EI-611
DELLA (BRIDGET GERARD) MULLEN GLECKEL
BIRTH DATE: JUNE 3, 1911
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INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED AND REVIEWED BY PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 5/1998

IRELAND, 1925
AGE 14
PASSAGE ON "THE SCYTHIA"

SIGRIST: Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Tuesday, May 2nd, 1995. I am in Mamaroneck, New York, which is in Westchester County, with Della Gleckel. Mrs. Gleckel came from Ireland in 1925 when she was fourteen years old. Mrs. Gleckel, can we begin by you giving me your birth date, please.

GLECKEL: June 3rd, 1911.

SIGRIST: I also want to say for the sake of the tape that I'm using a microphone that I'm not accustomed to and it's very strong. So whoever is listening to the beginning of this interview, I'll be fiddling with the dials probably for the first twenty minutes. You said June 3rd, 1911.

GLECKEL: Right.

SIGRIST: And what name were you born with?

GLECKEL: I was born with Bridget, B-R-I-D-G-E-T, Gerard, G-E-R-A-R-D, Mullen, M-U-L-L-E-N.

SIGRIST: Mullen was your maiden name.

GLECKEL: Maiden name.

SIGRIST: And do you know any stories about your birth?

GLECKEL: Well, the only story I can tell is my mother was given up for dead before I was born, practically. And she, she's the only one in our rural countryside that had to go to a hospital to have me born. My four brothers and sisters that were born ahead of me were born at home, you know, just by a neighbor come in to help with the delivery. There was no doctor in our area. So she had to go to the hospital with me and she prayed to Saint Gerard, who is the patron saint of pregnant women, that if the baby was born and her own life was saved, she would call the baby "Gerard" whether it was a boy or a girl. And, of course, you know Gerard is

a boy's name. So I was christened Bridget Gerard. And to this day I have so much confidence in Saint Gerard, I give the little the prayer to people that are pregnant or that try to get pregnant. So it's, it's just very fulfilling.

SIGRIST: What town were you born in in Ireland?

GLECKEL: I was born in Tuam, T-U-A-M.

SIGRIST: And where...

GLECKEL: County Galway.

SIGRIST: And where is County Galway in the country?

GLECKEL: Galway's in the west of Ireland. And Salt Hill is very famous. It's on the Atlantic Ocean. And before I sailed from Ireland, the boats used to leave from Salt Hill, County Galway. But I left from Cobh, C-O-B-H...

SIGRIST: You're saying salt, like, like the mineral...

GLECKEL: Yeah, Salt Hill, right.

SIGRIST: Salt Hill. What, what memories do you have of the town itself? What sticks out in your mind about the town that you lived in?

GLECKEL: Well, when I lived there I thought the town was huge and I thought it was, oh, just a big town. Now, when I go back to visit, it is such a small place they don't even have a restaurant that you could eat lunch or dinner in. So your perspective changes so.

SIGRIST: Is there a building that sticks out from childhood?

GLECKEL: Well, the school I went to would have been the building that would stay with me, but it's torn, it's demolished completely and rebuilt.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the school?

GLECKEL: And the church was torn down and rebuilt. They have a new church there. Oh, the school. I loved school. I would cry if I had to stay home from school.

SIGRIST: How old are children when they begin school in Ireland?

GLECKEL: I went to school when I was two years old.

SIGRIST: Two years old?

GLECKEL: Because I was the youngest of five and farming, we lived on a farm, and my parents had to work in the farm everyday. So in order to have me taken care of, my sister used to carry me to school, between my brother and my sister and my older ones. And I went to school and just sat there and played, you know, with the ball frame, we called it, and different little toys. The ball frame was like a, a standing fixture on the ground that had little balls and you put them from one side of the line to the other. They had just very simple toys.

SIGRIST: So you went to school so early, almost as a baby sitting situation.

GLECKEL: Yeah, almost like a nursery. And, I think as a result of that I loved school because it left memories of being two years old and loving playing with the things. And then, like, learning was like playing to me. I just loved school.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the school building for me?

GLECKEL: It was just no bigger than my apartment..

SIGRIST: Which is...

GLECKEL: ...the whole thing. I have two bedrooms, living room, dining room and kitchen.

SIGRIST: Which is what? Right, so, so what is this? About forty feet by...

GLECKEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...twenty five feet or so.

GLECKEL: Yeah, very, very small. Because there weren't, you see, we lived in the country and there were so few children for the school. I would say at a maximum the most we ever had in the school was a hundred. And that was really the maximum.

SIGRIST: How many grades were in that one...

GLECKEL: Oh, we had, of course, no kindergarten, but we had first grade to sixth grade. And I went to school until I was twelve years old. But the education was so terrific. The strength of the education was reading, writing and arithmetic, we called it. You

called it math in this country. But our teachers on those three subjects, pronunciation, spelling, penmanship, was just of upper most importance.

SIGRIST: Did you learn Gaelic in school?

GLECKEL: We just had a, no, we didn't. It wasn't in school when I was there. My grandparents spoke Gaelic. And I can say a few words in Gaelic. I still understand a few. (she coughs)

SIGRIST: But it wasn't taught in school. Is there a teacher that sticks out in your mind from your years going to school in Ireland?

GLECKEL: Yes, there was Miss Guitin, G-U-I-T-I-N. She was from Ennis, County Clare. We were, of course, from County Galway. And when I did something that displeased her, she would get a pencil and make me close my hand. And she'd hit me on the knuckles with it. That left a lasting impression. My other teacher was my singing, music teacher, and she was just wrapped in music. And I couldn't carry a tune in a paper bag, you know, I just have no feeling for music. I love to see musical comedies and I love to go to the opera and the ballet, but myself personally, if I ever sang you would leave the room. And I was a good student. I was in the top three in my class, and naturally being in with those

kids, everybody wanted to be friends with the best because we did have certain privileges. So I would go to church with them, and they would sneak me into the choir. And I would sing. I thought I could sing in those days, you know, when I was little. The next day, the music teacher would say, "Who threw everybody off-key last night? What happened in the choir?" Nobody would tell the story it was me. (she laughs) So I have pleasant memories.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the house that you lived in, in this town. Can you describe the house for me?

GLECKEL: Well, we first lived in, we called it the "lower village." And we just had like two big rooms, like the kitchen was your dining room. It was your storage, it had the fire. Of course, the rooms had the fireplace. And then the other room was for sleeping.

SIGRIST: What was the house made out of?

GLECKEL: Oh, it was made out of wood, all made out of wood. And a lot of them had, I think part of it was like stone in the front, just like, you know, fieldst--, well, not the, not the fieldstone you have in this country. But it had a...(noise off-mike)

SIGRIST: It sounds like someone is downstairs.

GLECKEL: My neighbor, my tenant.

SIGRIST: Oh, is he coming in downstairs?

GLECKEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh, okay.

GLECKEL: It had a thatched roof.

SIGRIST: How, do you, do you remember how they would thatch a roof? Could you describe that process for me?

GLECKEL: No, no.

SIGRIST: You didn't ever have to do that.

GLECKEL: Yeah, no.

SIGRIST: But a thatched roof is like straw.

GLECKEL: It's straw, just like sheaves of straw, and they just

place each sheave one right after the other and naturally have it very, very tight. They do have a wood base to it. There's still a few, possibly, thatched rooves over there in places like Connemara, which is real mountainous, and...

