

EI-607

ROSE KELLY LAUGHLIN

BIRTH DATE: OCTOBER 20, 1903

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 30, 1995

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 9/1998

IRELAND, 1925

AGE 21

PASSAGE ON THE COLUMBIA

LEVINE: Today is April 30, 1995, and I have the pleasure of being here in the Ellis Island studio with Rose Kelly Laughlin who came from Northern Ireland in 1925 when she was twenty-one years old. Well, I'm delighted that you were able to come and be interviewed.

LAUGHLIN: Thank you.

LEVINE: I'm sure you'll have lots of colorful stories, so I'm looking forward to this.

LAUGHLIN: Thank you.

LEVINE: Tell me, to start with, your birth date.

LAUGHLIN: My birth date is October, October 20, 1903.

LEVINE: And that makes you ninety-one as of today.

LAUGHLIN: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: And, uh, where in Ireland exactly were you born?

LAUGHLIN: In Northern Ireland, in the county Londonderry.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how about, was it, was it in a town, or a village, or . . .

LAUGHLIN: No, in the country.

LEVINE: In the country.

LAUGHLIN: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you live on a farm, or . . .

LAUGHLIN: Yes, we had a farm.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

LAUGHLIN: My father's name was John Kelly.

LEVINE: And your mother?

LAUGHLIN: My mother was Mary Atkinson.

LEVINE: And, uh, you, did you have sisters and brothers?

LAUGHLIN: Yes. There was eight in the family. I had three brothers and five, four sisters, five sisters altogether, including myself.

LEVINE: Can you recall the birth order starting with the oldest and going down the line?

LAUGHLIN: Well, I couldn't tell you their birthdays, of course.

LEVINE: No, no, just the names.

LAUGHLIN: Oh, the names. Well, my oldest brother was Tommy, Annie, Susan, Mary, Rose, Bridget, John, Paul. That's all.

LEVINE: Were you particularly close to, um, one or more of your brothers or sisters?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, yes, we were all very close. All of us was very close. Can I elaborate on that?

LEVINE: Sure.

LAUGHLIN: We were all very close and we were very happy. There was a lot of, there were three singers in the family, you know, singing at parties and that kind of thing, and we loved to dance, and we had a cousin that used to come down, well, at least sometimes, twice a week, and he was a great violin player, so we used to love to dance. You

know, we'd come in from the fields, they would, I never really worked in the fields, but, uh, the rest of the family did. I did embroidery. That's what I did.

LEVINE: Did you have, did you have grandparents who were around at that time?

LAUGHLIN: No. I just remember my father's mother, uh, I don't think I knew her for more than but one year, but then she passed away. But I can still see her, how she looked.

LEVINE: How did she look?

LAUGHLIN: She was very handsome, a tall lady, and she had the most gorgeous brown hair, and that was our pastime, when we would go there, say, "Grandma, let down your hair." And she could sit on it. And it was so beautiful. And then we youngsters would fuss, especially me, myself, we would fuss with that hair, oh, it was so beautiful.

LEVINE: How did she wear it?

LAUGHLIN: Uh, she wore it with, curled around the back, you know, put it up and curled it around the back, and then she'll stick a comb in it down here. (they laugh) I remember that so well.

LEVINE: And do you remember any other experiences with that grandmother?

LAUGHLIN: With that grandmother, yes, I do. My mother, they'd whitewash the houses over there. You know what that means? With lime, you know, instead of . . .

LEVINE: Why don't you describe it in detail.

LAUGHLIN: Instead of painting, you know, they whitewashed the houses. So I was the youngest, and this big pail of whitewash was all mixed up. And I went over, there was an old container in it, and I started splashing it, and splashed it right onto my eyes. My grandmother grabbed me up, took me onto the couch, put me down, and licked it out of my eyes. That I could never forget. She licked it all out. Well, that was an experience I never forgot.

But, however, then, uh, my mother used to, can I tell this, too? My mother (she laughs) used to bring her home, and she had, was on a pension, and my mother used to bring her home a little bit of liquor, and just an egging, an egging bottle, like. I don't know what you'd call that, a half a pint there or something. And my mother would bring her home this little bit of liquor. And I made two dolls, one for my little sister and one for

myself. (she laughs) So we put them in Grandma's bed.

And, of course, we thought we'd make them sleep, we'd give them a little bit of Grandma's medicine. So that's what we did. (she laughs) She never said anything.

She started laughing. (they laugh) So, so that's, them's the things I do remember, you know? And then Aunt Nancy, when she got sick, my, her daughter, Aunt Nancy, took her, then, when she got older, because we had such a houseful of kids, and she took her and that's where she died.

LEVINE: Where did she die?

LAUGHLIN: She died in my aunt, her daughter's house, her daughter's, my aunt.

LEVINE: Before that, did she live with you in our house?

LAUGHLIN: Yes, she lived with my mother. And her, her son, my father. My father was her son.

LEVINE: I see.

LAUGHLIN: So what, my father died young. He died when he was fifty-two years old with heart disease. He was a very tall, handsome man, and reddish hair. I'm the only one that took the light hair after him. And, uh, I think

I was the favorite brat in the house. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Why do you think you were the favorite?

LAUGHLIN: Well, any time my father come home, or when he was going anywhere, he was great for riding horseback. He loved horses. And he would pick me up and set me on that horse.

And when he'd be eating breakfast or anything, when I was little, I'd be on his knee sitting. And, uh, he was, he built a school house that I went to, my father did.

And, uh, I used to follow him there when I wasn't at school yet. But I remember one time following him down in my bare feet. It was about a mile down the road.

And, uh, this, uh, nephew of my father's was working along with my father at the schoolhouse. And he said, "John, take her, put her on your shoulder and take her home."

So that's, that's what I remember about my father. But, uh . . .

LEVINE: Was he a carpenter by trade? Is that what he did?

LAUGHLIN: He done everything. He built the bridge that crossed over to the church. He really was a very intelligent man, my father was. He built a bridge that we went over to to church, and he built the schoolhouse, and that was

there for years, and a second cousin of mine now bought that schoolhouse and has it as a dwelling house. And it's a beautiful place with cement walls and a big iron gate and two outhouses, you know, for it. That my father built. He really could have done anything. And I think, too, we had the only, you know, we had the big, open fires.

LEVINE: In the kitchen?

LAUGHLIN: In the kitchen. With the iron grates, and the crooks on it, you know, and the cranes. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: Where the pot hangs down?

LAUGHLIN: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And he made two braces, I don't know what you would call them. We'd call them black stones, but there were two arches, like, you'd (?), and then the mantelpiece went across. Well, them were cut stones, and they were cut like little hearts. And, uh, when I was talking to them the last time I was home I said you won't see another kitchen set like that anywhere. But I come out to my cousin's in Manor Haven in Long Island, and she said, "Yes, I found another one." And it was in this Protestant church. And she took me down to see it, and it was just exactly like my father's.

LEVINE: This was on Long Island?

LAUGHLIN: Huh?

LEVINE: On Long Island?

LAUGHLIN: On Long Island, yes. Yeah. So, uh, so that, he really could have done anything. My father was very, and another thing, we were Catholic, and all around my place was Protestant. Everyone but, I was in every house. (she laughs) And my father would shoe their horses, he could drench their cows, anything. He just could have done anything. And taking care of the young male calves, and, uh, he just was a man, he had a great head on him. And he used to walk up and down the street, you know, with these, they talk so much about the Protestants today and the Catholics over there, you know? Well, that wasn't the same in my time. Uh, I remember one day my father was walking up with a James Blair, and, uh, he comes around and picks me up in his two arms and throws me over his shoulder and carries me home. (she laughs) These kind of thing. Them things I don't forget, because they were such nice things, you know. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: What was the Catholic Protestant relationship in your time?

