

EI-286

ENID GRIFFITHS JONES

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AGE 10

PASSAGE ON "THE AMERICA"

PORT OF EMBARKATION: SOUTHAMPTON

RESIDENCES: ABERTILLERY  
NANTICOKE, PA

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here. It's April 18th, 1993. I'm in St. Petersburg, Florida with Enid Griffith Jones, who came from Wales in 1923 at the age of ten. Now, I have also interviewed today Mary Jane Griffiths Williams, who is Enid Jones' sister, and they came together on the same ship, which was the S.S. America. Okay. Well, I'm very happy and delighted that I have a chance to talk with you today, and let's just start by your saying your birth date and the town you were born in.

JONES: I was born November the 30th, 1912, in Abertillery, South Wales, Great Britain.

LEVINE: And when you mention any proper names, like places or peoples' names, if you could spell them it would be a help.

JONES: Okay. Abertillery, A-B-E-R-T-I-L-L-E-R-Y.

LEVINE: And could you just give a description of that town.

JONES: Well, in my mind, at the age of ten, that was quite a large town. But when we went back to visit it was very small compared to what my memory of it was. It was a family oriented town. I went to school down the end of the street, or at least in my memory that's the way it is. And we thought it was just a great place to live. Near the mountains, I remember going up the mountains to play. And it was very pretty.

LEVINE: And how about your, your father's name and your mother's maiden name?

JONES: My father's name was David John Griffiths, and my mother's maiden name was Maud Evans.

LEVINE: Okay. And your sister had told me that you had one set of grandparents.

JONES: That were alive. Right, yes.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember any experiences with your grandparents?

JONES: ( she laughs ) I remember mostly that I never would stay any, with anyone, or stay overnight anywhere but my grandparents. And I wouldn't sleep anywhere but between the two of them, which used to annoy my grandfather, but that was the only way I would stay there. We always went there on a Sunday after church. We walked from our village to Blaina, which was their village. That's B-L-A-I-N-A. Sometimes we'd take the train home, sometimes we would walk. But we were very family-orientated, and we were all very close. We had a lot of aunts and uncles who lived around that area, and we always visited with them when we went up on Sundays, and that, I think that's my most vivid memory of them.

LEVINE: What kind of activity would you do? Would you . . .

JONES: Church mostly. We went to Sunday school, always. We used to have what we'd call school-walking days back then. I don't think they have it any more. And once a year they would have this special day, and all the churches would have the children from Sunday school

and the adults parade around the streets and sing hymns and banners and advertise religion more or less, I would say. And everybody did the same thing, and then you'd go to a park or an open area, and they'd have a big picnic, and it would just be a religious day. And that kind of is vivid in my memory, which we didn't do when we came to this country.

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, would every denomination do this?

JONES: Most every, yes, anything that was a decent size church. They might not have it the same day. Some churches would have it one day. And maybe the others, if it was too much, they'd, but it would, like, we'd call it school walking day, and you'd just walk around the streets, and they'd have banners of what church you belonged to, and they'd sing hymns. And maybe two or three of the churches who were walking would get together then for the picnic and meet other people and mingle with the other churches, which was a great idea.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What else did you do for social, that was kind of social in that town, besides the church?

JONES: Well, it was mostly, your parents' friends, you would

call aunt and uncle. Everybody got together and had picnics, and my mother and father used to play cards.

And we'd mingle with the other, their children, and just things like that, because there really wasn't much else. I don't remember going, we'd go visiting once in a while to, my mother had a brother that was in the south, more South Wales, and that was kind of interesting because they spoke nothing but Welsh down there, and we couldn't understand Welsh. Even though I was born in Wales, they never taught Welsh in the schools because the second we were born in was Monmouth, Monmouthshire, at that time, and they just didn't teach the Welsh. But my uncle married a girl that was from further south, and her parents spoke nothing but Welsh. And so he had to learn the Welsh language before her people would let him out of here.

So when we had gone to visit with them, they would teach us little words to say good night or good morning. When we went into her parents' house, we could say this to them. But I learned more, or heard more Welsh in America, after I came on to America, than I ever did in England or Wales.

LEVINE: Well, were there customs, Welsh customs that were

carrying on in your family that you observed, or carried on when you were in Wales that you either did or did not continue . . .

JONES: Eating customs, you know. Most Welsh people, I guess most British people, I would say, were plain eaters. They never, they hardly ever had casseroles. It was just meat, potatoes and garden vegetables. We ate things out of the garden always. And they had blancmange, they used to call. That was kind of a pudding. And they had trifles.

LEVINE: How do you spell that, the pudding?

JONES: I just don't know. Trifle, now, T-R-I-F-L-E, that's a dish that I've seen out here, but usually that did come from Britain, I guess, you know, Wales.

LEVINE: What is that?

