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INA MILDRED SAUSVILLE DELANEY

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INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

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**REGISTERED NURSE WITH THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE,
AT ELLIS ISLAND: 1943-1944**

DELANEY: ...important. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service.

Today is Sunday, July 3rd, 1994. I'm in Warren, Massachusetts, with Ina

Mildred Delaney. Mrs. Delaney was a registered nurse at Ellis Island

beginning in the spring of 1943 through February of 1944. Anyway, thank you

for letting me come out here and ask you a few questions. Can we begin, Mrs.

Delaney, with you giving me your full name.

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DELANEY: Well, my, Ina Mildred, and my maiden name was Sausville.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

DELANEY: S-A-U-S-V-I-L-L-E. And that's what, I was single when I worked at Ellis Island, so that would be the name that they, you know, that would be on the register or whatever.

SIGRIST: And what is your birth date?

DELANEY: June 6th, 1913.

SIGRIST: And where were you born?

DELANEY: In this house right here on Ramsdell Street.

SIGRIST: And we're at what, 24 Ramsdell Street?

DELANEY: Yes, it used to be 3 (they laugh) but they changed things.

SIGRIST: They've added a few. Can you tell me, before we start talking about your interest in nursing, can you just give me a little bit of your family background; nationality, how long they lived in this town...

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DELANEY: Well, my father was of French decent and my mother's father, my grandfather was English and my grandmother was also French. And, uh...

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

DELANEY: William J. Sausville. And they bought this house in 1912 and I was born in this house in 1913 and I have two sisters who were, and my brother, who were also born right in this house. And my mother died here in the house and my father died here in the house.

SIGRIST: What was your mom's name?

DELANEY: Ina Mae.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

DELANEY: Stacy. S-T-A-C-Y. And, uh, I can't remember, but I mean we just grew up as, as everybody else in the neighborhood did. It was a small town. And it was a happy life. We had a very nice life.

SIGRIST: Must have looked a lot different in 1913 than it does now.

DELANEY: Well, yes, because the road outside was dirt. (she laughs) It wasn't paved. And Maple Street out here wasn't, I, I don't remember them

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paving part of it but the rest of Brimfield Road was all just dirt. And there wasn't quite as many houses, although there aren't too many now, but there were fewer then.

SIGRIST: I should say for the sake of tape, for anyone listening, that we're really very much out in the country here.

DELANEY: Oh, yes, yes. You can see the farm up there on, on, there's a big, well, now it's a dairy farm, I guess. At one time they had a couple of horses up there and, oh, it was, it was still country.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you how your interest in nursing began.

DELANEY: Well, my father was, was very, very set that we'd all be well educated. He didn't want any of us to, to feel, you know, that we wouldn't have some means of earning a living in case something happened. So, being pressured into going further than high school, there wasn't too much of an alternative in those days, 1931 when I graduated, you were either a teacher or you worked in an office or you were a nurse. And my father thought nurses were just perfect, so that's why I, I chose it.

SIGRIST: Did you have any inclination towards, you know, a medical career or did you basically do it because your father thought it would be...

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DELANEY: Well, it was a way of earning a living. That's actually why I, in 1931 there was a depression and it was very difficult to find a job anywhere. Married men with families were, were earning very, you know, very, very little. And it didn't cost anything, in those days, to go and I went into Saint Vincent's Hospital in Worcester. And all we had to do was buy our uniforms and our books, so that they didn't pay us anything but there wasn't anything going out, either, which was a big help in those days.

SIGRIST: Was that where the nursing school was? Was it out of Saint Vincent's?

DELANEY: Yeah, we had, Saint Vincent's had a school of nursing there, a very, very good one. In fact, I was told later that it was the ideal situation there, which I hadn't realized when I was there, you know. When you're eighteen, there are a lot of things you don't realize. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, tell me a little bit about how, after you got your training, for instance, what was your first position?

