

EI-250

MARY JANE POWDERLEY BAITZ

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INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

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ENGLAND, 1922

AGE 11

RESIDENCE: LIVERPOOL

US RESIDENCE: NEWARK, NJ

PORT OF EMBARKATION: LIVERPOOL

Oral Historian's Note: Mrs. Baitz is the sister of Theresa Cole, Interview EI-251. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 3/23/1994.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Tuesday, February 23, 1993. I am here in West New York, New Jersey with Mary Jane Baitz, and Baitz is spelled B-A-I-T-Z. Mrs. Baitz came from England in 1922 when she was eleven years old. Also present in the room are Kevin Daley running the equipment, student intern Grace Oflazian, and Mrs. Baitz's sister, Theresa, who also came with them from England. Good afternoon. Mrs. Baitz, can we start by you giving me

your birth date, please?

BAITZ: September 6, 1910.

SIGRIST: And what's your maiden name, please?

BAITZ: Mary Jane Powderley.

SIGRIST: Spell that, please?

BAITZ: P-O-W-D-E-R-L-E-Y.

SIGRIST: Great. Thank you. Can you please tell me where you were born?

BAITZ: I was born in Liverpool.

SIGRIST: And did you live in Liverpool until you came to this country?

BAITZ: No. We went over, the war was on, the First World War, and we went over to Ireland. My mother brought us over there with my older sister Kathleen. And we stayed there several months, but then we went back. We went, I went to school there, and we never went back to live in Ireland. We used to go visit my mother's folks, her mother and father.

SIGRIST: They were Irish.

BAITZ: Yeah, yeah, both my father and mother. My father was, he was from Termofeckin. Don't ask me how to spell that name.

SIGRIST: Do you know what part of Ireland that's in?

BAITZ: It's in the wee county, County Louth, L-O-U-T-H. And my mother's father lived in Cullen, C-U-L-L-E-N, which is about six miles from Droghda or Drogheda, whichever people, here they say Drogheda. Over there we used to say Droghda.

SIGRIST: What was your dad's name?

BAITZ: Thomas.

SIGRIST: And tell me in words what he looked like.

BAITZ: He was about 5'11", 6', and he had light brown hair. Of course, as I remember him, he was, he worked in the docks, you know, as a longshoreman.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about the kinds of work that he did.

BAITZ: He did that, that was the only thing he ever did.

SIGRIST: What did that entail? What did you have to do?

BAITZ: Unloading bags of cement and stuff off the ships, because that's in Liverpool, the seaport. So he used to go there to work.

SIGRIST: He must have been a strong man.

BAITZ: I guess he was ( she laughs ) because he used to have to carry these things, but I think that was probably one of the causes of his passing on, because he died when he was about I think forty-nine.

SIGRIST: So, it's heavy labor that he's doing.

BAITZ: Yeah. You see, in those days you didn't make the bags. They were like flour bags of burlap. And the cement powder, they inhaled it as they were working, and that's what got into his lungs. But the, now they don't have that. It's like the people who were in the mines, they don't get the dirt any more.

SIGRIST: This was a real occupational hazard for him.

BAITZ: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: This kind of dust.

BAITZ: And they didn't know about those things in those days anyway. It's just that we were told, you know, after he passed on, that it was, that's what was in his lungs, this cement.

SIGRIST: What was his personality like? When you were a little girl what did you remember?

BAITZ: He was quiet, very quiet. And I used to love to have him, we all had long hair. We wore ribbons, and we used to wash our ribbons. And I'd roll it up, and I used to have to have him, he used to press it in his hands together. You had to have lines in the ribbon as if you ironed it, which we didn't. And I, you know, they used to have, like, breakfast. We used to sit, we didn't sit at the table and eat with our parents. We used to have to sit on the stairs. They ate, and after they were through then we ate. I mean, they were very strict that way.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

BAITZ: Catherine.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name.

BAITZ: Byrne, B-Y-R-N-E.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you the same kinds of questions about your mom. Describe her for me physically in words.

SIGRIST: She was just the opposite of my father. He had the grey eyes and the light brown hair. My mother was brown eyes and brunette, a real brunette. She had very fine features, and she was quiet, you know. She wasn't too, things, you know. She had a lot of, don't forget, we were ten altogether she had. Seven of us survived, lived.

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

BAITZ: The only thing I know is when they were doing Irish step dancing they must have met in the same town because Termofeckin and Cullen couldn't be very far apart. I never went back there.

SIGRIST: Were they fond of dancing, your parents?

BAITZ: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about what you remember about them dancing?

BAITZ: They never danced from when I was, as I remember. I only know that they did, that's how they met. Because

the Irish are great for the step dancing, and my mother and father, that's how they met. They got, she was very young when she married, I think about fifteen or sixteen.

SIGRIST: Can you name your brothers and sisters, all ten?

BAITZ: The oldest brother was Patrick, and then there was my sister Kathleen. And then there was a brother Tommy, Thomas, and then John. And then Margaret, myself, and Theresa, and my mother. That's, that's about all.

SIGRIST: You said that three of the children didn't survive. What do you remember about that?

BAITZ: Well, she, my mother had twins and they only lived a short time. That was before, I don't even remember that. But during the second, the First World War, they had that epidemic over there with the flu. They used to call it the German measles. And I was laying on one end of the bed, and I had a different doctor than my brother, this brother that passed away at that time, Lawrence was his name. He had the same thing, but he didn't survive. He died, he was dead at the foot of the bed, and I was, we had different doctors.

SIGRIST: Talk a little bit about what you might know about how this epidemic hit the town. Do you remember?

BAITZ: Well, all over. Liverpool was very populated, so nearly everybody. We used to, when we went to school they used to take us out of school, the cold classrooms, and walk us outdoors. They'd try, you know, in other words they didn't want you constantly close together, so they used to take us outside.

SIGRIST: So at this time this was something the town was very conscious of?

BAITZ: Oh, yeah. It was, they were having trouble in this country at the same time with the flu.

SIGRIST: The great Influenza Epidemic, sure.

BAITZ: So it was a combination there of the measles and the flu. Of course, naturally, with being at war with Germany, they used to call them the German measles.

SIGRIST: Of course. ( he laughs ) Tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in this big household. What memories do you have of just being a little girl inside this house of lots of people?

BAITZ: Well, the first memories I have was on Whitley Street, which was nearer to the docks, and a lot of warehouses around there. And they, you didn't have toilets in your places where you lived. You had toilets outside. And then from there we moved to Vauxhall Road. That's the place I lived in before we came here. That was a big house, like a whole building, because we were such a big family.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that house for me?

BAITZ: When you walked in, it was really a store. When you walked in the front part it was a store. And then there was like a section where they kept the coal, and then beyond that was the kitchen. And they had a big, iron thing that she used to boil clothes in. And then the outside was a small backyard, you had the toilet outside. And then you had what they used to call back entrance. You had an entrance to the back. They used to call them jiggers. They used to, the kids run through those places. But most all the bathrooms at that place were on the outside, in the yard. And then the, you had two rooms on the first floor and then two rooms on the upper floor. So we all, you know, more or less slept together. I was sleeping with my

sister, and two other sisters. The three of us were sleeping in the one bed.

SIGRIST: How did you heat this house?

BAITZ: There was very little heat. We only had, my father built a fireplace in this part which was the store. That was our general room. And then of course where the kitchen was there was the grate, and then we used to have to clean, polish up that fender with sandpaper so there was no stains on it, because the water, you know, would stain it. And then they have to, the concrete, we used to have to scrub that clean, and then used to use this big lump of, looked like chalk. And we used to make designs on the floor with that, in front of the hearth.

SIGRIST: Let me just fix this wire here. ( he adjusts Mrs. Baitz's microphone ) There you go. Describe the kitchen for me. Describe what your mother cooked on.

BAITZ: Well, it was, the fireplace where you cooked it, it's like set in, and it's just like a bar. It was metal, and the coal would go in there. And they had to, sometimes you had what they'd call a hob on each side where you could put a pot to keep warm. It's like

this would be the stove, where your coals were ( she gestures ), and on each side was a harp. That's what they called it. Even in Ireland we used to have the same setup, too.