JONES: That is a pudding on the bottom. For instance, a cake, any kind of cakes. We used to, my mother would use stale cake because you could slice it and put it in the bottom of the dish. And then you'd put, um, a sherry, or something like that, on it. And then you'd put a layer of fruit. And then a layer of custard, or

jello. And if you put the jello, then you'd put another layer of custard, and then whipped cream on top. And they'd leave it over night and then, you know, it was sort of like a pudding or a jello, it tasted like. But it had, you'd put fruit, strawberries in it, you know. That's a typical British dish. They had what they called faggots and peas. That was, it was made out of a chopped, I don't know exactly what it is, chopped liver and other meats mixed. I don't make it, so I'm not sure. And it's got kind of a casing on it, sort of a fill that they get, that they buy in the butchers, and then they'd bake those, and then they'd have peas with them, which is the, the peas that you soak overnight. And they call it faggots and peas, and that's, and you'd buy that in a regular store. You'd go and get the best one. Also fish and chips is another typical Welsh. You'd just, like we go in this country to McDonald's and for hamburgers and things like that, they would go for fish and chips. And I think they still do that.

LEVINE: Were you near the ocean?

JONES: No. We used to go to the ocean every year for vacation, one week of the year. We went to a place

called Weymouth. That would be W-E-Y-M-O-U-T-H. We went to Blackpool, B-L-A-C-K, P-O-O-L. I can't remember some of the other names, but I know we took a vacation every year, our whole family, and loved it. The beaches back there are much more rough than the beaches are in this country. You don't have the smooth sand. It's rough sand. And all I can remember mostly is they used to have donkeys on the beach, and you'd pay so much, a donkey ride, and my mother would take us on each one, and we'd get this donkey ride which was, of course, in those days it was just a big deal. And that kind of living. I can't remember too much more.

LEVINE: Did you ever travel out of Wales before you left for the United States?

JONES: I don't think so. The furthest I can remember traveling would be down to, more down at, we were in South Wales, but more south again, which would be maybe, I don't know, an hour or two away, I guess. Of course, in those days you didn't have cars. You used to take buses, which we called char-a-bancs. I don't know how you spell that either. I really don't know how to spell it, but it sounds like Sharabang. And it

would be a bus with a roof that, it would be an open air bus but you could pull the roof up if it was raining or something. And they would, they would hire those or rent those from the church usually, and you'd go on these bus rides and picnics and things like that. And I remember they, I guess it was friends of the family or the church, I'm not sure, gave us one of those before we left. In other words, they took us for a bus ride with a lot of other people, and that was our farewell gift from them.

LEVINE: Did you have a farewell event? I mean, did people gather together . . .

JONES: Well, that would be it. They had this, and then we got, we got, I think it was in church, but I'm not sure. And we gathered together and had a little, like, I guess, a little service, and it was a church, I suppose. And then we went on the picnic. As far as I remember, that could be wrong, but that's, in my memory that's the way it is.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you knew about America before you . . .

JONES: We thought the streets were paved with gold. That's

all we used to hear back there. I mean, everything was just so wonderful about America, we thought. That's the idea that we had. We had no idea, I couldn't even picture it other than it was like paradise. We used to talk about it that way. We found it very, very different when we came because of Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Well, before we leave talking about Wales, do you remember stories? Was there somebody in your childhood who used to tell you stories?

JONES: About Wales itself, you mean?

LEVINE: Well, that or fairy tales or any kind of children's stories that you still recall.

JONES: No, I really don't, I can't remember. I, a lot of my memories are vague. I know we went, when we went to school we had to walk quite a long way to what they called, I guess it was the drill hall, maybe that wasn't where it was, to have swimming lessons. They'd have a pool, and the children would, we'd be in a row walking up the street. I can picture that. We'd probably be double, and we walked quite a distance up to where the swimming pool was. I think about once a

week maybe, and we had swimming lessons. That I can remember.

LEVINE: And where would you swim?

JONES: It was a, well, it would be like the Y would be out here.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So it wasn't like a natural lake or . . .

JONES: No, it was a regular pool. And I'm sure it was indoor, because the weather back there, I'm pretty sure it would have to be indoor because the weather back there wasn't that good. I can't remember too much of anything else.

LEVINE: Any other activities?

JONES: We used to sing in the church. I can remember singing in the church children's choir in church. That was . . .

LEVINE: Was that the Methodist church?

JONES: It was the PM church, Primitive Methodist, they called it the "PM," Primitive Methodist, at that time, you know. It's much the same as the church is out here, much the same as the Protestant Methodist or

Presbyterian, or one of those churches. Same idea.

LEVINE: What was the Primitive? I never heard that before.

JONES: Oh, yeah. They have them in this country. They have them in this country, because when we came to Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, friends of ours, we belonged to the Welsh Baptist Church, but friends of ours belonged to the PM Church, so that was the same thing. So they probably did have them. I don't know what it means, Primitive. Maybe the first idea of the Methodist Church.

LEVINE: Let's see. How about school? Could you describe anything, any experiences that you remember about the school in there?

JONES: I really don't remember too much. I do know we went to school much earlier. You started school back there I would say at three, or three-and-a-half. So when I came to this country they used to call it standard back there, like Standard One, Standard Two. They say grades in this country, but in Wales it was Standard. And I think I was in Standard Four, I believe, when I came to this country. I had just been promoted to that. And when I came here, I went to school, and

came home and told my mother I know all that. And every day I'd come home, I was very annoyed because I was going through the same thing again. So she finally went to the school and told them. And they were very, they, you know, kind of shrugged it off, but they said, well, they'd give me a test. So they gave me a test, and they put me into the next grade. So we were a grade ahead there. But, of course, you went to school younger, so I suppose that makes the difference. And I still was, kept up my grades very well in school, even though I had missed, more or less, that one grade. But that's about all. I don't remember going to school. I don't remember much about the school. My sister has a better memory than I do. She remembers a lot more than I do. But I really don't remember a lot of things like that. I know we used to have to walk to school, and it was close to home. It wasn't too far.

