

EI-823

ISABELLA STEPHEN ROHAN

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[NOTE: Interviewee mumbles and stutters, making verbatim translation impossible.]

LEVINE: Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Sunday, October 13th, 1996. I'm in the city of Springfield, Massachusetts, and I'm here with Isabella Rohan. Mrs. Rohan came from Scotland. She arrived June of 1913. She was nine years old at that time. Present in the room, also, is her friend Lorraine Winiarski, and I'll spell that. That's W-I-N-I-A-R-S-K-I and we also may hear in the background of the recording the dog, Dolan, D-O-L-A-N, who can be quite noisy. Mrs. Rohan, can we begin by you giving me your birth date, please?

ROHAN: Third of October.

SIGRIST: Year?

ROHAN: 1903.

SIGRIST: 1903. So you just had a birthday not too long ago.

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: And tell me where in Scotland you were born.

ROHAN: Dundee.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Dundee, please?

ROHAN: D-U-N-D-E-E. [Chuckles]

SIGRIST: Thank you very much. What do you remember about the town when you were a child? What sticks out in your mind about the actual town of Dundee?

ROHAN: Well, all I remember, we used to go to the movies every Saturday. We had to upstairs. We could look from the stairs over see the ocean. Well, you had the same life as any child, you know. Had a good life. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did you do as a child when you lived in Dundee? You mentioned going to the movies.

ROHAN: Yeah, I went to the movies, but we used to go on picnics and things. I don't know what.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the games that you played?

ROHAN: Games?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ROHAN: Yeah, we used to have these things you'd hook around, you put around. What do you call them?

SIGRIST: Like a hoop?

ROHAN: The hoops, you know, put around. Have that. We had jump rope. And regular kids games. I couldn't—I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Okay, did your mother or father ever tell you a story about the day that you were born?

ROHAN: About the day I was born?

SIGRIST: Yes, anything. Did they ever tell you anything about the day you were born?

ROHAN: They're just so glad to have me born. [Laughs] No, not that I remember. No.

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

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it for me?

ROHAN: We had three rooms, a fireplace in the kitchen. A bed in the kitchen. I can remember that. My father and mother slept there. We used to do the cooking on in the front of the fireplace. We had a thing like that and a fire—they called it a fender stool. We used to count the brass nails in it.

SIGRIST: A fender stool?

ROHAN: Fender stool, yeah. It went across—see, we had a thing like that. Then we had a fender stool in front of that

SIGRIST: I should say for the sake of the tape, since it's just an audio tape, that you're pointing to your own fireplace fender here in—

ROHAN: Yeah. Yeah, that. We had one like and then the fender stool went in front of that. We used to sit on that by the fire. We done the cooking there.

SIGRIST: Three rooms, was this a house or an apartment or—

ROHAN: It was like an apartment house. It was all houses next door and upstairs and used to go upstairs—we called it—instead of porches you called it plattees [PH] or something like that.

SIGRIST: Plattees?

ROHAN: Yeah, something like that. And I remember we used to get, we called it delss. [PH] I guess it was seaweed and we'd take a poker and roast it and eat it. And I remember a fisherwoman used to come once a week and my mother bought her fish from her fresh from the—things like that I—my aunt had a store, a candy store. I remember going there quite often. [Chuckles]

SIGRIST: Yes! What was your favorite kind of candy?

ROHAN: I liked the licorice. Yeah. Then we used to get licorice, we'd put it in a bottle and we'd—with water we'd shake it and then the foam

would come up and we'd suck on that. [Laughs] We sometimes said, "You want a suck?" We'd shake it. "Give us a pin." I don't know what we done with the pins, but—it was anything but sanitary. Anyway, you had to suck on it. That sort of things I can remember. We had a good life.

SIGRIST: Well, that's the kind of thing I'm interested in hearing. These little bits of memory that you have. Dundee I assume is on the coast. Is—is—

ROHAN: Pardon?

SIGRIST: Is Dundee on the coast?

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes, because you mentioned seeing ships in the ocean and everything.

ROHAN: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What—what can you tell me about some of the things that you could see in Dundee that had to do with the ocean? And what was—what was there?

ROHAN: Gee, I don't know. I never got close enough to it until I came to this country.

SIGRIST: Were there ships? Could you see ships?

