

EI-172/SCHILLING

EI-172

AGNES DOURISH SCHILLING

BIRTH DATE: JANUARY 23, 1906

INTERVIEW DATE: 6/16/1992

RUNNING TIME: 59:39

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

INTERVIEW LOCATION: LOCUST, NJ

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 10/1993

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 1/1994

SCOTLAND, 1922

AGE 15 (as recorded in the interview)

SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

RESIDENCES: SCOTLAND: MOTHERWELL US: NEWARK, NJ

Oral Historian's Note: This interview was recorded in a rural location near a major road. Consequently, the constant background noise of chirping birds is sometimes interrupted by traffic sounds and sirens. Mrs. Schilling coughs throughout the interview. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 1/28/1994.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Mrs. Agnes Dourish Schilling. I'm in Locust, New Jersey at her home, and it's June 16, 1992.

Mrs. Schilling came from Scotland in 1922 when she was fifteen years old. It's a pleasure to be here today, Mrs. Schilling.

SCHILLING: Well, it's nice having you. I'm very happy to tell you my story.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Well, great. Well, let's just start it by you telling me your birth date.

SCHILLING: My birth date? Yes. Uh, well, as I say, I was

determined to come to the United States, you know, even at that young age, leaving.

LEVINE: What day were you born? What . . .

SCHILLING: January 23rd.

LEVINE: 19 . . .

SCHILLING: 1906.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And where were you born?

SCHILLING: Motherwell, Scotland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did you live in Motherwell up until you left?

SCHILLING: Yes.

LEVINE: What can you remember about Motherwell? When you think about it, what do you think of?

SCHILLING: Well, it was a nice little town, but I, after the war, I guess I wasn't too content there. I just knew that there was something better, and to get to United States I could make a better living. And I had, I used to do the Scottish Highland dancing. I did that. That I enjoyed. (a telephone rings) But I felt I was at an age where I had to start earning money

and making a career for myself. And I didn't see any possibilities in Scotland.

LEVINE: What might you have done in Scotland?

SCHILLING: Well, I might have gone on for education, maybe to be a schoolteacher. But I had been discouraged with that. And my whole idea was to get to United States, and that I could work when I got here and help to bring my family. Eventually each one would come over, because there were many people migrating, so I was very insistent and, of course, much to my parents' dislike, they were afraid to let me go at a young age. I had no relatives in America, no relatives whatsoever. But we did have neighbors who had young girls working in a factory making good money and I thought I could work, get a job and work and send money home to my parents. So after lots of red tape, it wasn't easy for me to convince my parents, my family, everybody, that I was capable of going over and taking care of myself. But I was determined and no matter what obstacle came up I always found a way out of it. So I got, finally got my way.

LEVINE: What obstacles did come up?

SCHILLING: Well, for instance, a professional man, a priest, a doctor, had to sign certain papers, and the expression that my mother got from our Catholic priest was, "You're daft." Daft,

you know, that's the word for crazy. And my mother said, "You don't know this girl, what a determined person she is." So I said, "Well, don't worry. I know another nice little Baptist minister, and he will sign it for me." (she coughs) That I remember. They used to have little meetings on a Saturday night outside the little church. The church was upstairs. My girlfriend and myself would hand the hymn books around to everybody and we would stand and sing with them. And after the meeting was over we went upstairs to the hall where they served cream puffs, and that was really our idea for being there. But I knew, you know, my mother, that I could go to this man, he would sign it. However, everything was settled, and I left home. My father and brother took me to the boat. I had real auburn, curly hair, curls galore. And my poor mother knew it was almost impossible for me to comb it myself. It was so much, you know. And . . .

LEVINE: How did you usually wear your hair?

SCHILLING: Oh, I was going to show you that in my passport picture. I had it combed back here, you know, with a bow always colored and just masses of ringlets, real, you know, the sausage ringlets. My mother used to curl them around her finger every day. So anyhow she got me a pretty outfit and everything, and I left. So it was a ten-day journey, ten-day voyage, and in the

cabin with me was a young mother with a little baby. When the mother was sick I would help with the baby and get the bottle heated and take care of it. And the journey over I begin to have regrets about leaving home. I was feeling very lonesome, sorry for myself, crying all the time. And I don't remember if I went to Ellis Island alone or everybody went, but I was always afraid of Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Why were you afraid?