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please.

GLECKEL: C-O-N-N-E-M-A-R-A, Connemara, yeah.

SIGRIST: What kind of floor did you have?

GLECKEL: Cement. No heat, only the fireplace. And at night when you went to bed, you took the ashes and covered the coals so that they would be, part of them would live for the morning so you didn't have to start the fire over again. And can you imagine getting out of bed in the morning? Kids in this country? And no heat and a cement floor? I mean a wood floor would at least be a little bit warmer. But we were so accustomed to that that when we come to this country, a cold water flat was like steam heat. It was great.

SIGRIST: What, what did you light the house with? How did you light...

GLECKEL: Kerosene. We had kerosene lamps hanging on the wall and we had to go to town, which was in this old village it was at least five miles away. And we would either walk, and then as we got older went on our bicycle, to get oil, kerosene for the lamps. And the lamps had a globe on them and, you know, a part for the kerosene in the bottom, and you lit the wick. And when you think of it now, like, you know, when we had wind storms and that, but I never remember seeing a fire.

SIGRIST: Tell me, is there a piece of furniture that sticks out in your mind about that first house that you lived in?

GLECKEL: No, very, you know, the furniture was all made by people, like we have the caned chairs here, like my caned chair over there (she gestures). Most of the, a lot of the chairs were made out of rods. We called them "sallow rods," rods that weren't seasoned yet, you know, they were very flexible.

SIGRIST: You called them sallow?

GLECKEL: Sallow.

SIGRIST: S-A-L-L-O-W. (they spell together).

GLECKEL: Yeah, sallow rods. That just meant that they were new vines and they weren't seasoned when they dry up and get, but most of the things were like homemade. Of course, what you would treasure now.

SIGRIST: Tell me, how old were you when the family moved?

GLECKEL: Then we, then the government, which I don't quite understands the details of it, but they decided that this village was not liveable really. There was too many people in this small, little area. So they gave, they selected certain houses and the way they made the selection was if there was two houses really almost stuck together. One was moved and the other was left so it wouldn't be as crowded. So we were fortunate. We were moved to, we got twenty four acres of land just about five miles north of the old village. And this started like a new development. And our houses were far apart. They were maybe a quarter to a half a mile apart, which was really great.

SIGRIST: And this is new construction. They built new...

GLECKEL: This is absolute, we had a slate roof. And the house was, I call it cement but there's another name for it, you know. Concrete, is it?

SIGRIST: Stucco, maybe?

GLECKEL: It looked like stucco or concrete, looked like that. And there we had three rooms, like three bedrooms and a big kitchen and a pantry in the back. Now the pantry was where, when we milked the cows we brought, we had big crocks for the milk in the pantry. And you brought the milk in (she coughs) when you milked the cows in the evening and poured it into those crocks and just left them there because the crocks stayed so cold. And in the morning you would skim the cream off the top and just throw that skim milk out for the pigs or the chickens instead of water, anybody. We had troughs like outside and just poured it in. Or you could drink all the skim milk you wanted. But we never drank it because we liked the whole milk.

SIGRIST: So generally the skim milk went into the troughs...

GLECKEL: Oh, sure.

SIGRIST: ...to feed the animals.

GLECKEL: To feed the animals.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you moved? What year was it when you moved?

GLECKEL: I was six.

SIGRIST: Oh, so, so that would be 1917, 1918, depending.

GLECKEL: Yeah, yeah, and then I left, as I said, when I was fourteen.

SIGRIST: The first house that you lived in, was that a farm also?

GLECKEL: Well, we had very little farm. And it wasn't desirable. It was hilly, you know, it wasn't the kind that you could really sow a crop to any great extent, you know, whereas...

SIGRIST: Did you have livestock in the first house?

GLECKEL: No.

SIGRIST: No. That all happened when you moved.

GLECKEL: That all happened, yeah.

SIGRIST: I see. What was your father name?

GLECKEL: John.

SIGRIST: And tell me what he did for a living.

GLECKEL: That's what he, well, he and my mother did come to this country when three of the children were born, my oldest sister and then my oldest brother and then my next sister, and they went to Butte, Montana and he worked in the copper mines. And my mother stayed home, of course. But then she got pregnant, then, no, then my brother was born who is just a year older than me in Butte.

SIGRIST: Was he born in Butte? He was.

GLECKEL: He's the only one that was born in Butte. And then my mother got pregnant with me, which was, his birthday was May 28th and I'm June 3rd, so it was just about a year apart. And she thought it was too much for her because she had four children then and pregnant with me. So she decided to go back home because her parents were there. And my father stayed on. I guess it must have been the season and he planned to stay on for like six more months or something. And then he come home. But the copper got on his lungs and, of course, Ireland is so damp (she coughs),

that it was the worst climate for anybody to go home to after working in mines because he got what they called "miner's consumption." It's tuberculosis, of course. And he died at forty six. He would have been forty seven in January and he died in November.

SIGRIST: Was that before you came to America?

GLECKEL: Oh, yeah. Because I was born home.

SIGRIST: Right. So how old were you when your father died?

GLECKEL: He died in 1922.

SIGRIST: I see. So just a few years before you came to America.

GLECKEL: Yeah, just a few years. I think I was eleven.

SIGRIST: If you don't mind me asking, what sticks out in your mind about when your father died and that period in your life?

GLECKEL: Oh, it was just devastating because my oldest sister had already migrated to this country and my oldest brother and next sister were planning on coming to this country because

there was no future in Ireland. So, you know, if you're a family of five and you're the youngest, and you have both parents, and then your father who you just think is the glue to hold everything together, I mean he was the one who worked on the farm (she coughs) and he was just God to us.

And to think that he was gone at such a young age, like he was so pleasant and such a wonderful father, that you just felt your world had just split and you wondered what's going to happen. Like I can even think back at that young age of maybe eleven of wondering what was going to happen to my mother, the widow at forty five. And there was no future in Ireland. And the farm seemed monstrous then to do whereas like seven of us did up to a couple of years before. Now there's only my brother Johnnie and I and my mother. (she coughs)

SIGRIST: Would you like to get a glass of water right now? We're going to pause. (break in tape) Okay, we're now resuming. We were just talking about (Mrs. Gleckel clears her throat) the emotional...

GLECKEL: The devastation when my father died.

SIGRIST: Can you, can you talk a little bit about, about what happens when a person died in Ireland? What kinds of ceremonies are given? What do you remember about your father's death?

GLECKEL: Oh sure. Well, of course, my father was forty six years old. And when young people die, it's a real tragedy in Ireland. They really go into deep, deep mourning. And, different from this country, the body is taken to the church the night before burial. Whereas in this country, you know, the wake goes on and they're taken from the funeral parlor to the cemetery. But I'm going to be eighty four in June and the area would be thinking of me going to die. The younger people would be saying to each other, "Well, Mrs. Gleckel is due to go any day." And that was almost like a party, when an old person died. But don't that really make sense because, you know, when you do get like over eighty you know that it's inevitable. That Death is just around the corner.

SIGRIST: But what about when your father died? What, what, explain to me how, the ceremonies around his death, what that was like.

GLECKEL: Well, it was just sheer sadness like, you know, you're

just in deep mourning in the house. They're waked in the house, of course. They're not waked in a funeral parlor.