ROHAN: Oh, yes. You could see the ships from these stairs. We went up, we could see the ships on the ocean, you know. I don't remember getting close enough to it, you know, until I came.

SIGRIST: What about you mentioned this fisherwoman that you used to buy—

ROHAN: Yeah, she used to come every week. They came from—I don't know where they came from, but I remember they had funny dresses. You know, they'd come up and they sold all kinds of fish. My mother used to get the fresh fish every week. We would always get it. We lived good. Yeah, good.

SIGRIST: What—what kind of—do you know what kind of fish, excuse me, it was?

ROHAN: Well, my mother used to get smoked haddock and different kinds. I don't know. Haddock. I really don't know. I know—I know it was fish, that's all.

SIGRIST: I was just wondering, how would your mother prepare the fish when she got it? How would she cook it?

ROHAN: Well, my mother used to make—she cooked the fish sometimes the haddock like in milk and butter and the smoked fish, we just ate it like that, you know. But I don't know anything—any other way. I don't remember. [Chuckles]

SIGRIST: Let's get back to—to the actual place where you lived. You said you had three rooms and you had a fireplace.

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Does any of the furniture stick out in your mind? Do you remember any of the pieces of furniture?

ROHAN: All that stick out is the kitchen had a big bed in it. That's all I remember.

SIGRIST: And that's where your parents slept.

ROHAN: That's where my parents slept, yes. Right, yeah.

SIGRIST: What about in any of the other rooms, was there a piece that—that you remember?

ROHAN: Oh, my brothers were in one room and my sister and I were in another. That's all I can remember, but—

SIGRIST: So there were five children?

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: How many children? Five?

ROHAN: I had four—let's see. I had four brothers and one sister.

SIGRIST: Can you name everybody for me?

ROHAN: Yeah. My brother—my brother Bill was the oldest. My brother Charlie. My sister Myles. My brother George. I had a brother David that died when he was two years old. And myself. Yeah.

SIGRIST: So you're the youngest?

ROHAN: Pardon?

SIGRIST: Are you the youngest child?

ROHAN: Oh, no. John. John was the youngest. He was only three when we came here.

SIGRIST: I see. And what was your sister's name again?

ROHAN: Myles.

SIGRIST: M-I-L-E-S?

ROHAN: M-Y-L-E-S.

SIGRIST: M-Y-L-E-S. That's an interesting name.

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were you named after anybody?

ROHAN: My grandmother. My father's mother.

SIGRIST: She was Isabella?

ROHAN: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Well lets—let me talk about your father. What was his name?

ROHAN: John.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living?

ROHAN: Ha, that's a good question. [Chuckles] Jack of all trades. Master of none. It says on my birth certificate he was a general dealer. I don't know what that meant, but he did deal in antiques and stuff like that. I don't know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember him doing that in Scotland?

ROHAN: No, I don't remember him doing it.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What—what do you remember about your father in Scotland? What memories do you have of your interaction with him?

ROHAN: I remember he used to—whether he worked in a store or what. He used to bring home crates of—of grapes and we used to have to take the grapes out and clean them. It was like sawdust or something on them, and get them ready for him to take back. Because that's all I can remember. He loved dogs. He loved hunting. He loved to go hunting. He used to go catch, they called them hares, you know. Yeah, that's the thing I can remember. He loved to dance.

SIGRIST: What kind of dancing did he do?

ROHAN: Scotch dancing.

SIGRIST: Can you describe-

ROHAN: In fact, he taught it for a while. He, like the Highland Fling and them kind of dances. Shad twos and things like that, but he taught me, but I never was much good at it.

SIGRIST: Is dancing important to Scottish people?

ROHAN: Yeah, Scotch people are very—they like fun. You know, they like to go—you go to a Scotch party, you always have a good time, you know. They're that kind of people, but my father used to be great for—when we came to this country for having picnics. We'd go a way out and they'd take the accordion. Kids go with them and they'd play the accordion, sing and dance. He was great for that and—

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. So your father enjoyed being with his family?

ROHAN: Yeah, he enjoyed it.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. You said your father enjoyed hunting.

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: And that he hunted hares. Would he bring them home?

ROHAN: Oh, yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what would happen to the hare?

