

EI-566

FULL NAME: Margaret Disorda

BIRTHDATE: March 31, 1915

INTERVIEW DATE: 11/14/1994

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 79

RUNNING TIME: 1:00:05

INTERVIEWER: Paul E. Sigrist, Jr.

RECORDING ENGINEER: same

INTERVIEW LOCATION: Poultney, VT

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: Stephen Kempa (9/2008)

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

WALES, 1920

AGE: 5

SIGRIST: Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Monday, November 14, 1994. I'm in Poultney, Vermont, and that's spelled P-O-U-L-T-N-E-Y, with Margaret Disorda. Mrs. Disorda came from North Wales in 1920. She was five years old at that time. Mrs. Disorda, can we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

DISORDA: March 31, 1915.

SIGRIST: March 31, 1915. And where in Wales were you born?

DISORDA: Well, it's near Canarvon [ph], it's up in Llandwrog.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

DISORDA: L-L-A-N-D-W-R-O-G

SIGRIST: And pronounce it one more time for me.

DISORDA: Llandwrog.

SIGRIST: And you said that's in North Wales?

DISORDA: North Wales.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections yourself of the town that you lived in?

DISORDA: [interposed] Yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the town?

DISORDA: 'Cause I was over there when my mother. And I've been over there since then too.

SIGRIST: What do you remember as five year old about the town?

DISORDA: Oh, going to school, walking over to my grandmother's, going to church.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what the town looked like a little bit?

DISORDA: Yes, it was -- it had like, terraces, up through a narrow street. A terrace that went up on an incline. And course, we're up high, it's more up in the mountains, you know, and so it was high. And you could you know, look down, you could see the ocean, and you could see Canarvon [ph]. You could see a lot of different little towns all around. Everywhere, from there. Yep. And course, everybody walk, walk, walk, over there.

SIGRIST: Is there one building that was in town that sticks out in your mind as a little girl?

DISORDA: Yes, the church and -- and the -- the school.

SIGRIST: What did the church look like?

DISORDA: Well, any ordinary church I would say. I do have pictures of it from when I was over there. And the school is still, was the same when I went back. Not much change.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the house that you lived in -- in Wales?

DISORDA: Yes, I took a walk up there and I wasn't quite sure of it because it's more like a duplex. Here you would call, duplex.

SIGRIST: You're talking about when you went back to visit?

DISORDA: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember as a child of the house?

DISORDA: Well, I -- I think it was like -- it had an open stairway -- and it seemed, you know, had a fireplace, and a -- a backroom. And it's not too much of anything.

SIGRIST: Was it a freestanding house? Or was it attached?

DISORDA: It was attached. It was like -- more like duplexes around here.

SIGRIST: And was it in town? Or out of town?

DISORDA: It was in this little village, yes.

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SIGRIST: Do you know what the house was made out of?

DISORDA: No, I don't think so, but I would assume probably stones.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how many rooms it had?

DISORDA: No I don't, no I don't.

SIGRIST: Who lived in the house?

DISORDA: As far as I remember, it's just my mother and I and my sister. And I think my father was away at that time. See he was in the service, First World War you see?

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

DISORDA: Evan. E-V-A-N.

SIGRIST: And what was your maiden name, his last name?

DISORDA: Morris. M-O-R-R-I-S.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about your father's background -- his family history.

DISORDA: Well he lived near, what they call Critkis [ph], and it was, [not understood]. And, there's a castle there in Critkis [ph] of course, and um --. That -- he lived right -- right near where Lloyd Geor-- Lord George lived--

SIGRIST: [interposed] Lord George.

DISORDA: Because he was buried right there in a little cemetery, near a little bridge, and all he has is one great big rock for a marker.

SIGRIST: What do you know about your father's family history?

DISORDA: Well, I -- I think he was brought up more or less by his aunt. I think his mother had to go out to work, you know. And his aunt brought him up. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was his personality like?

DISORDA: He was easy-goin'. He was more my coloring -- my mother was dark. You know her hair was dark, my father's was a reddish color.

SIGRIST: And what were some of the things that he liked to do in life? What things gave him pleasure in life to do?

DISORDA: You mean when he got older or when he got over here?

SIGRIST: [interposed] Yeah, if you -- uh, over here. Just, anywhere. Whatever you remember. Things he enjoyed doing.

DISORDA: Yeah, well not too much of anything different I guess. He -- he liked his animals, liked to walk with the animals. You know -- dogs and stuff like that, and of course he worked in the quarries and and um --

SIGRIST: Did he work in the mines--

DISORDA: In the slate mines. Slate mines.

SIGRIST: [interposed] In the slate mines, here?

DISORDA: [interposed] Yes.

SIGRIST: [interposed] In America.

DISORDA: [interposed] Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did he does that work also in Wales?

DISORDA: No, 'cause he was younger you see and I think they went off to service. I think at first they probably were in agriculture helping on farms and things like that over there. And then I think when the First World War came on that's where a lot of them went. Into the war. And after that – that's when he came over here, you see.

SIGRIST: Do you know how old your father was when he went into World War I, when he went into the service?

DISORDA: Well he must've been around nineteen or twenty I think. Somewhere like that.

SIGRIST: Did he ever talk to you later on about his experiences during World War I?

DISORDA: No, no. No, I know that'd he'd went. Like – I can remember him say into Turkey and the Dardanelles and all those big – he was – went on through it, you know, from beginning to end, yes.

SIGRIST: But he wasn't inclined to tell stories about what happened?

DISORDA: No, they didn't. No, you didn't tell much stories. They don't any tell – I wish now that my mother and father had told us a lot more 'bout, you

know, when they were over there and 'bout different things. But. You know what, those times the little kids should, you know, just go aside – sit aside and be very quiet and not, you know, make any noise. And the grown up would get by themselves and talk. And poor kids didn't know.

SIGRIST: Kind of kept in the dark about everything?

DISORDA: [interposed] Yeah, yeah, it's true. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

DISORDA: Katherine Ellen.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

DISORDA: Evans.

