

EI-397/JORDAN

EI-397

MICHAEL JOSEPH JORDAN

BIRTH DATE: JULY 20, 1902

INTERVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 19, 1993

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 1:32:30

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELMHURST, NEW YORK

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JOHN MURIELLO, 4/1996

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 6/1996

IRELAND, 1924

AGE 22

PASSAGE ON "THE CEDRIC"

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Tuesday, October 19th, 1993. I'm am in Elmhurst, in Queens, New York with Michael Joseph Jordan. Mr. Jordan came from Ireland in 1924 when he was twenty-two. Kevin Daley is running the recording equipment, and also in attendance in Catherine Jordan, Mr. Jordan's wife. Anyway, thank you for letting me come out. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date.

JORDAN: July 10, 1902.

SIGRIST: And where in Ireland were your born?

JORDAN: Limerick City.

SIGRIST: Limerick City. Can you just describe Limerick City for me, what it looked like when you were a kid?

JORDAN: Well, let me see. Well, it was very crude in those days, looking from now back. It was rather crude. My father was a laborer, but he married a woman of a higher standard financially. And then after they married he went into business. He operated what they call a Garvey car.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

JORDAN: G-A-R-V-E-Y car. Which was a, they're the kind of cars came before the taxis. A public vehicle at the main street in Limerick. Georgia Street, the main street, and the main cross street was William Street. So he had this Garvey car for hire there to take people all over the country for long distances, you know, between the cities. And that went down...

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

JORDAN: James Jordan.

SIGRIST: And do you know how he met your mother?

JORDAN: Well, I wouldn't know except the parish where we lived. Parish where we lived. With the relatives, he was very close to her relatives. And he married, they were a little step above my father. My father was a laborer and my mother was come from a more secure family.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about your father's background and his family? Tell me a little bit about your father's parents and his background.

JORDAN: My father's, my grand-, my grand-, his parents was Margaret and James Jordan. Things were bad in the way of employment, so the father went to Australia, and left my grandmother with my father and three, six children, was it? Let me see. Three boys, three boys and three girls.

SIGRIST: Do you know when your grandfather went to Australia?

JORDAN: That I don't because...

SIGRIST: But your father was a child?

JORDAN: ...too young, I was young. My father was only about four-, sixteen or something. But there was six children anyhow. And naturally my grandmother had to take on the load. And when my mother came, of course, she brought money with her. And that's what started my father in business. So he kept that car like a taxi, the forerunner to the taxis. And we had a three story brick house and a little business there. What they call "trap" cleaning, trap business, you have the trap...[Mr.Jordan pronounces "trap" as "tripe"]

SIGRIST: Trap?

JORDAN: T-R-A-P. So we, my grandmother ran that business, my father also. Besides the car he hired, he kept common cars, what they call that carries garbage, any kind of goods. Especially, so these men that he hired, mostly he used them for carrying ballast to the ships. And the ships came in from the ocean ninety miles into the city of Limerick. And the Shannon was shallow at Limerick City, so we had a floating dock. So when the ships came in, they went to that floating dock. And

as there was no other kind of ballast in them days they had to get common cars to pick up rubbish, like stones and brick and earth. They filled the ballast on the ships. So these were sailing ships. And so naturally a sailing ship is going to topple over if there's no ballast. So they had no facilities for that. So that's what we kept, my father kept men doing that.

SIGRIST: Was Limerick, was it's main industry the shipping industry in Limerick?

JORDAN: No, that was only one part. The main industry was bacon curing. Bacon, Limerick is famous for bacon curing, and also for the production of lace. Czechoslovakians do that mostly now, but we still have people who do that lace work. We had the bacon factory, we had also condensed milk, and caramel factory. There were two big factories there. Then, of course, the flour was the, the distribution of flour from the docks. Besides that what else did we have? What else did we have? Yes, we had Tates [PH] factory. We made all the, we made all the, the army's suits.

SIGRIST: Uniforms?

MRS. JORDAN: Uniforms.

JORDAN: Yeah, uniforms. We made them, and that was a mass industry even before, before Henry Ford had it. We had a mass industry. And so that was one of our industries there.

SIGRIST: So Limerick is a prosperous city then?

JORDAN: Fairly, then, yes. There were a (unintelligible) in that way. Of course, we had our own government there. And that was about all I can say with regard to that.

SIGRIST: Can you describe your house for me? You said it was a three story brick house.

JORDAN: That was after my marr-, after the marriage, after my father's marriage.

SIGRIST: Yes.

JORDAN: Previous to that we had only a little small detached, attached cottages we lived in when I was a kid. So that's all that I know there.

SIGRIST: When you said after your father's marriage, are you, did he remarry at some point?

JORDAN: After my, my, I mean, after my marriage, my father's marriage we took a three, three story house with a yard and stables, which we kept the horses and the cars and the Garvey cars.

SIGRIST: Had your father been married...

JORDAN: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: ...before?

JORDAN: Before what?

SIGRIST: Before, before he was married to your mother?

JORDAN: No. No. No, I, I don't understand where you ask that question, you know.

SIGRIST: Well, you said when you, when you were, when your father got married you moved to this brick house. And I'm, I was just wondering if he had been married before.

JORDAN: No. That's no connection anywhere

SIGRIST: Well, can you describe the brick house for me, sort of walk me through the house.

JORDAN: Three story brick house like we have, much like we have here. It was, it was attached. There was houses, except we had a big space where there was a yard and stabling we called it for horses. That's where we kept the Garvey car when it wasn't on the street, plus the working cars. The men drove the Garvey cars, I mean the common cars we called them. They just had a little side truck to keep. And they drove out, they were hired men, and they gave so much to my fathe, they earned their wages and he got something out of it. So that was a business. Part of the business he had.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the kitchen in the house for me?

JORDAN: Where I lived? No, I couldn't.

SIGRIST: No.

JORDAN: I was too young there, and I was, in fact, I was only on a, on a, you know one of them little horses, and I was the lucky one at that time because the money was there, and the success. So I had a little horse and, and you know, and pedals. (unintelligible) So I was the lucky one of the children. Then after that the other kids got it bad, when we left, when the business broke down.

SIGRIST: How many other children were there?

JORDAN: My brother Patty, my brother Christy and three sisters.

SIGRIST: What were their names?

JORDAN: Patrick was the next one to me, then Christopher, then Mary, then Catherine and then Ellen.

SIGRIST: Ellen is the youngest?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: So you're the oldest?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: You're the oldest, Ellen is the youngest.

JORDAN: Yes, I am the oldest.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

JORDAN: McInerney was her maiden name.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

JORDAN: M-C-I-N-E-R-Y [sic]. McInerney. I'll go over it again. M-C-I-N-E-R-N-E-Y. McInerney.

SIGRIST: And her first name?

JORDAN: Ellen.

SIGRIST: Ellen. So the youngest child was named after her?

JORDAN: Yeah, that's right.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about your mother's background? You said she came from a wealthier family.

JORDAN: Yes. Right.

SIGRIST: What did her parents do?

JORDAN: There was a business there. Limerick was very well known for it's production of bacon. And there was a group of men that came from, mostly from our parish, what they called pig buyers. They went all over the country and they bought pigs. And they also, they al-
, you know, they were success, they were successive [sic]. So naturally they had more money. So they were, in a way they were a little upper class compared to us.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your mother's parents?

JORDAN: No. Never. They died very young apparently. But had a lot of property as well.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what your mother's personality was like?

JORDAN: Well, my mother was very quiet. She was, she was a kind of intellectual. But she done a lot of reading. I used to hear her reading Don Quixote and Scarlet Pimpernel and others of those years. You know, and then we'd start with, it was lucky for me that I had that, those things and I remembered them. Now, of course, then she stepped down when she married my father in terms of money anyhow. So that she was good. And, of course, she had relatives, you know, who were in the butcher business as well, as the pig buying. And they always helped us. Like around Christmas they gave us clothes and food and everything, you know, at different times through the year. But we have nobody, none are, nobody there. We all left Ireland.

SIGRIST: What about your father's parents? Were they alive when you were in Ireland? Your father's parents?