LAUGHLIN: In my time, I didn't know any difference, not a bit difference. We had the, in the school, twas a nice new school, and we had a Catholic schoolmaster who went to school with my father. And the lady teacher was Mrs. Smith, a Protestant. And I used to go over there, and she had one daughter was a schoolteacher, but then the other one was, she was my age. Maybe she might have been a year older. But I used to go over. She would ask me over on a Saturday night, and I would stay till Monday. And we used to sleep together. And I remember so well, I was religious, I still am kind of religious, but we, the two of us would go down on our knees at the side of the bed and say our own prayers, and then hop into bed. So I, all my girlfriends in those days was, Hattie Smith, Nellie Ritchie was a schoolteacher, and, uh, I don't know what, Hattie Smith is a very beautiful girl. I think she got married young. And Lilly Smith, she was a schoolteacher. Now, that's Mrs. Smith's daughter. She had two daughters, and they were both schoolteachers. And, uh, I was very quiet when I was a youngster. I never went out to play in the schoolyard. And she used to chase me around the desks, schoolmasters. And I think we were the pets, because my mother used

to go over, see, my father died young and my mother was a widow, and my mother did her washing, you know, and I think I was a pet with her, you know? And when I'd go over and my feet would be wet or anything, she would set me right on the stool. It wasn't an open fire they had in the school, it was a big range, and set me over there and put my feet up. And, uh, she would run after me. And when there were any sewing to do in the school, you know, we had like a sewing class, and, uh, I always took my embroidery. She said, "Rose, you can take your embroidery with you." And I was known as the little embroiderer in the neighborhood. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Your friends Hattie and, uh . . .

LAUGHLIN: Hattie Gibson.

LEVINE: Gibson. And, well, any of your friends, what do you remember about the kinds of things you did together with your friends?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, we went, we went to the store together. We pulled flowers together. We chased butterflies together. We, on our farm there was a big field. We called it the park. It was a big square piece of ground. And they would come up there and we would chase butterflies, put them

in jars, and then let them go. We thought they were going to die or something, we'd let them go. And we, some of them fields was white with daisies. They were beautiful.

And then we would have hide and go seek, skip rope, and, uh, there was a hill, a little hill. We'd lie down and roll to the bottom. (she laughs) We done everything.

I was good for skipping rope. And I was a good runner, too. So, uh . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember any of those skip rope rhymes?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Did you used to say?

LAUGHLIN: Yeah. Yeah, oh, I can't . . . (she pauses) I just think mine was ". . . went to school and skipped her way home from school." Oh, I had a lot of rhymes, and ring around the roses, you know, we used to do the ring around, and all that kind of thing. I forget now the . . .

LEVINE: Well, if you think of them you can say them later. How about the dolls you made? Like what were your dolls like?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, what were the . . . A little small potato for the face. And then I'd make like a pair of stockings, you know, and stuff them just with, I'd get an old sock, a

netted sock, and thread it all out and stuff the leg.

And then make little dresses for them and that kind of thing. People give me a lot of little brooches and pendants, because they always seen me doing something, you know, getting dressed up. They knew I was crazy for getting dressed up. And I'd always put a little brooch in here. (she laughs) And I would embroider, you know, do a backstitch around for, with different thread to give it color. Oh, I done a lot of things. I could think up anything like that. (she laughs) And, uh, here's a little rhyme. "Here we come gathering nuts in May, nuts in May, nuts in May. Here we come gathering nuts in May, this cold and frosty morning." That's one. Yes, I remember that one. But, uh, oh, I have a whole lot of them, but I just can't remember them now, you know?

LEVINE: How about your mother? What was she like?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, my mother worked, she was the greatest. Uh, even when I come out here to this country, and met some of my old neighbors, oh, this was the way they would say it. "Oh, your mother was wonderful, your mother was something." I would say I don't know how she raised us, eight of us. She just worked away, she lived to, she was seventy-eight years old, too, in spite of it all.

And she was always small. She was a great singer. Yeah, she had a beautiful voice. And, uh, she just worked her way, she embroidered, too. That's from her I got it.

And her and I went, we had to take out so much for the week, you know, of seven days, and finish it up and take it back in on, in our town it was Tuesday you went down to the market. So, uh, you took it down, and you took out some more. And that kept the house going.

LEVINE: Where would you take it to?

LAUGHLIN: Well, there was a place, an embroidery place. And a Mrs. Shields was the one I knew so well, and she had a big place with piles of this marked embroidery, pillowcases and sheets, with that, uh, buttoning. Do you know what buttoning is?

LAUGHLIN: Is that a stitch?

LEVINE: Yeah, it's a stitch, a backstitch. And, uh, cutwork. And then they had, there was nightgowns, pillowcases, everything. She, and especially blouses on voile. I used to do that. And we had a little thing, uh, that they give us for cutting, you embroidered around the marking first you traced it around, and then you sewed it around, and then you cut the leaves, you know, little

leaves, like branches. And, uh, oh, I should have took some with me because, you know, I had, and then there was the other, we used to take out dozens and dozens and dozens of handkerchiefs. And there would be one embroidered corner, you know, like . . . (she shows something) This is Irish.

LEVINE: Oh!

LAUGHLIN: That's Irish. That's Irish lace there, embroidered the corner, you know? Oh, it was different threads, and then we'd take them in. And you'd get so much a dozen for them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did you continue that kind of work when you came here? Did you keep doing that Irish embroidery, and . . .

LAUGHLIN: Oh, I did it for myself.

LEVINE: Yeah, for yourself.

LAUGHLIN: Oh, oh, yes, oh, yes. I did it for myself. And, uh, the latest thing I did was when my son was in school they, they went to the parochial school. The nun asked them one day to do, you know the little white squares that the priests use to put over the chalice, uh, our parents,

to embroider. So I embroidered, I think mine was the only one they kept. (she laughs) That's what he said, anyway. So, um, yeah, I did a lot of that. I still do a lot of things. I give a lot to Mary, my daughter.

LEVINE: Now, um, as far as your mother was concerned, were there any kinds of things that you did besides the embroidering, either you helped her to do, or with her.

LAUGHLIN: Oh, I did all the patching. You know, you didn't throw out a kid's pants or anything like that. You patched the knees on them, and you did their underwear. (she laughs) And changed the collars on their shirts. I mean, all these things, you know, all for being economical, you know? And, uh, oh, we used to knit a lot, you know, knit socks. We had sheep, and you sent it away to Donnegal and you got back the wool. And then, and my Aunt Nancy was a great spinner on the spinning wheel, and I used to card the wool for her. She said I was the best carder wool she ever had. (they laugh)
When she would start to knit and get the thing in order, she always brought me over for a week, Aunt Nancy. And I would sit with her and card the wool.

LEVINE: So, um, what about school? What do you remember, what

do you remember about your school days?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, yes. Uh, well, being that the schoolmaster went to school with my father, he said to me one day when I went down, "Come on, now, Rosie, and buckle up your whiskers."

(they laugh) So, uh, he was very nice to us. He was a terrible nice man, too. Of course, he always loved (?), you know, anyhow. So, he was awfully nice. I couldn't say anything. Uh, oh, I'll tell you a joke about my sister Mary. Uh, Mary was very quiet, and when she went to school she didn't want to go into the school.

She was the one older than I was. So I said, "Mary, you're as sour as buttermilk." To Mary. And she come home, and she told my father what I said to her, you know, and my father went to school with him, and knowing him so well, he had very black, curly hair, and he was more like Spanish than Irish, and he said, "You tell him tomorrow that he's as black as soot." (they laugh)

Well, these are silly things I'm telling you, but they all happened. Well, anyway, my brother Tommy was very smart, and the master couldn't put him any further. And, uh, but I never was, they would hit you, you know, in school, with a ruler, and I never got a slap. And, uh, when our master was sick or anything, and been out, our

schoolmasters would come in and teach us, teach us Catholics our catechism. And a few times she sent me in to read, give me something to read to her children.

She trusted me because she knew me so well. And, uh, that's the way things was, just, just so nice. And Mrs. Smith was a lovely lady. And, and, uh, the master, Master John, too. Very, very nice. And I remember, the last thing I remember about him was him coming to my father's wake and funeral, and he picked me up and put me on one of his knees. That's the last thing I remember about Master John. But . . .

LEVINE: How old were you? How old were you when your father died?

LAUGHLIN: I don't know. Well, I might have been nine, maybe, eight or nine or something. Yeah. And I know we were all young.

My youngest, my youngest brother wasn't even born. He was born two months after. And I took care of him. He was my favorite. And he died five months ago in England, and I helped him buy his house in England. And he had two houses, when he died, and he had four kids, and his wife still lives, and we still write to each other.