SIGRIST: E-V-A-N-S.

DISORDA: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you know about your mother's family background.

DISORDA: Well she had quite a few brothers and sisters. Two of 'em came over here. And, none of her brothers came over. One of her brothers was quite a good singer, very good singer. So he won a lot of trophies and things over in Wales. And, two of her sisters as I'd said came over here. The first one and this is the one who are – we – when we came here I think – when we went into Boston. That was her and her name was Mary. And she married this man by the name of, well his last name was Gasper. Well she –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Gasper?

DISORDA: Gasper.

SIGRIST: G-A-S-P-E-R.

DISORDA: Uh-huh. She died at child birth. Then, later on my mother's other sister Elizabeth came over here and married the same man. And they had a boy by the name of John. Well they – named him John but we always called him Jackie. And both of those children are living. Now Jackie's in Florida and Mary's in – the first baby – is in Massachusetts.

SIGRIST: That's an interesting story isn't it?

DISORDA: Mhm.

SIGRIST: This is all before you came to the United States – that this all happened?

DISORDA: No.

SIGRIST: You were already here when this all happened.

DISORDA: Yeah. Because the first one Mary came over – that was in Boston – this is why I think we went into Boston because they picked us up there at the port, you know. That's what I think. And we came then probably by train to – you know from Boston to – that's the train was running then – not many cars you know.

SIGRIST: So you went from Wales to New York City. To New York City to Boston by boat. And then train from Boston to–

DISORDA: [interposed] That's the only thing I can think of.

SIGRIST: – [inaudible] New York.

DISORDA: No, no.

SIGRIST: Or to Poultney, Vermont?

DISORDA: Poultney. Probably into Rutland [ph]. And then the trains did come through from Rutland [ph] to Poultney into Grandvall [ph] down that way.

SIGRIST: Tell me what your mother's personality was like.

DISORDA: Well she was sort of stubborn. She had – she was the boss, you know.

SIGRIST: Can you give me a story that illustrates how stubborn she was?

DISORDA: Yeah. Well when we got into New York, Ellis Island, 'course they were giving us shots, you know, for vaccination shots you know and how your arm would break out and be very sore. She would be so mad because they did that. She'd rub it off, you know. And then, 'course they put us in this big tub to bathe when we got there to Ellis Island. And everybody and their brother were in that tub and she didn't want us to go in where everybody else was bathing, you know. So she gave them a hard time there. I thought sure they'd send us back, you know. And, she was the same, with everything around, you know, through her life. What she made up her mind to do, that would be it.

SIGRIST: Strong-willed.

DISORDA: Yes. Yes. And it had to be that way, she wouldn't change. She would not change. Nope. There's a lot of other stories I could tell you too, but – (all laugh)

SIGRIST: Well is there one that comes to mind?

DISORDA: Yes my father got hurt in the quarry one time, a block came down 'cause he was in the pit.

SIGRIST: This is in Poultney?

DISORDA: Yeah, so Poultney. It came down, hit his should, went down, hit his arm, hit his thumb. So his entire arm was just about hangin', 'course in those days you know, they didn't have no rescue squad or anything. So they finally got – got him home, and they wrapped big Turkish towels around him and took him to the hospital. Well the doctors there of course wanted to cut his arm off. My mother said no. She said you're not, she says, if he's gonna, he'll die with his arm on. Well his arm got better. Yep.

SIGRIST: Good example of your mother's stubbornness working toward your advantage. In Wales, is there a story that you remember, when you were in Wales, of something that you did with your mother, or something that your mother maybe taught you how to do. Some interaction between you and your mother in your early childhood.

DISORDA: Well, I don't know. The only thing I can remember is that she used to dress us up and we'd have to walk to my grandmother's. And 'course she'd always you know give us a warning not to do this and do that. We walked a lot. Walked a lot.

SIGRIST: Whose grandmother was that? Was that–

DISORDA: [interposed] My mother's mother.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about your grandmother.

DISORDA: I remember she was kind of – I think – she's the type that liked children. You know? So we really related to her very closely. And I – I'd go into her place, 'cause they had these little stone houses you know and I remember lots of times we'd have to stay with her for some reason or other. I don't know, maybe my mother was out workin' or housework or doin' something, I don't know. But she'd take care of us once in awhile. And, 'course it was only small places, you know. And she had, few of her sons were living there. And I can remember when we had to go to bed, we had to crawl up this little ladder into the loft like. Yeah. That about–

SIGRIST: What did your grandmother look like?

DISORDA: She was very short and she, became blind later in – you know later on she was blind.

SIGRIST: Before you left Wales was she blind?

DISORDA: She might have been partially for all I know you know. It might have been coming on you see, because I know later she was. But–

SIGRIST: Do you know what her name was?

DISORDA: Um – she remarried you see. Lot of the women over there had to get remarried because a lot of the men died from this slate dust you see. And a lot of 'em remarried and she married this Jones.

SIGRIST: What was her first name?

DISORDA: I don't remember what it was. I probably got it some place on my mother's—

SIGRIST: But she was an Evans before she became a Jones, right?

DISORDA: Yeah. Mhm.

SIGRIST: I interrupted you—

DISORDA: [interposed] I think it was Margaret.

SIGRIST: Margaret.

DISORDA: I think her name was Margaret. Probably that's why my name is Margaret.

SIGRIST: Is there something you remember your grandmother teaching you as a small child?

DISORDA: No I don't think so. No.

SIGRIST: You mentioned men dying in the slate mines. Was your grandfather a miner?

DISORDA: Yeah, he must've been. I don't know anything 'bout him.

SIGRIST: He was gone before you—

DISORDA: [interposed] I think he was. Yeah. Yeah, 'cause she was remarried when we were small I believe.

SIGRIST: What about your father's parents? Did you have any—

DISORDA: I don't know much about his parents and he never mentioned them. I guess being brought up by his aunt—

SIGRIST: [interposed] Did you ever meet his parents?