SCHILLING: Stories, you know, we heard, and I was so afraid.

LEVINE: What, do you remember?

SCHILLING: If they keep you in Ellis Island they go through your hair looking for bugs and, you know. And my mother was always scaring me with that. Anyhow, when I followed an attendant with my luggage and when I noticed where he put it, the luggage, oh, I had a lot of dust. And I thought, "Oh, my God, I'm going to be here." So I was really crying hysterically and sobbing so hard that the doctor came to me. I guess they have doctors there examining everybody, and put his arms around me and said, "Please, please, don't cry so hard. We're trying to help you. We only want to help you. We won't hurt you. We're helping you." And I said, "Perhaps the people didn't come to get me." And he said, "No, that's not the reason." He said,

"You have something in your eyes that we have to test, and it would take ten days to test. It might be a disease. And also we are investigating the people." My sponsor. "So you'll be taken care of. Everything will be fine." So I sort of calmed down, and then a nurse came, and she took me. (she coughs) She said, "Come with me." I followed her around. You know, I was still a kid, on her rounds, and she was very kind to me. And consoled me so much that I felt so much better. So then she put me to bed in a room next to her. So the next morning everything, you know, was calm and nice. And the nurse, you know, was still taking care of me. And then she took me outside to sit outdoors and see all the boats go by. And I sat there and I wondered, "Will I get, will they let me into United States, or will they send me back? But I so much want to live here in United States." So when I was sitting there and after lunch somebody came and they brought me some flowers. And then there was a young man maybe around eighteen, and he was always walking around, you know. Of course, the nurses and everybody were admiring my hair, fixing my hair, fussing, teasing me that I might be coming over to give Mary Pickford competition. But there were also kind, every day somebody else came with, and then this young man brought me a box of candy, and they were so friendly, and they even asked, you know, if I would like to get employment through one of the doctors, maybe as a mother's

helper, but, you know, they would do. But I had commitments to the people, my mother's neighbors, and also that was the address, you know, that I had, where I could be contacted. But I spent ten days there and every day was better than the next. It was such a pleasure. They were so kind. They were extra kind because I guess they felt sorry for me that I was alone and coming into a country like not knowing anyone, that I used to go back and visit, if anybody came into Ellis Island I would go visit them again. I knew everybody there. So it was a most pleasant experience.

LEVINE: What happened? How did you, how, you got the tests back and . . .

SCHILLING: Get what?

LEVINE: You have the tests done?

SCHILLING: Well, I never heard. I mean, the tests had to be all right because I was admitted to the country, of course, yes. But I always had problems from measles, you know, eye trouble. And the doctors were most kind, you know, saying goodbye to me and if I wanted a job be sure and contact them. And it was just a pleasure to be with them. So my entrance to United States was very pleasant. It was wonderful. And that's the only country I want to remember.

LEVINE: What do you remember about Ellis Island, about, do you remember what it looked like when you came in?

SCHILLING: Yeah. Well, I remember, I think I might have been the only English-speaking person at that time. It seemed to me there were a lot of sick people around because I was in the hospital there. But I don't remember too much, just, you know, the few hospital beds, and then my, you know, I always went out by myself, sat out there.

LEVINE: Out by the harbor.

SCHILLING: Out by the harbor, you know, sat. And, or walked around with the nurses, you know. I kept busy. And my friends came every day to visit me. They came to visit me, and then took me to their home in Newark, New Jersey.

LEVINE: And what was the food like at Ellis Island?

SCHILLING: (she coughs) Janet, I don't remember. Isn't that funny, I can remember, remember all the pretty flowers and the candy and everything, but I guess I was really overwhelmed, you know, at my stay there. I guess I ate what the nurses, you know, had, because I was with them all the time.

LEVINE: Do you remember were you in a different building

than the Great Hall when you first came in?

SCHILLING: I remember the Great Hall, you know. And like maybe desks there with men. I don't know if they're doctors, judges or what, questioning the people, you know. And that's when I was very scared, you know, to be all alone in that big building being questioned. That's the only part I remember then. (she clears her throat) Excuse me. Going from there to the hospital I don't know how far it was from that building to the hospital.

LEVINE: Do you remember the examinations you were given?