SIGRIST: Yeah, this is what I'm, I'm getting at.

GLECKEL: Oh, that's what you're getting at. (they laugh) Yeah. And they're not laid out in their own clothes. I had almost forgotten that that is kind of news to so many American people, of course. You're laid out in a brown shroud if you're like my father's age. But if it were a young person they would have a, I mean a real young person...

SIGRIST: Like a child.

GLECKEL: Under twenty one, they'd be laid out in white, just like a white shroud. And the undertaker comes in, just sets it up. The wake is in the house and everybody comes regardless of how small the house. They come all day and all night, you know, to pay respects, and then the last night the body is taken to church. And it lays there in the casket until the Mass the next day. And then it's buried. But my mother was such a strong person and very, very bright, that was were fortunate to have a mother like that. Because when my father

passed away, her feeling, as I can look back, must have been she had to go on. And she immediately kind of thought, well, until my brother and I got to be a little older, at least at the age that we could get some kind of job in the United States, she stayed in Ireland and made the best of it. What was it? Three years, like, after my father died, three or four. And we had very good neighbors and they all pitch in with the farming, you know. They say, "Make hay when the sunshine." Well, that's what happened even when my father was living. If it was a sunny day and we had, we were putting in some kind of potatoes or cabbage or turnips or what have you in the fields, all the neighbors come and helped my father. Then he went and helped. It was like a barter system. So, when my father passed away, we still had those good neighbors and good friends and they certainly took over and helped my mother.

SIGRIST: After your father died, was there an official period of mourning that your family observed?

GLECKEL: No, you don't.

SIGRIST: Was there special clothing you had to wear?

GLECKEL: Oh, you wear a, a band on your shoulder, a black band, if you're over twenty one. You wear a black band on your suit to show that you're mourning, deep mourning for somebody in the family that passed away.

SIGRIST: I see.

GLECKEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: We've talked a little bit about your mother. What was her name?

GLECKEL: Her maiden name of, I'm not sure whether she was christened Bridget, but Delia, D-E-L-I-A. Delia Cunningham was her maiden name.

SIGRIST: And that's C-U...

GLECKEL: ...N-N-I-N-G-H-A-M.

SIGRIST: But you think she may have been christened Bridget but she went by Delia...

GLECKEL: But as I get, yes, I think. In Ireland, nobody goes by the name their christened, it seems, you know. I'm just exaggerating but you take Ted Kennedy, the senator. His real name is Edward. How do they ever get Ted from Edward? But that's prevalent in Ireland.

SIGRIST: What, what can you tell me about your mother's family background?

GLECKEL: Oh I, she was very close to her mother and father. Her mother was a tiny woman, oh a real hard, hard worker. My grandfather was, we just loved my grandfather but he was as lazy as sin. He did nothing. Grandmother would, Grandmother never wore shoes except when she went to market on Thursday. And then she would put her shoes in the donkey and cart. She'd put them in the cart. And just when she got close to the town, she'd put them on. But can you imagine, when the ground was full of ice and snow, she would go out barefoot. I wish you could see her feet, with bunions and like calloused. And she was so tiny. She was like five foot three and weighed like a hundred pounds. And she had her little idiosyncracies. She never wanted anybody to see her eat.

She just thought that you would feel so sorry for her if she didn't eat, so she would never sit and eat with Grandfather and any of us kids that were over there. And then we would go out in the fields with my grandfather. He had a field near his house we call a "Cuckoo Hill." Really, it was a job to go up the hill. And we used to love to roll down. But to go up it was so steep that you really had to be accustomed to it. So we would start out with Grandfather. We'd forget something, maybe a jacket or something, and we'd go back and we'd find Grandmother eating. She would eat all by herself. But my grandfather was so adorable. As I said, he was so lazy that he loved when we were there. He would cut our bread up in certain shapes and he'd say to us, "Now, this is a colonel and this is a captain," you know, to get us to eat. "Who wants to eat the sergeant?" You know, he would play games with us. We loved him.

SIGRIST: Do you know, obviously their last name is Cunningham...

GLECKEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What, what were their first names?

GLECKEL: My grandfather was Luke, L-U-K-E. And my grandmother was Catherine.

SIGRIST: Do you know Catherine's maiden name?

GLECKEL: Yeah, Kilgarrif. K-I-L-G-A-R-R-I-F.

SIGRIST: Are there any other stories you can tell me about either of your grandparents?

GLECKEL: Well, they had a dog, too, my mother's parents. They had a dog "Fan." And when we would leave our house to go to visit Grandfather, the dog would leave their house and meet us half way. Wasn't that remarkable? And then my grandmother and grandfather would want to give us a sandwich when we were going home. Of course, they never let us go alone. Grandfather would take us home. So we were so excited. We had enough of them by this time if we were there for a week, and we wanted to get home, you know, to be with our brothers and sisters and that. So usually it was my brother and I that had to go and spend time with my grandparents. So they would make a sandwich and we'd say, "No, we don't want it. We won't eat it. We're not hungry." And we'd insist we didn't want whatever

they were giving us, you know, muffins or something. And we'd get half way home and we'd say to Grandfather, "Oh, I wish we took that food. I'm so hungry." He'd say, "I've got it." He had it in his pocket. And he'd give it to us. Wonderful memories. But my father's parents were dead when he got married.

SIGRIST: So you never knew...

GLECKEL: No. All I know is their maiden name was Meehan, my mother, (correcting herself) my grandmother on my father's side, her name was Mary Meehan, M-E-E-H-A-N. And they were from Kellglass, Ballyglass I mean, County Mayo.

SIGRIST: Ballyglass, can you spell that, please.

GLECKEL: Yeah. B-A-L-L-Y-G-L-A-S-S. Ballyglass, County Mayo.

SIGRIST: Thanks. You said you had a, four brothers and sisters, right, and yourself?

GLECKEL: No, two brothers and two sisters and myself.

SIGRIST: Two brothers and two sisters and yourself. Can you name them from the oldest from the oldest one to yourself?

GLECKEL: Sure. My oldest was Mary, and she went by Mamie, M-A-M-I-E. And my brother was Luke Bernard and he went under Barney. And my sister Kitty was Katherine Emelda...

SIGRIST: Emelda?

GLECKEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Emelda?

GLECKEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: With an "E" at the beginning?

GLECKEL: An "E," yeah. And she went under Kitty. And my brother Johnnie was John Thomas, and he went under Johnnie. Everybody is Pattie or Tommie or Johnnie, you know, they add that "ie" to everything. I don't know why.

SIGRIST: And then you were born after Johnnie?

GLECKEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Now, how many years are there between...

GLECKEL: Eight and a half years between all of us.

SIGRIST: Between all of them.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit, is there a story that you remember in Ireland of something that maybe you experienced with your brothers or sisters? A story you can tell me about something...

