

EI-212

STEPHEN CONCANNON

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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IRELAND, 1921

AGE 20

PASSAGE ON "THE CELTIC"

PORT: LIVERPOOL

RESIDENCES:

IRELAND: SPIDDAL, COUNTY GALWAY

US: PORTLAND, ME

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today in Portland, Maine, and I'm here with Stephen Concannon, who came through Ellis Island from Ireland in 1921 when he was twenty years of age. I'm very happy that I got a chance to talk with you.

CONCANNON: Oh, yes, dear Miss Levine. I'm glad to be here to cooperate the best I can, you know.

LEVINE: Great. Well, why don't I start by asking you your birth date?

CONCANNON: My birthday was December the 22nd, 1900.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

CONCANNON: I was born in the parish in Spiddal, in that area, west of Galway, seven miles west of Galway, in

County Galway, in December, as I said, you know, December the 21st, 1900.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, did you live in Galway up until the time you left for America?

CONCANNON: I was, that was the time of the flu, too, I remember. And, of course, the west of Galway, it was a very rough land there. Spade work. You couldn't use any plowing. I was raised on a small farm. And in 19, October 1919 I went to East Galway. I would say East Galway at that time was like a miniature, in comparison to Aroostook County here, where they have tremendous lot of potatoes to dig. We used to go there to dig potatoes, you know, because the wages were better. And I ended up by settling down there. I stayed there for a year-and-a-half, until finally I came to this country. You know, I stayed there until March 1921, then I came to America in April 1922, 1921, a month afterwards. But I was, I left my village in October, 1919.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about the flu. What do you remember about the flu?

CONCANNON: Well, the flu, at that time really the doctors had

very little knowledge about it. For example, we used to have a doctor, he was supposed to be a specialist, too, Dr. Sands from Galway. And he was claiming that it was the air from the Galway Bay that was affecting it, but it wasn't, of course. And, you know, the doctors, at that time, many people, for example, at that time, because it was, anybody could sweat. You know, the sweat got that person that used to get them, they would take, like, brandy or scotch or something, many people survived, although the doctor, at that time, discouraged them from having it. But, you know, they needed, all those who was able to sweat was able to survive. So I, for example, I saw one day, in one town I went to in 1918, he was a blacksmith, he had thirteen kids, and his boy Michael, that was the oldest boy, twenty-four years old, his second son maybe twenty-two, and a daughter at thirteen. I saw them buried in one square hole, you know, in that thing. And many people were dying at that time, they died quickly. The doctors, of course, at that time, would forbid you to go to a wake or to a funeral except if it was immediate family, like, for fear you would contaminate the deceased. They were very

much afraid of it. And, you know, it took the doctors a long time to cope with it, I would say, because it's something entirely new, you know. It was like an epidemic that they didn't, it came all of a sudden.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, they thought that people might get the flu from the deceased?

CONCANNON: Uh, well . . .

LEVINE: Is that the idea?

CONCANNON: Well, you know, this they said, at that time, it's said that originally it took place in France where the thousands of soldiers were buried. That's where it came from. I remember, for example, I was with my oldest brother. We were planting one day in the field. And, of course, we could see, because the ocean, the Galway Bay, it was about a quarter of a mile from my place. But I could see this one night very close, you know, fog. And I could see layers of fog coming from the ocean. And when it hit me, I could swear I'll never forget, that was in 1918. And the smell of it was very like a dead carcass or something like that, I would say. Remind you of it

anyway. And right after that, two days after that, I heard them say people was dying all of a sudden. That was the beginning of it. And I think, as they claim, that it originally came from the trenches in France where the fighting was, you know.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONCANNON: Yes. Because maybe they didn't have, you know, so many people was buried in them days, you know, buried like a, buried in big holes, you know.

LEVINE: Well, now, what, who were the members of your family? What was your father's name, and your mother's name?

CONCANNON: My father's name was Patrick Concannon. My mother's name was Margaret, of course, but she was originally a Dunashoe, Margaret Dunashoe Concannon. Then I had six brothers and a sister, you know. My sister is still living, but all my other brothers are dead. I saw them. When I went over there in '59 I saw them, they were living, but they are dead since, they died since. But I have one sister. But, so we were brought up on a small farm, maybe twenty or twenty-five acres, but a larger one, mostly un-tillageable,

roughly, you know. So, but my father, for example, used to, we had good bog land. And Galway, the city of Galway was only seven, maybe seven miles and a half, a way. And my father used to go to Galway two days a week selling turf. And my mother, of course, used to make butter and eggs. And we, I would say we didn't live in luxury, but we had plenty, you know, of common things, you know, fish and potatoes and stuff like that, and bread and tea. But there was a, the people was really poor. It's entirely different over there today, of course. Because we used to have, in the old houses, the lamp on the wall, you know, the lamp. Now they have all electricity, and they are modernized today in comparison to old days. Everything, for example, in my time, from Galway back, my area was all horses, you know, people had horses, and that's how they used to do their business in Galway. Now today you cannot see a horse on the road there. It's all automobiles. It's entirely revolutionized around. But we were, I would say the standard of living was poor. And the wages, of course, was very poor. And the price of cattle was poor. Whereas today, of course, the prices of cattle in Ireland is

equivalent to this country. They, I think they send a lot of their meat. I know they send a lot of lamb to France, you know, there on the European market there, and that brought up the prices, they made the farmers a very good offer in Ireland. And the (?).

One of those that used to buy a lot of meat from us, too. He had the money, because my niece told me up there, you know, she was, I was over there about, oh, maybe five years ago, and she showed me, she was, she had thirty-two cattle, she said she was going to sell twenty-five of them, and she said she was going to get four hundred, four hundred and fifty pounds for each one, you know, which was good, you know what I mean, in my estimation, in comparison of my time. And they get good price, and on account of the Socialist way, although I do not personally agree with a lot of stuff that's going on in the Socialist world, because people get dough that really don't need it, like. But they're way ahead of my time. I mean, Ireland is way ahead of my time. And the standard of education, of course, went up with it. For example, in my time, when I went to school, there was Jimmy the schoolmaster and his wife. There were two. And you'd have a hundred

kids there, and they took care of the eight grades, or the whole grade, the eight grades. Whereas today, a few years ago, when I mentioned that, one of them told me they have five teachers now for the eight grades kids over there. The standard of education is away. Then today, you know, in them days when you leave the school, I used to go three miles before I could reach my school in the morning in Spiddal. And that was three miles from my village, and we wouldn't have nothing hardly to eat again until we came home at four in the afternoon, four o'clock, because they let us out at three o'clock but it used to take us an hour to get home. Now they have transportation. They have lunches at the school. So it's a different Ireland, you know.

LEVINE: Tell me about school. When did you start school?

CONCANNON: I think probably I was about nine years old when I started school because of the fact that I had to walk three miles, you know, six miles a day going back and forth. I know I didn't, I know I must be close to nine years old before I went to school, you know. Because I still remember on the blackboard, you know, they used to blackboard in 1909, like.

That's the era I remember. And, you know, they marked on the blackboard how many kids, and like that. But that's the year least that I remember, probably the time I started going to school, I was.

Because of the length that we used to have to go to school too, you know, at that time.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember, when you think about going to school in Ireland, what experiences do you remember?

CONCANNON: I do, dear, I think, you know. Of course, in my part of Ireland, in the west part, and they still, you know, that's, they have Irish colleges there trying to promote the Irish language. So, of course, in my area, we were brought up with the Gaelic language. That's all I spoke, you know, my father and mother. And going to school at that time, it was half Irish and half English, you know.

But we didn't have that difficulty, for example, when we came like the Italians. The other people, it was much harder for them that never heard a word of English, that came to this country. We, going to school you learned, you know, you, half English and half Irish. And when anybody would go to the town of Galway with selling merchandise or anything like

that, you'd have to speak English, because in the town of Galway is all English. They could speak. It's a funny thing, for example, in my time you go back about six miles behind Galway, all they spoke is Gaelic. But in the town of Galway itself, it was all English. So, you know, the Irish language was pretty well eliminated there. They tried to promote it. The government spent millions of dollars trying to promote it. But I was so, two years ago I was living over there with my sister and I met a young fellow from County Clare that was there studying Gaelic. And I asked him, "Tell me this," I said. "Is it easier for you now to study French or Gaelic? Which of the two languages?" He said, "It's easier for me to study French." Well, now, that's sounded funny to me. The Irish was his native language, but he found that the French language is easier to learn than the Gaelic.

LEVINE: Did he say why?

CONCANNON: Well, I don't know. It's very hard, the Irish language is a hard language to learn. So today, because of the TV, and many of the programs they've got, even the west of Galway where I came, it comes

from England and the little kids there today, in my time, they wouldn't know one word of English. Today, they all know English, because they pick it up from the TV there.

LEVINE: Did your mother and father speak Gaelic?