DISORDA: Only his sisters. Only his sisters.

SIGRIST: Do you know if they were dead or were they just out of the picture.

DISORDA: You – you, when do you mean?

SIGRIST: He was brought up by his aunt, but—

DISORDA: I think there were – I think his mother took off and had to go work on a farm somewhere. I think that was it. But I don't remember anything about his father. I know there are – there is a story about that, but whether it's true or not I don't know. But I looked on his certificate and it says father unknown. So I don't know and nobody's – there's nobody around that I could ask now because they're all gone. You know over there, that I could ask.

SIGRIST: What was the story that you remembered about that?

DISORDA: Well, this story that was told to me by my cousin that I have over there now from one of his sisters. In, I think it's Critkus [ph] the little town next to where he was, they were building this big hotel. I think it's called St. George Hotel – I don't know. And they said that his father worked on that and fell off from that building and was killed. Now whether that's a true

story or it was a story in order to cover up father unknown business I don't know. But this – these are things I'd love to find out you know. 'Course in those days they hid all this stuff. Today they wouldn't you know. They don't think anything of it today. So.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember of food in Wales as a child. What do you remember eating?

DISORDA: Well it would be the same thing probably this – we try to make here sometimes. It's mostly beef you know, and lamb that they would cook big dinners you know like on Sunday. And of course all through the day if the men came home from the quarries earlier they'd have like tea and probably fresh bread – that's – they always made fresh bread over there. And that's one thing I can remember my grandmother doing too is her fresh bread. And–

SIGRIST: Can you describe how your grandmother made the bread?

DISORDA: Well I suppose they didn't have stoves like they have today you see there were ovens in the fireplaces like – you see. You know the fireplaces had like little ovens on.

SIGRIST: And the fireplace would be in the kitchen.

DISORDA: Yeah. In the wall like you know. And they'd have their tea when they came home from work probably 'round three thirty or four. And probably the fresh bread or maybe some cakes that they had made you know a little breads that they'd make. Or like little fruitcakes or whatever. And then later on they'd have their dinner. But the men'd come home and the quarry would be cold and damp and [not understood] have a little something to – to keep 'em going 'till supper time I suppose.

SIGRIST: What about for special occasions? Was there a certain food that was prepared for a special holiday or a special event?

DISORDA: Yeah I would imagine it was the plum puddings and they'd make you know a rice puddings. Lot of puddings and lot of pies. They make a lot of pies. Pastry you know, over there.

SIGRIST: Did your mother work outside of the house to support the family?

DISORDA: At that time I don't know. Unless she went once in awhile to help somebody with housework you know. I don't quite remember.

SIGRIST: As a small child was there a chore that you were expected to help out with in the house.

DISORDA: No, not that I know of, no. 'Cause see we were a lot younger than, you know.

SIGRIST: Yeah you were just a little child.

DISORDA: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What about – you said you had brothers and sisters, yes?

DISORDA: I have one sister, but she just died a few years ago.

SIGRIST: One sister. Was she – was she born at that time?

DISORDA: Yeah, she was.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

DISORDA: Winifred.

SIGRIST: And is there a story that you remember as children of something that you and your sister did together.

DISORDA: Yeah well we always had to be together and walk over to my grandmother's together. And she used to be more of the pet of the family than I was. And that kinda didn't sit very good with me. (laughs) I don't know why, probably 'cause she was from that side of the family and I was more like the other side of the family, you know my father's side of the family.

SIGRIST: Was she older or younger?

DISORDA: Younger. She was only three when she came over.

SIGRIST: So there were just the two kids then, you and your sister. Do you remember games that you played as a young child?

DISORDA: Over there?

SIGRIST: Yeah over there.

DISORDA: No, not really. No. No I don't think so.

SIGRIST: Is there a memory of celebrating perhaps Christmas in Wales prior to coming to America?

DISORDA: N- I don't think - I can't remember that. I know we used to have to go to church for a pieces that we'd say or sing you know. The kids have to always sing in church over there. Those kind of little things that's all.

SIGRIST: What language did you speak?

DISORDA: Oh Welsh.

SIGRIST: You spoke Welsh.

DISORDA: Oh definitely.

SIGRIST: And what religion were you?

DISORDA: Welsh Presbyterian.

SIGRIST: Was there some way that you practiced your religion at home?

DISORDA: No, well when we went to Sunday school, even when we came over here they still had Welsh churches you know, it'd be a lot of the older Welsh people that were on the board or you know the church members or deacons whatever you want to call them. They used to make us learn Welsh and study in Welsh and you know the Bible and the music, the hymns and whatever.

SIGRIST: Do you remember perhaps a prayer in Welsh that you could say for us on tape?

DISORDA: No, not th- not that I can remember right now.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about school. How many years had you gone to school prior to coming here?

DISORDA: Well I don't know what they call it nursery school or what they called it over there. The kids, even my sister went to school and she was only three, so you were probably a little younger at that time.

SIGRIST: Do you remember something specific about going to school?

DISORDA: Yeah I can remember we had to learn to sew and all that stuff. Color you know. Yeah, you had to do that.

SIGRIST: Was the school somewhere near the house?

DISORDA: Yeah it wasn't too far from our place. We'd walk down this little grade [ph] and pass the church and the school was [inaudible].

SIGRIST: Is there a dress or a piece of clothing that you remember from this period?

DISORDA: No, but I can remember how we were dressed. You know little short dresses and of course your knee socks and the big bows in your hair. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of clothing your mother wore at that time?

DISORDA: Well I suppose these long dresses like you know some of those pictures there at that time. The long dresses I guess and the white blouses you know.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me how people did laundry in Wales?

DISORDA: Oh they had to scrub the clothes naturally in tubs you know. You know with scrub board. Now like they had big barrels outside where you have to catch water. We did that over here too when we first came 'cause we're in the rural areas you see. And this is – they'd get the rain water in the tubs – in the big barrels and that's what you washed your clothes in, you took water out of that you see.