SCHILLING: No. I know, the only, the thing I do remember was that they took all my clothes off and made me shower and wrapped all my beautiful clothes in a duffle bag which hurt so much to see them being rolled up, you know, and put in a duffle bag and put away. (a telephone rings) And then I don't remember seeing them again till the day I was leaving. The day I was leaving I was standing in line with others and I remember putting my hair all inside of my hat and one of the nurses came over, took my hat off and said, "Don't hide that beautiful hair!" I said, "I thought I might look older, it might help me get through." So they, you know, that's just about all I can remember there. (she coughs)

LEVINE: Well, were you in pajamas in the hospital, then, after your clothes were taken?

SCHILLING: No, I guess they gave me a gown and a robe to wear till the day I was leaving, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you had packed to take with you, what you had in your luggage that you wanted to take to America with you?

SCHILLING: No. Nothing in particular. I didn't really have anything much in particular. But I was lucky after I did arrive in the States. My brother came over about two months later. He was in the United States, so I had somebody. But the people who sponsored me were very kind. But then I discovered, when I went with them, that I was too young to go to work. I had to be sixteen to work. So my decision then was to go as a mother's helper. So that's when I started to work. There was a lady who had a millinery store. (she coughs) Excuse me. And I took care of her little girl, and I lived, you know, with her till later.

LEVINE: Where was that?

SCHILLING: That was in Newark. Then my sister came later. Within a year three more of my family came over.

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LEVINE: Did you go to Ellis Island to meet them?

SCHILLING: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And what was that like?

SCHILLING: That was nice, wonderful, because I introduced them to all my friends. But it's been so long ago I bet none of those people are alive. Because I'm eighty-six.

LEVINE: And they were adults then.

SCHILLING: Yeah, and they were adults.

LEVINE: Well, let's go back to Scotland, and would you just recount who was in your family? Your mother, her name and maiden name, your father, his name, and your brothers and sisters.

SCHILLING: My mother's maiden name was Tommney.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

SCHILLING: T-O-M-M-N-E-Y. I think that's how it's spelled. Agnes, her name was also Agnes, Tommney.

LEVINE: And your father's name?

SCHILLING: And my father's name was Patrick Dourish. And I had

one brother, and sisters. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Were you the oldest?

SCHILLING: No. I was in the middle, the middle one. My older sister was married and when she came out her in-laws were in California. So she stayed in New Jersey for a while, then went on to California.

LEVINE: I see. But you were the first of . . .

SCHILLING: I was the first of my family . . .

LEVINE: To come.

SCHILLING: To come over, yes.

LEVINE: And do you have any idea how you got it into your head that that was what you should do, come to the United States?

SCHILLING: Had I any idea what?

LEVINE: How you got it into your mind that this is what you wanted to do.

SCHILLING: Well, I think I was very impressed with visitors coming over from United States and Scotland. And I guess I was always sort of style-conscious. The clothing, their manners,

everything impressed me that I thought it must be beautiful, it must be a nice country. Lovely to be over there, to go there. I think that's mostly what . . .

LEVINE: Do you think you could describe yourself? What were you like as a young teenager?

SCHILLING: Well, I was, I was a raving redhead, and I loved to dance, loved to dance. I loved to have fun.

LEVINE: What would be occasions for dancing in Scotland?

SCHILLING: Oh, competition. I have my costume. I can show you over there. And I have medals for dancing. I did all that Highland dancing in Scotland. The sword dance, the Highland Fling. All the dances I did, you know. Of course, that was probably from when I was about eight years old till about twelve.

LEVINE: What would your family do for recreation? Was it a musical family that you came from?

SCHILLING: Not really, you know. I think my mother was too busy, you know, with her children. And there is something I would like to say, but I don't like to say it on tape because it might, you know, it would really be up to you. It might not be something people would like to hear.

LEVINE: Well, I think if you wouldn't mind saying it then . . .

SCHILLING: Well, I'll tell, my, we were a Catholic family. My family is Catholic, devout Catholics, and this particular town, Motherwell, was like a town in, it was like Belfast, Ireland. There was such fighting with the Catholic and Protestant. And I used to feel sorry for the priest coming around on sick calls or something, on a bicycle and his bicycle being disrupted and things done to it. And my religion was so strong that I think that's why I wasn't so in love with Scotland. Also when we had a May procession my mother would dress us up in pretty white dress and a veil, and these people would stop and pull our veil off and molest us on the way, you know. It was, it wasn't nice living. That's why I didn't, in the beginning I didn't have too much to say about Scotland. Scotland is a beautiful place, and I've been back many times, many times.