CONCANNON: Oh, that's how they spoke. And my poor father. My mother, they couldn't, well, they could, my mother had a little English. You know, she could sell eggs and like that, but she didn't have much, in truth, she couldn't say much English. They had very few. Enough to bargain or sell it, you know. My father used to sell turf, you know, what I mean, like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, the turf was used for fireplaces. Is that right?

CONCANNON: That was at my time, dear, yes. All, was turf. Of course, today they have gasses, too. They have these gas tanks, very convenient, and the stove. Whereas in my time it was all a fireplace. And I learned many years afterwards that a fireplace is that, almost eighty percent of the heat goes up the chimney, you know, whereas the stove, they throw the heat around. They circulate, the stove was better

to circulate. And the stove, of course, for other main conveniences, for cooking and stuff like that, much better than in my time. But in my time it was a hedge, you know, with a fire bed. They had the hanging kettle there, there was a big hook and they'd hang the kettle on the thing. And, you know, we used to have an oven, they used to call them. My mother used to bake the bread in the oven and put the red hot coal from the fire out underneath the main oven and then cover the cover, put the cover on it and cover it with red flame, red coal. That's how she used to bake the bread in the old days, yes, yes.

LEVINE: What else did you remember eating when you were young in Ireland?

CONCANNON: Well, you know, really your common food, I would say. In our time it was fish and potatoes. They used to have very good potatoes there. Fish and potatoes and milk and tea, and tea and bread. That was our common diet, I would say, you know. I mean, Christmas time we'd have probably would a few luxuries, but outside of that no. But . . .

LEVINE: What about the fish? Was it fresh fish?

CONCANNON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, it was very fresh. Fish was very plentiful in my time. But, like here in this country today, fish is scarce over there, very expensive. Yeah. They attribute it to, for example, the big trollers that goes out, outside a three-mile limit, that they clean up a lot of the fish, English trollers, you know. They're around there, outside of the three-mile limit they kill. But fish is much scarce, much, you know, it's not plentiful like in my time. In fact, there was a whole street in the city of Galway, they used to call it the Fish House. It was all, you'd go along the whole street, there were barrels of herrings and mackerels and, you know, they'd be selling them by the dozens, you know. Different types of fish. Not any more.

LEVINE: Were most people who lived in your village, Spiddal?
Is that the name of the town?

CONCANNON: No, dear. My village was Derry Loughne, Derry Loughne. D-E-R-R-Y, L-O-U-G-H-N-E. That's the name. Every village had a name. My name was Derry.

Scritty was a little town about three miles away, you know. But that's when I went to school, like, you know. And that's, Derry Loughne. There were nine houses in the village, nine houses in Derry Loughne. Nine houses, ten.

LEVINE: Can you describe it? Describe the village.

CONCANNON: Eh, well, you know, I mean, it's thatched. They were all thatched houses at that time, with the exception of one house that was a slate house. Today all the thatched houses are gone. In my village today they have probably twenty-odd houses. People, for example, that cannot speak the Gaelic would come to the town of Galway, and with the industry in Galway they got a job, but they liked to live out in the country. So they liked to live near facing in Galway Bay, you know. That's the valuation of their property is to say "looking out at the Galway Bay." So these people came along and bought up lots there and built houses where they don't, you know, they don't work there. They work in Galway. I was on a bus there about two years, a couple of years ago. And this young girl sat one side of me. I was sitting on the bus, and I said to

her, "Can you speak any Gaelic?" And she said, "No." She was one of them, you know. She was working in Galway, but, you know, the six o'clock bus at night time takes them home, a lot of the girls out in the country. Because they're, you know, they have secondary education today and they can do clerical work like that, which was something unusual, impossible, in my time, I would say, you know. Because very few of the commoners in my time would end up to send their kids to, you'd have to send them to Galway. But outside in Spiddal now they have secondary schools right there. They have tech schools, for example. You know, it's way ahead. Although the economy is bad, but personally myself I blame, a lot of their problem is in the line. We used to, in my time we used to have the tinkers, as we used to call them. In other parts of Europe they call them the Gypsies. I saw them in France. I was in France one time and I saw them there. But we used to call them tinkers. The reason they used to call them, in the old days, tinkers, some of them had a bag on their back and they'd go home, for example, you had a tin can for when you used to milk the cows, and they solder it.

It was leaking, you know. Or a pot that had a broken leg. We had these round pots, you know, metal pots, and if it had a broken leg they could fix a leg. So they used to call them tinkers, you know. But now they call them travelers. Well, now the government gives them, for example, for years they get doles from the government. So they all have trailers, and they have automobiles. A fellow told me a few years ago that when a tinker buys a car they have to pay all cash for it because they are travelers. The real estate, I mean, or the automobile, these men, they won't trust them, you know. So I would call that myself, and when I saw dole people. I saw people getting dole, that money at the bank, you know, the cattle and like that. They had no need of the dole. But that money that was going with the tinkers and the dole, like companies that were too overtime, they had to fold up. From Germany, from Canada, they could meet, you know, make it profitable on the European market. Say they folded up and they had to leave, and the youngsters that was working there, they had to go to Austria, you know, Canada or England or out in this country. That's why they had so many problems,

let's say, in Boston. So many of them came without a visa, you know. And some of them came with the visa, and when the visa was expired they didn't go back, you know, because they knew they couldn't get no job. One example, I had my grand-niece that came to me, oh, about six years ago. I signed a visa for her. And she was in her first year of college at that time. She was studying to be a schoolteacher.

But when she got the job, you know, she got, I think, a temporary job. Because teaching a grammar school, this teacher was teaching the fourth grade.

She went to higher education for different courses, you know, she, and she took her place for two years.

But when she came back she lost her job, so she had to go to Africa. That's where she was, in Africa. But she's back now teaching there again at the same school. But, I mean . . .

LEVINE: Well, tell me what your father did when you were growing up.

CONCANNON: My father was just a farmer, you know, that was all. We were raised on a farm. We used to raise potatoes and oats and wheat. Sometimes, you know, during the war there, 1918, the flour was scarce,

and they used to raise their own wheat. And there was a mill in Galway there. You bring it in and they ground it for you in Galway, and they'd mix that with the other white flour, you know, it was, because it was expensive, you know, during that time. There was ration, I think, you know, during the First World War, there. So they got by that time, you know, I would say. But I would call it poor, but not in want. They didn't go to bed hungry. That's all I can say to you.

LEVINE: Now, did your father own that land?

CONCANNON: Oh, yes, and his father before him, you know. And, you know, my niece owns that today, the same land where I was brought up. But where I was born, in a house, the thatched house, is gone. There's nothing there, but the foundation is there. They built a modern house. Today, you know, they're all, practically, the government started giving them grants, and they built all these nice modern houses. Still called, kind of a one, you know, a one-story building, with maybe four bedrooms, most of them four bedrooms. And central heating and bathroom, I think. That was something, and you should see, in

my time there, there was no facilities like that in the old days, you know.

LEVINE: Did you have running water?

CONCANNON: Oh, no, no, dear. We had a well.

LEVINE: And what was that like?

CONCANNON: Well, the well was, dear, you know, you'd go down the well there, and you get, the tin can. We used to have the tin can, maybe a three-gallon tin can, or maybe four, and dip it down in the water and take it home. That's the way we were, and do the washing of dishes and everything like that, and heat the water on the old fireplace, you know. That's what we used to do. And, what do they call it, you know, I, they did away with that, you know, about thirty years ago, now, in my area, because they get all the water from a lake.

LEVINE: I see. Did the women used to go there? Did the women wash the clothing?

CONCANNON: Oh, yeah. The women, well, you know, sometime we had a river in my place. My mother used to bring her clothes to the river sometime and wash them, you

know. They used to use the washboard and they used to call it the shlish, you know. They used to, because there was a square about that, put the water on, the water on a big, flat stone and they'd squeeze it up, but that's how they used to wash it and hang it on the wall, on the fence, the clothing.

But now they have driers and so forth. They are modernized like you'll see it out in this country.

LEVINE: I see. Well, is it, what else do you remember from your childhood? When you think of your childhood, what are the things that are most vivid to you in memory?

CONCANNON: Well, what they call it, over there, I mean, I used to, I used to go, you know, the bog with the donkey and two baskets, you know. And, of course, that's another thing that was (?) on those bogs. We'd have to go across the river, because the horse and cart wouldn't be able to get in on the bog. So we used to put the turf out with the donkey and baskets out where the horse and cart would get it. Now the government made a bridge across it and they have those big, what they call it, with the big rubber tires on them. It's like a trailer, what would I

call it?

LEVINE: Like a tractor?

