

EI-614/WHITTLE

EI-614

MARGARET ANNE SMITH WHITTLE

BIRTH DATE: DECEMBER 13, 1908

INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 17, 1995

RUNNING TIME: 50:00

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED AND REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.,
6/1998

ENGLAND, 1925 AND 1927

AGE 17 (1st TRIP)

PASSAGE ON "THE ADRIATIC"

RETURNED TO ENGLAND PERMANENTLY IN THE 1930's

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mrs. Whittle is the aunt of Dorothy Warner, EI-615. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 6/19/1998.

SIGRIST: Good afternoon, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Wednesday, May 17th, 1995.

I'm at the Ellis Island Recording Studio with Margaret Anne Whittle, who goes by "Anne" as a first name. And Mrs. Whittle came from England in 1925. She turned seventeen just after she got off of Ellis Island and got into New York. And, and she was visiting the museum today and has been kind enough to do an interview with us. Mrs. Whittle, can we begin by you giving us your

birth date, please.

WHITTLE: The 13th of December, 1908.

SIGRIST: And what was your maiden name, please?

WHITTLE: Eh, Smith.

SIGRIST: S-M-I-T-H.

WHITTLE: Yes. S-M-I-T-H.

SIGRIST: Smith. And where in England were you born?

WHITTLE: Newcastle-On-Tyne.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me...

WHITTLE: That's, that's the north of England.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about the town.

WHITTLE: Well, actually, it, Newcastle was a nice town, but we
lived in one of the villages just out of Newcastle,

and it was called Lemington. Lemington-On-Tyne.
That was right on the River Tyne.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Tyne, please?

WHITTLE: T-Y-N-E.

SIGRIST: And Lemington?

WHITTLE: L-E-M-I-N-G-T-O-N.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what it was like to grow up
 in England around the time of World War One in a
small village.

WHITTLE: Oh, well, we, we were a very close village. And my
 mother was a very out-going person. We knew, we
knew everyone. We were a family of nine and we all
grew up there. The girls went, I was on the bottom
end of the line and my sisters were in service, you
know, cooks and whatever, servants, you know, in
the big houses.

SIGRIST: Was that typical at that time?

WHITTLE: It was typical, yes. The girls left home and went into, into service. They had this, these big houses where all the people used to come and visit to stay in Newcastle. And they had to, they didn't have the amount of hotels then that we do now. And so they had these special places they stayed. Like for instance, Lord Baden-Powell stayed in, in one of the houses that my sister, and my mother took me one day to, they had a big function. I know there was quite a few people to meet Lord Baden-Powell. He was founder of the Boy Scouts. And I was quite a favorite with going round there, so he said to me, "Now you must come have a little walk with me." And Lord Baden-Powell put me on his lap, and I've got a picture, well, my mother did, with my, sitting on his lap. And when we were traveling on the train to go to this house, we met what we called the fisherwives, you know, the north, the north of England they had the, not the carts or the shops that we had that come round with the fish. The fisherwomen used to bring it on big baskets around their shoulders. And she said to my mother where were we going. And she said where she

was going. We were going to help to entertain Lord Baden-Powell. My sister was the cook there. And so she said, my mother said to me, "Now, tell her what you're going to say if you meet the ladies and gentlemen." And I said, "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen," you know, like a little girl. And so the fisherwife said to me, "And damn well don't forget." And when I was introduced (she laughs) with all these people, they said, "Now, what do you say?" And I said, "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. And damn well don't forget." Well, everybody started to laugh then, of course, but that, that was part of our, you know, growing up. The girls were all in, in big service and you were allowed to visit. And at that time, if, as I say, they didn't have hotels to accommodate people. Any help that they could get from the families, they all went in and helped (?)

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the house that you lived in?

WHITTLE: Yes, we had a, we had a big kitchen. And my mother did all the cooking on a stove. And as we got, as I got a little bit older before I came over here, we

managed to have a gas stove. And then my father built a, a big building over our kitchen to take us outside into a, everybody had their own private yard, backyard. And we had a nice big kitchen built in there. And my mother, I think my mother was one of the first people in our area to have this nice big gas cooker.

SIGRIST: What, what foods do you remember eating as a child?

WHITTLE: Well, my mother was a very good, very good, good cook. We had, we used to have a lot of stews, you know, and we had rabbit pies and, and chicken. She was a very good, she was a very good cook. And a very good cake, cake maker, you know.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite food as a child?

WHITTLE: Well, (she laughs) as I grew up, I got, I didn't like meat. I didn't have anything meat, so all I had was the, was the gravy, the potatoes. We had lots of vegetables, and whatever, I would have the gravy or anything from the meat but, no, I don't think I really had any favorites.

SIGRIST: Where did the vegetables come from?