LEVINE: Well, was it particularly hard to be a Catholic girl as a teenager? I mean, was it . . .

SCHILLING: Oh, no. It didn't make any difference, because even my father, you know, men that he worked for. Oh, on the 12th of July they celebrate the Battle of the Boyne. That was William of Arnes. It had something to do with Catholic and Protestant.

And every 12th of July a band, they would parade and the band would go through town, and they always wanted to pass the Catholic church and play, you know, terrible things about the Pope. And it was very, it, for a young girl it was heartbreaking. And I used to tell my mother, I'm taking care of the priest's bicycle, I'll stay here so no one will touch it. And she said, "You're going to, somebody will hurt you." You know, but I think that was one of the reasons.

LEVINE: So you . . .

SCHILLING: No, that is not typical of Scotland.

LEVINE: No.

SCHILLING: I don't want you to get that impression, you know. And Scottish people are very nice. They're very kind, very hospitable. But it was like a certain element that you would get in New York or Brooklyn, you know, some, and usually the scum, not real nice people that caused these problems.

LEVINE: Would you say you were afraid in your town because of this, because of the friction between these . . .

SCHILLING: Oh, no.

LEVINE: No. You just didn't like it.

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SCHILLING: I was brave enough, I guess. No, I was never afraid. No, I didn't, uh, hold any animosity towards Protestants because I used to like The Salvation Army. And this girlfriend and myself, we used to love to go to all the churches, and we'd go to The Salvation Army too, you know, because they have the band. Anything that had music, you know, we would follow, just parading and go and stop and enjoy the meetings and go in and listen to the prayers and do everything and come out. So I had no, I didn't say I disliked Protestants. Never.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: You must have been very determined because you, to go to a Protestant minister to sign the paper.

SCHILLING: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: It must have been quite a thing in that town.

SCHILLING: Yes, yes. (she clears her throat) Of course, lucky it didn't have to happen. The priest, my priest finally did sign it, you know. But that was the threat.

LEVINE: I see.

SCHILLING: My mother had. But, uh . . .

LEVINE: What did your father do for a living?

SCHILLING: My father was a puddler. I don't know what you know. He worked at a steel furnace. He used to work just with his pants and a towel around his neck, and I used to stand and watch him and bring his beer. And he, you know, they turned that around, and then it's real red, red hot. And then they pull it out and they put it on rollers, you know. Some other men had come and take it away.

LEVINE: These are pieces of . . .

SCHILLING: This is steel. And I would be standing just a few yards away from him, you know, watching him do that, you know.

LEVINE: Was that considered a good career for a man to have?

SCHILLING: Yeah, that was good. It wasn't one of the highest-paid. I think it was a little low class. Puddler, you know.

LEVINE: Puddler.

SCHILLING: But I was very proud of my father.

LEVINE: What kind of a person was he?

SCHILLING: Oh, he was very, very, very funny. And, of course,

he also went in the army, was in the army for about one year just. And he loved to tell stories. He loved to tell stories!

LEVINE: Can you remember any?

SCHILLING: And he used to tell me, and I never stopped laughing, even when my son, the one who owns this place, was born, and he came to the hospital to see me. He liked his drink. He loved to have a drink, and I loved to help him come home, staggering home. And he used to tell me, he was telling me this story, and I was still laughing at that story he told me.

LEVINE: Can you remember it?

SCHILLING: Yes, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, would you tell it to the tape?

SCHILLING: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you want to have a drink for a minute?

SCHILLING: But I don't want to bore you with . . .

LEVINE: It's not boring. This is wonderful. I love hearing what you have to tell. I'd like to hear way you tell the story.

SCHILLING: (she clears her throat) Yeah. Well, I, oh, I was

very proud of my father, really. I wish children nowadays had that respect for their parents that we had.

LEVINE: What was it about them that you respected so much?

SCHILLING: It was just his great sense of humor, his great sense of humor. And every Sunday morning we went to children's mass, my sisters and myself. And after mass we took a walk through the glen. My father would take us for a walk. So he was a very loving father. But also I have, but I really don't want to bore you with these stories, and if you don't want it on tape.

LEVINE: No, please, I'd like to tape it.