ROHAN: He brought them home. Now, I wouldn't eat one on a bet. [Laughs] But we ate them then, you know. Yeah. He always brought hares. He never brought small rabbits. It was always the big hares he brought home.

SIGRIST: And then what would you do with them, though? If he brought one home, what—what happened to it?

ROHAN: My mother cooked it. I don't know how. I don't know how she cooked it, but she cooked it. We ate it.

SIGRIST: You'd eat it. Okay.

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

ROHAN: Margaret.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

ROHAN: Fields.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

ROHAN: F-I-E-L-D-S.

SIGRIST: And what do you know about your mother's family background?

ROHAN: Well, my mother's father had a baker shop. My mother came from kind of a nice family. You know, they—

SIGRIST: Your mother's father had the baker shop/

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah, your grandfather.

ROHAN: Yeah. She had a brother in Australia, you know. In fact, she had three or four brothers, but they were all well-to-do, you know. My aunt that brought my father over to this country, was her youngest sister. Her mother died fairly young and my mother brought up her family, you know. So.

SIGRIST: Do you remember her father in Scotland?

- ROHAN: Oh, he died very young.
- SIGRIST: He did. I see. So you didn't know her parents at all?
- ROHAN: No. No, I didn't know my—all—I knew—I met my father's mother couple times, but I never met his father. His father was blind. [unclear].
- SIGRIST: What do you remember about his mother?
- ROHAN: She's very, very—she wasn't Catholic, but she was very, very good living. She believed in God so much that she believed that—well, in fact, the doctors used to give her permission if somebody was dying, to go take over. And a lot of—a lot of lives she saved by giving them herbs and stuff like that.
- SIGRIST: Oh, yeah, do you know anything about like how she did that? What she would make to help people?
- ROHAN: Well, I know I had a brother who was very, very sick. He had diarrhea they couldn't stop. The doctors gave him up and my grandmother came stirring something in a cup. She fed it to him and in an hour he passed a great big piece of potato black as coal. You could—my mother said you could actually see him fattening up from it. It was slippery elm, I think she fed him.
- SIGRIST: Slippery elm was what she fed him, huh.
- ROHAN: Yeah. Yeah, I think that's what it was, but I'm—
- SIGRIST: Well, that's very interesting. That—that's good information.
- ROHAN: I hope nobody goes and tries it.
- SIGRIST: I know, right. [Laughs]
- ROHAN: [Laughs]
- SIGRIST: Are there any other kinds of home remedies that you can think of that your mother may have made for you children or—
- ROHAN: No, but my father used to make a liniment that was hot, hot, hot! [unclear] Used to—my mother had bronchitis and he used to put that and help her, and then he made some kind of—well, he made with that slippery elm and lobelia I guess he called it.

SIGRIST: Lobelia, uh-huh.

ROHAN: I can remember one of my neighbors in Ludlow—we lived in Ludlow. She had a very bad ulcer on her leg and they couldn't heal it. He started treating it, healed it all up with that. See, it's still herbs. You try—you can bring it back now, but—

SIGRIST: That's interesting. So even in America when you were in Ludlow—

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: They were still practicing these kind of folk remedies.

ROHAN: Yes, yes. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you talk to me about what your mother's personality was like?

ROHAN: My mother's personality is like mine.

SIGRIST: And what is that?

ROHAN: [Laughs] Easy going. My mother never got mad. Very seldom got mad. She liked to dance. She liked company. Our house was like—well, nobody passed our house. Everybody came in, you know. They were welcome. Everybody was welcome. Didn't matter what nationality you were, you could come in. My brother John played the piano. He'd get her out there, sing. We had a good life.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the songs you sang as a kid in Scotland?

ROHAN: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Could you sing one for me?

ROHAN: Sing?

SIGRIST: Yeah, right now.

ROHAN: Oh!

SIGRIST: On tape. Oh.

ROHAN: I used to be able to sing. I can't anymore.

SIGRIST: I'm just curious what kinds of songs people sang at that time.

ROHAN: Well, they sang Ramona and the Sheik of Arabia. You know, we're going back. I'm really going back. [Laughs] But I can't sing anymore. I used to sing, but I can't anymore. In fact, I used to be in the choir.

SIGRIST: All right, I won't ask you to sing.