WHITTLE: Oh, we grew them, yes. My father had a garden. Most people in the village had a garden and you grew everything, you know. Everything was fresh from there.

SIGRIST: What about the meat? Where did that come from?

WHITTLE: Yeah, from, you had to go to the butcher. And it was collected every day. In our house, we had a big larder.

SIGRIST: A big larder.

WHITTLE: Larder.

SIGRIST: Larder. L-A-R-D-E-R, larder.

WHITTLE: Yes, that's right. And maybe a big stone shelf twice as big as this (she gestures) with big legs on it. And everything was put on there, on that shelf. It was always cold, you know. So we used to, having

a big family, it was nothing for my mother to have four dozen eggs in big crock in, in the corner, you know, and all the, whatever she was preserving. She did a lot of preserving. And did wine, made all our wine.

SIGRIST: Wine, really? Can you describe that a little bit for me?

WHITTLE: Well, I don't remember a lot about it. I only remember her having the crocks with it in, and as it was coming up to fruition and being bottled, you know.

SIGRIST: Were children allowed to drink the wine?

WHITTLE: Oh, no, no. That was, uh, taboo. But my mother did. And she was a great one for making liniments for aches and pains, yes.

SIGRIST: How? Do you remember what she would use?

WHITTLE: I don't remember what she did with it but that was, that was her, her hobby.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any other medicinal remedies that were used in the house for one reason or another?

WHITTLE: No, I don't, really, no. I know that, I only know that my mother, you know, that they used to come to her to, for, "Have you got anything like, for this?" What did they call it? Embrocation? To, for muscles and that. And I know she used to give it to the football team, you know, we had a football team in the village. And they used to, the man in charge, you know, he'd say, "Mrs. Smith, you got a bottle of your embrocation?" And he used to give it, the boys used to have that on their aches and pains right after, after the football. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: You've mentioned quite a bit about your mother. What was her name?

WHITTLE: Jane.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

WHITTLE: Jacques (she pronounces it "jakes")

SIGRIST: Could you spell that, please?

WHITTLE: Yes. J-A-C-Q-U-E-S.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about your mother's personality?

WHITTLE: Uh, she was a very jolly person, very caring. And she married my, she was married when she was sixteen, or just turned. And she raised us all up, you know, there were six of us. She was always hard working and it didn't matter what anybody wanted or, you know, if she could help she was always there.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what she looked like, in words?

WHITTLE: She looked like me.

SIGRIST: Could you describe that for us on tape.

WHITTLE: She had a lovely, she had a lovely face, really. I'm, I'm, they tell me now I'm my mother.

SIGRIST: What color hair did she have?

WHITTLE: She was a blonde.

SIGRIST: What color eyes?

WHITTLE: Blue, blue eyes.

SIGRIST: Height?

WHITTLE: Uh, yes, same height as me, five, five foot.

SIGRIST: Build?

WHITTLE: No, she was, as she got older, she was, well, she died
when she was just turned sixty, but as she got a
little bit older she was stout. But she was always
very slim as a girl, you know.

SIGRIST: Were you ever told any stories about when you were
born?

WHITTLE: Except that I, (she laughs), that I was, perhaps I

shouldn't talk about this. When my, when my mother was expecting me and she was (decorating?) at, do you think I ought to tell you this?

SIGRIST: Well, you don't have to if you don't want to. We can go on to the next question.

WHITTLE: Except that she, except that she, I was a very delicate baby, you know, and she had, there was a little boy born before me and he died. Of course, and it was something unheard of at that particular time that she went to the doctor and she said, "You know, this, this is not right. I'm still pregnant." And they just didn't believe her but, at first. But she was. Then I came. And that must have been a little while after, you know, maybe a couple of days, I don't know. But I, I always remember them saying they carried me around on a cushion. (she laughs) Not now.

SIGRIST: (he laughs) Well, I'm glad you did tell us. That's a very interesting story.

WHITTLE: Yeah, yes, it was.

SIGRIST: Were, were childhood deaths a common occurrence at that time?

WHITTLE: No, I don't think so, no. I didn't hear of anything like that, no. My mother, you know, my, had the name, of course. She was, they came over with William the Conqueror, my grand--, my grandparents, my grandfather. They, they settled in the north of England during, during the revolution from France.

SIGRIST: Were your mother's parents alive when you were growing up?

WHITTLE: No, no.

SIGRIST: No.

WHITTLE: Just my, just her father. I knew my grandfather.

SIGRIST: This is your father's father?

WHITTLE: My mother's father.

SIGRIST: Your mother's father. What do you remember about your mother's father?

WHITTLE: Oh, my grandfather Jacques, he was the nicest man that ever stepped in shoe leather.

SIGRIST: Is there a story that you like to tell about your grandfather?

