

EI-658

SYLVIA JONES

BIRTHDATE: MAY 24, 1904

INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 26, 1995

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INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST

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ENGLAND, 1911

AGE: 7

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PORT:

RESIDENCES:

- **ENGLAND: BIRMINGHAM**
- **US: TROY, NY; WATERFORD, NY;**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Saturday, August 26th, 1995. I'm in Troy, New York, at St. Mary's Woodland Village with Sylvia Jones. Miss Jones came from England in 1911, and she was seven years old at that time. Miss Jones, can you give me your birth date, please?

JONES: Er--I'm ninety-one.

SIGRIST: Yes, but what's your birth date?

JONES: Oh the -- May 24. That's Queen Victoria's birthday.

SIGRIST: And what year were you born?

JONES: 1904.

SIGRIST: And –er--can you say your full name for me on tape?

JONES: Sylvia Fannie May Jones.

SIGRIST: Fannie is, F-A-N-N-Y or I-E?

JONES: I-E.

SIGRIST: I-E, and then how do you spell May?

JONES: M-A-Y.

SIGRIST: M-A-Y. So it's Sylvia Fannie May Jones.

JONES: Jones, yeah.

SIGRIST: Where in England were you born?

JONES: We were born in – er — oh, I got to think now.

SIGRIST: That's all right. Take your time.

JONES: Birmingham.

SIGRIST: Birmingham.

JONES: Yeah. Called "Brummagin."

SIGRIST: "Brummagin"? Hmm--can you spell that?

JONES: Well, you spell Birmingham, you got Brummagin.

SIGRIST: Oh, all right.

JONES: B-I-R-[M]-I-N-G-H-A-M. Birmingham.

SIGRIST: I see, and um--did your mother or father ever tell you any stories about when you were born?

JONES: Well, after you have eleven children, you don't tell each one how they were born. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Your mother had eleven children?

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: How many did she have--were they all born in England?

JONES: All born in England. I had one brother that was the--Fred--that was married over there and when we come to this country, she couldn't bring him here because he worked in the mines and he -- he was married and had a child--so--over there. So she couldn't bring him -- him with her to this country.

SIGRIST: But all the other children came?

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: Wow. Um--tell me what you remember about Birmingham. What—what--do you remember the house that you lived in?

JONES: Well, we went to a cousin's house and her name to us was Aunt Celia.

SIGRIST: Aunt Celia.

JONES: And then we had to—le--go upstairs and she had a—a--an apartment upstairs that we went and stayed until my father could get us, you know, take us. He went to Waterford and got a house for us.

SIGRIST: Waterford, New York.

JONES: New York, yeah.

SIGRIST: What year did your father come to the United States?

JONES: Oh, dear, I don't know because my two older sisters came with him. Oh—

SIGRIST: Were you born?

JONES: Huh?

SIGRIST: Were you born when he went?

JONES: Oh, yes. We were all born.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when your father left for the United States?

JONES: Oh, dear. My two older sisters went—er--came with him, so--but I --I really couldn't tell you the date because the dates weren't interesting to me. I was too interested in eating raisins. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: You liked raisins?

JONES: Well, my mother never would give them to us, so—when — er -- on the boat when we were coming over and the—er--well, whoever's the head of it there, he said, "Miss Jones -- Mrs Jones, take your children and sit at our table." Well, of course, they had raisins and my mother never would give us raisins. So the only thing we—I--I did was wait until everybody got away from the table and left the dining room and then I went back and ate the raisins. (Laughs) My poor mother had an awful time.

SIGRIST: I bet she did.

JONES: I was a devil, like the all the rest of us.

SIGRIST: When your father came here to Waterford, New York, what job did he get?

JONES: He—er--was working in Clue—in Cluett's Bleachery.

SIGRIST: Cluett's—

JONES: Bleachery. In Waterford.

SIGRIST: And what did they do there?

JONES: They made the--he finished material to make shirts because in Troy Cluett's factory made men's shirts, and he made--he finished—she finished the -- er--material. You know, put a shine on the material, and it

run through—well, and my father work—my father worked in the same place. And-- er--I guess it was my father that worked on the machine and made the--the finishing the material—excuse me—the material for shirts.

SIGRIST: And I should say for the sake of the tape that Cluett's is spelled, C-L-U-E-T-T.

JONES: T.

SIGRIST: Cluett's.

JONES: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, because they're still in business.

JONES: Oh, yes. Sure.

SIGRIST: Um --what did he do in England before he went to America, for a living?

JONES: My father, what did he do? I know—oh, he worked in a mine, the same as -- er-- one of my brothers.

SIGRIST: What do you know about his experience in the mines?

JONES: I don't know.

SIGRIST: What were they mining?

JONES: Well, they -- er--what is it? Iron, coal or whatever--whatever.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of him doing that when you were in England?

JONES: No.