GLECKEL: Well, the greatest story was, my mother was a compulsive house cleaner. And our kitchen table was wood, you

know, everything was wood like the chairs and there was a lot of tin as far as, T-I-N, as far as cooking things, or we had to go to the well to get all our drinking water. And so we took the can to the well which was at least two miles away. I often think if the kids in this country had the inconveniences that we had. And to think we enjoyed it, and we loved it. But talking about the experiences with the family, my sister Mamie was like the one in charge when my parents went to town to do shopping. They went every Thursday, was market day. And they would take the eggs that the chickens laid during the week. They take them in a big basket and they were sold by the score. They got so much a score for the eggs. So they sold them and they would buy raisins for the cake and flour and Jello. And the Jello was solid. It wasn't granulated like in this country. And things like that that they needed, that the farm didn't produce. Of course, we had all the, we had our own pork and our own bacon and our own potatoes and vegetables and other. But when they went to town on Thursday, my oldest sister was in charge and my mother made sure we had no time to get in trouble. We had plenty of work to do. So we used to have to take the table, the kitchen table out and throw sand onto the, the sand was so fine, and then get a scrub brush and water and scrub it. And oh, it made it so white and, you know,

clean. And our pots that we used for cooking, when we were going to church on Sunday once in a while, they were hanging on the wall in the kitchen. We would just look to be sure our hair was okay, that's how shining our pots were because my mother insisted that. So that's when we had the family get-togethers, when my parents weren't there. My sister favored me because she was my godmother, to start with, and she was the oldest and I was the youngest. And I kind of was favored by all of them, but especially by my oldest sister and my oldest brother. They were just very, very fond of me and took real good care of me. Then my sister Kitty being the middle of five, it's so true what they say about the middle child, she was like an outcast. Well, first of all she was awkward, I guess you would call it. If you gave her something to take from one space to another, she'd either drop it or she would, if you gave her something to clean she would stain it more instead, you know, she just was the one. And so, of course, my sister, the oldest one, only like perfection like my mother. So we really had, but at the end of the day when my parents come home and they brought us home an apple or they gave us raisins to eat or they'd make Jello for us or something like that, we felt sorry. We forgot all our little differences during the day. We had a great family life.

SIGRIST: So there would be conflict while chores were bring done...

GLECKEL: While being done but when we had nothing to do, we were just...

SIGRIST: ...but you were all little angels by the time your parents got home.

GLECKEL: And it stayed that way. See, I'm the only one that's living now. It stayed that way through our whole life. You know, we stayed very close and just not visiting at holiday time but we were there for each other all the time. So I think my father's death and I think my mother's leadership, you know, she lived with me until she died. And she lived to be sixty seven. But she was just, each one of us got equal attention.

SIGRIST: And you think that your father's death had something to do with the bonding of the family.

GLECKEL: Yeah, because I think we respected my mother so and admired her so that our goal in life was to just take real good

care of my mother.

SIGRIST: Tell me what religion you were in Ireland?

GLECKEL: Catholic.

SIGRIST: And..

GLECKEL: We didn't think there was any other religion.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about practicing your religion in Ireland.

GLECKEL: Well, you know, it just comes so natural in Ireland because, you know, it's synonymous with Ireland the Catholic religion, it seems. The north is where they're having the trouble, you know, where England is more cemented into the north of Ireland but the east and south and west of Ireland is, you know...

SIGRIST: Predominantly Catholic.

GLECKEL: It was when I was there, I could almost say one hundred

percent Catholic.

SIGRIST: Was there a church in town?

GLECKEL: Oh yeah.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the church?

GLECKEL: I don't know.

SIGRIST: I've stumped you.

GLECKEL: Isn't that funny. I have just forgotten.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what the church looked like and anything that sticks out in your mind about it?

GLECKEL: Oh, yeah, it was, oh, the church was pretty, much the same as churches here like in small areas. We had a choir, like a balcony, you went up a flight of stairs. Rather roomy, where the organ was and where the choir would be. And it was laid out pretty much the same as here.

SIGRIST: And how often would you attend church?

GLECKEL: Every Sunday.

SIGRIST: And...

GLECKEL: And any holidays, of course, like the 15th of August and, you know, Good..

SIGRIST: What was the 15th of August?

GLECKEL: The Feast of the Assumption.

SIGRIST: And that was an important holiday?

GLECKEL: Yeah, any important holiday.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me how you practiced your religion at home?

GLECKEL: Oh, you said your prayers morning and night on your knees. Yeah, the Rosary, your parents, either your mother or father or if they, but they were always there, weren't then

the oldest person would start the Rosary and the rest would answer. You said your prayers morning and night. Prayer was very important. Prayer started the school day. When the men went out into the fields, they blessed themselves. You know, it was very important.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me how you celebrated Christmas in Ireland?

GLECKEL: Well, to us Christmas was just terrific with so little. The toys that stand out in my mind is a doll and a little brush and comb set that would come in the Christmas stocking. We just, and a mirror, like the brush and comb and mirror. We thought to have a mirror to ourselves, because mirrors were few and far between in the house. As I said, we used to look in the pots sometimes. But, oh, we were thrilled with the doll. And candies we got, you know, certain candies that we liked. And doll's clothes, but, of course, no guns or no, you know...

SIGRIST: Was there a special food that was served at Christmas time?

GLECKEL: Oh yes, well, of course, where we lived in the country everything was homemade. My mother was a wonderful cook and she made bread with molasses and raisins and currants and fruit, different fruits. And she made, you know, we had, I gave it to my daughter, we had a pet bowl that we loved. It was just a gorgeous bowl. And my mother would make Jello in the bottom and then she'd put (she pauses) corn starch pudding the next layer. And then the next layer would be a different color Jello up to the top. And oh, I mean, to us that was like the most expensive dessert here. And, of course, all kind so muffins and breads. That was the thing. And pies.

SIGRIST: Did your mother have a certain schedule that she adhered to when she did her baking?

GLECKEL: No, no, she just did it when the opportunity presented itself.

SIGRIST: There wasn't a certain day that she always...

GLECKEL: Because when you're in a farm, you have to work when the sun is there. You can't work on a rainy day. There's nothing you can do outside, so then they clean out the barns and

if it's the season when all the crops are in, they sometimes have to change about things. And our fire was made from peat, or from turf, from the bogs. The men used to have to go and just, there's a metal instrument that would just cut out a sod of turf. Looked like a, a brick of ice cream, you know, cut exactly that way. And he would be down in the pit and throw it up to somebody else that would fetch it and pile it. And then they took it from that bog which is, the bog is just a wet, real sloppy area. That's where the best turf is. They'd have to take it home. And then you'd pile it home in your backyard and that's what all your fires were made from.

SIGRIST: Is that something that the family did or did you purchase the turf?

GLECKEL: Oh, no. We had the rights to this bog that you could go and you produced it yourself. It was a lot of work.

SIGRIST: Whose, whose job was that in the family?

GLECKEL: Oh, my father, yeah. But naturally, if we had stayed there and the boys got older, they would. But my oldest brother used to fetch it for my father. He used to throw it up

and he would fetch it and then he would, you know, we'd take it home. Then we as kids, anybody could stack it, like. And then after it was ready for the fire, like after it was stacked outside and half dried, then you brought indoors so that when you burned it, it was as dry. It was excellent. And it stayed, you know, lit. It isn't like anything you have here for the fireplace.

SIGRIST: Did it have a smell to it when it burned?

GLECKEL: Well, you know, you can tell when there's a fire. Yeah, sure, it had like that fresh wood smell.

SIGRIST: Did your mother use the turf when she was cooking?

GLECKEL: Oh, you have nothing else to cook with.

SIGRIST: And, and what is she cooking on?

GLECKEL: The fireplace.

SIGRIST: She's cooking on the fireplace.

GLECKEL: Well, you have like a hook that comes down from the chimney and you hang your pot on the hook if you were boiling something. And if you're baking something, you just spread some coals out on the (she gestures), the fireplace is big, like there's a big hearth around it. And you put your pot on there and it's amazing. We as kids used to go back in the farm where the cows would sit, you know, where the cows would lay. We'd call it "the cow pasture." And pick mushrooms. We'd get a big can of mushrooms. Oh, they were gorgeous. And then we'd come home and we'd put a pinch of salt and a little bit of butter in each mushroom and sit it on a coal of fire and eat them. My mother paid no attention to us. We'd eat the whole can of mushrooms.

SIGRIST: How many meals did you eat a day?

GLECKEL: Three.

SIGRIST: And what was the first meal you ate?

GLECKEL: Oatmeal, usually, 'cause my father made it from the oats. He took the oats to the (kiln?) and made it into oatmeal and when he would come home the morning that he did that, you

know, the oatmeal was still hot. It was, oh, real oatmeal. And, of course, we had so much cream. It's amazing that we weren't, didn't weigh a ton. But see, we were so active that...

SIGRIST: What, what time in the morning did you eat breakfast?

GLECKEL: Oh, we had to be in school by nine o'clock, eight thirty or nine o'clock. So we ate early. Oh, my father, of course, ate maybe five o'clock in the morning. We always said he went to bed at dark and got up when the cock crowed. You know, you hear the rooster in the morning, cock a doodle doo, you know, you could kill that rooster.

SIGRIST: So oatmeal was your, your standard breakfast food.

GLECKEL: Standard breakfast...

SIGRIST: And then did you have something to drink?

GLECKEL: Oh, sure. We had milk. We drank milk and milk and milk.

SIGRIST: And then what was the next meal?

GLECKEL: Our next meal, then we had our main meal in the middle of the day.

SIGRIST: What time?

GLECKEL: Oh, maybe around one o'clock. And the men that worked with my father on the farm, they got priority. They were seated first and got the cream of everything. Like if there was a limited supply of anything, the men in the house, at least in our area, got the choice. He sat down first, and there was always a big, we called it a skib, S-K-I-B, of potatoes. It was just a basket but it was flat and, oh, it was maybe twenty, more than twenty four inches in diameter. It was round. And it was filled with potatoes. All you did was just take the potatoes, which, of course, was grown in the farm. And just put them in a pot and boil them and take them out and just put them peels and all, you peeled your own potatoes, at the table if you wanted to. But the potatoes were so fresh that they'd like open up. They were real, so a lot of the meal in the middle of the day was vegetables. Potatoes, cabbage, turnips, scallions, we had plenty of strawberries, plenty of

apples.

SIGRIST: Mostly stuff you probably grew...

GLECKEL: It was fruit and vegetables, all the stuff.

SIGRIST: Yeah. And...

GLECKEL: I mean meat, chicken, of course, we'd call our chickens together, my mother would and she'd call "Chicky, chicky, chicky," and they'd come running. And she'd say to us kids, "Which one should I kill today?" And we'd say, "Oh, get that little black one or little red one," or what have you. And she'd grab it, you know, because they'd be eating the food. And she would just take a, you know, when I think of it now, you know, kosher chicken is fresh kill. Well, you couldn't have it any fresher than we had it in Ireland. And then she would just cut it in the head and throw it into boiling water. And the boiling water made the feathers so that we kids could just pluck the feathers off. We had chicken a lot.

SIGRIST: And...

GLECKEL: And rabbit they ate. We didn't eat, I don't remember eating rabbit but we had rabbits on the grounds. But a lot of our neighbors ate rabbit.

SIGRIST: Now you mentioned earlier you had pork. Did you, did you keep pigs?

GLECKEL: We killed our own pigs.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what that process entailed?

GLECKEL: No, 'cause I never went with my father (Mr. Sigrist laughs) to where he, you know, none of us did. But he would take the pig and...

SIGRIST: Not that you wanted to watch, probably.

GLECKEL: No, and then he brought it home, you know, it was all cleaned and everything. And we'd hang it up by the fire and you had your bacon and everything from that.

SIGRIST: And then you said, did you have an evening meal of some sort?

GLECKEL: In the evening was just bread and jam as far as we were concerned. We ate a lot of strawberry jam or marmalade or, you know, any of the jams, whichever ones you liked. Bread and butter and jam and milk, sometimes we had cereal again for supper.

SIGRIST: And what time would that be?

GLECKEL: Oh, around seven o'clock.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about a special food. You mentioned this dessert that your mother, you know, with the layers...

GLECKEL: Well, anything that Mother made with like raisins or currants. And puddings; tapioca, rice. Those were our big desserts, was like cakes and pies.

SIGRIST: So, so a pudding would be, would be sort of a special food...

GLECKEL: Oh, sure.

SIGRIST: ...for you to have.

GLECKEL: And Jello, of course, we loved. And when, you see, the Jello only comes solid. And I can remember my brother and I and a couple of neighbors, there was a package of Jello that hadn't been used. And we decided we were going to eat it this day. We just loved it. And you can imagine, I'm surprised we had any teeth left because it was so hard to bite. And I can see the, our friends saying, "You've had the last bite. Give me a bite now." And, oh God, it used to pull. But we, we, we were just so happy when I think of it.

SIGRIST: What kind of clothing did you wear in Ireland?

GLECKEL: A lot of it handmade and a lot of, the men's socks were all knitted. My mother knitted all the socks. In fact, she knitted socks for my son and he has them in his house in Virginia.

SIGRIST: What kind of clothing, say as a child? Can you describe something that sticks out in your mind, a....

GLECKEL: Always a sweater and a skirt and a blouse. Jumpers

were very popular when I was there.

SIGRIST: And for the sake of this tape, we should say, can you describe a jumper for me?

GLECKEL: Well, a jumper you can, you put a blouse, you put on your pants [i.e. underwear] and your slip and your bra if you're wearing one and then you put on a blouse and then you put on the jumper so you can, the sleeve, the blouse supplies the sleeves. Whereas the jumper has no sleeves. It just has the bands on your shoulder. So it shows the neckline of the blouse and the sleeves. So it's very versatile, like you could wear a sweater under it. I guess that is why it's so popular.

SIGRIST: And how did you wear your hair when you were growing up in Ireland?

GLECKEL: Well, every, like here kind of, you know, everybody wears it different. A bun was very popular for older people. They had their hair in a bun or they pulled it back and had a barrette on it. Barrettes were very fashionable. Any kind of an ornament to hold your hair together. My hair happened to be very, very short and jet black and straight as straight can be.

Everybody would think that my mother and my hair was dyed, it was so black.

SIGRIST: Tell me, when you were growing up in Ireland, what did you know about America? How did you perceive America?

GLECKEL: Well, as I think I said in something I answered there [i.e. the Oral History Form Mrs. Gleckel initially filled out], I had never seen a black person.

SIGRIST: No, but, but in, before you got to America, how did you think about America?

GLECKEL: Oh, I never pictured it being as big as it is and as meeting so many different people. I just pictured that it was bigger than where I was coming from, but where I was coming from I couldn't tell you what the population was. I'm sure it wasn't more that two hundred people.

