**EI-869**
**ISABELLA (ELLA) MCDONALD DEEKS**
**BIRTHDATE: MARCH 18, 1913**
**INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 30, 1997**
**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 84**
**RUNNING TIME: 1:24:37**
**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**
**RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**
**INTERVIEW LOCATION: NUTLEY, NEW JERSEY**
**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE**
**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**SCOTLAND, 1923**
**AGE: 10**

**SHIP: THE BERENGARIA**
**PORT:**
**RESIDENCES:**

LEVINE: Okay. Today is April 30th, 1997 and I'm here with Isabella [unclear]—

DEEKS: All my friends call me Ella.

LEVINE: Ella Deeks, who lives in Nutley, New Jersey and I'm here at her home. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Mrs. Deeks came from Scotland in 1923 when she was 10 years of age. And so at the time of this interview, that makes you—

DEEKS: I'm here—let's see, 1923 to 1993 would be 60—60—

LEVINE: Let's see, '23 to '93—

DEEKS: Sixty-four years?

LEVINE: Well—

DEEKS: No, about 74 years because I'm here when I'm 10; I'm 84 now. Why should I go through all that routine? [laughter]

LEVINE: Okay. And you're 84 at the time of this interview.

DEEKS: Y—y—yeah. This is—84.

LEVINE: You've been here 74 years.

DEEKS: Right, right.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I'm delighted to be here, Mrs. Deeks. So let's just start—

DEEKS: It's very interesting for you to come and get in touch with me. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Real good. Okay. If we'd start at the beginning, your birth date and where in Scotland you were born.

DEEKS: Okay. My birth date is March the 18th, 1913 and I was born in Cathcart in Scotland. It's a suburb of Glasgow.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

DEEKS: It's—Cathcart? C-A-T-H-C-A-R-T.

LEVINE: Okay. And that's a suburb of Glasgow.

DEEKS: Yeah, that was a suburb of Glasgow. Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, when you were born did you have any brothers and sisters?

DEEKS: No, I was the first child for eight years. Then my mother had one son, John, and another son, David. That's on that picture that you just saw.

LEVINE: Right. And your father, what was your father's name?

DEEKS: My father's name is David McDonald.

LEVINE: And—

DEEKS: And he was a molder in Scotland.

LEVINE: Now, what did a molder exactly do?

DEEKS: He made, like, fire hydrants and iron things. Oops. All right.

LEVINE: Oh, I'm sorry.

DEEKS: Don't worry about the rug because I—I do it all—here's a napkin. And—

LEVINE: Sorry.

DEEKS: No, he's a—he—they were having a lot of problems in Scotland at that time with Ramsey McDonald. So his brother was here in America so he said, "Why don't you come to America and start a new life with your wife and—and three children?"

LEVINE: Well, now, tell me about Ramsey McDonald.

DEEKS: Ramsey McDonald was—I think he was sort of a—a—a politician of some sort. I think maybe he was—they used the red flag or something. I can remember as a little girl, the red flag, the communists. He probably was a communist. I'm—I'm not positive but maybe something in that order. So then my uncle was here in—in America in Kearny and he said to my father, "Come on over," which my father did. He came March the 17th of 1923. And then he sent for my mom and the three of us to come over in August of 1923.

LEVINE: Okay. We're going to pause here.

DEEKS: Okay. [tape off/on]

LEVINE: And we're resuming here after a phone call.

DEEKS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, was Ramsey McDonald related to your father?

DEEKS: No, no.

LEVINE: No.

DEEKS: No relation at all.

LEVINE: But your father—

DEEKS: He was a politician.

LEVINE: —felt like he—

DEEKS: Well, they belonged to, like, say American Legion or some of those things that had anything connected to the army. There was nothing connected

to the army with him. I don't remember exactly what it was all about because, although I was 10, I just remember that I thought it was communistic because they used to wave a red flag. That's all I can remember about that. So my father came here and he never got into any other groups or clubs or anything the rest of his life. I guess he f—figured that was it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: So he came here and then he sent for us in August of 1923. We landed here Labor Day weekend. We could not get off the ship, which was the Berengaria, and it left from England, from—I don't know. I can't remember.

LEVINE: Southampton?

DEEKS: Southampton. And they give us the third degree over there too before we even got on the—the ship. And so we came here and, of course, just seeing nothing but water for a whole week, it was kind of—kind of funny, you know, eye-boggling, even for a little girl. And when we got near to be in New York there was garbage out there. You saw orange peels and banana peels and all kinds of things and the birds, the seagulls, and all that sort of thing. And so that sort of—we knew we were coming near land. And when we did land in New York City in the harbor, seeing the Statue of Liberty, I don't know why the boat didn't capsize because everybody ran over to see the Statue of Liberty. That was a big thing. Even as a little girl, I remember everybody going over. And of course, it's not a boat. When it's a certain length, it's a ship. And of course, then we had to leave that ship and go on another one because we couldn't get off, because it was Labor Day and we were coming third class. First and second class got off the ship but we couldn't. And our ship was going back to Southampton again. So we had to stay in New York harbor. So I remember seeing—I think it was F—Fab—F-A-B was a soap powder or something. And the lights went—k—kept flicking out and in all the time, you know, and that was kind of—yeah. So then when the—my father came, believe it or not, on a little boat. And they hoisted fruit up onto the ship. My father sent a basket of fruit to my mom and, of course, my mother was always a very—a person who wanted to help people or give to people. So when this other little girl and I were up on the other part of the ship and we saw this and I said, "Oh, that's my father!" So we ran down to see what was going on and here's all this fruit. By the time I got to pick a fruit it was a peach. Believe me, I can't stand peaches today unless I take the skin off. It was like eating velvet. It was just awful. In fact, just talking about it, I get goose-fleshy.

LEVINE: You gave me gooseflesh talking—

DEEKS: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: [laughs]

DEEKS: So anyway—so he did that. And then the day that we were—I think it was two days there. I'm—I just can't remember how many days it was w—we were on—on the sh—other ship. But we were just sta—stationary. So then we were put into this big hall in South—in—