SIGRIST: That's all before you remember.

JONES: No, we were all too small, you know.

SIGRIST: What was your father's personality like?

JONES: Oh, he was Good Old Joe. My mother was the serious. We couldn't do—you know—er-- my mother, of course, having eleven children you don't—er—er--you know, show impartiality to any one child and of course, what one did, the other did.

SIGRIST: You might want to be careful, Miss Jones. [static] [unclear] pick up on the tape.

JONES: Oh, gee. Why didn't you tell me that before?

SIGRIST: I didn't think it would be important until you started using it to punctuate what you were saying.

JONES: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

JONES: Alfred.

SIGRIST: Alfred, what is his surname?

JONES: Jones.

SIGRIST: Jones.

JONES: Just Alfred Jones.

SIGRIST: And what do you know about his family background?

JONES: Well, his mother came to—er-- America and his—er—and his sisters.
They all came to America first and they landed in north side, Waterford.

SIGRIST: The north side of Waterford.

JONES: Yeah, and that's all I remember on that.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

JONES: Ada.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

JONES: Ada—Sar--here's her name. Ada Sarah Elizabeth Lanton—

SIGRIST: Can you spell Lanton, please?

JONES: L-A-N-T-O-N. Jones.

SIGRIST: Jones, because she was married. Tell me what you know about your
mother's family background.

JONES: My mother's family? Well, my mother was sent to a girl's school. Her education was in a Ladies school and—er-- in England, and--but what part of England I don't know. But it had to be up around where most of—I'll say this, but I don't get a swelled head. Where the rich people lived, up around—er-- let's see, if I can think where my mother would say she lived. I can't--it won't come to me.

SIGRIST: Well, maybe it will as we're talking.

JONES: Maybe.

SIGRIST: What was her personality like? You said she was serious.

JONES: My mother? Oh, she was sweet, but she was very strict. But my father, we could get away with murder.

SIGRIST: Is there a story—tell me a story that shows how strict your mother was. Is there something that you remember happening that shows how strict she was?

JONES: Oh, only eating the raisins. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Is there another story that you can think of?

JONES: No. Huh? Oh, well, she never let us run the streets or anything. We could—er--we would—when we lived in England, we would live—er--we lived upstairs over what we would call the lady—Aunt--Aunt Celia, and we lived upstairs and we used to look out the window, see the men fighting in the street. That's all I remember of that. And they would fight and they would hit. Oh, it was awful. And my mother said, "You better not watch

out so much out the window, girls, because,” she said, “maybe they might be waiting for you to come down.” So we wouldn’t go down. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember what they were fighting about?

JONES: No. They didn’t have to have anything to fight about. They were just—well, you’ve often see it on the movies today, how the--the people over in the old country—that’s what they call it, the old country. They just do things and--to get you mad and then when they got mad enough, they’d punch you.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any other rules that your mother—

JONES: Well, we went to school early. I went to school--school at three years old.

SIGRIST: Oh, what do you remember about school?

JONES: Oh, I loved it. It was nice and—er-- of course I was so small that they—er--you know, you started in like first grade. You didn’t go—they didn’t put me in kindergarten because I was older than all the rest of the kids, see. So—

SIGRIST: And what kinds of things did you learn in school in England?

JONES: Oh, reading, writing, ‘rithmetic.

SIGRIST: Could your mother read and write?

JONES: Oh, my mother was—yes. My mother—

SIGRIST: Because you said she went to a girl’s school.

JONES: She was a--went to a girl--girl's finishing school and of course she taught us and I had a cousin live with us. We called him Uncle George and he came over in England—England--from England with my father when he came over, and so he roomed with us, you know, in Waterford on First Street.

SIGRIST: On First Street in Waterford when you got over here.

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Um--tell me what you remember about your religious life in England. What religion were you?

JONES: Oh, well, we went to Trinity Episcopal Church.

SIGRIST: And how did you practice your religion at home? What would you do at home?

JONES: Oh, well, I always said the --um—said the—um-- said the—um--- Lord's Pray--Prayer and then every night before we went to bed, we had to kneel before my mother and she would tell us a prayer to say, you know. But don't ask me now. (chuckles)

SIGRIST: I won't. Don't worry. Do you remember—what do you remember about going to church?

JONES: Oh, we went to church—er--on Sunday and if they had anything during the week like a picnic or anything, we were able to go to that because there was always somebody to take care of you. And-- er—but-- er—they--I

don't know, have you ever been in an Episcopal Church? Yes, then you should know. (chuckles)

SIGRIST: Well, I'm just curious what you remember about it.

JONES: Oh, well, we went to—er—in the morning—we'd get up on Sunday morning and my mother would give us breakfast and then she would dress us all up in our white clothes. Our white dresses and shoes. And there --there was three of us, younger, you know. This is the young part now. The--the last children my mother had were three girls. Sylvia was the oldest—that's me.