SIGRIST: Small, very small.

GLECKEL: So, to think of America, I just thought it was like possibly a few villages put together or a few cities put

together but never thought of it. Of course, we had geography in school but you kind of took it as a subject. You didn't take it as being anything real.

SIGRIST: You're right, you didn't think those places were real out there.

GLECKEL: I mean, whereas now like if you look at an atlas or you look at something like that, you're so interested to see how close Vienna is to a place. In those days, like, you didn't know what.

SIGRIST: Now you mentioned earlier that after your father died, your mother thought that it might be a good idea for you and your brother to go to America.

GLECKEL: Oh, she absolutely had foresight. She could see no future for us in Ireland. And we thanked her until the day she died for deciding to dispose of the farm. And so she put it up for sale and a person that lived in the town that had an automobile business decided they would buy it because it was close enough to the town that they would be still convenient to their business. So my brother Johnnie, being an American citizen,

he did not have to have a passport. I did because I wasn't. I was on my mother's passport, naturally, because I was underage.

SIGRIST: Did you want to go to America?

GLECKEL: Oh yeah, because my two sisters and brother were here. And my older sister, as I said, was my godmother and I was just her love, like, she was like a mother to me.

SIGRIST: When, when did the two sisters and the older brother go to America?

GLECKEL: Uh, I think my sister went in 19--, well, she was, I guess she was here about, my brother and sister only went after my father died...

SIGRIST: But the oldest one is here already.

GLECKEL: The older one was here, so she probably was here five years, yeah.

SIGRIST: So tell me a little bit about the experience of getting

your papers together and getting ready to go and what that whole process entailed?

GLECKEL: Well, see, Mother, fourteen in Ireland you are as knowledgeable or as worldly wise as the kids five years old are here. I mean we were babies at fourteen, like we wore Mary Janes. When I come to this country, my sisters got me Mary Janes, little patent leather sandals and made me a dress and put a sash around the waist. I was, I was so naive like, you know, at fourteen. So you don't know anything about a passport or what's necessary for travel. But with my mother's leadership and guidance, we had to go to Dublin to get our passport. And, so then the people that were buying the house, just like a closing here is scheduled for May 1st and then something happens; the mortgage isn't approved and the closing isn't until May 25th. Well, that happened with our farm. And my sister, the, my oldest sister was getting married September 6th and I wanted to be here for her wedding. So I pleaded so with my mother to let me go on the date that we were scheduled to leave Ireland, which I think was August 25th. And I finally talked her into it and she let me come alone at fourteen.

SIGRIST: What was her initial reaction to you wanting to come by yourself?

GLECKEL: Well, she worried that I was so naive and so young. But then there were two neighbors that were coming on the same boat and they were older, so that really convinced her that I would be okay to be with them. And, of course, then my two sisters and my brother, and my uncle was a traffic cop down in the city in front of Sak's, Thirty Fourth Street, and he was coming down to, you know, they were all coming down to meet me.

SIGRIST: So she, so because of the neighbors and knowing that the family...

GLECKEL: Oh, sure.

SIGRIST: ..she eventually felt you would ...

GLECKEL: She let me go, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...be all right, yeah. Tell me what you packed to take with you.

GLECKEL: I can't remember exactly but I can imagine the same, I'm sure I had a couple of jumpers. And we never wore pants, you know, like slacks I mean or shorts or things like that. Just dresses. Just like children's dresses I wore at fourteen. Just little, cute dresses.

SIGRIST: Were there any objects, something that wasn't a piece of clothing, that you took with you?

GLECKEL: No, just, just my clothes and so much money. I forget how much money my mother gave me. And she put me on the train in Tuam and I had to go, you know, with my two neighbors to Queenstown which is the south of Ireland, the extreme south. And then when we go there, the boat was scheduled to leave tomorrow, let's say. Mother, naturally, planned it so that we would get there at the required time before the boat because you had certain things you had to attend to. And I had never seen an orange. I never had an orange. And one of my friends bought oranges and they loved them, so I tasted and I just loved the oranges. So all the spending money that my mother gave me, I'm sure I'm exaggerating a little, but I bought oranges and ate them the whole time we were waiting for the boat. I don't know how many oranges I ate. So that when I

got on the tender to go out to the big boat, I got sick.

But I blamed it on the oranges. But I was seasick for the whole trip.

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

GLECKEL: No, no, I don't.

SIGRIST: Was there any kind of gathering, family gathering, before you left.

GLECKEL: No, because my grandmother and grandfather had passed on and I had no aunts and uncles there. They were all in this country. And we had very, we had really no, well, we had cousins but they were like a distance away and it wasn't a big deal for me to be leaving.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the names of the neighbors that you traveled with?

GLECKEL: Oh, well, in fact, one of the closest neighbor lives in Syracuse, the Mannions.

SIGRIST: M-A-N-...

GLECKEL: N-I-O-N-S.

SIGRIST: M-A-N-I-O-N-S.

GLECKEL: Two "N"s.

SIGRIST: (they spell together) M-A-N-N-I-O-N-S. How much older were they than you?

GLECKEL: They were just, well, Birdie, the girl, the same age as I was. There was twelve children in the family.

SIGRIST: So Birdie Mannion and...

GLECKEL: Myself were the same age.

SIGRIST: Yes, and then who was, who was the other? You said there were two neighbors.

GLECKEL: Oh, the Lyons [PH] were on the other side but they were older. They had no children.

SIGRIST: I see, I see. I was just wondering what your relationship was with these people. Sere they good friends...?

GLECKEL: Oh, excellent. Oh, excellent, yeah.

SIGRIST: Now, how long did it take to get from your village to Queenstown by train, do you think.

GLECKEL: Oh, it took all day.

SIGRIST: Is there anything about that train trip that sticks out in your mind, going down to Queenstown?

GLECKEL: Well, I just loved it. I don't know, I must have been an adventurer.

SIGRIST: Had you been on a train before?

GLECKEL: No, well, just going to Dublin was the only time I was on a train before, when we got our passport. And, of course, the trains were so different than they are now, you know. You

climbed up about ten or twelve steps to get on the train. And it was like going into a covered wagon almost, you know what I mean. They were, not the windows like they are now and the modern, you know, interiors and that.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay in Queenstown prior to...

GLECKEL: Two days, two days prior to getting on the on the boat.

SIGRIST: And that's when you ate all the oranges.

GLECKEL: That's when I ate all the oranges. So I never left my cabin on the boat because I was seasick.

SIGRIST: We're going to pause just for a second and I'm going to put in another tape and we're going to get you on the boat and get you to America.

GLECKEL: Oh, okay.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: Okay, we're now beginning Tape Two with Della Gleckel, who came from Ireland in 1925 when she was fourteen, and we have you in Queenstown. And you had to spend two nights in Queenstown before you got on the ship. You already told us the story about eating all the oranges...

GLECKEL: Right.

SIGRIST: You got sick. (Mrs. Gleckel coughs) You had to take a small tender (Mrs. Gleckel coughs) out to the ship.

GLECKEL: The big boat.

SIGRIST: Do you know what the name of the big ship was?

GLECKEL: I think it was "the Cynthia." [sic: the Scythia].