LEVINE: What do you remember about him when he was a little boy, when you were taking care of him?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, uh, well, he was heavier, you know. I was always a skinny little kid, and I couldn't carry him or anything, and I had these chairs, you know, and they were around, and we called them the round chairs in the back, like sticks, up the back. Three or four up the back. And I put him on one of those chairs, tied a scarf under his arms or around the back, and tied another one here, and I trailed him through the house when I'd go to do anything, and I could trail him around with me. (they laugh)

That I remember. And, uh, well, I done everything for him, you know? Combed his hair, and kept him nice. And, uh, then he went to school. And when I went back home, when I left he was eight years old. When I went back home he was twelve, and he still had the short pants.

We called them the knickers. And I took him and I bought him a pair of long pants, and I bought him a bicycle.

And when we went down, the neighbors would gather, you know, and they'd all walk down to the church, to Mass, on a Sunday, and here he comes riding back and forth, and I didn't even know him with the long pants on, and he stopped and said, "Rosie, don't you know me?" (they laugh) So, uh, that was, that was that. So, uh, then he went, he went to England, and my mother died and, uh, he got married there. He married a Dublin girl.

LEVINE: Well, now, uh, do you remember your father's funeral and wake from when you were about nine years old?

LAUGHLIN: I didn't go to the funeral, I didn't get to, but I remember his wake very well, and I can still see him lying in state, in the house.

LEVINE: Was there anything about the Irish wake that you remember . . .

LAUGHLIN: Just that you used to get pipes, you know, clay pipes, for smoking, and, uh, the family got them, you know, and left them on a table, and tobacco, and stuff, and smoke. And then there would be a tea, they'd make tea, and they'd have tea with homemade bread and bought bread, and, um, well, they'd just, everyone that would come would have a cup of tea and have whatever they wanted. Tea, a piece of cake, or whatever. And, uh, then they would go, and they'd go and, some of them would stay all night, and the candles was lighted, you know, around the bed. And, uh, the priest in the parish was great friends of my father's because he. They used to, the way they give him his funeral, his fuel, fuel, each one would bring a load of turf, you know, and my father always built a turf stack, and I remember my sister and myself throwing

up the turf for my father to build, and he would build that like a wall, up to a point up at the top. Yeah.

So, and then, uh, we'd go into the parochial house and have tea. And I can still remember the raisin bread that they'd have. I love that . . . (she laughs) When you're kids, you know?

LEVINE: Tea and, uh, raisin bread and the turf fire.

LAUGHLIN: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, I think maybe this is a good time, we're going to pause now and turn over the tape. We'll continue in a minute.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

LEVINE: Okay, we're continuing now on Side Two. I'm speaking with Rose Laughlin. Well, tell me now, what you expected your life would be like when you were growing up. Did you have dreams or aspirations or what you thought you would do when you grew up? Do you remember anything like that?

LAUGHLIN: Well, yes. We had two, I guess you might say, they were my mother's second cousins, and their name was Cassidy.

And, see, my mother's mother was Cassidy. So they lived beside us, and they had been in this country at home at that time when I was about maybe fifteen or sixteen. And, of course, I was always talking to them. And when they used to come into our yard, and there was a big, iron gate between our two farms, and, but we had the well, the water. We had the spring well, and they used to have to come down. And they would start talking to my mother, and some of us youngsters, I used to do it a lot, I'd pick up their cans and go down the little lane and fill them and bring them up to them. Nobody said anything, (?) say thank you. And I used to go in and sit with them, and they told me all about America. And they were great singers, and they would sing this special song. Now I can't remember it, but I know it. (she laughs) And, uh, they would tell me all that, you know, it's hard work, you know. Probably, you know, maybe they were domestics, and they didn't say what they done or anything, but "Rose, it's hard work," and, uh, and they didn't tell me, of course, I didn't think of asking, because I was too young, you know, how long they was there. But they must have come home, they must have had quite a few dollars home with them because they had two men working for them on the farm, and there was one old brother, he was always

sick, so he didn't do anything. So they, some of us, when they'd be cutting their oats, the corn, as we called it, when they'd be cutting that or anything, we just would go over the fence and help them, but they never could come to us because they were that much older, you know?

And they had chickens on the farms, and they had a white mare, and we had a chestnut horse. And when we let the horse and the mare out, and the mare was on their side and the horse on our side, you should have seen those two with their heads together across the fence. We used to say, "What! They're making love." (she laughs)

And you should have seen them. It was really funny.

And I had minded this little boy out in Great Neck, and I told him this story, you know, and when the mother got it, she put it in the paper. (Dr. Levine laughs) So, uh . . .

LEVINE: What did they tell you? Do you remember, besides saying it was hard work, did they tell you things about America?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, yeah. They said I, you would like America, and they told me that I was just made for it, that I would like it.

LEVINE: Do you remember why they thought you were made for it?

LAUGHLIN: Well, I think I was always fussy dressy, and, uh, I think I always wore a smile, to tell you the truth. (she laughs) I was always laughing and playing jokes, and I was kind to everybody, and they just liked me. And, uh, I think I had the gift of gab. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Well, uh, when did you decide, or how was it decided that you would come?

LAUGHLIN: Well, my sister, Bridget, her and I were both to come. And we just, she was a year younger than me, or fourteen months, and we decided we just want to go to America. I always wanted to help my mother. And, uh, when I would make anything from the embroidery and all, I never kept it, you know, it went to the house. (she pauses) So I, I think I must have been, there was a quota. And I signed up when I was eighteen for it, and so did my sister, younger, she was seventeen. So we were supposed to go on and go to Belfast to get our passports, and I got a sore throat, and I couldn't go on the day appointed. But she went with this other girl and two boys, two brothers and a sister. Them three went, and I was left alone, of course. So two weeks later I went myself up to Belfast. Well, my brothers took me, of course. My brothers took me. So I went up to Belfast to get my

passport, and I had mine before them.

LEVINE: Do you know why?

LAUGHLIN: I had mine before they had theirs. This young fellow, when I went up to the desk and he gave the papers and all that, he says, "Would you like me to fill them out for you?" And I said, "Would you please?" And, uh, so he filled out my papers, and shook hands with me. (they laugh) So that was that. So then I was down, I was, went down to the well to wash potatoes. I had a pail and a basket, and there was a spouting, you know, for the, and you put the basket in and throw the potatoes in the water. And I didn't know, I was shaking the basket, and I didn't know there was anybody around, I didn't see nobody. I didn't know this young fifteen-year-old had a crush on me, a young boy. And he started throwing earth through the bushes. And I never lifted my head. I didn't bother to look. But when I, there was a bigger ball of, I lifted my head up, and here I got hit right across the brow and on the cheekbone there. And he wanted to get my attention, he put a stone in it, a rock in it, and fractured my skull bone. And this other man was coming up on the field, and he seen me fall down, and he come and picks me up and takes me into the house, and my mother,

she lost her eye, she'll be blind. And he says, "No, I watched it closing." "No," he says, "her eyesight is all right. I watched it closing." So I lay there for two years. I was deaf and I was blind. And I thought that's goodbye America for me. So when I got, I was a hundred and twenty-three pounds, and when I got better and all that, I was ninety-seven pounds. It split my brow there and here, and they went and they took me to the doctor, the doctor said, "It fractured her skull bone." Well, that boy, even to my niece of mine come out on a trip, and he was a married man at that time, and he says, "Tell Rosie," he says, "when you see her, that I never forgot that." He says, "I'm very sorry." And he says, "I might have put her eye out." So, but anyway, when I come back in four years, he was fifteen, in four years nineteen, he said, "I'm a young man now, Rosie." He says, "Will you marry me," he said. He was still regretting what he done. So I just laughed at him, you know. I intended to come back. I could have married a dozen times. (she laughs) So, so, uh . . .

LEVINE: Well, this time when you, for those two years, did you think that . . .

LAUGHLIN: No, I just lay there.

LEVINE: Did you think you would get better?

LAUGHLIN: I don't know. I don't think, I think I didn't think I was going to get better, because my head, they kept pouring the spring water on my head. They put a plastic, a big plastic over the end of the couch, and I had my head there, and somebody, I used to say, "Oh, my head, oh, my head." And they'd pour the spring water on my head. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: So it was like you had a headache for, it was a headache that you had for all that time?

