

EI-824/CONCANNON

EI – 824

CATHERINE CONCANNON

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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IRELAND, 1913

AGE 19

PASSAGE ON “THE ADRIATIC”

RESIDENCE: CAECHNORE, CO. GALWAY

US RESIDENCE: PORTLAND, ME

LEVINE: Today is October 15, 1996. I'm here in Portland at St. Joseph's Manor with Catherine Concannon who came from Ireland in 1913 when she was 19 years of age. When Mrs. Concannon came from Ireland her name was Folan. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm here for Ellis Island to ask Mrs. Concannon whatever she can remember about Ireland and coming to this country and getting settled. Today at the time of this interview, Mrs. Concannon is 102 years of age. Okay, if we could start at the beginning. If you would say where in Ireland you were born.

CONCANNON: In the village, you want the village?

LEVINE: Yes

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CONCANNON: Caechnora, I was born in Caechnora, County Galway, Ireland. Caechnora is back in the country. Galway is a big city. We stayed along the Galway, you know.

LEVINE: And how do you spell the name of the little village?

CONCANNON: C-A-E-C-H-N-O-R-E, that's in Gaelic, you know.

LEVINE: In Gaelic, all right, uh-ah. Was Gaelic spoken in Caechnora?

CONCANNON: That's all there was, dear. Mostly.

LEVINE: So did you speak Gaelic when you lived there?

CONCANNON: Yes. I was brought up by my father. 'Cause my mother had died when I was 10 months old. So we always spoke Gaelic. But then we went to school and learned the English language. But some how or another I could talk English before I went to school, but I don't know how that came.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

CONCANNON: Bartley Folan.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

CONCANNON: Bridget Folan, before and after (laughs).

LEVINE: (laughing) Oh, okay. And so she was related to your father?

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CONCANNON: No. No blood.

LEVINE: No?

CONCANNON? They lived in the same village though. He was older than her, much older. And she died when she was 36 years old, and left eight of us.

LEVINE: Oh my. So you were the last one?

CONCANNON: I was the last one. I was well taken care of. I had a great grandmother. I went to her if anything went wrong. And so she was very good. My mother's mother.

LEVINE: What was your mother's first name?

CONCANNON: Bridget.

LEVINE: Bridget?

CONCANNON: Yeah, she was a Bridget. I had two brothers married to Bridget's. All Bridget's. That was a big name in Ireland. Bridget and Mary.

LEVINE: Do you remember your brothers and sisters? Their names?

CONCANNON: Oh, I remember them well.

LEVINE: Okay. Could you start at the oldest one and work your way down?

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CONCANNON: My sister Julia first. My sister Mary. My brother Bartley. My brother Martin. My brother Sean(?) . My sister Mariah. My sister Mary. That's seven, isn't it? Oh, and I had a Barbara. My grandmother was Barbara.

LEVINE: Who is the sister right above you in age?

CONCANNON: Mariah. 13 months older. [?].

LEVINE: And so did your older sisters, you stayed at home, and your older sisters took care of you?

CONCANNON: My oldest stayed home. She got married home. And the rest came out to this country but went back again and got married over there.

LEVINE: And then did they stay in Ireland?

CONCANNON: They stayed at home, they married probably where there was land. But anyway they were all well, but um (pause) [?]

LEVINE: What do remember about when you were growing up, when you were a little girl in Ireland?

CONCANNON: I remember very well. I was devoted to my father. And I'd go with him down, he was a great worker, a little man, great worker, and I'd go down with him because he'd want me to be with him and he put me laying down when it got time and he put his jacket on me to keep me warm. And then I remember very well going home he had ahold of my hand. I remember that.

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LEVINE: What was your father doing? Was he farming?

CONCANNON: Oh, he was a farmer and a grave man. For a little man, he was one of the best.

LEVINE: What was his personality like?

CONCANNON: Oh he was kind to children, he was kind to everybody. He liked to share. My brothers all went out to sea and when they came home, before they get their shoes off, he send them to each and everyone of the neighbors who didn't have boys, with some fish. My brothers said one day, "they got more fish then we have left now" and he said "that's okay." So he was very kind. I think I got that from him. I like to share. And most my family too, they like to help.