SIGRIST: Can you describe some of the foods that your mother cooked when you were a child?

BAITZ: Well, we used to, basically potatoes. That was a big, and my mother wasn't too much, my older sister used to make pies and things like that. And if we got an apple or an orange, we thought we were made up. And you never got money. If you got a penny, boy, you ran to the store and you would buy a carrot. You wouldn't buy candy.

SIGRIST: You were healthy. ( they laugh )

BAITZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me, you say your older sister had some of the cooking responsibilities.

BAITZ: Yeah. She used to go to work, too. Because she, during the war she was working in what they call a Rights Factory, and they made these dog biscuits which they used to give to the soldiers. They call them

"dog biscuits." And she worked there and her hair used to be, she was a brunette. She had, her hair was always white with the flour. And then the oldest brother Pat, he was in the navy during the war. And . . .

SIGRIST: Would the older children be sent to work and then contribute their money to the household?

BAITZ: Well, I don't know whether, I imagine they gave some. I don't know too much about the money angle.

SIGRIST: Did your mother work outside the home?

BAITZ: No, she couldn't. There was too many of us.

SIGRIST: Tell me about some of the other chores that your mother had to do in this house of all these kids?

BAITZ: Well, the washing and the cooking and the cleaning.

SIGRIST: You said there was a big thing for washing clothes.

BAITZ: Yeah. It's like a big round iron pot, very, very big. It's about that, at least it looked big to me. You know, when you're little everything looks bigger than it actually is. But that's where she used to boil the clothes. Because you had to boil your clothes in

those days. You didn't have any of the modern things we have today. And . . .

SIGRIST: Did you have, you talked about polishing the grates. Was there maybe another chore that was specifically yours?

BAITZ: Oh, yes. The knives. All our knives. We used to have to use the sandpaper on the knives and forks. And the knives, you had to make a fancy, right on the tip of the knife. ( she gestures ) You'd go like this to make a design. And those were things we had to do. And we had to help around and do what we could.

SIGRIST: Was there a garden in the back yard?

BAITZ: No. There were no gardens there. There wasn't enough room.

SIGRIST: Where did, where did you buy food?

BAITZ: My mother used to go up to Scotland Road to buy stuff, and that was the shopping area. But you had a good walk, about three blocks, and they were long blocks, to go up there. We used to have, we used to call them, I think we called them the coolies, the Chinese.

You'd see them there, you know, with the ponytail on the back. And they used to, you'd see them, and plus, we'd didn't ever see any colored people, though, at that time.

SIGRIST: And the Chinese sort of ran the stores?

BAITZ: No, you had the Indians too, there, from India. No, they were just walking around. I don't know who ran the stores. But it was a big building where they had, like, stands in the place.

SIGRIST: Did you have any animals, pets?

BAITZ: Cats.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the cats?

BAITZ: Yeah. Oh, I used to, I loved the cats so much we used to, I'd give them a squeeze. And they wanted, we had too many cats, so my mother said we had to get rid of one. So then I was, I had to go find the cat and give it to her. I don't know what she did with it, but we didn't have it any more.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you did as a little girl for fun.

BAITZ: We used to go around on the side streets. We were

never allowed to play in front of the house. And on this side street we'd play, like, throw the ball up against the wall, you know, clap hands, roly poly. Then we used to play what they'd call feeders and rounders, which is the same game as baseball. And we used to have teams, you know, we'd form up sides and run around the bases and hit the ball and all that. Then we used to take a broom, you know, what you call a pushbroom. And if you set it a certain way it would keep falling towards you, and you used to hit it. We had rhymes and songs we'd sing. And they had to, when people would buy cherries in the spring of the year, we used to take the pits. You'd save the pits, you wouldn't throw them away. And we used to call it cherry wops, and we used to hit them up the spout of the building, the rain spout. And then when they'd come out it would be like, whatever your pit hit any other pits, you picked them up, they were yours. These were the kind of games we had.

SIGRIST: Would you say that most of your games were sort of home made? Cherry pits, I mean, you're talking about things that you . . .

BAITZ: You made use of everything. Broken dishes, we saved

them. And we used to play house with it, or make believe it was a store and you were selling. Kids played with themselves, and they didn't have any toys.

We didn't have any toys.

SIGRIST: As a little . . .

BAITZ: I think the only thing we ever had was a top. You know, you'd hit it with the string.

SIGRIST: Did you celebrate birthdays?

BAITZ: No, no. The birthdays were not celebrated.

SIGRIST: How about, tell me how you celebrated Christmas in your family.

BAITZ: Well, we used to look forward to it, and all we ever used to get was, if you got an orange in your stocking and maybe a piece of candy, you didn't get much.

SIGRIST: Did you put a tree up in the house?

BAITZ: No, they didn't have trees. They didn't use trees. At least as far as I can recall, we never had any Christmas trees. They didn't go in for the decoration, which they did, people didn't have it then. People were very poor. Liverpool was basically

predominantly Irish people. They come over from Ireland, because they couldn't make a living. That's why my father came over to Liverpool. You see, my oldest brother and sister were both born in Ireland, and the rest were all born in Liverpool. And my father had to go over there in order to make a living. And he wound up working on the docks.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, for instance, the birth of your sister?

BAITZ: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what you remember about what it was like for a woman to be pregnant and give birth at that time? What do you . . .

BAITZ: Well, we didn't even know my mother was that way. With my older sister Kathleen she, my mother had called her, and she went up. And then, of course, naturally kids pick up stuff. And we were sitting down. We were wondering what was going on. We didn't know nothing. Eventually then my older sister came down and she told us that my mother had had a girl. And she was baptized up in St. Bridget's Church, because we went to school up there.

SIGRIST: I wanted to talk to you, before we get you over to Ireland, because I want to talk about that sort of separately, how old were you when you went over to Ireland? Just when the war broke, or . . .

BAITZ: I was, I don't, I vaguely remember going over, but it was during the war.

SIGRIST: Do you know how old you were, roughly?

BAITZ: Oh, about two, two-and-a-half.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you were young. And you just stayed a few months.

BAITZ: We stayed there for, no. It was more, it had to be more than a few months, because I recall we used to take, my mother used to buy the sack of oatmeal, you know, for oats, for breakfast. And we used to roll the top down, and we made a game out of it. You had to put your hands behind your back and stick your face into the oats and eat them. They're good. Did you ever eat dry oats? I still can eat them. They're very good.

SIGRIST: Again, you know, another example of you had to make

your own fun, basically.

BAITZ: Yes, right. Oh, and then, oh. Then especially in Ireland, I remember one time my brother went, John went up to the front of the, there was a garden there, because Ireland was more countrified, not like Liverpool. And he went up, and there was something waving in the dark, it was already dark. And he come roaring, screaming his head off, banging on the door. I thought he was coming through the door. He said the fairies were after him. ( she laughs ) Because they're great for telling the legends of Ireland and all about the fairies that get you. And if you walked in the fields and you hit the wrong spot you could get lost. You'd get on a trail that you never came back home again. They had some very funny ideas.

SIGRIST: When you were in Ireland, where were you staying?

BAITZ: We stayed with my mother's father.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me, was it just your grandfather or was there a grandmother?

BAITZ: She was, no, she wasn't around, as I recall. She had gone on.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me about what you remember about your grandfather?

BAITZ: Oh, yeah. He was tall, very quiet, and he had a table that was so little, that he ate from. Like that, what you call it, your dining room table or your kitchen table. It was very, very small, and very low. And I used to always wonder being he was so tall why he had such a small table. But that's all they had. And then your mainstay was boiling potatoes. And you didn't dare brush your potatoes with a brush. You had to wash them with your hands. My grandfather would kill you if you used a brush on them, because you didn't want the skin bruised. And he used to raise his own potatoes. He got a little plot of ground. And he used to put his own potatoes in. Because he used to take me with him, and he'd tell me that he had the American beauties and the, what the heck was the other one? Shamrock, I think it was. No, one was American beauty, and I think the other was Shamrock. That was the name of the potato. And they were, oh. When you would boil them in their skins they would just burst open like a snowball. And that was, that was what we'd have for lunch would be a boiled potato

and buttermilk, which was churned. And then we'd have maybe a little dab of butter with your potato, but very little. And then once in a while my mother would make bacon. I think she used to boil it. And it was so greasy. We didn't like it. We'd try to dilute the grease with water, which doesn't work. It gets hard.