SIGRIST: "The Cynthia." [sic]

GLECKEL: It was the Cunard Line and I think the boat was "the Cynthia." [sic] C-Y-N-T-H-I-A.

SIGRIST: (spelling together with Mrs. Gleckel) C-Y-N-T-H-I-A.

And (Mrs. Gleckel coughs)...

GLECKEL: By the way, my passport, my mother's, because I was on my mother's passport, my mother's marriage certificate and wedding certificate, I mean her marriage certificate, birth certificate and passport was on display at the Smithsonian from 1976, the Bicentennial. They kept it for about four years. They solicitated anything from aliens, you know, the, the, you know what...

SIGRIST: For some sort of exhibit they were doing?

GLECKEL: For the exhibit that they did at that time.

SIGRIST: All right, so you got on the ship and you were pretty much ill.

GLECKEL: I never left the, my cabin.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the cabin for me?

GLECKEL: Oh, it was just a little dump away down in the boat. It was steerage or, you know, third class, which was the

cheapest. So it was just like a little bunk away down in the boat. But to me, you know, it meant nothing because we weren't accustomed to luxury.

SIGRIST: Who else was in that cabin with you?

GLECKEL: Nobody. I was in the cabin by myself.

SIGRIST: So no one was sleeping in there?

GLECKEL: Oh, nobody was sleeping in there with me. They were...

SIGRIST: The neighbors didn't travel in there with you. You were just...

GLECKEL: No, they were near me but not with me, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, what sticks out in your mind about the trip across the Atlantic?

GLECKEL: Oh, well, when I was beginning to better as I got close to the United States, but not close enough to see any land or anything, just water. And the great part of being naive was

that I had no feeling about anything ever happening like, you know, drowning or anything like that, because we only had rivers. See, I can't, I don't know how to swim because we had no place where you could learn. We had no pools. The ocean was twenty four miles away and transportation, we had no transportation except a bicycle. And to cycle eight miles was really a big cycling job, to go into this other town and come back the same day. That was like sixteen miles you cycled one day. So I don't know how to swim. So naturally I had no fear of the water. But I just looked out and saw nothing but water. And it was, even though it was kind of scary, you thought, "Oh, I'd just love to see land or a house or something," because I had never seen that mass of water. I had never seen the ocean until I got to Queenstown to sail, and that wasn't like being out in the boat. So then I saw buildings. Oh, we were ecstatic. We were just so excited. And when you saw Ellis Island, I think you have to come through that way to have the respect for Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: How long did the voyage take from, from Queenstown to New York?

GLECKEL: It only took about thirteen days.

SIGRIST: And you're traveling, what time of the year is this?

GLECKEL: August.

SIGRIST: Late August...

GLECKEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You said August 25th you thought...

GLECKEL: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...the boat was supposed to leave.

GLECKEL: Yeah, we had good weather traveling, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

GLECKEL: Yeah, that's most impressive, yeah. I didn't know, really, the background of it, didn't know what it meant. I just thought, you know, it was a statue saying "hi" (she

laughs) or, you know. But it really, now, you know, when I went over there I really had tears in my eyes.

SIGRIST: You mean when you visited it recently.

GLECKEL: When I visited recently, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me what happened. The boat comes into New York Harbor...

GLECKEL: Right.

SIGRIST: Then what happened? What's the process that gets you to Ellis Island?

GLECKEL: Well, the process is that the boat pulls in and immigration is there to clear you, you know, if you're healthy and you have all the paper work that you should have, all the credentials that you should have. And they just let you go if you're underage like I was. They would let me go to my sister's or whoever put up the bond that I'd be no burden to the United States and so on.

SIGRIST: Who did put up the bond? Who, who vouched for you?

GLECKEL: My, my sister.

SIGRIST: Your, this is Mamie, right? The oldest sister?

GLECKEL: Yeah, yeah, the oldest sister.

SIGRIIST: Tell me what you remember specifically about that whole process, about being at Ellis Island.

GLECKEL: Oh, I can, I can remember that to a "T." First of all, I didn't think there was such a thing as a black person. I had never seen anybody black in all of Ireland, like how much of Ireland had I seen? And there was no black people on our boat coming over. And I had never seen a black person. So when I got to Ellis Island, this gal was about five foot eight, great big, black woman. I can see her earrings now. They were real impressive earrings, large and dangling. And she wanted to give me a glass of milk. And I thought, you know, I just can't imagine this person, so I wouldn't take the milk. I just didn't take it because it, (she laughs) I was

so puzzled as to know what the black person was. Isn't that amazing? And, so then I saw my sisters and my uncle and my brother, all of them were like a distance from the boat but I could see them. And they were trying to tell me that they were missing one important paper to get me off. They didn't realize immigration wanted this particular paper, and they were telling me to call them. Well, I had never seen a telephone and I had no idea. And they were telling me that the phone was there like near me. It was like a wall phone. And I saw it and, of course, they were trying their level best but I went in and I did take the receiver off the hook but I didn't know what to do with the rest. And I said to them, "I can't do it!" So I had to stay in Ellis Island overnight because they had to come back the next day with the paper they were missing. So they come back the next day with the paper they were missing and I was allowed to go off. And it was just about five o'clock in the evening. And that's, you know, the traffic in the city coming up from Ellis Island. My sister was a waitress for a private family at 33 Central Park West. She worked for a Dr. Joseph, and they were nicest enough to say that I could stay there with her until my sister got married and had the apartment and then I'd be with my sister, which was only a week because I got here the end of

August and she was married September 6th. So in the cab coming up, the most traffic I had ever seen was a car at a funeral, you know, in the town. They would have one car to carry the coffin, and all the funerals, by the way, were lead with a white horse. That was really impressive. So I'd say, "Oh! Oh, you're going to get killed." I can't, I was a wreck in that cab coming up. So then they had all my cousins and friends in to see me, that I come over. It was a big deal. And they had all kinds of food as near as you would have in Ireland as possible. Well, I didn't like a lot of it and I kept saying I didn't like it, didn't like it. So they finally gave me a dish of ice cream. Now, I never had ice cream. So my sister Kitty said, "Now you will love this. Everybody loves ice cream." So I ate it and she said, "How did you like it?" I said, "It was too cold." (she laughs) Yeah, it was a real experience.

SIGRIST: You were hard to please.

GLECKEL: We laugh when we get together at Christmas now and tell the stories.

SIGRIST: Let me bring you back to Ellis Island just for a

second.

GLECKEL: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about having to sleep overnight at Ellis Island?

GLECKEL: I don't really remember how, I think I was very much at ease since I saw my family.

SIGRIST: You knew they were there.

GLECKEL: My, my big anxiety was to be sure that they would be there because I had no idea of how big the place and how many people. I had no idea of how many people were getting off the boat and so it was so, put me so at ease when I saw all of them and knew that they'd be back the next day.

SIGRIST: You told the story (he clears his throat), excuse me, about the woman offering you a glass of milk at Ellis Island. Do you have any other recollections of eating at Ellis Island?

GLECKEL: No, I didn't eat, (she coughs) no.

SIGRIST: All right, well, so, so we got you through your first night in America.

GLECKEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: They gave you all this food. You didn't like it. Where did you sleep that first night?

GLECKEL: I slept where my sister kitty was working.

SIGRIST: But where in the apartment?