ROHAN: Times have gone by. [Laughs—has the greatest 'belly' laugh]

SIGRIST: What were some of the chores that your mother had to around the house in—

ROHAN: She had to—

SIGRIST: In Scotland.

ROHAN: She had to—in Scotland?

SIGRIST: Yes.

ROHAN: My mother worked.

SIGRIST: Oh, yeah? What did do for a living?

ROHAN: Well, she—she ran a sewing machine in some factory. I can remember her saying that they made tints or so and then she worked in Kehler's Marmalade, as you said. She worked in there for a while, but outside of that. My mother liked to dance. My father and mother both liked to dance. That's where I take it from. And she liked—she liked people. She liked company. She liked a good time, you know.

SIGRIST: It sounds like your mother and father were well-mated that way.

ROHAN: Yes, they are. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: They both liked their fun.

ROHAN: Yeah, they got along very well. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What religion were you in Scotland?

ROHAN: Pardon?

SIGRIST: What religion were you in Scotland? Religion?

ROHAN: Oh, we were Episcopalians.

SIGRIST: You were Episcopalians, and how did you practice your religion in Scotland /

ROHAN: We went to church when we felt like it. [Laughs] When I got married, I—I converted. So I never missed mass.

SIGRIST: You converted to what when you got married?

ROHAN: Catholic.

SIGRIST: Oh, you became Catholic when you got married.

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember in Scotland how you practiced your religion at home?

ROHAN: No. I know when I was coming to this country I hadn't been baptized and I had a nun was my Godmother, I remember that. But—

SIGRIST: Did that cause some problem because you hadn't been baptized yet?

ROHAN: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ROHAN: I had to be baptized before I could come to the country, you know. So I had a nun who was my Godmother, but my father and mother, they never talked religion.

SIGRIST: That was not important.

ROHAN: I'll tell you, we used to go to—to Protestant school. What school? What do you call that?

SIGRIST: Parochial school?

ROHAN: No. We used to go to school and my mother worked and the hours were funny. She'd go to work six o'clock in the morning and she'd

come home at nine. She'd get us ready to go to school. We were always late, so the Catholic school told us we could go there because we didn't have to have the catechism or the prayers. So it—it gave her another ten, fifteen minutes, you know. She'd have to get us to school to go back to work, you know. So, that's all I remember about as far as religion. We weren't that religious, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you celebrated Christmas in Scotland?

ROHAN: Oh, same as we do here.

SIGRIST: What is that? Just describe for me what you remember of celebrating it in Scotland.

ROHAN: Well, we would get a doll or something at Christmas and that was it. We'd get a stocking with a piece of coal in it, an apple and an orange and maybe a small toy. And we'd get one toy, that was it. That was our Christmas, you know, but we celebrated it that way. They celebrate New Year's more than they do here.

SIGRIST: How—how did they celebrate New Year's in Scotland?

ROHAN: Oh, the usual way. Parties, you know. Not us, we didn't go to parties, but my father and mother would go to parties or something like that. But nothing—nothing different than any place else that I can remember. But, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me—you started talking about school. What do you remember about going to school in Scotland?

ROHAN: Well, like I say, we had to go to Catholic school and—

SIGRIST: What was your favorite subject when you were in school in Scotland?

ROHAN: [Laughs] None.

SIGRIST: None. [Laughs]

ROHAN: But the only thing was, when we came to this country, my sister was so far advanced because the education there seemed much better than here. Because when she came, we—she was ready for fourth or fifth grade and they said she could go in almost as a senior—junior class, you know. But she was further advanced than they were in this country, I know that.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROHAN: But—

SIGRIST: She's a couple years older than you were—

ROHAN: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: At that time when you came.

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Right. Could your mother and father read and write?

ROHAN: Pardon?

SIGRIST: Could your mother and father read and write?

ROHAN: Oh, certainly.

SIGRIST: Yes.

ROHAN: My father was always writing things in the paper. [Laughs] He used to write about—in this country, about football. He'd write, he'd sign his name McGonagall. One time he put something in there, a man says to him, "I'd like to get hold of that McGonagall, I'd kill him." He said, "The things he's writing about our team." [Laughs] It was my father he was talking to. Yes. He used to work sometimes for the politicians, too, you know.

SIGRIST: What was the name that he would use when he wrote?