WHITTLE: No, I don't, I'm not, not any particular one. I only knew that as we grew up and he used to come and visit us that it was one of, it was a high day. We always, we all felt like that about him, you know, we always were pleased to see him. It wasn't a case of going in and saying, "Oh, hello Granddad." It was, you know, you wanted to be there.

SIGRIST: But he did not live with you. He lived somewhere...

WHITTLE: No, no, he lived in the north, another part of the north of England.

SIGRIST: I see. What was your father's name?

WHITTLE: Thomas Smith.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about your father's
personality.

WHITTLE: My father was a very straight man. He wasn't, uh,
wasn't the easiest man to get along with but you,
you towed the line.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the rules that you followed
growing up in the house?

WHITTLE: Well, you were, you didn't go out, we didn't go out at
night, you know. You were in from school and you
had your jobs to do, that's it. If you did, you
had to know exactly where you were going. And,
I'll be quite honest, I used, I joined, I was a
Methodist then. And I joined the Christian
Endeavor. I was in the choir, and there was
something else we did. And I joined everything
I could to get a night out. (they laughs)

SIGRIST: Can you describe what your father looked like?

WHITTLE: Well, he was, uh, he was never stout. He was, he was tall. I say tall, he would be about five foot six some. Slim build. He was a nice looking man, a nice looking man.

SIGRIST: What color hair?

WHITTLE: Uh, he was dark. There again, you see, that's the Spanish in him. His, his parents came from Spain during their revolution and settled in Ireland. And my father was the only one of his family that was born in England.

SIGRIST: That's interesting. So his brothers and sisters all were Irish born.

WHITTLE: Yeah, yeah. So, they, they were all born there. And my grandmother Smith was one of the first midwives in England.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your father's parents?

WHITTLE: No.

SIGRIST: No.

WHITTLE: Don't remember any of them, all being big families and being spread, you know. Like my, I didn't know my, my mother's, my mother's mother died young, when my mother was only just sixty when she died, you see.

SIGRIST: Tell me, you mentioned that, that your father wanted, wanted you to do your jobs when you came home. Can you describe some of the jobs, the chores, that had to be done by the children?

WHITTLE: Well, I, at home, you see, my, there were ten of us that were all out at work, and married, see.

SIGRIST: How many years are there between the oldest and the youngest of the ten children?

WHITTLE: Oh, well, Irene, Irene in here, she's, that's my niece. [referring to Dorothy Irene Badger Warner, EI-615]

SIGRIST: This is the woman who is accompanying you today.

WHITTLE: Yes, yes, that's my niece. And I would say there would be about twelve years between, I think the youngest of the family would be ten years older than I am. And there was a break, you know, when my mother had three. She had my brother and then she had me and thought there was no more. And then she had my younger sister. And they've all gone. There's only me left.

SIGRIST: Tell me, is there a story that you tell, that you like to tell about your relations with your brothers and sisters or maybe a story that, about something that you did with your brothers and sisters?

WHITTLE: Well, we were all a very, very happy and united family, you know. We, we did things together and we, not that we ever went out together or we had big things at, at home but I don't know. We, we had such a nice, happy relationship with them all, you now, like my middle brother. He was the last one to be married from home and he, he'd say, you know, he was going somewhere or he wanted it, something, "How are you fixed for doing a bit of pressing?" you

know. Well, we used to get up and we'd press his
trousers. And if, if we were, had lots of time, we
very often used to stitch his shirt up so he had to
undo it before he could get into it, you know, all
those sorts. We really were a happy, jolly family
together.

SIGRIST: I had asked you about the chores in the house. What
were your chores? What were you responsible for as
a child?

WHITTLE: As a, as a child I've always liked, I've always and
still do like housework. My mother had a heart
condition. And, of course, my sister that was
home then was four years younger than me. And I
used to do a lot of work for my mother. And even
when I left school and had a little, a job, I'd
come home at dinner time and prepared the bedrooms.
Take all the stuff off the dressing tables. Cover
them over. Get the rugs up, you know, and do all
the little jobs for my mother. My mother couldn't do
them but she, there were lots of things that she did
for us. Like (?) she made everything that

we wore. And she saw that it was there. And there was always a meal on the table.

SIGRIST: Is there a dress that she made for you growing up that sticks out in your mind that you remember vividly?

WHITTLE: My first dance dress.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it for me?

WHITTLE: (she laughs) Oh, dear. I think it was blue, if I remember rightly. It was blue. It was short, which was, shorter than they had worn them. It was when they first, you know, she was very fashion conscious. And I remember amongst the girls, we used to go to these church socials or church dances. And mine as the shortest.

SIGRIST: Can, how, how short was it? Can you...

WHITTLE: Well, I would say to, you know, just...(she gestures)

SIGRIST: Just below your knee.

WHITTLE: Yes. And, of course, I was considered very, (she laughs) very top line. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: You went to school in England?

WHITTLE: Yes.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you started?