SCHILLING: After, I told you I worked for that one lady taking care of the little girl, I wasn't paid too much. It wasn't high. In the meantime, my sister was working for a family in Montclair, New Jersey, which is a lovely section. And she told me somebody there, they were looking for a girl to work. So I went there personally on a Saturday morning to apply for the situation, and the, Mr. Quigley was a judge, Michael J. Quigley, Newark. A handsome, handsome man came to the door, and I said that I came to apply for the job. And he just took one look at me and laughed, and laughed himself. So then his wife came and she said, "Mike, that's not very nice. Ask the girl, you know,

to come in." So I went in. They said, they were looking for a cook. And they had six children of their own, and he said, "Now we have another one." So I got the job. But there were two girls, a girl in college and a girl in high school, and by a previous marriage. And then there were two children, maybe nine and eleven, and there were a set of twins nine months old who had an English nurse. They had a real nurse take care of them.

They were, you know, a wealthy family. So I was hired and I worked for them and loved them, and loved the family, the children. I was just, that was my home, really, till my mother came and they took the best of care of me, you know. They made sure I, the company that I would go out with, you know. My sister and I, we would go to New York to Scottish dances, Irish dances. Anything that was dancing. And Michael Quigley says, "You be sure. I want to know when you come home and who you come home with," you know. Took care of me like a father. They were just wonderful to me. That was a wonderful experience in my life.

LEVINE: How many years were you with them?

SCHILLING: Pardon?

LEVINE: How many years were you there?

SCHILLING: I was there with them two years. Then, of course,

you know, my mother was here and we then had a home to go to, you know. But that was my home till my mother came.

LEVINE: So that was, that man was like your father to you.

SCHILLING: He was. He was wonderful, wonderful to me, really.

LEVINE: And your father never came to this country?

SCHILLING: Oh, yes, yes, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, he did?

SCHILLING: My father came before my mother. My father came around the Fourth of July because everybody teased him. He had a little clay pipe, you know, the men in Scotland smoked little clay pipes. And my father always smoked a clay pipe. Oh, but also, Michael Quigley, he liked my Scottish brogue. He loved my Scottish brogue. And once in a while he would ask me about my father. And I would tell him, and tell him a funny story that my father told me. When he had company, and sometimes he'd have the mayor of the town and everybody, he would come in the kitchen and say, "Agnes, do you mind coming in here and telling Mayor So-And-So the story your father told you?" And I would tell him the story. And they would all be laughing! And I guess I had such a brogue. And I was to do the Highland Fling for them and dance for them, you know. So they were very happy

times, you know.

LEVINE: Were you going to tell us the story that you told Michael Quigley and his friends?

SCHILLING: Oh, no. I'm a little, I can't. (she clears her throat) No, I don't want to tell this.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, let's see. What, so you went to school in Scotland.

SCHILLING: Well, you know, that's another thing. I was very, I thought I was pretty well-educated. I was a good reader, good at everything. And my intention in my life was to be a schoolteacher. But I had, as I said, problems with my eyes, and I had to go occasionally to an eye doctor for drops, and I'd have to miss school maybe in the morning. And this one, but as I said I always did that Highland dancing. This teacher one day was scolding me because I was absent, why was I absent. And I said about my eyes. And she said, "Well, it's not, it doesn't seem to bother you when you're up there doing that dancing." And then, of course, everybody in the class laughed. I was so humiliated, so embarrassed, that I never wanted to go back to school. So I didn't even finish eighth grade. So when I come over here I had no education.

LEVINE: So did you go to school here at all?

SCHILLING: No. And I've had two very successful businesses.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about . . .

SCHILLING: I had a dress shop, then I had a boutique right in this area that was very . . .

LEVINE: Which one did you start first?

SCHILLING: I started the shop in the Highlands, the Agnes shop. And I made money like, I could put my children all through college.

LEVINE: What prompted you to start that business?

SCHILLING: To start, well, as I say, I was always very style-conscious, loved clothes. And I was working in a department store, and my daughter got married, one of my daughters, and I made her dress with help, you know, from another. And another lady that worked with me, you know, she and I were talking one day and she said, "I would like to go in business for myself someday." And I said, "So would I." And she said, "Well, you can sew and you could, you know, help. Why don't we do it?" Well, I didn't have the money at the time, and I wasn't just rushing. And this lady, her husband was a half-brother to

Bristol, you know the Bristol Myers people? And they encouraged us to start. So we started looking for a place to have it, and finally, this is my husband coming. We found, oh, I had a friend who had a restaurant in the Highlands. And do you know anything about the Highlands?