LAUGHLIN: Yeah, yeah. So I never thought then, you know. Well, then I picked up and, uh, I didn't gain much weight. But, you know, they were very religious over there, and they had me in the center, and they said the rosary around me every night. And even the neighbors would come in, and everybody had it that I had lost the eye. Thank God I didn't. So, anyway, when it healed up and everything, and I come, and to Derry.

LEVINE: Well, before, before that, do you remember when it healed? Do you remember when you started to realize that you were going to be all right?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, yes, when I started to hear, when I could hear. See, I was deaf, too, and I would write down and scratch things down. And, uh, when I started to hear, that's when I knew I was getting better. And, uh, my mother used to tell, "Thank God," you know, and all that. So then . . .

LEVINE: So then you still, you had, you had already gotten your visa.

LAUGHLIN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Because you had . . .

LAUGHLIN: Yeah, I had my passport there and all. And during our time, by the way, my sister died. She died with pneumonia within one week.

LEVINE: Bridget?

LAUGHLIN: Yeah. And so, then they're after me, don't, you don't go alone. I said, "I'm going to America." So I come to America. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: And you traveled by yourself?

LAUGHLIN: Uh, well, there was a girl from home with me. She was, she got off in New York, but I went on down to Philadelphia. So, uh, her brother was a fireman, and

he took her off, and he said, when he met me afterwards, he said, "If I had known it was you I'd went home and put on my uniform and have took you off, too." He could have, you know? So, so that's, so I got better, and I come out, I come to Derry, my brother. And I had a boyfriend, of course. He wanted me to get married, but I didn't want to get married. I was always intending to help my mother.

LEVINE: Well, now, how long was it from the time you got better until you left for America?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, it was, see, the eighteen did two years, it was twenty, and I was in the third year. I was twenty-one, see, when I come out, you see?

LEVINE: And when did you, when did you, um, get the, uh, have the stone hit you?

LAUGHLIN: It all come, you know, this healed up, and my brow healed up, and it seems I got better fast, I think. You know, you forget kind of, you know? And, uh, anyway, when I come out, when I come to Derry, and I passed everything, and, uh, I come to Derry, and I met six girls, a girl that was with me, five girls and the girl that was with me, and there were seven of us, and we were all about

the same age. They were from a different county, County Calvin, two counties, Donnegal and Calvin, and I was from Derry. So we come in to Derry that day, and it was February and it was very cold, and my two brothers was with me, and my boyfriend. And this young fellow was, we had a handful of papers, and he was examining. And when we were standing there, somebody come, I can't remember who or what, and they took, took the girls, all but me, left me alone, to get their hair washed, and I didn't have to go. I thought that was, I often think of that. The other, four of them. There was five of them. Five or, five of us, yeah, five of us. And I was left, the other girls took their suitcases, but the girl that was with me, I had her two suitcases and my own two, and I couldn't move. And they were all passing me by in the lane, and he was taking the papers. So he said, this nice young fellow, when he come he said, this fellow that was taking the papers, "Would you mind," he says, "taking them, a couple of them suitcases up to the tender? That little girl is standing there," he says, "for over an hour."

And he says, "Not at all." So he took my two suitcases, and I took my own two, and we went up into the tender, and he took my papers. And then after they were all finished, uh, the papers finished, having finished taking

the papers, he comes up and he sits beside me, this young fellow. And he says, "They were taken to get their hair washed." I says, "Is that what they done? I didn't know where they went," I said. "Well, they'll be back soon."

Yeah, he says, "In about half an hour they'll be back."

So he sat there and he said, "Was that your boyfriend was with you?" And I says, "Yes, it was." And he says, "He's a damn fool to let you go." (she laughs) That's what he said. So, uh, then he shook hands with me and, he was an Irishman, too, and he shook hands with me, and wished me good luck in America and all that, you know?

And then when I went on the boat, the boat and me was a circus. People just come, there was two men come, one was a, one was a detective from Chicago, and his name was Dennis Kelly. Can you imagine, I was Rose? He pulls out his passport and so. And then one day we're out at a shuffle, on the deck with a shuffle . . . what do you call them?

LEVINE: Shuffleboard?

LAUGHLIN: Yeah. And, uh, and, uh, we were called, and the guard come onto the boat, the boat, and, uh, we all had to go down by the way for our passports, to get them examined.

So on comes this man behind me from the shuffleboard,

and he said, when he gives the orders to go down to get the passports, I know what he did behind me back, he put up his hand, anyway, and he says, "Arlo Camus Kelly."

And when that was done and all, I didn't have to go down for my passport. When that was done and all, he comes over and showed me his passport, and his name was Kelly.

Can you beat it? I could, I don't know, I just never could get over all the things that happened to me. So . . .

LEVINE: Well, tell me how you would describe yourself. What did you look like when you were coming to this country, and . . .

LAUGHLIN: Well, they called, I'll tell you what they called me. They called me The Pretty Colleen." (she laughs) I had two long braids of hair, and I had two bows on the back. And if there was a kid around, a little child around, I had it, you know? I love kids. And, uh, everybody was so nice. They took me up to the first, they took me up first class, that fellow that took all my suitcases. He was sick, and he'd come down one day to steerage where I was, and he says, "I had, I took up two suitcases for . . ." He had such a nice accent. " . . . for a little girl." And he says, "I wonder if she's sick, or where she is." I said, "She's right here."

(they laugh) And so, so we shook hands, and we were friends. So he come down, then, and he took me up to the party. His uncle was bringing him out here. They weren't Catholic. And his uncle brought him out here.

So I was taken up first class. And I had a couple of, I was a good dancer, and I had a couple of dances with him. And I used to, when they'd play the piano and they're all ballad singing, you know, I could sing a piece, too.

(she laughs) So I shook hands with the captain, and, uh, and it seemed to me I was the belle of the ball. And every day when we'd come down for breakfast the stewards, they were Scotch, young Scotch fellows, and we were sitting, the seats we were sitting on was like a piano stool, and you lifted up the top. And they would whisper in my ear there was oranges or there was apples. Oh, there was a lot of jealousy, of course, you know. They were all nice to me. Of course, I (?) them anyway, you know? And, all in all, I really had a ball. I was nine days on the ocean. And, uh, what more can I tell you?

LEVINE: Well, um, there was a storm when you were on the ship.

LAUGHLIN: Oh, yes, the storm, yeah. The storm, I don't know how far we were out on the ocean, there was a big storm.

I wasn't sick a day, nor an hour. And, uh, when I was home I was, went down to say, I used to do our church altar three months of the year, and I'd go up to the parochial house, and our priest said to Annie, the housekeeper, "make Rose some oatmeal farrows[ph]." You know, squares, farrows[ph], like that. "And let her take them," he says, "when she can't eat anything," he says, "she can nibble on those." And so, of course, I divided them around, you know, with the people on the boat. But I wasn't sick a day. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: But how about other people during that storm, during the storm on ship?

LAUGHLIN: Yeah. Oh, they were all excited. A lot of them was excited. But I never seen, I remember, you know, before the storm hit, I remember the old boat, I remember, you know, just going like this all the time.

LEVINE: Back and forth, uh-huh.

LAUGHLIN: But I wasn't sick or anything. And, uh, and I think there was really some jealousy, you know, that, uh, well, I was just lucky. I carried my ro--, are you Jewish? Are you? Well, you understand the Catholic. I carried my rosary beads with me, and I twisted them around my arm

and had the cross in my hand all the time, you know? And I had great faith. So, uh, I was very happy. I was always a happy person. I could see the right side of things, you know? And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Can you remember when the ship, it was the Columbia, right?

LAUGHLIN: The old Columbia.

LEVINE: The old Columbia.

LAUGHLIN: The last time.

LEVINE: The last voyage.

LAUGHLIN: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Did you know it was the last voyage when you were on the ship?

LAUGHLIN: Yeah, they were all talking about it, yeah. There was a young boy, nobody could take him, and he was so sick. He was out on the deck, and he just lay there, in February, he lay there. So the boys was trying to get him, but he was so sick he wouldn't come. He was a very handsome young boy, an Irish boy. And they come to me and said, "know what Rosie, would you try and get him in?"

(she laughs) Do you want to know how I got him in?
I went down on my knees and kissed him on the cheek,
and I says, "Tommy, come on and get up and come in with
me." I says, "You know you're going to get your death
of cold." And he walked in arm in arm with me. (they
laugh)

LEVINE: Well, do you remember coming into the New York Harbor?