DELANEY: Uh, finally, they were looking for help at the Worcester State Hospital and a friend of mine had gotten a job there and she told me. She told me, "They're, they're hiring but they're hiring R.N.s [i.e. registered nurses] as attendants with an attendants pay." But it was a job and they, you had a room and you get your meals and they did our white

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uniforms for us. And ten dollars and thirty five cents a week and you worked six days. So I went there to work and I stayed there for two years. And, in the meantime, I met someone who said, "Why don't you try to get into the Veteran's Administration? The money is much better and you don't have to work so hard." So I applied and I was able to, I was accepted and I went to Bedford, Mass. which, we had about thirteen hundred patients, I believe. This was before World War Two because this was in 1937 when I went there. And it was all psychiatric, so I got into that field really, more than anything else. And I worked there five years. And after the five years, it was 1942 and World War Two came along and you couldn't get any gas or tires or anything like that for your car, due to shortages, of course. And I had been going to Boston University part time and they gave me a scholarship for the summer so I took advantage of it. And instead of going back to Bedford when I finished, they wouldn't allow me to have the time off and, and come back. They said if I, if they did for me they'd have to do it for everyone. So, I was the only one there that was going to school but that was their answer. So, when I got finished at the end of August at Boston University, I went to Baltimore in the Public Health Service. And that, I stayed in Baltimore for one semester, uh, for two semesters. I was there for the fall and spring semesters. And I disliked Baltimore very much so I asked for a transfer and they transferred me to Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Why did you dislike Baltimore? What was it about...

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DELANEY: The weather. It was so hot and humid and, of course, it was city and I wasn't, well, I had been around the cities but I just disliked it down there. And it was war time. Things were a lot different than they are now. They had the, they didn't have a brown-out in Baltimore because they were so far inland but, uh...

SIGRIST: Can you explain for us, on tape, what a brown-out is?

DELANEY: Well, during World War Two, the cities along the east coast, I don't know about the west coast but the east coast, they, they didn't have, they didn't want any lights because the submarines could pick up ships, the reflection on the ships. So everybody who lived within so many miles of the coast had to pull their shades and have curtains and keep their headlights very low. And also, so there wouldn't be any light, the cities were all darkened. It was a safety thing for the ships at sea.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Someone a hundred years from now will want to know what that is.

DELANEY: Oh, did you know that?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

DELANEY: Yeah, yeah.

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SIGRIST: I thought on tape this would be a good example of somebody explaining it. Well, what, when you were told that you would be transferred to Ellis Island, what did you know about Ellis Island?

DELANEY: (she laughs) Very little. All I knew, it was, you know, in the New York City area. That's all I knew about it. But, uh...

SIGRIST: What was the whole transfer procedure? What did you have to do before your first day of work at Ellis Island?

DELANEY: Well, when you get transferred, they give you papers and you just present them to the nurse who was, who was in charge of everything as far as, I don't really remember. It, it was very, nothing serious about it. You, you know, you just, you just started. Uh, the first week or so I was there I had to stay in the nurses' quarters, which were located on the second floor of the hospital.

SIGRIST: This is at Ellis Island?

DELANEY: At Ellis Island. I had to have, get an apartment and I didn't have one so I, I stayed in the nurses' home for a week or two. And the thing that I remember about it is that walking up the stairs to go to the second floor there was a window, you know, and then you went like this. (she

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gestures) And I, the Statue of Liberty was, is, it looked like you could put your hand out and touch it, it was so, so close. It was really amazing. And it isn't that close but it looked like it.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the nurses' quarters that you stayed in for those, how ever long it was before you got your own apartment?

DELANEY: It was just a room, it was, I don't, I can't recall very much about it because in, uh, none of this was very important to me at that time. I, I was interested in, in going to school, and I did got to New York University, and earning a living, you know. And, I, I wasn't, it wasn't a big deal. (she laughs)

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

DELANEY: Oh, maybe a couple weeks. I'm not sure.

SIGRIST: And where did you finally get an apartment?

DELANEY: I was over on Staten Island, 105 Townsend Avenue. And I stayed there until, I stayed there quite a while. After I left Ellis Island, even, I stayed there.

SIGRIST: Tell me, when you were working at Ellis Island, how would you get

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to work from Staten Island?

DELANEY: I had to go down, walk down the street, get the street car to the ferry. Take the ferry over to New York, the Battery. And then we walked just a short distance from where the ferry slip was to the slip where the Justice Department boat went over to Ellis Island. And you had to wait for the boat. And, and, of course, the Staten Island ferry would go, if it was foggy they, they traveled more or less on a schedule, tried to. But the Justice Department boat wouldn't go unless they could see, I mean, if it was foggy, which it gets very foggy down here, they wouldn't go. So, when you got there you never knew for sure, if it was foggy, whether you were going to go over and relieve the people that were waiting for you or sit. And, of course, it worked in reverse as well. But it was a smaller, much smaller ferry.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what it looked like?