JORDAN: My grandmother, only one. That's the only one. The others we knew practically nothing about. They came from the country. My, my grandmother come from, you know, the outlying districts, from the, in the County Clare. And I guess they parted with their property out there before she came, herself and her husband came to, previously I understand it, my grandfather was a coachman. And there was a lot of estates around Ireland then, like, especially Spanish, Spanish, they came to Ireland. And, you know, they settled here and there. So I believe he was a coachman for some wealthy people. We assumed they might have been Spanish.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your grandmother when you were a kid growing up? Do you, is there something that sticks out in your mind about her?

JORDAN: No, I think she was, she was more dominant than my mother. So she ran the whole house.

SIGRIST: So she lived with you?

JORDAN: Yes. After we, well, yes, she lived with us.
Especially when we were in the big house in Limerick.

SIGRIST: In the big house.

JORDAN: Because I was quite young then. I must have been
only, maybe five or six at least, maybe eight when I
lived in that house. The three family house. It was,
it was like a three family, but we owned the whole
thing. We only used it for ourselves.

SIGRIST: When you were a child, who did the cooking in the
house?

JORDAN: Well, mostly my grandmother, because my mother was,
was, when she was home, as I understand it she had
servants to do her work. So my mother, grandmother
done the, the work. (there are sirens in the
background)

SIGRIST: What kind of food did you eat in Ireland when you were
a kid?

JORDAN: Well, generally we, we used to have meat, you know. We used to have bacon. And we also had, my grandmother used to sometimes go to the market and get chickens. And then besides, before she'd kill the chicken she decide to have meat instead and keep the chickens. So when we went to the poorer district after we left the big house, we used to keep chickens. And sometimes pigs in the backyard, because rearing pigs for the market over there was the kind of industry that poor people had. They reared them for three or six, three or four months, when they'd be good quality for making bacon. They had to be high quality for Irish bacon in them days. We were very famous for that. And so rearing pigs for three or four months, and getting the high price, they had to be a certain weight, quality. So that when at the end of three or four months they become a, a kind of an income.

SIGRIST: Now were you responsible for the slaughtering the pigs also...

JORDAN: Oh, no.

SIGRIST: ...or did you just sell the pigs?

JORDAN: No, you wouldn't be allowed. There were all these pigs, nobody slaughtered the pigs, unless the people in the country. The people in the country done that. The outskirts. But in the cities all, all bacon had to be certified through the government there. And it had to meet all the requirements of, you know, cleanliness and the like of that.

SIGRIST: So you ate, you ate bacon and chicken. What kinds of vegetables did you eat?

JORDAN: Well, mostly potatoes and cabbage was our food. They were the stuff. Sometimes we had turnips and parsnips. Turnips and parsnips mostly.

SIGRIST: Did you grow any of these in your own garden, or did you buy them all?

JORDAN: No, we didn't have any space in the city. No, there was very little private farming.

SIGRIST: And what about for Christmas? Describe what Christmas dinner would consist of.

JORDAN: Oh, well, Christmas dinner was generally a goose. We had geese, geese for Christmas and sometimes for Easter. And in them times we used to have a feast at night, at midnight maybe, New Year's Eve either, or Christmas, we had a feast of bacon and sausages and eggs.

SIGRIST: And then how else would you celebrate Christmas?
(there are sirens in the background)

JORDAN: Well, of course, we celebrate by, we used to go to, to the town as boys, we'd go through the city and we'd eat fish and chips. And chincherry [PH]. We used to call it lemonade. There were stores for that purpose there. And we celebrate by going there, and perhaps singing. You know, that's...

SIGRIST: Did you put a tree, a Christmas tree in the house?

JORDAN: Oh, no.

SIGRIST: Nothing like that?

JORDAN: We didn't do that. The most, the most we had at that time was we hung a stocking. And they put the presents into the stocking.

SIGRIST: What kind of presents would you get?

JORDAN: Oh, well, would I know now. Maybe candies. Candies. Perhaps candies and hardly a book, because we had delivered an amount of books, going, we went to the Christian Brothers schools, mostly because most of our population were Catholics in the south of Ireland. And we didn't have much books. But as I said, you might get stockings or you might, something like that, or shirt or something in your, in the stockings for Christmas. And, of course, we'd get gifts from our relatives. They would go into the stockings. Yeah, that's the only thing. We didn't have no, a Christmas tree.

SIGRIST: Anything like that.

JORDAN: No, not at that time.

SIGRIST: You said you were Catholic?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: What, was there a church nearby?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name?

JORDAN: Saint Mary's.

SIGRIST: And when, is there a story that you associate with that church? When you think about that church what do you think about.

JORDAN: Well, I'll tell you, when my, when I became of age to go to grade school my grand-, my grandmother took me to the convent, Catholic convent. And I went there for a very short time. Then I went to the boys school called the Christian Brothers.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about, about the Christian

Brothers school? What are some of your memories of going to school there?

JORDAN: I remember they were very poor and they were very strict. And they didn't think much of slapping you. If you came five minutes late on the cold mornings they'd have your hand out like that (he gestures), they'd slap you with a pipe across your fingers. They, yeah, they were pretty tough that way, but they were very good. But they left me off (unintelligible) after coming out number two in my class in fourth grade. When I should have gone to the next middle school, they left me there. They should have pushed me because I must have had a, a good potential, where there's only one man, one in the whole class, and we were about fifty, excelled me in, in the tests. So that, that was the end of my scholarship until I went to work as a messenger boy.

SIGRIST: How old were you

JORDAN: I went to work at, you're not allowed to work until you're fourteen. Fourteen years of age. Then I worked in a saloon. Well, we call it a saloon here,

but actually it's a wine and, and liquor and groceries. So I worked there in that place. And I sometimes had to bottle the non-alcoholics drinks in the basement, you know, bottle them.

SIGRIST: How did you do that?

JORDAN: We had to, you know, what you have, a gadget, it goes down like, and press the cork into the bottle. We filled them with funnels from a cask. And that's the only liquor I even handled. None ever touched, we were allowed to bother with alcoholic liquor such as stout or beer or whiskey or anything like that. The only acquaintance I had with the whiskey is I used to take some small bottles of it from the bonded whiskey storage. Once in a while I took a small bottle to relatives in the country. Relatives of the people I worked for. That was my only knowledge of any dealings with whiskey.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what this tavern looked like?

JORDAN: The tavern? Well, it was mostly for the farmers come in from the country. This was a very busy street,

Williams Street and Limerick. The farmers came from the nearby parts of County Limerick and County Clare.

They came in there to do a lot of their shopping, to purchase flour, flour and perhaps store bread sometimes, and bacon and other things. So a lot of carts came in there. And they dealt with this store buying the like of tea and sugar and some, some items like that. They came from mostly around the County Clare and the fringe of the County Limerick. They brought that, they came to purchase, you know, food for their homes.

SIGRIST: Or their alcohol if they needed it.

JORDAN: Yes. I guess they were allowed to buy bottle, I never no-, noticed them. But they maybe have boughten bottles. We didn't have whiskeys stores where they're selling like here bottles where anyone can go in and buy. I don't know how the people got their whiskeys. But I'm sure that they could buy that, as long there were dealers for, for tea and bread and so forth.

SIGRIST: What did you do for fun when you were growing up in Ireland? What kind of entertainment did you have?

JORDAN: Well, we had, the first time I went to a movie I was maybe eighteen, sixteen or eighteen years of age. They were the silent days. But we also had plays, or we had bands. We had brass bands and fife and drum bands. And we also had plays. We had plays based on the Irish history. On the heroes, you know, such as fellows who were sent away to prison or something. And we had one play I went when I was a boy, about fourteen, called "Knocknagow." K-N-O-C-K-N-A-G-O-W, which is probably Gaelic. But actually in English it was "The Homes of Tipperary." And that's the only play I ever saw in my life in Ireland. But we had the singing there. Of course, we were there to listen to the songs. So we had temperance societies for the boys, which were promoted by the Christian Brothers. And we didn't have much singing in the schools, except we sang hymns mostly. But we didn't have much singing. But we had Commor [PH] gangs who sang in the streets. Groups of boys. There was competition between the boys in one part of the, it was the parish and others. So we had our groups there and we sang the old songs. Like, for instance, "Old Black Joe," and "The Swanee River (unintelligible)," and what

else, "Old Black Joe," "My Old Kentucky Home." All the songs at that time. We'd stand on the corners and sing them. And we used to always compete with the boys on the other streets. So that was good for us. And then, of course, our enter-, our entertainment was sports.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite sport when you were growing up.