LEVINE: Was your family religious?

CONCANNON: Huh?

LEVINE: Was your family a religious family?

CONCANNON: Very. My grandmother, she lived two houses from us. And she's so kind.

LEVINE: What do you remember doing with your grandmother?

CONCANNON: I teased her.

LEVINE: (laughing) You teased her? What might you tease her about?

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CONCANNON: One day, I got a package all ready. I went up on the [?] we call it the loft, and got the harshest pig. Oh it was a little pig, harshest pig. They used to save it because they could make brushes. I had that. And I wrapped it up in some newspaper , [?] and then I went up to my grandmother's and I said, she had three children over here you know, I said, "granny, you got a package from America," "oh isn't that nice, my lovely children." So I went and closed the door for fear she'd chase me and as she opened it, you know, "oh, what pinhead you with you anyway, nothing." So I ran home down to my father's, he got a kick out of it. Those things I did. But I was good.

LEVINE: Do you remember any ceremonies that happened?

CONCANNON: Ceremonies?

LEVINE: Any kinds of events, like with birth or marriage or death?

CONCANNON: Yes, I remember my sister getting married over there.

LEVINE: What was the wedding like?

CONCANNON: Oh, the wedding, you got to hear this. In them days, the bride would go to where her husband was where she'd live. They would have a big cake all made and they would break it on the bride's head, but they don't have that anymore. Nothing at all like that. I used to wait for the cake to break and see how it would go. I was a grown up girl then.

LEVINE: So they would just break it over the bride's head?

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CONCANNON: I just wondered myself if they already had cut it, because they wouldn't do that and break the cake. But the cake would be fresh, it would break easily, I would think. But they did that in Limerick; that's eighty years ago.

LEVINE: Was that for good luck or something?

CONCANNON: Some kind of thing they had. Superstitious, I call it.

LEVINE: Were there other superstitions that you remember as a little girl?

CONCANNON: Oh, oh yeah. We wouldn't eat meat on Friday. And the second day they would kill the chickens to draw blood. Now how to I know what that meant? But they'd draw the blood. They had that in my young days. But they did it for [?]

LEVINE: Did you have chickens? Did you have animals?

CONCANNON: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we had bought cows, sheep, everything, chickens, pigs. We had a lovely cow and she had twins every other year. And she be so quiet. She was so lovely. Any one of us could milk her: she'd never kick. And she got a little older then, so my father decided he'd sell her and we went to the fair and sell that cow, we were all crying 'cause we didn't want to loose her.

LEVINE: Did you have a name for that cow?

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CONCANNON: No, I don't think so. No, but we loved that cow. Every other year she would have the twins; isn't that funny. But she wouldn't have a baby ever year. She'd had the twins. And I can remember her and I can remember . . .Anything else?

LEVINE: Did you do other chores too, around the farm, around the house?

CONCANNON: Oh yes, but I was never, my father used to say to me you've got to go home dear, I was grown up then, and clean the house and do the work, the house work. So, cause I was no good in the garden. And my sister, oldest sister, she was just wonderful and I thought I want to get, I never was. So I'd go home and I'd clean that house from top to toe and I'd get the cow's food ready and I'd do anything that my sister would have to do if she came home and all that and clean the house, I loved to clean the house. (coughs) And put the potatoes on. We'd have the supper, dinner, at night at nine o'clock.

LEVINE: Oh, that's late huh?

CONCANNON: (Coughs) The potatoes would have to be solid, they'd have to be in a big pot, right over the fire.

LEVINE: And would they be potatoes your father had grown in his garden?

CONANNON: Oh yes, (coughs) they'd come home and everything would be ready. We'd sit down and eat. We didn't have a lot of meat but we had plenty eggs, and butter and chickens.

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LEVINE: And fish.

CONCANNON: Umm, food, potatoes (coughs).

(pause to adjust Mrs. Concannon. She is having a coughing fit.)
talk about water and raising her head)

CONCANNON: I remember the day I left home. We were all gathered outside our house. And my father was there, a little man. I went to say goodbye to him. And he said, "I'll shall never see you again." That's hard. And he didn't. I should have gone home and I could have. That's my, I'm sorry for that. Anyway.