DELANEY: The ferry?

SIGRIST: Yeah, the Justice Department ferry.

DELANEY: Oh...

SIGRIST: Or what sticks out in your minds the most about that boat?

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DELANEY: Oh, it was, it was, uh, it was a smaller ferry and a big waiting room like I mean with a, with seats on the side. And, uh, during that time, they had the Coast Guard located behind where the nurses, where the hospital part was. I never went around there because we weren't supposed to, I guess, but that's where they were located. And they had famous people coming and going a lot of times just to entertain the Coast Guardsmen. But it was just an ordinary, probably a third the size of the, the big ferry that we took. I, I can't remember exactly how big but it wasn't, it wasn't huge because they didn't need a huge one. There wasn't that many people going back and forth.

SIGRIST: And then, when the boat got to Ellis Island, where did it dock?

DELANEY: Well, in that slip that's between the second, where the hospital was and the one where the, is that the first one, the one that they've renovated, is that the first...?

SIGRIST: The Immigration Building.

DELANEY: Immigration, well, it was, it's between those two buildings. And I, we never, none of us ever went over into the Immigration because we weren't supposed to. And they used to pick up people who they were suspicious of and that was one of the things that the ferry did, the Justice Department boat did, was take them over to New York City to court and back.

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And then they'd make a determination where, what they were going to do with these people. And I remember somebody telling me, one of the nurses telling me that, I don't know how she heard about it, but she said one of the people they picked up over there was, had received some, I guess you'd call it fat drippings or suet or something. It was from meat that had been, the fat had been saved, and, and the relatives had sent it to this person. And it was ironic because we were having oleo but because of the Geneva Conference the people that over there were getting butter. They were entitled to butter. So that I was one of things that I remember that happened over there. But other than that, we didn't know who was over there or what happened to them or anything.

SIGRIST: Would any of the detainees over in the Immigration Building for any reason be brought to the Public Health Service hospital?

DELANEY: Not, not, not to my knowledge.

SIGRIST: Who was in the Public Health Service Hospital in terms of patients?

DELANEY: We had Coast Guardsmen. And it wasn't a hospital that did surgery or any big things. It was more or less custodial type things, some medication. We had one young man that was homesick. He was terribly homesick. He cried, just cried all day long. And if you said something, he'd say, "I'm all right. I'm just homesick." And he was being discharged.

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And, of course, they had the psychiatric area in the other, on the end there and these people weren't, weren't really violent. We didn't, we didn't have anything that was exciting and, you know, lots of things going. I remember one evening I was on the afternoon shift and they told me that this young man had, had been having abdominal pain and to keep an eye on him because he might have to be sent over to Staten Island, where there was a big hospital.

SIGRIST: Is that the Stapleton Hospital?

DELANEY: Yeah. And I, I lived right near there. I could have walked to it, you know. Well, anyway, he, he didn't do too well during the evening and I got kind of worried. So I called the Coast Guard and they came in one of those small boats they have and they took him over to the hospital. So we didn't handle anything that was really serious.

SIGRIST: What kinds of ailments and, and, what kinds of things did you handle at the hospital? If they weren't, if they weren't the big cases, well, what, what were some of the ones you did handle?

DELANEY: Well, you gave medications.

SIGRIST: But for what kind of, of ailment would you distribute a medication? I mean, just like if someone had a cold or, (a telephone rings in the background),

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uh, we're going to pause just for a second...(break in tape) Okay, we're now resuming. Mrs. Delaney, we were just talking about the sorts of things that might have put a Coast Guardsman into the hospital.

DELANEY: I can't remember anything that was out of the ordinary, you know, that wasn't just kind of routine.

SIGRIST: Well, what, what, I guess what I'm asking is what were the routine problems that might have landed you in that hospital? What, what kinds of things?