ROHAN: McGonagall.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

ROHAN: No.

SIGRIST: MA-GON-A-GALL. Huh. That's funny. Well, tell me—tell me who went to America first.

ROHAN: Well, my aunt and uncle went.

SIGRIST: This is your mother's youngest sister?

ROHAN: My mother's youngest sister and she didn't like it. She got homesick. She came back. I think she was here six months. She came back. Then she decided to go back to America, so she did—I think she took my eldest brother and my father went with her. And my father was here a year before we came. He didn't care very much for it. He wanted to come back and go to Australia, but my mother wanted to come to America. So we came to America. We got here, she was homesick. She used to look at the—the [unclear] and she'd say, "Even the birds look different here." You know, of course, homesickness but we adjusted to it. We came to a brand new home and—

SIGRIST: When your father came the year before you did, where did he live in this country?

ROHAN: In Ludlow.

SIGRIST: He lived in Ludlow.

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living when he got—

ROHAN: He worked in Chapman Valve. It was a—

SIGRIST: Chapman Valve.

ROHAN: Valve, yeah.

SIGRIST: Is that like a factory, a valve factory?

ROHAN: It was, yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROHAN: And then he worked in the Fiske Rubber Company.

SIGRIST: The Fiske Rubber Company.

ROHAN: Yeah, and—but we came here. We moved into a brand new home.

SIGRIST: When you were in Scotland, what did you know about America?

ROHAN: Nothing.

SIGRIST: Did you have any idea of what it was all going to be like?

ROHAN: [unclear] Had no idea at all what America was like.

SIGRIST: Did your father—how did you pay for the passage? For the ship passage?

ROHAN: How did we pay for it?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ROHAN: I don't know whether my father paid for it or my aunt paid for it. My aunt was well-off.

SIGRIST: Was she in Ludlow, also?

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, she lived in Ludlow, too.

ROHAN: Yeah. It—my aunt and uncle never had any children. They wanted to adopt me, but my mother wouldn't give me up. But they were always very good to me, you know. Like that.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the process of getting ready to leave Scotland? What did you have to do to get ready to leave Scotland?

ROHAN: Well, we had to pack our clothes and get rid of what we had, couldn't take with us. We had to go to Glasgow to get on the boat.

SIGRIST: What—what do you remember that you took with you?

ROHAN: Only thing I can tell you is my—our clothes, that's all. That's it. I don't think we brought anything else. I don't know. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Did you take an object that was yours? Like a doll or a toy or a book or something that was yours specifically? No.

ROHAN: Not that I remember, no.

SIGRIST: Was there anyone in Dundee that you had to say goodbye to before you left?

ROHAN: Yes, a very dear friend. Her and I were always together. Always. Where you see Muriel, you see me. [Laughs] Yeah, but—

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SIGRIST: And what do you remember about having to say goodbye to Muriel?

ROHAN: All I remember is crying. That's all, you know. She—very, very nice friend of mine. Yeah. We were both the same age. So—but it's hard to leave any place, you know.

SIGRIST: You said you had to go to Glasgow to get on the boat.

ROHAN: Glasgow, yeah.

SIGRIST: How did you get from Dundee to Glasgow?

ROHAN: By train.

SIGRIST: Does anything stick out in your mind about the train ride?

ROHAN: No.

SIGRIST: Who's traveling exactly? It's you and your sister.

ROHAN: My mother and my brother Charlie, my sister Myles, my brother George, my brother John and myself.

SIGRIST: And that's quite a span of ages, too, right?

ROHAN: Yes, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: The kids.

ROHAN: There's about two years between each of us.

SIGRIST: Was anyone else traveling with you from your town? Another relative or a friend?

ROHAN: No.

SIGRIST: No, it was just your mother and the kids?

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And you went to Glasgow. How long did you have to wait before you got on the ship?

ROHAN: Oh, gee, I don't know. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember getting onto the ship?

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes.

ROHAN: Well, I got on the ship. We came on the Numidian. Took us fourteen days to come over here.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship?

ROHAN: Numidian. We also passed thirteen icebergs. I remember that.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me where you slept on the ship?