LEVINE: Ellis—

DEEKS: —in Ellis Island now. We went down and there was like fences in between. And this other girl and I, who was 18 years old, we exchanged hats, you know, fooling around on the ship. I had a crinoline hat and she had a regular stiff—a straw. And then when we didn't know we were going to be separated but she was going to Massachusetts, and we were separated. So she couldn't give me my hat and I couldn't give her hat. So we got off there into this big room and—and, oh, my mother said, "Oh! We're with all these foreigners," because the ladies had babushkas on their head. And of course, my mother, although she was Scottish, was not a foreigner as far as she was concerned, you know. [chuckles] So anyway, we—finally, they called my mother's name and then we went into a r—another little—a little room and my father was up at a desk with other men and people t—men talking to him. And we were, like, in a big cage. That's all I can think about it, was a great big, closed in with—it was all open but it was more like a cage. And other people were there and they were asking my mom questions and my father questions. So whatever, everything happened, we finally got off and we got over to New York. I have no recollection—it's the craziest thing—how I got to Kearny. I don't know whether we went on a bus, whether somebody picked us up in a car, whether we went on a train. But I have no recollection of getting to Kearny. But we got to Kearny to my uncle's house. They had a two-bedroom house, living room, dining room, kitchen. And there we stayed for a couple of weeks until my mom got an apartment. And the funniest thing is, I don't know how we did it because my aunt and uncle had three children, all grown up, all teenagers or older. And my mother had three children. But I was the oldest of 10, 3 and 9 months. We slept in that house for two weeks. Don't ask me how we did it. Who slept on the floor and who didn't sleep on the floor? But it was really something. But we got a—a house, a—an apartment about, I would say, two—two-and-a-half blocks away, Bergen Avenue in Kearny. And it seemed everybody that came from Scotland came to Kearny. It was just a place, where other foreign people go to certain places, we went to Kearny. We were in that house six months and my mom and dad—a big thing we used to do in Scotland was paint our apartments. And my mom and dad painted our

apartments. It was six rooms, very nice place. But unfortunately, the landlord sold it to some other landlord, and his daughter got married and wanted the apartment because it was all nice and clean. We were on the third floor. Then my father li—my father worked in Harrison in—in—oh, I can't think of it offhand but I will—and we moved to Harrison because in those days we didn't have cars. So he had to walk to work. And so we moved there and we lived there for—in that apartment, we lived there for almost—oh, I guess two and a half years and my two sisters were born. My sister, Jean, was born a year after we landed here in September. And my sister, May, was born not quite two years later in June. So we—all of us then, my father, mother—there was seven of us—lived in Harrison. Then we moved to another apartment in Harrison, a six-family house, and my mother had a nervous breakdown there because in the other—in the first house we went in she had boarders. And because she didn't have a lot of money and we took boarders. One was my uncle and one of them, we don't know who, had taken some money from her, not knowingly. And so we moved into the six-family house and we lived there for—that was the first time I had a bedroom of my own because the other one only had four rooms and, of course, three boarders. And so we lived in this six-family house for about maybe a year, little over a year. Then we moved to Bloomfield and—because now my father was working in A.P. Smiths in East Orange.

LEVINE: What is that?

DEEKS: It's another foundry. My father was a—a—a—an iron molder and they made hydrants and stuff like that in—in A.P. Smiths. And he—he—he worked there and, of course, this way he could get the trolley car or the bus back and forth because that was a way back. But it so happened that none—unbeknownst to us at that time, this young man worked with him. His name was Charles Deeks and he became my husband. [chuckles] [unclear]

LEVINE: He worked at the foundry with your—

DEEKS: Yeah, yeah. He worked with my father in the foundry and another fellow brought them home. And they used to come along Broad Street in Bloomfield and I would walk with my two sisters and my two brothers down to the corner to meet my dad. And of course, then I got to know him a little bit, nothing special, because I was only—that time, I was only about 15. But then later on in life, he got a car. My—Charles Deeks. He got a car and he used to take my dad to work. And so this one morning I'm working in a place called—by this name, now, I am 17 and I am working in a place called Crockowheeler [PH]. And that is, like, close to East Orange. And so this girl comes into—into the work that day and she says, "I saw the most awful accident." And it happened to be a bus hit the

car that my intended husband was driving. My father was hurt and had a fractured skull and he couldn't work for a couple of years after that. So I was the only breadwinner. And so then they told me to—they—you know, they had, I guess, like, welfare that you have today. I don't know what it was but whatever it was, they told my mom that I should try to get a job living out. And that's going into someone's home and doing whatever. So I finally did. I was only—I was 18 and I went into this people's house. Their name was Grandage [PH]. They lived on—on—up in Montclair on—isn't that awful? I can't think of it right now—and Grove Street, lived on Grove Street in Montclair. And I worked there for four years living in, learning how to cook and to clean. And it was a—a mother and father with two children, a boy and a girl. And it was a 10-room house and the man was the vice president of Clark Thread Mill [PH]. And so I stayed there with them for four years and my day off was Thursday. And of course, then I got a little bit more friendly with my boyfriend and then we got to be really that we were going to get married. And I got married from Mrs. Grandage's home. And then I worked for her for one whole year after we were married. And believe it or not, I came right to this house, only this addition wasn't on. And I've been living in this house now for 62 years and so that—and my husband was born here.

LEVINE: In this house?

DEEKS: Yes, in the other part, in the—in the front part of the house, he was born in the—in fact, when my number two son went to school, he was in the third grade. And the teacher was asking them where they were born. And he said—he put his hands on his hips, the teacher said, and he said, "I was born in my father's bedroom." And [chuckles] which, of course, tickled the teacher very much. But that's where he was. He was—he was in—in that bed. His father was born in that bedroom. He wasn't. He was born in a hospital because we got a little bit more civilized or whatever you want to call it by this time now. We were—my children were all born in the same hospital. I had three children, Chick, who is now 59, and Artie, who is now 54, and my daughter, who is 51. So they're all in their 50s this year. So anyway, that—that's bringing us up more or less to date. But my daughter is now in the state of Washington. And of course, I try to see her at least once a year. I go out to the state of Washington. And this year, I—my girlfriend that I usually travel with when we go anywhere, her son invited us to Ireland. And we were going there in August and I had a passport from before, not my original. That wasn't any good because that was Scottish. And—but I had a passport to go to Scotland before and I had a passport to go to England. But I have—couldn't find 'em and I just had a toe operation and a face operation so I couldn't go up in the attic and look for them. So I went down to try and get a new passport. They said they had—I had nothing to prove that I am an American citizen. I was an American citizen in 1952, January. And I

told them that I got it in Newark, New Jersey. And you know, finally, after a whole lot of rigmarole, so to speak, and money—it was over a hundred dollars I had to send to this one and that one and the other one. I finally got my passport Friday.

LEVINE: Ah.

DEEKS: And so I have that. But they only gave it to me for one year because—it was supposed to be 10 years. But they only gave it to me for one year because they didn't get a receipt that they were supposed to—be sent to Philadelphia. So now, next year I have to send that passport back and the receipt and then they're supposed to give me the other nine years.

LEVINE: Why was it that you became a citizen in 1952? How come you did it then?

DEEKS: Well, the reason why is because I was a citizen until I was 21—

LEVINE: Under your father.