SIGRIST: Hm, it's interesting.

DISORDA: Of course they always – they scrubbed the outside of their sidewalks if there was [not understood] on my sidewalks they'd have fifteen [not understood] because they'd be on their hands and knees scrubbing those sidewalks. Yeah. I've seen them do that too. Even the later years they were doing it. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Now your father served during World War I. Did he come back to the family when he was finished?

DISORDA: Oh yes because I remember he brought me a teddy bear from someplace. And when I went to school there was a wall like and I put the teddy bear down and went somewhere and came back and it was gone.

SIGRIST: Was life different in the house after your father came back?

DISORDA: Well I don't quite remember what he – what that was there at that time or where he went or what he did. I don't know. It don't seem to me like he worked in the quarries over there but maybe he did. I think he did, yes. 'Cause I remember he had a cat. And the cat would always go to meet him when it was time for him to come home to work – from work. So it must've been – he must've been working in the quarries.

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SIGRIST: Do you remember what the cat's name was?

DISORDA: No I don't. I don't like cat.

SIGRIST: Was that the only pet that you had or did you have—

DISORDA: Over there, yes.

SIGRIST: Did you have a garden or anything like that? That you remember?

DISORDA: I don't know if we had a little garden out there or not. I don't remember. It wasn't – there's not too much room there you know.

SIGRIST: Was there a backyard to the house?

DISORDA: Probably a little one. Not even a quarter size of this maybe.

SIGRIST: Was there a bathroom in the house?

DISORDA: I don't know there had a bathroom or they – they – they used the pots of what they did. I think they did that at my grandmother's. So we must've done it at our house too, because I don't – there was no – I know there were no bathrooms I don't think. But I don't remember going. Probably on the pots maybe. I don't know. They did [not understood] afterward, I don't know. (all laugh)

SIGRIST: Tell me who wanted to come to America.

DISORDA: I think my father. Or maybe my mother too because she had a sister here you see.

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SIGRIST: What did you know about America as a little girl in Wales?

DISORDA: Nothing.

SIGRIST: You had no conception of what this all meant.

DISORDA: No, no, no, no, no.

SIGRIST: Did your father come first?

DISORDA: I think so. Because he wasn't with us when we came. And I'm sure he did, but how far or how long before we did I don't know. These are things I'd like to find out but I can't.

SIGRIST: Did your father come here to Poultney when he came?

DISORDA: I think he went somewhere else begin with. Like Utica, Rome, or some of those places for a short period of time. But – evidently he wanted to get back here with people that – relatives and things that you know my mother had around here. He didn't [ph] have relatives around here but my mother did.

SIGRIST: Do you know what he did when he got here before you came?

DISORDA: Yes I suppose he had to find us a place to live and also he was working in the quarries like always.

SIGRIST: He got jobs in the quarries.

DISORDA: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How long had he been here before you came over?

DISORDA: This is what I'd like to know –

SIGRIST: [interposed] You're not exactly sure.

DISORDA: –I really am not sure. You see. They never talked about that, you know, those things.

SIGRIST: Tell me about what you remember if anything about getting ready to leave Wales.

DISORDA: Well I can remember being down by the church and this woman lived by the church and she gave us a pair – she had knitted some mittens for us. You know, as a present, going away present. And I know that I lost one of mine of course. Didn't know whatever happened to it. And I felt bad about that. But – that's – but I don't remember saying goodbye to anybody or anything like that.

SIGRIST: Do you – do you know anything about the process of getting papers and passports and that sort of thing.

DISORDA: No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being photographed for a passport?

DISORDA: No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you took with you? What did your mother pack–

DISORDA: Trunk, trunks probably. Trunks. But what she had in there I don't know.

SIGRIST: And do you know what month it was that you left? What time of the year was it?

DISORDA: No I don't. No this is what I don't know. Nope. The only thing I can pick up or think of is that we must have landed here somewhere – March, April – somewhere around March and April in the 1920s. I think.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

DISORDA: I'm not sure.

SIGRIST: You think that you went to Liverpool to get the ship.

DISORDA: Yes, I do.

SIGRIST: Is there–

DISORDA: 'Cause that's the closest. We were – you know, we weren't too far from Liverpool.

SIGRIST: Do you have any memory of the trip to Liverpool?

DISORDA: No, I can just remember something 'bout walking, and it seems like there was new tar [can't understand] or something and you know, we tried to, kids, you know, tried to walk through the tar [can't understand] you know. Get all messed up. I can remember smelling that and seeing it, but where it was, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Much to your mother's horror probably.

DISORDA: Yes. (all laugh)

SIGRIST: Well, let me see, do you remember the name of the ship?

DISORDA: No, these are what are things that I want to find out.

SIGRIST: [interposed] –want to find out. What do you remember about being on the ship.

DISORDA: I can remember us playing, swinging on like swings. And there was like latticework underneath us you know you could see down, and I think there were some boys down there with long sticks or something that would stick ‘em up and pinch us you know, when we were sitting on the seat there. I can remember that. And my mother, you know, I told my mother and ‘course she’d get mad and she’d go down after them. Whoever was doin’ that– (laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you know where you stayed on the ship?

DISORDA: No I don’t remember too much about that.

SIGRIST: What about eating on the ship?

DISORDA: Don’t remember that either.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how long the ship voyage was?

DISORDA: I think, we were getting kind of tired of it but I don’t know.

SIGRIST: Did anyone get sick in your family?

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DISORDA: Yeah I can remember this woman that was with us coming over. My mother said to her – they were, how I know this, is because when they got together over here they'd say something once in awhile if we were around. She got sick and my mother says Oh never mind she says I'll take care of you she says. First thing you know my mother was sick. (laughs) It was just vica versa [sic.] then. So they got a big kick out of that I guess.

END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1

BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE 1

SIGRIST: Do you remember there being a storm on the boat–

DISORDA: [interposed] No.

SIGRIST: –while it was coming over?

DISORDA: No, no, I don't.