LEVINE: How was it that you happened to come to this country?

CONCANNON: Well you know, we thought America was rich, you could pick up money any old place. But my sisters were here and they sent for me and my brother. And my aunts were there. One of my aunts. So I'd thought I'd be happy. I was the most homesick young girl that ever lived. Everything was so different. We were brought up in the country. And here, big America, beautiful, and with stoves, and all these things. You go to Ireland now, everything is there as it's here -- stoves, frigidaires, and cars. Everybody's got a car. They don't work as hard as they did the time my father was young and my brothers. I don't know if that makes any sense, but I'm doing the best I can.

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- LEVINE: Oh you're wonderful. Tell me, were you excited about coming?
- CONCANNON: Oh I was excited to get here. We was eleven days on sea. We didn't have a worry in the world.
- LEVINE: Who were you coming to this country with? Who was with you?
- CONCANNON: I had a friend for years. We chummed around for twenty-five years. Margaret Foley. She was my cousin, my neighbor home and we came together, we stayed together till I got married. [?] I came out and ahh, we were so homesick, both of us. And we got the wrong place to work, hard. Hard work, you know.
- LEVINE: What kind of place?
- CONCANNON: The corner of Dearing and State Street used to be the Lethans. Grain people. And she came from Ireland. She was Irish, came from Ireland to get some bread. She was the worst woman you could work for. She'd work you to death. And the only thing I felt so bad for, she'd look down on you, you know, as help. Because when I worked for the others, they were so lovely, they were like my mother, but see you find, and I was so unhappy. Until my sister got married, and I took her place, and I worked for the nicest woman was ever born.
- LEVINE: Were you cleaning, is that what you were doing?

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CONCANNON: I learned to cook. I was a great worker at all times if I do say, and I'd answer the telephone.

(Interruption in nursing home)

LEVINE: We are going to pause here.
We are going to resume here.

LEVINE: You were cleaning and cooking?

CONCANNON: Yes, and answering the doorbell and answering the telephone. Worked hard. Dr. Warren's. I worked there for two years. My sister worked there for two years. She was the nicest woman that ever lived.

LEVINE: What was her name?

CONCANNON: Sarah Northworn. He was a minister's son, I don't think he cared for the Irish. But he was, he was glad to have me because she got sick and she wasn't much of a housekeeper like, and I was pretty particular. And still he wasn't nice like her. He'd like everything to go his way. Like he'd ask you to go to an early mass so you'd be there for everything. I went to mass anyway. But um, he delivered some of my children.

LEVINE: He delivered your children?

CONCANNON: Two of my children. Then he had a heart attack. And her sister-in-law used to come there every summer, stayed with

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her, with us. From New Haven, from Massachusetts. Do you want the story?

LEVINE: Sure, this is interesting.

CONCANNON: And poor Sarah died, she was sick for nine months. And then she came and kept house for a while. They got married. They were only 60 years old. I knew they were going to get married, but she wasn't like the first one.

LEVINE: Did you stay in Portland? From the time you came--

CONCANNON: Yes, I never went anywhere, which I made a big mistake. I should have gone and visit Massachusetts where my friends were. But no, I would never want to travel. Some people, they love to travel. I'd take a vacation once in a while, but I'd stay right in Portland. I'd stay at my sister's or my aunt.

LEVINE: If we could back track a little. Tell me the name of the ship you came to this country on.

CONCANNON: Adriatic

LEVINE: And what do you remember about the Adriatic and about crossing the ocean?

CONCANNON: Oh, eleven days on sea. [?]. Us girls and boys were having a good time you know.

LEVINE: Were you dancing and singing?

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CONCANNON: Oh no, we [?] singing. (pause) No, we didn't have a care in the world, like. We didn't know too much either. Cause we were brought up in the country, I'll tell the truth, and uh we thought, we were good, strong religion, you know, good, good people. Except once in awhile you meet with somebody that, that there was something or somebody. But, uhm .

. .

LEVINE: So when you came into the New York Harbor, did you see the Statue of Liberty when you first arrived?

CONCANNON: No, I wouldn't know nothing. We came to Boston.

LEVINE: Oh you came to Boston. You didn't come through Ellis Island?