LAUGHLIN: Do I remember when I come in? On the old tender, yeah,
I remember.

LEVINE: The Statue of Liberty?

LAUGHLIN: Yeah. We were all choked up, and clapped our hands, and
hollered, I guess, too, you know? Oh, yes, I remember.
I can still see it, you know, the way it was. And, uh,
they, there was icicles on the old tender as thick as
my arm hanging down, and then I remember passing, I can't
remember stepping up or where we come in the door into
Ellis Island here. I can't remember that. You know what
door I went, I don't know. It's a big wide open door
and it steps up to it as far as I can remember.

LEVINE: Yeah, and you can go down there. Yeah. Uh-huh.

LAUGHLIN: And it was like a barn place like with, to me as I recall,

I think it was like cement blocks or, you know, just, not plaster. You could see the rocks, you know, or something like that. That's seventy years ago. So the lady come and, uh, give me a clothes hanger and a towel, and, "Take off all your clothes." And I can see the pegs up there where you hung, when you put your clothes, and hung them up there. And she says, "Open your braids." Hair, your braids. And once I had them open, she says, "Shake out your hair." I shook out my hair. And she examined me then. She examined me then from the head to the foot, all the way down, yeah. And, uh, she says, "Very good. You passed." And, you know, I was scared after the eyes and ears and the whole bit. But I looked good, you know. But I was only ninety-seven pounds. I remember I had a, we had this dressmaker because it was a big family, you know, and you used to, she used to sew quite a lot for us. And I had this lovely brown dress, and these two American ladies that lived besides us, they gave me braiding. It was green and white, like a twist. And she put it all around my collar. And put a big, put a band around it and a big buckle on the side. And I thought I was the cat's whiskers. (they laugh) And I got, um, my cousin bought me a beautiful silk, plain silk blouse, and it was a beautiful thing. She

was in Belfast, and she bought me the blouse. So I thought I was the cat's pajamas, I tell you. So, uh, then . . .

LEVINE: Is there anything else about Ellis Island that you know before we . . .

LAUGHLIN: Yeah. Uh, she said, "Get dressed," and I got dressed. And when I got dressed she hung this on my, on the button.

LEVINE: That's the card, the inspection card.

LAUGHLIN: Because I had a coat with a button, yeah, and she hung that on me, passed and inspected. But there was, yes, I remember there was two of the girls sent back home.

LEVINE: Oh, do you know why?

LAUGHLIN: Well, they didn't pass the inspection. Well, to tell you the truth, you know, some people, even to look at them, you know, they just didn't sit (?) I think, you know? But, you know, when I was in the ship and I watched the people, what they were doing, and I figured that's what I would be doing in America, a lot of the things that they were doing there, you know, the way they waited on the table and, uh . . .

LEVINE: You mean when you were up in the first class, when you

were watching . . .

LAUGHLIN: When I was coming out on the boat. I seen the young boys, you know, working and, um, and, uh, then the man in the library asked me to go up, you know, and sit and talk to him. He was a Scotch fellow, and they liked to talk about Ireland and Scotland. And I used to go up and sit and talk to him. And, uh, I figured all the things I seen that they were doing, that I'd be doing some of them things, you know, in America. But when I went to the office, well, that's the boat bit now, and that's, uh, when I got off the boat and, uh, I had a ticket in me hand. I don't know who give me that ticket. It was a ticket for Philadelphia, for the train. I don't know where I got that ticket, or who give it to me.

LEVINE: Did anyone meet you? You just went by yourself to Philadelphia?

LAUGHLIN: Nobody met me, because my cousin was working for Ford's in Philadelphia, and during the time that I was preparing, Ford's moved to Detroit, and he was the, one of the foreman. He was there seven years at the time. And, uh, he went with them, and he told me that, "Go to the boarding house," you know, "Don't change anything,

because they'll put you back, but go to the boarding house where I was boarding," he says. And, uh, he was from home, the man at the boarding house. He was from home with me, too, but he was a lot older and I didn't know him at home. But apart from that, these other two girls, there were three of them, I think. Two or three of them left, and a sister come to meet them at Broad Street Station there in Philadelphia. She come to meet them, and a friend of hers took the day off because, and she said, "I'll go with you to meet the greenhorns." So these girls told them, the sister and the lady, my story, which was true, about my cousin and all that. So she says, "Would you mind if I took you up there to the boarding house?" Well, I said I'd be delighted. So we got, we parted with the girls, and we got on the trolley car, the old trolley cars in those days, and we were just one block, traveled one block, and on comes a girl, right from home with me, in Ireland. I said, "Aren't you Bridget Mullen from Half Gain[ph]?" And she said, "Yes, I am." And she sticks out her hand. She says, "In the name of God, who are you?" That's what she said. She was so flabbergasted, you know? So I said, "I'm Rose Kelly from Half Gain[ph]." And she took there, and she couldn't say anything else. She held my hand. And, uh, Lizzie

that come up with me said what is your, what is your phone number. So she told her, she says, "Locust 2-6-1-2."

I never forgot it. So . . .

LEVINE: Wait, could we, we need to pause right here to change the tape. But just hold on. I want to finish that.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and this is Tape Two. And I've been speaking with Rose Kelly Laughlin, and I apologize for having mispronounced her last name on Tape One, but it's pronounced Laughlin.

LAUGHLIN: Laughlin.

LEVINE: Laughlin. And, um, we're going to continue here with the story that you were telling about when you arrived in Philadelphia and you saw someone who you recognized.

LAUGHLIN: We got in the trolley car when we got, at Broad Street Station, and we rode one block. And on comes this young woman from home with me, in Ireland. I said, I got up and I said, "Aren't you Bridget Mullen from Half Gain[ph]?" She said, "Yes, I am. In the name of God, who are you?" Well, I said, "I'm Rose Kelly from Half

Gain[ph]." So she said, "Oh, you were only that height when I left." And then, uh, Lizzie said, the girl that was taking me up, she said, "Where do you live? Do you have a phone number?" So she told her, "Locust 2-6-1-2."

So she said, "I'll call you." And she called her, and they got together, and I knew the half of Philadelphia.

(they laugh) Yeah. I went to one house, they took me to one house. His name was Johnny Haggerty. And they told me who, they told him who I was, and they said I was a daughter of John Kelly's of Gorton Amoya[ph], Garva[ph]. And he gets up off his rocking chair, and he said, "There's no chair in the house good enough for a daughter of John Kelly." That's the way he liked my father. So then, from then on I knew a lot of people.

So Lizzie took me up to the boarding house where my cousin was, but he had moved to Detroit with Ford's Motor Company. So I, she, when we got there, she looked in and, uh, there was nobody there but this gentleman himself, and she said, "Oh, I don't . . ." Maybe I shouldn't say that. "I don't like the looks of it." She said, she meant there was no women around. So she, "Would you come up with me to my cousin's in West Philadelphia?" I said, "All right, I will." Knowing them all up for nine days in the boat, you know, and

everything. So she took me up to her cousin's in West Philadelphia, and they had a beautiful house, a beautiful daughter, and he was such a gentleman. He was a park man in the park. He had the uniform, you know, in the park, in Philadelphia.

LEVINE: A park ranger?

LAUGHLIN: Huh?

LEVINE: A park ranger?

LAUGHLIN: Yeah, something like that. And, uh, well, anyway, they were thrilled to have me. I think they liked to have me with their daughter, you know? And, uh, so Lizzie stayed that night in that house, my cousin's house. And then she said the next morning, "Would you like to come down with me," she said, "to where I work?" She never said what their name was or anything. So I said, "Sure."

So I got dressed, and I went down with her to where she was working. And there was another lady there from County Donnegal, she was a cook in the house. Lizzie was the waitress. And Lizzie said, Lizzie got the breakfast ready and took it up to the two old people upstairs, the man and the wife, they both had a day nurse and a night nurse. And, uh, when Lizzie went up and told them where she

was and that, uh, she had a greenhorn, as they call it, there, so the lady said, "Will you bring her up so we see her?" So Lizzie come down, and this is what Lizzie said to me, "Don't put your hand out to shake hands with her." She said, "If she wants to, she'll do it." So Lizzie took me up and I went up there and I remember stopping in front, I can see the old lady sitting there, and the nurse standing at her side, and she looked at me, you know. "What is your name?" she said. And I said, "Rose Kelly." She sticks out her hand, and she said, "With a name like that," this is the way she said it, "with a name like that, you can stay in the guestroom here as long as you want." Their name was Kelly.