SIGRIST: That's you.

JONES: Ivy, I-V-Y. My sisters and Glad—er—Ivy—Elsie, but those two are dead and there's only me -- Sylvia and who's the other one that's living? I--er-- Elsie. And she's in Massachusetts and I haven't seen her in two years.

SIGRIST: Er--how many years were there between the--the oldest child and the youngest child?

JONES: Well, I imagine just the amount of time it took to make another one. (laughs). My mother had her children fast.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when your younger sisters were born? Do you have any recollection of that?

JONES: Only that all us kids, you know what I mean? My father used to take us out—er—take us to Sunday School on Sunday while my mother got the dinner, and then when we'd come back, we'd have dinner. And then we'd go for another walk over what they call—oh, what's the name of the place? You know anything about Waterford?

SIGRIST: No, we're talking about England now.

JONES: Oh, England, oh yeah.

SIGRIST: We're back in England now.

JONES: Yeah, that's right. I'm thinking of what we did when we come to Waterford.
Er--

SIGRIST: We're going to get you to Waterford in a minute. I was wondering if you remembered when your younger sisters were born?

JONES: No.

SIGRIST: No? In England. Um--do you remember the clothes that you wore in England? You mentioned white dresses.

JONES: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe them?

JONES: Well, I had older sisters, see. My sister Gladys and my sister, Gertrude, but they came over here with my father. But before that, they would make--make our clothes. One of my sisters, well, she was a dressmaker, so she made our clothes. Then we had a grandmother over there and she would make our clothes.

SIGRIST: And how would your grandmother make your clothes? Can you describe the process for me?

JONES: Yeah, just ordinary, you know, plain clothes. That's all.

SIGRIST: What did they look like?

JONES: Well, kids wear the same things today practically.

SIGRIST: But what is that? Can you say it in words, what it looked like?

JONES: Yeah, it's a—well, a white dress and you would have—er—er--it would be short sleeves. And if it was a--a white dress, you would only wear that in the summer, and then you would have a—a—le--another dress, a heavier dress for, you know.

SIGRIST: And how long was the dress?

JONES: They didn't wear them very short, I'll tell you. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: And when you were a little girl, how did you wear your hair?

JONES: I had natural curly hair and when I came in here—

SIGRIST: To America.

JONES: The man that used to cut my hair when I was a kid, lives in this place.

SIGRIST: Oh, oh, you mean here at St. Mary's Village?

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: The man who was your--who used to cut your hair—

JONES: That used to cut my hair—er--but not in England.

SIGRIST: Right, but in Waterford.

JONES: When I was in Waterford, because we were all small when we came here.

SIGRIST: Oh, my goodness.

JONES: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That must have been a surprise for you (laughs).

JONES: Yeah, and—er—he--but he used to cut my hair and my mother used to yell at him because he cut off my curls.

SIGRIST: Well, it all grew back.

JONES: Yeah, it would all grow back. But I don't—I had to have perms, you know, but my hair has got a--a tinge of it, you know, the natural.

SIGRIST: And what color was it when you were a little girl?

JONES: Black. Oh, no, my sister Ivy's was black. Mine was brown and my sister Elsie was a towhead.

SIGRIST: Meaning that she was blonde.

JONES: Yes. But those two, Elsie and—er--Ivy, and that—and--we were all young when we came here.

SIGRIST: Do you remember in England, do you remember—you said you lived upstairs from your aunt.

JONES: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the apartment, how many rooms it had and what it looked like?

JONES: Well, you only had—it had one room and you'd put two beds--beds in it. And so three kids would sleep in one bed. I always took the foot, and then the others, my other two sisters were younger, so they took the top. And then, of course, I had older sisters that lived in England, too.

SIGRIST: Did they live in the apartment with you?

JONES: Yes, but they had another part of what we would call Aunt Celia's house, see, and then we stayed down with my mother, down this way.

SIGRIST: What else do you remember about the apartment that you lived in? Do you remember the kitchen?

JONES: Yes. Much the same as over here.

SIGRIST: How did you cook?

JONES: I didn't cook.

SIGRIST: Well, who—yes, your mother cooked?

JONES: Yeah, my mother cooked.

SIGRIST: Well, what did she cook? How did she cook? What did she have to cook on?

JONES: Oh, every Sunday we had a leg of lamb. I do remember that and then during the week you had—er--like pork chops or veal chops or whatever.

SIGRIST: Did she have a stove to cook on, or how did she cook?

JONES: No. You had a—you've seen houses where the -- built in fire?

SIGRIST: Like a fireplace?

JONES: Yeah, like a fireplace, and then you would—er-- put the things—to--we called it a hop. You put the—um—er--well, whatever you were going to cook for your dinner, you put it on and it was like the grate in there with a fire, and then there was a thing, you know—er-- that you would--er—so the children wouldn't get near enough to it, and then they would—er--cook. You know, cook whatever--whatever they had, I guess.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite food as a young girl when you were growing up?