CONCANNON: Yes, something very like a tractor, and they go right in the bog with them and take it out, you know. It's entirely, it's so revolutionized compared to my time. My time is like the horse and buggy outside of the way they have it today. Then they had a machine that cut the turf, too and, of course, cuts it away faster than the old-fashioned. They cut the turf and squeezed the sod. For example, in our time when we cut the turf the sod was so wet you'd, we'd put it in a wheelbarrow and you'd wheel it maybe, you know, about fifty yards away or maybe seventy-five yards away and throw it over, and then you'd squeeze them and leave them there for about three weeks. If the weather would be fine, then we'd take those sods and set them up so the air would blow through them. But now, today, they squeeze all the water out of it and, you know, they are, it's more effective, you know. And stove turf, they can use it in their stove. Probably they've modernized so, my sister had one there about that size, (he gestures) heavy, like coal. And

they burn it in the stove, and they don't last as long as the coal does, but it does the same work. I mean, to cook on the stove, you know, they have the same benefit out of it as you have a coal fire. So, I mean, it's economical back there, you know, the turf, if you have the bogs yourself. But if you haven't . . .

LEVINE: It's expensive.

CONCANNON: A big lorry of coal I think would cost about three hundred, three hundred pounds. That would be equivalent to five hundred dollars here, you know.

LEVINE: Well, now, were you a religious family?

CONCANNON: Yes, dear. We were brought up as Catholics. All my area was practically all Catholic area when I was there. I would say, (he laughs) my father wasn't what you call a religious man. He never went to church, to my knowledge. He went to church maybe, oh, Christmas time or Easter maybe, but that's it. But my mother was a religious woman, and we were brought up, you know, the school, you know, the catholics, the way I was taught, you know. We had a schoolteacher, you know, they taught us, prepared us

for our sacraments, you know what I mean.

LEVINE: This was in a public school or in a Catholic school?

CONCANNON: What they call them the national schools there. They are public schools, but they call them over there the national schools. They are public schools, but they were allowed to teach catechism there. I didn't see anything forbidding that, you know. That I know, I never heard that it was forbidden. My only thing I know of that, in my time, we were forbidden, for example, to know Irish history. That was forbidden to be taught in the school, Irish history. Well, you know, of course, Ireland was controlled under the British government in my day, and I suppose they figured, with the young generation growing up, if they told them all the atrocities that was really committed, you know, about Cromwell and all that, that would rouse them to rebel, you know. So it was forbidden in my time. But still, you know, the schools, they used to teach the other side. (he laughs) Very much like, let's say, the French here now, you know, here in Maine or up in Canada. Canada, I know, for example, the national language is English. But you

go to Quebec there at the other end, and you have a tough time to meet somebody that would speak English to you. They speak their own, they go by their own culture, I mean, French. I remember I was up, there was a shrine up in Quebec there, St. Anne's shrine, and I was there the 15th of August. And the bus driver, you know, the Maine bus line here, he had a puncture of one tire, you know, a puncture. And so it was funny that near Quebec he went to a garage but they couldn't do it, but they called up some special company that came, and this young man came with one of those little, (he gestures) gives the guy, you understand it's common, you know, hair, you know, tied back like this.

LEVINE: A ponytail?

CONCANNON: Yeah. And he was a good mechanic. But only for the women out here, in Westbrook, that she could understand the French, really the bus driver would be lost. He didn't have one word of English, that young man about twenty-five. He was a good mechanic and a smart one. He did the job, but he did not know English. I would say, you know, that, I would call kind of too deploring, you know. They should,

because as long as it's the national language, they should know the language, I would say. But I suppose they do it to keep their culture. I think I would say that.

LEVINE: And that was kind of the way it was when you were growing up.

CONCANNON: Well, in my area, in my area, dear, it was all Gaelic, you know. Everybody spoke the Gaelic. And none of the farmers, very few of them that could speak. Maybe they would understand you when you would ask them a question, but you'd have difficulty to understand it from a lot of them. There was a lot of them. And the further back you went, you know. For example, in my area we were close to the town of Galway, and that my father used to go to Galway twice a week, Wednesday with the loaded turf, and my mother would go with him Saturday with the eggs and butter and things. He wouldn't have a big load of turf, she'd sit up on the half a load, you know, and they'd go with horse to Galway. It used to take two hours from my village to get to Galway on the horse and cart. Well, on account of that communication and contact with the Galway people,

you know, most of my people, around there, they could speak English, you know. I mean, not fluently, but they could get by. But back west further, like thirty miles west of Galway, when they didn't, even if they did have a horse, they were too far away from the town. They couldn't. Back there, that other state, they used to have boats, and they'd have a boatload of turf and they'd send it across to County Clare, which was another county, you know. That's how they, and a lot of them was making a living on fishing, too, selling fish, you know. They used to have boats, and they used to sell fish, you know. Make a living that way, you know.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

LEVINE: Were you, were you the designated child to become a priest? Was that decided a long time ago?

CONCANNON: Oh no, dear. No, no, no. I'm not a priest, dear.

LEVINE: Oh, I thought you were a priest.

CONCANNON: Oh, no. My son is a priest out here.

LEVINE: Your son. I see.

CONCANNON: My son is a priest out in Scarborough there, you know. And his name is Stephen, too. Probably that's where the confusion is.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. I see.

CONCANNON: No, no. I was, I was, I went to, I went to Notre Dame. In the end I wanted to be a brother. I stayed there for about, oh, maybe almost four years, and I left, you know. I figured it wasn't my vocation. But I never regret going there, but it wasn't my vocation.

LEVINE: You just decided . . .

CONCANNON: I decided, you know, my health wasn't feeling too good, and I decided I wasn't going to go through with it, you know. So I came home in 1930. That was, oh, back after Wall Street crashed in 1929 there. I worked to find a little yard there, you know. I worked in a restaurant about eighteen, oh, I was getting eighteen dollars a week. We used to work from six in the morning to six at night, six days a week, at that time. But the jobs were so

scarce, I mean, you couldn't. But I was getting by because I was only paying three dollars on my room and I had some money left for myself, you know what I mean.

LEVINE: Well, let's talk about in Ireland, did you have your grandmother or grandparents?

CONCANNON: I had my grandfather and mother on my mother's side, but I never saw my grandmother or my grandfather on my father's side. They were dead before I was born, I think.

LEVINE: What do you remember about your grandparents on your mother's side?

CONCANNON: Well, you know, they used to be getting pension in them days, so I used to work. I used to go there, when I was, about 1915, you know, when I was about fifteen years old. And I used to put the turf home for them, you know. You know, it used to take me about a couple of weeks with the donkey and baskets to bring the turf from the bog, and that would be their fuel for the winter. That, I recall that. I mean, they lived, you know, they didn't, their son, my uncle, was married next door, so he had most of

the land, but they only kept enough to feed one cow.

They only had one cow, and I don't know, it's one thing. Enough to give them some milk, I suppose.

But they were getting pension, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember any stories that they told you as a little boy?

CONCANNON: No, no, I don't recall. I don't, I don't know what would, what would be the stories, you know what I mean. I, of course, like they said, I was, 1918 the Black and Tans was in Ireland at that time. That's the time of the Black and Tans. And, of course, I was out, I came out in this country in 1921. In 1922 they got their freedom, you know. They got the Irish free state government there, and the Tans left at that time. But they were there when I left, you know.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

CONCANNON: Really, you know, they were, many was tough, you know what I mean. For example, you know, that if somebody got killed, which they did, you know. There was an ambush, you know. Let's say, I remember near Galway one time, there was three

officers wounded there. None of them was killed, though, but they were wounded, English, of the Black and Tan. And they killed ten, any English soldier that was killed, they'd kill ten of the others for it. And it was indiscriminate, because lots of times some of the innocent got killed, you know, who had nothing to do with the uprising, you know. So that . . .

LEVINE: And you witnessed some of that? Did you witness some of that?

CONCANNON: I did. I was in East Galway, dear. I was in East Galway, a place called Callastrand. That's about four miles beyond Headford. Headford, that's seventeen miles from Galway, goes northeast like that, and then Callastrand was four miles. So that's where I went digging potatoes in October 1919. And I, after I finished a month, I started working for this man, his name was Tommy Holt. Well, he had a brother by the name of Michael who had a store, and a sister. And they were running this very good store, you know, because they used to have those, you know, selling flowers and implements, wood, you know, farm implements, plows

and stuff like that. But he had a big box and that, for example, over there they used to have a lot of sheep. And every year they dipped the sheep, you know. It's compulsory today, of course, the government there, to dip them.

LEVINE: Dip them?