(Dr. Levine laughs) They weren't Catholic, but that made no difference. She was a Kelly. So, uh, but I didn't stay, of course, you know, I wanted to get a job, and so on. So, uh, then I went, Lizzie put me on the trolley and I went up to her cousin's that night and I stayed there, and then it was walking distance just to the office where you could get a job, and I went and got a, I got the job right away. And I was walking back up again, and there was nobody on that street. The park fence was there, and the big iron posts, all fenced in, and on this side was houses. There wasn't a soul in that place that

I seen, only this one old gentleman working for Con Edison with the smoke lamps. And I was crying, I was so cold.

And this old Polish man, he was standing at the smoke lamp, and he had a little white moustache, I can still see it, and he says, "Little girl, what are you crying about?" So I said, "I'm so cold. I'm so cold," I said.

So he took me over and beat me hands over the lamp.

(she laughs) And then there was a police car coming up, and they called the policeman to take me home. So when I took, when, uh, I stayed on the running board, because I had a short distance to go, and maybe that's where I'm supposed to stay anyway, so I stayed on the running board, and he took me up. And when we were, went a short piece, he said, "Now, your name wouldn't be Kelly, would it?" An Irish brogue on him. So I said, so, honestly, I says, "Yeah, how did you know?" And after that, he started laughing. After that he took out his wallet and showed me his name was Kelly, too. So I says, everybody's Kelly. So, anyway, he took me up, they took me up and let me off and I went down to the place in there.

So that lady that I got that job with took me twice to the Devon Horse Show. They had no children themselves.

Their name was Ellsley[ph], Mr. and Mrs. Ellsley[ph].

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

LAUGHLIN: I don't know. I think it's E-L, E-L, well, I guess you could spell better than me.

LEVINE: Okay.

LAUGHLIN: So, um, there were two other Irish girls there and, uh, well, it was just a lovely place. So she, uh, she said to Annie, the cook, she bought me uniforms, and she said to Annie, "Send Rose up." You know? "I'd like to talk to her." She said, "She's such a child," she said. And I, actually, so I went up the back stairs like this on my hands and feet, and she opened the door, she opened the door, and laughed, and then went away. And, of course, I was so embarrassed when I got on there. So she took my measurements for my uniforms and all that kind of thing, and that was that part. So I stayed there in that place until my cousin come over. Three times she had him over before I come. And, uh, she said one day they should make me the parlor maid. So then I come over to New York and, well, I did the, mind children. I worked out in Long Island. And, uh, and there were a lot of the socialites. And I worked in this house, he was a, Mr. Clark[ph], he was an attorney. And he won the case

for the Metro Goldwyn Meyer at that time, in the movie industry. His name was Mr. Clark. And he had, they had a son and a daughter, Mandy and Teddy, and, of course, I was minding them, partly. But, uh, I did the cooking for them, too. And they had a chauffeur, and they had another maid there, and she used to take the girls, took the kids to the Greenvale School, and drive them. And it was there that I seen Gloria Vanderbilt and Medina Hutton[ph]. And they used to come up, you know, to have lunch parties or, and all the boys was after Medina, she was so pretty. Medina Hutton[ph]. And they were just nice girls, you know? You'd think they would be stuffy or anything, but they had, they had maids with them. But, uh, they were just so nice. Gloria Vanderbilt had the most gorgeous black hair, beautiful black hair I ever seen at that time. And I used to read about her two aunts, you know, one of them used to go with, uh, with the Duke of Windsor, you know? And all that. See, being English and all that, and me the North of Ireland, I was always interested in anything. So, uh, anyway, they were going to Greenvale School, and they visited there. And then I remember after that when I left I watched them, you know, they kept in touch with, uh, the papers, you know, and I seen where Medina Hutton got married to a man the

name of Rombor[ph] or something, he was related to the Colgate's family. So . . .

LEVINE: Is that the period of time when you met the Marx Brothers' chauffeur?

LAUGHLIN: What was that?

LEVINE: The Marx Brothers' chauffeur.

LAUGHLIN: Oh, no, no.

LEVINE: When was that?

LAUGHLIN: No. I was working for a family the name of Baker's. I was minding young James Baker at the time. And I always went to the eleven o'clock mass on Sunday. And I noticed this big limousine, you know, pass me by. At that time of the day on Sunday, there never was many people on the streets. So this big limousine go past, and when it was empty it would go slow, you know? And one day they stopped, and he said, "Would you like me to take you to church?" He knew, he knew where I was going. So I looked at him and all that. He was an old Jewish gentleman, and he was so wrinkled. I never seen anybody wrinkled, you know, like that. And, oh, he was so nice. So he said, "Get into the back seat, and I'll take you up."

He was going to the Great (?). And he says, "I drive my lady," he says. Marx Brothers' mother. "I take her to the synagogue," he says, "every Sunday." And he showed me where the synagogue was there, and my church was there.

So, oh, I don't know how long he took me. He called me then the little Colleen. And I don't know, he took me, he must have took me for over a year, to church. And one day I got into the car, one Sunday, and he says, "My dear lady," he says, "died in that seat where you're sitting." I never could forget that. And he said, "She was a dear lady." (she is moved) And, uh, he took me up, uh, he took me up to church. And then he come back after that another time, and I was just wondering did he come back to say goodbye to me, because he said, he put out his hand, he says, "Well, now, my little Colleen," he says, "this is the last time I will see you."

And that was the last time I seen him. And I often wondered about that. And I never seen her face till I seen a movie, not long ago, when she was on that movie, and I stayed up to watch it, and I seen her, the pretty woman she was. Yeah. So that's my story. Yeah. Oh, fantastic. But that old gentleman, God rest him if he's dead, and, he was so good.

LEVINE: Now, was this before you met your husband?

LAUGHLIN: Huh?

LEVINE: Did this happen before you met your husband?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes. That all happened to me. Now, um, uh, they, the Bakers, I was there, I think, three years, in that place, and they went away to, up to Boston. And this girl called me and she said want to come up and work with her in Irvington, the Hudson. So I went. And the girl was from, that was the girl that come out with me, by the way. Her name was Annie. And this other girl was there in this house, too, and her name was Kathleen. So, anyway, and when I was there for a while, Annie left, and Kathleen and I were working together, and Kathleen, uh, well, she just did everything, mind the kids and everything. And she said, her brother was coming out, Kathleen said, her brother was coming to this country. Now, this is 1928. So he come out, and he come up to where we were, and we were introduced, and nothing happened or anything for a long time. In fact, he got, he had a pass to go to work in one of the hotels. He got it from Ireland when he was working, and he just went right in and got the job. And,

uh, then he, uh, then he, we started to go out together, and I was working with Kathleen about four years, or three, two or three years, anyway, at this time. So that's where I met my husband.

LEVINE: What was his name?

LAUGHLIN: Owen, Owen Laughlin. Yeah. And, uh, it was a very nice, he's very, he looks like a Spaniard, with black, curly hair. He's very good looking. Yeah. I had a picture to take with me, and he said, "Ah, don't take that." So, uh, no, he was a very good man. I always say, I think he was the honest man in the wide world. He was so honest. He worked for Fordham then, and he worked in Manhattan College in his later years. And, no, he worked really for the Board of Education, and then he retired from there, and then he was working and he met one of the Jesuit priests from Fordham, and he went up and they talked a while, and he worked with them, you know, with the food bit, you know, the restaurants or whatever. And then, uh, when he left that and we moved over to the west side near the Hudson, where my daughter lives now, and he was out, we were out walking in Van Cortlandt Park, or he was, and we met this Brother, a Christian Brother from Manhattan College, and from home. He was right from home

with him, in Ireland. So he went up and worked there.

He didn't get much, you know, but just to pass the time, he got his food and he adored them all, you know, they were so nice to him. And, uh, then when my daughter-in-law got sick, that young man's wife got sick, she died, she got sick. She had, you know they tie with them bandages, the, the things that they used for the menstruation.

You know, what do they call them? She all swole up like that, and then she died in Valley Hospital from it. So I minded his two daughters for five years, back and forth.

That's when I left. That's when I left Riverdale and come over to Jersey.

LEVINE: Why don't you tell the names of your children and the ones that are here with you today?