DEEKS: —on my father.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

DEEKS: Then after that, I was living out, you know, because I got married at—when I was 22. So I just didn't have time. I—I worked more or less every day and got my day off Thursday. And it wasn't a big thing. I wasn't a politician type of person and my father, as I said before, after he came here he—he voted but he was never regular—I—I didn't know whether he was a Republican or a Democrat or whatever. So anyway, then the children were going to school and they came home and they said, "Mom, why aren't you a citizen?" Because they were talking about it in school, I guess, and my one son invited me to school to—to tell the children that I came here as a—a little girl and all that kind of thing. So finally, my husband said to me—now, I had to go every January in—down to Newark and be fingerprinted. That's how it was in those days, because I was an immigrant and I still was not a citizen. So he said to me—he said, "Why are you getting fingerprinted like a common criminal?" He said, "Let's—why don't you go"—and of course, he was an American. He was born here. So I said, "Okay." You know, pushed me into it. So I did go and I became a citizen January the 7th, 1952. Then when I got these papers about my passport this time, they put down my birthday was March the 18th, 1952. So I wrote on the top of it, "My birthday is March the—March the 18th, 1913." But they sent me back that same paper with the—so the day I became a—I mean, I became a citizen in January and I was born in March, according to their paper. [laughs] Sort of crazy.

LEVINE: Tell me about the fingerprinting. I hadn't heard that before. What was it like every year when you had to do that?

DEEKS: Well, every year you had to go down to the post office in Newark. That's where I had to go because I came in from Nutley. And you—they—they fingerprinted you because, I guess the—you were an alien. You know, you were an immigrant. In today's world, they should be a little more stricter with the people that come into this country than they are, because I'll tell you, like I think I sent to Ellis Island, if we would get another Ellis Island where the people had to go to through, instead of so many [unclear]. There's a lot of nice people come to this country but there's a lot of bad people come here. And I think it's a shame because they're making it hard for the nice people, because everybody puts it in one barrel and says, "These people are no good." And it's not true. A lot of the people are very good. And they're—they're good—going to be good citizens. And of course, now I vote all that time. And when I went down to get my citizenship—get my passport, I said, "I thought when you voted that you were an American citizen, you had to be a citizen to vote." And they said, "That doesn't make you—that we are sure you are a citizen." So that kind of bugged me. I thought, 'If voting is not making you a citizen, what is? You're not supposed to be able to vote if you're a immigrant.' And so they were telling me I was an immigrant.

LEVINE: Were you able to vote all those years—

DEEKS: All these years.

LEVINE: —before '52?

DEEKS: No, no. After '52.

LEVINE: No, after '52.

DEEKS: After '52. No, I never even tried to vote before '52. No, this is now that I've been voting all the time. And they have a record of me—you know, cause you have to put your name down in a book when you go to vote. And I have voted practically all the time. And I am not a Republican or a Democrat. I am whatever I think. I vote for the—whatever the person is that I think is a good person and not for the party. So I am just one of those kind of people. But it—it was—it just blew my mind [chuckles] when they told me that by voting did not make it that I was a—a legal citizen. So that kind of bugged me. No, I don't—you know. So, anyway.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, let's—let's go back to—to Scotland—

DEEKS: Yes.

LEVINE: —first.

DEEKS: Okay.

LEVINE: And did you live in the same place in the—in the suburb of Glasgow—

DEEKS: No.

LEVINE: —up and through your t—first 10 years?

DEEKS: No, I—we lived in Cathcart when I was a baby. I don't remember anything about that. We moved to Govenhill [PH], 96 Bank Hall [PH] Street in Govenhill. And it was on a big apartment house. The—all these apartments were together and they were all like sandstone. It was kind of a reddish stone. And it was a 12-family house and we lived on the top floor. And there was three families on each floor. One family had a living room, kitchen and bathroom. The other two families had to use the toilet on the stairs. No bathtub. You had a bathtub under the bed that you pulled out. And—and it was just cold running water, no hot water. We lived in two rooms, a bedroom and a living room and a kitchen, living room, sort of. And there was a bed in the wall. Now, might wonder what—what that bed in the wall, is like an alcove. And the mattress and spring and everything fit into that alcove and then my mother had curtains over it so that you actually couldn't see the bed during the day. But at nighttime, they pulled the curtains apart. How she made that bed, I'll never know. But I think she had a broom handle to—to push it out because it was right in against the wall. And the one in the bedroom was the same way. And we used that as a—just a—a—I used it as my bedroom when my brothers were born. And I don't remember that there was any crib in there but there probably was. And my mother used a lot of—she was a sewer. She used to sew and she had a machine and—and materials in there. But it was only cold running water and I went to the school right across the street. And it was—it was in Govenhill and our church was close to there because we didn't have cars either in Scotland. We w—I used to walk to my grandmother's on a Sunday and we walked down, oh, I guess it must have been—it probably took a half an hour. How far, I don't know. But she lived on Crammon [PH] Street in Oatlands [PH]. And we use—I used to go visit a girlfriend there and got friendly because of my grandma. And we used to go to a park called Richmond [PH] Park. And believe it or not, in today's world, I still write to her.

LEVINE: Your girlfriend.

DEEKS: My girlfriend in Scotland. I came here when I was 10 and she was about a year younger. And I went over to visit, the way back, after I was here 50 years with my brother and his wife. And we went to my cousin's, who was Lange [PH]. Their name was Beatrice and Hugh Lange. And we went to—he said to me, "You want to go back to where you used to come from?" And I said, "Yes." And I said to my brother, "Come on. Let's go up to where I used to live." So we went all the way up to the—the fourth floor, knocked on the door, but unfortunately, nobody was home. And so then he said to me, "If you want to go to your girlfriend, I'll take you." So I went there and, of course, she didn't know I was coming. I had not told her. And this is 50 years so now I'm 60 years old. So I go to her door and she comes to the door and I said, "Hi, Enid. How are you?" She said, "Fine." And I passed the time of day, you know, saying all nice things to her and not letting her know who I was. And I finally said to her, "Aren't you going to invite me in?" And then she said, "I don't know you." And I said, "Well." I said, "It's just about 50 years ago since I last saw you." She said, "Ella!" [laughter] Then she knew me and then she said, you know, "These people come to the door," like religious people and they say, you know, pass the time of day like, as if they know her. And she said, "I thought s—you were one of those people." Well, we renewed our friendship and I—unfortunately, I didn't see her too much because I was staying with my cousins and we visited relat—relatives. I had a lot of relatives then but now they're all gone. I don't have any more rel—I had two uncles and one of them was in his 80s and his wife was in her 80s. And they walked up to the third floor all the time in their 80s. They were so used to doing that. But he couldn't see very well. And then the other one, my aunt, was my—my aunt was my relative and her husband was a—an uncle through marriage. We went to visit her and she was really something. She told my—my sister-in-law and—and me, she said, "You sit down there. You sit down. You let the men do all the work. You let them—they'll get something to eat for us. We'll just sit down." [chuckles] And she was really a character. But they're all dead now, unfortunately. They're all gone. And this other, Beatrice and Hugh, they came to America and they were going to stay here but they couldn't get a green card. He said he didn't care whether he ever got a green card or not. He's staying in America. So he did die and that's about maybe five, six years ago. And she stayed there. She stayed up at my sister's in Maine. And she decided then she was going to go back to Scotland. So she went back to Scotland to live and, unfortunately, she got cancer and she died about two years ago. So now there isn't anyone. And she was my cousin. She was my father's—my mother's sister's—no, my mother's brother's daughter. And she was an only child. Now, I still have a cousin. My Uncle Bill, who was my father's—my—my—here, I'm getting mixed up—who was my mother's brother, Bill. He came to this country with my mom. And h—he was married and left a wife and child home. Then they came to America and he sent for them and they lived with my mom. And

then they—he couldn't get a job here. It was during the Depression and he couldn't get a job so th—he asked to be sent back to Scotland. But in the meantime, they had a little girl called May Jeffries [PH].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