LEVINE: How about, your father worked in the coal mine. Was that the biggest, uh . . .

JONES: Yes, industry.

LEVINE: Industry around.

JONES: In that area it was. Almost all the, my mother's and father's friends and all the people in the neighborhood, other than businesses they had, you know, people had businesses like stores and, it was a nice town. They had a little department store that, I would say, like ours, we thought it was like ours here, but when we went back it was just a small store, but where they sold everything, you know. The yard goods and things like that. They had kind of like a main street where they, so the people that had the businesses were there. But most of the industry, I would say, right in that area, were the coal mines. And all my father's people, everybody we knew worked in the coal mines. They never knew anything else really.

LEVINE: And what about celebrations? Do you recall any?

JONES: They used to have Guy Forks Night.

LEVINE: What is that?

JONES: Guy Forks. I think it's G-U-Y, and F-O-R-K-S or E-S. And that would be like the Fourth of July here. They'd have fireworks and celebrated just like the Fourth of July, so it had to have something to do with

that fellow, Guy Fork, but I never really know. At my age I never thought about it, but I remember that name, Guy Forks Night. Now, maybe Jim might remember because, see, he was twenty-three when he came out, or twenty-two, or something like that. He might remember.

LEVINE: Your brother.

JONES: Yes. Yeah. Both of the, my brother-in-law and my husband came here from Wales. ( she laughs ) And my husband lived about five miles from where I lived in the old country, but I never had met him until I came. And he was eighteen when he came to this country. And, so they would remember a lot more than what we would remember, you know.

LEVINE: How about Christmas?

JONES: We had dances, I used to go to dancing school. That I know. Once a week on a Saturday afternoon, and they would teach us not individual dancing, but in those days they had, like, the foxtrot and the, oh, they had all different dances that you did either as a group or two people. And young, you would learn that from the time you were like maybe six years old. So that you

were able, when you were like ten or twelve years old you were able to do those different dances. They would call the dance out, whatever dance they were going to do. There might be fourteen different dances, and you would do that dance. So it would be much like they do here in the square dancing. The same idea, more or less, but different dances, you know. That I remember.

LEVINE: Did everyone learn that, or did . . .

JONES: No. I think you paid, my mother paid, I think, for us to go to that.

LEVINE: How about music? Do you remember anything about . . .

JONES: No, I wasn't too much musically inclined. So, but Wales itself is noted for music. That's all, all the good times. Anything to do with good times. You never did anything but sang. I mean, if you went to a party, that's all they did was sing all night. And they'd harmonize. People were very, had, people were talented that way. None of our family was, but Jim is, my brother-in-law, and my husband used to sing duets. And their family, my husband's family, which would be Jim's family, actually, they had about nine

or ten children, and every one of them had solo voices but one. And Jim's father would play piano. My mother-in-law has told me this. On a Sunday afternoon he'd play the piano for all these hymns, and all their family would get around the piano and they'd sing, and they'd all harmonize. And the whole street would come out and stand outside and just have a wonderful time.

So singing was like almost the heart of Wales, really. They had all kinds of festivals going on there. They had the Eistedhwod. That's the Welsh festival. They have an international one, and they have the national one. I have been over there. And that's competition of all kinds of, mostly singing but it could be reciting, piano, or anything like that, but it's almost all singing, and it's, it's known world wide, and an awful lot of people attended. It runs for a week. They do have a lot of the singing festivals. That is the heart of Wales is singing, really. And we've always kept that up. Whenever we've had a party in this country, whenever we did anything, singing was the basis, always, of what we did, I suppose.

LEVINE: Did, do you know what the situation was that

determined whether, that you would leave Wales?

JONES: Not really. I think, for one thing, my mother had a twin sister here. And she used to go back and visit, and tell my father and mother about this country. And she really wanted us so badly to come out because she, she had nobody out here and she wanted Mom to come so desperately that every time she'd come and write or she'd want to do it. And I think maybe my father, he thought maybe he'd get out of the mines. I really don't know. But he was the one that really wanted to come and decided to come and packed everything up. We brought all kinds of things with us, you know, to start housekeeping and things. I'm sure my mother brought a mattress with her. ( she laughs ) We came by boat, and we had this, all these big trunks that we'd bring with us, you know. And . . .

LEVINE: Can you think of other things that your mother brought?

JONES: Some dishes and some glassware, things that meant a lot to her, you know. Something that she didn't want to leave behind. I don't think anything really, that I know of. We still have a couple of the things that

she brought. Jenny has glasses, cut glass dishes, you know, and things like that.

LEVINE: Did you bring everything with you on the boat?

JONES: Uh-huh. ( there is a disturbance in the microphone )

LEVINE: And, so when you left, how did you leave your town to go to get the ship?