CONCANNON: Yeah. It was very compulsory, you know. To dip the sheep in case if there were any diseases, too, you know. But he used to, anybody who would buy the dip, like, he'd give them, they could take the box in order to dip their sheep. That would be a whole day, you know. They would have a party, you know, for dipping the sheep. Well, this Michael Holt, there was an ambush there and, as I said, there was three officers hurted. And he was blamed, but I understand that he had nothing to do with it, but the reason, the way I heard it, the story that I, there was a man, a neighbor there, living by, a very lazy person, and he had a boy. And this Michael Holt was, one day he had the money left on the counter like that, but he was in the kitchen having a cup of tea, I guess. And the boy, I guess, went in and grabbed, got the money, and stole it. Well,

then they had to take the boy, I heard them say, back in the field at night time and they threatened to kill him unless he would reveal. So he revealed where he got the money. He kept it under a particular bed. Well, then, they said, that's the way I heard it, I have no proof. But that his mother, as a revenge, when they were, that she reported him, that he was one of those that he was in the ambush, that he was killed. I seen it. But I seen him, in them days, with the Tans, you know, they used to have blank bullets. Those, the Tans and the Irish constabulary policemen, many of them, of course, were Catholic too. But nobody, I guess, knew whether they had the real, some blank bullets and the real bullets. And the rule was that they tried to make a person run before they'd shoot him. But they tried to make him, I remember, the field where he died, he got killed, there was a stack of turf there. That's where I used to get the turf for the party I used to work for, his brother. But they shot him. I heard the shot, but I was away, a half a mile away, that Saturday, and I, when he was laid out I saw him on, they brought him in on the cover of the dipping box because it was long. And they

laid him, and they told his sister if she wanted to to call the priest. And, of course, he was dead. And that I remember. When I saw him, I came to the wake, I could see his blood down on, he had cayenne powder. He was all ready to go to town, you know, and his blood was down here, (he gestures) but they straightened him. So that's, these actions, stuff like that. Then another case I heard, for example, you know, because they'd march a funeral of somebody like that, and to see some of those leaders of the young Sinn Fein Irish, they used to call them. The Sinn Fein at that time, the Irish Republican. They were different from those in Northern Ireland today, I would say. You know, these are, I would call them cold-blooded murderers, you know. But they were fighting for the free Ireland, you know. And, of course, I mean, I wouldn't, thank God, I never shot anybody. I came out with a clear conscience. Because some of them, a lot of the Irish policemen, constabulary got killed themselves, you know. Because they were working for the British government, you know. And I say that in one location at the funeral they, the Tans got all the, those who came to the funeral, and

gave them all a stick apiece, one of those sticks, you know, I mean, like a (?), you know, and put them in a school. And each one, you know, the tent was behind them, but if you wouldn't hit the one ahead of you, the child would hit you. (he laughs) They did it trying to divide, to split up the other, the, you know, that they'd break it up, you know, to cause a riot. So there's a lot of work like that there, there's a lot. That period, you know, that was a tough period. But I would say the objective was good to get Ireland free, but the method was poor, that's the thing.

LEVINE: Do you think that seeing that kind of thing, and the difficult time that it was, did that influence your decision to come to the United States?

CONCANNON: No, dear. No, dear. I absolutely had nothing to do with it. I mean, my mother, I was working for this man, you know, for, I was finishing, of course, I mean, at my age. I was working, and I came to my Galway one time, and I gave my mother ten pounds and a bag of wool. And she said to me, like that, "Steve," she said, "you are working. As long as you don't want to stay at home," she said, "you ought to

go to America. It will be better for you than to be here, you know. You're working, and you're not getting much wage." Which was very true. And then that's the time I wrote to my uncle out in South Portland the other night out here. And he sent my passage which was, in them days it was a hundred and twenty dollars. Well, the hundred dollars was for your passage. The other twenty dollars was, they call it "landing money." When you came to this country they'd give you that twenty dollars so as to take you wherever you were going in these parts, you know.

LEVINE: Well, now, did you, any other family members come with you?

CONCANNON: No. My brother, I brought my brother out, Pat, 1925 I brought him out myself. I brought a (?) myself. And then I had another brother, a youngest brother, he came out by himself in 1928. I didn't take him out. But . . .

LEVINE: You were the first, then.

CONCANNON: I was the first of the family.

LEVINE: Why did your mother say it to you rather than some other brother?

CONCANNON: No, the reason she, I think she said it to me because I was gone away almost a year-and-a-half from home, and she figured that I didn't have no attachment in the home, that I wanted to travel. And she figured, you know, which was right for her, that it would be better, I'd be better off out in this country, which was very true, than working for the family there, because, I mean, the money I was getting, I wasn't spending any, but I wouldn't hardly keep myself in clothing but, I mean, the wages were so small, you know.

LEVINE: Well, had you or your mother heard from people who had come to the United States?

CONCANNON: Oh, yeah, sure, everybody there, they used to call them the Yanks. People who came to Portland, Maine were back on a vacation. And, of course, they had nicely, they wore nice suits and nice dresses. We had the old flannels in them days. You know, my mother, of course, used to make the shirts for us, and knit, you know, we, the wool, for example, we

used to get from the sheep, you know, the white sheep and the black sheep. We'd mix them together and send them to the mill in Galway, and they'd put a, they'd spool them around on a big, round spool or thread like that, (he gestures) white thread or black thread, and they'd make, they'd make, we used to call it, they used to call flanny, or some bonnies, white bonnies, it was pure wool. And gray trousers, you know. And the trousers was made of the thick thing, and it was heavy, you know, too, but it was, you know, substantial. But I never cared for it myself, you know what I mean? I'd rather have the nice tweed, I used to see them over there. And, in fact, that's the reason I asked my mother that I'd like to go to East Galway to earn the price of a suit, a tweed suit. And she let me go, you know. But when I stayed there for a year-and-a-half, that's when she told me I should come out to this country. So my mother, that's the one that told me.

LEVINE: So did you get an Irish tweed suit before you left?

CONCANNON: Oh, yeah, indeed. I bought a suit, a tweed suit, a blue suit, before I left, a blue suit. And I

remember, in Galway, I had it tailor-made, tailor-made in Galway, and I remember distinctly I paid eight pounds and two shillings for it. But now eight pounds and two shillings, and the money at that time was equivalent, because five dollars was equal to a pound. And so you figure out it was about eight pounds, I mean, forty dollars. It was . . .

LEVINE: That's a lot, isn't it?

CONCANNON: And I got, you know, over there at that time it would take me on the farm about maybe four months to earn the price of a suit of clothes. Where when I came here, especially when I started working long shore, I remember, the first time that I came out here I had another blue suit made by Hal the tailor. He was an Italian, a very good tailor, down at the square here. Forty-five dollars it cost me, forty-five dollars. So I . . .

LEVINE: How long did it take you to earn the forty-five dollars?

CONCANNON: I know in this country it was about a couple of weeks, you know what I mean, at that time. Of

course, I worked on the railroad first summer, but, you know.

LEVINE: First let's say what you took with you when you decided, when you were leaving to come here.

CONCANNON: Really, I didn't take, I had an extra suit, for example. I used it on the boat coming over, a kind of a gray suit. And we'd, you know, we'd be wrestling. And I'd know they wouldn't tear my clothes, you know, making fun, you know. There was forty of us there, you know, on the deck, you know.

LEVINE: Forty people from . . .

CONCANNON: From Galway, from the west of Galway, where they came from. You know, in an area about maybe twenty or twenty-five miles, like that, you know. And so we grouped together because we were all spoken the same Gaelic language. And I remember one day a woman came from Scotland. She was Scottish, coming from Scotland, and she was listening to up speak the Gaelic. And she started putting, they have the Scotch Gaelic too, you know. I don't know if you ever heard about that. Oh, yeah, they have, the Scotch Gaelic and the Irish Gaelic are very similar,

and there is a man, a friend of mine teaching up at Antekenesh there, St. Francis and Antekenesh, and it's a predominantly very Scottish place up there. They teach Scotch Gaelic in that language. And I asked him one time a couple of years ago, when he called me up, I said, I forget now, he came from Brooklyn, New York, but he speaks the Irish language fluently, better, probably as good as I can, anyways, and he knows Scotch Gaelic, and he teaches the Scotch Gaelic there. And I said to him, I asked him, "Is there any difference, do you think it's originally the same language that we had?" And he said, "Definitely, it was the same language. The Scots and the Irish are practically the same race."

And that was in the fifth century, but, I mean, the separation came, for example, in the King Henry the Eighth, where the Reformation of the sixteenth century came. They went Protestant, like. And that's one of the reasons. But he said it definitely was the same language. But now this woman on the boat said, you know, for example, duddus, duddus, in Gaelic, it's a door. And she had things like the kiddie, you know, the kiddie. And she had words, but if she uses a sentence, like,

there would be words here and there that would throw you right off, you know. But it's very, very close, you know, and if you, the Scotch people, of course, if you see them, they are for bagpiping. The Irish, of course, are great for bagpipes, you know, and music, too. And the Scotch is very much that way too, you know. Their musical culture is very much the same, yeah. Although in religion they are different, that's all.

LEVINE: Well, now, what was the name of the ship that you came on?

CONCANNON: Celtic, Celtic.