DELANEY: I, I can't remember too much about the general hospital. I remember that the wards were very, very large and they had beds all, all along the perimeter. But I went down and, because I was, the psychiatric training, you know, training I had, I worked down there some, too. And I remember one person, they, of course, we had attendants, men, to handle things. And this patients went out with others in, in the yard. There wasn't too much room, of course, because you're on that small island. And they had a high fence all the way around it. And, all of a sudden, he decided he was going to try and escape. And he gave a, almost a leaping, there wasn't room to really get a good running start. I don't know how he ever made it but over the fence he went. So they called the Coast Guard to go pick him up because the tide there and the flow of water is very fast. And I don't think anybody could ever swim even though it isn't that far from New

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Jersey, that they'd ever make it. So they came and picked him up, but he made an effort anyway. And I'll never know how he went over that fence. He must have had a great deal of strength.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what a, what a typical day would have been like, what time you would have arrived and what the first thing was you had to do, that sort of thing?

DELANEY: Oh, gosh. I don't even remember. We, we had to be there at seven and, as I say, if the ferry didn't take you, you stayed in one or the other place and waited for relief.

SIGRIST: And then, when you got to the island, what was the first thing you would have done?

DELANEY: Well, you get off the ferry and go into the entrance there and, it's, it's odd but I don't remember too much about all that because it was not anything that was...

SIGRIST: It was so routine.

DELANEY: It was very routine and there wasn't anything that was exciting, you know.

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SIGRIST: Was there a nurses' station that you had you check in...

DELANEY: Oh yeah, oh yes, you'd always have that.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that a little bit for me.

DELANEY: I don't even remember what it looked like. I was anxious when I went [she refers to a recent trip to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum], that I could go over there and just see the, the way it's laid out and everything. All I remember is that huge, huge room that they had all the beds in and I don't remember any, any others. Now, there might have been. There could have been but I don't remember them. And I don't know why I can't remember that particularly but it was so mundane, so routine, you know.

SIGRIST: Now, were you responsible for one ward all the time or were, did the nurses go from wards, from ward to ward?

DELANEY: Well, they, they, if they needed somewhere they can say, well, you better go down to such and such a place. I remember going down and, in the psychiatric area and there were two or three nurses there when I was there, I'm sure.

SIGRIST: What did you do when you went down to the psychiatric area?

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DELANEY: Well, you had to observe the patients, of course. And, and if there was any medication you gave it out. That wasn't too much. But they had to, you had to have people there to see what was going on, I mean, because they were, some of them were more disturbed than others. They weren't bad. They weren't like they were at Worcester State [Hospital] or even at Bedford but, uh, it was more transient. They didn't stay that long. I guess we'd get them and then they'd decide, the doctor'd decide where to send them or something because they, we didn't seem to keep anybody very long, as I recall. I didn't, I don't remember any particular patients that, uh, I remember one man. He was married and had kids. And he was in there and he had to see the psychiatrist. And he came back and, oh, he was so mad at, at everything that they had asked him. He says, "All they can think about is sex." (she laughs) I remember him particularly. He was so upset. And, and he made sense, you know, he wasn't (she laughs), he wasn't off the wall at all. Oh, gosh. Well, anyway...

SIGRIST: Now, did, were they only men, the patients that you dealt with, both in the psychiatric ward and in the hospital?

DELANEY: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: And were the psychiatric patients Coast Guardsmen? I mean, who, who were your patients? I know Coast Guardsmen were some of your patients.

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DELANEY: Uh, I don't know that we had too much, you see, they didn't keep them very long. But, apparently, I don't remember anybody saying, "Well, he's in the Coast Guard." I mean, we didn't pay any attention to that. It, they were a patient and they weren't, of course, they weren't in uniform or anything so you didn't know too much about them. I remember we did have one older, older person, very old. I don't know whether he, how he happened to be there but he had syphilis. And penicillin had just come, become being used at that time. And they gave him penicillin because one of the nurses said, "I wonder why they're wasting it?" because they, she didn't feel he was in any condition to, to recover from this. So, uh, but every, I don't remember too much about any of that. As I say, it was routine.

SIGRIST: You say that they were giving this gentleman penicillin for syphilis, which is sort of a new idea, a new thing...

DELANEY: Well, see, penicillin has just come out at that time.

SIGRIST: Well, how would syphilis have been treated prior to that?

DELANEY: (she pauses) I was just trying to think, because we had, had them at Bedford, too. Uh, they didn't, they didn't have any specific, we did have some, uh, oh, what's that other drug, sulphur drugs...

