

EI-177

ELIZABETH HORAN SCHMID

BIRTH DATE: OCTOBER 13, 1902

INTERVIEW DATE: 6/20/1992

RUNNING TIME: 14:16

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: LORD CHAMBERLAIN HOME
STRATFORD, CT**

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 10/1993

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

IRELAND, 1926 or 1927

AGE 23

SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

RESIDENCES: IRELAND: BIRR, KING'S COUNTY

US: NYC - EAST 84TH STREET

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Elizabeth Schmid, who came from Ireland in 1926 or 1927.

SCHMID: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And she was twenty-three years old when she came through Ellis Island to the United States.

SCHMID: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And I'm here today in Stratford, Connecticut where Mrs. Schmid is now living.

SCHMID: Yes.

LEVINE: And I want to say thank you for talking with me. I'm very happy to be here. So why don't I start out by asking you your birth date.

SCHMID: October 13th.

LEVINE: And the year you were born?

SCHMID: Well, 1902, I think. 1902, '01 or '02.

LEVINE: And you were born in B-I-R-R, in the town of Birr.

SCHMID: Yes. Birr, yes.

LEVINE: And that's in Kings County, Ireland.

SCHMID: Yes.

LEVINE: And do you remember, did you live in Birr the whole time before you came to the United States?

SCHMID: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Could you describe it? What was it like?

SCHMID: It was a very nice town, very nice, a very nice town. We had three different schools there, then we had the Catholic school and the Protestant school and the, another school, Model School, they called it.

LEVINE: And which one did you go to?

SCHMID: I went to Catholic school.

LEVINE: And what do you remember about the Catholic school where you went?

SCHMID: They were very nice, the sisters were very nice.

LEVINE: Were you good in school?

SCHMID: Pretty good, pretty good. Yeah.

LEVINE: And how many years did you go to school?

SCHMID: I went to school, uh, I started in at, maybe ten years. Yes.

LEVINE: Were they big classes? How many children would be in a class.

SCHMID: There would be about thirty-five or forty.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. With one sister teaching?

SCHMID: Different sisters had different classes. Yes.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. So was that high school, then? Did you go to . . .

SCHMID: No, no high school there, no. Just, uh, regular school, you know.

LEVINE: And do you remember the house where you lived?

SCHMID: Where I lived, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What was that like? Can you tell me about it?

SCHMID: It was a very nice house.

LEVINE: What did it look like?

SCHMID: Oh, a two-story house and it had five rooms, a little garden at the back, and it was nice. It had flowers, things like that.

LEVINE: And who lived in your family with you?

SCHMID: I lived with my aunt.

LEVINE: Oh, with your aunt.

SCHMID: Because my mother died when I was very young, so I lived with her.

LEVINE: What was your aunt's name?

SCHMID: Gilsenan, Nurse Gilsenan.

LEVINE: She was a nurse?

SCHMID: She was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how do you spell her last name?

SCHMID: G-I-L-S-E-N-A-N.

LEVINE: And her first name?

SCHMID: Her first name was Elizabeth.

LEVINE: Oh. Were you named after her?

SCHMID: Yes.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. And was she your mother's sister?

SCHMID: Yes.

LEVINE: I see. So you went to live with her when you were a baby?

SCHMID: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did she have children of her own?

SCHMID: She did.

LEVINE: What were their names?

SCHMID: She had two sons and a daughter. The daughter was a nurse, and the son was a priest, and the other son was in the army. Yes.

LEVINE: And did she have a husband?

SCHMID: No, she was a widow.

LEVINE: She was a widow. Uh-huh. So then her children were significantly older than you.

SCHMID: Yes, they were.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So how were you treated living there?

SCHMID: Very, very nice. Very nice, all of them.

LEVINE: And did you have any sisters and brothers of your own?

SCHMID: Yes. I had five brothers and one sister. They're all dead. I'm the last one.

LEVINE: Were you the baby?

SCHMID: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how about your father? Did you see him when you were growing up?

SCHMID: Oh, yes. He was there. He never married again, and he's a good man, a nice man.

LEVINE: What was his name?

SCHMID: John Horan.

LEVINE: John Horan.

SCHMID: Or Horan, yes.

LEVINE: H-O-R-A-N.

SCHMID: Yes.

LEVINE: Can you describe him? What kind of a person was he?

SCHMID: A very nice man, a farmer.

LEVINE: A farmer, uh-huh. What did he grow?

SCHMID: Oh, everything in the vegetable line, everything.

LEVINE: So did he have a farm of his own, or did he work on someone's?

SCHMID: He did. No, he had his own farm.

LEVINE: Did you spend time with him on the farm?

SCHMID: Yes. I used to go out and visit him, yes, sure.

LEVINE: Do you remember any times on the farm?

SCHMID: Not quite, no, no.

LEVINE: But then would he visit you at your aunt's house?

SCHMID: Oh, yes. He did, he did.

LEVINE: Now, was there a sister or brother that you were closest to?

SCHMID: No, I liked them all. We got on well with all of them.

LEVINE: And did they, did you see them when you were coming?

SCHMID: Yes. They came to visit us. That's all the news I can give you.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about games you played when you were little?