LEVINE: And where did it leave from?

CONCANNON: From Liverpool. We left from Liverpool.

LEVINE: Now, how did you get to Liverpool?

CONCANNON: Uh, we went, we had to, first of all, from Galway, we went on the train from Galway to Dublin, Dublin. Well, then after we got to Dublin we had to go to the, to the American consul to be examined, you know.

LEVINE: Well, how did Dublin, is that the first time you had ever been?

CONCANNON: That's the first time I ever saw Dublin.

LEVINE: What did . . .

CONCANNON: But I was not interested in Dublin that day.
(he laughs) I had only one thing on my mind, to pass the test, you know. And so . . .

LEVINE: And what was the exam like?

CONCANNON: Eh?

LEVINE: What was the examination like?

CONCANNON: The examination, you know, to my knowledge, for example, we were put wise to it. And not say, if you said that you were coming to America for a steady job, that you had a steady job, that would disqualify you right away. So I told them I was coming to America to visit my uncle for six wee years, which, to me, six years I was so young. Six years at that time is like forty years now, but that's how it worked. From Hollywood there is a, they call it Kingstown now, but that, they used to

call it Kingstown at that time. It's outside of Dublin, about nine miles. Well, they brought us out there, and we went over across on the main boat to Holyhead, England. And from Holyhead, England we were probably two or three hours on the train when we landed in Liverpool. We didn't sleep that night, because we had to be on the boat the next day at nine o'clock, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about England that struck you?

CONCANNON: No, dear. No, I didn't, because, as I said, we had one thing on our mind, and I wasn't interested in anything because, you know, that everything would be okay and that we'd pass, and so forth. But I remember the lady that kept us there. Mrs. Christie was her name in London, a very nice woman, who stayed there. But we didn't go to bed or anything. We just stayed for, until when she brought us to the boat the next day, you know. And then, we left there the sixteenth of April and because there was a lot of English people going to Halifax, the boat went to Halifax first. And on account of that, it delayed us a day. Otherwise the Cunard Line and the

White Star Line, at that time, we were, I was in the White Star Line, it would take eight days to London, to New York or Boston. It would take, but it took us nine days on account of Halifax, you know.

LEVINE: I see. Do you remember, was it hard to say goodbye to your father and mother?

CONCANNON: No. Well, I'll tell you, I wasn't very lonesome because we were not sure. I was afraid, like, that people would laugh at you, come back at you, went to the American consul and failed then they'd be laughing the next day saying goodbye, you know. No, I wasn't. I remember my poor mother was crying. I didn't cry myself, you know what I mean. I, but another thing, I was gone away from home a year-and-a-half. Maybe that helped me, kind of broke it off for me, you know.

LEVINE: Did you have in mind to return when you, if you got to come to America? Did you have it in mind to do that?

CONCANNON: Well, I did, to tell you the truth, dear. But I was young and I said I was sorry. My mother died in 1928, and I would have gone back to see my mother,

really, you know what I mean, because my mother, she worked hard to raise a family, you know, poor in our time. I remember women, you know. There was no such a thing as dentures. Well, the rich people had them, you know, but the country people, you know. Women had children and they would lose a lot of her teeth. And I remember my mother, she was probably, when I left, maybe around fifty years old, but she looked way older than she did on account of the way she worked so hard. And, I mean, for all the people over there, they bake the hard bread, the crisp bread in the oven. And the diet, I would say, it was all right for the young people that, but for the older people, I mean, up in their sixties and seventies. They didn't have the luxuries like you have here today over there.

LEVINE: You didn't grow vegetables besides potatoes, did you?

CONCANNON: Oh, yes, dear. Oh, we had, we had onions and we had turnips, you know what I mean, turnips. And we used to call another one, mangoes, we used to call. I don't know what you call that, mangoes. We used to feed them to the cows. And, of course, a lot of,

it's a lot of cabbage. For example, the ridges. Over near our place, they plant the potatoes in the ridge, like. And it would be a dike here and another ridge. And in this dike they'd plant cabbage so that the ridges were used for the cabbage heads, you know. And so they used it lots of times. They'd feed them to the cattle, too. They were good, you know, feeding. You know, just cut the head of cabbage and throw it over the fence to the cows. They'd eat it, you know. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. So when you got aboard ship, the Celtic . . .

CONCANNON: Yeah.

LEVINE: What was the voyage like?

CONCANNON: The voyage?

LEVINE: The voyage, the voyage. The trip on the ship.

CONCANNON: Yeah, it was a hundred dollars, as I said, you know.

LEVINE: Was it, did you have a good time on the ship?

CONCANNON: Oh, yeah. We had a wonderful time, really, you know, because we had, you know, there was two, there was three decks, you know, a side deck like that,

and the middle deck, and another side like that. So we used to be, but those who danced was on the middle deck, you know. You know, there was, they had music there, Irish music and dancing, you know, very good. And the food was very good and fine. We were in second class, of course. The first class, for example, I remember the bells would ring in the morning. We know that was for the first class, and we'd have to wait maybe up till eight o'clock, nine o'clock, before our breakfast would come, you know, the second class, you know.

LEVINE: And what, where did you eat?

CONCANNON: Down, they had a beautiful dining room on the boat, you know, oh, yes. The Celtic was quite a big boat, you know.

LEVINE: And was the food, the food was good?

CONCANNON: The food was good, you know what I mean, solid food and, you know, marmalades and juices, and the food, you know, meat and everything, all I can recall there. And they had a bar on there, but I didn't, I never drank anything from it. But they had a bar on the ship, too, for those who wanted to take a drink,

you know. For those, but we (he laughs), we didn't have much money, you know. We didn't.

LEVINE: Did you dance? Did you, were you one of the few people dancing?

CONCANNON: Oh, yes. I, oh, yes. I used to like to dance, you know what I mean. We used to have, well, there's a stackabally. It's an Irish step, you know. That they swing, you know. There's, for example, two bars, as they call them. And the other second two, second bars that you're swinging, you know. But I used to like dances when I was young like that. I, dances, yes. We were, you know, we were really happy, you know. Although we were strange to each other. Like, let's say, you went to, from here to Canada, your group from Westbrook. Probably you never saw them, but we all, we were all looking for the same objective, to land in this country over there. So we had a nice time. I enjoyed it. I, we had three weeks on the boat, you know. I said, I mean, I spent nine days but I thought, I said to myself a number of times, I wouldn't care if I spent three weeks on the boat. We had a good time, you know. Dancing and, you know, accompanying together,

you know.

LEVINE: And did you sleep in small cabins?

CONCANNON: A bunk. We were in bunks, you know, there. Well, why, I would say, I would say the bunks they had there were almost like, very much like my kitchenette, you know, here. For example, two beds on this side, two beds, and the space between, then you'd, the space between, there was a washbowl where you'd shave yourself, you know, and a window that you could look out on. But over me, I was on a bunk, on the lower one. And I remember there was an Englishman, a very stocky fellow, a middle-aged man. He was sleeping above me. I was afraid the bed would break and he'd fall down on me, of course, I mean, because he was a heavy man. But I was, I was in with three Englishmen, you know. Of course, that's the time of the Black and Tans and all that. But they were very nice to me. I remember, for example, as I told you, I bought my, my blue suit in Galway, and I had my other suit on. But this Englishman told me, you know, probably he was a salesman or something, well-dressed up. He saw, he was wrapping up my suit nice, and he wrapped it, he

showed me how to wrap it up so when I landed it wouldn't be so wrinkled. So he was, you know, so they were nice to me. I didn't, you know, make anything other than going in there. Of course, I used to go in there to sleep. That's about all. But in the morning I didn't ever went back to it, you know, unless I'd shave, or something like that, you know.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: Was it strange to be with English, with Englishmen?

CONCANNON: No, dear, not to me. No, I really don't, for example, you know, I have, I have no, over in Coventry England. I have two nephews, my brother's two sons and his daughter, three there. In London I have my sister's two daughters and her son-in-law, who's married to her. Then I have another boy. The oldest boy belonged to my brother. So I will come, my other nephew, who was living with my sister now, with my sister, he's the oldest boy. He's fifty, probably going on fifty-eight or something like that. But he never got married, you know. He

didn't want to get married. But he was over in England for three years, and he told me one time (he laughs), he said, "I'd rather work for an English boss than for an Irish boss." You know, he got along with them fine, you know. As far as the English, I mean, the English, there is a lot of, in politics and, you know, they misjudge themselves. The common English people, you know, is nice. And my niece now, for example, who's in London. And she takes care of a house, a very out, this big businessman. And he gives her the key, and she's the one that's taking care of it for years, you know what I mean. They were always nice to her, you know, and her husband.

LEVINE: Putting yourself back in the way you were when you set out for America, the only Englishmen you really knew were the Black and Tans.

CONCANNON: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: So these were the first . . .