LAUGHLIN: What are the names of my children?

LEVINE: Yes.

LAUGHLIN: Edmund was the oldest one. He worked for the government.

He went to, he got a scholarship to Regis, and a scholarship to Fordham, and then he got a job and just went to Washington and got a job there. And, uh, he knew them all. He knew them all. He could tell you all.

And, so he was there thirty-one years, in the government,

and he is retired now and living in Maryland. So, he had three children, Patrick is the eldest, he's a college graduate. He was in the submarines for five years, he come out, and they sent him to school for another year to polish up or something, and he has a big position now.

Janet is crazy, she teaches school, she's crazy about archeology like me. I love that stuff. And she is living in Georgia, too. And, uh, Krissie, she was the movie queen. So she graduated from college in Virginia and went out to California, and she was working for Mr. Stone.

What is the name, Charlie Stone, or, one of them movie stars, anyway, you know. And she didn't like things, you know, you see. So she just quit and went to be a, not a secretary, but an accountant or something for two ladies. Yeah. So that's Chrissy. Chrissy they always say looks like me. But she's a circus, she's a little imp. Yeah. And, uh, so that's his three kids.

LEVINE: And how about your other children?

LAUGHLIN: So, Owen, and he has two daughters. Denise is twenty-three now. She went to public school in New Jersey, and she went to Gettysburg, she just, she graduated from Gettysburg. She's a smart one. And her and three other girls went to Atlanta. She has a big

position. And she's only there but five months and she's got a promotion. She can speak Spanish and French just like a native. She's the only one there that can. So, but, uh, Tracy now graduated. She went one year just to college. And she has been working in Norstroms for all of five years now, I guess, four, well, maybe four years. Beautiful girls, very pretty. And, of course, I'm like their mother, you know? They call me sometimes twice and three times a week. "Grandma, I need a hug." So that's the story of them.

LEVINE: And your daughter?

LAUGHLIN: Oh, Mary. Mary, Mary's a sweetheart. Uh, Mary went a couple of years to Fordham University, and she was a . . .
(she is moved) What do you call the professional?
She was a secretary in Colgate's for fifteen years. She has arthritis now. But they loved her in that place. And we went down that day, and I went down with her to get the job, and we went in, and I remember it was a Wednesday, and we walked in. She was a very pretty girl, Mary, when she was eighteen, you know, and nineteen. And she walked in and she went to the head boss. But she didn't know it was the head. So they never asked her for a reference or anything. (she laughs) He says,

"Can you start work tomorrow, Mary?" So she says, "Sure she can," and she started to work. And she went down the next day and got her job. I never had no letter of reference or anything else. She went to the private schools, you know. And, uh, she met this man, she always talks about him, how good he was, you know. And she worked with him for years. And then, uh, and her hands, you know, typing and all that. Yeah. So she retired, and she gets Social Security, you know. She gets the benefits, you know, Social Security. And she had quite a lot of, I saved all her money. She didn't know I saved her money, but I saved it all, and give it back to her.

But she got, before this, though, of course, before she retired, we were over in Ireland. Her cousin, my cousin and her cousin, of course, is married to her husband's brother, and she went over as her bridesmaid there, to Ireland. And she met, the best man was her brother, and they got married. He was working in England, and he sent for her, and . . . (they laugh)

LEVINE: And we should mention that your son, Owen, and your daughter, Mary, are here today.

LAUGHLIN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Um, well, is there anything else, I mean, when you think about coming here as a young woman and spending the rest of your life in this country, are there things that you would say you've retained about being Irish, about coming here from Ireland and living out your life here? Are there certain qualities that you have that you consider to be . . .

LAUGHLIN: Well, you know, the way I look at it, there are certain people, you know, you can be from a family, and you're different from the family, too, you know? I was kind of always picked in the family for people like, for instance, our schoolteacher, and our schoolmistress, she'd have me over there for the weekend, and she didn't ask the others. And a lot of things, you know?

LEVINE: Why do you think you were, you've been so fortunate in so many ways?

LAUGHLIN: Yeah, I don't know. I don't know. I went to this place, they were a Protestant family, this is Ireland now, and they were well-to-do because they had two servant boys there, and, uh, they just, she just liked me. I think I made fun for them. When I was in that house, that's the first experience I had with working out, anywhere,

from home. And they had a victrola, so it was in a closet.

And one day she was out, I takes it out and puts it on the table. And when she, when they come in I was playing Harley Loder[ph]. (they laugh) (?) pleased. And then another time I had on the music, you know, a polka. And she come in, and this is my lady boss. I grabbed her and we danced the polka. (Dr. Levine laughs) That, I think, I made fun, I think, you know? I think that was it. Because then, when my mother wanted me home because I embroider, and my sister Bridget knew I liked the place, and she went, and they didn't like her at all.

Yeah. They didn't. When we would go out to do something, that lady herself would take (?) with a bucket of water, a can of water, she'd walk beside me and take it. And when she would go out for serving tea with the, to the men and her husband and all that, she'd take me with her and all that. I don't know. I was just a companion, or I was old, maybe I was (?).

LEVINE: Maybe you were what?

LAUGHLIN: Maybe I was (?). (they laugh) But, uh, I was asked everyplace. I really was. And every, there were seven Protestant houses, families, where we lived. My father, we had a, I think we had about the best farm on the place.

But I was in every house. And then men, they would go to the town, or women, they'd bring candy, bring me home candy, and, uh, I don't know, I just, I never could figure, you know? I think maybe I was my father's favorite. My father said I was like his Aunt Rose. Yeah. So here's a joke. My Aunt Rose was a very pretty girl, and she had every color of suit, only velvet, she wanted the velvet suit. So, of course, I kept it up. I said, "I'm going to get a velvet suit, too." You know, I got a velvet suit. So, but I never seen Aunt Rose. But she eloped with, she eloped with somebody. They were trying to marry her to someone else, but she eloped with the one she loved.

LEVINE: Let's pause here. We need to turn the tape over one last time.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: Okay. We're now on Side Two of Tape Two, and I'm speaking with Rose Kelly Laughlin, and I want to, uh, you were talking about, you seem to take after your Aunt Rose although you never met your Aunt Rose.

LAUGHLIN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, is there anything else, I mean, well, let's talk about this time in your life.

LAUGHLIN: Oh, now?

LEVINE: This, you're in your nineties now. What is this phase of life like for you?

LAUGHLIN: Well, I was taking care of my husband, you know. We lived there twenty, twenty-four years in that apartment. And, uh, that's when, um, I was minding my son's two girls. That's part of it. And, of course, they would come over, then, and stay with me, but I stayed over in their house and mind them. And they never seemed to miss their mother much, you know, because, and they would say to me at night, "Grandma, tell us to go to sleep the way you used to do in Ireland." And I'd say to them, "Come on now, go to sleep there, girls, I'm going to spank you." I'd put on a good brogue, you know. And then they'd giggle and laugh and everything. And, uh, they were so happy. They always talk about, we had, the driveway was like a hill and come down, and when I'd give them their supper at night we'd go up to the top of that hill, and I was twenty years younger then, and you'd come down the hill on that. And, um, and then, of course, they had their homework

to do. But we had a cat, and they called her, what did they call that cat? Anyway, that cat, when I'd be raking the leaves, that cat would follow me. When I'd bare a space in the leaves, she'd come over, move every time to get closer to me. And when she would go out at night, she would come to the back door. She would get up on the wire, and they had a little black railing on the back door, and then the wonder(?) was there. She'd get up there and tap the wonder(?) with her foot to get in. Shadow, that was her name, "Shadow." Every morning when the girls would go to school, go up to get the bus, she'd walk them up. I walked them up, too, but she walked with us. And when she knew the time that they'd be coming home, she went up to the top of the hill and lay there, and walk down between the two of them. You can't, you think I'm making this up, it's the honest to God's truth. And that, if I was home in my own place and come back again, she would crawl up and get on my knee, on my lap, the cat. And then I would rub her and pat her for a while, and she'd go down. I think when you feed them, you know, they always cling to you like that. So, oh, she was fifteen years old. And then one day I said, now, when she was coming down the stairs, she only can use her two front feet, and I said you'd be doing an act of charity

to take that cat and get her put away. So the two of them did, and they put her, they carried her in her arms.