CONCANNON: No. We came to Boston.

LEVINE: What were your first impressions, the things you saw in this country?

CONCANNON: Oh, I came to Union Station, that's where we landed. On the train from Boston. And my brother was there and my uncle, to meet us, but they didn't think we were going to come that night. They thought we'd come later. But we came and then they took us over to my aunt's where we were going to stay, where my sister was visiting. And I walked up the stairs, opened the door and gave them a big surprise. And my sister said, "Oh my god, that's Catherine."

LEVINE: What was it like to see your sister?

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CONCANNON: Lovely, but I hated America.

LEVINE: Why did you hate it?

CONCANNON: Because, it was hot in the summer and uh the work is so different. And the girls were bossing me around you know. Do this, do that, do that. It didn't take me too long, I got the hang of it.

LEVINE: And your friend, what was your friend's name? The one who came with you?

CONCANNON: Margaret Foley.

LEVINE: Did Margaret live with you or did she live somewhere else?

CONCANNON: No, she came, and her sister was here. And she took her sister's place, and she didn't like it but she had to stay and learn. Then she moved from there and she worked for some nice people. Next thing you know, she got very sick, cancer. She was my best, maid of honor and the Godchildren [sic] to my children, two of them.

LEVINE: How did you meet you husband?

CONCANNON: I knew him home. I met him at my sister's wedding. And I was young, he was six years older than me. That makes a big difference. But we liked one another. And we, he came out here [?] you know, a long time before I came out. And we got together again, after awhile, after I got used to this

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country and the hang of getting dressed and going places and working. And so it took us ten years before we got married. I was 27 years old when I got married.

LEVINE: And what was your husband's name?

CONCANNON: Peter, Peter Concannon. I had a new great-grandchild. Christened the other day and they gave him his name. That was quite a thing.

LEVINE: And what was your husband doing here in this country for work?

CONCANNON: He was a railroad man. He was educated, and he's smart and he always read. He was a good provider. Found him dead in bed.

LEVINE: How long were you married?

CONCANNON: (Pause) I don't know how long. I have to go by the children's age. He's gone for 38 years. He died when President Kennedy died.

LEVINE: He died from...

CONCANNON: When President Kennedy--

LEVINE: Oh, when President Kennedy died.

CONCANNON: Found him dead [?] hardening of the artery. Shock. That wasn't as big as shock as when my son died. Fifty years old.

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LEVINE: How many children did you have?

CONCANNON: I had four, lost the two boys and I have the two girls.

LEVINE: And what are the names of your children?

CONCANNON: Maureen and Barbara. Maureen Flaherty and Barbara Doughn. Do you know Don Doughn? No. He's a musician that's why I asked you.

LEVINE: This was your son?

CONCANNON: That's my son-in-law.

LEVINE: Your son-in-law, I see.

CONCANNON: And their children are grown up, which would be my grandchildren. Then I got great-grandchildren.

LEVINE: To what do you attribute your ripe old age?

CONCANNON: (Pause; sighs) I hate it.

LEVINE: Do you?

CONCANNON: I hate it because I can't work.

(Interruption by nursing home staff member.)

LEVINE: You hate it because you can't work, huh.

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CONCANNON: I hate it because I had to break up my home. I sold my house, then I moved into a lovely apartment. I was there thirteen years, I loved it [?] Then I got sick. They found I was diabetic and a heart condition. And they put me in here. The worst thing that ever happened to me I thought. But it was the best. Because I couldn't, I wouldn't go live with any of my children. [?] I figure, I always thought I could be alone. So we talked it over and I said, "Well, I'll go to St. Joseph's."

LEVINE: Why did you want to come to St. Joseph's?

CONCANNON: I liked the name. My boy is Joseph.

LEVINE: So how is it here, for you, in this place?

CONCANNON: (Sighs) They are lovely, lovely people here. Most all of them. The nurses, I love 'em. And the girls, they are just lovely to me. Last night I had an attack of diabetes and I had one of the girls stay with me. She brought me toast and coffee and brought me on my feet. They call me Gran. They just love me and I love them. The nurses are grand. There's always one in particular.

LEVINE: That's particularly nice to you?

CONCANNON: uhm hum.

LEVINE: Which one is that?

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CONCANNON: I call her Pauline but her name is Anita. She has a middle name, I couldn't remember her name first, so I said can I call you Pauline 'cause we have a Pauline in the family. And she said, Yes (laughs). Do you know Anita?

LEVINE: No, no. I don't --

CONCANNON: She's heavy. She's out of this world. She'd say to me "Catherine, you've got to eat. Your diabetic." She comes in sometimes, with peanut butter or packages and crackers.

LEVINE: How do you think about coming to this country? In other words, you came here when you were 19 years old and then you ---

CONCANNON: I thought if I'd come to this country I'd get a lot of money. I'd be rich. Then I could send my father home a lot of money. I never forget him. I found it different. You have to earn your money [?] I didn't like it for a long time.

LEVINE: When did it change for you? When did you start to like it more?

CONCANNON: Took me about three years.

LEVINE: Do you know what made the difference? Did you just get the hang of things?

CONCANNON: Well I got to learn how to cook. I didn't have to learn to iron or wash, I knew how to do that. But cooking, but you can cook like you can read, which I was able to do you know.

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And after that I got getting up in the world, like doing things, clean, I didn't have to learn to clean.

LEVINE: Was there a big Irish community here in Portland?

CONCANNON: Oh yes, in Portland there was. Massachusetts too but some of my friends, my brothers, were in Massachusetts.

LEVINE: And would you get together, was there a social club?

CONCANNON: Yes, they'd come down, they'd come down, we'd get together and have a good time. Always [?] playing the accordion. All the Irish music I love. I still do.

LEVINE: And how about the Gaelic? Did you ever get a chance to use the Gaelic that you knew, after you came to this country?

CONCANNON: Oh, we spoke the Gaelic all the time. I still do with some people. It's pretty hard if you get to talk both languages, you get to, you're kind of mixed up. You have to go back on one language (laughing) when you try to say some kind of word and you can't say it in the English language, you go back to the Irish, or the other way around. It's hard to explain it to you, but ah, it's a tough way to start. It was tough on us. To come here, it's so different. Everything was different, especially because we were brought up back in the country.

END OF SIDE A

BEGINNING SIDE B

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LEVINE: Okay, you were just saying you went to Galway only once in a while.

CONCANNON: Yes, because you've got to go, my grandmother was a great one to go to Galway, and I walked, we walked twelve miles to go to Galway. She'd have butter and eggs (pause) to sell.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONCANNON: And we'd always liked when that, and we'd love to go to Galway but ohh it's like America when I first came here. Galway's such a beautiful place. And then you'd go back in the country, it's just like what I left home, you know. But uh...

LEVINE: So did you go to market day? When you, was there, were there market days when you would go to Galway?

CONCANNON: It's a market. You'd market, you'd sell your eggs and your butter. And that's what my grandmother did, she and I. They used to bring chickens there too. They'd sell. They were rich people in Galway. We'd call them rich. And they had a nice place in Galway called Salt Hill and, oh it was a pretty place. They'd come from far to near to be in Salt Hill you know and they'd buy the eggs and they'd buy the butter and uh it's hard to make a living that way but we did it. My grandmother did but I went along with her.

LEVINE: And then would you, uh, would go and [?].

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CONCANNON: We'd buy, then we'd buy sugar and tea and coffee on the money, it was [?].

LEVINE: And you would walk home?

CONCANNON: Sometimes.

LEVINE: Did you have wagons?

CONCANNON: Yes, we had a [side ?] car, we'd, sometimes we had a ride from friends sometimes. We never, I guess we always, we didn't walk home I don't think.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONCANNON: Which I think there were people that did.

LEVINE: Oh, uh ah. So umm, would you, uh, would you, were there any automobiles in your town?

CONCANNON: Not in my time, but there there now, like here.

LEVINE: Um hm.

CONCANNON: Every house has it.

LEVINE: So would people have--

CONCANNON: And they've built new homes over there. So they have everything in there, bath, and every thing. Frigidaires.