DEEKS: Believe it or not, that little girl was naturally an American citizen because she was born here. But of course, she went back to Scotland with her mom and dad. And I do get in touch with her now. She lives in the Isle of Man and her name now is Radcliffe [PH] and she's married the man, Radcliffe, no children, so that she is the only one now that—that has any close relation to me at all. And of course, she's a—doesn't live in Scotland, per se. She lives in Isle of Man and that's, I—I understand, an island between Scotland and England.

LEVINE: Well, tell me now, before your family came here—

DEEKS: Yes.

LEVINE: —what family members did you already have in America?

DEEKS: I had my uncle, Bob, whose name was McDonald, his wife—

LEVINE: Your father's brother.

DEEKS: My father's brother, his wife and their two children—four children. They had three girls, Helen, Betty, Catherine and John.

LEVINE: And then after you came—

DEEKS: Yes.

LEVINE: —what family members came after you?

DEEKS: Well, my Uncle Bill Jeffries, my mother's brother. He came on the same ship that we did. And then after that he sent for his wife and his son. Unfortunately, he got killed in the Second World War but—in Scotland, because they all went back. And then May Jeffries was born here and then she went back with her mom and dad—exactly what year that was, but was somewhere in the 1930s. I don't remember exactly what year they went back. But she was—well, I—I guess she's in her 60s now.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: So—but it was in the 1930s because I kn—know I was working in Montclair when they went back to Scotland.

LEVINE: Well, now, how about the Second World War? Could—could you talk about what it—did—did many men—Scot—men from Scotland go back there in [unclear]?

DEEKS: No, no. The only one that I know was—they—they—he went back as a little boy with his mom and dad.

LEVINE: I see.

DEEKS: See? And then—

LEVINE: So he was there.

DEEKS: So he was there and—no, the other ones didn't—there was nobody else here that went back to Scotland as—to go in the service. Anybody was here went into the American service, yeah. But—

LEVINE: Okay.

DEEKS: No, no. That was the only one that did.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, you mentioned your grandmother.

DEEKS: Yes.

LEVINE: Who—which grandmother was that? Your mother's or [unclear]?

DEEKS: Well, my mother's—it was my mother's mother that we used to walk to all the time because she used to—my mother had to work in doing the army—the coats the fellows wore in service. She was—as I said, she was a sewer so she used the machine and she went—she worked, I guess, in a factory. And so while she was at work, at that time, I was the only child because I was the only child for eight years. And so my grandmother took care of me. My Grandmother Jeffries took care of me and that's how I got friendly with this—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

DEEKS: [chuckles] Got it?

LEVINE: Yeah.

DEEKS: My other grandmother, McDonald, she lived in—let's see. Where did she live? She—I think she lived in Govenhill too but she—she did—she didn't live that far away from us. I guess it was maybe a 15-minute walk. And she lived on the top floor of a 12-family house. And it was a spiral stairway. When you go up you could look all the way down.

LEVINE: Was the stairway outside?

DEEKS: No, inside.

LEVINE: It was inside.

DEEKS: Inside. It was inside and—and my uncle used to give me a thrutness [PH], which is—it looks like a dime. And, oh, that used to be—I thought I was a millionaire getting that. You know, I—and of course, as I was the only child I was kind of spoiled. You know? I was spoiled for eight years. But after that, my brother, John, came; he was eight years later. And my brother, David, came. He was less than two years. My sister, Jean, was born in America, less than two years. My sister, May, was born in America, less than two years. And less than four years, my brother, Gordy [PH], was born. And then, less than four years, my brother, Walter, was born. So now we were a family of seven.

LEVINE: Wow.

DEEKS: So that I was spoiled the first eight years of my life. But from then on I wasn't spoiled that much, although I can't say there was anything—I'm very happy all my life. I mean, we never had a lot of money. And even when I was married, we never had a lot of money but we had a lot of love in our families, both families, in the Deeks family and also—and my mother-in-law—this was my mother-in-law's house originally. And her husband died when my husband was seven and he was the baby of his family. There was four of them. And there was two—two sisters and a brother. And so that when we got married his mom was alone, so we came here to live because he didn't want to leave his mom. And so we took two rooms in the house and we lived here. And then she died when my daughter was three years old and that was in 1949. My daughter was born in '46, so she died in '49. And of course, then we took the house over to a certain extent. But his sister—we didn't have the money to buy it and it was left to whoever had the money in—in my husband's family. So there was five of them. So the one sister had enough money. She bought it and she gave us all whatever. Of course, our share was $700; in those days, it wasn't very much. And so that she let us live here and we paid rent and paid the taxes. So the—then of course, as I say, I have been living here ever since. I came here as a bride in 1935 and I've been here ever since. Only now, I sold my main house to my son. Then I put a

three-room apartment addition. I put a two-car—with the money he gave me, I put a two-car garage attached to the house with a three-room apartment. And this is where I am living now. So I am 84 and I have been living here ever since I was a bride of 22. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Wow. Now, can you think of any experiences with either of your grandmothers when you were a little girl in Scotland?

DEEKS: Yes. Well, my Grandmother Jeffries—of course, I lived with her quite a bit and she had a bed in the wall that I used to be in. And she had a big bathtub underneath the—the bed. And of course, once a week, Saturday, you know, a big deal, out came the bathtub and I was in it. It was a copper bathtub with, like, a hood on it. And she would give me my bath and then she had a big long, like, hallway. And there was a lot of closets there. I don't know whether they were pantries or closet space or what. But then it le—led—led into a living room. In the living room was a bed in a wall and another bed. There was a—a—she had boarders because in those days nobody had a lot of money. My grandfather was a car conductor and he—I used to remember seeing him sitting in the big chair shining his brass buttons. It was a green uniform and he had brass buttons and he used to shine them. And then he would take a little nap and he'd put a p—newspaper over his face. And so to get back to the living room part, when my uncle came, my Uncle Tom was in service. And he came home and we used to go in and sit on this horsehair couch, him and I. He and I were very close. And then these other couple of men lived there. And then the one, Mr.—Old Joe, he had a big beard. I don't know how old Old Joe was but I remember this time when my uncle came home, they were having a party for him. So everybody sat on—one sat on the bed and the other sat on the chair and—chairs—and they all put their feet across. And they said to my uncle, "Now, you've got to get up." And they put a very pretty girl up at the end. And they said, "Now, you've got to walk up and you can kiss this very pretty girl." And of course, they blindfolded him and, of course, in the meantime, everybody took their feet away so that it—it was clear sailing all the way up. But instead of this lovely, pretty girl, they put Old Joe there. So my uncle's going up and, as I said, my Uncle Tom and I were very close so when he almost got to Old Joe I said, "Uncle Tom, no, no, no! It's Old Joe you're going to kiss!" [chuckles] They could a killed me. [laughter] But that was one of these—

LEVINE: Yeah.