JONES: Just anything. (Laughs) Actually, just anything.

SIGRIST: You liked to eat anything.

JONES: Just as long--just so long it was something to eat. But my mother was a good cook.

SIGRIST: What would she cook for Christmas?

JONES: Oh, you had everything for Christmas, you know what I mean? Much--we had—we had—er—er--well, what do we call it? Wreaths and—er-- then what she would cook for Christmas, you know, for Christmas would be a chicken or a chicken and what else did they have on Christmas--for? Well, whatever, and it was a big family, so we had to have a lot to eat.

SIGRIST: Did you exchange presents for Christmas?

JONES: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Is there a Christmas present that you got as a child that sticks out in your mind?

JONES: I was glad enough to get anything, (laughs) because people weren't rich in those days and they didn't have money to spend. But we always got something and we got—er--when I—when we went to Sunday School, they would always give us something. They'd always give us kids stockings, black stockings, and I would fold mine up and put them under the bed. I hated black stockings. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Were those intended to be worn every day?

JONES: The black?

SIGRIST: The black?

JONES: Yeah. Yeah, you had to wear them to school, you know what I mean. I went to school here and my sister Ivy, and my sister Elsie wasn't quite old enough to go to school, but we all--we lived in Waterford for so many years.

SIGRIST: Once you got to America.

JONES: Yeah, when we got to America.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, when you were a little girl in England, do you remember how you thought about America? What ideas you had about America before you got here?

JONES: Well, they would read us stories, you know. Like when we would go to Sunday School, we would hear the stories about Christmas and things like that. And then we didn't call—we didn't call him Santa Claus. He was called Father Christmas. (Chuckles) Did you ever hear that?

SIGRIST: Did you have a Christmas tree in the house?

JONES: No, we had what they call a Christmas bough. It was two hoops, one going this one and one going this way.

SIGRIST: Opposite directions.

JONES: Yeah, and they would decorate it all up with—er--well, much the same as you put Christmas up here. But it would go on that round—one would go that way and one would come this way.

SIGRIST: When you were—when you were a little girl, how did you think about America? Before you got here, when you were in England, how did you think about America?

JONES: I don't know because I wasn't old enough to be --to go to school. I went to school. They--you go to school three years old over there.

SIGRIST: Was your father writing to your mother from America?

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the kinds of things?

JONES: No. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: No?

JONES: No, my—

SIGRIST: Did your mother have a job in England?

JONES: Yes!

SIGRIST: How was she supporting the family?

JONES: Well, my mother was from a rich family and she was brought up like a young lady, but then when she got—you know, and married my father, why, he was just an ordinary man with a—with a job. And as I say, he put—er--he run a machine called a calendar and it would run this way and this way, and this way and this way, and it would put —er--finish to the material that they would use to make shirts.

SIGRIST: That was here in Waterford?

JONES: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember packing to leave for America?

JONES: No. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember —

JONES: No, my mother used to wait until night and she put us all to bed, and then she would do the packing. She was a very—er--particular person.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you felt about leaving England?

JONES: Oh, all I wanted to do was get on the boat and ride. That's all.

SIGRIST: Do you remember leaving your house to go to get on the boat?

JONES: Well, there was so many of us, you know, that—er--we all went together, and—er-- you had to wait for a certain boat to come up. We came up-- over on the Mauritania, if you've ever heard of the Mauritania.

SIGRIST: And where did you have to go to get on the Mauritania? Where did you have to travel to get on the ship?

JONES: Oh, what was the name of the place? I can't remember, but it was—er-- wherever it would—it had to stop at Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Oh, wait. We're still in England. We haven't gotten across the Atlantic yet.

JONES: No.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me what you thought when you saw the ship, and the Mauritania is a big ship.

JONES: Oh, sure it is.

SIGRIST: Yeah, tell me what you thought when you saw the ship?

JONES: Oh, all we did was run up and down. My mother had the worst time because when we got on that boat, they—my mother said she could have given me away a dozen times. I was small, and I was very thin. My sister Ivy was a little chubby and she was still younger than me, but she had long--long black hair, right down to her shoulders and I had brown hair. And my mother didn't like me in long hair, so she used to cut it. Cut my hair short, and--or bob it. You know, a bob. And then my sister Elsie had--was a towhead.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where you slept on the Mauritania? Where did you sleep?

JONES: Oh, well, in—er—er--you—my mother and us girls were on the girl's side and then my brothers and—er-- there was only two—let's see. Archie and Reg, and Bert. There was only three brothers—but one--oh, no, there was four, but one stayed back because he was working in the mines and he had to stay there because he had a child.

SIGRIST: But--but the ladies were separated from the men on the ship?

JONES: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you do on the boat?