SIGRIST: Do you have any other recollections of perhaps being on deck or something that might have happened while you were on the ship?

DISORDA: No, I don't.

SIGRIST: Do you know if you had a toy or something with you. You lost your teddy bear–

DISORDA: [interposed] Yeah, lost the teddy bear. (all laugh) Didn't have much of anything I guess in those days. No, was lucky to get that I guess.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when the boat came into New York harbor?

DISORDA: Well no, I – I don't think so. All I can remember is being around there with a whole lot of people around, you know. And we had to get undressed and put this blanket around us and kids being kids couldn't keep the blanket on. This is to get in that stupid tub.

SIGRIST: This is at Ellis Island?

DISORDA: Yes. (laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you know how long you were at Ellis Island?

DISORDA: Well there – it must have been quite a while because I know we had to answer a lot of questions or my mother did. And then they'd ask the kids questions. There was one officer there, (laughs) I can remember this. He wanted to know what my name was. And my mother always called me "Maggie" [ph] and I hated that name – I wasn't gonna tell him what my name was. We almost got sent back for that you know. Wouldn't tell him what my name was. (laughs) I would not tell his that it was Maggie [ph]. My mother called me Maggie 'course my name is Margaret. That's what he was trying to make me say you know and I wouldn't say it. Isn't that awful?

SIGRIST: What about – you know you have a younger sister–

DISORDA: [interposed] Yeah.

SIGRIST: – with you. What recollections do you have either on the ship or at Ellis Island of having this younger child with you. If any.

DISORDA: Well no – we always had to more or less stay together – stick together – and–

SIGRIST: ‘Cause your mother’s got two young kids with her.

DISORDA: [interposed] to watch. Well we had to sit there and do nothing. We didn’t move. That’s how she took care of us.

SIGRIST: You mentioned that another woman came with you.

DISORDA: [interposed] Yes.

SIGRIST: Was this woman from the same town in Wales?

DISORDA: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember her name was?

DISORDA: I don’t know what her name was. I know for her first name is Elizabeth, and then of course – I don’t know – I know her married name is Jones. I thought she got married before she came over but she didn’t. She got married when she got over her ‘cause that’s what her daughter told me.

SIGRIST: I see. And so when she was – when she married she became Elizabeth Jones

DISORDA: Jones. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you have any other recollections of Ellis Island and being on the island?

DISORDA: No, I didn't. I don't.

SIGRIST: Were you ever fed on the island?

DISORDA: I don't remember that either.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what happened with your luggage? Did you have it with you or—

DISORDA: I don't know. I don't know.

SIGRIST: Now from Ellis Island where did you go?

DISORDA: Well I thought we got back on the ship and went to Boston. That's all I can remember.

SIGRIST: Why does that stick out in your mind?

DISORDA: Because I can remember saying to my mother I don't want to get back on that ship again. And somebody said, Well, it isn't gonna be very long this time. And then, I run onto something that said Port of Entry Boston, but I still know I was in Ellis Island. So, what the connection was I don't know. But as they say we had our — I can remember — there's a picture. I don't have it right now. It's amongst my — some of my sister's things. Having — my sister and I's picture taken with my mother's sister. And she was pregnant at that time. So, she was in the middle and we were one on each side of her. So it had to be that we went into Boston and she — they picked us up there. Because it wasn't long afterwards — or it couldn't have been — because she was pregnant then you know. She died of course in child birth.

SIGRIST: That's right, that's right, that's a way of timing—

DISORDA: [interposed] Yeah.

SIGRIST: —timing that photograph.

DISORDA: [interposed] That's the only thing I can put together. See if her husband was still livin' I could find out. But he's dead too. Everybody's dead.

SIGRIST: Well, 'course there'd be a death certificate for the woman and you could find — if you had the death date of the woman you knew that you would have been there just prior to that.

DISORDA: Yeah. Well it was. Sure. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you think that you stayed in Boston for an amount of time?

DISORDA: I don't know. I don't know. They must have packed us on the train and send us on — I don't know.

SIGRIST: But you father didn't he wasn't—

DISORDA: [interposed] He wasn't with us. No.

SIGRIST: He wasn't at Ellis or in New York.

DISORDA: No. No.

SIGRIST: Was anyone in New York that you knew that met you or—

DISORDA: No.

SIGRIST: No nothing.

DISORDA: No.

SIGRIST: Where did you go from Boston? You went on a train and where did you?

DISORDA: Evidently came to Rutland [ph]. You know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember that train ride at all?

DISORDA: No, no.

SIGRIST: Do you know – did your mother ever –

DISORDA: [interposed] That's where I got lost.

SIGRIST: –relate to you how she felt about this whole process of coming to America? Did she want to come?

DISORDA: She probably did. I don't know. 'Course everybody thought it was gonna be great over here you know. But it was pretty rough. Not like it is today.

SIGRIST: Do you remember as a child how you felt about leaving your home and coming to America?

DISORDA: Well I don't think I minded it. You know, kids it's experience it – something exciting you know porbably.

SIGRIST: Something new to do.

DISORDA: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well tell me what happened what happened when you got to – to Rutland [ph]. Where did you hook up with your father again?

DISORDA: I don't know. I really don't know.

SIGRIST: Where are you when you do remember?

DISORDA: Well on South Poultney [ph]. See we lived – where we – the first place we lived in. This is – we're in Poultney now – it's South Poultney. I don't know if you came through South Poultney today or not. Did you come down Route 30?

SIGRIST: No we came through Wells on Route 30.

DISORDA: Around the lake you came?

SIGRIST: We came around the lake.

DISORDA: Oh yeah. Well if went – if you didn't come around the lake – kept straight through you'd a come through South Poultney. Well anyways. It's up on 31. 31. You came in Poultney through Furnace Street [ph] that way and you – at the corner there is 31 goes that way and you came this way. Off in 3.

SIGRIST: But you remember being in an apartment?

