

EI-317

KATHLEEN EASON HARLOW

BIRTH DATE: NOVEMBER 10, 1915

INTERVIEW DATE: 5/18/1993

RUNNING TIME: 49:42

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: PETER HOM

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 7/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 12/2006

ENGLAND, 1920

AGE AT IMMIGRATION: 4

PASSAGE ON: CARMANIA

PORT OF EMBARKATION:

RESIDENCES: ENGLAND, DUSTON

US: BROOKLYN, NY

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Kathleen Eason Harlow, who came from Great Britain to the United States in 1920 when she was four years old. Today is May 18, 1993 and we're here in the Ellis Island Sound Studio. Peter Hom is handling the equipment for this interview. Well, I'm very happy you're here, and I look forward to hearing I think a very colorful story. Let's start at the beginning by your stating your birth date.

HARLOW: My birth date is November 10, 1915.

LEVINE: And where in England were you born?

HARLOW: I was born in a little thatched-roof cottage town called Duston, which is a suburb of Northhampton, right in the middle of England.

LEVINE: Okay. And that would be D-U-S-T-I-N?

HARLOW: T-O-N. Duston.

LEVINE: Okay. And do you remember Duston?

HARLOW: Yes. I remember, I remember it fairly well because as I've said so many times I remember things from a very early age if they were incidents or situations that I didn't really understand and they stayed with me until I did. And so I remember because I was born during the first World War, and things were not what would normally be the life in Duston. I remember the soldiers. I remember one of them telling me I would wear stars and stripes on my socks some day, and I had no idea what he was talking about. My father, of course, was in the war, like all of the men in the village. The ones that were in our town were brought there as wounded soldiers. We had a hospital in our town. But my father and his brothers were in the war.

The youngest one was killed, but my father and his brother came back.

LEVINE: Where was your father?

HARLOW: In France. They were all in France. And that was why we came to the United States, actually. Because when the soldiers returned, the economy was such, there were no jobs. This I only know from what my father and mother told me later.

LEVINE: Tell me what you remember before the plans were made to come to the United States? Do you remember, tell me more about the thatched-roof cottage.

HARLOW: Oh, yeah. My grandmother lived in a thatched-roof cottage. It had stone walls, a stone floor, and you used to have to cook on an open fire. I remember all that. I remember my grandfather coming home with his horses and wagon and then I would sit on his lap and help him eat his supper that was being kept warm for him. I remember all that very well.

LEVINE: What was your grandfather's name?

HARLOW: His name was William Eason, and my grandmother was Sarah.

LEVINE: Do you remember any stories or any experiences you had with your grandmother or grandfather when you were still in England?

HARLOW: One thing that stands out very vividly is I decided one day, the routine, to digress a little bit, the routine was when the men came home from work on their bicycles they stopped at the pub, The Squirrel's Inn. I remember that very well. And it was on the other side of my grandmother's cottage. Now, it was about what we would call three or four blocks from where I lived. And I decided one day, we had a dog that used to go and meet him every day. He knew the time. And I thought, well, if he can go, I can go. So off I started. And I can remember getting just opposite my grandmother's house, and keeping my back close to the stone wall as I inched around, thinking she couldn't see me. And suddenly, I was almost there, and suddenly the door flew open, and there was my grandmother screaming, "You go on home!" (she laughs) And I can remember I was scared to death, and I could see the bike, I could see the dog, and I had to go home without meeting my father. That I remember vividly.

LEVINE: What was the dog's name?

HARLOW: Jack, Old Jack, yeah. And that was another thing. I remember always saying, "Take Jack home." Because he used to follow me all over. He was bigger than I was. But he used to, he was a big old sheepdog, and he used to follow, I can remember, "Take Jack home." Because he used to be a nuisance to me. But he was trained to keep an eye on me, except when he went to meet my father.

LEVINE: Now, what did your grandmother, what did your grandfather do for work?

HARLOW: I don't know. I imagine he was a farmer because he was on the horse and wagon. That's all I remember. There used to be a standing joke that my father, my grandfather could drive this team of six horses all the way home, but if he stopped at the pub too soon the horses could get him home. (she laughs) And then he'd fall off. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Now, how about your father? What was his name?

HARLOW: Herbert.

LEVINE: Herbert. And your mother's name?

HARLOW: Kate.

LEVINE: Kate. What did your father do?

HARLOW: He was in the shoe business, as I assume almost everybody was in that town at that time. And . . .

LEVINE: Were there, were there large . . .

HARLOW: Shoe factories.

LEVINE: Shoe factories in Duston.