DEEKS: —things that happened. And then, of course, he went back into service. Unfortunately, he was gassed a little bit. But he was my visitor from Scotland.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

DEEKS: And he came here and he visited with me and I had a hat shop in Bloomfield Center at the time. And he came here and he slept with—in—in my house. And—and he was—he said he's had such a good time that he was going to go over and tell his daughter she had to come and visit. Well, his daughter came two years later and she said when she was getting off the plane—because now we've got planes, not ships—when she was getting off the plane she thought, 'Here I am going to strangers. I don't know these people. Are they going to like me or am I going to like them?' [chuckles] So she said she was a little upset. So we met her at the airport in New York in—in—the main one, Kennedy.

LEVINE: Kennedy, uh-huh.

DEEKS: And we brought them home here, my son and I, and picked—picked them up, brought them here. And so when she came in here she was only here about, I think, an hour and then she told me. She said, "I was so scared." But she said, "I am so welcome." [chuckles] She says, "I am really welcome in your house." So she was really, really—from then on, she was coming anything. Then later on, she brought her husband here and then they came here to live, and they came to me first before they went up to Maine. Because my sister said, "Well, you can come up and help me up in Maine because I have an inn up there." So they helped but they were trying to get the green card so they could actually work, but they never could get the green card. And so it was—it—to meeting my hus—my uncle that first time, my Uncle Tom, my son and I went over to New York to pick him up when he came originally. And of course, he was going to have a flower in his lapel. You know how you're going to do this? So we—we went to the—asked about the plane and they said, no, it was not going to be in for another hour. So we went and had a cup of coffee. In the meantime, the plane did come in and he had already come through Customs. So of course, we're looking all over for my uncle now. Where is he? And he couldn't put the flower in his lapel because you weren't allowed flowers. You couldn't bring any flowers over. So I saw this man with a real ruddy completion. And I said to him, "Are you my Uncle Tom?" He said, "Aye, Lass. I'm your Uncle Tom." [laughs] And it was really—it was really funny. H—and he had a woolen suit because in Scotland they wear wool, you know. It—it looks like a regular suit but it's made of wool. And boy, I tell you, I—and we didn't have air conditioning in our car at that time. And we didn't air conditioning in my house at that time. But the next time, two years later when he came here I made sure I had air condition. That was when I got my air conditioning, for Uncle Tom. That was—it was a very interesting time, you know. And so that he—he really enjoyed being here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: And then eventually, my sister got him to wear shorts because he never would wear shorts, you know. She finally got him to wear shorts when he came. He came about three or four times after that. But he brought his daughter and then she was—she always—she wanted to live here and so did her husband.

LEVINE: Well, now, tell me any other memories of—of your—in—that took place in Scotland.

DEEKS: In Scotland?

LEVINE: Things that you think about when you think about—

DEEKS: Yeah.

LEVINE: —Scotland and what happened.

DEEKS: Well, in Scotland, I went to school across the street. And the teacher that—when I was leaving Scotland to come to America, she gave me a little tartan bag with a piece of white heather on it, which of course was embroidered. She gave me that as a going-away present, which was very nice. And then I remember we weren't allowed to play on Sundays in Scotland. No way could we play on Sunday. And my mother was going to take me to this park, and this one Sunday we were going to go to the park and I was all dressed up very nicely because I was an only child at this time now. And [chuckles] she—I don't know. I start—somebody threw a ball and I picked the ball up and my mother saw me. I never got to that part because I was a bad girl and I had played ball. And of course, I had only threw the ball, I think, twice or something like that but that—that was bad. And another thing that I remember in Scotland was we used to play a game. It is so—something like hide and seek. It was ling—ring-a-leavio [PH]. And we used run through and get—they had—anybody had been caught, you let them go. So we were going—and all the backyards where we lived had a—a backyard all fenced in with iron palings and all spikes. And of course, some of the spikes had been—somebody had moved them so you could get through. You could—you know, easy to get through. And in the middle of all this thing—it was a whole big block. In the middle of this was, like, a park. People didn't go in that park. It was more or less not to be in. It was just for show. But they had trees and things in there, not big trees, but small trees. And believe it or not, we used to play cricket and we used to play rounders, which was something like baseball, only we threw the ball. We didn't use a bat. And we used to do the—us kids used to get through and do that. So this one time that we're playing ring-a-leavio and I had gotten up on top of one of the—it—they had washhouses in the backyards. Everybody had a washhouse

and it was built by—there was a garbage place for your garbage cans all made out of brick or stone. I can't remember if it was stone or brick but it was all—either one. And the garbage c—was on one side and the washhouse was on the other. And there was a great big boiler that your mom put the clothes in and then two big tubs. And then you only had a special day to do your laundry and then you hung your—the—the rope out in the backyard. And of course, with 12 families, you probably only did it maybe once every two weeks. And so anyway, I was up on one of these dykes, washhouses. And of course, I was supposed to jump off. [sniffs] Well, when I went to jump off I was very, very lucky because, instead of one of these spikes piercing me, it pierced my dress. And I had a coat on. But believe it or not, the lady tried to sew it up, one of the other children's mothers. And of course, I didn't want my mother to know because we knew we were going to go to Scot—go to America now. And oh, I—I was afraid to tell her that I had ripped my dress. That was a mortal sin. So every time I went out the house—you know, it was only from the kitchen to a little hallway to get out the door—I went backwards so my mother couldn't see. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Why were you on top of the washhouse?

DEEKS: Well, we were playing a game.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: And so we were hiding and we were getting up on top of this to get through in somebody else's yard. And of course, we didn't call them yards. And so, but it was going up and these—all this palings, iron palings had spikes on the end. So I was lucky that I didn't really get hurt. So my mother never knew that my dress was ripped until we were come to—coming to America.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: But I—I hid that from her. But I w—oh, I was scared to death she was going to find out, you know. And—

LEVINE: What kind—what religion was the family?

DEEKS: Protestant. We were P—Presbyterians.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: Yeah, we were all Presbyterians. But in the meantime, my family has all married into Catholic—my three brothers married Catholic girls. And I

don't know whether they kept their religions up or not but they were—and one married a—a—a girl from Nicaragua.

LEVINE: Hmm.