JONES: Fell out—fell out of bed on top of my mother. (Laughs) My mother couldn't stay in the bed, be--so she laid on the floor because she was so seasick. So I was on the upper bunk, you know. Well, there was three of us in one bunk up on the top and so I don't know how I got pushed out, but

I got pushed out and I came down on my mother. (Laughs) Can you imagine?

SIGRIST: Did you get seasick?

JONES: I think we all got seasick, yeah, but I would eat so much that I—it's--the ones that got seasick were the ones that couldn't eat, but I could always eat.

SIGRIST: Yes, you told about eating the raisins, that was on the boat.

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember eating other things on the boat?

JONES: Well, yes. We had—er--cooked meats and things like that. You know, like a dinner at night and then for lunch you'd have like a sandwich or something like that. And--but very much the same as it is here.

SIGRIST: Did they have activities for you to do on the ship?

JONES: Act—act--What?

SIGRIST: Did they have activities for you to do on the ship?

JONES: Oh, yes, we did a lot of things. We jumped rope, played hipscotch—hopscotch and things like that. Oh, yes, they entertained us very well.

SIGRIST: Did you—

JONES: And sang. I had a sister, and—er--oh, she had a beautiful voice and she would sing. But not until later, did--did she and I go out—I got to play the piano real well and—er--I would play the piano. But this is in this country now.

SIGRIST: In Waterford, yeah.

JONES: In Waterford. And--er—er--I would—I would play in church. Twenty years I think I played in Trinity Episcopal Church there in Troy—in Waterford.

SIGRIST: And you would play and your sister would sing, here in America?

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the songs that she sang?

JONES: Well, all the old hymns. I don't know if you know them, but whatever the hymns for the Sunday had to be picked out and then you would take those. But you would go to choir rehearsal during the year—you know, during the like the week you'd go to choir rehearsal. Then on Sunday you'd go to Sunday School. Then you'd go to church. Then you'd go to Sunday School at night.

SIGRIST: Were other members of your family musical?

JONES: Yeah, well, my sister Gertrude played. Well, she-- it wasn't—er—it wasn't a—er--one of these things.

SIGRIST: Like a violin.

JONES: Yes, it wasn't the violin. What's—what's another music—

SIGRIST: Well, there's a viola that you play like that.

JONES: No, it was a small one.

SIGRIST: Small, but was held like a violin?

JONES: Yes, yeah.

SIGRIST: Violin or a viola, that's all I can think of. Or cello.

JONES: We all played something and I played the piano. But I have never played the piano here.

SIGRIST: And you have a beautiful piano out there.

JONES: Yes, I know.

SIGRIST: I saw—

[End of Side A, Tape One/ Begin Side B, Tape One]

SIGRIST: --the ship. How long did it take the ship to get to New York?

JONES: Oh, weeks at that time. You can go in two days or three days right now, on the same boat. You know what I mean, the same crossing. You can go very quickly because they—well, they must have a better boat and must have more people.

SIGRIST: They're faster now.

JONES: And when we came over, there was a strike and when we got on the ship -- er--nobody knew whether we were ever going to get to America or not because they--it was an--an awful strike on the river or something. I don't know. I don't remember that much about it.

SIGRIST: But you remember that it did cause some inconvenience?

JONES: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you remember being on the deck of the ship?

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: What did you see when you were on the deck of the ship?

JONES: Nothing but the ocean. (Laughs) Nothing but the ocean. But they had it like a divide —er--division. They had the ship and then there was glass windows like all about so far apart where you could go inside and sit, and—er--you know, just watch the ocean. That's all you did.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the other passengers who were traveling on the ship?

JONES: Well, yes, we had—er--er--their name was Burnett or Bennett we would call it here, but it was Bennett in England. And they got off at—er--oh, dear, what--where did they live in New Yor—in England? In New York. They got off at New York because their home was going to be in New York. Later, in—er-- when we lived in Waterford, those same people came to visit us and—er--when they said to my mother, "Let's take this one back with us, she's awful sk--awful skinny," and my other two sisters were very—you know, they would eat, but I don't know what happened to

me that I didn't. But this lady took me. They--she lived in New York so she took me with her and I was supposed to stay two weeks. I stayed two years and I loved it there.

SIGRIST: This is right after you arrived?

JONES: Huh?

SIGRIST: When you first arrived, you stayed for two years in New York?

JONES: No, when we were going to-

SIGRIST: Oh, I see, they had come up to Waterford.

JONES: Yes, they had come up to Waterford and visited us and then they took me back with them, and I was only supposed to stay two weeks and then they were supposed to bring me back. I stayed two years.

SIGRIST: Oh, good. We'll talk about that when we get you to New York. Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when the ship came in to New York Harbor?

JONES: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: Did you know that was?