WHITTLE: Uh, well, five, uh huh.

SIGRIST: And how old were you when you finished school?

WHITTLE: I, I left school at thirteen to come to, because I wanted to be with my sister who, she moved to another part of England and she took her little girl with her. And I went with her and I never went to school anymore.

SIGRIST: Tell me what sticks out in your mind about the years that you did go to school in England.

WHITTLE: Ah, it was a happy school. It was a very happy school. And, yes, I got, I got on ever so well. I don't why I didn't just start going back again, you know. It really was, it was, school was, they were very caring.

SIGRIST: Could your parents read and write?

WHITTLE: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What were their attitudes about education?

WHITTLE: Oh, they were, they were for it, yes. Oh, yes, they were for it. Anything that, to advance you and to do things. And I was taught to sew, I was taught to darn, you know, things like that. In fact, I did all the darning at home. And...

SIGRIST: Part of these domestic chores that...

WHITTLE: Yes, that was part, that was part of growing up, yes, you know. Everything was put on one side, so you, that, that was your job, you know.

SIGRIST: So at thirteen you left school and you went to live
with a sister who had moved to a different town.
Where did she move to?

WHITTLE: She moved to a place called South Shields, and that
was down...

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

WHITTLE: Well, Shields in S-H-E-I-L-D-S [sic, Shields], you
know..

SIGRIST: And South.

WHITTLE: South Shields, yes.

SIGRIST: And why did she move?

WHITTLE: Work, and then her, her husband came over, you know,
eventually came over to the States.

SIGRIST: I see. So did stay with her the whole time until you

left to come to the United States?

WHITTLE: No. I, when she, when she left she came back home to stay with my mother and bring Irene, of course, with her. And then, when I knew that they were going, of course, it took about twelve months, you see, for Irene and my sister to join. And then I, and when they had gone, you see, then I put my name down to come. And it took me 'til I was sixteen to get over here.

SIGRIST: What did you know about America when you were growing up in England?

WHITTLE: Not a lot. My, my aunt that I was called, named after, she lived in, uh, Elmhurst [NY] and her husband, he was a, into building, you know, he was a plasterer. That's when he came over and he worked there. He worked in New York and built. And I came, when I came over she was, she was my aunt, my mother's younger sister.

SIGRIST: Did you, but when you were growing up, did you have

any ideas about what America was or any expectations
about what you might find here?

WHITTLE: Not really, except what we'd see when you went to the
movies, you know, the pictures. And, and not a lot
really, not a lot about it. America, for me,
held everything I wanted and that was my sister
and my, my niece.

SIGRIST: So, how long was it, uh, after your sister left to
join her husband...

WHITTLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...how long was it before you were able to leave?

WHITTLE: Uh, it took me nearly twelve months to come here.

SIGRIST: So almost a year...

WHITTLE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: ..you were, your sister had already gone to America.

WHITTLE: Yeah, uh huh.

SIGRIST: How did your parents feel about you going to America?

WHITTLE: Uh, my mother was all, was very forward looking and she said, "Yes, if that's, if that's what you want, you go and try it." Unfortunately, I was, I was only out about seven, seven months when my mother took sick and my father asked me to come home, which I did. But I, I only stayed home about twelve months. I couldn't stay home after, afterwards. It wasn't the same. I had outgrown all the things we did, you know. Except I used to, the only outlet I had, I used to like to sing the choir and I had that. But that was all I had. And so I said to my mother, you know, once she was feeling better and we got someone to be with her, I said to her, "I'd like to go back." And so I came back. And I was married out here.

SIGRIST: So, so you went initially to America, you stayed seven months...

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WHITTLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...you went back because your mom was ill...

WHITTLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...you stayed there for...

WHITTLE: Twelve months.

SIGRIST: ...for a year and then you came back.

WHITTLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Just to get the chronology straight here. Tell me
what you packed to take with you to America the first
time.

WHITTLE: What I...?

SIGRIST: What you packed. What did you, what did you put
together to take with you to America?

WHITTLE: Oh, well, of course, it was winter time, wasn't it, you know.

SIGRIST: You said it was November.

WHITTLE: Yeah, the first time, oh, well, my mother was a great knitter and she was a sewer. So, I mean, I had wool suits and, and good strong dresses, you know, to wear. But she was very fashion conscious. So, I really, I was very, well, they said I was very presentable. I always remember my, my auntie saying that, and she was a dress designer. And when she, when we arrived off the ship and we went there for a meal, you know, and she just took me by the hand and looked at me and she said, "My word, I swear you are a credit to your mother." (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember taking any objects with you?

WHITTLE: No, I don't, just a ring and a brooch that I had given to me by, you know, family. That was all.

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SIGRIST: Was there some kind of a, of a dinner or a, a
celebration of some sort in honor of your leaving?