LEVINE: No, I don't.

SCHILLING: You have to take . . .

LEVINE: Maybe we'll turn the tape off for a second and you can fill us in on the Highlands and your husband can sit down. (break in tape) Okay. We're now resuming our tape with Agnes Schilling, and she was talking about her business. So if you could just briefly tell what it is that you're proud of that you did in your business.

SCHILLING: Well, I was very proud, you know, to start that, and that I could be of such a service to so many people that enjoyed pretty clothes, not too expensive, and the spot that we picked in the Highlands. The Highlands was a small town with no business, only restaurants, seafood restaurants, and taverns, no dress shop. So it was extremely rare. But in the summer the people come from New York in droves. They come by boat to a hotel called Conner's Hotel. And they flocked into my shop, flocked into it. So I was never . . .

MR. SCHILLING: This is the only one . . .

LEVINE (to SIGRIST): Can you get that?

SIGRIST: That's okay. Continue talking.

SCHILLING: Give him that. I was never without customers.

LEVINE: Okay. Maybe we'll wait with the pictures, because on the tape people can't see the pictures.

SCHILLING: So that was, so that's why it was very successful.

LEVINE: And then you went, when did you meet your husband?

SCHILLING: That is another story.

MR. SCHILLING: That's a big story.

SCHILLING: That's another story I have to tell you. Well, my husband is German, and of course when my mother moved to a new house we moved into a German neighborhood where he lived. And I went to work there, you know, with my family. And the priest used to stop in and visit the families, and my mother had pictures of me with my costume and dancing trophies and everything. And the priest said they were going to have a celebration there in November and would I entertain? So when I came home from work my mother said, "The priest was here and he

would like you to entertain." And I said, "Oh, no. No way. Those Germans would never understand a Highland Fling. They don't know what a, but in those days you did as your mother told you. My mother and sister, "Yes, you will." And I said, "They don't even have the music. I need the bagpipes." And my mother said, "You go Sunday to rehearsal and find out." So I went on Sunday and they had a girl who played piano, and she could play anything. So there was no excuse, no way out. So I, on that Sunday when I went I tripped on the stairs, and he was the electrician at the church, on the stage, putting the spotlight on. And he sort of picked me up, and I thanked him. So the night of the affair I went out, I did my dance, and after the applause, you know, went back on to thank them. And I was presented with a beautiful bouquet of mums. And there was a card, of course. I didn't know, you know. And when I walked back stage and I looked, one of the girls there said, "Oh, that's from August Schilling." She said, "That's my cousin." And I said, "Who is that?" She said, "That's the young fellow, you know . . .

MR. SCHILLING: Who puts the light on you!

SCHILLING: And I said, "Oh, well, that was lovely, that was lovely of him." So, anyhow, but I had a boyfriend with me, Scottish, who came all the way from New York to see the

entertainment. And we lived within, I could walk down home, change my costume, and get into clothes, you know. Because it was a dance afterwards, a big dance. So I went home and changed. And I said to this young man, "I have to thank this young fellow that sent me the beautiful flowers." And he said, "Oh, no, you're not going to go talk." And I said, "Oh, yes. I certainly am. I'm going to thank him." So then I thanked him, and that's how we met. From then on, you know, I used to, you know, see him. And he was an altar boy. And, of course, my mother was in love with the altar boy, and she thought I was kind of on the rough side always going to dances and going here and going there, that she would like me to settle down. So I think she prayed hard that I would, and we finally, so we are married sixty-four years, January would be sixty-five.

LEVINE: Wow. And what do, how many children do you have?

SCHILLING: Six.

LEVINE: And what are their names?

SCHILLING: I, we have, my son who lives here is August after his father. I have a son in Colorado, Gregory. My daughter Agnes in Thailand, and my daughter Mary is in Connecticut. Roseanne is here right now. She has a home in Florida, and they also have homes in Greece. My daughter Eileen lives in

Fairhaven. Her husband is a judge. He's a federal judge, Judge Bassler. So that's my six children.

LEVINE: And why don't you tell us how many grandchildren?

SCHILLING: Oh, there are twenty-eight. I have lovely grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, great-grandchildren.

LEVINE: How many now?