JONES: Well, no, not really. I think I was too young to get the meaning of it. You know, what I mean. All I could see was this lady and that's the Statue of Liberty. And--er--but I didn't like looking at the ocean because I didn't like--sometimes the--the waves would come, oh, you'd think they were

going to take that boat right under--underneath the water. Maybe they did, I don't know. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: So the ship comes into New York and then what happens?

JONES: And then my—let's see, who was—my father was here first. And my two older sisters. Now, when we come to get off the boat, we had to get—we lived in Waterford, so my mother and father and whoever was over here at that time, they lived in Waterford, and do you know where Waterford is?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

JONES: And—er--so then we got off the boat and my father met us and—er--my two older sisters were going to have dates with fellows. So they felt when we got off the boat, they didn't think that my father was going to meet the boat and take us out with my mother, you know. But they did, and they didn't get to meet the fellows in New York. (Laughs) It's—it's—it's like a fairy story, actually.

SIGRIST: It happened a long time ago.

JONES: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Now, did you have to go to Ellis Island and be processed?

JONES: Yes, yeah. We went to—

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about it?

JONES: You stopped at Ellis Island, yeah. That—I don't know whether we got off there—or--no. That's when we came to this country, wasn't it?

SIGRIST: Yeah, it would have been on your way.

JONES: On the way, yeah.

SIGRIST: What happened to you there, do you remember?

JONES: No, only that all we did was eat. But all we did in--on the boat, run up, run around the boat and up the boat. There was always somebody that wanted to take one of us. Now, there was a lady and she lived in New Jersey and she wanted to take me and my mother said, "No, I have to take them home," you know. And--er—and my sister Ivy, she had beautiful black hair and she wore it long. Well, I was too short to wear my hair long, so I had to have bobbed hair.

SIGRIST: Did you have to undergo any kind of medical examinations?

JONES: Well, when you go so—when you--before you get off the boat, you all get in line. Yeah, they looked up your eyes, take your eyes and lift them up, see if you were all right. See if there's any diseases, and--er--but that's all they did was that. They didn't take your clothes off or anything like that. And then they would feel your arms and that's all they did.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me meeting your father, because he'd been in America for a while.

JONES: Well, my father had a whi—er--a moustache and he was light. My sister Elsie took after my father because he was light. My mother had dark

hair, so—er--l—l—er--my hair was brown. My mother had the same kind of hair.

SIGRIST: Did your father bring anything when he came to meet you at the boat?

JONES: Not that I know of.

SIGRIST: When you came off the ship, where did your father take you?

JONES: To New York. I mean, we st—er—it--would we have stopped in New York?

SIGRIST: Yes, possibly. Yes.

JONES: Yeah, well, we got to New York. Then we had to take a train home.

SIGRIST: Well, do you remember—do you remember having to—did the boat stop or were you on a smaller boat?

JONES: No, the boat—

SIGRIST: The boat stopped. Is that where your father met you, when the boat stopped?

JONES: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: The big boat, the Mauritania.

JONES: Yeah. Yeah, that--that came into New York Harbor, I imagine and then because I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty. So would I see that there? Yeah, okay. I had to get my brain down. But anyway—er

SIGRIST: So your father—so then where—your father took you to where?

JONES: Troy. No, Waterford.

SIGRIST: How did you get from New York City to Waterford?

JONES: On a train.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about this train?

JONES: I was very sick on the train. I had to stand up in the—in the back to get the—and he opened the window for--for me because it made me sick to ride the train. Now, the others never got sick. My other two sisters didn't get sick. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Did you see anything in New York or on the train that you had never seen before?

JONES: Lots of things.

SIGRIST: That was new. What? What sticks out in your mind?

JONES: Well—er--one thing we never saw in England and that was the men that would be in New York selling on—out of that—their—er-- wares, whatever they had on the--to sell. Oh, such as—er-- lollipops or—er-- what else?

SIGRIST: You mean like street vendors?

JONES: Yes. Yeah, very much so.

SIGRIST: So that was something new?

JONES: That was new, yes. (Laughs) My poor mother, she was so so sick, riding the—er-- train into New York—I mean from New York when we came in on the boat. Well, then you got off the boat and you went to get the train to come to Waterford, New York. To Waterford, anyway, and--er--but the train—where would it have stopped? It didn't—but we had to get a trolley car and that made me sick, too. Oh, long time I couldn't ride anything and I don't know why. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: So you were sick on the boat, sick on the train and sick on the trolley car.

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: You mentioned you thought you might—

JONES: And of course, then we went from there to Waterford, you know. Now, do you know anything about Waterford?

SIGRIST: No, tell me what you remember about arriving in Waterford.

JONES: Oh, we'd--my father got us a house. You know, it was a nice house. A woman lived upstairs and then we took the one down on the lower level. But it was in—it must have been the time of the year that they—they never had a flood there before, but they had a flood at this time. And so anyway, but at night when we got there—it was night when we got there. My mother put us to bed and then her and my father went to bed, you know, as people do when they get in a place. But then my father was to go to work in the bleachery in Waterford. Of course, you know, you go—

er—er-- over the bridge and that's where he had to work. He worked there, and—er--he run what they call a calendar.