DISORDA: No it was a house. It was a double house. And it's – the house is still up. And I don't think it's ever been painted. And if you went by there you

could notice it. And it was – you know two parts, like a duplex I would say yes. And–

SIGRIST: And what was the inside? Can you just walk me through the house on the inside?

DISORDA: Yeah well, there was a little brook next to it. Was mostly near the road you know. As you went through I guess – Well it was upstairs and downstairs. You know it wasn't side by side, it's upstairs and downstairs. And first house – the room was a big room. And – and I think the kitchen and everything was there and maybe there was a living room to this. And then of course you go out back and then you always had a shed you know. Out there. And you know you wash clothes and things there. And then of course there was bedrooms of course upstairs.

SIGRIST: Did the house have electricity?

DISORDA: Oh no.

SIGRIST: How did you light the house?

DISORDA: Lamps. I still got some of the lamps. Yeah. And then – we lived there – there was the school not too far from there. 'Cross the road probably and I was late everyday.

SIGRIST: How long did you live in the house?

DISORDA: [interposed] 'Course I suppose we had to learn English too you know. When we were in school.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of that experience of learning English?

DISORDA: It didn't seem like it was that bad really. You know. We had a nice teacher.

SIGRIST: What do you – you say it was a nice teacher. Why does that teacher stick out in your mind?

DISORDA: Because she was more like a motherly teacher you know and she was very good to you – you know very patient and you know and would help and she wouldn't get mad at you if you didn't know something. She'd just be nice about you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember her name?

DISORDA: Yes. She just died recently too. And my son even had her when he went to school.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

DISORDA: Um (sighs). Jeepers. She lived right across from my sister too. (pause) Hughes. Ida. Ida Hughes [ph].

SIGRIST: Ida Hughes.

DISORDA: Mhm. Ida Hughes. Her husband I think was the First World War from here probably, not from across. He was in the First World War too.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the school building for me?

DISORDA: Yeah this is up – way up in South Poultney now where the first school we ever went to over here. It was a big – a two room school. A few grades in

one room and then the other higher grades in the other room. And of course the teachers had to come up by horse and buggy up there. You know through the winter too it was hard and one of the boys – some of the boys in that area would come and start the stoves and [not understood] warm.

SIGRIST: Is that how the school was heated?

DISORDA: Yeah with stoves. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any interesting stories about being in school. Maybe something that happened one day when you were in school during this early period up here?

DISORDA: There – well no I can (pause) – No – well – A lot of things. Different little things that happened. We'd put our boots out in the hall you know out in a row. (laughs) I had a brand new pair of boots and I thought some of the other kids switched the boots you know. While we weren't around And we used to get in more trouble over that. I suppose my boots were supposed to look new all the time. (laughs)

SIGRIST: Were there other immigrant children at this school?

DISORDA: I think most of them were born here. But they did originate from Wales.

SIGRIST: Was this mostly a Welsh community that you were living in?

DISORDA: [interposed] Yeah definitely. This whole area was. This whole area here was. All Welsh people at one time.

SIGRIST: Was it a combination of Welsh from Wales and Welsh decent who had been born here or was it mostly people who had come from Wales?

DISORDA: Well a lot of 'em – I don't think too many of those children came from Wales. Their parents did but not the children. Until later then there was one other family that I remember did come over. You know after we did. But then of course there were Polish people around here too 'cause the Polish people you know. But they had their own little section.

SIGRIST: Did the Welsh people associate with the Poles?

DISORDA: They didn't want you to. Really didn't want you to. But 'course my mother's relatives that were here ran a store up there. And 'course the Polish people would come down and you know trade there. And that's about it. And of course, they worked in the quarries just same as the Welsh I think.

SIGRIST: So that was gonna be my next question. Did the Poles also work in the –

DISORDA: [interposed] Yeah and some of them had farms too.

SIGRIST: Can you talk to me a little bit about the slate quarries and – and what the men were actually doing? How was the slate mine?

DISORDA: Well it all depends on – there were different sections of it. And all like some men would be working in the pit. You know digging the slate up – not the slate but the – the – the – blocks I think you would call them – blocks out. And then they'd hitch 'em onto this chain and this carriage up above like in the engine house would role 'em up see. And then they put 'em up on the yard. And then it would be split. And then you'd get 'em split certain ways then they'd you know cut 'em in shapes for slate. And

different sizes and then they had a machine that would punch holes in 'em. You know for like to put nails in. And they'd be different sizes whatever sizes you know somebody would want. And there were different color slates around here too. Now the Grandville [ph] area has the red slate. And we had like the green slate. The black slate is in Pennsylvania. And we had the green and the gray—

SIGRIST: [interposed] Which is where another large Welsh population is.

DISORDA: Yes right.

SIGRIST: Well now, was, were the slate quarries here used exclusively for slate singles or was it mined for different purposes?

DISORDA: Well, at first I think it was more or less for the roofs you know. For roofs. And then of course they do have them for walks. And probably some floors.

SIGRIST: And they would be cut differently than those.

DISORDA: Different yes. Mhm.

SIGRIST: Now your father's working in the mines.

DISORDA: He was in the pit, quarry pit. Yeah.

SIGRIST: You told me the story of the piece of rock hitting his arm. Are there any other stories that you remember about your father working in the quarries? Or stories that he might have told.

DISORDA: Well a lot of the men got hurt at that time.

SIGRIST: Is this a dangerous job?

DISORDA: Yeah it is.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things could happen?

DISORDA: Well as I say, you know things could fall onto you if you're down in the pit you know. And – and that was the most probably important thing. Or if you're halfway up you might slide down or something. And things like that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember an occasion where something did happen in the mines?

DISORDA: Well yeah. A lot of times men would get hurt. Someone got killed. I remember one of my friend's father got hit in the head and he wasn't too good after that I guess. But uh. Then I think another man got hurt same time as my father did that one time. But he wasn't – I think he lost a leg. That was it. I know one of them did anyway. Probably some of the big blocks went down on his leg or something.