JONES: Oh, we had to take a train to Southampton. I'm pretty sure that's the way it was. And then we got the ship in Southampton. And then, we were ten days on the water, and I enjoyed it very much. Of course, we were children, we would enjoy it anyway. But my mother was deathly sick. She was in bed most of the time I would say on and off. And, so I guess she didn't appreciate the trip, but we enjoyed it.

LEVINE: Where, what were your accommodations on the boat?

JONES: I really, it was tourist class? Jenny would know that better, I guess. But we went on First Class, I know that, because we used to, as children we used to go up to First Class and watch everything that was going on. We had to come back down to our class, but it wasn't the lowest class. I think it was kind of in between,

as far as I understand.

LEVINE: So you weren't in the hold of the ship?

JONES: No.

LEVINE: You had to . . .

JONES: We had cabins, yes.

LEVINE: And you went to a dining room, do you remember?

JONES: I would say yes. I really don't remember too vividly about that. I can remember running over the ship, all over it. And I remember mother, my mother was sick, but other than that I really can't remember too much about it. We met a lot of friends, people that were going to the same place that we ended up in eventually. We went to Philadelphia, but six months after we were in Philadelphia my father wanted to go to the mines, so we went to the, to Nanticoke, Pennsylvania and met these people who we met on the boat coming over, and got very friendly with them, and it was really through them, in a way, that we went back to Nanticoke, Pennsylvania where Dad went back in the mines.

LEVINE: Were most of the people on the ship from Wales?

JONES: Oh, no. No, they were all over, all different nationalities.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So that was your first exposure to lots of different kinds of people.

JONES: Oh, yes, definitely.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of your impressions?

JONES: No, because we, of course, the people that we got friendly with were these people that were from around our area, and they had children. She had children about our age, and other children, so we kind of stayed with them. And Mom being sick most of the time couldn't take us anywhere else or do anything much. So we kind of had to be on our own, and that, we probably were impressed, when we'd go to First Class we'd see all the beautiful clothes and all the people dancing or whatever. But as children you thought that was just something out of this world, and then you'd go back to where we were.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you wore? Do you remember what clothing you wore?

JONES: Well, my mother used to knit a lot of our clothes, dresses and sweaters and caps. And I know, I can remember my brother, she had made him a, he was only about three, and she had made him a white pants, knit, short pants and a, and a white sweater. I could picture that. But most of our clothes were knit, and for the cooler weather, because of course back there there's a lot more cooler weather. But we also had just regular, the clothes were much like the ones that were in this country. When we came, we didn't feel out of place with the clothes that we had, so I guess it wasn't too much difference.

LEVINE: As compared with some of the other people . . .

JONES: People that, right, yes. Yes, it was very much different. When we got to Ellis Island, that's when we really saw the different nationalities, the way they dressed, and that was different. A lot of the children wore long clothes. We wore clothes, it was almost identical to the way we wore them in this country, you know. So in a way it wasn't that much difference as far as clothes, as far as we were concerned. But we did see the difference in the other

people, and the other people would wear babushkas and things like that, where we never did anything like that.

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

JONES: Yes, yes. I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty. Everybody was up on the deck and looking, so excited. But, of course, we had to go, we went right then to Ellis Island and then everything became this confusion as far as we were concerned, you know.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Will you describe your impressions of Ellis Island?

JONES: About Ellis Island? Well, to me it was like a prison. There were all these barbed wire there, and much like, when I saw the movie Ellis Island, it was almost identical. All people pushing one another, then they'd call something out, and you'd go one way, and someone else would go another way. And finally we ended up in this place. It was like a big courtroom. This is my version of it anyway, all I can picture

it. And we sat there and the person up front would be like a judge, and they would call up and say, "All right. Now, everybody, we'll just say, I'm not sure this is the way it was, but everybody and somebody, all these women all go this way to the left and the men will go to the right, and all boys and the men go to the right." So that's what we did, and Mom took Jenny and I over this way, and my father took my brother, who was, like I said, three. And we went to this big, like an open room, and there were a couple of doctors there, and then they tell you, "Strip." And my mother had never, ever undressed in front of us. In those days nobody ever would. She was so embarrassed. And it was all these other, all nationalities, all people there. So anyway we had to do that, they checked us all over, and then they'd stamp something on the card or whatever you were supposed to do. And then we went back to the big room and we sat there waiting for my father. And then my father came, and he didn't have my brother with him, and my mother said, "Where's Glen?" And my father started to cry, and he said, "They took him." She said, "They took him where?" And she said, "Well, they took him. It's all right, all right. They're

just going to do an examination and he'll be back, and they'll be back." And so he had to quiet my mother down, and finally we sat, and we sat, and we sat, and waited, and nothing happened. And it so happened my brother had been born with a bone, without a bone in his nose, the top part of his nose. And I think he had kind of a cleft palate. But then my mother had taken him to all kinds of doctors back in Wales, and they said there wasn't anything that could be done until he was older and they would put a piece of bone out of his hip or something, you know. So nobody said anything before we came to this country and they just took him. And they kept him for a whole week, and we never saw him or never heard from him, never heard anything about him. And I thought my mother was going to go out of her mind. And then she goes to sleep at night, and it was just terrible. Finally when we did get released she went to get him and he was quite content and he was sitting between a Japanese and a Chinese man or something reading, they were reading to him, and he looked like he could care less. But here my mother was worrying herself sick about him, you know. But there really wasn't anything they could do. They decided the same thing they decided before we

came, that there was nothing that could be done until he was around eighteen.