JORDAN: My favorite sport was the Irish sport, similar to hockey, you call it hurling. H-U-R-L-I-N-G.

SIGRIST: And how would you play that?

JORDAN: We played it with clubs, with, I have a stick here.
(he starts to get up)

SIGRIST: That's all right. No, no. We'll, we'll see it later.
Just describe it for me.

JORDAN: A stick with a, like a hockey stick, but it had a flat surface towards the bottom. And we played that with a leather stitched ball, like, much like a baseball, not quite as big and not quite as hard. We played that.

Of course then we had football. Gaelic football which is similar to soccer, beside of the fact, you know, we could catch the ball in our hands and everything.

SIGRIST: Were you good, were you good at sports?

JORDAN: Huh?

SIGRIST: Were you good at sports? Were you an athletic young man?

JORDAN: I was good at sports. Always. Because I was kind of a leader in that respect. I, I was instrumental in, in organizing a football team. Rugby football. The English football was very popular in our parts. Rugby. So I, I started a club. And we went on to senior, senior groups, county groups in the end. After I left there they went to county, I went, left for America then. But my game was hurling. My brother was great at rugby football. He had a great future in it but he left before me to America.

SIGRIST: Was there some kind of entertainment that your family shared, that you would all do at home?

JORDAN: The only, I don't know, the only entertainment they had was when they had parties for, and maybe anniversary, marriage, children being born, christenings. Things like that's the only entertainment we really...

SIGRIST: Special occasions?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, did you have to learn Gaelic?

JORDAN: We did, we were supposed to learn it, but there was too limits. You only got one hour of Gaelic in our schools. And the man, he became, he became, I think he, I don't know if he became mayor, but he became assistant to the mayor. And he used to teach us for one hour in the Catholic school. That's all.

SIGRIST: What about your parents? Could they speak Gaelic?

JORDAN: No, yes they did. Only. My grandmother carried a lot of the Gaelic, she didn't speak the Gaelic language,

but she carried a lot of the Gaelic words which she used instead of English at some times. But we had no problem with the English. Never, not my grandmother or my mother.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the Gaelic now?

JORDAN: Well, I don't. I don't really remember. There I remember (Gaelic) was "How are you," and (Gaelic) is "Give me that," "Give me your hand." So I was very limited because we didn't take a serious interest in Gaelic at that time because we were bad, bad enough with our own language. We were crude with the English since we were very poor and, so we didn't have much chance with the Gaelic language. Now I know it's different. Now you have to qualify for any decent job in Gaelic, any profession, but which makes it tough for both, you know.

SIGRIST: Sure.

JORDAN: But it's all right. We love it there just the same. You have that love for your language no matter where you come from.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember personally of the Irish conflicts in, in 1916.

JORDAN: Well, the Irish conflict came about because the British government wanted to force conscription on Irish people. They wanted to force conscription, and so a new party started up then. We had, previous to that, we were called the Irish National Volunteers. And they were, they were in cahoots with the English government for to build up an army, and they, and so they kind of trained the Irish National Volunteers with sticks and sometimes guns. And then the next thing was when they tried to force conscription on us, the Irish people got angry as could be, and they revolted against. They started the I.R.A. That's how the I.R.A. came about. When they came about they petitioned the government not to force the Irish boys to go. And even though they, even though they did for-, try to force us, there was about four hundred thousand Irish volunteers to go, to fight for British in 1914, voluntarily. But they wanted to force, and that's what started the national movement under the I.R.A. That kept on. The British, I don't, I guess

they kept on fighting, they tried to force us in but they couldn't. And so it ended up in 1916 with a revolt in Dublin called the Easter Rebellion. And that went on. And after that there was guerrilla warfare because we, our men attacked the British everywhere.

SIGRIST: Did this happen in Limerick also.

JORDAN: Yes.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: What do you remember personally witnessing or participating in at that time?

JORDAN: Well, I'll tell you, in 1916 I was fourteen years of age. We had the I.R.A., or Sinn Fein we used to call them. (unintelligible) the name is Sinn Fein. And on the other side was the Irish Free State. They were

willing to accept the British terms, which they did in 1922. They, they gathered in trucks and lorries, and the men with the, with the I.R.A. was at that side of the street, and the Free State soldiers which were backed by the British. They got guns from the British. They used to passed each other in the streets in Limerick City when I was a boy. So it came to such a bad end that the, the I.R.A. men attacked the barracks where the British soldiers or the Irish Free State soldiers were. They attacked the barracks and it turned into a guerrilla war. And that went on until 1922.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing fighting in Limerick? Do you actually witness any kind of fighting in Limerick?

JORDAN: No, not much. Not much. Not much.

SIGRIST: No.

JORDAN: We had, one time in 1912 the, the people from the north of Ireland, the people who I'm talking about now what we call the Unionists. They came down from the north to stop us from even having recognition in the

British government. We had, they wanted to, they wouldn't let us have, they were trying to deprive of us any recognition in the British parliament. So they came down, and they held the meetings in the city condemning the Catholics. That's what they came to condemn. And so naturally they held meetings in these big halls, started a riot. (he coughs) So I was a boy at that time, and I got in the riot. I just happened to go uptown, everybody goes uptown. When a riot comes it's just like what happened in San Francisco or anywhere. They break the windows and rob the stores and all of that. But later on I went across the river to the County Clare, I come around the length to get back to my own parish and safety. I just happened to be there. Well, that was the riots of Limerick. And the people of, Limerick, the Catholics and Protestants, any number were in business, they all suffered because when people riot there's no control. But that all started because these people came down to vote against home rule for us. Then that was the end of the riots there in 1912.

As I said until 1922 when the guerilla warfare came and the British were attacked everywhere and they couldn't get their, they disband the Royal Irish

Constabulary which were the British police force, they couldn't fight. And so they took all the criminals out of jails in England and made them policemen in Ireland. And they became what they call the Black and Tans. They didn't have enough uniforms to give them black police suits. They gave them a black vest and khaki pants. That's the origin of the Black and Tans, the way they're dressed. That's all I know up to 1922. Well, that was...

SIGRIST: How, how did your father feel about, where did he lie politically?

JORDAN: Well, my father, I know my father at that time, he didn't like the I.R.A. He went with the other side because the business people always go with the money side. And, of course, he wasn't a businessman but he was associating with them and he went that way. When we were boys we went the other way, the new way, the young, young people. And so we were mostly Republican kids. But things were bad and I joined the army. I joined the opposite side. I went into the army.

SIGRIST: What year was that?

JORDAN: 19', it must be 1922.

SIGRIST: So it's just before you came here?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Just before you came to America. You had a brother
that went to America...

JORDAN: Previous.

SIGRIST: What year did he...

JORDAN: He came 1920.

SIGRIST: Which brother was it?

JORDAN: Patrick. He was younger than me.

SIGRIST: Why did Patrick come to America?

JORDAN: Well, he was the, because his uncle took him out here.
The reason he came is the same as we all came. There

was a better opportunity for work here. And...

SIGRIST: What uncle was already here in America?

JORDAN: Oh, I had three uncles here.

SIGRIST: On which side of the family?

JORDAN: My father's side. And, but my brother now was there.

Yeah. He was strong. And my, my uncle wanted to take the oldest boy to the, to this country, but because my boy was more, my brother was more robust than I was they decided to send him instead of me.

SIGRIST: What kind of business did your uncle have in this country?

JORDAN: He was a truck driver for the railway express.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when your brother left?

JORDAN: Do I, I must have. I must have. Nothing spectacular about that.

SIGRIST: I see. What did you know about America when you were growing up? What did, what did...