HARLOW: Yes. In fact, that was the reason we came to America, because after the war the government offered the returning servicemen up to five years to decide that they would relocate them to what was in their commonwealth. So my father's brother went to New Zealand. My father was coming to Canada, but my mother had a brother in the United States, in New Jersey. And he wrote and said, "Don't waste your time. With your background in the shoe business, I can get you a job five minutes after you land if you sell up and come to the States." And that was how the decision was made. And it was true, you know. He

worked in the shoe factories here.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the shoe factories that your father worked in?

HARLOW: Not in England, no. I was too little to be involved. I'll tell you one thing. I just, it just comes to me now that I remember. One night we were all down. There's only, it was a one-room schoolhouse. And it was up on the, it was on a little hill that was surrounded by a brick wall, a stone wall. And we all went down into the town at night. I remember this, because I haven't been out in the town at night, a stone wall. And we all went down into the town at night. I remember this because I hadn't been out in the town at night. And we sat on this wall while they showed pictures on the wall of the shop across the way of the soldiers in France. I remember they were brown and white, and I didn't know what it was all about. So most of the children and I were running around a little bit, because we were excited being out in the dark. But I remember that, being on this wall while they showed the pictures of the soldiers in France on the wall of the building.

LEVINE: You mean, they were projected like a movie?

HARLOW: That's right, like a movie. But they weren't really movies, but they were pictures of the soldiers. And I guess everyone looking to see if they knew anyone.

LEVINE: I see.

HARLOW: I don't even know where it came from. I've never even remember asking my mother or father about it. I just remember it, you know.

LEVINE: Is there anything else you remember about the war? Maybe something that didn't make sense to you at the time that you experienced.

HARLOW: Yes. Inasmuch as my father was away all those years, almost from the time I was born, he was over there three years. My mother used to take me up to the hospital where the wounded soldiers were, and it was something foreign to me to see these rows of white beds with all these men in it. And I remember one, but they loved to see children. You know, it reminded them of home, I guess. And I remember one calling me over, and my mother told me I could go, and he had a box of chocolates, and he offered them to me. And I

remember looking at my mother and my mother nodding,
"Yes." And I had this chocolate from this soldier in
the bed. So then I loved to go up there
(she laughs) any time she wanted.

LEVINE: Was your mother volunteering in the hospital?

HARLOW: Well, then it wasn't, you didn't, she didn't have to
volunteer. You were appointed. Because she had
soldiers billeted with her. If you had any rooms in
your house, you had visitors and soldiers and
everybody else. She had five soldiers billeted with
her. Not wounded, but part of the Army or Navy,
whatever it was, the Army, I guess. And she had to
feed them and wash their clothes and all these other
things. They had no choice.

LEVINE: Do you remember the soldiers? I mean, do you remember
any experiences with them?

HARLOW: I remember the figures in the house. The only one,
the only person I remember personally was a nurse who,
from the hospital, came to stay with us. Remember
Miss Lovejoy. I still have a Christmas card from her.
It has a cat on it and says, "Till The Boys Come
Home." You know, that sort of thing. And she used to

sing to me, and I'm now singing those songs to my grandchildren and, in a few months, to my great-grandchild.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Could, can you, can you sing a little bit of it?

HARLOW: Oh, my word!

LEVINE: It doesn't have to be wonderful voice, but . . .

HARLOW: (she sings) "Come and be my little teddy bear. I'll fondle you all day." You know, that sort of thing. I remember that well. And it fascinated me. And then my favorite song, and I remember singing it when we were leaving England because my aunt wanted me to, was "Smile A While." (she laughs) (she sings) "Smile a while, (?)." And when she asked me to sing it I can remember saying, "No, you'll only cry." Because she used to cry every time I sang it. Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you actually go to school at all while you were in England?

HARLOW: No, I was too young. I started here. That's where my English accent went. I went to school in Brooklyn,

and they used to laugh at me, so they volunteered to teach me to "tawk" right. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Well, now, were you an only child?

HARLOW: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you have cousins, aunts and uncle, in Duston?

HARLOW: Oh, yes. I still do.

LEVINE: So did you have much to do with your extended family when you were a little girl?