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- LEVINE: Can you remember, could you describe the home that you lived in when you were growing up?
- CONCANNON: Oh I say now, it's half down. When I went home, my niece was a very lovely housekeeper. And she used to be in England and she got married and then came back to Ireland, they had everything, they had everything that we had here, so that was a treat you know. I stayed with her for a week.
- LEVINE: Can you describe what your house was like when you were a little girl growing up?
- CONCANNON: Oh yes. I had, we had two bedrooms, one there and one there, the kitchen, we had an attic you know, the boys slept at the attic.
- LEVINE: And how did you heat it?
- CONCANNON: The fire, open fire. And we cooked the potatoes in a big kettle over the fire, and we baked a cake.
- LEVINE: Over the fire?
- CONCANNON: Not over, but put it in the pan and put the fire underneath, not on the big fire but...
- LEVINE: An oven, like a brick oven, no?
- CONCANNON: We'd have an oven like, and we'd take some of the fire and put it right underneath so it would bake the food. And it did it beautifully.

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LEVINE: What kind of foods do you remember eating when you were little?

CONCANNON: When I was home? Oh, we'd love bread with raisins, we had, we liked, well we had good food, we had to eat it, potatoes and eggs and chickens every so often, we killed the chickens and they have lots of eggs and milk, real butter and I never liked it. Eggs, the boys always had eggs for breakfast. I don't care for eggs, I eat 'em now scrambled.

LEVINE: Did you go to school?

CONCANNON: Oh yes I went to school, I went to, through grammar school.

LEVINE: And was that, did you like that, did you like going to school?

CONCANNON: Oh yes, I could have stayed there for a while and be a teacher, we called them monitors, and I wouldn't stay, I wanted to get out of school. You see, in another words, we had a chance to teach, to learn to teach and be teachers. And she stayed cause they were educated people anyway and she was a teacher for years. And then we went to school, to grammar school with her and we were friends, when I went home, I wanted to see her and two or three other girls I liked. We were in Galway one day and my nephew was with me and he said you want to see [?] Auntie and I said yes I'd love to see her, there she is. She was ahead of us with her husband. That sickness.

LEVINE: Oh, Parkinson's Disease.

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CONCANNON: I said, Cole, I don't want to see her. She was a teacher then.

LEVINE: Why did you want to get out of school so much?

CONCANNON: Because I didn't know any better. It's a good reason isn't it?

LEVINE: yeah (laughing). Yeah, so...

CONCANNON: (laughing) And my sister was a teacher. My sister Mary, she stayed there and she taught school there and then she came out here. She didn't like teaching either.

LEVINE: Did you have any idea what you did want to do?

CONCANNON: No idea, I want to be dressed up and I want to have money, I was very religious, I wanted to be good and to get [?] with my friend she want to go in the convent. She said to me let's go and try the convent and I said no, I'm not fit for the convent, you can go. She was ready to go. And uh...

LEVINE: What was it about you that made you realize you didn't want to be in the convent?

CONCANNON: Well I didn't think I was good enough, you know you have to be pretty good, I was good living but confined you know, be confined. She was fit for it, but I wasn't. Cause uh, I wouldn't want to be confined. There are people for that you know.

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LEVINE: And how about the little village, were there, how many people, about, lived in your little village?

CONCANNON: In the village, my village home? Huh, there quite a number of houses.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONCANNON: There not there now, they have new homes. Uhh, one, two, three. Eight or nine in homes now, all neighbors, good neighbors, once in a while, you get a bad one, and uh, we'd get away from him then you know, they'd steal and we were all good neighbors and her poor mother, when they need, you know, need anything.

LEVINE: Were there certain people who came through the village, like selling things or were there doctors or were there people who came through?

CONCANNON: There were doctors and there were tinkers too. Did you ever hear of the tinkers?

LEVINE: I've heard of them but tell me what you remember about them.

CONCANNON: Ohhh, I was scared stiff of the tinkers. And when I know they'd be around, I'd lock the doors and usually I'd be home alone you know cause my people were working. They were beggars, they'd come and pray, pray, pray, pray, and beg.

(knocking on the door)

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LEVINE: Okay, just a second.

(tape paused)

LEVINE: The tinkers, you said you were scared to death of the tinkers.