SIGRIST: Getting back to your grandfather, what was his personality like, and what was your relationship like with him?

BAITZ: Well, he was very quiet, very nice. I mean, I used to go, like when he used to do his potatoes he'd take me along with him. And he would talk to me, you know, he was very, very pleasant, very nice, a quiet man.

SIGRIST: Was there a story that you'd like to tell, or some anecdote about your grandfather that you remember specifically as a little kid, something he did maybe, or . . .

BAITZ: Not too much. I remember he used to have the big wooden barrel out in the back to carry, to catch the rainwater. That's what they depended on, to catch rainwater.

SIGRIST: You lived with him?

BAITZ: Yeah. We lived in his house. It was a little cottage.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it for me?

BAITZ: You went in the door. It was like similar to stucco, but it wasn't, I don't think. And it was only two rooms, I think. Two rooms or three rooms at the most. And there was not a lot of furniture. I mean, because he was by himself at that time, so I don't remember too much before that.

SIGRIST: That's quite a hoard moving in on a man in a three-room cottage.

BAITZ: But it was just, it wasn't, Theresa wasn't born at that time yet, so it was just like Theresa, no, my sister Margaret and I, and my mother would be over there. That's all. My brother John didn't go over.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your father's parents at all?

BAITZ: No, I never met them. They lived in, his, he had a sister that lived on, by the sea. And the Irish sea used to wash right into their floor where they lived.

You know, you never had a kitchen there. You, that one room was everything, your kitchen and your living room and your dining room. And the water used to wash in when they'd have a bad storm, come right in on the floor. And the floors were dirt, dirt floors. I don't think that house is even standing any more. It probably . . .

SIGRIST: ( he laughs ) It doesn't surprise me.

BAITZ: The sea, I think, probably washed it away.

SIGRIST: So how long did you stay in Ireland?

BAITZ: We were there, I started school there. I'm trying to think how come, that's when we went to, we used to eat the oats. There was, I went to school there.

SIGRIST: You started school in Ireland.

BAITZ: Yeah, and you started at four, so I had to be there, we must have been there better than a year at least.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about starting school in Ireland.

BAITZ: I wasn't, I didn't feel scared. You didn't know enough to be scared about it in those days. You were

taken there and you were told to go. But the teacher, they had a lay teacher. They didn't have any nuns there. And I remember, you know, you learned your ABC's and stuff like that, but not the way they taught you here.

SIGRIST: So you stayed in Ireland for a short amount of time, and then you went back to Liverpool. Tell me what memories you have as a little girl about World War I. When you think back about World War I, what comes to your mind?

BAITZ: I remember seeing the American soldiers walking, you know, on Vauxhall Road. And the kids, especially the boys, used to run after them. And they'd be singing "Yankee Doodle Dandy" and, you know, praising them up to the sky. The same way with the bobbies over there. If somebody ever, boy, did anything wrong, there was no fooling around. They got a hold of you, and they'd take you down to the police station. I saw them take a boy, and everybody would follow. And, of course, actually, they made fun of the bobbies. But they had, they didn't have too much trouble with, you know how boys can get into a lot of trouble and mischievous, and that was their way of doing things.

SIGRIST: What else do you remember about World War I? Do you remember, for instance, any kind of hardships your family suffered because the war was on, or anything you had to do differently?

BAITZ: The only thing was I recall about it was they had to cover the windows up so the light wouldn't come through, because they were just getting, the planes were just starting then, and they didn't want no light to be seen. Like we had in the Second World War, you had to have blackouts. That was what they had there.

SIGRIST: You said that one of your brothers served?

BAITZ: Yeah, my oldest brother Pat.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

BAITZ: He was, he came on once, once or twice, but not too often. Because once, he was around the Dardanelles, in Malta, when he was in the service, so he didn't get home much. I think he used to send my mother money because she used to take me with her to go to pick it up.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when the war was over?

BAITZ: Not too vividly, not too vividly.

SIGRIST: It wasn't a big event in your household?

BAITZ: No, no. I don't think so. And I can remember like we didn't have anything much. They would try to get us to learn how to, memorize the words of songs, "Danny Boy." And "Kevin Barry," that was the one we had to learn. And they'd put a half a, like a farthing up on the mantle piece. In other words, if you learned the word and sang it, you would get the farthing, which was a quarter of a penny. ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: It was something.

BAITZ: Oh, yeah. You thought that was great.

SIGRIST: Tell me about school in Liverpool. When you got back to Liverpool, tell me what you remember about school. Where was the school? Let's start that way.

BAITZ: Well, the first one I don't recall, remember too much about it. That was down at St. Augustan's. But we wound up going to St. Bridget's, which was where we lived in Vauxhall Road.

SIGRIST: That was the house that you lived in.

BAITZ: Yeah, yeah. That's where we lived, the last place we lived in. We used to go to, walk to school. And they had lay teachers. But there was one nun in charge, and you had three different sections. The boys were not mixed with the girls. The boys were on the top floor, and then came the girls, and then when they first started school there was another floor, like they didn't call it kindergarten there, because you started school at four years of age. And the, they used to have us, they had us knitting socks because the war was on, four needles, which is quite a thing to teach kids, but we learned how to do it.

SIGRIST: Why? Why would you have to do that?

BAITZ: They were making them for the, for the boys in the service. So this was, I guess if they came out good that's who got them. And they taught us how to sew, and they were big for teaching you how to dance and wanting you to act. I guess that's why the English are so much into the theater, because of that. Because it was stressed in the schools, and then even people at home were always, the Irish were great for the poetry and telling stories.

SIGRIST: Is there a nun or a teacher who sticks out in your mind that you remember most?

BAITZ: I had one teacher, a Miss Cunningham. She was very thin.

SIGRIST: Why do you remember her?

BAITZ: She had a habit with the nails all the time, like she was cleaning her nails always ( she laughs ) when she'd be talking to us. But she was a good teacher, though. She was a very good teacher.

SIGRIST: Did you like school?

BAITZ: Yeah, I didn't mind it.

SIGRIST: What were you like as a little girl? Describe yourself as an eight, nine, ten-year-old girl.

BAITZ: I was Miss Work, I was a workaholic. I loved scrubbing floors, believe it or not. ( she laughs ) And I liked reading especially. I had one book. It was called The Legends of Ireland. I read that book so many times that I knew it from cover to cover, and that was the only book we had in the house. We didn't have any books.

SIGRIST: Did your parents encourage education?

BAITZ: No, we just did it on our own. My mother used to, my father didn't read. My mother used to have to read the newspaper for him because he couldn't read it.

SIGRIST: Did, was that something that he was embarrassed by, or . . .

BAITZ: No, I didn't think he was, because I guess so many people were like that in those days, you know, that didn't read.

SIGRIST: This wasn't so unusual.

BAITZ: My mother did. They came from the same area, so you'd figure if she learned to read why didn't he? But we never, we naturally wouldn't say anything about something like that. So she wouldn't be, and we did not address our parents as Mom and Pop or Dad. You had to say, "Yes, sir. No, sir. Yes, ma'am. No, ma'am."

SIGRIST: Strict.

BAITZ: Very, very strict. You just had to behave, and you didn't get away with nothing.

SIGRIST: We're going to pause for a second, and Kevin's going to flip the tape and then we'll continue.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: We're now continuing with Mary Jane Baitz. You said that your parents were strict. Tell me how they were strict. For instance, if you did something wrong, how were you punished?

BAITZ: You got fanned on your hiney. You got hit. There was no such thing as getting away with something. And you didn't, you would behave because you didn't want to get hit.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a specific instance where you didn't do something . . .

BAITZ: I did something. I ate, my mother had some raisins up in her room. It was kind of a wooden chest or something. And I guess she was saving them for something, and I found them. Naturally I started eating them. And I kept trying not to eat too many, but I ate too many of them. And when she found it, oh, boy. She found out that they were eaten. So

naturally I didn't want to admit it. And my sister Margaret, it was between her and I, because Theresa was very little at that time. And so finally I had to admit it. And I really got a good shellacking for it.

SIGRIST: Was there somebody in your family who was the most mischievous?

BAITZ: Not really, I wouldn't say, because my brother John, he used to go out with the, you know, with his own age at that time. No, I don't recall too much of that.

SIGRIST: Who was the disciplinarian? I mean, who struck you? Was it your mother or your father?

BAITZ: My mother. My father, all my father ever did was grab you by the ear lobe. And he pinched that so hard, unless your ears are very sensitive when you're a kid, that would hurt like the dickens. But he was very quiet. He didn't, the boys he might have given a cuffing to, but not the girls he didn't.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your religious life. What religion were you?

BAITZ: Catholic.

SIGRIST: And tell me about what you remember about going to church and all of that?

BAITZ: Well, we went every Sunday. I used to go with my mother. She used to go to eight o'clock mass, and she used to take me along with her.

SIGRIST: Was this St. Bridget's?

BAITZ: Yeah. And Theresa was baptized in that church.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the church for me a little bit?

BAITZ: No, I don't recall the outside of it too much. I don't know why things like that don't impress you. But I remember we used to go down Whitley Street, or was it Whitley? No. From Vauxhall, we used to walk, when you were out and the weather was nice, we'd walk. And there was a canal there in Liverpool. I think, I don't know if it was called Leeds at that time. I'm not too sure about that. And I remember this boy that I knew, he lived in a very, very nice house near this canal. And I remember him taking me up to show me his home and it was so beautiful, you know. And the table was all set up for tea and all that. And I said, "Boy, that's nice." I never got to know them, you

know, how kids are, they just do things like that.

SIGRIST: Was there a way that you practiced your religion at home? Prayers, or something along that line?

BAITZ: Yeah. We used to say, you know, like when you'd go to bed at night. When you'd go to bed at night you'd say the rosary. But, you know, it wasn't a constant going on. That didn't exist.

SIGRIST: Were your parents religious people in general?

BAITZ: I wouldn't say they were overly religious, you know, fanatical about it. They, you had to behave yourself. There was no such thing as using cuss words or anything like that. That was taboo. You just didn't do it. You didn't, I guess maybe being you were, they were strict, you didn't take any chances.

SIGRIST: You grew up in this environment. You knew what you could do and what you couldn't do.

BAITZ: Right, right.

SIGRIST: Is there a, is there a tragedy, either a family tragedy or a community tragedy that you remember that happened as a child, something that awful, something

that was awful?

BAITZ: The only thing I remember was before we came to this country was when my father died. I remember him being laid out in a casket, and I even dreamed about it before it ever happened.

SIGRIST: Tell me about that.

BAITZ: And I was, the way they did it over there, you know, they didn't dress you in a suit or anything like that. They wore these shrouds. It was brown and he had his beads there. ( a rustling noise is heard ) And we sat there, and they didn't have any, like you hear over here they talked about wakes, the Irish wakes. It didn't happen in my family. You know, people came in and it was very, you know, orderly. There were no such thing as wild parties. They used to say, people used to love to go to Irish wakes here years old. I never went to one. I never saw that. We didn't have that.

SIGRIST: Was this difficult for your mother after your father died?

BAITZ: Well, it wasn't too long afterwards that we came to

this country.

SIGRIST: Were you already planning to come to this country before he died?

BAITZ: No, not really, no.

SIGRIST: When you were a little girl, what did you know about America?

BAITZ: Well I had, the brother Thomas, he was on, he used to go back and forth on the ships. I guess you'd call it like Merchant Marines or something like that. And everybody, and if something was bought in America, he bought a pair of shoes for my father, I remember this one time. And we thought they were good. They were great, you know, really good. In fact, the shoes we wore over there were clogs. In other words, the upper part would be leather, but the sole of the shoe was wood. And on it they had like you would with a horse, like a horse shoe. They had the metal around on these things. That's the kind of shoes they wore.

SIGRIST: Where did you get those?

BAITZ: Well, they bought them. I don't know. You see, you didn't have stores like here. And my father used to

do, mend all our shoes, too. He used to buy a piece of leather and soak it in water and bang away at it to soften it up and make it flexible, and he had his last, which he could have, you know, he put the shoe on and then he cut the thing out and do the whole thing. He was like a shoemaker, a shoe cobbler. He would have done good if he would have come to this country, but he wouldn't come. He didn't want to come.

SIGRIST: You all had to be very enterprising, didn't you?

BAITZ: Oh, yeah. Because you'd, you had to, your imagination was always working. What you could do, you know, try to keep yourself amused. And then, of course, we used to play the games like hopscotch. We did that outside, and the feeders and rounders around us. And hide-and-go-seek. Oh, we used to call it whip the can. You know, they'd put the can down. The count, it was like hide-and-go-seek only we used a can for it. Their name for it was whip the can.

SIGRIST: Why didn't your father want to come to America? Why was he so dead-set against it?

BAITZ: I don't think he liked changes. Because my mother's

sister, she's the one that brought us all out here. She brought my older sister out, and then they, between the two of them then they brought the five of us out at one clip. And, but he didn't want to come.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your mother's sister. What was her name?

BAITZ: Margaret Laughlin.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Laughlin?

BAITZ: L-A-U-G-H-L-I-N.

SIGRIST: And when did she go over to America?

BAITZ: Oh, she was over here quite a number of years. She worked for a rich family. She was a laundress. You know, they did all that. That's what most people, I guess, went into.

SIGRIST: Was she writing to your mother about America?

BAITZ: I don't know, but then my mother, my father had a brother who lived in Belfast, and he was a tailor. He was like so much higher than we were, you know, education. He came, he had what they call a Chesterfield coat on and the derby. And he was very

nice looking. You know, we were quite impressed with him. And then there was another brother who came, my father's brother. Lawrence was his name. And he worked on the Titanic when it was being built. And they claimed, of course, I don't know if it's true or not, that they wrote on the boards in the Titanic that, "Down with the Pope," and all this sort of thing. They said, that should, they said, "God punished it. That's why it sank." But he worked on all that. They had to do, I think what they do is like putting the stuff between the boards, the ship's chandler, I think they call that, and he worked on that.

SIGRIST: So there is family over here then.

BAITZ: No, they, this, he did that, the Titanic was built in England.

SIGRIST: No, I realize that, but in terms of your family, I mean, you've got some family over here, there was a connection to America.

BAITZ: My mother had a brother over here who lived in Bellville, but we didn't have much contact with him. And my mother had a sister who went up to Boston. She

just had a picture of her, but we never met her because she had passed away.

SIGRIST: Was it your mother who had decided you should come here?

BAITZ: I think, you know, my sister, writing to her made her feel it was the best thing to do. There was nothing there for her.

SIGRIST: Did your sister come before your father died?

BAITZ: Uh, let me see. No, it was after.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what year your dad died?

BAITZ: Uh, I'm trying to think. Theresa was eighteen months old. 19 . . .

SIGRIST: Around 1920?

BAITZ: She was born in 1918, so it had to be about, if she was two, that would be 1920, about that.

SIGRIST: So your sister came over because you had an aunt here.

BAITZ: Yeah. Aunt Margaret.

SIGRIST: Which sister was it?

BAITZ: The oldest sister, Kathleen.

SIGRIST: What did Kathleen do when she got here?

BAITZ: She did domestic work. She worked for a family by the name of Jones in Short Hills, New Jersey. And she used to help with the cooking. You know, you did whatever you could. She always tells the story on herself about they gave her a cucumber to fix, and of course naturally she sees the seeds in it, she started picking all the seeds out of the cucumber. They didn't tell her to cut it with the seeds. You know, things that people did that didn't know anything about. Like we never had the vegetables you had here. Lettuce I never ate. Tomato was a, the only was one who ever got a taste of a tomato was my father. We never ate them. Corn? Never had corn. And a lot of things we didn't have in the way of food.