GLECKEL: Oh, in her bedroom. Yeah, we both slept together. Not like now. No people sleep together, it seems. Everybody has to have a separate bed. Well, we were so accustomed to doubling up in Ireland, two and three of us in a bed, that the two of us, you know. I still don't mind sleeping with my sister if we're someplace that, you know, there's just one bedroom and it's...

SIGRIST: Tell me about, what, what did you do on your first day in America? You woke up the next morning, tell me all about that

first day.

GLECKEL: Oh, well, it was just visiting with my cousins. I, my father's sister lived at 306 West 121st Street. Her name was Mrs. Brown, and her name was Delia, too. And she had a family, two girls and three boys. And they just loved their Irish cousins. And so I was busy with them, and my sister getting married in a week. I was only here a few days until my sister that was getting married wanted to return a hat that she had bought down on 53rd Street. Now, I was at Central Park West and 93rd Street living with my sister Kitty. And the station on the El, we had an El then that ran, you know, up above, I think 90th Street was the station. And my sister said to me, and I was, imagine, just here a few days, she said, "You will be able to do it. You just get on any train that comes along at that station." She took me up and showed me the station and told me how to get the money, you know, to pay for it. And she said, "You get off at 53rd Street." There was a station at 53rd. And she said, "All you do is come down the stairs and the millinery shop is right there. And they will give you a receipt. Then cross the street and come back and get off at 90th Street again." And I did that after just being here a few days.

SIGRIST: Well, what, what were some of the things that you, you said a little bit some of the firsts, you know, the first telephone, the first ice cream. What, what were some of the other firsts that you had never seen before?

GLECKEL: Well the first, I, I wanted to go, we all wanted to go to work because my sister Mamie, the oldest, had gotten married. And my sister Kitty was not living home. She was doing this waitress work for this doctor. And so there was my brother Barney, who was working for Daniel Reeves, the grocery store, but in there office. It was at 144th Street. He didn't work in the stores. He was...

SIGRIST: What was the name of the store? Daniel...

GLECKEL: Reeves, R-double E-V-E-S. It was a, the two big grocery stores in those days was James Butler and Daniel Reeves.

SIGRIST: So Barney is working for the Reeves store.

GLECKEL: In their office, yeah. He was very bright. He was

working for them. So the only two that could be home bringing a salary in, of the three I mean, my brother Barney, Johnnie and I, to pay the rent and keep my mother with us. So she had planned that we would go to work. So my uncle Dan had influence at Sak's 34th Street, and McCreery's on 34th Street because he was a traffic cop down there. And so he said to me, "Would you like to go to work for Sak's or McCreery's? I can get you into to either place." So I liked the name of McCreery's better. It sounded more Irish. So I said I'd go to McCreery's, so he made a date for me to go on a Tuesday. And I went over and I saw this gal, Miss Scanlon, S-C-A-N-L-O-N, that was supervisor of the kids that do packing. You go in the desk and if you're in the cosmetics department you pack all the cosmetics for a customer to take with her or if it's being sent. And it was a Tuesday, and it happened Tuesday was payday at McCreery's. So while I'm there waiting for the interview, I hear people say, "Oh God, I didn't get paid. I can't eat. I have no money." And this was like a record. I heard more than several people say it. So I come home and I said to my mother, I said, "Can you believe that there were kids there that had no money and they couldn't eat?" Then I didn't realize that as years go on you wait for your payday, sometimes you don't have. But anyway, they trained, I did get

the job as a packer or a wrapper, whatever you call it. But in those days they trained me for two weeks how to wrap packages, and has that ever come in handy. I can make wrapping paper stretch so far if you know how to do it. So after I was wrapping for two weeks, uh, well, of course, I was so conscientious. I was, I got twelve dollars a weeks and I was so thrilled. And my brother that was a year older went to work for Reeves in the store delivering orders. And he would have to carry those orders, you know, it was all walk-up, no elevators hardly in the area. And he got fourteen dollars a week. So that, we lived, the first house we lived in was 153 West 102nd Street in Manhattan, a walk-up apartment, a cold flat. And I think we payed twenty five dollars a month rent. But our two salaries, we just brought our envelope home, never opened it. And, of course, there was nothing taken out of it in those days, no Social Security, no tax, no, you know, you got the twelve dollars.

SIGRIST: When did your mother come?

GLECKEL: She come with my brother in September when the closing of the house...

SIGRIST: So it was right after...

GLECKEL: Oh, she was hear a month after me.

SIGRIST: I see. In,in our few minutes, because I have to run off to this other interview,...

GLECKEL: Okay.

SIGRIST: ...tell me about your mother's adaptation to America.

GLECKEL: Oh, she, well, she had been to Butte before.

SIGRIST: Of course, that's right.

GLECKEL: So, I mean, she didn't have to be oriented.

SIGRIST: But, of course, New York is not Butte, you know, it's a whole different...

GLECKEL: Well, you know, having all her five children around her, and my aunt was most helpful, my husband's [sic: father's] sister, so that all made it so much easier. But the one thing

that I would love to get across to this whole country is to think my mother, a widow at forty five with five children ranging from eleven to nineteen, did all this, come to this country, never a cent of welfare, never had to go on public funds for anything. So her motto was that when you have a job, if you get in before the boss and you leave after the boss and you work hard while you're there, there's always a job for you.

SIGRIST: Did she get a job when she came?

GLECKEL: No, she didn't have to. We kept her. My mother never worked a day and nobody in my family has ever been on welfare. And my son is a retired full colonel from the Air Force. My daughter is director of mental health in the county. We've all had, I went to school until I was twelve and I was a professional buyer until I retired in '72. My company sent me to germany, France, Italy, England, to buy for the store I bought for, to spend thousands of dollars. So that education of reading, writing, and arithmetic, I see the kids now, they're in high school. And I work down at the Emporium and we have cupcakes, fifty nine cents each, and the customer will buy two and they'll say they want to get the

calculator. I say, "$1.18!," where...

SIGRIST: And didn't you go back to school, too, later? Didn't you tell me that you...

GLECKEL: Well, when my husband died in '73.

SIGRIST: Why don't you just say that for me on tape, because you went to college.

GLECKEL: I worked and retired in '72. My husband passed away in '73. And I just wanted to convince myself that I could graduate college. So I registered at the College of New Rochelle in New Rochelle, New York in '74. And I graduated in '78 with a 3.6 average. And I got my Bachelor of Arts. So I would just love, I just love the United States of America. For me there's opportunity for everybody. It's up to you. And the schools you have here, if we had schools like that in Ireland, I think I could be president. But you don't take advantage of them, the kids don't here. I mean, the guns and the knives and carton openers and, isn't it a shame.

SIGRIST: Yes, yes. Mrs. Gleckel, I'm sorry...

GLECKEL: Okay.

SIGRIST: I think we could have been here for a much longer time...

GLECKEL: Oh, yes, I know.

SIGRIST: ...but I have to get to Darien to Mrs. Lambert [Gladys Lambert, Interview EI-612, interviewed in Stamford CT, not Darien].

GLECKEL: So what are you going to do with this?

SIGRIST: Well, hang on one second. Let me just sign off. I'm signing off with Della Gleckel on Tuesday, May 2nd, 1995 in Mamaroneck, New York. And Mrs. Gleckel had come from Ireland in 1925 when she was fourteen. Thank you very much.