JORDAN: All I knew is that, that when American, what we call Yanks, when they came back we called them Yanks, when they came to Ireland they always had more money than us, and they're free spenders in them days, you know. They always gave us, you know, if we'd sing, my brother used to sing songs, they'd give him ten shillings, which was an, a big sum, which would be taken off of the kid and we'd get a couple of pennies, and my grandmother would keep it for the treasury.

SIGRIST: Were you disappointed when your brother was sent...

JORDAN: No.

SIGRIST: ...to America instead of you.

JORDAN: No. I didn't. No.

SIGRIST: You were happy to stay in Ireland and...

JORDAN: Well, we didn't, it didn't consider it much. We

figured out, I suppose he'd help us, so he took us out in a few years. In a couple of, in four years he took us, the two of us out. And we came then in 1924, the three brothers. We brought the rest of the family, sisters, grandmother and mother, all of them out of Ireland.

SIGRIST: Tell me about going into the army in 1922 and your experiences in the army.

JORDAN: Well, I went into the army like all the boys in the neighbor were talking. They're talking about joining up, join up, so I went up and joined up. Went in and kept there for a very short time, stationed in the city till we get uniforms and guns. Then they sent us to the countryside to where, you know, the Republicans were strong. And we used to go chasing them through the hills. That's how we done chasing them here and there. Get a couple of ambush, one ambush is all I remember I was in, bad ambush. And...

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the ambush? What sticks out in your mind about that?

JORDAN: Well, there were, apparently the Republicans were all in a brigade meeting, and they were in the, they picked the top of the hill where they had the advantages. And so we came to meet them in groups because they had the own, we had information wrong all part. I mean, our leaders had information that they were a brigadier, brigade meeting by Republicans was being held in this part of County Cork. And I was stationed in Cork, and I got groups of soldiers, battalions and companies from all around to go there to try and make a fight and get them out. So I was in one group, the near group. So we got up there too soon, and we were in an open, open hill, I mean open valley, compared to the others and they were shooting down at us. So I got myself caught in the front of it. (he laughs) And the, which you, when they just went to the, what they call a hedge here, all the, all the fields in Ireland have hedges dividing the properties. You go over one hedge and you go over another, and it was very tough. So we go over the hedges and I find myself in the, in the middle of, of the field. When the sniping started, we didn't know where to go. So the commander told me run to a rock. He says, "Run to that rock and go down." I done

that. And then he said after, "Well, you can get up and run to the nearest hedge at this side." So I done that. I got over there. When I got over there, I was in the worse open position. I could see nothing, only hear the shots and the leaves on the trees flying beside me. So I run like blazes this way. (he gestures) But I got behind that hedge, and I got, when I got behind the hedge and I got, caught one of the soldiers. He was bleeding, shot near the heart. We picked him, three other guys, we picked him up and took him in a farmhouse. And he's bleeding, and these fellows followed me in there. And they, and they had machine guns. They were called Thompson guns. They were not long range. They were only about a hundred, a hundred yards limiting. So they followed us to the farmhouse and they start shooting at the house where we were. But in the meantime reinforcements came up behind us and the, these guys, they took off then. That's my only experience. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: That's quite an experience, though. (he laughs)

JORDAN: But I was scared. (they laughs) And I never fired a shot at a man. I never fired a shot at a man. Fired

a few shots in the air when we got in a, passing a road they used to snipe at us. I never had to, never had to fire a shot and I wouldn't want to do it.

SIGRIST: Well, and you were lucky you didn't get shot.

MRS. JORDAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: 'Twas a crazy army. 'Twas a most horrible thing. Because I see some fellows panicking. I didn't panic, that's one thing. I kept my head down. But not panic.

SIGRIST: How long were you in, how long did you have to fight?

JORDAN: I spent about two years or some, some time like that.

SIGRIST: So by the time you got out of the army, then it was time for you to come to this country.

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the process you had to go through to get all your papers together and that sort of thing.

JORDAN: Well, you had to go to the police, to the authorities and clear your name that you weren't involved in any kind of crime, or any kind of misdemeanor. So we never had any problem like that. Anybody left at that time had to have a clear slate from the government. (traffic noise in the background) There was no, the only ones ever got to this country by not having to appear to the authorities were the ones who used to jump ships, the ships that came into Limerick. One big ship came into Limerick and a lot of guys got on it and they went off, you know, and jumped off at New York and Baltimore, some of them. But they're the only ones that ever got out of Ireland without coming with a clean slate.

SIGRIST: How did your parents feel about you leaving for America?

JORDAN: Well, they felt good because they figured we'd help them, which we did. They knew that we were going to come here, we were going to help them.

SIGRIST: They already have one son here.

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Patrick's already here.

JORDAN: Right.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, do you remember how you felt about leaving Ireland? Did you want to go?

JORDAN: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: You did.

JORDAN: We wanted to go.

SIGRIST: Now you came with one of your brothers, correct?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Christopher?

JORDAN: Christopher.

SIGRIST: You came with Christopher. What year, what month of the year is it that you leave?

JORDAN: That's what I, that's, I have doubts about that. I know it was, it could be October, because what surprised me here in this country when I came was how long we are without rain. I thought it beautiful. No rain, because we were very subject to rain, continuously, even today in Ireland. And I noticed that.

SIGRIST: So you think it might have been the autumn sometime...

JORDAN: 'Twas.

SIGRIST: October or...

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did your, did your mother and father give you and Christopher some kind of a send off dinner or anything like that?

JORDAN: My father died while I was in the army. I forgot to

mention that.

SIGRIST: How did he die?

JORDAN: Well, I guess, I think, chest, he had something with the chest. He had, I think he got pneumonia because he used to go fishing. Fished on the river with, especially with gentlemen. They fished for salmon. So I think he got wettings there. You know, the people are very careless in Ireland there. They don't always have raincoats or umbrellas. And they go fishing in the river, it rains, they pay no attention to it. So I believe he got pneumonia.

SIGRIST: Was pneumonia a common thing for people to die of at that time?

JORDAN: I imagine it was because of, you know, because of the climate. No heating, and if you got wet you just, I remember once in the ri-, I fell into the river in, in the time I was in the army. My brother was in with, Christopher, he was also in the army with me. He was quite young and small. And we crossed the river. I took his rifle to get over to help him. And I slipped

on a rock myself in the middle of winter. And I, and I'll never forget the cold feeling that I got walking.

You know, we had to tramp over hills and what have you, with that wet. And that's when it happened to me. I wonder I didn't get pneumonia. But when I came into the, near the village, the nearest village, we went to the saloons. The other boys used to drink. I never drank. But at that time I said to my brother, "I got to drink because I'm soaking wet. I need something." So I borrowed money from my younger brother and I bought whiskey, as much as I could afford, about ten shillings worth. And I drank that.

By the time I got back to our barracks in the evening I was dry. The sun dried us out and I didn't even get sick.

SIGRIST: Lucky again. (he laughs)

JORDAN: Yeah. Well, half an hour later I might have got pneumonia. That's the only thing I could...

SIGRIST: So your mother is, is supportive of you going to America? She's, she's happy that you're going.

JORDAN: Well, everybody was happy when people go to America from Ireland at that time because they, they figured they get a chance. It's a step up. Of course, freedom is the thing. Always, we always thought about freedom, about American freedom. While we didn't feel that we had over there. We didn't have it over there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you packed to take with you?

JORDAN: Probably very little because, but anyhow, whatever extra coats we had or suits, we had to, we had to come through, what do they call them stations that you put the clothes in where they're all being cleaned? I wonder, I can't think of the name of it. See, I was...

SIGRIST: A fumigation area?

MRS. JORDAN: That's right.

JORDAN: Yes. All the people at time coming through, because in Ireland after the war, up through that war when men were on the hills without care, the fellows we were

after, they got what they call scabies in the fingers.

They got that.

SIGRIST: What is that? What is scabies? (Mrs. Jordan answers unintelligibly off-mike)

JORDAN: It's an itch that comes from lice. From the lice. No care. So the fellows on the run, we call it on the run, the Republicans were on, we were after them. And then we got the scabies. And the men in the barracks got it. So they used to treat them. They send them to special hospitals, anyone that got too bad. Then they got to the families. You went home and slept in the house, they got that from you, the scabies. You went to that station then in Queenstown. Anybody left there in that time had to go through that.