SIGRIST: So do you think Kathleen is encouraging your mother to come?

BAITZ: I think so. I think she, she worked, she had no way of, my mother had no way of making a living over there.

SIGRIST: What did she do after your father died?

BAITZ: She did domestic work too after we came to this country.

SIGRIST: But when you were still in Liverpool and your dad had died?

BAITZ: I don't know how she managed, I really don't know, unless my sister was sending money to her, and then maybe the oldest brother might have sent something to her.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the procedures that your mother had to go through to get papers and that kind of thing before you left?

BAITZ: No, because somehow or other it seemed, it all went without any hitches, and I don't recall much about it.

SIGRIST: Did you want to come to America, you personally?

BAITZ: Oh, I think we did, because all you heard was glowing stories about this country. They always used to say you could pick the gold off the streets, which is not true. You earned it. But you heard stories like that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your mother sitting you down and saying, you know, "We're going to be going to America."?

BAITZ: No. Just all of a sudden it happened, we were going. And then we all started, she had to get rid of the furniture she had. The only thing she brought with her was a Singer sewing machine, which was the foot pedal type. That's the only piece of furniture she took with her.

SIGRIST: What did you take for luggage?

BAITZ: See, I don't remember. I don't know how we carried out stuff.

SIGRIST: How did you take the sewing machine?

BAITZ: Well, I guess that was picked up, you know, by somebody. I don't know how she worked that out. But we did, I know that did come with us. And as far as our clothes and that, this is not a lot of clothes, really. You had maybe two outfits.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of your clothes in Liverpool, an outfit that maybe you can describe?

BAITZ: I had one that was my sister Margaret and I both had.  
It was a navy blue serge dress, and it had, I know it had a yoke up here, and just hung loose. Then we used to wear pinafores a lot, so if you had a dress that you wore to school, you had to wear a pinafore to keep that dress in good condition so you didn't slop it up.  
That's the reason for pinafores, as far as I remember. And my mother used to, she used to knit the stockings.

SIGRIST: And the cloggy shoes that you had, too.

BAITZ: Well, my father did, those she had to buy. He didn't, my father didn't have anything to do with the clogs. But we did have the leather-type shoe, and they were, I think it was mostly the boys that wore them. I don't think the girls wore them.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, did anyone give you maybe a little goodbye party? Or do you remember saying goodbye to friends or relatives or anything like that when you left?

BAITZ: No. It seemed to be very quiet. There was no fanfare, no excitement about it.

SIGRIST: Slipped off into the night.

BAITZ: Yes, right.

SIGRIST: It's Mom, you, Theresa and . . .

BAITZ: Margaret.

SIGRIST: And Margaret.

BAITZ: And John.

SIGRIST: Oh, and John. So there are four of you.

BAITZ: Five of us all told.

SIGRIST: Five with your mom.

BAITZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you leave from Liverpool?

BAITZ: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about, because you were used to seeing boats, probably, living in Liverpool.

BAITZ: In fact, we used to, my sister Margaret and I, we were two years apart. We used to go down to the landing stage and watch the boats coming in and out there. We

used to think that was, that was our way of, we didn't have any playthings, so we used to walk around a lot.

We did a lot of walking.

SIGRIST: Oh, of course, Liverpool's a busy city. I mean, there's a lot to do, probably.

BAITZ: I don't recall getting on the boat too much.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the boat?

BAITZ: S.S. Cedric.

SIGRIST: And can you describe for me what your accommodations looked like on the boat?

BAITZ: Well, we were, all five of us was in one room, and it was sort of like on the idea of bunk beds. You had one bed here. You know, it's wood, and then one above. Somehow or other all five of us were in the one room.

SIGRIST: What else, what other furniture was in the room, or . . .

BAITZ: I can't remember if there was water there. There had to be water, unless you had, you know, the pan and that. I don't remember that too well.

SIGRIST: Did you have a porthole?

BAITZ: No! It was completely, there was no way of seeing anything out. I'm trying to think. I remember going up when we used to go to eat. They had a dining room. We used to go and eat in the dining room. And I remember getting so seasick I couldn't go, I didn't, the minute I'd get to the dining room, I'd run, I'd have to be throwing up all the time. There was a little Swedish girl. She was on the boat. And she said to me, so all I did was sit around. I wouldn't even feel like doing nothing. She says, "You better get up and play." She says, "Otherwise you're never going to get better." So I figured, well, I'd try it. So I started running around and playing with her and the other kids and I didn't get seasick any more, I stopped getting seasick. And then the sailors on the ship, they put a rope up so we could have a swing. Not going out that way over the water but this way ( she laughs ) on the ship.

SIGRIST: Were you the only one that got sick?

BAITZ: Huh?

SIGRIST: Were you the only one who got sick, or did your mother or brother?

BAITZ: No, I had, at least I recall, I don't remember the others being sick.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your sister Theresa being on the boat? Did you have to take care of her?

BAITZ: She was very quiet. No, we shared it. In fact, my sister Margaret and I, when she was born, we used to fight over who's going to baby, who's going to sit her in the chair and feed her and rock her and do things like that. We did that.

SIGRIST: So it was no great inconvenience for you as an eleven-year-old to have to watch the four-year-old. You were used to doing that.

BAITZ: And then my mother was home all the time anyway, so it wasn't where your mother goes out and works and you're left, somebody else has to do the looking out. Whenever we were home we took care of, we did it.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the dining room on the boat for me?

BAITZ: It was quite large, but I don't recall too much detail

about it.

SIGRIST: Maybe food on the boat, or anything?

BAITZ: Oh, yeah. The food seemed pretty good. To us it seemed awfully good. I mean, I don't recall it being, you know, not tasteful. And it was kept nice. Oh, then we had another thing that they did to us. I don't know why. We all had to take, get in this big tub. They had a huge tub. There were no bathtubs in those days.

SIGRIST: Is this on the boat?

BAITZ: This was on the boat. This huge tub, everybody had to go in there. They had water in that tub, and they had the CN. At that time CN was the disinfectant that was used. The minute you pour that into water, it would discolor the water. And I remember my sister Margaret and I, the two of us went in together into the water. And we were standing around walking, it's so big, you know, two big people could have fit in there very easy. Walking around, and I feel something in the bottom of the tub, so I reached down and picked it up, it was a ring. And, but everybody was using the same water. If people should have caught something

( she laughs ) they should have caught it there. But apparently nobody ever got sick from it. And the ring that I found belonged to an Irish girl who was on the ship, and it was a ring her boyfriend gave her. He was a Sinn Feiner, you know, with the, they were against the Black and Tans, which was the English soldiers.

SIGRIST: That's an interesting memory. I've never heard.

BAITZ: And then they had, we had spent, I'm trying to think. They had us up dancing I know, my sister Margaret and I. We had to get up and do, we used to do the step dancing, and we used to do dances we learned in school in England. And everybody was entertaining themselves that way. Some people would sing. We traveled third class.

SIGRIST: You said that there was a Swedish girl. Was there a real mix of different kinds of people traveling third class?

BAITZ: Not too many, not too many. But this little girl, she happened to be one, I remember her from that. I don't recall. You know, we didn't bother much with people. We sort of played with ourselves, among ourselves,

and with other kids. And they were all more or less, and this little girl spoke English quite well, because she told me to stop sitting around, that I should play.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being up on deck when you were out on the ocean and seeing the ocean?

BAITZ: Oh, yeah. And it was pretty rough because that time of the year, the wintertime, is very, it took us I think ten days then to come.

SIGRIST: And what month did you leave in?

BAITZ: I'm trying to think. It seems to me we must not have left on the 22nd. Because I remember spending Paddy's Day on the boat. So we must have come right after March.

SIGRIST: March of 1922?

BAITZ: Yeah. It must have been March. Because I remember that. I'll always remember that.

SIGRIST: Why does that stick out in your mind? Did they do something for . . .