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SIGRIST: Sulphur?

DELANEY: Yeah, we did have sulphur drugs. But they were, you see, when they had gotten to the point where their body was full of the germ, there wasn't too much you could do for them. And, but we did give them sulphur drugs but, oh, oh, it was horrible.

SIGRIST: Yeah. The psychiatric area is a whole separate building from the hospital building, yes, or were they connected?

DELANEY: I, I don't think so because I don't remember going outside when I went down there. I think we went through kind of a hallway of some kind.

SIGRIST: There, there is a hallway that connects...

DELANEY: The two of them?

SIGRIST: Yeah, Island Two with Island Three...

DELANEY: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...so that would make sense. Do you, do you remember being on any other parts of the island? You were on...

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DELANEY: No, just those, just, just that part. That's all. That's as far, you got off the ferry and went in and, once you got through you came off, uh, out and that was it. You, we, as I say, they had the Coast Guard station in the back there somewhere and I, I never saw or knew anything about it except I knew that it was there.

SIGRIST: So you had no interaction directly with the Coast Guard.

DELANEY: No.

SIGRIST: You, you mentioned that, that well known people traveled back and forth on the ferry to entertain. Do you know who any of these people were?

DELANEY: I can't remember their names. There was one, uh, actress, and, of course, I took the ferry all the time so the captain got to know the small group, like there wasn't too many of us. And he said he'd had her upstairs-- up where you, where he, in his compartment there where he steered the boat and so forth. He said, "I didn't want to open the door because that perfume was so wonderful. I wanted it to stay there." (she laughs) He was funny. And we had, I can't think of the actor's name, but he was in the Coast Guard and I saw him on the ferry one time and the nurse that was coming back with me said, she went over and spoke with him. But I didn't. I didn't know, I didn't know what to say, really, because I was young then, too, (she laughs) so I didn't go over and talk to him. But she did.

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SIGRIST: When you arrived at seven in the morning...

DELANEY: Uh huh.

SIGRIST: ...and the first thing you did was check in...

DELANEY: Oh, yes, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and then what would you do?

DELANEY: I guess you checked your patients. I'm not sure. I don't remember anything about it. All I know is that you, you were told, you know, more or less, and you just followed directions.

SIGRIST: Did you wear your uniform to work...

DELANEY: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: ...or did you change when you got to Ellis?

DELANEY: Gee, I can't remember that. I don't remember changing it but I might have. I can't recall. Isn't that terrible. Terrible, it was so unimportant.

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SIGRIST: Well, because it was so ordinary.

DELANEY: Yeah, it was so unimportant. I probably did change it because I didn't normally wear a uniform when I was off, you know, when I wasn't working.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the uniform for me?

DELANEY: Yes. It was, everybody had to have the same kind. It was white, of course, and it had a belt. It had a collar.

SIGRIST: What was the length of the skirt?

DELANEY: Oh, I would say mid-calf. They weren't short but they weren't very long, either. They were, it was kind of a routine thing. And the cap was different. Of course, we weren't allowed to wear the caps that we had when we were graduating and all. It gathered in the back and it had a wide band that came down, uh, in the front like, you know, and you had to wear those.

SIGRIST: Why were you not allowed to wear your, the cap that you graduated in?

DELANEY: I don't know. We couldn't when I went, worked at the Veteran's

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Administration, either. It had to be, it was the type of uniform, I suppose, like they put the people who join the, the services because you, you weren't allowed to wear, only the one that they told you.

SIGRIST: Now, did you have to purchase your uniform or was it supplied to you?

DELANEY: No, no. We had to buy our own. I used to have mine made because I, they fit better if you, you know, but they had to be that same style. Everybody wore the same style.

SIGRIST: What about shoes?

DELANEY: Well, those had to be comfortable. That's about all. They had to be white. They didn't, they didn't insist on a certain, as long as they were comfortable and, and you could walk in them then they didn't say too much about that.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about eating lunch, perhaps, at Ellis Island. I assume you had a break.

DELANEY: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Was there a place where you could eat?

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DELANEY: Apparently. I don't even remember eating there. Isn't that terrible. I never thought, thought about it. I, I had worked at these different things, you know, and it was all very routine. The only thing I remember, at the Veteran's Administration the nurses were treated real royally. We sat down and were waited on. But I'm sure we didn't get that during the war and, no, we didn't in Baltimore so it must have been the same in, in Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, perhaps, your superiors. What sticks out in your mind about, if anything, about the doctors perhaps or the administration of the hospital?