CONCANNON: Ohhh they were awful, they could steal too you know. And they like to be beggars, they'd sleep out and you never know when they'd come around, they'd knock at the door and they'd walk in, they wanted baked food or whatever you had, food, food, food. My oldest sister, she was a great one to give them their [plate?] and all.

LEVINE: Were they men and women and children?

CONCANNON: Oh, they were married and they slept out in the fields of anywhere they could and they could steal. They wasn't good people, seemed.

LEVINE: Did they have children too?

CONCANNON: They did. But they're not allowed to stay anywhere but overnight now, they'd put their tents up you know and [?] oh they'd tell me they could stay. And some of them got rich too.

LEVINE: So, did they travel all over Ireland?

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CONCANNON: Back in the country, I don't know. I don't think they been in Galway. There were fish women in Galway selling fish.

LEVINE: And what were they like?

CONCANNON: Uh, they had the baskets on their head, fish, fresh fish. They'd get the fish and then they'd sell it. And they'd drink it, some of it. They were fish, we used to call them fish women. But there not gonna, nothing like that now. It's all changed, like everything here. It's a good thing.

LEVINE: You must have seen a lot of changes in your life.

CONCANNON: Indeed I did. I did. And when I went home you know I was forty years out here before I went home. I had to wait until my girls got married and everybody thought I should go home but I didn't go home where my father lived. I wouldn't go home, you know, but anyway, I went home, I'd have to, I would go back to my sister's, she lived little distance from us. I'd have to look at certain houses to see, I was gone so long, there were changes, you know. I wasn't happy.

LEVINE: Did you want to come back here then?

CONCANNON: Oh yeah, I wouldn't stay home. I loved the people, just different.

LEVINE: How do you think about yourself? Do you think of yourself as Irish and American?

CONCANNON: [?].

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LEVINE: Did you get your citizenship?

CONCANNON: Oh, yes. That's how I put Foley in Folan.

LEVINE: Oh, right. So that was a confusion?

CONCANNON: Yeah, oh I love this country.

LEVINE: You do?

CONCANNON: Oh, I love this country. I loved it deeper than Ireland. But not now, as it used to be, [?] more dressed now, [?]. The dear ones are gone. Does that make sense, I don't know?

LEVINE: Yes, it does. What is it that you like about this country?

CONCANNON: Now?

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONCANNON: Cause I got my children and my children's children. You know. They're in Australia; they're in Massachusetts, they're everywhere. You know, it's all my relatives. Where there's a large family, you know, they got to go here, there and everywhere. My sister had eleven children. Ten boys and one girl. And uh, they were very good to their parents. Some of them died young, and they had built a home for their parents and everything, but they died young.

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- LEVINE: What do you feel very satisfied about? What do you feel satisfied that you've done in your lifetime?
- CONCANNON: In my life? Ummm. I think, well my children, I think, I haven't done anything great. I lived to be a hundred and two (laughing).
- LEVINE: (laughing) That's pretty good.
- CONCANNON: And I lived to be a good mother and good grandmother. Good person.
- LEVINE: Can you think of a high point in your life, a time when your life that was a very good time for you?
- CONCANNON: The hardest part was when I lost my son. I thought it was hard when I lost my husband. But I had my son you see. What did you ask me again?
- LEVINE: I asked you for the high point of your life, when your life was really at its happiest.
- CONCANNON: Oh yes, when my children were small. When I was bringing up the children, my husband had a good job and I had money. And uh...
- LEVINE: Did you always like to dress well?
- CONCANNON: Yes.
- LEVINE: Was that important to you?

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CONCANNON: I like clothes. And I like clean house and I like to dress the kids. And I did. Poor kids,. They used to say "Well have to keep the stores going Catherine, cause I always had packages comin', charging to you know. But I always paid. He was always good about the money.

LEVINE: Do you remember when President Kennedy died?

CONCANNON: Oh yes, my husband died then. A week from the day Kennedy was buried my Peter was dead. I'll never forget that. I felt so bad for him, poor President Kennedy. Oh. It's sad. (pause) (Sighs.) Sad.

LEVINE: You particularly liked President Kennedy?