BAITZ: That's why we had to get up and dance, do some Irish

dances. And then when they, when it came getting close to here everybody wanted to go up to see the Statue of Liberty. And it was very cold.

SIGRIST: So you're on the boat for ten days, roughly. Tell me about seeing the Statue of Liberty. Do you remember that?

BAITZ: Yeah, I remember. I wasn't, like now if I see it I'm more in awe of it than when I was a little girl. But everybody wanted to be up there to see it.

SIGRIST: What about when you saw New York from the boat, what did you think?

BAITZ: We didn't see, a little bit on the foggy side, too. So we didn't really, I didn't really see too much. Well, you didn't have all the buildings you had either at that time. It was entirely different.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me. Once you've pulled into New York Harbor, then what happens?

BAITZ: We pulled in and then they, for some reason or another, I seem to remember when we got off, we had to get off that ship, you go through the papers and all that. Naturally you're just, you're with your mother

so you don't pay much attention to that. But I know we had to take a boat over to Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about Ellis Island at all, if anything?

BAITZ: It seemed very, the main, that main hall, I remember that. And we stayed overnight, and yet I can't recall how the heck we slept there.

SIGRIST: Do you know why you had to stay overnight?

BAITZ: I guess there was because there wasn't anyone to, you know, my mother's brother was supposed to come over and take us, because we wouldn't know where to go. So we just stayed over the one night, that was all. And that's where they examined your eyes, you know, they roll your eyeballs around, and all that sort of thing.

SIGRIST: Was Ellis Island crowded at that time?

BAITZ: Yes. There was a lot of people at that time.

SIGRIST: Do you remember if you had your sewing machine with you when you were at Ellis?

BAITZ: No.

SIGRIST: I'm intrigued by this because, of course, a sewing machine is a big, heavy thing.

BAITZ: Yeah, it was, no. It wasn't with us there. But it came, we wound up with it, because I remember having it. So how they worked it out, with someone to pick it up, I don't know.

SIGRIST: You said you'd stayed overnight. Do you remember eating at Ellis Island at all?

BAITZ: No. I don't recall much about the eating part.

SIGRIST: Did your uncle come and get you?

BAITZ: Yeah, they came over. I think it was an uncle, and then I think my sister, my oldest sister, they come over. And then they had, they already had the apartment on Orange Street in Newark.

SIGRIST: What was it like seeing your sister? Did she look different to you in any way?

BAITZ: No. She looked, the uncle I didn't know him too well because I'd never seen him before. All we knew was that he was my mother's brother, and . . .

SIGRIST: What do you think your mother is thinking through this

whole process? This is a whole new thing for her, leaving everything that she knows. What do you think she's thinking about?

BAITZ: I think she was, she never discussed it, and never talked about it. I think she was very nervous about it. I think she really was. Because it was a period, you know, to adjust to this country, was so different from what she was used to in Liverpool. And I know they took us home, and I can't remember how we traveled.

SIGRIST: They took you to Newark.

BAITZ: Yeah, Newark, Orange Street. We lived on Orange Street in Newark.

SIGRIST: Tell me, do you remember the first night in America? Do you remember if they had dinner for you or, or if anything impressed you about that first night, seeing something, or?

BAITZ: No, it was just when we got to Newark there was, my sister had, and my mother's sister, they had seen to it that there was food and stuff there. But there was no, no big fanfare made about it. It was very quiet.

I had two other brothers that were supposed to stay there. My brother Thomas and Pat, I think, was supposed to, yeah, because he was still going back and forth on the ships. He stayed with the ships most of his life, the oldest brother. And he, they were supposed to stay there, but they weren't too happy staying with my mother in that place.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your mother for like that first year in America, and that whole adjustment to this country.

BAITZ: She found it very difficult to adjust. And then she was sort of against, she was having words with my sister and her sister, and of course it didn't make things easier. And she, she wasn't used to the cold here, the different type of cold than what we had in England. Although England is cold and damp, it was not like the cold here. I mean, winters were much colder there, but it was hard for her. And she tried getting, you know, a little work, working for, doing like domestic work. She didn't have any skill to do anything. You didn't have things like that. And we . . .

SIGRIST: So this was, it was tough for her. She . . .

BAITZ: It was very hard.

SIGRIST: Did she regret coming?

BAITZ: Well, apparently she must have resented it because she, her sister then finally said to her, "Look, if you want to go back, you meet me tomorrow morning and I'll get the fare and send you all back." But she never went, and we stayed here. I guess she thought better of it, you know.

SIGRIST: It's just one thing to complain about the situation and it's another, that's interesting. It's very interesting.

BAITZ: It's very difficult.

SIGRIST: Tell me what it was. What was causing the conflict between her sister and your mother? I mean, where was the friction?

BAITZ: I don't know. I mean, they provided the apartment, and it was furnished and everything. I guess not having a breadwinner bring money in, I think it was all to do with money. That was the, and then my mother, after all, we were, Theresa was very young, so she couldn't very well navigate and adjust to it. So

we wound up in a home, St. Joseph's Home.

SIGRIST: The children did.

BAITZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your mother . . .

BAITZ: She stayed there too, until, you know, she did work in the laundry, you know, to help for us.

SIGRIST: How long after you got here did that happen?

BAITZ: Uh, within a year.

SIGRIST: This is interesting. Can you tell me how your mother got that job, or how you ended up there?

BAITZ: I don't know how she managed that, unless she went to the priest, I don't know. But that's where we wound up, in St. Joseph's Home, in Jersey City.

SIGRIST: And you lived right at the home. What was it a home for?

BAITZ: It was for orphaned children, you know. A lot of, they had a lot o kids there. They had big dormitories. And Theresa was very young, so she was with one particular nun where they kept the very young

people. And Margaret and I, we were on another floor.

It was all girls there. There was no boys in that place. You know where Colgate's is?

SIGRIST: I live right next to St. Joseph's. I know exactly what you're talking about.

BAITZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: The orphanage, but your mother is living there.

BAITZ: She stayed there for a while, but eventually she left there and went out and got a domestic job.

SIGRIST: How did you feel as children being put in this situation?

BAITZ: We had no choice. What could we say? We couldn't do anything. We just had to accept things the way they were.

SIGRIST: How often did you see your mom?

BAITZ: Not too often because she didn't, you know, you didn't get much time off in those days, so that, then eventually my sister Margaret, she went, they sent her up to I think it was Connecticut, somewhere. It was quite a ways off, you know, to, as a working girl.

SIGRIST: How much older is Margaret?

BAITZ: Two years.

SIGRIST: So she's in her teens.

BAITZ: That's right. It's the same way with the home.  
( she laughs ) I always remember Sister Ambrose. She was the head one there. She was tough. And on, when they got the hats for Easter, around Eastertime, there was a lot of people were, I guess would donate stuff.  
And if there was a ribbon on the hat, a pretty ribbon on the hat, Sister Ambrose would go with the scissors and cut the ribbon off. She was, she felt that it was vanity, you know. That wasn't right.

SIGRIST: This is not a pleasant atmosphere for a little kid to grow up in.

BAITZ: No, no, no. It wasn't. But believe me, it wasn't. But you had to, there was a big hallway. The kids lined up on that side and that side. ( she gestures )  
And I remember this one nun saying prayers. And I don't know what these kids did, I didn't see that they did anything, but she must have seen something, or maybe she had a bug, I don't know. And she took her

strap, boy, and she beat the dickens out of those two kids. It wasn't nice at all.

SIGRIST: Was this kind of discipline common in this environment? Did the nuns hit people a lot?

BAITZ: Not all of them, not all of them. There were just certain ones, maybe, that would be like that. But what could you do? You couldn't say anything. Who were you going to report to as a kid? There was no one you could turn to. You had to accept a lot of things. And I used to work over in the printing room, which was, they have the home for the blind there, too. There was a printing room, anyway. They used to make up this, and I, this other girl, Smitty and I, we used to go over there and we had to scrub all those floors down on your hands and knees, scrub all these hardwood floors, every week. That was our weekend job. And clean the bathrooms for the help. And we used to use the kerosene for cleaning, that was your disinfectant.