DELANEY: We didn't, we didn't see too much of the, or I didn't see too much of the doctors, as I recall. There wasn't anybody that I remember particularly. And, uh, everybody that worked there was compatible. We don't, you know, you didn't have any problems with anything or they didn't ask you to do anything that was out of routine. It's, it's strange. I just don't remember too much about that period. I was going to school part time and maybe that's why I didn't pay any attention. I went to New York University.

SIGRIST: Of course, being the country girl in the big city, you didn't like Baltimore because it was, it was very city-like and here you are in New York

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City.

DELANEY: Well, it, of course, I went by subway to school but you just got, came off the boat and, and just a short distance, I don't know how far it would be but maybe from here to the corner up there, and then you took the ferry to go over to Staten Island. So, I, I never, I wasn't in New York City itself too much until later on.

SIGRIST: Until you started going to N.Y.U.?

DELANEY: Well, I, I had to take the subway to the school, but after I left Ellis Island I went to school full time for a semester and then, in the fall of that, of '44, I got a job at Lenox Hill Hospital. And that's when I saw more of New York City.

SIGRIST: When you were at Ellis Island, did they offer any kind of classes for you to...

DELANEY: No.

SIGRIST: ...you know, any kind of learning experience for you as opposed to just doing the routine?

DELANEY: No, not there. It might have been because of the war, too. There

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was so much going on at that particular time all around. The ships going out. The Gripsholm going back and forth with the, the big red cross on it. And I saw a submarine in the bay. One of ours, of course. And the Cardinal Richelieu battleship was anchored one, one time. It was so disguised that as we came along on the ferry, it looked like it was five or six small, smaller vehicles. Not vehicles, but ships. And, but as you came up to it, then you realized it was all one huge battleship. So, it was an interesting place because it was very active.

SIGRIST: And you're right in the middle of the war at this point.

DELANEY: Right.

SIGRIST: Were your wards filled?

DELANEY: Yeah, they, the beds were all pretty well taken, yeah. But, as I say, I don't, I don't remember any, I remember that little fellow that was so homesick. But people, the patients walked around pretty much. I mean, they weren't all bedridden. They weren't bedridden. Of course, they were young, you know. And they didn't stay that long. Apparently, it was like being over at the Immigration. They, they were there temporarily and then they got transferred or something. It's, it's terrible that I don't remember more about it.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Well, and as you say, these were not big injuries and that sort of thing.

DELANEY: No, no. And nobody was coming in like an accident case or anything. You didn't get that.

SIGRIST: You were there at Christmas time. Did they offer any kind of Christmas party or some kind of, or maybe even throughout your time there, any kind of social opportunities for the staff?

DELANEY: I don't remember anything social particularly. They always, they always made a big dinner for, like for Christmas or anything like that, for the patients and us, too. They's have a very, very nice dinner.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any, any details about that, like where, where you would have eaten it or...?

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DELANEY: Well, if I worked that day, I'd have to be eating where the rest of the help were. And, as I say, if I went back over there and saw the, the ward and all, then some of that probably would come back to me. But, uh...

SIGRIST: Well, you'll have to come back down and I'll take you over there.

DELANEY: Well, can you get in that second section?

SIGRIST: Oh, yeah, sure.

DELANEY: Oh, that's wonderful.

SIGRIST: Yeah, you'll have to come back down and I'll..

DELANEY: Because I thought I said to my daughter, I said, "You know, I don't remember enough about it. It's, it's terrible to be so forgetful. But it, none of it impressed me at that time because I had my mind on other things, I think. And I would make plans and I was, as I say, it was war time, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the patients being sort of flirtatious with you?

DELANEY: Oh, no.

SIGRIST: No.

DELANEY: No. (she laughs) When I had a uniform on, they didn't. (they laugh) Oh, dear.

SIGRIST: Let me just skim through the questions for a second and, so you worked an eight hour shift probably, right?