CONCANNON: Yes, yes, dear. And, you know, that's the Black and Tans. And, of course, I mean, the prejudice, the bigotry, the thing that was emphasized for us, like,

in Ireland, is the bad side, you know, about the English. Well, the poor English people themselves, ordinary like myself, they didn't have nothing to say about it. I mean, say IRA over in Dublin and Belfast, Ireland, now, you hear sometimes, and Piercely, there are two groups, Protestant and, I don't know. I think the IRA, they call, they're supposed to be Catholic, but I think a lot of them are Communists. Some of them, they went over to what's his name there, to, oh, he's a radical in the East there, you know. I cannot think of his name in person. They were trained revolutionaries over there, you know, trained.

LEVINE: Mercenaries?

CONCANNON: You know, with bombing and stuff like that, how to bomb. Qaddafi, Qaddafi. Some of them, they said, went over there and was trained by Qaddafi there. Well, of course, I mean, dear, my religion, my Catholic faith that the dear Lord taught us love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that persecute you. And, you know, he said, "He that kills a man." You know, when Christ was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, St. Peter

got the sword and knocked the head off of one of the high priests, the soldiers of the high priests. He heard him and he told Peter, "Put down your sword. Don't fight. If you fight with the sword, you will perish by the sword." So I say we are taught if we are led to it, but in parts of it like, like the Jews. They didn't live up to their faith themselves. And Catholics, very often they don't live up to their responsibility, either. I mean, there is, we are not supposed to hate anybody. I don't care for their (?), but, and their religion, you know. But I think (?) said, "Do good to them that hate you. You know, do good to all men." That's really the Christian religion, not an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth. So that's why I don't believe, I believe, for example, I would like to see Ireland free and all that, but the objective is bad. I condemn, you know what I mean. If you cannot get it, if you can't get it free without fighting you're going to kill somebody. You know, the IRA now, in Belfast there, they killed a lot of innocent Protestants, you know. They had nothing to do with it. And it only aggravates the thing. It only makes it worse.

LEVINE: Did you think in that religious way when you were twenty?

CONCANNON: Oh, I did, dear. I did. I would, thank God I never wanted to hurt anybody. That's one thing I did. I joined, you know, because 1917, I think, after the revolution in Dublin, that's when they started in Dublin. And our schoolteachers joined us. We got joined, you know. And we used to march on a Sunday, and parade around for somebody. But there was no soldier there. I wouldn't say, we didn't get no real training, I mean. But it was kind of a unity, like. And because of that unity I, for example, we, I'd be killed in the draft only for that, I think. I mean, killed over in France in 19. I had three brothers older than myself, and I was sixteen. And in 1916 the four of us got our draft papers from the war, the war office in London. They were going to draft all the Irish and send them, and all you'd get that time is three months' training, and they would ship you out of the trenches. And, of course, I mean, they got slaughtered out there. You know, thousands of the Irish got killed fighting for the British. But I think on account of the uprising, in

1916 in Dublin, and there was voting, I remember, in 1918, they voted, I remember I voted, excuse me. And they voted against the draft that they would not fight with the British. And I think that saved them because they figured they'd have to slaughter an awful lot of them, you know. They wouldn't fight. So I think that's what saved us from going there, dear. I had three brothers older than myself, and I was the fourth one. I was sixteen, going on sixteen, at the time, and I got my paper. Well, the four of us, my father had nobody left but my sister. She was about, at that time she was about eight or nine years, and my other brother Thomas, he was about two years younger than I was, fifteen, fourteen. That's all my father would have. So, I mean, you can see that, dear, how unfair that was. Yeah. But I remember in 1917, before this country went to war, there was a paper printing at that time that the war would last about two months at that time, that Germany was winning. That's the time that Germany invented the hand grenades. They did an awful lot of slaughter with the hand grenades before the British picked it up, you know. Some of them that did not explode, and experimented on it,

and they made their own bombs, you know, their own hand grenades. But Germany was the first one that used it. But I remember distinctly in 19, that period, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, when you were coming on the ship, on the Celtic, was there a steerage class? Were there a group of people on the ship who were down in the bottom, in the hold of the ship?

CONCANNON: Uh . . .

LEVINE: It would be lower than third class. It would be called steerage class.

CONCANNON: Oh, no. I never heard that, dear. I think we were what you'd call the poorest class, and we were called Second, Second Class, you know. But no, there was, you know, we had, as I told you, we were on the second sitting, as they call it, the second sitting, and breakfast, dinner, supper, I guess. And I would say, you know, the crew and everybody else, they were not really treating, you know, they had never, I never remarked that any of them insulted, you know. They were very polite, all I can say, very polite. You know, that was, the

Celtic was a beautiful ship, you know. I wish, if I would have known, I wish I had a picture of her, at that time, I would cherish it, you know, as a picture. Oh, they had beautiful ships, you know, the White Star Line, you know. There was the Cunard Line and the First Star Line.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember the ship coming into New York Harbor?

CONCANNON: I do, dear. Oh, I do. And I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty, you know. And we came into New York Harbor, I think, if I remember correctly, it was Saturday night, and we had to wait there until Sunday or Monday morning because Saturday night, Sunday and Monday. Monday they took us off, you know, to go to Ellis Island, you know.

LEVINE: What did, what happened when you approached the Statue of Liberty?

CONCANNON: Oh, yeah. We were happy, oh, sure. And one of the astonishing things that I never forgot, that astonished me, you know. Because, for example, I was brought up in the country. I knew, out in the country, maybe out in this country too, when there

was no lights, you know, a dark night you could hardly see the road there, pitch dark. But that's where I was brought up, in a country place. But one of the astonishing things I saw that stayed in my mind is the glare of lights along the island. You know, along the island, New York, there. Oh, out in the Harbor you could see, there were beautiful sights. And then we used to get the Lipton tea. I remember my mother used to buy Lipton tea over there. And I saw this big sign flashing on and on, "Lipton's Tea and Coffee." Like that.

(he laughs) And I got, you know, it took me some years. I think it was in 1925 I went, I had, my uncle, an uncle of mine on my mother's side living in Hoboken, New Jersey, and I went to visit them. And there was, a few blocks away where the big sign was, it was still going on, that it was, "Lipton's Tea and Coffee." But, I mean, I felt home. I never, I never regretted coming to America, you know. I liked it always, enjoyed myself. And the good Lord was good to me. I always had good health, you know. I had a few accidents. I fell, oh, from a school window one time back in my, twenty-four years, maybe twenty-four years ago. And, oh, I

broke, you know, my wrist and I guess my pelvis, you know. I was two months in the hospital. But other than that my health was very good, you know.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about Ellis Island. What, how did you experience Ellis Island?

CONCANNON: Well, I cannot be honest with you, dear. I cannot say much about it because, as I said, we were conscious. I would call it an inferiority complex. We had a lot to learn and we, you know, to cope with the new system and the government. And I didn't, all we were interested is to go and test it and we passed and get out. But I mean I didn't take no, I had no interest in looking around at Ellis Island. I couldn't give you any description of it, I know.

LEVINE: Did someone meet you there?

CONCANNON: No, dear. No, no, no. Nobody met me until I came to the Union Station back here. You know, there was a Union Station back here, and they got rid of it here about twenty-odd years ago, but it was a beautiful station. My uncle met me when I got off of the train, when I got off of the train there.

LEVINE: Well, after you came from Ellis Island, then where did you get the train?

CONCANNON: The train, when we got off of Ellis Island they put us on a boat, and this boat brought us to South Boston, to South Station in Boston. In them days they used to have, I don't know if they have it today, but they used to have a boat coming from New York. And we got off at South Station. And myself and this friend of mine, my friend who died many years ago, they put us on a, on a horse and buggy and drove us to the North Station, and that's where we, and the lady at the North Station put us, gave us a ticket and put us on a train, and we were all set, and we came here to Portland. My uncle, my uncle met me and his sister met this fellow that was with me.

LEVINE: I see. Did any one of the forty people that you came with on the boat, were any of them turned back?

CONCANNON: Uh, no. The only, the only one I heard at Ellis Island is the one that was calling the dances, you know what I mean. He was one, dressed up. But, I heard, but not definitely, I heard that he didn't

pass. I don't know, was it TB or was it a disease or something like that. But he was a very nice, dressed up fellow, you know. Smart, you know. I don't know what happened. But I don't know how many of them, I couldn't tell you how many, because you, we had no way of knowing who passed and who didn't pass, you know.

LEVINE: Well, did many of them come to Portland that came with you on the boat?

CONCANNON: There was the only two, we came to Portland, myself and this man Flaherty. That's the only two that came to Portland at that time. Most of them came to Boston, some of them in New York, you know.

LEVINE: Well, when your uncle met you, what was your uncle's name?

CONCANNON: Mark, Mark Concannon. Mark Concannon. He was my father's brother, you know.