LEVINE: So you, before you left you, you didn't have any idea that they might hold you back because of your brother's condition?

JONES: Oh, no, we had no idea, because it wasn't anything, like if it was something somebody could catch or something, well, if it was a physical problem that would endanger somebody else or something, but I mean he was, other than that he couldn't speak plainly. But other than that there was nothing wrong with him. I mean, physically he was in good condition. So we couldn't understand why they would want to do something like that, you know.

LEVINE: And there was no, when your mother made inquiries there was no response to what his situation was?

JONES: No. Nobody seemed to know anything. And the hospital end of it were, I don't know if that was really joined with that, or I really don't recollect, I can't remember. Even if it was we never saw him, so I think if it was right there they would have let her see him, or maybe not, because maybe they'd think that he'd

want to come back, naturally. But it was a terrible, terrible time to go through.

LEVINE: I'm sorry.

JONES: And luckily it was only a few years after that that they closed it down completely.

LEVINE: Well, now, what do you remember about, you were there for over a week.

JONES: A week.

LEVINE: A whole week. What do you remember about life that week?

JONES: Of course, being a child, we were allowed to, it was like, what I can recall, it was like a prison wall. It would be a high wall, and then you had a courtyard that you could go around where this wall would be. This might not be true but, I mean, this is the way I picture it. And we were, we could go run around all we wanted on the outside. Then inside this wall I would say we would be in there maybe, in there maybe, or maybe not quite that long. And then there was a place where we ate. They had like barbed wire. Well, I couldn't picture it, and you'd go in through these

doors, or gates. And they'd say, "Well, okay, you go in there." And then that's where you'd get fed. Now, I don't remember, the only thing I remember about eating is I know we'd have to go down, they'd give us, you'd pick a hard boiled egg out of a basket in the morning and you'd go in, and, you know, what else you got, I don't remember, but I do remember that part of it. And you'd go in and you'd take that, and then you'd sit there and eat, you know. And that would be the way you, the way you ate. But so you did have the freedom of, you know, running around in this courtyard. And, of course, being children, we had a ball as far as, you know, we could play or do this and that. And we'd meet the other children maybe, or play with them. So, but that, as far as I was concerned it wasn't that bad, but with my mother and dad, of course, the worst part with them was not seeing my brother. We weren't mistreated, as far as being mistreated, but I remember, the only, I do remember there was this Irish person, and she was one of these mouthy kind, and she was giving them a hard time about where we were going to sleep. Because some of them were sleeping in, like, dorms, and they were like prisons, like. But they gave us a little, I don't

know, somebody kind of, whether we were dressed differently, or I don't know why. But they were putting us in a decent place to sleep. It was only like four or five, it wasn't like a dormitory, in other words. And this Irish person was giving them this awful time, and my mother said, "You'd better be quiet or we're going to land back in the other place."

At that, I can remember that. And we were in the better place to sleep. It was still, you know, it wasn't like private rooms or anything, but it was better than the other people have.

LEVINE: In other words, was your father able to stay in the same place?

JONES: I can't remember. I really don't remember.

LEVINE: So it was like a small, it was still a dorm, but it was smaller?

JONES: Yes, yeah. It was more like, I think, four or five beds, maybe. Whereas, like, in the other place it would be like, oh, maybe there'd be twenty in there, you know. And they probably had a few of these little smaller places. And I don't know why we got to go in there, but we happened to be one of the people that

they picked to go in there.

LEVINE: And what about the food? Do you remember . . .

JONES: No, I don't remember anything about the food at all. I really don't. The only thing I can remember is that egg. ( she laughs ) Every morning we went down, and we took this hard boiled egg. And I don't know if you could take two. I'm not sure. But I know we were allowed to take one. And what we had with it, bread or whatever, I just cannot picture. I've often tried to think of it, but I just don't. But that egg stands out in my mind.

LEVINE: So then someone met you from your family?

JONES: My aunt, who was my mother's twin sister. All this time we were on this she was worried and trying to get in touch with these people so we could get, so she could get us out of there, and I think she might have come into contact, if I had contact with somebody in the government, and that's how finally we got out. And she met us, and then took us back to her house, and we stayed, that's where we stayed for six months, living with them. But my dad didn't like, he worked on, my uncle was a boss on the railroad, and he got

Dad that job there under him. He was used to being so bossy, because he was used to working in the mines, and he had never worked with other people than Welsh people, and this was just a combination of everybody, and he just did not feel at home, and he told my mother he just didn't like it. So then that's how they came to go to Pennsylvania. My mother had called this lady that we met on the boat, and they knew a lot of other people. There were a lot of Welsh people settled in this place. This is what happens. One gets one there, and then the relatives come and so on and so forth. And that's what happened, and we were, Dad and Mom went there for the weekend, or maybe my aunt and my mother went, I'm not sure now. But anyway, they went, and finally Dad got a job in the mines there, and so we moved to Pennsylvania to, uh, of course, Philadelphia was in Pennsylvania, but this was in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, near Wilkes-Barre. And then we lived there till, well, we got married there, I got married there. So we must have lived there about ten years, I would say. And then we moved to Jersey.

