEVINE: Okay.

SHELEEN PETERSON: Umm, hopefully it will continue and that's really what we want to see happen because we wanna see her memory go on and the information out there corrected and a good spin put on it. and it being more than just a piece of granite out there.

LEVINE: Mhmm. How do you plan to correct the years of mistake about the identity (interposed)

SHELEEN PETERSON: We're working on (interposed)

LEVINE: of your great great grandmother

SHELEEN PETERSON: doing that now with different proposals that are being put forth through committing umm right now we're focusing on getting the head stone but part of it is umm through the genaology umm committee is re-doing a family tree. Umm there's a lot of misinformation on the family tree that we're in the process because there's so many different people giving information of clearing up and trying to correct; getting it in the right order. We're also going through different sites on—by finding (unclear), google, yahoo, and just putting things out that you have your information wrong. This is the correct information. Some sites like expedia have already corrected their information. Umm (interposed)

LEVINE: What (interposed)

SHELEEN PETERSON: As a teacher I've seen information on an edhelper.com, which is a site I used to (unclear) and I'm in the process of emailing them and saying you know some of your information is wrong. This is the real story. And I actually wanna write my own story for them and submit it to them and say you know this is what actually happened.

LEVINE: How about written like books. Is there any way for you to correct misinformation there?

SHELEEN PETERSON: There is one writer who did get in touch with the family about changing things. Other than that the only writer that I know of who has actually written directly about annie moore is Eve Butting (ph) who wrote a children's story. And I haven't been able to get my hands on a copy of the book to see what they information is—to see if it's inaccurate enough to get in touch with her. Umm, so I'm trying to find a copy to do that right now.

LEVINE: Mhmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: But, I think it's important and we're trying to get through as much information as we can umm

LEVINE: Mhmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: and I use it as a teaching tool in my class

LEVINE: What do you teach?

SHELEEN PETERSON: I teach seventh grade-special ed self contained.

LEVINE: Mhmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: So, I teach all subjects. And this year—this past year when things were going on I brought it in as current events and it really worked well cause we were doing immigration—it's social studies—we were—I was doing Alex Haley's roots in my reading literature unit. So, I brought it in and connected it all. This is why you need

to know family history. This is about oral history. He –his family told him these stories. So my family told me this story.

LEVINE: Hmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: And this is how things get passed down. Why is it important? What family stories do you have? Write it down.

LEVINE: And how did your students respond?

SHELEEN PETERSON: They really learned it well. One of my students was mainstreamed into another social studies class and the teacher knew it—about it—so that was something he brought in that day to help him transition in and he goes, “okay. Who knows who Annie Moore is?” and my student of course right way raised his hand and he said oh that’s Ms. Peterson’s great great grandmother (laughter in background) and told the whole story to the class. And it made him feel confident.

LEVINE: Great.

SHELEEN PETERSON: And all my kids can relate the story and when they did their term papers at the end of the school year and one of my students did her term paper on annie moore and another did it—her’s on Ellis Island. And they actually performed better on their term papers than the couple of the regular-ed students because they had the background.

LEVINE: That’s wonderful. Well, you know now that you’re doing all this activity ar—around Annie Moore and you’re working with your students and all that—wha—wha—what does it do to you? What—how does it—how do you feel or think about her in your life?

SHELEEN PETERSON: It’s just validation cause we were always told the story. And I can remember doing a report on Ireland in sixth grade and including that in the report and the teacher being like yea right whatever. It’s—you know. And I’m going no this is the story we were always told and including it—and first of all the teacher didn’t even know who Annie Moore was. And just being like brushed aside and being like but why?

Okay. So they have a different one but this is the story we were always told. It doesn't change our family old tradition. It doesn't change what we've been told.

LEVINE: Mhmm

SHELEEN PETERSON: Why is she taking that away from me? And I couldn't understand that and even to this day as a teacher I can't understand how you do that to a student.

LEVINE: Mhmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: And it's just a validation of we've been told these things. And it's the truth and sometimes he who make mistakes and there's way to correct it if you look deep enough and go through it and it's just you know the fact that it's important to know your family history. And to go back and find it.

LEVINE: Mhmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: and you know I used that as teaching tool to what my students—I teach in Elizabeth, New Jersey, which has a very high immigrant population. Mostly umm South American and Spanish and my principal thinks it's an amazing story cause he is an immigrant himself and to be able to share that and to be able to share that and to say to my students you know just because I look the way I do don't judge me. You don't know my family history. You don't know where my family comes from. And my family grew up on the lower east side of New York. Let's look that up. Let's look at where my family came from. And don't think that because I've gone to college and I've done this that you can't because of your history.

LEVINE: Mhmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: And this is three generations ago where my family was. This is where they were four generations ago.

LEVINE: mhmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: Now, think of where you can be a few generations from now.

LEVINE: Okay.

SHELEEN PETERSON: Where you can be yourself a few years from now. And that's important.

LEVINE: Mhmm. Mhmm. Well do you think that your—your great great grandmother has—has become kind of—what do I want to say—into the realm of myth? In other words, you know there's biography and then there's family legend and then it goes further and it's kind of myth that grows up around a person like her.

SHELEEN PETERSON: Yea, I do. I think it's interesting umm we got to see Ronan Tinen (ph) perform a couple of weeks ago in the auditorium of Ocean Grove and he stopped the show cause we had let him know (interposed)

LEVINE: Let him know that you were in the audience? Uh huh.

SHELEEN PETERSON: Umm, and well someone let him know we were in the audience. We're not actually sure how it came about. Umm, friends of the family were our ushers and we think they let him know.

LEVINE: (coughs)

SHELEEN PETERSON: And he stopped the show cause he saw "Island of Hope, Island of Tears" and said that we were in the audience and had us stand up. And this one woman who teaches in Jersey City stopped on her way out and said oh you know I take my kids to Ellis Island every year and they have to find out who Annie Moore is and find the statue as one of their assignments and to be able to meet you is amazing. It's kind of a little awkward because the—it's like oh okay but on the other hand it's kind of okay this is important.

LEVINE: Mhmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: And there's some fun parts to it but there's also some okay now we have to live up to a certain expectation and a legacy and make sure that the legacy goes on in a certain fashion.

LEVINE: What would you—if you had to put words on it and I don't mean to put you on the spot—What would you say the legacy is of Annie Moore?

SHELEEN PETERSON: Just to overcome the obstacles that are put in front of you and to do the best you can with what you're given.

LEVINE: Hmmm.

SHELEEN PETERSON: (laughs)

LEVINE: Well I think we should end here because that's wonderful. Very nicely put.

SHELEEN PETERSON: Thank you.

LEVINE: Okay well I want to thank you both (interposed)

MARLENE PETERSON: Oh, thank you—

LEVINE: Unless you have more that we haven't covered I would say that I'm very happy to talk with you and to put this interview into our collection and you'll have a copy of it as well.

SHELEEN PETERSON: Thank you.

LEVINE: So, thank you very much.

MARLENE PETERSON: Thank you. It was really you know interesting and nice like I said I don't even know how to describe the feelings. It's—it's—it's (tape ends)