DEEKS: And—but her father was Scottish. He was a—a Marine but he had—his family had been in this country for at least three generations. So he was a Marine in Nicaragua and her mom met him there and had these children. There was two girls and a boy. Unfortunately, the mother and the—the boy died. And I don't know what they died from but the two girls—the father brought them here after he remarried. And they were—the—my—my sister-in-law was 12 years old when she came here. And—

LEVINE: Was your family religious in—in Scotland?

DEEKS: In—in Scotland, yeah. We went to a Methodist Church there. But somehow or other, we—I guess it was the closest one because you didn't have cars and, see, we went to a Presbyterian Church here. And my brothers and sisters all went to the Pres—they—one of them became a member of it. They all went there to that Sunday school. I didn't go to that Sunday school because I was—as I say, I went up to work in this lady's house and I worked on Sundays. So I never went to church all that time. And then my husband and I got married in, oh, it wasn't a Lutheran Church. It was—it was in Montclair and we got married there. And we used to go there on Sundays after we got married because there was a very nice young minister there. And—but then it—the—the people—you know, he was young and he was trying to get all of us together. And a year after we were married he got all the young that got married and had a get-together, a special service for us. And these older people, for some reason or other, they didn't like the young man—minister's Methodist—, ah, methods.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: So the sort of—we sort of just drifted away after a while. We just didn't go all the time. And we went to a church down here, the—the Methodist Church in Nutley where my daughter was married. But my son was married in a Catholic Church, St. Thomas. And my other son was married in a Episcopalian Church in Nutley. So my children were all married in different faiths. But they—my one that was married in the Catholic Church, his children were b—brought up Catholic. And the other one, he didn't want to be married in a Catholic Church. So their children were brought up Protestant. And of course, now the youngest member of all my grandchildren is about 26. He's—the youngest one is 26. And I have three great grandchildren. One is 11 out in the state of Washington and

one is four in the state of Washington, and one is here in Nutley. She's eight years old; she'll be nine in June. So I have one here.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, let's say about—is there anything else about the voyage that you remember, of coming to this country?

DEEKS: Well, the one thing I do remember, I was seasick for four days and I was miserable. I was downstairs in our room, which of course at that time, everybody and their uncle was coming to America. And they—the boat was overloaded. The ship was overloaded. And so we weren't put in third class where we should have been put. We were put in where the help was, where the—the workers had been. So it was only two bunks. So my mother and my brother, David, who was nine months old, they slept in one bunk. And my brother, John, who was three years old, he and I slept in the other bunk. And—but anyway, getting up on top of the ship, I was so sick all the time. And—but my mother loved it. She would sit in the deck of that ship, because we were in the back of the ship, and she watched that ship go up and down and those waves. And sometimes, you thought the waves was going to go to right over the ship, although the Berengaria was the third lar—largest ship at—at that time. It had been taken from the Germans during the—the First World War. And—but we saw a—a—I guess it was a yacht there. And all of a sudden, you saw the yacht and all of a sudden it disappeared. We thought, 'Oh, it's gone.' But it was in the waves. That's how high the waves were. You know, it was really—you didn't see anything, nothing at all. And of course, I was too young to really go dancing or anything like that. And so I probably went to bed early. But there was a little boy, an American boy. We used to play some games up above on the ship deck. And this little Am—he had a—a Buster Brown hairdo and he was fresh. Of course, we didn't say fresh; we said cheeky. So I said, "Oh." I said, "That—I hope all the—all the little children in America aren't cheeky like him," you know. [laughs] Because he was. So that was a recollection of me coming. And—but the people on the ship were very nice and—and they—you know, the—they were third class passengers and everybody seemed to get along. And the food was very good when I could eat it. But I—I wasn't very good. And I was down in—in my room this one time, which of course was only a little two by four. It had a sink and these two bunk beds. And the steward come down and he said, "Young lady." He said, "You'd better not stay down here. You'd better get up on deck because," he said, "you're going to get sicker by staying down here. You've got to get up on deck." Well, I felt like a drunken sailor, as the saying goes, trying to get up those stairs to get up on the deck, because we were down low. You know, I guess I was down on the lowest deck you could go. And—because it was—it belonged to the—actually, to the workers, because later, we saw what the third class room was. And it was a nice room and it had beds in it. But, see, we weren't in that. So

that—that's about the—the most I—I didn't see anything else except that one yacht that was going over the other way, no planes, because in those days there was not any plane because Lindbergh hadn't gone across to France yet. You know, he hadn't done that. I think that was in '27, see, and—and that, I remember. We lived in Harrison and one of our neighbors had a radio. We didn't have a radio. And one of our ra—neighbors had a radio and we listened to him leaving New York to go over to Paris on the other person's radio. And then when we first got our first radio, it was one of those—they called the cat's whiskers. You had a little crystal and you had this little pointer thing. And you kept going around. It was like a little diamond and you kept going around trying to get—but only the one person could have the earphones on and only one person could use it. And you know, you—as a child, you weren't allowed to use the radio that much. Mom and Daddy had the radio but they let us use it once in a while to hear it. And so then, of course, as time went on we got the radio in a piece of furniture. And of course, then we all used to sit down at the bottom of there and listen to all the programs that came on, you know, and when we were little, you know, the different shows that came on. And then I remember when my son—after my son, Artie, he loved television. Of course, we didn't have a television. I didn't get a television until 1952 when we went down to get me fingerprinted, and we were coming along Broad Street in Newark. And we passed by this store and it had a Muntz—M-U-N-T-Z—television. And it was one of the cheapest ones. So of course, we bought it on time because we didn't have the money to buy a full thing. And we had it sent on a Saturday. We had the kids go off to the movies. And then we had it all hooked up by the time they came home. Well, my oldest son, he's still a reader. He's not a television—he watches it but not that much. But number two son, Artie, he can—and his eyes got as big as saucers. "A television! It's our television? Our very own television?" Oh, he was just crazy about this television. And of course, my daughter was—it was okay. And they used to watch—I can't remember the—the show on a Saturday. It had a clown. And they used to watch that every Saturday. It was very good.

LEVINE: How about the radio programs? Do you remember what you used to listen to?

DEEKS: Yes, the radio programs. We used to watch "Fibber McGee and Molly." And—and of course, we used to watch "Lux Theater" on—on a Monday night. And a—you—you would imagine these things happening. Television, of course, shows you. But you would imagine. You—they would hear water running. You would—you know, somebody would be in a boat or a canoe or something, horse's hooves and everything. You imagine—I think it was much nicer to a certain extent because you used your brain. Today's kids don't use their brain. They—because they're—everything is pushbutton, even the computers today. They don't even

have to add up figures. And when I went to work in a five and ten years ago, I had to add up figures. You know, I had to—to write up and then we—we had a—a—a whatcha-macall it to—to put the money in.

LEVINE: Cash register?