WHITTLE: Oh, well, we had everybody at home, you know, and all
our friends were there. And they all came down to
the station to see us go off.

SIGRIST: Now, are you traveling alone?

WHITTLE: Yes.

SIGRIST: You are going by yourself.

WHITTLE: Yes.

SIGRIST: And where did the ship leave from?

WHITTLE: Liverpool.

SIGRIST: So how did you get from Liverpool, (correcting
himself), uh, from your town to Liverpool?

WHITTLE: Uh, by train.

SIGRIST: Now, did any of your family members travel with you to
Liverpool?

WHITTLE: No, no, but I was in the charge of the W.I.C.A., you
know them, and they met me off the train and we
went for breakfast. And she said did I know
anyone else and I said, "No, no. I don't know
anybody." But she said, well, while we were having
breakfast we saw a girl. Oh, well, she was a
woman really, sitting by herself and so we asked
her to join us. And she was traveling on the same
ship, as it happened. And she was very nervous,
very nervous. She was an Irish person and she was
very nervous about traveling. And, anyway, we were
introduced and they came on board and introduced us to
everybody on our section, you know, the stewardesses,
and made it possible to share the room together. So we
were friends before we got, uh, and then we were
friends all the way over.

SIGRIST: Oh, so that made it a little easier, I guess.

WHITTLE: It was, yes, it was very nice, yes, uh huh.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying "good bye" to your parents?
You said "good bye" to them at home...

WHITTLE: Oh, yes, at home, yes.

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

WHITTLE: Well, it, I really think I wanted to go so much that
 it, it was maybe difficult to swallow one and bring
 forward the other one. I was sorry to leave them
but I, I just couldn't wait to get on that train
to, to get, to do what I wanted to do. And I
think that's, I mean, I've been like that all my
life, doing, wanting to do things and doing it.
Trying not too hard to show, uh, that you didn't
care. I, I really did care and I miss them
terribly but I had this picture in front of me
what, what I was going to do and what was there
waiting for me, you know.

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SIGRIST: Yeah, it's a real sort of, happy and sad all at the same time.

WHITTLE: Yes, yes, yeah.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship?

WHITTLE: Adriatic.

SIGRIST: And tell me, was this the first time you had ever been on a ship?

WHITTLE: Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you thought when you saw the ship.

WHITTLE: Oh, absolutely astounded, you know, it really was. To see it all, you know. And, of course, it was November and the weather wasn't very good. And when we, we had to come into Queenstown from Liverpool, Queenstown in Ireland, to pick up the people who were coming to America from there, and we, the ship couldn't go in. We had to have, the lifeboats

had to go to bring them in, you now. And they came in, they came on board. They were sick on the, the (?) there, they were saying the "Hail, Mary. Mother of God" all the way over and wish the ship would go down (she laughs). But the, the, they were all right once, once they got on board. But it was a very rough crossing, and we had, the decks were roped across so we could, so being third class or steerage or whatever it was then, you, you could only go to the top of the steps to get out on, on deck. You couldn't go on deck because it was roped. And, I know, uh, the girls I was traveling with, they were all sick in my cabin. No, I can't stand this, so I, I got out and I got dresses and I was standing on the steps and I could see a little bit of opening at the side and I just got through. And I sat on one of the, the benches that they had on deck. And they were scrubbing the decks and one of the men said, "You can't be up in here, you know. It's too rough. You mustn't, you can't be here." And I said, "Oh, please don't send me down." I said, "They're all sick in my cabin. I can't stand it." And he, and just then one of the pursers or officer came

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across and he said, "What's the trouble?" And I
said, "It's not trouble, really." I said, "I'm a,
I can't stand the cabin." I said, "They're all sick
in my cabin and," I said, "they're wishing for the ship
to go down. I don't want it to go down." (she laughs)
So he says, "All right." So he brought me a cup of tea
and a blanket and he said, "Now, if, if it gets on top
of you like that in the morning, if you get up out
of bed," he said, "when you feel like that and, and
come up here."

SIGRIST: We're going to pause just for a second and Kevin is
going to flip the tapes over and we'll get you to
America.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: Okay, we're now beginning side two with Margaret
Whittle and we, you were just on the deck and the
purser allowed you to stay up there with the
blanket and the cup of tea...

WHITTLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How long did the journey take until you got to New York?

WHITTLE: Uh, it was over ten days. And we could see the icebergs as we were coming over. And all night, you know, there'd be the fog horns that would be going from out of us as well as ships going the other way. It really was a, it was a rough crossing.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me where they fed you on the ship?

WHITTLE: Oh, I, I think I was the only one, I think I was the only one on our table that had meals all the way over. We, we had everything. The food was wonderful, really was. And, of course, being so young and being the only one, you might know they made ever such a fuss over me, you know. (she laughs) And there was plenty of fruit to take with you. "Now, you take fruit and, you know, you have it. Come tell us if you want, if there's anything

that you need." They were very good, yes.