SIGRIST: And you were saying about a flood, something happened?

JONES: Oh, yeah. So anyway, that morning when we got there, and he took us to the house, you know, where we were to stay. In the morning, in the morning when he got up, the river had risen. That was—er--not the Hudson, but the one that runs this way. That's--well, whatever one that way. Mohawk.

SIGRIST: The Mohawk, uh-huh.

JONES: Okay. And—er-- when he got up out of—my father got up out of bed, he got—went in, you know, the bathroom, I suppose, and the water was up to his waist. And so we all had to stay in bed—er-- until they came with a rowboat to get us out of bed. And they put us in the rowboat and brought us up to Broad Street in Waterford, and then we went up to the Knights of Columbus Hall. They took us all in. They had all these white beds. I can see those white beds today. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: How did you feel during this?

JONES: Oh, I was too busy. I was always busy with something.

SIGRIST: But I mean during this experience of being in the flood, how did that make you feel?

JONES: Well, we didn't think anything—well, yes. We had—er--an aunt who met us, went with my father and met us when we were coming home, and she used to take fits, and the day that they had the flood in Waterford

and it said if they rang the bell, you know, all right like a church bell or whatever it was, everybody had to run up to—er-- the Catholic Church and that was running up the hill.

SIGRIST: High ground.

JONES: High ground. And—er---which we did, and—er--my one sister Ivy, she was so cold that she was crying. I didn't—I never cried over anything. I don't to this day. Only if it hits me, you know what I mean, just so. But er---

SIGRIST: What happened to your aunt? You said that she—

JONES: Oh, she took fits.

SIGRIST: And what do you mean when—

JONES: And she took a fit right in the middle of the river—right in the middle of where all the water was, where you had to wait until the boat come and pick you up to take you up to the church.

SIGRIST: When you say “take a fit,” what do you mean? What happened to her?

JONES: Well, I don't know. She'd just faint and fall right down into the water. (Laughs) Had to go get her.

SIGRIST: Was she okay, though?

JONES: Oh, yeah, she lived to be a real old lady.

SIGRIST: I see.

JONES: See, these were my father's mother and sisters and brother--brothers that was all here before he came.

SIGRIST: I see.

JONES: And then we came to join—here—to join them.

SIGRIST: Tell me about going to school in America. Tell me what that experience was like for you.

JONES: Well, just that I had to do sums, that you would call them, the same as they did in England. Very much the same, only we went to—er-- school at three years old.

SIGRIST: But what grade did they start you off in America?

JONES: Well, they wanted to put me in kindergarten. My mother wouldn't let them because I had four years schooling before we even got here. So they put me in grade four, and then my other two sisters, they went in the lower grade, like grade one. And my sister Elsie went in kindergarten.

SIGRIST: And um--tell me about what that was like to go to school that first year. How was it different than what you were used to?

JONES: Well, now, I have to tell you about going to New York first. And I stayed in New York, I was supposed to stay two weeks and I stayed two years. I went to school over there.

SIGRIST: Did that happen soon after you arrived?

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: How long had you been in America before you went back down to New York to stay for two months—two years?

JONES: Oh, maybe about a couple, about four or five years. But—er-- where we lived, we lived on what you call First Street in Waterford. Then we had to run up to Fourth Street to run to the public school. And then right next door to it was a man that run a machine and made all kinds of paper stuff. You know, like if you wanted a--a certain kind of paper and something like that. It was a paper place, anyway.

SIGRIST: Did your mother get a job in Waterford when you arrived?

JONES: Yes, she—she--my mother worked in—er--Cluett's Bleachery for twenty-seven years after we got here.

SIGRIST: So that's the same place your father worked.

JONES: Yes, same place my father worked.

SIGRIST: Did she do the same kind of work at the bleachery or did she do something different?

JONES: Well, my mother—er--graduated in England from a girl's school and—er--she went to a very high school, and but when she come over here, she was married and so she had children. But she did get a job in what—do you know anything about Waterford?

SIGRIST: No, I don't. I don't, but you said she—

JONES: But you know there's a bridge you go over. We lived on First Street and you had to go a block, walk a block and go over the bridge and that's where my mother worked, in there.

SIGRIST: And that's also where your father worked.

JONES: And where my father worked.

SIGRIST: Were there lots of immigrants in Waterford? I mean, were there other English people in Waterford?

JONES: Oh, yes. But most of them stopped in New Jersey. When we came, you know, from—when we got on the--the train or boat—no, the train to come to Troy, those people got off—didn't get on. They went into New Jersey. You know, after you got off the boat, I guess.

SIGRIST: Why do you suppose they did that?