ROHAN: Where we slept?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ROHAN: Well, in rooms. We each had a room and we had, I don't know, bunk beds or what they were. I can't remember. But I know my mother never got seasick. Neither did my sister. I did. I was seasick mostly all the way across. And I remember my mother used to people if were sick, go around. You know, she'd go around helping. I made her sick, though. She says to me, "Get me a drink of water," and I went to the wrong place and got her salt water. Made her sick. [Chuckles] But I don't remember too much about it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how it feels to feel seasick?

ROHAN: Oh, yeah. Terribly.

SIGRIST: What happens when you're seasick?

ROHAN: Every time the boat would rock, I'd go—up would come everything. [Laughs] But see, I wasn't—I never was an eater. I still can't eat and the doctor thought if I got this trip over, it would help me. It didn't help me any because I was sick all the way.

SIGRIST: Hmm.

ROHAN: I was the only one that sick. The rest of the family weren't.

SIGRIST: Did you see anything on the ship that you had never seen before?

ROHAN: Not that I can remember. No, I can't remember anything.

SIGRIST: How long did you say it took?

ROHAN: Fourteen days.

SIGRIST: Fourteen days, uh-huh. And do you remember when the ship came into New York?

ROHAN: No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

ROHAN: Yeah, I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty and I remember going to Staten Island—Ellis Island and we had to wait there. I'll say in the rain. I had long hair and I think they looked my head over see, make sure I didn't have bugs, and whether they gave us a test or not, I don't remember. But I can remember my brother three years old, when my father came to claim us, the said, "Who's that?" "I don't know." My mother went to tell him, they said, "Don't tell him. We want him to tell us himself." "Is that your father?" He said, "No." We called my father "Ty," you know. He said, "That's my father. My Ty's in America." He was only three years old, so. I remember that, but anything else I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Did that get you into trouble at Ellis Island?

ROHAN: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ROHAN: No, no. No.

SIGRIST: What did you—how did you feel when you saw your father?

ROHAN: When I saw my father?

SIGRIST: Yeah, when he came to claim you.

ROHAN: Well, I'll tell you—[static]

SIGRIST: Wait—[static, adjusting microphone].

ROHAN: [unclear] fixing it like that. You know what I mean, we don't fall all over him. I suppose we kissed him and that's about it.

SIGRIST: I'm wondering, did he look different to you in any way?

ROHAN: No. No.

SIGRIST: Did anything else happen at Ellis Island that you can remember? Did you eat while you were there?

ROHAN: No.

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

ROHAN: Well, I probably was dressed in American style because my aunt had come back to Scotland. She brought us clothes from this country so we were probably dressed. I don't know just how. I remember my mother had a straw hat and my father said, "What did you wear that for? Nobody but colored people wear them." We got here, they were all the style. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Did people dress differently in Scotland than they had in America?

ROHAN: No.

SIGRIST: That you remember?

ROHAN: I think the styles are ahead sometimes, yeah.

SIGRIST: So your father came to Ellis Island. He claimed you all.

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: So how long were you there for, do you—

ROHAN: About an hour.

SIGRIST: About an hour. It was very fast.

ROHAN: Yeah. [unclear]

SIGRIST: Where did he take you?

ROHAN: Well, he took us to eat. Then we got on the train and we came—I don't know where we came. It seemed to me I came from Boston,

all the way by trolley. My father wanted us to see the country. We came all the way by trolley and we landed up the Ludlow Bridge and we had to get off and walk—walk over the bridge to get to our home. But how we got to Boston, I don't know. Must have been by train.

SIGRIST: By train or—

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: But they actually—they were—they had boats that went up to Boston, too, at that time.

ROHAN: Yeah. No, we weren't on a boat.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

ROHAN: It must have been a train, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Describe for me where your father took you to live in Ludlow. What—where was he living at that time?

ROHAN: Well, as I said, we went into a brand new home.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROHAN: In fact, they didn't have the stairs on the porch going up yet. They hadn't finished it. That was in Cyprus Street in Ludlow.

SIGRIST: Cyprus Street.

ROHAN: A very nice neighborhood, yeah.

SIGRIST: And can you describe for me what the house looked like?