DEEKS: Cash register. It was the old fashioned where you had to push the button and get the—the drawer would open up and then you had to give them the right change. Now, all you do is push the buttons and they tell you how much change to give. You know, so it's—the children—I—I feel sorry for them to a certain extent. There's all those commuters—computers and all these webs and all these things. I think it's great. I think it's a terrific thing. But the children are not using their head, actually. Everything is more or less done for them, the same in games. Everything is—I mean, baseball, any of these games, they're all made with somebody telling them what to do. They're not—we used to have to use our mind to play games. We played jacks. You threw the ball and picked up the jacks. And we jumped rope, played marbles. We did all those kind of things that you had to use your own head. And today, I mean there are very smart ki—kids. Don't get me wrong. They're very, very smart children in this world but a lot of them, they depend on somebody telling them what to do.

LEVINE: Right.

DEEKS: You know.

LEVINE: Now, let me ask you—

DEEKS: Yeah.

LEVINE: —a couple of questions about—what about the Scottish people in Kearny and—and the other places where you lived?

DEEKS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did they have clubs? What kind of—

DEEKS: Yes.

LEVINE: How was it that these people from Scotland socialized with each other [unclear]?

DEEKS: My mom and dad never belonged to a club in—you know, as far as that's concerned. But the average person in Kearny belonged to clubs, in the Scottish American Club and all that sort of thing. But none of my family,

as far as I know—you know, my aunt and uncle and all those—they didn't belong to any organized club. And my—my cousins, they—they worked in Clark Thread Mill, which was the big thing at that time. And—but they didn't actually—but there was a lot of Scottish stores. They had a Scottish bakery that we used to go to. I used to roller skate, when we moved to Harrison, up to Kearny to get these—because Kearny was the place where all these Scottish stores were. And then they—also, even in today, in 1997, they have a fish and chips shop, which we used to get in Scotland. The fish and chips were crusted, put in hot fat for the—the fish. It would be a fillet of sole or haddock. They put it in the hot fat and then the chips was French fries. And in Scotland, they used to make what they called a poke out of newspaper. And you made the poke and in it went the French fries. And nobody got sick. You know, today, if you ever put anything in—wrapped it in newspapers, oh, you would be dead tomorrow as far as people were thinking about. And then—now, over here in Kearny there's a place called the Argyle, which has the fish and chips. And they're—they're Scottish people, I'm sure. And there's another one that I go to in Kearny. It's also close to Harrison and that's called Thompson's. And they have—they have a little more [unclear] dinner. When you go there on a Thursday they have a special for senior citizens. And me and my girlfriend—there's five of us usually go. I drive over there and we go there and we have—first of all, they give us clam chowder. And then they give us fish with the chips, whatever you want, if you want it broiled or fried. I like it fried. Then they have on the table cole slaw and pickled beets. And then you have your coffee or your tea, whatever. And then you have dessert, which is rice pudding or ice cream, and all of this is for 7.98, whereas the Argyle is a little more expensive. They—they go all over and they give fish and chips—places to clubs and organizations. But we never belonged to any Scottish club, as far as anybody that I knew in the family. And the on—then my Aunt Jean came here. She came through Canada. That was my father's sister. And she came here and was married. Her name was Findlay—F-I-N-D-L-A-Y. She also lived in Kearny and she had three girls and a boy. And in fact, my cousin still lives in the same house. It was a three-family house and Isabelle Findlay still lives there. Her mom died and her sister—her older sister is now in a nursing home down in South Jersey. And the other sister, Jean, died and the brother, David, died. So—but they lived—she still lives in the same house that her mom and dad came to when they came to Kearny.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, let me ask you—

DEEKS: Yes.

LEVINE: We're getting close to—

DEEKS: Yeah.

LEVINE: —the end now.

DEEKS: Yeah, okay.

LEVINE: And I want to ask you a couple of questions. Are there any other ways, maybe other foods or other ways that the Scottish people who came here—

DEEKS: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: —that you had association with—

DEEKS: Yeah.

LEVINE: That they kept up some of the Scottish traditions and—

DEEKS: Yeah. The traditions, sometimes, they—they would have—they wear their kilts, you know, and they would have, like, going out in the street. Parades. Parades. In fact, my sister, May, married a Scottish fellow and he—they belonged to a—an organization. And they all wear kilts in their organization. And so—I can't think of the name of it offhand. But as far as my family were concerned—and of course, the only thing is I say that we kept up traditionally, we always kept our holiday. You know, the Scottish holiday and, which, of course, was New Year's. New Year's is five hours earlier than America. And so always, at seven o'clock at night we would always say, "Happy New Year." And I still do the First Footin [PH]. In Scotland, after the 12 o'clock, you—fist footed [PH], the person in your house after 12 o'clock was supposed to bring you something like bread or—or—or coal or something they had to bring you. And it was usually like the dark-headed man. Okay? The one time in Scotland I went out. My father used to play a Gramophone, which is a Victrola. A—"A Good New Year for Everyone and All." That was his record. And I went out on the landing and I could not get back in again till my uncle came, because my father knew he was going to come within the hour. But he would not let me in because I was a little girl and they wouldn't let me in. So I still had that tradition here. Whoever comes into my house after midnight has to give me something. I don't—well, of course, in—coal, today, you can't find coal. And they can bring bread or I tell them a nickel or a dime or a dollar. You know, whatever they want to bring me, they do. And I still keep that custom up every New Year's. And we always, at mid—at midnight here, we always drink to ourselves here and wish each other a happy New Year. But at seven o'clock at night we usually drink to them in Scotland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: So that's—

LEVINE: I see.

DEEKS: —a tradition we kept up.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: And I have the little man over there—I can show it to you—that shows you the First Footin and what it is.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

DEEKS: You know, so I can show you that.

LEVINE: Okay.

DEEKS: But that's about the only, I—I think, main tradition that we do keep up. Now, the rest of the family, I don't know whether they do or not.

LEVINE: Well, let me ask you this. Are there any attitudes that your mother and father tried to instill in you that you remember? And maybe you didn't—

DEEKS: You mean from Scotland?

LEVINE: Yeah.

DEEKS: Not really. My mother was always a very giving person. She always was—wanted to help people. And my father was a very social person. He always wanted to be—have—have friends and have people in. You always could—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

LEVINE: Okay. Now, we're beginning tape two.

DEEKS: Okay.

LEVINE: And I'm speaking with Isabella Deeks. And we were talking about attitudes. Are there any attitudes that you tried to instill in your children that either came from your parents, or maybe they were different from your parents?

DEEKS: Well, we tried to like everybody. We don't care, in our family, whether you're a different color, a different race, different religion. We don't worry about that. In fact, we've married into different religions. But we don't worry about colored—race. I mean, black people, I've had in my home because I worked with them. They're very nice people. And I don't care what nationality or what religion you go into, you'll find good and bad. And so my parents tried to instill that on us, that everybody is more or less equal. And they never had—in Scotland, I will say, my mother had her little prejudices. But after we came here, we lived in Harrison and everybody was different. You had Polish. You had Catholic. You had Jewish. You had all kinds of religions and races there. And then my sister married a Jewish fellow and m—my—my other sister married a Catholic fellow. And my brothers married Catholic girls. So, you know, it was just one of those things that w—we didn't have any prejudices. So that was attitudes that my mom put—instilled in us, I think.