SIGRIST: And is that where you left from ultimately was Queenstown?

JORDAN: Well, Queenstown at that time. They called it call Cobh now. C-O-B-H.

SIGRIST: So, so how did you travel from Limerick to Queenstown?

JORDAN: Oh, we went by train.

SIGRIST: How long of a trip is that?

JORDAN: It's probably, well, it's maybe sixty miles, or maybe...

SIGRIST: A couple of hours, anyway, on the train?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did you had your brother travel by yourselves, or did your mother go with you also?

JORDAN: Oh, we went alone. They weren't there at that time. We took them in the later years.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying good-bye to your mother?

JORDAN: Oh, of course, we did. But not in a, not in a, nothing spectacular about it, you know. They didn't, when you live in a crude society like that time you take things as they come. The same as what's

happening in South American countries. They don't make a big to do over anything.

SIGRIST: Were your sisters still living at home?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: All three of them?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: None of them had married at that point?

JORDAN: Oh, no. None of them married. They never married till they came here. They were young anyway. They were very young.

SIGRIST: Now how long did you have to stay in Queenstown before you got the ship?

JORDAN: I think we only stayed there overnight or something. Or two, maybe a couple of days while we're waiting for to get our clothes back from this defuncting [sic] place.

SIGRIST: Was there any kind of physical examinations given to you at Queenstown? Any kind of medical exams?

JORDAN: Oh, I'm sure there was. I'm sure there was. But I know most, I'm not quite sure about that, tell you the truth. But what good would it be disinfecting the clothes if we didn't also have our bodies disinfected before we got the clothes to travel with.

SIGRIST: Did they make you take a shower of some sort or did, I mean, did they delouse you in some way that you can remember?

JORDAN: They must have. I, I can't recall, I wouldn't say yes or no on that.

SIGRIST: Okay. Did you take something with you to America that would remind you of Ireland? Something that was very special to you, an object of some sort?

JORDAN: I don't think I did. I don't think I had anything. We didn't even, graduating from my class I didn't get any papers to that effect.

SIGRIST: So leaving Ireland was not a sentimental thing for you...

JORDAN: No.

SIGRIST: ...at all.

JORDAN: No. Nothing. Not because of, you know, the conditions in those days.

SIGRIST: Did, were, did you have an intention of coming back to Ireland some day, or when you left, you left?

JORDAN: Nobody ever left the country that didn't dream of going back no matter it was a savage country. You always had that. That remains even till your dying day. That's something you always count on. I went back a number of times.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship that you took in Queenstown?

JORDAN: The first ship I think I came from Queenstown was The

Cedric.

SIGRIST: The Cedric. And can you describe your accommodations on that ship for me?

JORDAN: Well, they were really fine for us. They were good except of course we were seasick. We weren't used to the ocean. We got sea-, well, there was, I wouldn't say there was any trouble with, and the British were very good. They were very good to, they're very good to people anywhere. They're very kind. So we used to have our tea in the afternoon and our meals in the morning. But we were all the time sick. And you're not sick until you see somebody else vomit. I tell you, you have to run. (he laughs) Well, that was bad. And then when I came, then when stopped here near Staten Island, anchored in the bay, that time I got a ferocious appetite. I couldn't eat enough. (dogs can be heard barking in the background) So we were held there. And then some of the passengers, the first class passengers, I think they were let off, let off at the pier at 96th, or wherever we went on the west side of the river. And later then we went to a boat that took us to Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Okay, before we get to Ellis Island I have a few more questions about the boat. Did you and Christopher share a cabin on the ship?

JORDAN: We were in the same cabin, yes.

SIGRIST: Were there other people in that cabin, too?

JORDAN: Well, let me see. I think there. There could have been. Yes, there could have been. I know because there was an American boy there. And he was in, he was, so probably there were some, four beds in the ship at that time I would say. And, yeah, he used, I used to hear him, we used to hear him singing. That's how we knew he was in our room.

SIGRIST: Did, did you get sick immediately, or did it take a while before you got sick?

JORDAN: I got sick, I got sick the minute I start going on the, a row boat. I'm very subject to that.

SIGRIST: Was this the first time you had ever been on a large

boat?

JORDAN: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: When you, when you saw the boat for the first time when you were boarding, what were you thinking? Was this kind of a, a frightening thing, an exciting thing?

JORDAN: Well, first we went on a small ship to the, we took a small ship to the big boat in Queenstown. Something like a ferry. They took us out there in maybe two or three, maybe a hundred of us at a time.

SIGRIST: I see. I just want to say for the sake of the tape that there are some people talking in the background.

JORDAN: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: How long was the ship trip?

JORDAN: Pardon?

SIGRIST: How long was the ship? How long did it take to get

across the ocean?

JORDAN: Oh, you mean to come over? I think it about, took about, it took almost seven days at that time. Of course I could be wrong. But I'd say it was about seven days that I'd never see land.

SIGRIST: When you were seasick did you stay in your cabin?

JORDAN: When I was sick I went up because you need the air, up to the, over the side of the deck, you know, the railing.

SIGRIST: So all the sick people were, were up on deck.

JORDAN: (he laughs) All the time. You'd get well and go down, somebody else would get sick. They'd go up there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything else happening on the boat, maybe a, a bad storm or some kind of an event that happened?

JORDAN: Not one thing that I can tell. Not, not on that trip.

SIGRIST: It was, it was pretty uneventful and you were sick most of the time?

JORDAN: Yes. Very good.

SIGRIST: How did they treat your seasickness?

JORDAN: They treated us nice. I'm sure that, you mean the crew?

SIGRIST: No. How, what, what, did they give you medicine for being sick, or did they give you special food? How did they treat the sickness?

JORDAN: We didn't look for it. We had to, you know, take it because there was too much of it. A lot of people who were never used travelling on boats were very much subject to these things. So we didn't have any treatment till we got to Staten Island, Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Why did the boat anchor at Staten Island before it initially docked?

JORDAN: Well...

SIGRIST: You said that the boat docked at Staten Island...

JORDAN: The, the, the boat, no, it stopped in the bay...

SIGRIST: It stopped in the bay.

JORDAN: ...at night. That was at night. And there was a lot of traffic in them days in the bay, New York bay. So the next morn I remember we went up to the piers, in the forties on the Hudson River. (he coughs) And I don't remember all that time getting on the small boat to go back to Staten Is-, to...

SIGRIST: To Ellis Island.

JORDAN: ...Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Did you meet anyone on that trip that you became friends with later on?

JORDAN: Yes. I met two, I met two girls. One of their brothers was in the army with me. They were very

friendly to us.

SIGRIST: Do you remember their names?

JORDAN: Their names was Mahoney and O'Connell. Well, I know that the O'Connell girl is dead. Passed away. But Mahoney I don't know. She could be.

SIGRIST: I see. You said your brother was just as sick as you were?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: So the boat docked at the pier and then you were ferried to Ellis Island?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: And how long did you stay at Ellis Island?

JORDAN: We stayed about four days because there was examinations all the time you were there. And we got, I guess we got need-, what do you call them, shots as well. The doctors gave it. We had a lot of treatment

there. But then we were, we had patches or buttons, marks to put us to whatever department they wanted us.

So my brother, they said that he had some kind of trouble from breathing, which was a farce. They said he got that from smoking cigarettes. He never smoked in his life, and neither did I. Not even yet. (an airplane can be heard in the background) And because of my travelling in the same bunk with him, they held me, too, see, so we were there for three or four days. And at the end of that time we got released.

SIGRIST: Can you tell what Ellis Island looked like at that time? What, what do you remember seeing around you?

JORDAN: Well, it was a great, big area where they entertained us at night with, they always had entertainment at night. Clowns and magicians and what have you. Sometimes we had people in the audience who were magicians, and when they went up there, we got a kick out of them. (he laughs) So they were good. So we had no problem there. We had no problem with baggage. One suitcase and that was it.

SIGRIST: All right, we're going to pause just for a moment

tape...

JORDAN: Very well, very well.