DELANEY: Yeah, I expect that was it, it must have been that. One thing that did happen that was amusing to me. We all had to have a pass with our picture and our thumbprint I believe it was, or something. There was a print that went on the thing. And it was from the Port Authority and you had to show that when you went on the Justice Department boat. So we, we'd have to sit in this little, it was not, it was not a very big place and they had settees on both sides. And then when the ship, the boat came in they, the people got off and then, of course, we lined up and we went in. And you had to show them this pass as you went by because they had two or three Coast Guardsmen, or I think they were, there to make sure that nobody went over that, that wasn't supposed to. And one day, and they, they knew us because they see us all the time, so one day one of them said, took my pass to look at it. And I thought, "What's the matter?" Then he, he came from this town, that's why he wanted to be sure because he knew my sister and I look like her, you know, so, that's why he wanted to check and

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make sure. Of course, I couldn't talk with him very long because we were on the line and the, you know, they want to take the ferry over, so you just (she laughs) don't stay and talk too long. But it was interesting.

SIGRIST: (he laughs) There, in New York of all places.

DELANEY: Yeah, right, yeah, uh huh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have any opportunity, you told the story about seeing the Statue of Liberty through the window, but while you were at Ellis Island did you ever, did you ever go to visit the Statue of Liberty?

DELANEY: No, I don't, I don't think, I seem to remember that they, they didn't have a ferry going over there then, right at that period of time. Because I've been there and, and been in the Statue but it wasn't while I was at Ellis Island, I don't think.

SIGRIST: Do you remember having to attend a patient when the patient was being removed to another hospital like Stapleton...

DELANEY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...or somewhere like that? Did you have to go with them?

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DELANEY: No. No, the Coast Guardsmen went with them. And we called. You called to the hospital and so on because they, they apparently felt that this young man might have, have reason to go. And I think they had it all prepared because it was up to me to decide whether he should go over there or not. And I felt, it is in the evening and all and I didn't want to take any chances because it would take a little while to get him over there, you know, and, in that small, those small boats that they, that they used. So I didn't want to have anything to happen to him so I called and it was very routine. They just came and, when you're working with young men like that, they take care of so many things, you know. It's, it's just wonderful. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Would you say that's the only instance that you remember of, of a serious problem...

DELANEY: Yeah, right.

SIGRIST: ...when that happened.

DELANEY: Yeah, right. There, there was always people around, as I say, the young men that were around and all, that, uh, it, it isn't like being all alone and, or even in the hospitals today where there's shortages of people, not enough people, and you're really with emergencies all the time. It wasn't that kind of a life at all. It was very calm.

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SIGRIST: Was the, was the work a little easier than it had been in Baltimore, would you say?

DELANEY: Probably, although it wasn't bad in Baltimore. They, they had, I was in a ward and we had, oh probably six or seven patients but there was other people helping, too, so, uh, if weather hadn't been so humid down there I probably wouldn't have minded it so much. Another thing too, I was going to, to the school there, the Johns Hopkins University, and I wasn't too pleased with the courses and so on. That was another reason why I wanted to leave. I actually graduated from Boston University and so these courses had to be approved by them. And so that was another reason I didn't want to stay there.

SIGRIST: I have to ask this question because you started the whole interview by saying your father felt it was so important...

DELANEY: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...that the children have an education and here not only are you getting an education but you're sort of moving all around. What did he think of that?

DELANEY: My father died. He, he died. He was only forty, uh, fifty six years of age. When my mother died, she was only forty six. So, uh, I was working at

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Bedford...

SIGRIST: Oh, so they never, they weren't living at that time.

DELANEY: No, my mother died when I worked at Worcester State [Hospital].

She died in January and I left Worcester State in July and went to Bedford.

And while I was in Bedford, my father died in 1940. And he died and so they, he, they never knew what I accomplished or, even my sisters and my brother. My brother was still in high school when my father died, so...

SIGRIST: And especially because he was, you know, that was so important to him.

DELANEY: Yeah. Yes, I remember my brother, he didn't like school and he was going to join the navy. And I can remember my father saying, "You're going to go to school if you're forty!" (she laughs) Oh, gosh.

SIGRIST: Well, why don't you tell me a little bit about how you got off of Ellis Island then and where you went after that.

DELANEY: Well, I resigned.

SIGRIST: Why, why did you want to leave Ellis Island?