SIGRIST: Did the slate quarry owners offer any kind of insurance or compensation to their workers?

DISORDA: No I don't think so. I think you had to have your own insurance. If you were lucky. But the insurances were so you know terribly exp – everything was expensive because you didn't make much money. Let's put it that way. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know how much your father made working in the mines?

DISORDA: No I don't. Wasn't very much. 'Course if it was raining you didn't – you lost the day and you didn't get paid for it you know like they do today. 'Course lot of days in the winter you couldn't work either. You know snow and ice and whatever. So you didn't get much money in those days.

SIGRIST: Did your mother work outside of the house.

DISORDA: She worked but I can't remember when she started. Whether we were the first house that we lived in way up when we first came here how long she – it was quite a while I guess before she went to work. But see down here – downtown here – they had this big Manhattan Shirt Factory. And that's where a lot of the women worked – in the shirt factory at that time. And they – way up in South Poultney they used to send a truck after the women. And it was more like a platform truck but they had benches on each side of it you know for 'em to sit. And it was 'course wide open, but at least it was a ride. You weren't walking. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did the Polish women as well as the Welsh women work in the factories like the Polish men and the Welsh men working together in the mines.

DISORDA: Uh, all I can remember is mostly all the Welsh women. I don't know what the Polish women were doing. Probably working on the farms. Yeah most of 'em I think worked on the farms. Yeah, you know until later years you know. Because they were – they really couldn't speak English as well as we did – you know the Polish people. Of course English and Welsh you know you learn that anyways. You see they teach English in the Welsh schools.

SIGRIST: Oh so you were—

DISORDA: We knew something – yes. My mother and father you know – you don't have trouble speaking English.

SIGRIST: Do you remember them trying to – to improve their English skills at all when they were here.

DISORDA: No they just talked right along. But amongst themselves they always spoke Welsh you know. And 'course they'd speak Welsh to us of course we'd going to schools we'd answer 'em back in English. And then after awhile you kind of forget your Welsh and you try to talk Welsh and you weren't saying it right they kind of laugh at you so then we forgot about trying. (all laugh) My father did anyway.

SIGRIST: Did you parents ever want to go back to Wales to live?

DISORDA: My mother always got – once in awhile she'd get discouraged or disgusted with somebody and she'd like to go back to live. But this is – my father never said that. He probably didn't – lost all connections anyway so he was more isolated than she was with her family. He was more isolated from his family. They were – he didn't know too much about them I guess. I don't know why.

SIGRIST: Did your father develop any kind of health problems from his job?

DISORDA: Well yes later years he – 'course being in the service too didn't help. You know in the First World War a lot of them were gassed and all that stuff. Well yes – I think his lung his lungs are getting bad. Yeah. And he finally developed I think a carcenoma [ph]. That he had a tumor like of the intestines. He – he suffered a long time with that. He had pain in his side and he went to doctor after doctor. Oh there's nothing wrong with him, there's nothing wrong with him, there's nothing there. The poor man was

suffering and there's nothing wrong with him. 'Till after he died then they knew what was wrong with him. Disgusting.

SIGRIST: Your mother – you said your mother did work in the Manhattan Shirt Factory.

DISORDA: Yes, for years.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what her job was at the Manhattan Shirt Factory?

DISORDA: She – she was what they call examiners. You know they stood up all day and every thread you know or if there's something wrong with it they'd have to send it back. To have it corrected. Or if there are threads they'd have to snip those off and if there was something wrong like maybe sewed wrong or something. Everything had to be perfect on those shirts you know.

SIGRIST: How did your mother feel about having to work in the factory?

DISORDA: I don't think she minded it too much. Only trouble is – she – I don't know what later on in years whether they didn't have that truck running or not but she had to walk to work a lot of times. We moved from way up South Poultney halfway down.

SIGRIST: How long did you live in the first house?

DISORDA: Oh gee I don't know. Let's see five, six seven – probably maybe five years.

SIGRIST: Oh well that's quite a long time actually.

DISORDA: And then we moved to the second place and we went to Little Red Schoolhouse – it was halfway down. Well from there she had to walk all the way to Poultney – even in the winter time. And I can remember she used to have to wear creepers a lot of times ‘cause it’d be icy on that hill you see. And cold and the poor thing walked all the way to work and back. I don’t know how she ever did it but she did.

SIGRIST: What did your parents do for entertainment?

DISORDA: They didn’t do much in those days. You couldn’t go very far. No they didn’t. We used to go to church a lot ‘course. And we had little plays and things you know for church. It was [not understood]. Some of the men teach us these plays and things. And they were pretty good plays too lots of times.

SIGRIST: Were they performed in English or in Welsh?

DISORDA: English I think.

SIGRIST: Were there active Welsh organizations up here? Like was the St. David’s society –

DISORDA: [interposed] Well we didn’t have – I think they used to years ago have one and I think it fizzed out. Yes, the ladies, I think the ladies had some kind of society.

SIGRIST: I’m just wondering –

DISORDA: [interposed] I don’t know if they called them [not understood]. I don’t know what they called them.

SIGRIST: Or maybe the church did this. Was there some institution that offered social events to the Welsh people up here. Either a Welsh society or a church might sponsor a dance –

DISORDA: No they did – no, oh no they didn't dance much. All I can remember is like church suppers or something like. That's about it that they'd have. 'Course you couldn't get around you know. You didn't have no cars or anything. Of course we didn't have horses – that some once in awhile some of 'em would have a horse and buggy and we'd get a ride on that. To come to Poultney my mother did – did her shopping and then they'd come back home. And we'd stay with somebody while she was gone.

SIGRIST: Did your parents have anymore children once you settled here?

DISORDA: No, no.

SIGRIST: So just the two girls.

DISORDA: Yep.

SIGRIST: Just the two girls. Did you go through high school in Poultney?

DISORDA: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

DISORDA: I went to TCA over here. It's a college now. Troy Conference Academy it was.

SIGRIST: Troy Conference Academy.