SIGRIST: ...into the machine, and then we'll get you...

JORDAN: We have that much to go? (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Yes, we have, we're, we're only up to Ellis Island,
so...(Mrs. Jordan speaks unintelligibly off-mike)

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: Okay, we're going to begin Tape Two with Michael Joseph Jordan, who came from Ireland in 1924 when he was twenty-two. I also want to comment on the exterior noise you may hear on the tape. Car alarms, street noise, et cetera. Anyway, Mr. Jordan, you were saying that you and your brother were held at Ellis Island for about four days.

JORDAN: Good.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me where you slept when you were at Ellis Island?

JORDAN: I couldn't tell you, but I know we, they were, we had no problem with, 'twas good. For us it was good, you know that. Most anyplace was better than what we left.

SIGRIST: Did they take your brother away somewhere?

JORDAN: No, they didn't. We still stayed together. 'Twas nothing serious. They said it was due to smoking. It couldn't have been due to smoking because he wasn't a smoker.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the exams that were given to you when you were at Ellis Island?

JORDAN: No, I do not.

SIGRIST: Nothing specific?

JORDAN: No, I can't.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you did during the day for four hours, for four days?

JORDAN: What could we do but walk around. There was little to see, you know, the big auditorium there where the entertainment and stage, that's the only thing I noticed. It was bigger, I haven't much recollection.

SIGRIST: Did they let you outside?

JORDAN: Outside? We didn't go outside, tell you the truth. We didn't go outside. We were anxious anyhow. We were anticipating the time when somebody would come to get us to take us to New York.

SIGRIST: Whom were you expecting to come and get you?

JORDAN: I had an Uncle Patty, Patrick. He's the one that came. And he would be...

SIGRIST: Is that the uncle that your brother Patrick was

staying with?

JORDAN: That's not the uncle. No, the brother, the one that my uncle, my brother was staying with was John. But the other uncle was Patrick, and he was the oldest and he was an engineer. A station engineer. And he came with another man. A representative of the engineers. And his name was Begley [PH]. So he, he was influential in getting us released from the island because I'm sure it was political at that time. At that time, well, the President was Coolidge. And I remember that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being fed at Ellis Island? Do you remember being fed while you were detained at Ellis Island, where you ate or what you ate? No?

JORDAN: No, I, I don't remember anything.

SIGRIST: Just kind of blocked it all out? (they laugh)

JORDAN: Nothing. My brother came to visit the first time and he gave us money to buy candies. That's all I, I remember there. There was really nothing spectacular

(unintelligible). The only one thing I'll say, there was some of the people who were in charge, like the security people all around.

SIGRIST: The guards.

JORDAN: A lot of them were, some of them at times used to sneer at us because of our, our behav-, probably our behavior but, our, our appearances. We were so green. Of course, we were green. And I remember one sneering and I didn't like that. But that was only one occasion. Most all the rest of the people were wonderful. Everybody was.

SIGRIST: So when, when your uncle and this man, Mr. Begley [PH] came and got you, where did they take you?

JORDAN: They took me to my Uncle John's house which was in front of the United Nations on First Avenue. That's where they, we landed. Right in front of the United Nations, which was a slaughterhouse in those days.

SIGRIST: Excuse me, we're just going to pause for a second.
(break in tape) Okay, we're resuming now. So they

took you to, to a building that is now where the U.N. building is in New York.

JORDAN: Opposite that.

SIGRIST: Opposite that. Who's, was this where your uncle lived?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Was this an Irish neighborhood?

JORDAN: Oh, I wouldn't say that. I'd say it was mixed. No, not, all kinds. There were Germans, Italians. Germans and Italians were the most, I guess, and the Irish.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you did your first day in America.

JORDAN: I know I got new clothes. And I got a stiff collar which I didn't like. We had the high collars that were ironed at that time. Then we, we visited neighbors next, around the corner first. They came from my place home. We visited them. They were here

years before us. We visited them. That's all I know.

And then we visit my uncle in the, who lived in the Bronx, the engineer lived in the Bronx. We went there, and introduced to the other people there, his family. And there's only, there was only the two brothers there then because the one died before I left Ireland. There was three brothers. Three uncles.

SIGRIST: You're talking about your uncles? Yeah. So you were sort of shown around to the relatives in a way.

JORDAN: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about going out and getting new clothes. Do you remember what clothes you were wearing, and what they looked like and why you had to get new ones?

JORDAN: My brother was the one. My brother took us, he took us right to an area in New York, the cloth-, clo-, cloak and suit area. Fourteenth Street to Twenty-third. All, he, he was acquainted with them by being an expressman delivering to them. And they used to give us suits at cost price. Nice suits. So he got

us, got me suits and my brother. That's all I can remember about that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing things in New York that you had never seen before? And what did you think of New York?

JORDAN: Well, now, let me think. Well, we had other relatives here, too. We went to them. Visited them. I, the only thing I was thinking about was getting work, getting a job. That's the most thing was on my mind, and the other brother the same. There's nothing, well, I knew the, the buildings, you know, they looked high. They were six stories. Terrible. And they're very crude. The latrines were out in the yards. We had to go out in the, in the cold and everything at that time. The other thing I remember was the, the vegetable man came through the streets selling vegetables, and the ice man came around at that time. They delivered ice up into our iceboxes. We kept iceboxes at that time. And, and the men came selling the vegetables through the streets, screaming (unintelligible). Also the garbage was picked up with rough old trucks. And it was very hard to get men to

work on garbage at that time. They had to go the Bowery to get them and crude trucks to lift up the cans and throw them in. So it wasn't too much that I can think of except go visiting friends.

SIGRIST: How long did it take before you got a job?

JORDAN: It took six weeks.

SIGRIST: And how did you go about finding work?

JORDAN: Well, my brother, I got, I was getting a job in Bloomindale's store at that time. And the wages I think was about twelve or fifteen dollars a week. Fifteen. And my brother told him I'm going to, the brother who was here before us...

SIGRIST: Patrick.

JORDAN: ...my brother got a job there, he says, "Don't bother. I'll get you a better job in the Express. Sixty cents an hour." So it amounted to a lot more. And I went to that job, to the Express, and I worked as a plant laborer there for a while part time. Then later

on I went to helper on the trucks. Finally I became a chauffeur myself.

SIGRIST: So the first job that you got was in the plant?

JORDAN: No, the first job I got was in the hotel.

SIGRIST: Was in the hotel?

JORDAN: Yes. What they call the "houseman." Laying, building the platform for the dais for speakers and all of that. We put up boxes and then let out chairs and tables for two thousand people.

SIGRIST: Doing setups?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: What hotel was that? Do you remember?

JORDAN: That was called the Commodore Hotel, Forty-second Street and Lexington Avenue.

SIGRIST: And how did you, how did you get that job? How did

you get your first job?

JORDAN: I, I don't really know how I got it, tell you the truth. But I suppose I applied. They, they used to put ads in the papers, men wanted here and there. And I got a job there for a few weeks.

SIGRIST: Were you living with one of your uncles?

JORDAN: Yes, at that time.

SIGRIST: How long was it before you got your own place?

JORDAN: Oh, I think it was about six months before we got our own place.

SIGRIST: And did you move in with Christopher? The two of, you and Christopher lived...

JORDAN: Yes, myself and Chris and the brother, the three of us. We moved in and we got our own apartment.

SIGRIST: Where was it?

JORDAN: That was Fif-, Fifty-sixth Street and Third, and Third Avenue.

SIGRIST: And can you describe, can you walk me through the apartment, how the rooms were set up?

JORDAN: Well, 'twas, there was two rooms on the front, a livingroom and a bedroom, and the kitchen was cut off. So we had to get out of them rooms to go into the kitchen. It was over a clothing store.

SIGRIST: Did you have electricity in this apartment?

JORDAN: Oh, yes, we had. We had everything there.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about maybe writing to your mother or to your sisters and what you were telling them about America.

JORDAN: Well, we told them that when we have a job, once we have a job we get our money together and we will take them out. That was the main thing. And I said to my brothers at that time I'm going to, "We're not going to pay rent for the rest of our lives here," I says.