SIGRIST: And you're kids basically. We're going to pause right now, and Kevin's going to put another tape in the machine, and then we're going to continue with Mary

Jane Baitz.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: We are now beginning Tape Two with Mary Jane Baitz, who came from England in 1922 when she was eleven. This is Paul Sigrist. Mrs. Baitz, we were just talking about your experience at the St. Joseph's Home, the orphanage where you were put in. Your mother was a laundress there. What did you do for fun that you remember?

BAITZ: Well, we had a playroom, a room what they called like a playroom. It was up above. And we used to go in there, my sister Margaret and I, and it wasn't too much. There was no games or anything like that. You had to make your own fun up. And then from reading this book in England, The Legends of Ireland, I used to get the kids sitting around me, and I would tell them all the stories from that book, word for word. And that was, you know, the kids loved all that stuff. They thought it was fun.

SIGRIST: Was there immigrant children in this orphanage?

BAITZ: I don't recall whether they were or not. I imagine some of them must have been. In fact, I ran into a woman about fifteen, eighteen years ago. She was, she went to that place. We lost track of each other, but she had been in the home.

SIGRIST: While the tape was off you told me a little bit about the roof of one of the buildings. Can you tell me that on tape?

BAITZ: The what, dear?

SIGRIST: The roof, something about being up on the roof.

BAITZ: Oh, yeah. The roof was, we used to be able to go up there and, you know, when it's nice weather, and the nun was always up there with us, you know, to make sure you didn't get, be rambunctious. But we didn't have any, sometimes they had us doing a little drawing or something like that, but there wasn't too much activity.

SIGRIST: Did your aunt come and visit you at all?

BAITZ: No. Everybody was working. You didn't get much time off. When you worked domestic, you're lucky you get one day a month. So you, you didn't have much time to

go visit anybody.

SIGRIST: So your aunt was doing that also, domestic work.

BAITZ: Yes. My mother said, she was a laundress. My sister Kathleen was a laundress. And then my mother went into domestic. An awful lot of the Europeans did that.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay at the St. Joseph's Home?

BAITZ: Not too long, because then I wound up, Margaret was sent to Connecticut with a family, and I was sent into Bergenfield, New Jersey, with St. John's, Father Morrissey. And I lived there from when I was twelve till I was fourteen.

SIGRIST: Tell me is this another orphanage situation?

BAITZ: No. This is going from the orphanage. ( she coughs )  
Excuse me. ( she coughs ) ( voice off mike ) No, I'll be all right. They had, Father Morrissey had come down to St. Joseph's Home looking for someone, you know, to do work in the house. And that's how come I went up there. They, I saw them and met them, and then when I got there they had stopped in the boy's home in Englewood. And I stayed overnight

there. I don't know how come, but that's what they did. And the woman that was in the room where I was sleeping, she had one of these epileptic fits. I was scared stiff. I didn't know what it was. Then they brought me then to the rectory. I lived in the rectory on the top floor, the attic. It was a big attic in that house. It was I think three or four bedrooms and a bath. And I stayed there for two years, went to school there.

SIGRIST: Your childhood really stopped in England, did it? Because when you came here you were basically had to work and . . .

BAITZ: We were all broken up, too. We never stayed together. We were separated. And then Theresa stayed in the home.

SIGRIST: Of course, she was just that much younger.

BAITZ: She, the reason we got sent out was because we were old enough to do work, housework.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your little spot in the attic and what it looked like.

BAITZ: It was a nice room, very nice. And there was a

washbasin in the room, and it had a bed and a bureau.

It wasn't bad.

SIGRIST: And what were your duties in the house?

BAITZ: I had to help with the cooking, all the pots and pans, scrubbing them. I had to keep the kitchen clean, the dining room. They had an L-shaped porch, and that all had to be swept. The upstairs, the downstairs bathroom and the upstairs bathroom, and then I'd have to go outside to sweep the sidewalks and all that sort of stuff.

SIGRIST: Who lived in the house? Was this a house for priests, or . . .

BAITZ: Just the one priest. And he had his cousin, she was housekeeper. And then he had his niece who he was sending through, she was in New Rochelle College, and she wasn't home, though, because she only come home like on holidays. And the housekeeper, she was from England. That was his first cousin, and she was the cook. She'd never been married. But she was a good cook, though. ( she laughs ) She used to make the whole wheat bread there, homemade.

SIGRIST: Were they friendly towards you, the staff and the house, already?

BAITZ: There was nobody else. I was the only . . .

SIGRIST: I mean the niece. I mean all these sort of . . .

BAITZ: Not too much. No, you were kept in the kitchen. You weren't allowed in the living room. I had to live in the kitchen. You understand, I would, like I'd go upstairs to go to bed and I'd have to clean the room, take care of it, and all that sort of thing. But they did not have me in.

SIGRIST: I have to ask you this question. Through this series of kind of lonely circumstances, being in the orphanage and then going to work up at this house, did you wish that you had stayed in England?

BAITZ: No. No, I never felt that way, never did. To me everything was very exciting here, and there was always something new.

SIGRIST: What were some of the new things that you were experiencing when you came to this country?

BAITZ: I remember there when I was at the priest's house I

finally, I got a pair of roller skates. So I thought I was made up because I got a pair of roller skates. And to go down and get the mail, I had to go down to where the railroad stop was and pick up the mail and skate back. And then if I had to go to confession, I used to go up to Dumont, the next town, because they didn't want me going to the priest that was there, you know, Father Morrissey. But they had the Notre Dame sisters there, and with the school, and the church was wooden. So I understand it's all changed. It's nothing like . . .

SIGRIST: Who gave you those roller skates?

BAITZ: I think the priest, they gave it to me.

SIGRIST: Was he friendly towards you?

BAITZ: Not usually. He was very stern, very strict. In fact, he was a hard taskmaster. The funny part was you figured it was your own time he would be a little more. But I remember having to wash twenty-two pairs of curtains in the summertime down in the basement of the house, and I remember being very rebellious and I wouldn't do it. And I stayed down there all day. And then when he came home the housekeeper told him that I

didn't do the curtains. I told him I wasn't going to do it. And he hauled off and slapped me in the face.

I went down and did the curtains. ( she laughs )  
That was, that was the only time I ever pulled that.

SIGRIST: What did you do for fun?

BAITZ: Not much.

SIGRIST: What would you do for fun?

BAITZ: There wasn't much, because none of the kids I went to school with lived nearby, and they weren't going to hang around the school when they got out of school. So I really, books was mostly, I used to read a lot.

SIGRIST: Well, you're still going to school, I assume, at this time.

BAITZ: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I was going to St. John's.

SIGRIST: Always under the auspices of the church, parochial school.

BAITZ: Right, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about when your mother left the orphanage, St. Joseph's, and went on somewhere. Tell

me a little bit about what's happening to her when you're sent up to Father Morrissey, and what's going on in her life while you're away from her.

BAITZ: Well, she still, you know, continued to do domestic work, and she came up to see me once or twice in the two years, because it wasn't easy to travel for her. And she wasn't too communicative, she wasn't someone you could communicate with very easily either. It was kind of hard. There wasn't, and naturally I did try to write. My oldest sister, I used to write to her.

SIGRIST: Is your mother really unhappy at this point in her life?

BAITZ: I don't think she was too happy about things, you know. It was, I don't think she ever really adjusted to things. I mean, the fact of losing my father and having all of us as a responsibility. See, everybody takes things differently. I didn't see much of her at that time. And then from there they sent me back, the priest was transferred out of there, Father Morrissey. So then they sent me back to the home.

SIGRIST: Back to St. Joseph's.

BAITZ: So when I went there, then, they sent me to St. Vincent's Academy in Newark.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about just sort of being, you know, you have no control in your life really, you're just sort of being shifted from place to place? What did you feel like?

BAITZ: Well, there was nothing you could do about it. Who would you turn to? What could you do? There's no one you could turn to, say anything to.

SIGRIST: Are you the sort of person, or were you at that time, that could simply say to themselves, "Well, that's just the way it is. Let's start . . ."