LEVINE: And how was, how was your life in those initial few

years compared with . . .

JONES: Back there?

LEVINE: Back in Wales.

JONES: Well, school was strange, very strange, because they spellt things differently in this country. Even though we had never learned Welsh, we only spoke English, but they spelled colour C-O-L-O-U-R. In this country it's C-O-L-O-R. Theatre, T-H-E-A-T-R-E back there, it's T-E-R there. So we would put this down on our spelling, and they would mark it wrong. And we'd go home and cry because we said, "This is, they don't even know how to spell in this country," we'd say. And my mother would call it, and they said, "They have to learn to do it this way. That's not the way." There were so many words, so many things that were different until you got used to it. But, and, you know, after the first year in school here, well, you just, everything was, we really loved it. My mother hated it because she'd gone through so much, and she had no friends. I mean, all her friends were back there. And she, oh, she used to cry a lot. And my father said, "Well, after the first year if we make

enough money you can go back for a trip." And so that's what they were kind of working toward. But then when the year was up, or two years, whatever it was, he told her now he had the money and she could go, and we could stay here with him. She said, "No."

She'd gotten more used to it then, and they'd buy, we'd buy a car with the money, and we'd all be able to enjoy it, and that's what we did. So she never went back for years and years after. And she was fine. I mean, everything was fine. It was just, the initial year I would say was when it was bad for her, but we all, you know, the rest of us enjoyed it. It was tough. We had, you know, the first place we lived, it was three rooms and we were five of us, we only had one bedroom. So we had two double beds in there, and the three little ones, we slept in the one bedroom, and my mother and father slept in the other. But that only lasted for a while till my father got going, you know, getting money. And then we finally moved to a house, and, you know, we were just so used to it then.

There was, we loved it from the time we came. We, as children, did, you know. My father did, too. My father never went back for a trip. All the years he was here he never took a vacation, he never went back.

LEVINE: What was your mother and father's attitude about being American? Did they want you to hold on to your heritage and . . .

JONES: Not really, no, no. They accepted America. They became American citizens and, of course, we always, we went to a Welsh church. We, they had Welsh dances. They used to have a place called Kirmer Park in . . .

LEVINE: Kirmer?

JONES: Kirmer. K, I think it's K-I-R-M-E-R, Park. That was in Glenn Ryan, Pennsylvania, right near where we lived. I think it was every Friday or Saturday night. They would run these dances, and it was almost all Welsh people that went. Nanticoke, Pennsylvania was mostly Polish, almost all Polish and Welsh. You were either Polish or you were Welsh, I mean, that was, I guess that's how it started out. And (?) we got along fine, you know. But, of course, they were mostly Catholic and we were mostly Protestant, and so most of those, if they have their own dance or their own good times, because they have different backgrounds. And that's the way it was with us. And we'd have picnics, Welsh picnics, and it would be always, you know Welsh

people there. And they'd talk about places in the old country or songs that we knew, and things like that. But aside from that everybody mixed and mingled and worked in the mines together. And we used to, we were invited to a lot of Polish weddings, which were entirely different than the way we would have ours. Yet it was great. We enjoyed them. It's just, it is too bad America as a whole couldn't do the way, couldn't be that way, because everybody should stay to their culture, I think, or remember it, but also put this country first. That's the way I feel.

LEVINE: What was it about the Welsh wedding that was distinctively Welsh?

JONES: Well, they, at Polish weddings they always have, they'd have a lot of Polish dances, like the Polish hop or something like that. And they'd have that, you know, the music was, a different type of music. It was great. We loved it. But, I mean, that's how it was. And they would have, they would go, they'd have an envelope or bags, and they'd put money in it, as you went in or went out or something. And they'd be gone for two days sometimes. Well, that wouldn't have been our way. Ours was usually like, well, almost

like the American wedding would be, you know. You'd have a regular wedding in a church. But they'd always have a lot of singing. There was always singing. I mean, they say Wales heritage is the land of song, and I believe that, because it's, it's a natural thing for anybody to do, you know. You don't seem to be happy unless you are singing. Even in the pubs back there, or any place you went, everybody sang. It was just the natural thing to do. Football games, any kind of a game you'd go to. The whole, it would be a stage maybe with fifty thousand people, and they'd, everybody would sing this one song. It would just give you chills. That's the type of thing it is. And that kind of a heritage of Wales is song, really.

LEVINE: When you were in Wales, was there any kind of distinct group, like in Pennsylvania there were the Poles and there were the Welsh. In the town that you grew up in, was it . . .

JONES: All Welsh.

LEVINE: All Welsh. Everybody was more or less the same.

JONES: Yes, because they were born, you see, in those days there was no way to get around a lot. You had a bus

or something, but most people didn't have cars or anything like that. So you had to, you had to make your own good times. And not only that, but you wouldn't, you wouldn't emigrate, you know, because, you know, everybody had a job. So you stayed there, your family stayed there. Then a new generation would come along and it would still be the Welsh people, more or less. So that's the difference in this country and the other. You go to Denmark, for instance, and everybody, most everybody there are Danes, Danish people. And, so that's the way it was at that time. Now, of course, it's different now because of the transportation and things that I suppose there's a lot more different, although there really isn't. I've been back for a visit. And, oh, they have a lot of Pakistanians now. A lot of Pakistanians, a lot of Indians now which would wouldn't see, you'd never see back then.