LEVINE: Now, when, what were your first day or two like here in Portland?

CONCANNON: Oh, God. I remember, he brought me down, there was a store down there, Portius Mitchell. And, of

course, in them days, they used to sell, because the longshoremen down here, they used to have a lot of ships there. There was twelve hundred longshoremen.

Seventy percent of those that was longshoremen from Galway, you know. They were Irishmen from Galway, so it was common, everybody had a pair of overalls in them days, and a jumper, you know. And that's the first place, he brought me down to Portius, a couple of days afterwards to buy me a set of overalls and my jumper, you know. And the next thing I noticed around where the (?) is now there was a store there, oh, and I saw these red apples. I thought they were painted, you know, at first. Because, I mean, in Ireland you see the apples, but they're green. Even when they're ripe they're green, but I never saw anything like that, like so beautiful. And of course they were, they were built up on a big, big, you know, laid out in an advertisement. It was so attractive, so beautiful.

Yes, that's one of the things, how I got my, then I got acquainted with some of the fellows that came from my place. We worked together on the railroad there and . . .

LEVINE: You got a job right away?

CONCANNON: Oh, I had a job, you know. The first thing, I think I was only here, I went to work for John Romano. There was an Italian contractor at that time. They were the one that built, oh, South Portland High School. But, it's not a high school any more. It's a junior high school, I guess they call it now. But that was in 1919. But in Fort William they were building some, I don't know what kind of a big shed, at that time, because Fort Williams, out here at my time, there were the soldiers used to come there, you know. There was, I mean, a whole regiment of soldiers. There was another place out in the ocean there, Fort Prevel. They used to have soldiers there. They used to have a lot of soldiers. That's why a number of the Irish fellows ended up marrying someone, you know, that's married, you know? They, because they used to work, you know, in the summertime the Yanks, we used to call them the Yanks, the rich people back from the western farm, they used to have mostly all domestic Irish children working for them. And in the summertime they'd move out to the cape there, you know, in the summer or

so. And the girls, of course, in them days they used to have the electric cars, you know, open. I don't know if you ever saw any of them.

LEVINE: No.

CONCANNON: Wide open, you know, an electric car. They were nice, you know. In the summertime they were open, you know. And those soldiers I guess would be coming in, and that's how some of them got acquainted with them, you know. They got the men marrying the . . .

LEVINE: Was there a large Irish community here in Portland?

CONCANNON: I would say this, you know, that church there, now, dear, you know, across from over here, that was practically, you know, a good five thousand people living, they were practically all Irish, you know. All Irish longshoremen and their offspring and so. In the meantime their offspring, I'd say they got married and went and moved out. The automobile revolution took place, and so they moved out to Scarborough, you know, out in the country way, you know. It was constant, a lot of the Irish, when they came here, of course, they were always

constantly freighted into town, like Boston, New York, Chicago and Portland, they didn't. But, for example, on my case, I never had a car in my life. I had no occasion to get a car, because I always walked to the job, you know. The job I had, it's only a matter of where the job was. I used to walk in the winter time on the long shore, and then, then I was, you know, I went up to the Second World War I took a job as a fireman up at the Mercy Hospital, across what you see here. I was there for maybe ten years or eleven years. But I left because I couldn't adjust myself to the night shift very much, you know.

LEVINE: So you were a longshoreman?

CONCANNON: I was a longshoreman, I would say, for about seven years. I was a longshoreman for seven years. We worked, in the summertime worked outdoors for a lot of companies and, you know, for a contractor sometimes. And in the wintertime, because then they down the Grand Trunk here, down the Grand Trunk there used to be sixteen, there used to be, you know, there used to be eight, eight locks there, and you could get two big ships in each lock, you know.

There used to be sixteen ships there at one time. Most of them all came from England, you know. You know, and we used to grain, load them with grain and boxed meat that used to come from Canada. Most of the goods that were slaughtered was from Canada, from Toronto and those places. And we worked there, you know. In the wintertime was good, you know. I remember 1922 I worked about forty hours one week on a grain that, I remember I made sixty dollars. Sixty dollars in them days was good money, you know, because the average wages was about twenty, twenty-five, twenty-five anyways, you know. Even those who worked uptown, you know, had to go, executive jobs there, very few of them probably wasn't getting any more than that. But I mean, we made, you know, longshoremen, in the wintertime, even though it was a lot lower. I never would like to do it as my living, but during the period there, you know, when I was working on the railroad I got laid out in November. My uncle had me join long shore, so that's how I happened.

LEVINE: So first you worked on the railroads, then you went to the long shore?

CONCANNON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then after that?

CONCANNON: Then in the summertime, I was here in 1925, and in the summertime I used to probably work for the water company because a long shore, down the Grand Trunk, all the business that they, because it was all Canadian business, and they used to bring you down to St. John's of Brunswick because the ice was gone. The reason they used to have it, the reason we used to get so much of the Canadian stuff here is because the harbor was frozen down in Montreal there. They couldn't handle it in the wintertime. But in the summertime all the missus went down to Montreal, you know.

LEVINE: I see.

CONCANNON: And so we went to work for contractors or somebody like that, you know. Each according to whatever your taste was, you know what I mean.

LEVINE: So when did you meet your wife?

CONCANNON: Oh, I met my wife, I met my wife in 19, 19, June, I

think this is 1930. I met my wife in 1930. I came, I was up, working up in New York, you know, after I, I came from Notre Dame, and I was working up at the Erie railroad in New York, and I was making twenty-seven dollars a week. But I wasn't feeling good. I wasn't, I know I wasn't feeling good and I told my uncle up there that I'd like to, I was a, there was a man living at that time, Brother Andre in Montreal, that he was a great cure man, and his reputation was high. So I wanted to visit him, and my uncle told me, "Why don't you stop over," he said, "on your way, and see your two uncles in Portland?" Because I had two uncles here, and I visited. And then my cousin, who was doing domestic work too, she was chumming around with my wife like. They were two young girls doing domestic work back in the (?) there. And she found out I was living out, I mean, out with uncle. And she called me up on the phone and she asked me would I come and visit her, you know what I mean. So I went to visit her, you know, because she was my first cousin. And my own wife was with her, at that time. And on the way home she asked (he laughs), my wife was working for a Doctor Moulton up here near, I don't know if

you are acquainted with this place, Tully. There's a place over here, the undertaker on State Street, on this street, Tully the undertaker. Well, the house next to it is Dr. Moulton's old original house. That's where my wife used to work, you know, for them. And they were a very nice couple, you know. She said, you know, they were very, very kind couple, always got along together very good. But anyways, that's how, my cousin asked me would I leave her home, and that's how I happened to get acquainted with my wife, you know.

LEVINE: And then did you see her for a long time before you got married?

CONCANNON: Uh, no. We were only going together about six months when we got married. Yeah. And I was, you know, I was going on thirty years, so I decided I, you know, my age, you know. All my friends, for example, I chummed around with, they were all married. They were all married. The other Irish fellows that I chummed around with, they were all married, and I decided, I decided I'd get married. So I never regretted getting married, you know.

LEVINE: What was it about your wife that, what was it about your wife that . . .

CONCANNON: Well, she, I know she was a very good girl. She was a very (?) good girl, she was. That's one of the reasons I married her, dear. So I, you know, she was a, and she, my poor wife, you know. Even for one of the kids, one that my daughter got married, they had a tough time putting on, she never would use rouge or anything like that, but she allowed them to put it on the day of the wedding. (they laugh)

LEVINE: What was your wife's name?

CONCANNON: Uh, Catherine.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

CONCANNON: Her maiden name, Feeney.

LEVINE: Feeney.

CONCANNON: Feeney. But no relation to what's his name there, oh, Feeney. I was going to say, what's his name in Boston there? Politician in Boston, it's not. Yeah, and she was Feeney, and she was, oh, she came

here in 19, uh, '24, and she was out here probably in '24. She was here about six years when she got married I guess, yeah.

LEVINE: And then how many children did you have?

CONCANNON: We had ten, dear.

LEVINE: Oh!

CONCANNON: We had ten children. Three of them died in infancy, though, then seven of them lived. But my daughter, who was married, and she had ten children, married French. They had ten, and she died in '86. My wife died in '75, and my Joe, Peggy and Joe, they were twins, and Joe died about a year afterwards, you know. About '87. So there's two of them, died, three, that, you know, plus the three babies, and so I got five living now, you know. Kevin, Jerry, he works down in the Finance Department at the City Hall here, and Steve, the priest out here in Scarborough, and Vincent who was here today from Boston, and Maryanne, she's a nurse. I think she works maybe two days a week now in one of those convalescent homes. She's up in Connecticut. Her husband was working here, but he got transferred up

to Connecticut. That's where they are now. She's up there, you know, for maybe ten years since they moved up there.

LEVINE: How did you, how many grandchildren do you have?