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DELANEY: I resigned because I only needed I think about twelve more credits to get my degree. And I couldn't arrange it so that I could work and take these courses and get through in a reasonable length of time. So I resigned and I took four months off and went to school full time to get those extra credits so I could graduate in May from Boston University. And, when I got through, I got a job. They hired me but I didn't go to work until September at Lenox Hill Hospital teaching. So I worked in a hospital on Ellis (correcting herself), uh, on Staten Island for the summer and they knew that I was only going to be there for that short time. And when I went to Lenox Hill, I was the History of Nursing, Sociology, Psychology. I taught those three subjects in the nursing school. And I was the assistant nursing arts instructor. And I stayed there 'til the winter, December of '45 and I got married so I, I left.

SIGRIST: When you left, when you resigned from Ellis Island, did they give you some kind of...

DELANEY: I don't remember.

SIGRIST: ...uh, that you can remember?

DELANEY: No. As I say, I was there such a short time I didn't really, I can't recall anybody's name who worked there. And, it wasn't, when I left Bedford I'd been there five years so we did have a party and stuff but you see,

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as I say, wartime made such a difference in everything, too.

SIGRIST: Well, and, you know, people are coming and people are going and, well, just for the sake of the tape, you said you got married in 1945. What was your husband's name?

DELANEY: Fran, Francis X. Delaney.

SIGRIST: And did you have children?

DELANEY: No, we adopted two girls.

SIGRIST: And what are their names?

DELANEY: Dawn Marie, she's married. Her last name is Dumont. And Jane Frances Delaney.

SIGRIST: And after you married, did you not nurse anymore?

DELANEY: Very little. I did a few emergency type things. My aunt had a serious operation and I stayed with her in intensive care for a couple of days, nights, during the night. And what else was there? I helped with the Bloodmobile down here when they, once a year.

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SIGRIST: Did you miss that, that part of your life?

DELANEY: Not, not especially. I tried to, well, I went to Monson, to the hospital there, the state hospital in Monson, and, of course, I was married. And she said, "Well, you live in Warren so you'll have to work the 3:00 to 11:00." And I thought, "That's not, I waited until I was thirty two years of age to get married. I'm not going to spend it fooling around with that kind of thing." So I, I went into where my husband worked, he was a mechanic, and, a truck mechanic, and I was sitting there waiting for him to get through.

And the girl that was supposed to be help, well, she wasn't a secretary, it wasn't that kind of work, but it was in the trucking company anyway. And the manager was trying to catch up because all this paperwork had to be sent to Chicago everyday and it would just pile up. And I think it annoyed him to see me sitting there. He said, "Would you mind doing such and such?" And he showed me, and I said, "Sure." So I did it and I got through with that. "Well, how about this?" I got hired right then and there (she laughs), so I worked there for a while. (they laugh) Oh, dear.

SIGRIST: When you look back on your life, uh, what do you feel about, about your nursing career? I mean, you nursed for a long time, right? Fifteen years, almost.

DELANEY: Well, yeah.

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SIGRIST: Right? 1931 to 1945 you got married...

DELANEY: Oh, yeah. '31 to '45, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: I mean how, how do you look back at that time in your life?

DELANEY: I feel I've had a wonderful life, really. Everything has been very, very ordinary and, and happy. And I just feel that I've really had a wonderful life. Every experience has been good, you know. You learn something and, uh, I just, I'm just satisfied with my life.

SIGRIST: Great. Mrs. Delaney, thank you very much for letting me come out here and, uh...

DELANEY: Oh, you're very welcome.

SIGRIST: ...you remember as much as any other nurse I've ever interviewed from Ellis Island (he laughs), so...

DELANEY: Well, you know, I remember so much more when I went to Worcester State [Hospital] and when I was at Bedford. I do remember some things about Baltimore. But I know, I remember going over to Ellis Island from Staten Island and seeing all these things. And I always made sure I sat (she laughs) on the ferry where I could see a life jacket, (she

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laughs) you know, I didn't take any chances. And, uh, that kind of thing.

But I don't remember too much of the, the duties weren't that great, you know, you didn't do anything exciting, just routine stuff. of course, I had worked in, in mental work and really had some experiences with mental people in Worcester State and in Bedford. So anything that wasn't up to that was routine. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Kind of boring...

DELANEY: Actually, it was, you know.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Ina Delaney on Sunday, July 3rd, 1994 in Warren, Massachusetts. Thank you.