SCHILLING: There are twenty-eight of each. Sometimes it's a little hard to keep track, you know. I have . . .

MR. SCHILLING: They come visit us now every year, the great-grandchildren.

LEVINE: Well, let's go back for a minute just to Scotland, to the parts that we didn't cover. The house that you lived in. Can you describe it?

SCHILLING: The house was, it was very simple, not like anything here, you know. The kitchen, the beds were in the kitchen and maybe we had one living room. The bathroom was outdoors on the stairway, and my mother, to give us a bath, had to put a big tub in the middle of the kitchen floor and heat the water.

LEVINE: Did you have running water?

SCHILLING: Oh, yes, yeah.

LEVINE: But you just had to heat it. And what do you remember about meals? What was mealtime?

SCHILLING: Oh, mealtime was very good. We had lots of, you know, vegetables, mostly like turnip and never spinach. I don't remember spinach. And my mother used to make very good meals, very good, plenty of potatoes, lots of potatoes.

LEVINE: Do you remember a favorite dish that you had, as a girl?

SCHILLING: Well, the favorite dish in Scotland is called steak pie. And steak pie is like a beautiful flaky crust, very flaky, with a, like a stew meat. That's the meat, stew meat. It's most delicious. Steak pie is the main dish at weddings, when we have the big wedding celebrations they serve steak pie.

LEVINE: Is there something else in it, in the pie, besides the steak?

SCHILLING: Well, some people put kidney, like a steak and kidney pie. But we had a lot of fresh fruit tarts and things, you know.

LEVINE: Did people have gardens, or was it a farming

country, or?

SCHILLING: Yes. Well, some people had little gardens. There were certain sections, you know, that people with a little more money than we had had beautiful little gardens, just a small patch.

LEVINE: Well, can you think, before we close, can you think of anything that you'd like to add about, you know, starting your life in Scotland and coming here, a determined young woman, and living out the rest of your life here. Is there anything that you would want to say about your life?

SCHILLING: I can't think, you know, of anything, as I say. You know, I didn't have regrets leaving it. I think, also, because I knew eventually my family would all be together, you know, they would get together. But I was very happy to go back. My first trip back was in 1960, and I went back to the same street and the same house was still there. Oh, what I do remember, (she clears her throat) the street we lived on. Did I say there was a little Baptist church on the left? And down on the right on the corner was the pub where all the men congregated, in the pub. And that's where my father used to go on Friday night and come out singing all the way home. And I'd be waiting for him. We'd love to see him come home, you know. Of course,

my mother was ready to beat him over the head with something. She was trying to give us our baths, you know, in the, because my sisters, we all had beautiful curly hair, you know, real curly hair.

LEVINE: Well, before we close, I would wonder if I could persuade you to tell anything of your father's stories.

SCHILLING: Well, there's only one, and I just don't like to use the expression. That's why I just, I'm trying to think of some of the stories, you know, my father used to tell.

MR. SCHILLING: He used to talk about . . .

SCHILLING: Oh, I used to tell them so. Of course, in those days, you know, when they had the corpse at home, there were lots of funny stories. That's one that I just don't like to say the word, but he did tell this one about the Irish, there were a lot of Irish people came over to Scotland to work in the steel mill, too. And some people had them as boarders, you know, the Irishmen. So my father used to tell the woman had a boarding house and all these boarders, and one day one of them died, and she asked somebody else to go upstairs and carry him down and it seems when I, after a person dies the last thing, they have a BM. And this man carrying him said, "Well, if he can shit, he can walk." (they all laugh) And dropped him, dropped the

corpse. That's why I didn't like it. (they all laugh) So I always, when my father tell it, it seemed so funny, you know. That's why I didn't like it.

LEVINE: Okay. We're about to, the tape is just about done. Is there anything you'd like to say in closing?

SCHILLING: Well, I'm so happy that you got here in time. I said, "This is my last hurrah."

LEVINE: Well, it's a wonderful hurrah, and thank you so much, and we're so happy to have your story.

SCHILLING: I'm very happy because, now, you tell me, did you think that it is an interesting story about Ellis Island?

LEVINE: It is one of the most interesting stories I've ever heard about Ellis Island.

SCHILLING: Yeah, because . . .

LEVINE: Let me just say this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and we're signing off. I've been speaking with Agnes Schilling. Thank you.

SCHILLING: Thank you.