SIGRIST: How many girls were in your third class cabin?

WHITTLE: Three, three more. There were four of us altogether.

SIGRIST: Was your friend, the woman that you...

WHITTLE: Yes.

SIGRIST: She was there and then there were two other girls.

WHITTLE: Two others, yes, uh huh.

SIGRIST: Is there anything else that sticks out in your mind
about the, the journey across, maybe something that
happened? You mentioned seeing the icebergs
and...

WHITTLE: No.

SIGRIST: Did they have any kind of organized activities for
you?

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WHITTLE: Oh, yes. We had, we had, we did, you know.
Eventually we, we were allowed on deck, just (?) took
the ropes down, you know, the decks were all roped.
As it got better, they were taken down. And we
had ship's concerts, you know, yeah, and I
didn't, I even sang for them. (she laughs) I went up
into first class. They asked me if I would go up
to first class and sing for them, so I felt quite
honored.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you sang?

WHITTLE: "You Are A Wonderful Mother." (she laughs) I couldn't
think of anything else. I hadn't, I didn't bring
any music although I'd always been, I'd always been
that was inclined, you know. Of course, I don't
do any now, of course.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how that song goes?

WHITTLE: (she sings) "You are a wonderful mother, dear old
mother of mine. You have a place down deep in my

heart 'til the sun no longer shines."

SIGRIST: Thank you.

WHITTLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What about safety drills on the ship?

WHITTLE: Yes, we had that.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what that was like for me.

WHITTLE: Well, they used to get us on deck every morning or part of the day and say, they'd warn us and tell us to have all our stuff ready. And it was, it was good. You had to, you had to know exactly what you were doing. And they were very thorough about it because of the, I imagine because the sea was so rough. But they were very thorough with what they got you to do. I know there was a lot of people on board who, who never got out of bed from the first day out after leaving Liverpool. And I don't know what would happen with them, now, I

really don't.

SIGRIST: Well, it's a winter ocean, you now, it's a rough time
to be traveling.

WHITTLE: Yes, yes, it was terrible.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty coming
in?

WHITTLE: I do.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what that was like?

WHITTLE: Well, knowing how I felt about coming over and wanting
to come and waiting, and I knew that my sisters
would be there, I think it was the, the, most
wonderful thing I'd ever seen. I thought now this
is, this is beckoning me to a new start and
I hope that my, that that was how I, how I would
feel, you know, all around. And, and I did.

SIGRIST: What happened, when the, the ship into New York

Harbor, then what happened?

WHITTLE: Well, I, I don't remember all this part of, I remember coming through.

SIGRIST: Coming through Ellis Island.

WHITTLE: Yes, but not, not, it, it didn't seem very traumatic.

And it didn't seem to take too long, whether it was because we had been introduced to all these people and the people on board were so good to us, you know. They used to come every morning, the stewardess would say, "Are you all right today, " you know and everything because they'd be so careful about us in, in Liverpool. And it seemed to me that the ship pulled in and I got off. My, my sisters were waiting there, you know, for me, on board.

SIGRIST: Describe what it was like to see your sister.

WHITTLE: Well, I, I think they had to hold me down. I, I thought I could get (?), as soon as I saw them, of

course, I put my case down and my hands went up.
But they had to bring me back, and I was half way
across the, the entrance, you know, to get to
them, you know, but it was the most wonderful thing.

SIGRIST: You said "sisters." Now, I know one sister is over
here. Were there more than one?

WHITTLE: There were two, two sisters.

SIGRIST: There were two.

WHITTLE: Yes.

SIGRIST: What were their names?

WHITTLE: Dora and Betty. Mrs. Durand and Mrs. Badger.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Durand and Mrs. Badger.

WHITTLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Is there anything else that sticks out in your mind

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about, about this part of the trip, about the
processing part? Did you have to present any
papers to anyone?

WHITTLE: Yes, I had to take all, I had to take all my papers
through and I think, if I'm not right, I had to do
a little bit of reading, you know, they gave me a
little piece like that (she gestures), you know.
And, and they were very nice and said to me,
"Well, welcome to America. Hope you like it."

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you were wearing when you got
off the ship?

WHITTLE: Yes, I was wearing a, a blue wool suit that my mother
had made me, a jumper and skirt.

SIGRIST: Did you have a hat on?

WHITTLE: No.

SIGRIST: No. How did you wear your hair back then?

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WHITTLE: Well, it, I never had a (she laughs) bun in two places at the same time. I was, I used to take it back but it was very wavy. It used to, and it used to, part in the middle and waved it each side. And it was red.

SIGRIST: It was red?

WHITTLE: Yes, I had a, I was a redhead, yes.

SIGRIST: Where did your sisters take you?

WHITTLE: We went to Elmhurst first to my auntie's.

SIGRIST: How did you get to Elmhurst?

WHITTLE: By car.

SIGRIST: And does anything stick out in your mind about that trip up to Elmhurst?

WHITTLE: Just that I was watching through the window all the time, you know, to get through. And I was very

anxious to meet this auntie, you know, because,
although I (called her?), reached her, dropped a
little note to each other occasionally, yes. And
it was...

SIGRIST: How did you spend the first night? When you got to
Elmhurst, what happened?

WHITTLE: Yes, well, we, we eventually went to my sister's
house, you know, but I think I was on, I was still on
the ship. (she laughs) It seemed to go up and
down all night. And when I , when I, and she
said, my auntie said, "Please don't think of going
to work, you know. You have to get acclimatized to
everything. Don't think about anything. Just
think about yourself. Get yourself acclimatized and
everything." And I said, "Yes, ma'am," you know.
But when I was with my sister and we lived up in,
uh, Flushing, Long Island and I said to her, oh,
no, Bayside, Bayside.

SIGRIST: Bayside.

WHITTLE: It was just a new area and we lived, I lived there.
And I know I had been with her about a fortnight or
three weeks and she went out to visit, to shop,
and I picked up the paper and I saw this add for,
need a girl for, an English girl, preferably English
born, speaking, and I thought that can't be
too far away from where I, and I love children. And
so I rang up and made an appointment. My sister
was a bit cross but, anyway, she took me. And I
went to see this lady and we had a conversation, you
know about, she got little boy and was expecting
another. But she said to me, "Well, of course,
you're very young, aren't you," you know. And I
said, "Well, nothing the matter with me that age
won't, time won't change." So she said,
"Well." I said, "And I'm used to children." I didn't
want to go too far and I could travel, she lived in
Bayside as well, you know, Bayside west. Still, I
could really get, I could travel to my sister's. I
didn't have to stay overnight. It was only just
daytime. And, anyway, she said she got some
people to see. But, anyway, I got the job.

SIGRIST: How much did you get paid?

WHITTLE: Nine dollars.

SIGRIST: Nine dollars a week?

WHITTLE: Yes.

SIGRIST: And what were your duties?

WHITTLE: Uh, well, just to take care of the, the little boy and then, and then fix his diet. But he was a very, a bit unruly but not for very long. And when I went home to stay, back home when my mother was ill, you know...

SIGRIST: After the seven months.

WHITTLE: Yes, and I was there, and when I came back I was shopping with my sister and a little boy ran up to me and he put his arms around me. He said, "My aunt's come back." I couldn't believe it was this little boy, you know. And his auntie was with

him. And she says, "How long have you been back?"
And I said, "Oh, a couple of weeks, you know."
So she said, "Oh," she said, "We want a, we want
a girl to go with us to North Carolina." So, and she
said, "So far," she said, "we haven't got anybody
suitable." She says, "Well, do come and see.
(?) and see." And her husband was with the talkies
when the talkies first came out. And his, his area
was North Carolina. So I went to see them and I got
the job and I went to North Carolina. (they
laugh)

SIGRIST: Let's talk about that seven months before you went
back to England. Was there anything in America that
you had never seen before? Anything that was really
new to you?

WHITTLE: (she pauses) Well, living where I did, you see,
everything was so very personal. Everybody knew
you and everybody, you know, I used to find that a
bit hard sometimes. Like, for instance, I said to a,
I asked a policeman. He was standing by the bus and
I wasn't quite sure whether I should have this

bus or the next one. And I was just qualifying numbers. And I said to him, you know, was this the right bus or should I, and (she laughs) he said, "Snow again, sister, I didn't get your drift." And I looked at him and I thought, "My God," you know, and I walked away from him. I thought now (she laughs) is that a way to do, I thought it was very impersonal but after we, after we got into the life in, in where we were staying, you know, I found people were, they did care. But they always wanted to know, "Did you do this in the (?)? Did you do that?"

And I found it very hard in North Carolina when they, because they wanted to know if the king and queen went around with a, with their hats on, their crowns on. (she laughs) But they'd never been out of North Carolina, never been out of Queens borough.

SIGRIST: So you found that people were sort of asking you stupid questions about England...

WHITTLE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you ever find, did you ever experience any kind of prejudice or did anyone ever make fun of you because you weren't American born?

WHITTLE: No, no. I, on the whole I think I was, uh, I got accepted very well, very easily, you know, very well.

SIGRIST: Did you ever experience any language problems? I realize you're English speaking, but, of course some words mean different things.

WHITTLE: Different things. I, very rarely. I 'm, very rarely. I think I was one of these people that catch on quick, you know. I soon learn different things.

SIGRIST: What did you, what was it that you liked about America the most when you first got here?