BAITZ: I never thought about that.

SIGRIST: You were never bitter.

BAITZ: I just accepted it. Naturally there were things I didn't like, but what the heck. There was a lot of things that I did like. They had the, that play in the town was the first time they ever had a play at St. John's. And I wanted to be in that play so bad. Father Morrissey said no. I couldn't be in it. Boy, I was so hurt. So when it came to his feast day in

December and he was giving out the pictures to all the kids, when he came to my row I just got up and walked ahead. I guess I was stubborn too. What the heck, you know.

SIGRIST: A little rebel.

BAITZ: Yeah. And he just shook his head. But then he would have, this priest used to come to say mass for him. He was French, Father Whirley. And his sister used to come, and she used to play. The niece was home, the priest's niece was home, Eileen. And then the priest that was visiting to help say the extra mass, his sister was with. She played the violin, and the other one played the piano. And they used to, finally they, I was always singing, believe it or not, when I was in the kitchen doing pots and pans and scrubbing, always singing.

SIGRIST: Well, you had to learn the words to "Danny Boy."  
( he laughs )

BAITZ: Oh, yeah. And they, that's the very song that they wanted. So the priest, the French priest came out to the kitchen and he said, he asked me if I would do him a favor. And naturally all he had to do is ask. He

said, "Would you, I understand that you know the words to "Danny Boy," that you sing it." And I said, "Yeah." And I was nervous. And so he said, "Would you come in and sing it for us?" And they played the piano and the violin, and I sang it. I don't know how good I sounded, but I guess it was all right. Because we used to sing a lot, my sister Margaret and I, a great deal. We were always singing.

SIGRIST: When you were, when you were sent to Father Morrissey, and then back to St. Joseph's and then off to St. Vincent's, were you keeping in contact with your sister Margaret? Did you have a close relationship with Margaret?

BAITZ: No, because she was nowhere near. We never saw each other.

SIGRIST: And what about Theresa? I assume is still at Saint, was she still at St. Vincent's?

BAITZ: I think she, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Or St. Joseph's?

BAITZ: She was at St. Joseph's for a while. I don't know where she was. She was still at St. Joseph's. She

was at St. Joseph's a long time.

SIGRIST: Yeah, I see. Tell me a little bit, um, just tell me about sort of your, the rest of your mother's life, and her life in America, and what she did, and how she enjoyed doing it.

BAITZ: Well, it was kind of hectic in a lot of ways, because it was, the family didn't jive and get along too good. There was always friction, and she did her, you know, did the work that she did, domestic. Like during the Depression, I had lost that picture, when they had the WPA, that's when Roosevelt came in. And people couldn't get work. My mother was working for WPA. She was putting spinach in cans, and they took a picture of her in the Journal American years ago, and it was, it was a good picture of her, too. I don't know whatever happened to that picture.

SIGRIST: Was she proud of that?

BAITZ: She didn't say nothing about it, you know. She showed it, I mean, I saw it. I don't recall how I got to see it, but she did have it.

SIGRIST: Did she ever become a citizen?

BAITZ: Oh, yes. But it was quite a while before she did, because she didn't become a citizen, so therefore I didn't become a citizen, and I wound up working in the telephone company. So I had, I had to get my first, I had, I went to get my first papers. Then when the war broke out, that was very important. I had to prove that I came into this country legally. I paid my head tax.

SIGRIST: And we're talking twenty years has gone by almost, when the war broke out. So that is a long time.

BAITZ: They, she was, at that time, then I was sixteen. I left school when I was sixteen, and then I went to, I did domestic work. I worked out in Brooklyn, and then I worked up in the Bronx, the lower part of the Bronx, you know, pot walloping. Scrubbing, cleaning, doing the, helping with the, doing all the dirty work that the lady of the house don't want to do. But they weren't, you know, very rich people. Like the doctor, I worked for him for a couple of years, he had his office there. The porch was his office. And I used to have to answer the phone, take care of everything, and I was like, they treated me like I was a nurse. I was a maid. I was everything. And then I had a room

there. I got thirty dollars a month. And you got maybe a half a day off.

SIGRIST: You worked hard in your life.

BAITZ: Huh?

SIGRIST: You've worked hard.

BAITZ: Oh, yeah. Always, always. My whole life's been that way.

SIGRIST: Let me kind of speed you up through your life here. Tell me what your husband's name was.

BAITZ: Well, I was married twice.

SIGRIST: Well, your first husband.

BAITZ: Brian.

SIGRIST: His last name?

BAITZ: Brian. His name, he never married me into the proper name. He was a bigamist when he married me.  
( she laughs ) My luck.

SIGRIST: This is another interview. ( they laugh ) Well . . .

BAITZ: Anyway . . .

SIGRIST: Tell me briefly about that.

BAITZ: He called himself Dial, but his name was really Dali, and his mother was in show business. She came from Arkansas. And his father was from England, the landed gentry. And he was in show business, too. And then, but he never held a job, because the Depression was in full swing.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you married him?

BAITZ: Nineteen. I was nineteen.

SIGRIST: And when did that marriage end?

BAITZ: Uh, I'm trying to. Could it be, God, I forgot the year.

SIGRIST: How old were you?

BAITZ: ( she pauses ) That's awful. I can't remember that. There's so much water gone under the bridge.

SIGRIST: Good to forget about some things, I think. Oh, Theresa is saying three. Thirty? Ten? No, wait. Nine, 1934? ( voice off mike ) 1939. ( voice off mike ) Well, tell me about the second husband.

( he laughs ) Were there children with the first husband?

BAITZ: No.

SIGRIST: The second husband is Mr. Baitz, I assume.

BAITZ: Yeah. And that was, the war was on. The Second World War was already on then. There was an interim about a few years between. And I met him down in Union City.

SIGRIST: What was his first name?

BAITZ: Charles Conrad.

SIGRIST: Charles Conrad Baitz.

BAITZ: Uh-hmm. And he, uh, he was a widow and had two boys. And then things weren't so easy at that time either. But anyway we got married, and we stayed with his mother for a while, and then we finally got to live in the basement apartment in Union City with the two boys and him and I.

SIGRIST: What were his boys' names from the previous marriage?

BAITZ: The oldest boy was Charles, and the other boy was Gerald.

SIGRIST: And then did you and Mr. Baitz have children?

BAITZ: We had one boy. The one you met here. That's my son.  
I only had the one.

SIGRIST: And his name is Tom.

BAITZ: Thomas, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, good. We got all the marriages and children taken care of. ( he laughs ) Let me just ask you a couple of final questions here. We've really covered your immigration experience very nicely. Let me ask you first about your mother. At the end of her life, how do you think she looked back on her decision to come to America and her experience that she had when she got here? How do you think she thought about how her life had gone?

BAITZ: I think she expected more than she got. She didn't, you know, it wasn't exactly what she wanted. I'm sure of that. It wasn't very happy for her. Ah, it's the way life is.

SIGRIST: What about, what about you? Are you glad that your mother made that decision to come?

BAITZ: Oh, I've never regretted coming to this country, never. I'm very pro-American. To me there's no place, and I don't like people knocking this country either. I think this is the greatest country. That's why everybody wants to come here. In those days it was hard when you came to this country. Like that picture shows you, over on Ellis Island, that picture, that movie they show you. You've got to see. We didn't come under those conditions, as bad as that.

SIGRIST: But just your own story that I've listened to this afternoon, I mean, you had it tough in this country. You worked very hard.

BAITZ: We all did, the whole family did. There was nobody that didn't work. Everybody had to work. And it was a struggle, because we weren't educated. I only went to sixth grade grammar school. And then I, getting into the phone company was a good thing for me, but then I loused that up too with my stupid Irish temper.  
( she laughs )

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. Baitz, I want to thank you very much for letting us come out and picking your brain. You've told a wonderful story, and I'm very glad that we had

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the opportunity to meet you and to conduct this.

BAITZ: Thank you, Paul. You're very nice.

SIGRIST: Thank you. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Mary Jane Baitz in West New York, New Jersey on February 23, 1993.