"I'm going to buy a house. We're going to buy houses." So I said, "We pool our money together, and we'll buy a house eventually." But it took a good while because the Depression came. But that's what I wrote. I wrote and I said, "We'll take you out when we can. We, we, when we're working together we'll, we'll do the right thing," and that's we done.

SIGRIST: Were you sending your mother money...

JORDAN: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: ...on a regular basis?

JORDAN: Whenever we could we send money. That's, all the Irish people do that as a rule. And I'm sure other peoples in other coun-, other parts of the world, they send it to their relatives, too. But we sent money.

SIGRIST: Did you primarily, were you primarily around other Irish people when you were, your friends in New York, were they other Irish people?

JORDAN: Well, at that time we didn't mix too much with other

Irish people because we weren't united. Until we start reading the paper we see where there's entertainment, and we usually went to Irish dance halls. That's where we made our acquaintance with Irish people.

SIGRIST: Describe for me what it was like to go to an Irish dance hall.

JORDAN: Well, I went with this friend of mine. I was in the army with him, I met his sister on the ship. I got in touch with him, I said, "We'll go to a dance, an Irish dance." So we used to go, and we were just looking and dancing. We were too crude to start, but eventually we got into it. And we went to the different dance halls. And we met the girls there. And that's how we usually get married. You know, your own people, you're better able to mix with them.

SIGRIST: And what kind of dancing were they doing?

JORDAN: At that time they were doing something very much similar to the dancing in Ireland in those days. Jigs and reels. Jigs and reels and hornpipes. That was

the main dances at them times. We went to the park. There was a sports park in Long Island, Long Island City, near Long Island, yes, Long Island City proper. Gaelic Park. They had, the sportsmen, they held their meetings there and every Sunday there was games there.

So we went there, and they had a big platform where they, they would dance before, or sing before the games would start. So they had these fiddlers and accordion players. They all played. They came there, but they used to, we used to pay them. Because when you'd ask a girl to dance, you'd pay maybe twenty-five cents for her and twenty-five which was, for the privilege of dancing. Then we'd make a group. And there was, each musician had his little groups and they played the tunes and music and then we would dance. Then, when the games start, that would stop until the game would be over and continue again.

SIGRIST: So dancing is an important way that people met each other?

JORDAN: Socializing, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the names of the Irish dance

halls in New York that you went to...

JORDAN: Oh, yes. That I...

SIGRIST: ...and where they are? Could you say those on tape for us?

JORDAN: Yes. There was the Innisfeel [PH] Dance Hall on Fifty-sixth and Third Avenue, the Lycene, Fifty-fifth Street and Third Avenue, Columbus Circle, Donovan's Dance Hall, Columbus Circle on the West Side, and McConnell's Dancing on Seventy-sixth Street and Third Avenue, at that time.

SIGRIST: That's very interesting. Tell me a little bit about your religious life once you got to America. Did you have a religious life once you got to America?

JORDAN: Oh, yes, we did. We were right near the church. The first place I landed, you know, at John's house, we were in the same block as the church. The church was on Second Avenue, we were on First Avenue. That's the site of the United Nations.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the church?

JORDAN: Saint Boniface. And that's gone now because the United Nations swallowed it.

SIGRIST: And, and did you go to church regularly...

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...once you were in America, or...

JORDAN: We did because we were very religious home. We had a very religious atmosphere home.

SIGRIST: I thought maybe, you know, the brothers being alone in New York, in New York, sort of...

JORDAN: No.

SIGRIST: ...that would have all gone out the window.

JORDAN: No, the, the Catholics...

MRS. JORDAN: Church.

JORDAN: ...kind of stick to each other.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit for us about the job you got driving the truck?

JORDAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you talk about what you had to do and the people that you worked with?

JORDAN: Well, first there was a lot of Irish and Germans and Italians and Jewish peop-, Jewish drivers. And there, what we actually done was pick, there was hundreds of trucks with horses, horse driven trucks, used to pick up packages all over the city of New York and elsewhere. Forty thousand people working for the Express that time. No particularly in New York, but all over the country. But they hang out a sign, "Railway Express," outside the door, then an express man would come and pick it up, put it in his car, get a receipt for it and take it to the railroad station, or take it to a distribution depot where they separate it for different parts of the country. That's what

they done. Well, I worked first in the Penn Station sorting stuff for different railroads. Then the trucks came and they took them across the river or sometimes the horses, horse, the trucks with horses would be there, and they'd take them across the river.

And all the Hudson River was full of ferry boats that time running to the railroads. The railroads all terminated on the Jersey side of the river. So we took our trucks across to each different railroad. Jersey Central, Pier (unintelligible), Weehawken, different places along the Jersey docks. Put the stuff there. Then, of course, we'd come back to the city. But we also used to pick up goods. We also pick up goods in these places, especially fruits and fish. Fruits and fish and vegetables and fish. And at night, the fish used to come in at night. I used to go for fish to the Jersey railroad, Jersey Central, and pick up fish to deliver into the Fulton Fish Market. We picked up everything, turtles, pigs, these big lake fish. I forget the name of them. What's the big lake fish?

SIGRIST: Trout?

JORDAN: Big lake, oh, no, they're...

SIGRIST: Pickerel?

JORDAN: ...very big fish. Well, I can't think of the name of them now. But they used to be that size sometimes, the lake fish. (he indicates) So we took them turtles and crabs and all kinds of fish to the Fulton Fish Market. So that was night work. I started work at Forty-second Street at the garage and took the truck down to the Jersey Central Railroad across the river, pick up the load and bring it to that place in the, the Fulton Fish Market was the fish market for all of New York. And that's, so that was a whole days work by the time we were done. 'Twas, we'd come home in the morning and get the smell of fish off us. But I'd get any kind of fish I wanted. They'd give fish if you wanted it.

SIGRIST: Did you like...

JORDAN: And, of course, we also went to the, I worked sometimes going to that market at night, where these rivers, the sculls, the sculls, you know, there was

that docked, they pulled into the docks on west side.

And it was like daylight there at twelve midnight with all the trucks and all the vegetables all going to Washington Street. That's where the market for the vegetables were. And up above that again was the goose market, where fowl went. Well, we knew, we went there. And, of course, when you go to that place to pick up vegetables that would be a whole night's work.

We take them to put, maybe to sta-, railroad stations for up New York or elsewhere on Long Island. That's all I remember about that.

SIGRIST: Did you like being in America when you were here? Did you like being here?

JORDAN: Well, of course, we did. We were always, well, you know, we were, we were looking for success. We wanted to be something. But the, the Depression, the Depression killed everything. It set us back. (unintelligible) in the, in the railroads and all of that. And the, everybody was (unintelligible), there was no work. So I'm walking the street almost for three years doing any kind of job, anything possible. Shovel dung or whatever you called it. We would do

that. I do that. I worked as a porter. I worked in a cotton mill, porter, hotel, or else, and finally dock laborer. I go to the docks, I get extra work, I work two jobs. I worked in the building as a maintenance man and then I get out by the evening when I'm done, I, I work as a maintenance man. And I also worked as an express man extra for two hours in the evening. So I worked the two jobs for to get enough salary to keep going, to keep our apartment.

SIGRIST: Now, America isn't quite so wonderful...

JORDAN: Oh, it was, at that time. Then, of course, the Depression came. It broke everybody. And we were, we still didn't want to go back to Ireland at that time.

SIGRIST: Well, you life was here...

JORDAN: Because we figured something is going to happen, which it did happen when Roosevelt, when Roosevelt came to power. They started the National Labor, N.R.A., whatever it was. And it made a minimum wage for workers everywhere where you get at least fifteen dollars a week, because I worked for less than that

before. I worked in that hotel for forty dollars a month and then my meals. That was, that was tough. But we, we managed.

SIGRIST: Tell me how you met Mrs. Jordan.