They went out in the car and carried her in the arms and let her down on the table and shed a couple of tears and said, "Goodbye, Shadow." And you know she says, "Meow." Honest to God. They told me this when they come home. And, uh, the man put her to sleep.

LEVINE: Well, do you, do you think back over your life more now than you did before?

LAUGHLIN: Yes, yes, I do. I think, well, I think back on all the things I told you, I laugh at some things, you know? And, uh, everybody was so nice. I think, you know, how nice these people was. I met, uh, a lady they called, she was Mrs. Melkson. Her name was Eleanor Lupont. She was the nicest. I cooked one day eight chickens, and her and I cleaned them off. They had a yacht out on Long Island Sound. And we cleaned them off, and I said to her, and when we're mixing them up, and we made potato salad, and tomatoes, we made big basins of salads, and I said to her, "My wrists are very thin," I said, "I like to mix with my hands." So I, this is what I said, "Wait till I wash my paws." (they laugh) So she was laughing, so she says, "All right, Rosie, you wash your paws."

So I started to mix and everything. Well, we went, took that out to the yacht, and I went out, and there was two other girls there, and she never took them out. I went out in the yacht, to the yacht with them, and she made a sandwich. There was a count there from England, he had a monarch on him, and she made a sandwich herself, and put four big toothpicks sticking up in it, and I was supposed to give them to him. So they knew him, you know, so well. So, of course, I put this on the plate, and it was over slyly, and he looked at it, you know, "Is that for me?" And, uh, he took it and left it there, and, "I'll get you later," he says. (they laugh) So, of course, we had a laugh, you know. And then when they had the ripper glass. You ever hear of, did you ever hear of the ripper glass? It's a glass, you know, and they make holes down in it like here, and when you drink it it would go down. (she laughs) So I was the one always picked to do these tricks, you know? So, uh, I did that, too, to another one of them, on that same day I was out there. Well, anyway, it was nice, you know, and I always think of her, you know, she was so ready to make a joke. But Mrs. Baker, I'll tell it to you, another thing, Mrs. Baker, she was Spanish, she loved her husband so much. He was English descent. That lady

cleaned his shoes, and she always, I never seen a shoe that was soiled in all his closet. She took all his clothes to the cleaners, and Mikey darling all the time, oh, she just loved him. And they were such a nice, and I called their house a love nest. Yeah, it was so nice.

And they took me everyplace, to the beaches and everywhere with them, you know. Of course, I was minding their son, I was minding little Jimmy, and he was a wild kid. (she laughs) But, uh, so that, that was that.

That was them two ladies I just adored, they were so nice. Well, I liked them all. But, uh, they had such a sense of humor, you know? Mrs. Baker would be upstairs, and she knew all the Irish songs, and she'd be singing My Wild Irish Rose, and Kathleen (?). I was singing downstairs. We were half crazy. But she was, Jimmy used to say, the boy that I was minding, the two prettiest girls on the block, his mother and me. So that was a compliment. And then there was a family, the McGowans[ph]. And, uh, she was the daughter of the, I forget what her name was, but she was married to a man the name of, Mr. McGowan was I called him. Her father was the president of the Canadian Railroad, and she was married to Mr. McGowan. Little Eleanor, they had a son and daughter, little Eleanor always come over to me every

day when she'd come from school. And we used to talk, and she was so crazy about her dad. "My Daddy, my Daddy."

I said, "Your daddy's not coming home. This is me. Your daddy's not coming home," I says, "tonight at seven o'clock." And she said, "Yes, he is. He always does." And I says, "He called me up and called here," I says, "and told me he wouldn't be able to make it tonight." And that was all. I didn't remember any more about it. She went home and told her mother, and here's this Mr. McGowan[ph], a gentleman on Wall Street. So the next day I was out with the kids, with Jimmy, and they were there playing, too, and they're all around, and Mrs. McGowan[ph] herself was knitting down on a chair, and he was washing his car. So she says to me, "Rose, come over here." (she laughs) So she says, "Why did you tell Eleanor about my husband wasn't coming home?"

You know, and I was so thunderstruck, and he looks at me and winks, and laughs. And that was it. That was all the spirit. I was, it comes back to you, you know?

So, uh, I wonder where Eleanor is now. She was such a beautiful child then. She was nine years old that time, Eleanor.

LEVINE: Well, is there, is there any . . .

LAUGHLIN: That was in Great Neck.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Is there any advice that you would have to give to somebody who was immigrating to this country now?

LAUGHLIN: Well, just be honest, and be clean. And whenever you start something, finish it. And always be nice to the children, you know? And that's all people expects of you, you know. You go in to do a job. That's the way I look at it. You go in to do a job, and you do it, and if you don't know how to do it, ask them and they'll tell you. So, we were pretty well brought up. My mother was a great worker, and we knew how to do a lot of things. We knew how to wash wools, woolen sweaters, and I was a good knitter, and I could embroider. Many, uh, when the kids were small, when children were small out here, I could put the bows on their caps. I knit them caps. I knit them sweaters, you know, to the people I work for. Another thing I did was this lady, Mrs. Clark, she had an Irish woman knit her a knit suit. She wanted a knit suit. But she got sick and she couldn't finish it. And I took it and finished the skirt. Yeah. So that's the things, you know, that, I think you might say, endears you to them, you know?

LEVINE: And how do you feel about the part of you that's American and the part of your that's Irish? How do you, um . . .

LAUGHLIN: The part that's Irish?

LEVINE: Yeah. How do you think about that?

LAUGHLIN: Well, I think I'm more American now, do things more American ways, you know? But it seemed very easy for me to get into the ways of anything, you know? I could see you doing something, and say, well, I could, I'll try it too, you know? Things like that. And, uh, they all, when I would work in the kitchen, the ladies always loved to come into the kitchen because I had flowers, I had plants. I could grow plants. I used to do the altar at home, and I could grow plants. Me, I have eleven plants in my own house. And where my sister-in-law would have them, let them die, mine never died. So, uh, I don't know.

LEVINE: Well, it sounds like you were like your father.

LAUGHLIN: In our ways, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

LAUGHLIN: That's what, um, I was watching a mason, his name was

Tom O'Connell, and he was building my cousin's house for him, and he said to me one day, "Come on out and look at this, Rose." He says, "If you're a daughter of your father," he says, "you'll tell me what I'm doing wrong." Absolutely, that's what he said.

LEVINE: Okay. Is there anything you'd like to say before we close? Is there anything else that maybe we haven't talked about, or anything you'd like to say about coming to this country, or whatever?

LAUGHLIN: I enjoyed every minute I was in this country. I enjoyed, and I knew, as soon as I put my foot in the country, I knew what I'd be doing, you know what, because I didn't have the education. I knew I'd be minding children, or something like that. Anything else in the domestic line, I think I could do it, you know. And, uh, I always worked for somebody that had more than myself, you know what I mean? I would work, that's why I worked with the rich society, you know? And, uh, I seem to fit in, you know? I don't know, I was well-reared. We were poor, you know, but we got everything we need, nice clothes and everything. And, uh, I just seemed to know where I fitted in. And I was liked every place I went, and I can go back to any, back to a lot of, when I would leave a place,

they were going away anywhere, "Rose, the guest room is your any time you want it." I never met, American people are marvelous, honest to God, and they're just fabulous.

They're kind, I never bought a sweater or underwear while I worked with those people. There was one lady that went away to the Catskills one time, two sisters that went away, and she knew I had lost my umbrella, so she bought me an umbrella with a note on it, "To a little girl that lost her umbrella." And, um, no, the American people, I love America. I just love it. I love everybody I meet, and now I'm in Jersey. People are so darn nice. Every one of this one. I go to the store, I go to the Grand Union, and one of the managers is, like, an Irish lady, is there for years, she comes over and gives me a hug.

LEVINE: Well, I'm sure people feel the same about you as you feel about them. I want to thank you very, very much. This has been most pleasurable. I'm so happy you were able to come today.

LAUGHLIN: Yeah.

LEVINE: I've been speaking with Rose Kelly Laughlin who came from Northern Ireland in 1925 when she was twenty-one years of age.

LAUGHLIN: Right.

LEVINE: And today is April 30, 1995. Mrs. Laughlin is ninety-one years old at the time of this interview. We're at the Ellis Island Studio. And this is Janet Levine, and I'm signing off.