HARLOW: Yes. There was one aunt in particular who just died at the age of a hundred and five. We're all long livers, fortunately. And she had three children, and my mother used to, I remember staying with her, I found out since my mother had gone to visit my father when he was wounded, and he was on the Isle of Wight. And they brought him from France, and that's where he was in the hospital there. So I stayed with her, and I can remember instances with these children. One, they were older than I. One was about, let's see, she'd be about four or five years older than I, and so we were close. In fact, the one incident

(she laughs) has nothing to do with immigration, but I remember it so well. My mother used to make me, make all my clothes. She was quite a seamstress, and I had quite a wardrobe for a child. And she'd made me a lovely silk coat, and it had snaps on it. They called them grippers, grips. But all the big girls had buttons on their coat. So I can remember the commotion. I sat with my cousin Reenie. She was cutting holes in my new coat so I could have buttons and buttonholes, and her mother walked in and there was such a commotion, and I really couldn't understand why they were so upset. She was only putting buttonholes in my new coat for me. But I remember that, too.

LEVINE: So do you remember what it meant in your little girl's mind when your father was wounded and your mother went to the Isle of Wight?

HARLOW: No, because I wasn't, the first thing I remember about my father was one morning my mother came and got me out of my bed and brought me in and my father, that was when he came home, of course. And my father had come in during the night, and she, and I remember her sitting me down beside him in the bed, and he had a

book for me, which I still have, incidentally. And he had this book to sort of break the ice between us. And, but there was a picture of my father in our living room or in the parlor, the front room, as they called it, a big picture. And so I knew that was my father. She was always pointing to that about my "Dada," as they called him. So I knew what he looked like, so he wasn't altogether a stranger when I saw him.

LEVINE: What was the book?

HARLOW: I Want To Read, and it had all these alphabets and what the letters mean, and different figures making the form of the letters. I still have it. It has some pretty bad painting in it that I did at some stage of the game. (she laughs) Where I decided to color these pictures.

LEVINE: And do you remember what it was like being around your father for the first time?

HARLOW: Not really. No, that I don't remember. I mean, he wasn't there, and then he was there. But it's, life, as I think about it now, it seemed to go from this type of thing that I'm talking about, and suddenly we

were on our way to America. That's how it seemed to me. I don't remember any normal pattern of life with my father there. The life that I remember was without my father being there.

LEVINE: Before we talk about going to America, you described your grandparents' house a little bit. How about the house you lived in with your mother and father?

HARLOW: That was one of the newer houses. They were row houses, as they called them, you know, all attached. And modern for its time, I remember the kitchen, of course, was all stone, stone floors. And then in back of the kitchen was the, where they had a big copper to do the washing and my mother used to stand with the stick pounding the washing down. And you could go out that door into the backyard, into the garden where we grew the vegetables and had chickens and that sort of thing, which was what everybody did. And then the parlor was downstairs, and this other room with the table, I guess it would be like a dining room. And upstairs were the bedrooms.

LEVINE: And did you have hot running water?

HARLOW: I doubt that. I don't think, no, because we had a

fire under this copper to make the water hot when they put the clothes in. That's how they had hot water for the washes.

LEVINE: Did you have like a pump for water? Do you remember . . .

HARLOW: Yeah, we had a pump. We had a pump in the sink, I think. We were modern. The pump was in the house. We didn't have to have it outside, because ours was a newer house. But it was a pump.

LEVINE: And did you have an outhouse, or did you have a toilet, or . . .

HARLOW: We had, it was an outhouse, but it was right close to the back door, so you didn't have to go down the end of the yard. They must have had some type of drainage by that time or something. I don't, that's all I remember.

LEVINE: Do you remember . . .

HARLOW: But, of course, we had the pots under the bed, too. Let's remember that. It was night time. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Do you remember any kinds of foods that your mother cooked when you were little?

HARLOW: Well, the strange part is we didn't have much of a variety because it was wartime. And so when we came to this country I didn't like gravy, I didn't like butter, I didn't like creamy things. We never had anything like that. Uh, but we had some plain biscuits, you know, cookies. No candies or anything like that. And there wasn't, I don't think there was any food to make an impression, because we had, rice pudding is the one thing I remember the most. We had lots of rice pudding and things of that sort. But there wasn't, I mean, what vegetables we grew in the yard.

LEVINE: And were you a religious family?

HARLOW: Oh, we were all Church of England. At that point my father was bellringer. He was a choir boy and my mother and father were married in the same church, same little village church. And he was the bellringer, and then he was captain of the bellringers. They grew up in the church. And when I go back I visit that church. It dates back to the

year 1232. They have the records up to them. I was christened there.

LEVINE: Can you describe the church?

HARLOW: It's like you see on all postcards, you know. It has the gate that you go through, the wooden gate, and it has an entrance that comes up to a peak, and then you go in and it's all stone. Everything is stone. Stone pillars, stone floors, stone walls. And now that they have put electricity in, you see the pipes going up outside of these, uh, stone pillars. But the church itself has been in existence, and they're still worshipping there, since 1232. They have the names of the ministers from that time on.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you know what kind of stone it is?

HARLOW: Actually no. It's just the rough stone of the area.

LEVINE: It's just, it's fieldstone.

HARLOW: Yes, yes. And in the back is the churchyard where mother, my grandparents are buried. And all the other relatives from Duston are buried there. And then the town takes care of the cemetery, the flowers and so on.

LEVINE: Is there anything else that you recall when you think back about the time you spent in England before you came here that you remember?

HARLOW: Not explicitly. I mean, all I know is it must have been a very happy time because I look back on it, now I'm at the stage of the game I thought I'd like to go back and live as I did for a while, and that's why I'm happy where I am now. I've found that type of living, small town living with people knowing one another, and that sort of things. And everybody was your friend, and it was just a very peaceful and joyous time in my life, because I have nothing to think of. There's nothing to make me think otherwise. I don't look back on anything and say it was not a happy time. So regardless of the situation, they tell me of things like the zeppelins dropping bombs on our village at one time. But, and my mother telling me I was saying, "Stop shaking," because she was holding me and she was shaking, obviously. (she laughs) And that sort of thing. But there was nothing to make me say I didn't have a happy early childhood.

LEVINE: Now, how about the decision. Would you talk about how

that decision was made that you and your mother and father would come to America?

HARLOW: I don't know how the decision was made. I just know that that was, the circumstances were that there was, they had to do something because there was no work in England. And I think I said, my mother had a brother in New Jersey, and he said, you know, to come to the States. And so the next thing you know we were on our way. We were on a train, and then we . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving the village?

HARLOW: I remember people saying goodbye to us. I wasn't sure what was happening. You know, going to America could have been going down the street. It didn't mean anything to me. And everybody waving, and my aunt crying. And it was quite a turmoil and they were waving flags and all sorts of carrying on.

LEVINE: Were they British flags they were waving?

HARLOW: Yes. But they, and they gave my father a silver case, a cigarette case, with a British flag folded up in it so that he would, he said, "Don't forget where you come from." (she laughs) We still have that, too.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything your mother packed, or you yourself?

HARLOW: All I remember is my aunt gave me a big children's book of stories. It was heavy! It was, oh, it must be about three inches thick, a very heavy book. And it was all children's stories, and my mother carrying a five-pound tin of Huntley and Parmer's biscuits. Because I was such a fussy eater, she figured I wouldn't eat anything as it was, and at least she'd have that, never dreaming we'd be fourteen days on the water. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Okay. So when you left the village then, how did you leave? What mode of transportation?

HARLOW: I only remember the train. I don't remember the rest. It would have had to been, I guess it must have been a train going right into Northampton, but I don't really remember that.

LEVINE: There was a train that came from Duston?

HARLOW: There was so much going on. Not Duston itself. We would have had to, maybe somebody drove us, or whatever. No, they wouldn't have driven us, I don't

think.

LEVINE: A wagon?

HARLOW: They had buses. They did have, like, buses. So maybe we came on that. That would make more sense. And then the next thing I know we would, I remember saying goodbye at the station, and then the next thing you know we were getting off the train and we were, there was all sorts of commotion, so many people and luggage. We were getting on the boat.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the period of time when you left your house until you got on the ship?

HARLOW: No. Strangely enough, I don't. And I don't remember my mother telling me anything about it either. So I really don't remember any of that.

LEVINE: Well, that must have been your first time out of Duston, huh?

HARLOW: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. It certainly was. But I don't remember that. And I remember, then, being on the boat, and being in this little hallway, and these bunks, you know, these berths that we were in.

LEVINE: Were you in a cabin, or were you in the hold?

HARLOW: It was a cabin with berths, you know, three berths. With my mother, there was an upper and lower. I don't know where, I guess I must have slept with my mother. But then my mother was sick the whole time. Some of it is hazy because it was, there were so many things for me to absorb that I obviously only remember the things I wanted to.

LEVINE: Well, what else do you remember about the ship?

HARLOW: The one thing I remember is my father one day decided we would go. He used to, he was all right and I was all right, so we used to take little walks up and down the hallways. We went to the dining room one day. There wasn't a soul there. And we came out, and we were going up the steps one day and as we, as they opened the doorway to let us up to get outside on the ship, we couldn't go up because they were burying a man at sea. I remember that part. He'd fallen down the stairs in the storm, and they were burying him at sea. And so we had to go back down this ladder-type thing. And we never did get upstairs. Adn that's why I never knew who was on the ship but us.

(she laughs) I thought it was only those of us in this little corridor. All the women seemed to be in bunks, seemed to be. I figured that's the way they traveled. But they were all sick, it was such a rough journey.

LEVINE: Did you actually see the burial at sea?

HARLOW: I saw these people standing there and they had this, as I know now, they had this board and this thing on it, which I didn't know, and that's when we came down. So I didn't see him drop, but I could see him on his way. (she laughs)

LEVINE: So in May, which is when you were traveling, it was a very rough sea?

HARLOW: They said they would, they had to take us, I guess, into foreign seas because they were dodging icebergs. That was the story. Where they were, I can't tell you, but that's what they said. And they took us out of our way and made the trip extremely rough.

LEVINE: And, let's see. You said on your form that you were vaccinated on the ship?

HARLOW: Oh! When we stopped, we were here. The Statue was

outside our window and so on, or outside. We didn't have a window.

LEVINE: Did you know what the Statue meant?

HARLOW: No, I had no idea. And we were all lined up to go past. There were two men at tables, square tables. And as we approached them the next thing you know they stuck a needle in my arm, and I was vaccinated. That's before we got off the boat.

LEVINE: Do you remember the boat, do you remember seeing New York City from the boat when you came into the harbor?

HARLOW: As I say, the first thing I saw, I was so short and little that I was usually surrounded by legs and skirts and things and couldn't see an awful lot. But when we, my mother and my father held me up so I could see Ellis Island, and I thought that was my aunt's house. (Dr. Levine laughs) Because, now we're here, you know. That's where we were coming. We were coming to Aunt Emma's, so that had to be her house. Then I remember going up the gangplank, again with these crowds all around me. Because nobody carried me. My father lifted me up to see things, but the rest of the time I was on my own two feet. And we got

to this big room which is now Ellis Island. And we sat in a corner, my mother and I while, obviously my father was doing paperwork, but he wasn't there, just she and I. And at right angles to us was another mother and three children, all in very colorful costumes, and babushkas and scarves on their head. And they were dancing around, and they were jabbering.

And I was fascinated. I'd never seen anything like this, not in Duston, and I'd never seen or heard anything like this. So I just stood with my mouth open. And finally my mother took out this same old Huntley and Palmer's biscuits and told me to offer some to these children. Well, I went over and held out this tin box to them, and they looked at their mother, and their mother said something which meant nothing to me, and with that they each took one, and they smiled and I smiled, and the next thing you know we were just jigging around together. We had no idea what the other one was saying, but we smiled and we shared cookies and it was a very happy situation.

(she laughs)

LEVINE: Do you remember what you were wearing?

HARLOW: Oh, I know I was wearing a woolen, uh, I don't

remember what, I had a skirt, obviously, because I had this woolen sweater on, my jumper, as they call them, that my aunt had made for me, and I had a hat to match, and it itched like the dickens. I can remember wearing it because it itched so. They didn't know about allergies then. We have since found out that was my problem. But that I remember.

LEVINE: And do you remember anything else about Ellis Island?
The procedures, what you had to go through there?

HARLOW: That was the thing that I remember most. And then my father came for us, and then we all proceeded. Again I'm down among all the legs and skirts. And we went through what seemed like a cattle run, I would call it today. Crowds of people, and we were just shuffling along through this doorway onto like a ramp. And on each side was an iron mesh or steel mesh type of fence. And suddenly this head popped up from amidst the crowd on the side, and she had a big, oval shaped black satin hat that was probably quite popular in those days, and she was yelling, "Katie, Katie, Katie!" And I looked and she looked, and it was my aunt, who had come to meet us. And then we all met down at the end, and then we went on the subway train

to Newark.

LEVINE: So tell me, your aunt's name was Emma. And what was her, what was your mother's maiden name?

HARLOW: Kirby.

LEVINE: And it was, Emma Kirby was . . .

HARLOW: No, it was John, she was married to my uncle, Jack Kirby.

LEVINE: Oh. And what was your mother's maiden name?

HARLOW: Well, she was Kirby. That was the thing. She was Kate Kirby. John Kirby, Jack Kirby was her brother, and he was married to Emma. That's how that situation was.

LEVINE: Okay.

HARLOW: Then we went on to Newark. I can remember kneeling on the train, and it had that, like, wicker, and all my knees got all (she laughs) you know, dented.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I think we'll pause here for a second while we turn over the tape, and then we'll continue from the train ride.

EI-317/HARLOW

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Okay. We're resuming now on Side B of the interview with Kathleen Harlow. I neglected to ask you the name of the ship you came on.

HARLOW: It was the Carmania, one of the White Star Cunard ships that were I understand being used then.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. So you were saying that after you left Ellis Island . . .

HARLOW: Yeah, then we went on this train, and I was fascinated because I knelt on the seat and it marked up my knees on this, this rough seat. But we were going through a, it looked like a canyon. It was all stone. And I'd never been on anything like this in my life. And we eventually got to my aunt's house. And . . .

LEVINE: And that was where?

HARLOW: Newark, New Jersey. And she lived on the second floor, and the thing that I liked the best was it had a back porch with stairs that you could go down the back way in the open. And I'd never been in a two-story house before either. So it was all wonderful to

me.

LEVINE: Was there anything else about your aunt's house that struck you as different from anything you had known?

HARLOW: Uh, yes, there was a lot of activity on the street, you know, a lot of carts and horses and things with vegetables. And one day they had a merry-go-round. It came on a wagon. And so my, I didn't realize it, my cousin said, "Ooh, would you like to go on the merry-go-round?" I said, "No, thank you." Because I had no idea what she was talking about. So they said, so then they told her to tell me it was wooden horses. That's what we called them. "Would you like to go on the wooden horses?" "Well, yes, that I would like." So we went down and I remember riding on this little thing, and I thought, "This is a wonderful country. All these things you can do." You know, we had none of that. And then eventually we got our own place which was two rooms in an attic. And we had one big kitchen, living room, dining room, recreation room. That was one room. And one bedroom with a cot for me. I can remember this very well, because that was where we had our first Christmas in America. And I woke up in the morning and there was this little tree. It

must have been all of twelve inches high. And I've never had a tree that made an impression on me like that did because I didn't expect it. It was wonderful.

LEVINE: Had you celebrated Christmas in England?

HARLOW: It just dawned on me, yes, that I do remember.

LEVINE: What was that like?

HARLOW: I was staying with my aunt. Evidently my mother had gone to visit my father. And we used to hang up pillowcases for them to put the things in, not stockings. And they used to put things in. I remember we hung a pillowcase up for me at my aunt's house. Now, her husband had been sent home. He died, he picked up Bright's disease in the trenches. But I could see him in the bed, and I was in there, and I got a dollhouse that year. Somebody had made me, made a dollhouse. And it was all such a tremendous thing going on, this pillowcase with the toys, and a dollhouse. And my poor uncle in bed, it was quite a time. That's the Christmas I remember there.

LEVINE: Now, was that a big Christmas tree?

HARLOW: There? They didn't have a tree that I recall.

LEVINE: No tree.

HARLOW: I don't remember a tree. I only remember the dollhouse, this little toy dog outside the dollhouse, and the pillowcase with a couple of books and an orange and things in it, and my poor uncle in bed. That's all I can remember about that Christmas.
(she laughs)

LEVINE: So your first Christmas here when you were living in the attic with the little tree was the first.

HARLOW: That's it, it was in this, that's right. And that's the thing that I remember the most.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, were your accommodations where you moved with your mother and father, were they more or less comfortable than what you had had in England?

HARLOW: Well, I suppose to my mother and father they would be less comfortable but I was happy as could be because I had no reason not to be happy. I had a bed, I had a big place, and then we could step outside this room and I was on the roof outside to play. There was nothing I wanted. And there were some young people

lived downstairs, and they used to drive me all around on the back of their motorcycle. And, oh, I had a wonderful time. My mother was petrified, I remember.

Every once in a while she'd be looking for me. I did very well that year because I, they used to take me, I can remember this. They'd take me to the local candy store, sit me up on the counter and give me all sorts of things to sing all the war songs to them. I used to sing all the songs. And they'd give me candy, they'd give me lollipops. And I sat up there singing my heart out, and I made out like a bandit.

(she laughs)

LEVINE: Who would take you there?

HARLOW: These two teenage boys downstairs that had the motorcycle. Because with the English accent and all it was a lark to them. So . . .

LEVINE: Now, how about your father? Did he, in fact, find work quickLy?

HARLOW: Right away, yes. And then eventually enough that we could get settled, and he moved to Brooklyn where he was offered a better job and we had a real apartment then. Cold water, but it was an apartment.

LEVINE: Did he work in the shoe factory?

HARLOW: Yes. He's always worked in the shoe factory until the Depression. All those years.

LEVINE: And did you start school soon after, well, in September?

HARLOW: Yes. I started, well, they sent me to school in Newark for a while from, I guess kindergarten, because I was very little. I remember that. I also remember, I don't know if this should go on tape, but what happened was we sat in a circle and I had no idea what they were doing. I mean, when the kids would get up or they'd want to leave the room, I didn't know what they were doing. But I had to go, and I really didn't know how to go about it, so I went. So they had to send me home because I was, I wet my pants. I remember that. Because I walked, my mother was mortified. And then they told me I was supposed to raise my hand and ask to leave, but nobody had told me.

LEVINE: Do you, were you one of the few, or only immigrant children who . . .

HARLOW: To the best of my knowledge, yes. And, in fact, a lot of people were interested in talking to me. And now I remember that one of the women downstairs, one of these fruit market, fruit wagons came by, and she bought a fruit, she bought some fruit and gave me a peach. And I came upstairs and I said, "The lady downstairs gave me this nice ornament." I had no idea it was edible, because I hadn't had a peach with this fuzzy skin before. And when they told me you could eat it, I couldn't believe it. But I remember saying that. I said, "The lady downstairs gave me this ornament."

LEVINE: Is there anything else about school? Were you, did kids tease you in school, or did you have . . .

HARLOW: When I went, when I finally got to school in Brooklyn, yes. I was then six or seven, and by then the teachers thought it was wonderful, and they'd put me in all the plays. And the kids fell on the floor laughing every time I spoke. And the key thing I remember was we were doing The City Mouse And The Country Mouse. And I said at this one point, (she speaks with an English accent) "I have been to the city." And the kids roared! So I said, I said to my

friend, "Why do they laugh?" And he said, (she demonstrates a New York accent) "You don't 'tawk' right." I said, "Well, what should I say?" So they taught me how to say, "I been to the city, I been to the city." (Dr. Levine laughs) So I could say it properly. And I went back, and I was very proud of myself that I could say, (she demonstrates a New York accent) "I been to the city." And that was the end of the British accent. And irony, I now live in Michigan, and everybody says to me, after all these years, "Oh, where are you from? You have an accent." I said, "Deja vu. I'm right back where I started."

LEVINE: And how did your mother like it?

HARLOW: My mother wasn't too sure, of course, at first. It sort of overwhelmed her. She was used to small town living. I only know from what she tells me, and it did frighten her. The first thing that she thought, that there wouldn't be any, she'd heard how hot it was in New York, so she didn't think there would be any trees. So that was a relief to find they did have some trees here. And she'd heard it was, everything was cement. She didn't think there'd be gardens and flowers. And then once we got into it she was happy

and, of course, never regretted. She never really lost her love for the English way of life. We kept it, more or less. We always had English Christmases and baked puddings and Yorkshire puddings and all that sort of thing. I grew up with that. But my father was, he applied for his citizenship papers immediately. And I became a citizen on his papers. In 1920 the wife, everyone took the father's citizenship, but you had a five year wait. But in 1922 they changed the law. So when he got his papers, second papers, I became a citizen, but it left my mother still an English, an English, uh, person. So she had to go and get her own papers, which took her a long time. She was afraid. (she laughs) You know, but she did get them eventually. But my father and I became citizens five years after we came.

LEVINE: Was there a community of people from England in Brooklyn where you settled?

HARLOW: No. No, there wasn't. In fact, the first house that we lived in, this tenement that we moved to, had six families, three on each side. One was, there was a Scotch lady on the top floor, so we were very close with her. She was like the grandmother that I didn't

have here. And then on the other side there was Italian and Polish, and we had a league of nations. It was wonderful. And when you'd go in the hall you could smell everything from kielbasa to corned beef and cabbage, you know, that sort of thing.

LEVINE: So there were a number of children in the school who had come from someplace else?

HARLOW: The children actually hadn't, it was actually heritage, you know.

LEVINE: They had been born here, as far as you can remember.

HARLOW: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Is there anything else that you remember that struck you as different when you first came?

HARLOW: In the early years? Um, I think it seemed, there seemed to be a vastness that I was not used to. The streets seemed bigger. The people seemed to go farther distances. And it seemed like I could go farther than I could. I remember the, and there was a vastness. That's the only way I could describe it. In the town I came from everything was more compact, and the streets were smaller, the houses were closer.

And even here when the houses were next to one another, they were bigger houses, so there was always that much, there was more space to get used to.

LEVINE: Now, how about, you stayed in school how long? How long did you stay in school? Till what grade?

HARLOW: Well, actually I went to eight grammar schools. We were constantly moving. But going up, I have to say this, because it was a standing joke as I got older. I said, "Didn't you pay your rent?" You know. But we went from this attic, place in the attic, to a cold water flat with the gas mantles, and I remember I wasn't allowed to jump because you'd brake the mantle and we'd have no light. And then we went from that to a place with electricity, I want you to know. And heat! And this, and eventually they bought their own home in Flatbush, Brooklyn.