CONCANNON: We have, grandchildren, twenty-four grandchildren, and I have about thirty great-grandchildren. Yeah. Yeah, yes. Because my daughter, Maryanne, and Peggy, who got married. Well, all the kids are married, and one of them, one of them has three, the other one has four, then the one has two. The other one has three, and Eileen, she's going to have the second baby. And I would say I counted them, you know, I know she's got eighteen, eighteen, I don't know if it's eighteen or nineteen, you know. She would have grandchildren, which are my great-grandchildren. Then in Boston Patty, who was here today on business, he got six grandchildren to four daughters, they're married. Six, and my Maryanne in Connecticut, they have two, you know. So that's what it is. So I think I got about thirty great-grandchildren. (they laugh) Yeah.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: Well, thinking back over your life in Ireland and coming here, what are you proudest of? What makes you proud?

CONCANNON: Well, I'll tell you the truth about it. I'm so happy, I'm happy that I came to this country, I'll tell you, because of the fact that I had opportunities to read and to broaden my mind and see different things that if I would have stayed on the farm out there I would, I would be absolutely cut off from a lot of things that I got to know here. And, you know, I would say America, I always liked it, because it's a great country, a great country. If anything's so wrong, the economy and all that, I think that one of the reasons for that today is greed that it's killing the economy. They would, you know, people, no matter how much they get, for example, you know, they are not satisfied. I think that's one of the basic causes of trouble here in the economy. Because, for example, when my son died in '70, '87, because he was living with me and we had, the will was made out, we were going to leave him everything. So I had to go and change the will

after he died, and I met this lawyer, very, very popular lawyer here in Portland, Ralf Lancaster. He's a very outstanding, upright lawyer. So I told him about the death. So he asked me about the price of my house, like. And I told him, you know, that I would say probably seventy-five thousand if it sold at eighty thousand, you know what I mean. Dawn on Grand Street, a modest, small family house. Well, you know, my granddaughter who was in the real estate, she valued it at ninety-five thousand, but I wouldn't have the conscience to take that if anybody offered me. I didn't. But I sold it for eighty thousand and five hundred, I guess. But I told Lancaster unless the prices will come down, that's one thing that stayed in my mind. Oh, he said, "No." He said, "The prices won't come down. They will keep on going up." This is, a couple of years after that everything crashed, you know. So people with great brains, they could not foresee. People, you know, I mean, like a donkey once said that they are intelligence, and I see they could not foresee what was going to happen, dear. And I see, this is a beautiful country, but greed is ruining it. No matter how much they want, they want more, see. And

another thing about it, I believe in unions myself.

I joined the union when I was first here. But I know in many of them they abuse themselves, they abuse themselves. For example, while you're working for the water company here, and let's say I'm satisfied that the company's treating me right and I'm getting well-paid. And what the, like the union leader would say, "Well, they got a raise in this union over here, so we should go for a strike, too."

Because, not because we need it, but because there, let's keep going to, getting ahead of us. Something like that. That's the way I describe it. They abused it. One example I will use on that, when Reagan was president, let's say eight or nine years ago, maybe about that period, the controllers, air controllers out in the airport here now, the government offered at that time a thirty percent raise and they weren't satisfied. Their leader, their union leader, he said wanted seventeen thousand dollars across the board raise. So Reagan, and I think he did a very good job, he gave them forty hours to get back or lose their jobs. A lot of them did lose their jobs, but they had nobody to blame but themselves. (an airplane passes overhead)

Because my son in Boston who is a schoolteacher, and graduated from college, of course, and he was a school teacher for about twenty years. He said to be an air controller you don't have to have a college degree. If you have, all you need to have is a high school diploma and you go and take the examination and if they think you are qualified, if you have good judgment and like that, you have to have a good judgment to be one of those air controllers. Then, if they hire you, they train you for three years and during that three years they're giving you enough money to get by on yourself. Well, now you figure out people that come from poor families, let's say my kids, you know, we were brought, and in the name of goodness why wouldn't they be satisfied, you know what I mean? Why wouldn't they instead, a lot of them could say, "Well, I'd be way better off than on my dad." I mean, you know, luxuries and things. But, so that's what I meant. It's abusive. When the people are, when people are free to drive, if I was young man today, for example, I'd rather work for a company that wouldn't belong to no union at all. If I know they'd treat me right, you know. Because, you know,

a lot of companies, you know, that they did out here. They were out here in Westbrook, for example. Now, S.T. Warrens, they were very good to their workers all through the years. They bought a gymnasium, they made a gymnasium for Westbrook there. They have a hospital there. My own daughter works there, a fine hospital, and they supply all the heat and steam, and they don't (?), they don't have to hire any firemen or anything. And then they want, they once said they won't join the union, and after they joined the union they'd merge in with another company. Now, a lot of them, they lost a lot of their rights, you know, the company. But I would say, that's what I mean. I'm trying to describe it the best I can. I say, unions, unions have gone too far in too many cases, and they had no motive, an example, but greed. They said, "Well, this fellow is getting ahead of us." I mean, it's not the idea that I'm making a comfortable living. It's because the other fellow is making better than I am. Why should I worry about that?

LEVINE: Let me ask you this. What is your old age like?
How do you feel . . .

CONCANNON: Well, I'll tell you, dear, Ms. Levine. I'll tell you, my old age, I enjoy my old age as good. And I deplore, I deplore when people at my age gets depressed like, they say it's lonely, and all that stuff. I'm a reader, and I enjoy myself, you know. I'm as happy now in my old age as when I was twenty-four years old. I'll tell you the reason why, dear. Because in them days when I was young, when I was married I was worrying about a job, and I was worrying to get fired or something like that, I had something to worry about. I had to get up every morning and go to my work. I had responsibility. Now that my responsibility is gone I'm on my own. Nobody bothers me. I'm not responsible. My own kids take care of themselves. I don't have to worry about them. And I say I enjoy my old age as good as when I was young because, I mean, we have to go, you know, it's no use for me to say, "Oh, I wish I was young again." What's the use of trying to go back, you know. (he laughs) You have to go, and I say, no. I'm not one bit, some people, I notice, down here, you know, they get lonely. They're by themselves. They've got to have somebody to entertain them. But no, I'm not that. I'm very

happy that I am, and I appreciate it here, because really here in this place nobody bothers you. Everybody has their own privacy, here, too. Everybody has their own privacy. You know, you, I got the same privacy that I had in a one-family house down on Grand Street. And, of course, nobody bothered me except my own friends, and they would come to visit me. But I can say I got the same privacy here. I'm here for a little over three years now. Last, three years ago last March I came here.

LEVINE: Well, do you find that you think back over your life now that you have more time and you don't have to go . . .

CONCANNON: Yeah. Well, I heard, I heard an old man, an old farmer in my village back in Ireland one time, I said something like that question to him. "Mark," I said, "if I were you, if you had your life to live over again what would you do?" He said, "I would live differently," he said. "I would live different." But in my own case I, the way things worked out for me, I went through poverty in the Depression and all that. But honest-to-goodness, I

mean, when I look at it, at the Depression and the hard life, but we were happy. I say, you know, with contentment, dear, it's very hard to lose it. If you're a millionaire and if you're not happy, what good is it? Money is not everything, dear. We have to have it, of course, but it's not, it's not the key to all our success, you know, to all our happiness in this world, you know. But I see, I wouldn't want, maybe I'd, you know, I'd be more cautious and things if I had my life to live over again, you know what I mean? But nobody (he laughs) nobody gets that chance. Nobody gets that chance. But I said I don't regret my experience. I don't regret, for example, I had my experience over in Galway, over in Ireland. But I never regretted coming here. I never regretted coming to this country. I mean, I always like it here, and freedom, you know what I mean. And a lot of people, you know, they have. It was a lot, America is the land of opportunities for any nationality. I don't care who they are. And I think if they fail sometimes they cannot blame this system here. It's their own fault, I would say, you know. A lot of them, you know, including my own,

some of the Irish, too. They abuse their opportunities themselves, you know. But they didn't make a success of it, I think they had nobody to blame but themselves. But I say it's a beautiful country and I'm glad that I came here, dear. I wouldn't, I wouldn't want it any different. You know, I, somebody asked me a few times would I like to go back and live in Ireland again? No, dear. I wouldn't. I'd like to go back and see the friends and the place and all that, but I wouldn't like to stay there, you know. I wouldn't. I'm so used to this place. Seventy, seventy-one years ago since I came out here in South Portland. That's a long time ago, dear. 1921.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, maybe this is a good place to stop, and I'm very happy you came to this country, too.

CONCANNON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And I'd like to thank you very much.

CONCANNON: Thank you, dear, yeah.

LEVINE: And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I've been speaking with Stephen

EI-212/CONCANNON

Concannon at his home in Portland, Maine, and it's
September 16, 1992, signing off.