JONES: Well, they had a home here before they got here, so they had to go to where their home was.

SIGRIST: I see. Tell me a little bit about those two years that you spent in New York City with the Burnett family and what sticks out in your mind about that experience.

JONES: (Laughs) Well, it was wonderful. Well, I went—they--the Burnett people had birds. They kept them in the cellar and they were all in cages. And of course—er--what we did is they had one son, Harry, but they had-- Mrs. Burnett had married a man that had two grown girls, you know. And so those girls went out and did office work and so Harry and I had to take care of the birds, and we had to—er-- make sure that they didn't get out

of the cage. And when we—er—cleaned the cage, you know, the bottom of the cage, we had to take them and put them on the table and make sure they didn't get out to fly around. (Laughs) But one of those—one of those—er—er--birds, they didn't like me. For some reason, I don't know. I never heard anything, but it didn't like me. I think because I was too small. They thought they had—and Harry was a big boy. And—er--but every time I went near him, he went to bite me, and bite me he did. My fingers. But I don't know what ever happened to him.

SIGRIST: Why did they—why did they have all these birds? Why did the Burnett family have all these birds?

JONES: Oh, well, I don't—oh, they had a store. Is there a store in Troy or around about where they sold them, sold birds or chickens?

SIGRIST: Are you in New York City now or you up in Troy?

JONES: Up in New York City. In New York. Newark, New Jersey is where we were.

SIGRIST: You were in Newark?

JONES: Newark.

SIGRIST: Newark, New Jersey. Oh.

JONES: And they—and--er--but the people where we went, they had this big house and they had the cellar and it was filled with birds. And of course, they would sell the birds, you know. And but there was one, this one that didn't like me, but why I don't know, and we had to clean them every day, you know, not just on a Saturday.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you were living with the Burnett family?

JONES: About eleven.

SIGRIST: So you'd been here for a few years before that happened?

JONES: Yes.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me a little bit about what you remember during the period of World War I, between 1915, 1916, 1917. What do you remember about that?

JONES: Well, I had two brothers in it. One brother, and the other brother cried all when my one brother went away with the service. My brother Reg—his name was Reginald and we called him Reg—and he cried because they wouldn't let him go because he was too young. They wouldn't take him. Then I had a younger brother, Archie, but he didn't go in the war because he was too young.

SIGRIST: Did one of your brothers serve during the war?

JONES: Two.

SIGRIST: Which ones served? You said Reggie they didn't take because he was too young.

JONES: Yeah, and then my brother Bertram.

SIGRIST: Bertram.

JONES: And he lived in Waterford.

SIGRIST: And do you remember, did he ever talk about his experiences during the war?

JONES: Never.

SIGRIST: No?

JONES: Never could get a thing off of—away from him. You know, out of his, but we lived in Waterford for a good many years. Everybody I think in kingdom come knew us. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, now, Miss Jones, have you ever gone back to England to visit?

JONES: Er--only once. My mother and I went back.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what year it was or how old were?

JONES: Oh, well, I know I was still going to school. No, I wasn't. I was working and I took—er—er--I did office work because I went to school, you know.

SIGRIST: Why did you go back to England? Why?

JONES: To visit my cousins. I got lots of cousins over there and they wanted me to stay. And they came over here and they didn't like it, so they went back.

SIGRIST: Was that before you went over to visit or after?

JONES: After I went over.

SIGRIST: It was after you went over. Did you go back to the town where you had been born? With your mother? Did you go visit the house where your Aunt Celia lived?

JONES: Oh, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did it feel to go to England at that time? How did it feel to be in England?

JONES: Well, of course, I was so young it didn't make any impression on me at all. Just that I was some, you know, my mother and I and my father stayed home and took care of the——took care of the kids. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: So it didn't really mean anything?

JONES: Nah.

SIGRIST: To you particularly. Were there any kind of things that your parents taught you when you were young, sort of rules to live your life by?

JONES: "Keep your fingers from picking and stealing," my mother would say five times a day. "Keep your hands from picking and stealing." That's all that she would ever tell us, and we were scared to death. We didn't know what to do.

SIGRIST: Do you think of yourself as being English or American?

JONES: Well, I don't remember that much of England. You know what I mean, even though I did go over and I met all my cousins and everything. I wouldn't want to live there, after you know, we come back. But they

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came over and visited us one time and of course they didn't like America so they went back and they never came back. That's the end of my story.

SIGRIST: Well, that is. That's a good place for us to end. I want to thank you very much, Miss Jones, for letting me come over.

JONES: Did I help you out?

SIGRIST: You did a wonderful job. You really did.

JONES: That's all I could think of. You know what I mean. I've got an itchy head.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Sylvia Fannie May—

JONES: Jones.

SIGRIST: Jones on Saturday August 26th, 1995 here in Troy, New York. Thank you very much.

JONES: Okay. I hope—

[End of Interview]