LEVINE: You stayed in Brooklyn once you had moved to Brooklyn?

HARLOW: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. So . . .

HARLOW: And then eventually went to Queens when I was much older, and I was married from Queens.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. How did you meet your husband?

HARLOW: That, well, I started in dancing school, and my mother is sitting next to a woman who's starting to drop her "H's". And she said, "Ah!" You know, an Englishman. So they became very close friends, and my husband was her younger brother. That's how it worked out. We grew up together, more or less. (she laughs)

LEVINE: So you, did you actually meet him in dancing school or . . .

HARLOW: No, I met, we became close friends and then socialized. In fact, we were friends for the rest of our lives. My mother and she were friends. They're all gone now. But I'm still close to the rest of the family.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, what did you, did you work after you finished school?

HARLOW: Oh, yeah. I got out during the Depression. I got out when you needed a college diploma to run an elevator. So I heard they were hiring waitresses for Schraft's, so I trotted myself down there. And they eventually hired me because I went back and forth so many times

to get, they hired me. And I started working down here on Broad Street. And I worked there, and then I got a job with a hotel in Bermuda, and I stayed as a waitress until I left to have my children. I got married, then I had my children. And I ended up working for the New York State, the payroll department of a state hospital. I've done most anything. I have a friend who always says, "If you want to know about anything, ask Kay. She either lived there or worked there." Because I had so many jobs and so many places of residence.

LEVINE: What was your husband's name?

HARLOW: George.

LEVINE: George Harlow. And your children?

HARLOW: Nancy and Barbara.

LEVINE: And do they have married names, or . . .

HARLOW: Nancy Horney and Barbara Ellis. And I have five grandchildren, and I'm expecting a great-grandchild.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Well, looking back over your life and having come here from England, what difference do you

think that made in your life?

HARLOW: Uh, I believe that it, English children, particularly in my day, were raised to be seen and not heard and speak when spoken to and so on and so forth. And I think by coming to America I was given an opportunity to find that I could do things and be somebody and I had a very, I have a successful life by my standards. I was happy. I have wonderful children, wonderful grandchildren. And I can look back and say it was a very productive life. We had the opportunity, we do a lot of volunteer work and that sort of thing, and still doing it. And even after I retired from the state I was running a senior center. And those sort of things that I doubt very much, because I see my cousins, they do not have the opportunity to do those things. They're happy, but they haven't known anything else.

LEVINE: So you think coming from the environment that was in England to this one made you more apt to want to do things.

HARLOW: No question about it. And by that I think I was able to give my children more, more to get on with their

lives and do something with themselves. My daughter here has become a nurse, and the other one was an administrator at a hospital in Illinois, now has her own inn in Saugatuck. They're all, none of them have been afraid to do anything. This daughter has adopted three boys, one from Bogota, Columbia who is graduating from college next weekend, And twins who are in high school. It's given them a background that they can go ahead and do something with their lives, which they may not have had had I been in England and had them in England.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What about this period in your life? What would you say about this time of your life for you?

HARLOW: I don't think I could ask for much more, to be perfectly honest. I have, I'm in reasonable good health with things that happened to me, could happen to anybody at my age. And my children are very attentive, very loving, very kind. I never have to worry about anything. I have many, many friends. I can do pretty much what I want to do and nobody stops me. They will help me if necessary. And my grandchildren are very fond of me, if what they write and say and do is any indication. And so I really

couldn't ask for any more. I have a pension.

(she laughs) I have social security.

(she laughs) I have a medical plan.

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else that you would like to say before we close?

HARLOW: (she sighs) No. I can only say that everyone that I've been contacted by or have been in touch with through this particular situation has been wonderful, most gracious, most kind. And we feel far more important than I thought this was about, and I'm grateful for that. This is another experience. When you say about my life, I get excited when the sun comes up. So things like this that are out of the norm are even more exciting to me.

LEVINE: That's wonderful. Well, it's a pleasure to honor you, because that's really what this is about.

HARLOW: That's exactly what it is. And I'm delighted. My mother and father must be delighted, too.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I want to close now, and I've been talking with Kathleen Eason . . .

HARLOW: No, it was Eason Harlow.

LEVINE: Eason, I'm sorry. Kathleen Eason Harlow. And it's
May 18, 1993. We're in the studio at Ellis Island,
and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service
and I'm signing off. Thank you.