JORDAN: Well, at that time, you know, in those dance halls, the, the most well-to-do people live on Fifth Avenue and the East Side. What do they call that district now? I don't know what people called it. 'Twas the kind of the golden, well, the rich people were very rich. (Mrs. Jordan speaks unintelligibly off-mike) Rich and then they were very rich, the families. And all the domestic servants worked between Fifth Avenue, you may say, and Madison Avenue and Lexington Avenue. All that area. They have a name for that district yet. All the domestics worked there, and the girls went to the dances. And then the girls introduced each to each other, and that's how we meet them.

SIGRIST: And, and Mrs. Jordan was at dance hall?

JORDAN: One time I met a girl there and she was friendly with one of these friends of mine. And she liked me, and

she thought she'll, she said," I have a nice fellow for you," and she called, she talked to her, my wife, and said, "Oh, I have a nice one (unintelligible). I'll introduce you to him." So that came about. And that went on, the other, and, of course, I had other girls previous to that, but I wasn't serious. And that's how we married.

SIGRIST: And what is your wife's name?

JORDAN: Huh?

SIGRIST: What is her name? Your wife's name. Say it on tape for us, please.

JORDAN: Oh. At that time Catherine...

MRS. JORDAN: Carroll. C-A-R...

JORDAN: Carroll.

MRS. JORDAN: Carroll.

JORDAN: Great Irish name. Catherine Carroll.

SIGRIST: Can you spell the last name, please?

JORDAN: Huh?

SIGRIST: Spell her maiden name, please?

JORDAN: Oh. C-A-R-R-O-L-L. (Mrs. Jordan speaks unintelligibly off-mike) C-A-R-R-O-L-L.

SIGRIST: C-A-R-R-O-L-L.

MRS. JORDAN: -O-L-L.

SIGRIST: Carroll. And she had come from Ireland?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: When did she come from Ireland?

MRS. JORDAN: 1929.

SIGRIST: 1929.

MRS. JORDAN: November, 1929.

JORDAN: A different part of Ireland than me.

MRS. JORDAN: Not far from Dublin.

SIGRIST: From, near from Dublin?

MRS. JORDAN: County Louth.

SIGRIST: And how old were you when you came?

MRS. JORDAN: When I came I was twenty-one.

SIGRIST: Twenty-one in 1929.

MRS. JORDAN: Hmm-hmm.

SIGRIST: Oh. And what year did you marry?

JORDAN: 1940. Because I was a long time here before then,
because I was a kind of supporter for the family. I
was...

MRS. JORDAN: Yeah, he took care of the family.

JORDAN: ...real supporter of the family. The other boys were helping, too, but the youngest one got married. And the other fellow left to work for the state in the Long Island. For the, for New York State. So I was with the girls and the mother and the grandmother. Yes.

SIGRIST: That right. You brought them over, didn't you?

JORDAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what year that was when you brought them over.

MRS. JORDAN: Brought your parent, family, your family over.
Twenty...

JORDAN: I'm just...

MRS. JORDAN: '26 I think.

JORDAN: Huh?

MRS. JORDAN: Wasn't '26?

JORDAN: About Nineteen, yeah, it must have only a few years after we got here. (Mrs. Jordan speak unintelligibly off-mike)

SIGRIST: So you weren't here that long actually when you brought them?

JORDAN: That's right. Not long. Say about 1926.

SIGRIST: Tell me what your grandmother thought about America.

JORDAN: Oh, well, she, as long as she had her three, two sons here, you know, and us, she, she had nothing to do. Only sit around and go to church. She lived near the church when she came. And we had a steam heated flat, what they call, a luxury at that time. They used to boast about steam heat flats ready for them when they came. So she liked that, of course. She don't, she was the boss, anyhow. She got the money. Whenever we got the money, we gave it to the grandmother. And we had a, you might say when we were growing up we were

still on, on allowances. So that was, we lived on Six-, Sixty-second Street and Second Avenue then. But when the Depression came at that time it made a mess. But we stuck together anyhow.

SIGRIST: Did you mother go out and get a job during the Depression?

JORDAN: No.

SIGRIST: No. Your sisters?

JORDAN: No, she wasn't very well qual-, yeah, well, she did, that's where I'm wrong now. She went to James Butler, a warehouse for dis-, for the supermarkets, you know. James Butler was a chain like the A.& P. and all the rest. She worked for them for a while when times were hard. And my sisters also worked.

SIGRIST: So there was some money coming in.

JORDAN: Some got together.

SIGRIST: Can you, before we conclude here, can you, did you

have any children? Did you have any children?

MRS. JORDAN: Yes, we had two daughters.

JORDAN: What do you mean? Us have children?

SIGRIST: Yes, did you, did you and Mrs. Jordan...

JORDAN: Not till after, not till after 1940.

SIGRIST: Well, yes.

JORDAN: After we got married.

MRS. JORDAN: ...I mean 1941 she was born.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

MRS. JORDAN: The oldest girl.

SIGRIST: And what was her name?

MRS. JORDAN: Ellen Patricia.

SIGRIST: Yeah. And then...

MRS. JORDAN: And then Theresa Mary was born in '44.

SIGRIST: I just want to get this all on the tape.

MRS. JORDAN: Yeah. I know.

SIGRIST: And, well, good. Let me ask you a couple final questions, Mr. Jordan. One is, you went back to Ireland. What was the first year you went back to Ireland?

JORDAN: I went back in '38.

SIGRIST: 1938. What did you, how did you feel when you went back to Ireland? What, what did Ireland mean to you when you back to Ireland?

JORDAN: Well, I was single then. And I kind of feel, I just loved to be with the, with the boys, the neighbors that I met there. The boys that I knew before I went away. Especially the fellows that were in the army with me. We all came from the one parish, our

company, like the company I was in the army. My own parish. Well, most of them came from my parish. I'd go out and we have a few drinks. I didn't drink much anyway. I was always a pretty sober guy. Didn't drink much. But I used to go with them. And I don't think I went to any game, we used to go, once in a while to what they call an excursion. On a train. Take you to, out to some nice place out in the country where, where they'd have water sports. There wasn't much swimming there. Not much swimming.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: Did you feel any kind of emotional connection to Ireland, because it had been many years since you'd been there.

JORDAN: Oh, indeed I did. I didn't lose a bit of my feelings for there, and not even now. And that just, I don't know, all the fellows who I saw, very few of the

fellows who I saw there when I made the football club.

I really started that football club. The most of them were scattered and gone. But there was a few fellows left there.

SIGRIST: I wonder if your feelings might have been different had you, had no one been there when you went back.

JORDAN: Well, I had to stay with, with my neighbors when I went back, the people who lived next door to me. They were the Bowmans [PH] and Clancy's [PH]. Well, Clancy [PH] was a great friend of mine. He came out and stayed in my house out here. I had a house out on the island. And he was my best friend. He introduced me to the mayor of Limerick when I went back there. And the mayor asked me all about previous times, you know. And...

SIGRIST: Are you glad that you came to America, or do you sometimes wish you had stayed in Ireland?

JORDAN: I wouldn't, I would never say that I wanted to stay there. I'm glad I came to America. I'm glad anybody belonged to me came because they had freedom to do

something. We didn't have the freedom by virtue of the poverty that was there. And I love this country.

Don't worry about that. But I love my old country, too. I love both of them. And I think it's great. We have great people here in this country, and of course, we have the other side, too. There's some great people, I have great admiration for the good people of this country. Everybody has their own opinion about good and bad.

SIGRIST: Well, Mr. Jordan, I want to thank you very much for letting, letting Kevin and I come out here and, and asking you, picking your brain about all this...

JORDAN: I'm so glad...

SIGRIST: ...information.

JORDAN: ...so long as it's a legitimate thing.

SIGRIST: Oh, indeed. Indeed. Indeed.

JORDAN: And it's for, it's historical.

SIGRIST: It's going to be preserved forever in the museum...

MRS. JORDAN: Oh, great.

SIGRIST: ...so, anyway, I want to thank you very much, and you, too, Mrs. Jordan...

MRS. JORDAN: Oh, will I not be included in that at all?

SIGRIST: Well, we asked you a few questions, so... (he laughs)

MRS. JORDAN: Yeah, (unintelligible) a little.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Michael Joseph Jordan and with Mrs. Jordan and with Kevin Daley on Tuesday, October 19th, 1993 in Elmhurst, New York.