DISORDA: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Did your parents ever attend any kind of school or night classes or anything here in this country?

DISORDA: No, no, no, no.

SIGRIST: What was the first paying job that you got?

DISORDA: Well as kids we used to probably take care of somebody's kid or something. Or go out and clean somebody's houses out probably before – if you got paid you were lucky. Yah, they expect you to do things for nothing. We used to go help an old woman get her – she lived in the house that we lived in the second time before we got it – help her get wood and things and she'd make this candy – fudge candy or some kind. Brown sugar candy I guess that was it. And poor old lady, we'd find a piece of string or something and that's how we got paid. Piece of candy.

SIGRIST: Was she Welsh?

DISORDA: I think she was, I'm not sure.

SIGRIST: Um, I should have asked you this when we were talking about your mother in your factory? Was the factory unionized – was your mother a member of the union where she worked?

DISORDA: No they didn't have union in them – Well they probably have unions but that shop wasn't.

SIGRIST: What about the slate quarry?

DISORDA: I think the slate quarries did. I'm not sure because I can remember some of them going and I can remember being with a bunch of – well on the corner my uncle's store up there in South Poultney, 'cause the quarries were up above his store there – had us all on the corner we're hollering scabs at the ones that were going to work. (laughs) It reminds me of Telescope down here they're on strike right now you know.

SIGRIST: Is that a factory?

DISORDA: Where they make the Telescope – the furniture – furniture place.

SIGRIST: Oh I see.

DISORDA: Not house furniture. It was the furniture for outside.

SIGRIST: I see.

DISORDA: That's what they're making down there.

SIGRIST: When was the first time you went back to Wales?

DISORDA: I went back with my – my mother went by herself. She scrimped and staved and went over 'cause she wanted to see her mother.

SIGRIST: How long was that before she went? From 1920 when you arrived what year did she go?

DISORDA: Gee I don't remember. And I went with her – what was it in 194 – well it was after the war – 'bout '47 – '48 somewhere in there. I went back with her. And why she want to go was because she wanted to see her mother

cause I guess her mother was getting bad and she wanted to see her before she died but. We got everything all ready to go and she got word her mother died. But we went just the same. And that was quite an ordeal to go through you know.

SIGRIST: How did you feel when you went back to the town that you had been a child in? How did you feel emotionally?

DISORDA: Well I liked to look around and I – and I could you know visualize a lot of the place came back to me and things like that. But I didn't – in fact I really didn't want to go that was the whole thing you see. I really didn't want to go but I just went because she want me to go. So I wasn't too interested. But we stayed over there for what two three months. You know it was quite awhile.

SIGRIST: [interposed] How did your mother react to being over there?

DISORDA: Well she felt terrible 'course when she first got there you know. But we did – see we went into London which we shouldn't – and took the train from London and boy that was something because we didn't get the express train it was a local and we stopped every station and we had these darn stinkin' trunks. This how stubborn she was – she wouldn't change and get something easier you know she had to do things the hard way. Like me, I'd fly or I'd get a bigger ship or something but no not her. She had to do things the old fashioned way and make it so hard. And of course at that time those poor people didn't have much to eat over there 'cause it was right after the war you see. They didn't have nothing, absolutely nothing. So she tried to bring sugar to – over to them in a tin and she had it sealed with like tape or something 'course naturally so the covers wouldn't come off. Well it took us so long to go through customs there because the way she did things you know. She made it look terribly hard and these people

didn't believe her. She was just that stubborn she was gonna stick with it you know. Oh God. We sat there, three years she would have stayed there. Because they kept shaking those stupid cans and I said oh Mother let 'em have the damn thing and let's get out of here. Oh no, no way.

SIGRIST: When you look back on your life now –

DISORDA: [interposed] Oh God.

SIGRIST: –what do you think is inherently Welsh about you?

DISORDA: Well, you – you know you always try to forget these things. In fact, you know, people came over didn't really want anybody to know they were immigrants you know so they try to hide a lot of things you see. They didn't want anybody to know you know. You didn't broadcast it you know. But – we went to church we had a – all 'pends on who you had there for Sunday school teacher you know. You had to do the Welsh. But–

SIGRIST: But now, is there some aspect of your personality that you think of as being very Welsh? Or is there something that you enjoy doing that you feel is part of your Welsh heritage?

DISORDA: Well yes I'm getting back into it now. You know for awhile I didn't pay any attention. You know how it is. And now we're getting back into it through the St. David's society and being that I had been brought up – went back over there and met some of my relatives which I – on my father's side especially and they're they ones I wanted to – to meet you see. Because I didn't know anything about them. Just my – on my mother's side you see.

SIGRIST: That was a dark corner in your history–

DISORDA: Yes. So this is what I – I wanted to – to find out. So, a few years ago Janice and I went over. We wanted to go–

SIGRIST: [interposed] For the sake of the tape I want to say that Janice is the – is a member of the St. David's Society. Jan Edwards is her name.

DISORDA: Yeah, she was a Jones. Well anyhow we got the bright idea to go over there. Well okay so we got goin' and I said–

SIGRIST: [interposed] We have two minutes left.

DISORDA: –I said I don't know how I'm going get a hold of these people because there's nobody left over there to ask on my father's side see. So what do you suppose happened? I get this letter. I had met my – when I went over with my mother I had met two of my father's sisters but then after that I lost track of them right? I get this letter when we were wondering where to go and who to contact from this cousin of mine. He says my mother just died and we went going through her things and I found this letter where you had written and a picture of your son – you know after I came back I had a son. And he says I took a chance to write to see if you were still around and still in the same place and somethin'. So right there we got our in – right there. He took us everywhere, introduced me to all my relatives over there on that side you see. And this was just great how that turned out. Wasn't that funny?

SIGRIST: Great.

DISORDA: Isn't it?

EI-566/DISORDA

SIGRIST: We need to end right now. We are just about out of time. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Margaret Disorda on Monday, November 14, 1994 in Poultney, Vermont. Thank you very much.

DISORDA: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW