

**EI-402**

**DANNIE MADDEN AND SARAH WHITE MADDEN**

**BIRTH DATE: JULY 19, 1909 and OCTOBER 12, 1914**

**INTERVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 25, 1993**

**RUNNING TIME: 1:00:16**

**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

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**INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 5/1996**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 6/2009**

**DANNIE: IRELAND  
AGE 18  
PASSAGE ON "THE CARONIA"  
PORT OF EMBARCATION: QUEENSTOWN**

**RESIDENCES: MOYLOUGHK, CO. GALWAY; MANHATTAN, NY**

**EMPLOYED AS A HANDYMAN AT ELLIS ISLAND: 1928-1938**

**SARAH: BORN U.S.  
NURSE'S AID AT ELLIS ISLAND: 1937-1940**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It's October 25, 1993, and I'm here in the Ellis Island Oral History Studio with Dannie Madden, and Mrs. Sarah, her maiden name was White, Madden. Uh, and it turned, it turns out we have a double kind of interview today because Mr. Madden came from Ireland in 1928 when he was eighteen years old. He then worked here at Ellis Island from 1928 till 1938, and Mrs. Madden worked here from 1937 to 1940.

DANNIE: That's right.

LEVINE: So, um, I'm very happy that you were able to come today, and I'm really looking forward to hearing your stories.

DANNIE: We're happy to be here.

LEVINE: Good. Okay. Why don't we begin, Mr. Madden, if you would say your birth date and where in Ireland you were born?

DANNIE: I was born July 19, 1909, in Moylough, County Galway, Ireland.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

DANNIE: M-O-Y-L-O-U-G-H.

LEVINE: And that's the county?

DANNIE: No. That's the city. Galway's the county. That's the parish.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh, uh-huh. And did you live there the entire time until you came to the United States in . . .

DANNIE: Yes, I did. I lived with my parents and my brothers and sisters.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What was your father's name?

DANNIE: Brian. Brian Madden.

LEVINE: And your mother, and her maiden name?

DANNIE: Julia Hynes Madden. Hynes was her maiden name.

LEVINE: H-I-N-E-S?

DANNIE: H-Y-N-E-S.

LEVINE: H-Y-N-E-S. Okay. And, um, your brothers and sisters, would you say their names, and where you fall in the birth order?

DANNIE: I have Nellie, was born in, she's deceased now, but she was born in 19, 1910. Margaret was born in 19, uh, 1911, 1912. And Martin was born in 1914, and John was born in 1915, and Mary, the youngest, was born in 1916.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So that makes you the oldest?

DANNIE: That makes me, that's right.

LEVINE: ( she laughs ) I see. Well, tell me, uh, tell me about the town. What was it like there when you lived there?

DANNIE: It was a farm. I lived on a farm, on a farm there. And there was a town. Moylough was the town there. And, uh, if you drove twenty-five miles an hour, you'd miss the town, actually.

LEVINE: What was there in the town? What did the town have?

DANNIE: They had a, it has a grocery, two grocery stores there. There was a gasoline station. There was a school, and a church. That's about it.

LEVINE: And was it a Catholic church?

DANNIE: Yes, it was a Catholic church, yes.

LEVINE: What . . .

DANNIE: There was a Protestant church on the other side of the street. They were looking at each other.

LEVINE: ( she laughs ) I see. Was your family a religious family?

DANNIE: Yes, more or less. We went to church regular.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did, the Catholic church?

DANNIE: Yeah. They didn't believe in swearing and stuff like that, you know. They weren't fanatics, though. They were just Catholics, that's all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you have grandparents who were around?

DANNIE: I did. Dan Madden was my grandfather, and he was in this country

three times in his life. He come out here in '78, and he stayed four years in Montana, and then he come again in 1906, and he stayed five years. And he come out in 1919, and he went back in 1922.

LEVINE: Wow.

DANNIE: He spent three years and went back again. But he never stayed in New York. He was a westerner all the time. Yes. In Montana, he was all over, because I have a lot of uncles there and aunts, around Montana, Salt Lake City, California.

LEVINE: Was his idea to come to the United States, make some money and go back?

DANNIE: Yes.

LEVINE: Was that . . .

DANNIE: I don't know what his idea was, to tell you the truth, but he made money though, because his (?) was good. California was going big when he was here, and . . .

LEVINE: What did he do when he came here?

DANNIE: He didn't do anything. He was a farmer, and (?) take anything. He worked on a ranch, and he, he worked in a gold mine, in a copper mine in Montana. He worked (?). Whatever job he got he took it.

LEVINE: Do you remember any stories he told you when you were a little boy?

DANNIE: Ah, some things all around there, about he got, he got a gold watch one time in the copper mine in Montana. He saved three men

out of the pit. He had a, he rescued them. He rushed them into a place where it was right, and he got air to them, and he got a gold watch. I had it last week, and I gave it to my son.

LEVINE: Oh!

DANNIE: It was engraved to Dan Madden, and I have another son which I seen there, so I gave it to him.

LEVINE: Oh, nice.

DANNIE: And he told all about when he was driving a team of horses, one of them was wild, was always kicking and lashing. And he went across the bridge. It was just wide enough to (?). I didn't know, I didn't realize it until I come to this country. I saw the bridge he went over. It was just wide enough for a cart. And to scare you to walk, having a horse kicking. And . . .

LEVINE: Where was that?

DANNIE: That was in 1906, 1896 till 1901.

LEVINE: Where was the bridge?

DANNIE: It was in Montana.

LEVINE: In Montana. Uh-huh. Well, um, so, uh, how about your grandmother, his wife?

DANNIE: Yes. She was, she was eighty [sic] years older than he was, and she was arthritic, and she couldn't walk. I never saw her walk. And she died in 1922. But she was always a cripple for as long as I knew her.

LEVINE: Do you remember any times you spent with her when you were

little? I mean, do you remember your grandmother?

DANNIE: Oh, sure. I remember, I was twelve years old when she died, and, uh, I remember, Concannon was her name, and she was, she liked to talk with the neighbors and all that, you know. She was very blunt. (?) the killers wouldn't do, you know. But she was a nice woman. I'd call her a nice woman. And, uh, she never put it into their faces, which she took. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences with her? I mean, would she, like, tell you stories, or do you remember things that . . .

DANNIE: Yes. Nothing important, you know. Nothing. She'd tell about, things about her youth, you know. And one story she told us, they were, there was a bunch of guys, and they had a horse there. And nobody was getting on him, because he was bouncing around or whatever. ( he laughs ) So she volunteered and got on him, and he threw her. That's the only thing.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So this was your father's father and mother. How about your mother's father and mother?

DANNIE: They were both dead before I was born. Yeah. Both dead, yeah.

LEVINE: Did you have an extended family, like aunts and uncles and cousins and . . .

DANNIE: Yes. But they were mostly here. I had an uncle in Montana, I had an uncle in California, and an uncle in Salt Lake City. I had an aunt in Montana, I had an aunt in San Francisco, and, uh, and I had an aunt that's dead for years. She was in Nebraska. She's dead about seventy years, seventy-five years. And, uh, but she, I never knew her, I never knew anything, I never saw. But

the rest I did see out here. Then I had three aunts on the other side, and I had two uncles. They're all dead.

LEVINE: Well, um, tell me about the house you lived in. Describe it.

DANNIE: Yes, yes. It was an attached house, and it was three rooms. My father was in, there was a big kitchen, a room, that's all.

LEVINE: What was the kitchen like, like the stove and the .

. .

DANNIE: A regular room. There was a chimney for the fire, and table on the side. And, you know, a dresser for, uh, for dishes and stuff like that. And apart from that, that's all.

LEVINE: Well, what did your mother cook on?

DANNIE: She cooked on my father's turf fire.

LEVINE: In the fireplace?

DANNIE: Yeah. No, it was no, it was an open fireplace, and she, you made the fire there. You raked the fire, they kind of raked the fire at night when you went to bed, put the ashes on top of it. And you got up in the morning you pushed the ashes off and the fire started up. You put turf on it, and before you know it you had a fire.

LEVINE: How did you get the turf?

DANNIE: We cut it, dug it out of the land. We had turf in the area. There was a bog in the area, you see. Not for about two miles, we dug it out of there. And, uh, that was a great time of the year, getting the turf.

LEVINE: Tell me about that, getting the turf.

DANNIE: You, a person would have to dig about two foot off the top of it, was, and throw it into the bog, make the bank. And then you still had to cut the turf. And you had a slane. A slane is a spade like this, split like that. The way you cut the turf, you go along to cut it off, and you throw it up to, one other guy, and he put it on the barrow and wheel it. He'd put about, uh, about thirty sods of it on a wheelbarrow. That's if you were, good enough. When I started wheel (?) wheel turn.

LEVINE: When did you start? How old were you when you started raking turf?

DANNIE: I would say about six I guess.

LEVINE: Really. Wow.

DANNIE: It was (?), you know. Always, it was nice weather at that time. It had to be cut in fine weather anyway. And, uh, it was always some fooling around and going, you know.

LEVINE: Was this done in the autumn, in the fall of the year?

DANNIE: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you go turfing in the fall of the year?

DANNIE: No. You did it in summer, in June. Just after school closed, they were getting ready to cut the turf. And then we headed for the bog, then. ( he laughs )

LEVINE: You kept it in a barn?

DANNIE: Yes. It was . . .

SARAH: Bog, bog.

DANNIE: You spread it out on the bank, you know. And then you had to go and turn it, then, turn it twice over, and then (?), build it up in pieces, you know. Then nine or ten size. If you got two weeks of fine weather to dry, it was tough to get two weeks of fine weather. It would always get wet again, so it would take you two months before you could take it home. Then you took it. You had the donkey, and you couldn't bring a horse in there because the bog was too soft. The horse would go down on it. So you had a donkey, and brought it home. And it generally took about two weeks to do that, too.

LEVINE: Did you go turfing with your father? Did your father do that?

DANNIE: He cut the turf, you know. Because the slane, nobody, you, there's a (?) to it, you know. That's sort of, that's hair. A hairy kind of a, I mean, you couldn't, it was hard work. So (?), they wouldn't trust, because the slane was sharp, you know. And if you missed it, you missed your toes or your (?). ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Do you remember any experiences, uh, when you were getting the turf? Are there any incidents that happened that you can remember?

DANNIE: Yes. The only, ( he laughs ) the only one I remember is my youngest brother. He was fooling around, jumping in a place which was narrow. And he jumped for, he thought he was a smart guy. He jumped down, and he landed on a ledge, and the ledge broke, and the fellow (?) his back in the water. I have to remember that. He was drenched in water, and he couldn't get out. That's more.

LEVINE: Yeah. Um, let's see. So what other duties or chores did you have as a boy growing up?

DANNIE: What was, you're making hay. Hay generally come in July and August. You'd have to save that, you know, turn and turn, and gather it up. And, uh, then we make it into a big rick, we can take it in the house, that was, take it in the yard, you know, put it all together. It was all (?). The oats was the hardest part of it, because that had to be made into shaves, taken out, and you take it out and you lift it up or down, flatten it again. And you stoop down (?). And at that time of the year it was fourteen hours, because it had to be, as soon as the oats was ripe, you have to get it out of there. And then, so then you had to work (?). And then the potatoes were another story. They had to be dug. But I wasn't, I was only in on that on Saturdays when I come from school, because I went to school (?). That was hard, too. The cold weather was terribly (?), hard. Ah, but we lived through it.

LEVINE: So in the beginning you would do these things with your father, and then as your brothers got . . .

DANNIE: Yes, they come along. They had to get in there, too.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about your sisters? Did they take part in those . . .

DANNIE: One of them did, the second sister did. The other one didn't. She feels she likes to work around the house with my mother. And the youngest one, she was too young when I left home.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. What was school like in, uh . . .

DANNIE: Two long schools, country schools. We were about eighty-five kids in all told.

LEVINE: And that was all the grades together?

DANNIE: Yes. It was a girl's school on one side. The same building, but there was two school yards. We had one, the girls in one, the boys, and an entrance for the boys and the girls. And, uh, it was about eighty, eighty students all told. Maybe forty, forty. And we were in two rooms, and then they'd also had the classes (?), you know. To break it up, to get the air changed they'd open the windows and all that, you know. And that was it. And the teachers were kind of rough, too.

LEVINE: How were they rough?

DANNIE: Oh, they didn't take no. You had to just sit there and keep your mouth shut. If you were whispering or something they heard you. I still to this day can't tell how they, I guess, he'd be up in the front, "Hey, cut it out."

LEVINE: And what would they do to you if you talked?

DANNIE: Oh, they'd give you a whack on the hand, like a stick.

LEVINE: A stick? Yeah. So were you a good student? Did you do your homework?

DANNIE: I was average, average. You know, the oldest kid in Ireland never gets to go to school a lot and study, because the farmers there, and when it gets busy you're held home and (?), and if you miss a day you're behind the first guy. And, uh, but apart from that it was all right. I made it.

LEVINE: What kind of things would come up where you had to stay home?

DANNIE: I (?). The time of taking in the oats. If there were two or three (?), you were stuck with it. Then a fine day come, we had to work hard, and you stayed home. That's all.

LEVINE: Yeah.

DANNIE: The same with the potatoes, too. When I come later in the season, November. And if you had a lot of wet days, if you leave the potatoes too long in there they start to rot, you know, so you have to get them out, and I helped with that. That's all.

LEVINE: So did you, did your father have his own farm?

DANNIE: Yes.

LEVINE: And was it a big one?

DANNIE: No, it wasn't. No, it was a medium-sized one, forty acres.

LEVINE: But, so did he sell, uh, farm quarters.

DANNIE: He had all the (?) vegetables it was in there. He had a turnips (?), potatoes, and, uh, and, uh, peas and carrots and stuff. We saw them in the garden there. He had all this, he had sheep there, we had cattle. We had two horses. It was the average farm. Some were bigger, and some were smaller. I'd say it was about average.

LEVINE: Would he take the, uh, how would he sell the farm produce?

DANNIE: Go to a fair day. It was, they called fairs, we used to call them, and everybody went there. They'd be, sometimes there'd be a fair for cattle and sheep. Sometimes if you wanted a fair

there for horses and cattle. And, uh, we were there to sell them, you know. We were there, the jobbers would come in from Dublin or from places, you know, and we always gone buying here and there. They bought mostly sent to England and places like that. And you got the best price you could. That's all.

LEVINE: Was it a bargaining situation?

DANNIE: Oh, sure, haggling.

LEVINE: Yeah.

DANNIE: You never know which way you're going. ( they laugh )

LEVINE: So did you go to the fairs? Did you help your father?

DANNIE: I was often at the fairs taking in the cattle, but I never had anything to say. My father had a last, uh. I just kept my mouth shut. ( they laugh )

LEVINE: Did you have any special, uh, what do I want to say? Were you treated in some way special because you were the oldest son?

DANNIE: No. The only thing I was treated, I was called to do everything. About the only thing special.

LEVINE: You didn't get any special privileges. You just got a lot of work, I guess.

DANNIE: (?)

LEVINE: Um, let's see. What else, what would people do in your, in your, I guess it was a village sort of . . .

DANNIE: A village, yeah.

LEVINE: What would they do for enjoyment, for recreation?

DANNIE: Board games and Sunday football, hurling, and card games in the wintertime at night. That's all.

LEVINE: Would they be in each others' house?

DANNIE: Yes. They go more houses yet. And there would be generally nine of them, nine or ten of them, you know, get around a table and play cards. And I see a lot of them (?).

LEVINE: Now, would you play, as a boy?

DANNIE: No, I never did.

LEVINE: No. It would be for the older men?

DANNIE: Yes, yes. I never, I never got interested in playing cards. Ah, that's . . .

LEVINE: And how about your mother? What did she do as a social thing?

DANNIE: The same thing. She was going to visit me, you know. (?) went different places. Now, that's, most of the store, the store was the center of everything, you know. And, uh, I liked that, you know. Talk and hear gossip.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What was your mother like?

DANNIE: She was a very, she was about five foot seven, and she was, she weighed around a hundred and six, a hundred and sixty pounds. And a round face, that's all. Typical Irish face. That's all. Typical Irish face.

LEVINE: Let's see. Were you closest to any particular family member,

would you say?

DANNIE: There was one sister I was, I didn't realize it till I come out here that I was closer to the second sister, Margaret. And I felt just about the same with all of them, though.

LEVINE: Did Margaret come here?

DANNIE: She did. She come here later. Six years later she come here. She's back home, I guess. That's all.

LEVINE: Is there anything else that you could say about life in your village? Maybe, uh, anything about the way people dressed, or had, how they got their clothing, or, uh . . .

DANNIE: Oh, there were stores there, you know. Like the country store, like I told you, you could buy a set of clothes, you could buy a set of shoes for the horse. You could buy anything there. And that was where they mostly bought their clothes. They got off the racks, some of them, they used to get their clothes made. There was a local tailor there, and he'd make the clothes. He used to make a good job, the way I remember.

LEVINE: And how about shoes?

DANNIE: Shoes, the same thing. You bought them in the store. You bought them in the store. It was, when I was young it was, there was a shoe, they call them the clog. And what they were, they were a sole made out of wood. And it was shaped nice. And then they tapped the leather into the side there. They were wonderful. It was the one, the young guys (?). But they were wonderful shoes.

LEVINE: And you would wear them everywhere?

DANNIE: I wore them. I wore them, yeah. They were wonderful. I always wore them, you know. Like leather shoes, they got damp, you know. But the wooden shoes, they never. They never got cold. And the people that used to wear them weren't subject to colds either. But they still, you, they wouldn't know what you were talking about over there now. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, okay. Well, how was it decided that you would leave Ireland and come here?

DANNIE: Oh, I guess I had, what would you call it, wonderlust, I guess. That's about it.

LEVINE: I see. So your father stayed there. He hadn't come over here.

DANNIE: Yeah. My grandfather was here.

LEVINE: Your grandfather was the one who came.

DANNIE: My father was never here. And, uh, I don't know, I wanted to go someplace. As, it was very hard to get a visa to come out here in my days, in '28, you know. Only two percent of the people got them, and it was very hard to get them. And, uh, one day I told them, "Listen, if I don't get a visa, I'm going to New Zealand." And I knew another guy about five miles away that was going to New Zealand, and I was going to join him. Good thing I got the visa and I come here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So you came here, would you say for adventure?

DANNIE: Oh, no. Oh, no.

LEVINE: Why did you come?

DANNIE: I come here to make a living, make a living. I started work the

day after I come here. Working in the A&P. That's when they had local stores, you know. The supermarket wasn't known. I was on the corner of 73rd Street and Madison, and Columbus Avenue.

LEVINE: Oh. Let me, let's get to that a little bit later. First let me ask you, what did you know about America before you came here?

DANNIE: Oh, yes. Well, a pretty good idea, because my grandfather used to talk about it, tell stories, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember any stories that he told? Well, you told some of them before. Is there anything else that you remember him telling you?

DANNIE: He told a story about, he was great. They called him the miner in Ireland. The reason for that was he was always talking about the mine, because he worked in there. He was very demonstrative, you know, talking. He'd get up there and you'd put a hole in the wall like this, and you go this way and that way. ( he laughs )  
But get him (?). You know, the, I remember one time there was a fellow, Ned Kelly was his name. So when he come in, they (?). That was it. "Don't ever leave this damn business." He was talking to him about. "Never mind what he did in America. Just forget about it." "All right, I'll forget it." So his father turned around, he's not talking to him, talking to his father, possibly some neighbor was doing in the mines. He got up, "Ah, they all do that. (?)." My father says (?). ( they laugh )  
Things like that, that's all.

LEVINE: So, um, you, you got your visa. Did you have to go to Dublin?

DANNIE: I had to go to Dublin, yes. I was in Dublin, and (?).

LEVINE: And how . . .

DANNIE: I was up on the 30th of March.

LEVINE: That's when you got it?

DANNIE: I went up to Dublin, and I had to stay in Dublin that night and then go down to the, to the visa office in the morning. And then, uh, that's all. I passed, I passed through Dublin all right.

LEVINE: Well, did it just take you that one day to get the visa? How long did it take you from the time . . .

DANNIE: It took three weeks, three weeks.

LEVINE: From the time you tried to get it the first time.

DANNIE: See, I went to the agent in Moylough, to Gilmore, the agent, the travel agent. And he worked from there. I said, (?), three weeks, I guess it was. And then I got there, he says, "You go to Dublin on the 30th of March, and you'll be in Dublin the 31st, at nine o'clock in the morning." So there was no train to go that early, so I had to go the day before.

LEVINE: Was that the way it was done? You would contact a travel agent?

DANNIE: Yes, that's right.

LEVINE: In your, near where you lived.

DANNIE: Local, yeah. Local neighborhood.

LEVINE: And you'd tell that person . . .

DANNIE: Tell him that I wanted to go, and he'd get all the papers

working. But you had to have a letter from somebody here, because they'd take care of you when they got here, (?). I had an uncle working here, and he, he sent me a letter a long time, that was coming, see. In other words, he'd be responsible for me, and I went up to Dublin.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what else did you have to have in order to . . .

DANNIE: Nothing more. Because then when we went to Queenstown to the shipping office on the 30th of April, I went up there, then we had another physical, and he wasn't sure if that was all, he wasn't sure if you got there or not, because there was twenty people, twenty (?). Sometimes thirty (?). And, uh, I made it through. So . . .

LEVINE: So you had a physical in Dublin, and then a physical in Queens . . .

DANNIE: Yes. The real physical was there. A real physical was. I, the funny thing, there was a doctor working in the side, a woman on the girls' side of the place. And I don't know why I looked at him. He impressed me some way or another. I was in the, working in the island over here, and I was in the hospital one day, and I saw this guy coming down. And I asked the guy, Toufer was his name. I stopped him, and I said, "We have a (?)." "(?)," he said, "were you?" I was.

LEVINE: How many years later was that?

DANNIE: This was two years later. He had a good memory there.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

DANNIE: But that was all there was to it. But then when I got on the ship, then I had, I suffered. I got one boil after another down my shoulder, and I was walking around like this, like that. If you got, some of the help on the ship, God they were rough one me.

LEVINE: They didn't treat you very well.

DANNIE: Oh, no. They didn't treat anybody. And, uh, they, if you made a move, like there was one guy there, he used to sing a lot, you know. So one day, "You don't keep quiet, do you want to land in New York?" "Yeah." "Well, if you don't keep quiet, you won't." They'd hold it over your head, you know. But they had no authority. I didn't know that till a week later. If I know as much then as I did a week later, I'd tell them where to get off, but I couldn't. And, uh, they're out there walking around. "Come on, move, get out of the way."

LEVINE: Okay. I think we'll pause here while we turn the tape over, and then we'll continue about the voyage.

DANNIE: Okay.

LEVINE: Okay.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Okay. We're resuming now with side B. I'm speaking with Dannie Madden. Um, before you tell me about the A&P, tell me more about the voyage. What were your accommodations like?

DANNIE: The accommodations were all right, they were nice. The food wasn't very plentiful. It didn't bother me. I wasn't, I wasn't

able to eat anyway. I was sick all along. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: How do you think you developed the boils?

DANNIE: I don't know. I got (?). I had five of them, all together, one after the other. And I couldn't put on my collar or nothing. I got over it. That's what, that's what brought me into Ellis Island, you know.

LEVINE: Well, first tell me, first tell me, anything else about the voyage? Were you down in the hold of the ship in like a dormitory, or were you in a cabin?

DANNIE: No. In steerage.

LEVINE: And what, did you, when you were given meals, was it in a . . .

DANNIE: No, we went to a dining room.

LEVINE: You did.

DANNIE: Yes, we went to a dining room. As far as I was concerned, it was all right. Most of the guys were complaining they didn't get enough to eat.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did you go, when you were aboard ship, did you leave with someone you knew?

DANNIE: Yes. There was a friend of mine, Tom Miskel.

LEVINE: What's his last name?

DANNIE: Tom Miskel, M-I-S-K-E-L. He's dead now, dead twenty years before, right. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: He was from the same village?

DANNIE: He was a village, right, same village.

LEVINE: So you both decided to go together?

DANNIE: Yes. He was talking about it for a long time. He didn't move. I did, when he's going (?). So we were doing all right till we got to New York, and then, you see they were very particular, on the ship they were very particular. When you come over here, the (?). I'll tell you why. They used to take nobody into the island except if they had a defect, had something the matter, had something the matter with their papers, or God knows what, and they take them in here, always take them in. They were supposed to, then when I was discharged I was here till three o'clock in the afternoon. Then finally went, "Ah, you can go." So I had to go outside there to a guard. I was standing out on the dock there. And he says, uh, "Got a tag there?" "Yeah." "All right, go ahead." So I went down to the boats, down to the ferry. And I got in New York. The other was four, four more there. Two girls and a fellow. And they had somebody to meet them right away, and they got going. So I didn't have any money. My uncle was supposed to meet me down to the ship. And he got fouled up somewhere, and he didn't get to the (?). But, anyway, he was, a city cop was working there. He used to, had to count how many cabs, you know, and all that. The cabs were all thieves in them days. So he says, "What's with you?" I said, "I'm waiting for my uncle. I told you." "Well," he says, "listen. If you go up to the dock, you won't get a no, because they're closing it." So he said, "What's your address?" So he gave us, I gave him my address, 130 82nd, West 82nd Street, and he called a cab over for me. "By the way," he asked me, "do you have two-and-a-half

dollars on you?" "Yeah, I have." So he says, "I'll call the cab." He wanted to make sure. "Listen, take this guy up to 139 West 86th Street. Make sure that somebody knows him before you leave." He says, "Here, give him two-and-a-half dollars. Your tip is there, too." I found out later it was fifty cents, and he's from up there, there was no uncle there. But the owner of the house seen I was coming, so she said, "All right, come on in." So that was that. I got rid of him. Which, what I wanted to tell you, when I got out of the barge office, somebody was supposed to stop me and took the tag. He took the tag all right. He just pulled it off. "Now you can go." A lot of guys got waylaid, what have you, and especially girls. They got laid, you know, pulled aside, you know. There was kidnap in them days, you know. We didn't call it kidnap. They would take them into business of their own, you know. I haven't thought of that. It was only two weeks later when I was down here I knew what was going on, you know. That was, boy, he was, see, immigration we had didn't care. He was getting ready to go home anyways. He was supposed to leave at four o'clock.

LEVINE: So what did your tag say?

DANNIE: The tag, my name, that's all and the ship.

LEVINE: That's all, uh-huh.

DANNIE: Ship, it was a tag put on on the ship, and it says, "Colonial Canal Line," and then they wrote it in Dan Madden, that's all. I was supposed to wear that all the time. Last week when I was getting the ferry out here, the guy says, "You got a tag?" "Yeah." "Ah, go ahead." That was it. It was the other guy, he says, "Give me your tag." And didn't ask me where I was going or

anybody picking me up or nothing. But the cop was there. Oh, he was really good. He was an old man. Eddie Whalen [ph] was his name. And he, he was a tough, oh, boy, he was tough as iron.

LEVINE: Did you ever see him again, that cop?

DANNIE: Oh, sure. When I come to work on the island I used to see him every day. We talk it, he was a big man, you know. He come over, he says, "You got a cab, you know. I told you to take a cab some place, didn't I? Did he take you?" "What if I took him?" "Yeah, you took him around the city." That's what they used to do, you know, drive you all around and drive you up to Queens, Bronx anyplace, and then drop you off, and then (?), you know. They didn't do it to him. He was, he had his money there.

LEVINE: Is there anything else you remember about Ellis Island when you were here?

DANNIE: I don't remember too much. I remember, I was telling Brian before, over in that section where we were, that was a prison ward. They used to have, in them days, they had deportees. That was mostly in my day, that's what they had, deportees. They'd take them in from all over the country. They'd come to Ellis Island, and then they'd process them or ship them back, and whatever they're doing. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: This was when you worked here?

DANNIE: Pardon?

LEVINE: When you were working.

DANNIE: Working, yeah. And, uh, one night they had a riot over there in that building. And a guy broke the sill off the window, and he

took it and he used a club. He killed one guy, and there was a guard, he left him crippled and all that. We call those (?). And, uh, so this detour, and I, he was a tough guy. He says, "Where do you get a box for this, a body box?" A body bag, they call it, not a body box, and take him over to the morgue there, the morgue on second island. So we took him in there. My belt broke from the raft, and I was. So he (?), "Wait a minute," he says. "He doesn't need this one." He pulled the belt off.  
( they laugh ) So . . .

LEVINE: Well, let's, before we talk more about when you worked here, let's talk about when you first got to New York, were there things about it that struck you as very different from anything that you were used to?

DANNIE: No, because I heard so much about it now that I wasn't awfully impressed, no. And the only thing was, the second day I was here, I was on my way home in the evening from work. A woman asked, I knew from, I knew the difference uptown and downtown. That's all I knew. I was in the Ninth Avenue El. I remember it to this day. I asked her would she come along, and she asked (?). I knew it was downtown, the address was. So he gave her the address, but she had to go down and pay another fare, go on the other side. And I said, "(?), you know. Don't seem right. The guy says downtown, I knew it." So I thought to myself, "Nobody will ever do that to me." The next day I bought a little red book, and there were five of them, five boroughs. And I just counted one on the train. Nobody ever set me wrong after that. I tell you, it was an awful thing, and she was lame, too, and he sent her down. That was, that was those deadly tricks I saw. But the store that I worked in, I had to go in in the morning at

eight o'clock.

LEVINE: Well, tell me how you got your first job.

DANNIE: Uh, a mounted cop was talking to me on the street, and, uh, he says, uh, "You working?" "No, I'm not working. I just got here yesterday." "Well," he says, "you'll be working now. You want to work in this A&P?" I didn't know what the A&P was. "What is that?" So he says, "Go down to 73rd Street, and tell them I sent you down." I go down, I wander in, I says, "This mounted cop sent me down." And I said, "Why don't I tell them your name?" He says, "Oh, Karl," he says. All right. That was that. All right. "Come in, come back here at twelve o'clock," he says, "there is your work." I come back twelve o'clock, work till ten. The next day I come in at eight, work till ten. I do that until Friday night. Saturday I come in, I work from eight to eleven at night. Then two weeks I was like that. And then there was a fellow working down on the island, and he found out I was up there. I knew, my mother new him. I didn't know him. And he come up to see me, he says, "Yeah, I want to work all that damn thing." And he says, "Come down to the island tomorrow," he says. "Just come down yourself."

LEVINE: What island?

DANNIE: Right here.

LEVINE: Oh, Ellis Island. Uh-huh.

DANNIE: I come down here. He took me up to the personnel, Ellis Island. I stayed ten years.

LEVINE: What were you doing in the A&P?

DANNIE: I was delivering mostly, counting stock upstairs and downstairs.  
I didn't care. I didn't mind the hours so much. I didn't like that work.

LEVINE: Yeah. So how did you happen, uh, were you in a community of people who had come here from Ireland?

DANNIE: Yeah.

LEVINE: How did you meet the fellow who knew your mother?

DANNIE: Yeah. I, my mother wrote to him.

LEVINE: Oh.

DANNIE: I didn't even think of him. I didn't even know him. And she wrote to him. She told him, so he didn't even answer the letter.  
He come up to the address where I was staying on 92nd Street.

LEVINE: Oh, so he went to find you to tell you.

DANNIE: That's right. He wanted to find me, sure.

LEVINE: And did he work at Ellis Island?

DANNIE: He did. He worked here till 1934.

LEVINE: So it was through this friend that you got the job. So what job did you get here?

DANNIE: Uh, I don't know what you'd call it. We used to call it a bull gang.

LEVINE: A bull gang? ( she laughs )

DANNIE: Yes. You did everything you had to do. They tell you the

carpenter needed a helper? Go and help him. The plumber needed a helper? Go ahead. The electrician needed a helper? You'd do anything. You'd shovel snow, up the sidewalk. The boss told you what to do, and you did it. So . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember who your boss was?

DANNIE: Yeah. His name was Hagberg, August Hagberg.

LEVINE: Can you spell the last name?

DANNIE: He was, he was my immediate boss. H-A-G-B-E-R-G. But the big boss there at that time was Theiss. He came by the name of Fred Theiss.

LEVINE: T . . .

DANNIE: Yeah. T-H-E-I-S-S. He put a (?), shaking in shoes. But he was a good-natured man, a decent man, just the way he was, that's all. If you made a mistake, he raised hell. He figured (?). You pay any attention what I told you? I did. All right. Let me know after (?) again, that's all. He used to go on (?). "What the hell are you doing?" I said, "I was doing the same thing the other day." (?) "Ah, get off the island."  
( Dr. Levine laughs ) That's all. But he was a decent man, though. They had nothing in common with him. He was a very nice man.

LEVINE: Now, what was going on here, uh, on Ellis Island, during the years you were working here?

DANNIE: Well, them two islands over there were turned into Marine Hospital. That, there's, uh, the shipping industry got a deal with the government to take care of their, the seamen that got

sick on board the ship, so they put them over there. That's the area, like I told you, that were handling mostly deportees. It was ninety percent of them was all deportees.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of people here?

DANNIE: There was quite a few. They were . . .

LEVINE: In the hundreds.

DANNIE: Yeah. They were rescuing them all over here in the day, you know. And then a lot of them wanted to go back, and they were getting a free ride because of the depression. Don't forget, a lot of them committed some sort of a half a crime, you know. (?)

LEVINE: What were most people being deported for?

DANNIE: Oh, they come out, most of them, they come here a public liability, you know. Well, that was the impression. Some, of course, a crime. We had John Dillinger's girlfriend. She was in here.

LEVINE: Really?

DANNIE: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you see her?

DANNIE: Yeah. It was hardly about three months. They had trouble trying to get a country to take her. But they got rid of her. They sent her over to Austria in the end. And, uh, there was a lot of gangsters in here, too. Small-time gangsters, you know. They didn't have any pull to take care of themselves, you know.

LEVINE: And where were they going, mostly?

DANNIE: They were going mostly to Italy and to, uh, a lot of places, Sicily. A lot of them went to Sicily. And that's all.

LEVINE: So did you, you didn't have to deal with them personally.

DANNIE: Oh, no, no.

LEVINE: You were more a handyman doing all the . . .

DANNIE: Yes, that's right, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DANNIE: There was five of us on the crew, and you got, and everyplace, you went here, you went there. And I was, I was, anyways, it was good. I was the only young guy that was here. There was nobody in the place, none, under forty-five.

LEVINE: And you were, what? You were twenty-eight.

DANNIE: I was, I was eighteen when I come here.

LEVINE: Oh, that's right, right, in 1928, right.

DANNIE: In fact, we were all (?). (?). And didn't want to work, especially nobody wanted to go to South Island, because between the two islands there was a passageway there. It was long, about three hundred feet. You could see the water down, and the galvanizer was busted, broken, and everything else. And Monday night we were (?). So I get on the bridge and I was running like the devil until I get to the other end, and I come back and run like that. They could do that, They were too old.

LEVINE: So where did you live when you worked here?

DANNIE: I lived on the island.

LEVINE: Oh.

DANNIE: On the front end of the second island there, there was a cottage there. We called it a cottage, which you could pass as a sort of a boarding house. And there was rooms there, and I was in one of them.

LEVINE: Is that still there, do you know?

DANNIE: Pardon?

LEVINE: Is that building still there?

DANNIE: No, no.

LEVINE: No.

DANNIE: It's not there, no. It was separate from (?), it was out near the front of the bell house there, almost.

LEVINE: And it was a separate structure.

DANNIE: A separate structure. They call it a cottage.

LEVINE: And, so, was it like a dormitory, or was it each .

. .

DANNIE: No, there was rooms in it.

LEVINE: Each one had a separate room.

DANNIE: Yes. It was a nice place.

LEVINE: Oh. So how many staff members would you say, roughly, were living here at that time?

DANNIE: It was about, uh, well, it was about twenty-five, twenty-five or thirty, I don't know which. It was another, up on the, on the, in the main building over there on second island, the tall building, the top of that top floor was girls, females over there, and the men were down, and there were, some men were living in the, that house was fourteen, I guess, for the old laundry yesterday. They were living over there, too.

LEVINE: Did most of the staff live on the island?

DANNIE: Pardon?

LEVINE: Did most of the staff . . .

DANNIE: No, no, no, no. No. It was good for, we were saying. And then they fed us, you know. Yes, we eat in the place.

LEVINE: And was that, how was that food?

DANNIE: It wasn't good, but it was all right. It was all right. You'd get by on it.

LEVINE: Would you go to New York or New Jersey?

DANNIE: Oh, yeah. You could go. You always went to New York. You didn't go, there was no, yeah, but, did you tell me they have a connection bridge there, you know?

LEVINE: Yes.

DANNIE: Oh. There was nothing there in my day, nothing. And they couldn't have anything there, because a (?), because they used to have criminals in here, and they didn't want them to escape. They had nothing. They were very particular about who got on the

boat, not who got off it. When they got off, you were there. So when you got on, that was, okay.

LEVINE: So when you went to New York, would you go with some of the other fellows who worked?

DANNIE: By yourself, or you go with somebody. And it was, in the evening you had five, ten, six tenants, seven boats. You come back, you had, uh, nine o'clock, eleven o'clock and twelve fifteen.

LEVINE: And what if you missed the twelve fifteen?

DANNIE: You could sleep in the park. ( Mrs. Madden laughs ) (?) You were out of luck.

LEVINE: So did yo have any friends your age?

DANNIE: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Who worked here, too?

DANNIE: Oh, yeah. Yeah, you, it's a small, like a small community. You get friendly with all of them, you know.

LEVINE: And what happened to your friend who came over on the boat with you?

DANNIE: I never knew. They all disappeared. The only one I knew was the one that come out (?). They never changed addresses or nothing. Some went to Jersey, and some went to, God knows. I never heard from any of them.

LEVINE: Were there mostly Irish people on that Caronia?

DANNIE: No, there was more, there was Scotch people and English on it, too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what happened to you, to your pal who went with you?

DANNIE: He went over to Brooklyn, and he got a job over there in an ice factory, and he stayed there, forty years almost he stayed. We were friendly right along. He got out of there. Oh, he got out in '32. And we were friendly up till the time he died twenty-one years ago. Oh, that's, but the ship passengers, was sorry after, but I never took an address or nothing, you know. They didn't get mine.

LEVINE: Well, um, Mrs. Madden, tell me how you came to work at Ellis Island.

SARAH: Well, I came looking for a job. And, uh, I got a job as, uh, like a nurse's aid, and I worked there.

LEVINE: Now, were there people in the hospitals who were to be deported? Is that, who . . .

SARAH: No, I never . . .

DANNIE: Seamen.

LEVINE: Oh, they were the seamen. Okay.

SARAH: Yeah, yeah. And then, they had people in the hospital, you know, wards. And, uh, you took their meals to them and things like that, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what . . .

SARAH: There was a lot of nurses, too.

LEVINE: What year did you start?

SARAH: '37.

LEVINE: And you worked, uh, as a nurse's aid, or . . .

SARAH: For '40.

LEVINE: Till 1940.

SARAH: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, um, did you live here, too, on the island?

SARAH: Yeah, I did, yeah.

LEVINE: How did you find out about this position? How did you come to look for a job here?

SARAH: I don't know.

DANNIE: From the agency.

SARAH: Oh, from an agency sent me out, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how did you feel about working here?

SARAH: I liked it all right, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SARAH: I mean, you got your room and board and all that, you know. And, uh, you're mixing with the people that worked there, you know.

LEVINE: Were the seamen, uh, what kinds of problems, because you say what kinds of things they were being treated for?

SARAH: No, I couldn't no. No. You know, they were just sick, that's all, you know.

LEVINE: Is there anything that you remember about the islands when you were here, how they looked, what was going on, uh . . .

SARAH: Well, I, they used to transfer me from one island to the other, you know. And Island 2 was a medical hospital, you know. And then Island 3 was, uh, for, uh, what do you call it?

LEVINE: Infectious diseases?

SARAH: No. They were mental, like, you know. Yeah. A lot of, some of them were coast guards, and some of them were, you know. And, uh, they had problems.

LEVINE: Did you ever work with the people on Island 3?

SARAH: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And what were your, do you think of any experiences that you had there?

SARAH: I had one, uh, English lady, and she kept telling me she was going to tell the FBI on me and all this, you know. Mentally, you know.

LEVINE: Well, um, how did a woman come to be there? Was she a coast guard or something?

SARAH: I think she was . . .

DANNIE: They were prisoners, prisoners going back.

LEVINE: Oh, these were being . . .

SARAH: They were deporting them, yeah.

LEVINE: To be deported, I see.

SARAH: But then, uh, and then there was one, uh, that was, uh, a navy guy's wife, and she, she had a baby, and then she went mental, you know. And she was here for quite a while, so finally he took her home then, you know.

LEVINE: So, do you . . .

DANNIE: Otherwise just, uh, you know, just ordinary people.

LEVINE: Well, do you, do you remember when you first saw Dannie?

DANNIE: I don't know. ( she laughs ) I don't remember. He was going around fixing the boilers and stuff when I saw him. ( they laugh )

DANNIE: I'll tell you how it happened.

LEVINE: Okay.

DANNIE: There was a horse show in New York. I went up and got two tickets to Madison Square Garden for myself and a friend. The night before the horse show the friend come around, and he told me, "Listen, I can't go. I promised to go someplace else." Oh, you know what, what the hell is this? Because we weren't making a lot of money, so I didn't want to spend it. And I was (?). She come down going on the boat, and she's standing there. I said, "You want to go to a horse show?" ( Dr. Levine laughs ) So he says, "Don't you go anyplace with him, because he's the worst character." ( they laugh )

LEVINE: Do you remember this?

SARAH: No! ( they laugh )

DANNIE: You can't trust him. You will never be the same. I don't know, but she, "Ah, I'll take a chance," and she would.

LEVINE: Now, had you noticed her before that?

DANNIE: No. I never saw her before.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

DANNIE: So . . . ( they laugh )

SARAH: Some meeting, huh.

LEVINE: So you went to the horse show.

DANNIE: And, boy, what a mistake that was.

LEVINE: Yeah?

DANNIE: Fifty-two years of a mistake. ( they laugh )

LEVINE: That's a long mistake.

SARAH: Yeah, yeah.

DANNIE: The longest mis--

LEVINE: Too long for a mistake. ( they laugh )

DANNIE: That's how it happened.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, um, well, we're near the end of the tape. Can you tell me, uh, then you had children. Tell me your children's names?

DANNIE: Five of them. Five boys. There's Bryant, James, Dannie, Francis and Michael.

LEVINE: And do you have grandchildren?

DANNIE: Two. Four of them. Two in California, and two here in New York.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what do you feel proud of? What do you feel proud of having done in your lifetime?

DANNIE: Uh, I'll tell you. I had a lot of emergency jobs, jobs that people (?). I never left one of them undone. I never walked away from a job, never. I'm proud of that.

LEVINE: Yes.

DANNIE: I'd rather take a job than mess it up or something and go away. I'd stay all night, finish the job.

LEVINE: And how about the fact that you came here as a young man, and really changed your life by, by starting out fresh here? How do you think the coming here, the immigrating, affected the rest of your life?

DANNIE: I don't know. When I come here, I think you're not, you're not built into one system, and you just gradually move along without knowing what you're doing.

LEVINE: Do you think your life was much different since . . .

DANNIE: Oh, it was different in certain ways, you know. Different mood. You work, that's all. That's all.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about you, Mrs. Madden? What makes you feel proud of having done?

SARAH: I don't know. ( she laughs ) Sticking him, I guess. ( they laugh ) Oh, God.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, um . . .

SARAH: But the children, I guess, you know.

LEVINE: Raising five children.

SARAH: Yeah, yeah. It was hard work.

DANNIE: She had a busy life. Seven in the morning till eleven at night. You got to get up and get them out, go to lunch, bring them home for lunch, bring them back again. In the evening they (?). She was kept busy.

SARAH: I got kept busy.

LEVINE: Yeah. We just have one minute left. What did you do, Mr. Madden, after you left working here?

DANNIE: I worked, I worked as a handyman in an apartment house, and then I left there and I went in a wall factory, and the control instruments in Brooklyn. And I stayed in that line of business ever since.

LEVINE: I see. And how's this period in your lives?

DANNIE: Oh, it was all right. I take it as it comes, that's all. I don't, I don't worry about anything. I never get mad at anybody, and I flared up from 1900, told somebody what I think of him, but I never stayed mad, never stayed mad.

LEVINE: That's good, that's good. How about you, Mrs. Madden? How's this time in your life?

SARAH: Well, it could be better, you know. Because I have my problems, you know. But, uh, otherwise it's all right.

DANNIE: No matter what it could be better, you know, so you might as well be satisfied with what it is, that's all.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, I think that's a good note to end on. I want to thank you so much. It's been a pleasure talking with both of you.

DANNIE: It was a pleasure for me.

LEVINE: And this is Janet Levine. I've been speaking with Dannie and Sarah Madden, and it's, we're in the Oral History Studio on Ellis Island. It's October 25, 1993, and I'm signing off.