SCHMID: Oh, hopscotch and skipping rope and, oh, kids games. I don't know.

LEVINE: Did you garden? Did you garden in the backyard at all?

SCHMID: No, no, I didn't, no.

LEVINE: Did you have chores as a child that you did around the house?

SCHMID: Yes. I helped with the dishes and other things, ironing and washing dishes and things like that.

LEVINE: And was there any music in the family? Was anybody musical?

SCHMID: Yes, we had a piano. And I, Aunt's daughter played the piano. She was away then. She was much older than me, so she went to England to be a nurse, yes.

LEVINE: And do you remember what you wanted to be when you were a little girl?

SCHMID: Well, I wanted to be in the post office. I learned telegraphy.

LEVINE: Tell about telegraphy.

SCHMID: Oh, dot-dash, you know, the Morse code. (There is a discussion off mike.) (break in tape)

LEVINE: Now, with the interview with Elizabeth Schmid, since we were interrupted by a nurse here. Let's see. You were telling about the post office, about the telegraphy, the dot-dash. Tell us about what that was like.

SCHMID: Dots and dashes, you know, dots and dashes. And it's outmoded now. They don't have it any more.

LEVINE: But you learned that when you went to work in the post office?

SCHMID: Yes, yes. I worked doing that, yes.

LEVINE: And was that, did that, was that exciting?

SCHMID: Very, very exciting, yes.

LEVINE: Well, what made you want to work in the post office? Do you remember?

SCHMID: Well, a friend of ours, she worked there, and she was a very good friend of mine. And she got me interested in it, and that's why.

LEVINE: So what else did you do in the post office besides . . .

SCHMID: Oh, issue stamps, send out telegrams, things like that.

LEVINE: And how many years did you work there?

SCHMID: I worked there two years, because they came back from the First World War and they got back their jobs that we had. So that's it.

LEVINE: Well, how was it decided that you would come to America?

SCHMID: Because I needed a job, I needed the money.

LEVINE: And why America? Why did you decide to come here instead of somewhere else?

SCHMID: Well, my father was here when he was a young man. He was out here before he married, and he like it. And we had cousins out here, things like that.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you had heard about America before you actually came?

SCHMID: Yes. I heard it was a wonderful country, very good and everything good about it, very good.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then had you saved up money for your trip, or how did you finance coming?

SCHMID: We had, we had enough to come over, and that's about all.

LEVINE: And who did you come with?

SCHMID: With our friends, our friends, and that's all.

LEVINE: Did you keep in contact with those friends?

SCHMID: No. They're dead a long time ago. Yeah.

LEVINE: So you came with friends and what did you do? You left Birr, and then where did you get the boat to come?

SCHMID: I got it in Cork. And then we came to Ellis Island and my sister met me there.

LEVINE: Do you remember coming into the New York Harbor on the boat?

SCHMID: If, barely.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. The Statue of Liberty, did you remember seeing that?

SCHMID: Barely, so long ago, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the voyage? What was the voyage like for you?

SCHMID: Just nice, smooth. Just nice. Yeah.

LEVINE: How did you feel about leaving Ireland?

SCHMID: I felt badly. I didn't like to leave, but I had to.

LEVINE: Did you take anything with you, in particular, that you remember?

SCHMID: Oh, I took, they gave me different gifts to take over.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of them?

SCHMID: Scarves and blouses and stockings and things.

LEVINE: And your sister met you? So this was your one sister.
And what was her name?

SCHMID: Mary.

LEVINE: Mary. And how long had she been in America?

SCHMID: Oh, she was here about four years before I came.

LEVINE: So had you been writing to her?

SCHMID: Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything she told you before you came here?

LEVINE: Well, she told me it was a nice country and she thought I'd like it very much, and that's all. But I think I've given you all that I have to give, I think so. I'm just getting over a cold, you know, yes.

LEVINE: Okay. Then before we close is there anything that you remember particularly about Ellis Island? Do you remember the

Great Hall? Do you remember when you came there before you met your sister? Do you remember being examined?

SCHMID: No, I don't. No.

LEVINE: And then, just briefly, what did you do for work when you came here then?

SCHMID: Well, I went to work with my sister. She was a cook, and I helped with the dishes, vegetables, things like that.

LEVINE: Was this in a home?

SCHMID: In a home, a private home, yes.

LEVINE: And did you live there, or did you live someplace else?

SCHMID: No, I lived there. Yes.

LEVINE: In Manhattan?

SCHMID: Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember where in Manhattan, roughly, the neighborhood?

SCHMID: 84th Street.

LEVINE: East or west?

SCHMID: East.

LEVINE: East 84th, oh, uh-huh. And did you stay there for a long time?

SCHMID: I did. (A nurse enters the room.) (break in tape)

LEVINE: With Elizabeth Schmid, and we're going to close off now. Is there anything further you'd want to say, Elizabeth, about coming to this country or being in this country before we close?

SCHMID: No. No, I think it's a very good country and we got on very well here. That's all.

LEVINE: Well, thank you so much for talking with me.

SCHMID: You're welcome.

LEVINE: I really appreciate it. This is Janet Levine signing off on June 20th 1992. Well, that's just great. Thank you.