ROHAN: Yes, we had—upstairs we had three bedrooms. Downstairs we had three—three rooms. I'll tell you something funny. My father was making—we had a fire—a stove in the parlor to heat, you know. He said to my brother—I was down the cellar, so it was just my brother. "Go down the cellar, get some"—no, my brother was down the cellar, and he said to me, "Go down and get some bark." Well, I didn't know what bark was, so I'm going down the stairs saying, "Bark, bark," and my brother's there, "Bow wow."

SIGRIST: [Laughs]

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ROHAN: I didn't know what bark was. Bark from the tree. He wanted to start the fire, you know. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Did that house have electricity in it?

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes, it was built with electricity.

ROHAN: We had electricity. We had gas.

SIGRIST: Running water?

ROHAN: Running water.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROHAN: Bathroom, everything. Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How—how long did it take before you were put into school?

ROHAN: For what?

SIGRIST: How long was it before you were put into school?

ROHAN: Oh, we weren't here very long when we went to school. We were—we didn't live far from the school, no.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being registered for school?

ROHAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What sticks out in your mind about being registered for school and starting school?

ROHAN: Well, I know my mother took us down and registered and we went to school. That's all I know about it. We always—we always lived in Ludlow.

[END OF SIDE A]

[BEGIN SIDE B]

SIGRIST: Were there other Scottish families in Ludlow?

ROHAN: Loads of them.

SIGRIST: Really?

ROHAN: Because Ludlow Mills, the jute mills, brought people there to work in the mills.

SIGRIST: Jute, J-U-T-E. Like rope.

ROHAN: Jute, J-U-T-E, yeah.

SIGRIST: Jute.

ROHAN: Yeah. Yeah, they had big mills up there. They had—I think they had nine of them and they brought a lot of people over here from Scotland, yeah.

SIGRIST: When you first got to this country, did anyone make fun of you for having an accent?

ROHAN: No. No. Where we lived on our street, we were all Scotts. So—but no, they didn't make fun of us.

SIGRIST: Were they from different parts of Scotland, or—

ROHAN: Oh, I guess so.

SIGRIST: Or mostly from the same area in Scotland?

ROHAN: Yeah. I think they were all from different parts.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROHAN: There might have been some from Dundee. But no, I was [unclear] the other night and I was talking to a friend of mine, she—well, she left last week for Ireland, and she said, "I come from Scotland." I says, "You do?" She says, "Yeah." She said, "Yeah, from Dundee." That's the first time I've heard anybody come from Dundee, you know. So it's surprising.

SIGRIST: Is that where they still have these dances that you go to in Ludlow?

ROHAN: I don't go to them in Ludlow. I go to Chicopee to dances.

SIGRIST: To Chicopee. I see.

ROHAN: They still have them.

- SIGRIST: I was just wondering if I can find other Scottish people somehow around here.
- ROHAN: No, no, they're all—used to be two or three of them came. Used to be one from Northampton and she was—she still had her brogue, but I haven't seen her now in ten years. So.
- SIGRIST: Uh-hmm.
- ROHAN: Yeah.
- SIGRIST: Did your mother get work when you—when she came to the United States?
- ROHAN: She get what?
- SIGRIST: Work. Did she get a job?
- ROHAN: Well, she used to go out doing housework for a while, but that's all. No, she never went to work. My mother never worked in the mills. Only she worked, like I said, a sewing machine. I heard her say they made tents or something.
- SIGRIST: Were—were there activities that all the Scottish people used to get together and do?
- ROHAN: Oh, yeah. Real. They had the Scottish Clans used to get together and have dances. It's all dances. That's all I know about. Of course, when we were younger and my father and mother went out, we didn't g with them. They went by themselves, you know. We—we had somebody take care of us at home, you know. [Chuckles] Just like babysitters and—there's no different than—than the country here. It's no different. We were brought up the same way in Scotland as we are—were here. So.
- SIGRIST: Right, the cultures are similar.
- ROHAN: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.
- SIGRIST: Did—you said when your mother got here she didn't like it.
- ROHAN: No, she was homesick.
- SIGRIST: She was homesick.

ROHAN: Yeah, homesick. They all get homesick when they first come.

SIGRIST: Did—

ROHAN: Of course, we were too young.

SIGRIST: Did—did your parents ever go back to Scotland?

ROHAN: No, I never went back. My sister went back. My sister went back ten years ago. She said it's a beautiful, beautiful country.

SIGRIST: But I mean back then your parents didn't talk about moving back to Scotland or anything.