CONCANNON: Well, yes I did. I don't think my husband was that crazy about him. But I liked because he was who he was. I like him, you know, as Irish. And he's a nice man. Who wants to kill anybody? I couldn't kill him. It's awful.

LEVINE: So is there anything else that you can think of about coming to this country that maybe we didn't talk about? Anything else you remember about life in Ireland?

CONCANNON: I went to Ireland four times. But it was forty years before I went first. Then the last time I went to my brother's funeral. And uh...my young brother always went with me. Before he got sick he said, let's go once more. He loved to go and I said, Joe, I couldn't go up that flight on that airplane, oh,

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there's none, we go right up, we'd love to go once more Catherine. I didn't go. I know I wouldn't.

(knocking on the door, tape paused)

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming here. Um you were saying that your brother Philip wanted you to go.

CONCANNON: Oh yeah, he want to go, he loved to go to Ireland, he loved the people he left. But I wouldn't go and he was very disappointed. But he died you know, quite a few years ago. But my son is gone ten years, died before Christmas. And my brother, oh he's gone, his wife's gone, probably seven years. But he loved to go to Ireland; he go on that airplane just to go over there to see the people. But I didn't go and I wouldn't go because I knew better. I wasn't well. I was having spells with the diabetes. I knew nothing about sickness until I got sick. Then I got sick. And here I am.

LEVINE: So you were healthy all your life?

CONCANNON: All my life, I didn't, I had a nurse, god love her, she's in California, she still writes to Barbara and I, my daughter and I and she'd say, "Catherine, did you take you pills," "oh no Elizabeth, I did". I wouldn't have taken them, she said "you did not." And if I had taken them when she told me I probably wouldn't get this sick. But you know, when you're not sick, you're not sick. You don't know what sickness is. Now I do.

LEVINE: So are you looking forward to being a hundred and three?

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CONCANNON: Yeah. [?]. (laughing).

LEVINE: (laughing). Okay, well is there anything else you can think of that we didn't cover, anything about Ireland, or coming here or getting settled here or your later life here?

CONCANNON: Well I got married, nice wedding. I lost my first baby. Little boy. [?]. Then I had my oldest girl, who is now seventy-one. She's not too well. Then I had my young daughter is sixty-two I think. She's wonderful. The wedding was nice and we had a good time. Then, I don't know anything else.

LEVINE: Okay. Well I think you remembered an incredible amount. You must be getting a little tired huh?

CONCANNON: No, but I don't think I did it very good.

LEVINE: Oh, are you kidding, you did wonderful. Now this tape is going to go to Ellis Island where so many people came through when they first came to this country, and it will be there so people who maybe are doing research or whatever they are doing, they can come and listen to your story about Ireland, and then I'll send you a copy so your family can have a copy too.

CONCANNON: Oh, wonderful, wonderful.

LEVINE: I want to thank you so much; it was really a pleasure.

CONCANNON: Oh, I loved having you dear.

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LEVINE: Oh thank you. Okay. I've been talking with Catherine Concannon who came here as Catherine Folan and then the name was changed to Foley.

CONCANNON: That's right.

LEVINE: And uh, maybe you can remember one last thing. Can you remember when you became an American citizen?

CONCANNON: I was having my first baby.

LEVINE: And did you go to night school?

CONCANNON: I didn't have to go to night school. No but they told me though to check in, read, read cause I went to, I could read good you know. Understand everything but I didn't want the reading.

LEVINE: Was there a ceremony when you became a...?

CONCANNON: No, I went (laughing), he asked me, have you ever been in court [?] and I said oh my lord, no (laughing). [?] didn't mean [?]. They had to ask those things you know. [?]

LEVINE: So was that a big day for you, were you were happy to be a citizen?

CONCANNON: You know he was ugly to me, I remember that.

LEVINE: He was ugly.

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CONCANNON: I thought he was ugly. Maybe some things like that he asked, no it wasn't. I think he was ugly. He told me though to check and read more about America, that much I remember. I've seen enough of it now, haven't I?

LEVINE: Yes you have.

CONCANNON: Yeah, I like America and God Bless America.

LEVINE: Okay, this is, I been speaking with Catherine Concannon and it's October 15 and Mrs. Concannon is a hundred and two years old and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service signing off.