LEVINE: I see. So there weren't, like, Jewish people or any other kind of . . .

JONES: Not really. I don't remember any. I mean, I don't even remember any other chapel, we used to call it chapel. The church used to be called chapel there.

If you didn't, if it was church, it would be Church of England. That is close to the Catholic church, next to the Catholic church, but they don't belong. But I remember Church of England, but the rest were all chapels. I don't even remember a synagogue or anything. It might have been, but I never heard of it, or I didn't know anything. Or any other, very few Catholics, because most of the Welsh people at that time were Protestant. So I, there was a Catholic church there, but that's about all I can remember.

LEVINE: And how about, were there English people there attending the Church of England, or were they . . .

JONES: No, they were Welsh, yeah. And most people that were there were Welsh, or there were English people there that used to, maybe somebody married an English person and they'd come down and live down there, but I'd say the majority of people were just the Welsh people.

LEVINE: Can you remember your family's attitude towards, toward England, when you were growing up?

JONES: My mother and father and my grandparents, never that I remember, were very broad-minded people. They never, they judged everybody by themselves, no matter what

they were, you know. And we were always taught that from the time we were little. You just didn't judge by anything else but what a person is, you know. So most of the people that we, my mother's friends and everybody. I don't remember people being bigoted or anything like that. But, of course, again, if there were only Welsh people there you wouldn't notice it or see it because the people were not there.

LEVINE: Do you remember any other attitudes?

JONES: I remember that, of course, the Irish was, and the Welsh, well, not only Welsh, British people, were always leery of each other because the British people were at war, just as the Irish people were. So they were stationed in Ireland. And I can remember people coming back, and they called the Irish everything, because they would shoot them. One got shot in the back, and one would get something. Of course they'd blame the Irish people, naturally. So there was that feeling between the Irish and the, and I think that's been there for all these years. That's what all this problem is. But my mother was not the type to, you know, to ever put the Irish down, but you would hear it, and we would hear it as children, you know. "Oh,

you're the Irish. Don't you," and, "That's the Irish people." You know, everything was, you blamed them, in other words. But that was because of the conflict that was going on. But other than that, there was never anything.

LEVINE: Can you think of any other attitudes that your parents tried to instill in you and your sister and your brother?

JONES: Always more work, you know. Always right from wrong. We always were taught right from wrong. Always to respect everybody, and especially older people. When we were children we were to be seen and not heard. In other words, if we had company, we would have to sit in another room. If there was no room at the tables, we'd have to sit in the other room and eat, or we'd have to, we would be, speak when spoken to. Things like that, you know, which I think years ago was mostly, the majority of people felt that way. Of course, they don't feel that way today, but . . . ( she laughs ) That's the way it was. And you wouldn't think of saying no, or anything else, to your mother or father. Well, you wouldn't dare. And yet they were wonderful parents. We always look back, and

we couldn't have had better parents ever. But that's, most people, I can remember we had two murders. And one was up the street from us, on the other side of the street, about six houses up from where we lived a little girl was murdered. And then another one. So we weren't allowed to go out at night and there was all, oh, there was an awful lot of fuss. People were scared. They finally did get the fellow that did it, and, of course, that helped. But in the mean, and he was out, he was out looking for the guy, looking for people. I mean, he pretended that he was, he was a friend of the families, and he murdered this little girl. She was a friend of ours. We used to go down the street and play. So that was one thing that was kind of scary. So I guess things were going on in those days like they are today.

LEVINE: Yeah. Of course, that was probably very unusual.

JONES: Oh, it was, it was very unusual. But it happened to me in this little town of, the place where we lived. And, of course, it was all over the papers. And then within, I couldn't tell you exactly when, but in a very short time another woman was killed, with the same fellow that did it. But that was very unusual.

LEVINE: Let's see. So, when you were here in this country, you went through high school. Then what did you do?

JONES: I went to business college. And then I, I worked different jobs, secretarial jobs, more or less. And I finally ended up working for the City of East Orange for sixteen years before I retired.

LEVINE: And when did you meet your husband?

JONES: I met him in Nanticoke, through the church, I guess it was. And I married him when I was nineteen. He was twenty-three. And then we had three boys.

LEVINE: And what did your husband's name and your sons?

JONES: My husband's name was Horace Charles Jones, and my sons, David, David Allen, and Robert Griffiths, and Brian, William Brian. That's the youngest.

LEVINE: Do you have grandchildren?

JONES: Yes. I have six grandchildren. They've all, let's see now. I have two, two right now going to college, and I have two graduated from college, and one graduated from beauty school. And I have one left who is going to college next year evidently or the year

after. She's going to be a senior next year. So five, five of the six went to college. And my oldest son is the general manager for the AARP. My middle boy who was just down is a policeman in Irvington, New Jersey. And my youngest boy is the Assistant City Manager of the City of Maitland, Florida. So they all have done pretty well, and they each have two children, so I have six grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

LEVINE: Really, how wonderful. Well, tell me, how is this period of your life for you?