ROHAN: No, no, no. My father wanted to go to Australia because my mother had a brother there. He owned a wire mill or something and he wanted to go there, but my mother insisted on coming here. So. [laughs]

SIGRIST: What—what are some of the—the personality traits inside of you that are very Scottish? You've mentioned you like to dance.

ROHAN: I like to dance. I'm not tight, if that's what you mean. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Well, I'm just trying to think what—what—is that a—is that a personality trait of people from Scotland?

ROHAN: Well, so they say. The Scotch people are tight.

SIGRIST: Tight meaning kind of don't want to spend money.

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROHAN: But—

SIGRIST: What about food, do you cook? Did you used to—

ROHAN: Do I cook?

SIGRIST: Scottish food?

ROHAN: Yeah. We got oatmeal and vegetable soups and stuff like that. I don't cook them anymore. I don't cook anymore, period. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. [Laughs] Well, we've got just a couple minutes left. Let me just ask you about when you got married. The name of the man that you married?

ROHAN: Carl Rohan.

SIGRIST: Carl Rohan.

ROHAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And when did you get married?

ROHAN: 1930.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh, and what was his background?

ROHAN: He was—his—his people came from Ireland, as far as I know.

SIGRIST: Where was he born?

ROHAN: Adams.

SIGRIST: Adams, Massachusetts.

ROHAN: That's it, yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see. So he was—he was American born.

ROHAN: Yeah, he's an American. His father and mother are born here, too, so he's really an American.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

ROHAN: So.

SIGRIST: And did you have any children?

ROHAN: I got two sons.

SIGRIST: And what are their names?

ROHAN: Carl and Edward.

SIGRIST: Carl and Edward, and are your children interested in learning about their Scottish background?

ROHAN: I don't think so.

SIGRIST: No, not particularly.

ROHAN: No.

SIGRIST: And you said you've never been back to Scotland. But do you want to go?

ROHAN: I don't like to sail. My sister loves to sail, but not me. My sister loves to travel. I don't.

SIGRIST: I hope I get to meet your sister. [Laughs] And interview her at some point.

ROHAN: Yeah, [unclear].

SIGRIST: What—how do you think your life would have been different if your parents hadn't come to the United States?

ROHAN: I don't know. I haven't the slightest idea. [Laughs] Probably been like it is now, I don't know. I have—I've had a good life. So nothing to complain about.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. When you think of yourself in terms of what nationality you are, do you think of yourself as an American? As Scottish? As Scottish American? How do you think of yourself?

ROHAN: Scottish. Anybody asks what nationality I am, I always say Scottish. I am Scottish. I've got my citizenship papers and I'm American as far as that goes, but I was born in Scotland and I'm still Scottish.

SIGRIST: Do—when—do—when you became a citizen, how did you do that?

ROHAN: How did I do it?

SIGRIST: Yeah, how did you become a citizen?

ROHAN: We had to go and—I don't remember. We had to go down and swear you—I don't know. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: The reason I'm asking that is I was wondering if you got your citizenship through your parents or if you went and did it.

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ROHAN: No, I didn't get it until after I was married. No, my father never took his papers out. It was too late for us to become citizens, you know. So I didn't get mine until I was married. After I was married.

SIGRIST: I see. So you did it on your own.

ROHAN: Yeah, if my father had taken it out, we'd all have been Americans, but he didn't take them out. So.

SIGRIST: Why didn't he take them out?

ROHAN: I don't know. My father was peculiar. You couldn't tell him you had to this or had to do that. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Just had his own way of doing things.

ROHAN: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, I think that's it, Mrs. Rohan. Thank you.

ROHAN: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: Very much. You did a good job. You have a good memory.

ROHAN: Yeah? Oh, good. [Laughs] Oh, see, sometimes, you know, things from happened years ago come back to you, but things that happen yesterday I couldn't remember. You know? [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Tonight, you know, as you're going to sleep tonight you'll start thinking about Scotland all night, as you—

ROHAN: Yeah. I've been thinking about Scotland for three nights trying to think what we done, you know. But I can't think we done anything any different than we done here. So.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Isabella Rohan on Sunday, October 13th, 1996 with her friend Lorraine in attendance. Thank you.

ROHAN: So that's it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]