WHITTLE: Uh, I think I liked it because there was a lot of freedom between parents and, and children. But you have to bear in mind that my, that my parents were older, you know. I mean, I was the last

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of, I was the end of a, a big family and I didn't
experience my parents when they were young.
And this was something else I was experiencing.
But my sister, especially my sister Dora, and her
family life, that I was part and parcel and, and we
all had our own voice. And I thought that was
very nice.

SIGRIST: That's, that's interesting that, of course, you know,
your sister has created her own life here but that
she just sort of brought you right into that...

WHITTLE: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

SIGRIST: ...into that family situation. How long did you live
with your sister?

WHITTLE: Well, it must have been about three years. And then I
got married from there.

SIGRIST: So, when you came back...

WHITTLE: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...you went to live with your sister again, and you stayed in that, that family unit.

WHITTLE: Yes, yes, our family union, uh huh.

SIGRIST: Tell me, you said you got married.

WHITTLE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you meet your husband in the States?

WHITTLE: No, I actually married the lad from next door, you know, he was an English boy. His, his elder sister married my eldest brother. And when he wanted to come to America, he, my sister, my sister stood bond for him. And so he was there. But we never, we, we never went around together. We always knew each other, you know, but that was all until I was coming home. I was going to come home again to see my parents and change my mind. We got married.

SIGRIST: What was his name?

WHITTLE: James. James Dobson.

SIGRIST: James Dobson?

WHITTLE: D-O-B-S-O-N, uh huh.

SIGRIST: And what year were you married?

WHITTLE: What year?

SIGRIST: Yes.

WHITTLE: Oh, God. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Well, how old were you when you got married?

WHITTLE: I was twenty three, twenty three. I was twenty three
when I got married and my eldest daughter was born
here.

SIGRIST: And what was her name?

WHITTLE: June, June Nanette.

SIGRIST: And how many children did you have?

WHITTLE: She had three, uh, four.

SIGRIST: You, how many children did you have?

WHITTLE: Two.

SIGRIST: June, and who is the other?

WHITTLE: And my, uh, Shirley. And we went, we went back home during the Crash when you either had to be an American citizen to hold your job down or become, you know. And I was expecting Shirley, my little girl. And I was given a time limit. If I didn't sail within six weeks, I couldn't come. I would have to stay. So we decided to come, uh, to come back home. And we came in October and she was born in November.

SIGRIST: I see.

WHITTLE: And she's the most American of the lot. (Mr. Sigrist laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, I have just a couple questions to ask you before we go, because I know have a lot of museum see because you're just visiting today. When you went back to England the first time, you said that thing just didn't seem quite right to you.

WHITTLE: No.

SIGRIST: Can you just elaborate a little bit on that. What, what had you gotten accustomed to in America that was different when you went to England?

WHITTLE: Well, when I was in, in America, I, I had to prove myself. I had to, I was my own boss. But I had a, I had a lot of things to live up to, you know. I wouldn't do anything that my mother wouldn't approve of, you know. I used to keep that in my mind. But when I came home, and I remember it was summer time and my youngest sister was at home

and it was round about nine o'clock, nine o'clock.
And I said to her, "Oh, isn't it lovely." I
said, "Let's go for a walk." And she said, "Have
you seen the time?" So I said, "Yes, nine
o'clock." She said, "My father won't like it." So
I said to her, "Of course he will. He won't take
any notice of that." So I said, "Are you coming for a
walk, Janet?" Nice and loud so my father could hear.
And he said, "At this time of night?" I said, "Dad,
one of these days," uh, he said, "What will the
neighbors say?" And I said, "One of these days
we're going to die and leave them all, so why worry
about them now?" I said, "I'm going for a walk."
It was so small, you see? He was, we were still
children. He (?) that was at nine o'clock. I
said, "All these miles I've been away from you," I
said, "and I'm, I've always (?) and kept in line.
And, and you're going to tell me I can't go for a
walk at nine o'clock?" I says, "Dad, forget it."

SIGRIST: So not only, America didn't just give you freedom. It
gave you independence, too.

WHITTLE: It gave me independence and it gave me the right to be independent. So I'll put it like that because I was my own earner and so I had, I was grateful for everything. And I hope that I adjusted well enough to be accepted. And I think it was, but, all the friends I made and the people we knew.

SIGRIST: What advice do you have for young people now about a way to lead their life successfully? When you look back on your own life, you know, what, what, what went well that you could convey to someone?

WHITTLE: I'll always remember a man at home when I was leaving, leaving home. And he said, "Well, you're going an awful long way from home." And I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Just think," he said, "I'm not going to give you a lot of advice but," he said, "if you come up against a question 'Would my mother approve?' or 'Is this the best way to go?'" He said, "If you've got a doubt in your mind, don't do it. If a doubt arises in your mind about anything, don't do it before you think about it." And I always, I always said to my girls, "Think." And