JONES: Well, I'm happy. I lost my husband sixteen years ago. We moved down here, he was only retired a few years, and he loved it. But he was, he's had a lot of problems in his life, physical problems, you know, things like that. So it was, we wanted to move down here figuring that it would be the greatest thing, and he really enjoyed every minute of it, but then he died. But I loved it here, the children want me to go back up there, you know. They want me to come back with them. No, I just love it down here. I can get around down here. I can do anything down here. I just, I just hope I never have to go to either one of

them, but who knows. The time will come. But as far as I'm concerned I do not want, I'd never want to be a burden to my children.

LEVINE: Let's see. How old are you now?

JONES: I'm eighty.

LEVINE: You're eighty. Do you look back on your earlier life and reflect on it at this point?

JONES: Oh, yes, yes.

LEVINE: More than you did, let's say, earlier.

JONES: Oh, yes, definitely, yes, yes. You do. You go back. You know, you think of the different things. But my children are not Welsh-orientated. They are typical Americans. And they're not even interested, really, in anything to do with Wales. I mean, I don't mean, you know, but I sometimes wish they were a little more so. And one of my grandchildren, I was going back for a trip once, and she said something, "Oh, I wish I was going with you." I said, "Well, maybe one of these days I'll take you." This was no choice at all. She kept saying to me, "When are you going to take me back there?" So I think if there was anyone who was going

to be interested, she seems to be more. But the others, to them they're just Americans, period.

LEVINE: Do you think you, I mean, I think it's typical for people to sort of re-interpret what went earlier as you think back over it. Do you think, do you think you have, what was I going to say, do you think you've done anything to your remembrances of Wales since that time, in your own mind?

JONES: I have been back three times, I guess. And the first time we went back my husband had not seen any of his people for thirty years. And he had a half-brother that was, a half-brother and a half-sister that were still alive. And my niece is a schoolteacher in this country, that's his family. And they went back with us, she and her mother and Horace and I went back for a trip for two weeks. And, of course, being a schoolteacher we got a special trip that went into Glasgow. And we rented a car, and she was going to drive the car down to Wales. So we got the car, and we started. Well, every, if she'd seen a lot of sheep, in other words, she'd want to get out and take a picture. And the (?) castles, she had to take a picture. So finally she said, "Elaine, I don't care

what else you do. Get me to my brother's. You can do, go and do whatever you want, but get me to my brother's." And it was just such a wonderful reunion, you know, when they got together, and we had a wonderful time. They treated us like, they'd known us all our lives, and it was just wonderful. You felt at home." So, of course, that was my first impression. And I guess then I was, I was in my maybe thirties, I guess. We didn't have the children then, I don't think. And so it was a wonderful trip. After that my sister and her husband exchanged houses with people back there, and they made a couple of exchanges. And I've gone while they've been there, and seen a lot of the country, which I had never seen before because all, you were in this little town and you'd go maybe to the next town, but on our vacation, once a year, but we never really went out of, very far. Well, now we've seen, we went to Scotland, we traveled through Scotland. It was beautiful, and we enjoyed it. And I always, I'll always cherish it now, those memories. But I wish I'd known, I'd asked my mother more questions. And also my mother-in-law, because they were both, you know. And now you realize that now after they're gone that's the time you should have

asked. People asked me questions, I don't even know.

LEVINE: What do you think it means to you to have this Welsh heritage?

JONES: I'm very proud, very, very proud of the Welsh heritage, I really am. And I wish that I could pass it on more, but what I see now I'm not going to do much passing on, because they don't seem that interested, you know.

LEVINE: Well, how about the American side? How do you think you personally have been affected in your life by starting out in Wales and then coming here as a girl and living the rest of your life here?

JONES: Well, it gives you a broader aspect of life, I think, you know. You have a different culture. And, too, by coming to America you see all the other kind of cultures. And I'm so glad we came to America and not went to another country.

LEVINE: Was that ever a question, that you might go somewhere else, that you know of?

JONES: No, I don't think so. I don't think so, no. But I'm, all I can say is I'm real proud that I was born of

Welsh extraction. And a lot of the culture that we brought with it, I think, has helped in this country, with the singing, especially. Now, they do have these national singing festivals, Welsh singing festivals. Anybody who's interested in singing would love it, because they do have good voices. I mean, it just, we weren't, I'd say the majority of Welsh people can harmonize. Which, to me, I have no earthly idea of harmonising. But when you're with people that do that, it's just, it kind of gives you a thrill, you know. You think, well, you're proud that is part of the Welsh culture.

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else you'd like to say? We have about half a minute.

JONES: Oh, I don't think so. I'm just glad, happy, that I came to this country, even though we had to go through so much to get in. And I'm so glad that they did away with Ellis Island the way it was, the way it worked at the time. Other than that, I never, ever regretted coming to this country, and I am glad that I am of Welsh extraction, but I'm very, very happy that I am an American.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, that sounds like a good place to stop. This is Janet Levine, and I've been talking with Enid Griffiths Jones, who came from Wales in 1923 when she was ten. And it's April 18, 1993, and I'm signing off.