LEVINE: Is there—is there anything about being in an immigrant community that you could talk about, once you got to this country?

DEEKS: Well, actually, in Kearny was a lot of Scottish people. And of course, like any other race, they usually would stay—mingle with their own. But we moved to Harrison and, of course, there was a lot of different people in Harrison. There was, like I said, Jewish and Polish and everything. And I'm still friendly with a girl, Helen—her name was Helen Bonzig [PH]. Now, her name is Helen Holl [PH]. And I'm still friendly with her. The—we went to school together. So I was 10 years old when I came. I would say, between 11 and 12, Helen came to live there and we've been friends ever since. And we—we don't see each other constantly but we keep in touch. And I just—believe it or not, I saw her about two months ago. And—but she's the only one of—of the old ones. And then I had another one, Stella Mitchell (she was from England), who I met down in Harrison, but she died quite a few years ago. But actually, Helen is the only one that I've kept in touch with from my school days.

LEVINE: Wh—what about the o—Enid in Scotland? Wh—when you write to each other, what are the kinds of things you talk about in your letters?

DEEKS: Well, she doesn't write as much as I do. I write like I talk, nonstop. But she [chuckles]—she writes a card and, you know, she—and I keep writing to her and saying, "Let me know how your family is." She had a daughter and, I guess, grandchildren. But she never does write what's going on, very nice woman. Because when I went over there with—on a trip with my girlfriend, Madeline Williamson, that I'm going to Ireland this year—when I went over there on a trip, we went on a—Scottish—from England to Scotland. And we went to different places. So I got in touch with Enid and I said to her, "We're going to be in Glasgow a certain time." And I

said, “If you can meet us for dinner or something.” So she said, “Okay,” you know, in the answering. And so then when we got on the bus from England to go to Scotland, I said to the—the driver said, “Well, we have a little change in our route—route that we’re going on.” I said, to my friend, “Madeline, I bet it’s to—to Glasgow.” Sure enough, he said, “We are not going to that hotel in Glasgow. We’re going to a different one.” I said, “You can’t do that to me! You can’t do that to me.” I said, “You’ve got to get—let me know.” So we went to the place where the golfers go.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

DEEKS: And we stopped there and he said, “Give me her phone number and I’ll call.” So he called but she didn’t seem to understand who he was or what. So then later on, oh, I had of course—we had gone shopping and then we—I came back to the phone booth and I called her. So I told her so she said, okay, sh—she could meet us at that hotel. So she and her husband came to that hotel and had dinner with us and—with our group. And we had such a great time and we—she came up to our room afterwards in the hotel. And we reminisced about being in—when I was a little girl and she was a little girl. And of course, she’s got white hair and I have white hair. And there was other boys on that trip with their mom and dad. They were taking them for—on their 50th anniversary because they were from Scotland also. And these boys were really something. They—

LEVINE: Let—let me talk—

DEEKS: Yeah, okay.

LEVINE: —about you.

DEEKS: Oh, okay.

LEVINE: Because we—

DEEKS: Okay.

LEVINE: We want to go faster.

DEEKS: Right, right.

LEVINE: Let me [clears throat] ask you, how do you make sense of now? When you look back—

DEEKS: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: —coming here as a 10-year-old girl.

DEEKS: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Immigrating to this country and really starting again—

DEEKS: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: How do you think about it now? Now that you're an older woman and—

DEEKS: Well, I think it was a wonderful experience.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

DEEKS: I—I'm really very happy that my father left Scotland and came here, because the average working person in America is so much better off than the average working person in Scotland. They have to pay for television, regular television, whereas we don't. And they—their life—and my girlfriend there I just spoke about, her life is not as—I would say, as luxurious as mine, although I—not luxurious in any way. But in comparison, I have my own car and I drive and I have a nice little apartment. I can go places. I can go out for dinner. And I think it was a wonderful experience coming here and it made me, I think, a better person, a more outgoing person because I learned to live with all kinds of people, that maybe in Scotland I would have been a little more prejudiced because we would have lived in the same community, you know, and gone to the same churches and all that sort of thing. And they—a lot of people just stick together. You'll even find that today with immigrants. The Polish stick together. The Jewish stick together. The Nicaraguans or Puerto Ricans all stick together. So I think it gave me a broader outlook on life. And I think that is why, in today's world, everybody is the same as far as I'm concerned. I don't care what religion, what race you are or anything. You are my friend until you show me that you're not, you know, as far as that's concerned. So I think it was a very good experience coming here as a child, because I was old enough. Now, my two brothers didn't know anything. They were too young. But to me, I was old enough to remember Scotland, go to school in Scotland, go to church in Scotland, visit my two grandparents, which they never knew. I was very fortunate. And my great grandmother, I knew. In fact, I have a picture—it's up in the attic somewhere—of my great grandmother and my mother—my—

LEVINE: Grandmother.

DEEKS: —grandmother and my mother and I, a four generation. And I have done that with my son. I have made a four-generation. We keep having four generations all the time. In fact, my mom and dad's picture is behind you. That was a pic—that—that was taken from a big picture in Scotland of my

mom and dad. That was something like they were just before we came to America.

LEVINE: Very nice.

DEEKS: Just before we came to America.

LEVINE: Now, how about you in your old age?

DEEKS: Yes.

LEVINE: Consider the 80s.

DEEKS: Yeah. Oh, yes.

LEVINE: W—how is life for you at this p—time in your life?

DEEKS: Well, I think I'm very, very lucky that I have not had any bad sicknesses. I had a hysterectomy back in the 19—early 1950s. And from that time, I got somebody's blood. I almost died. I had an obstruction in the bowel and they—they—I got blood from somebody that my husband worked with, and who, I don't know. And so that, actually, [clears throat] I have been very fortunate. I had a nice married life. We never had a lot of money but we always had friends.

LEVINE: What was your husband's first name?

DEEKS: Charles.

LEVINE: Charles.

DEEKS: We—I called him Chuck.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

DEEKS: He was Chuck and my first child was Chick.

LEVINE: Oh.

DEEKS: And so we lived—we lived here and we always had a card group. We always played—because you didn't have a lot of money to go places. So we had—we played cards at each other's houses. In fact, in today's world, I still played cards with my family. I played last Saturday with my sister and—and two brothers and their wives. The other brother died so his wife doesn't come anymore. But we still get together. For over 40 years, we've been playing cards.

LEVINE: Wow.

DEEKS: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And how about Ellis Island? H—you visited it.

DEEKS: Yes.

LEVINE: And how—do you feel a—a special connection with that place?

DEEKS: Oh, yes. I—I certainly do because when we came here, as I said, my mom thought we were with a lot of foreigners. You know, she never considers herself a foreigner. And as a little girl, I remember coming through there and I wanted to get to Ellis Island and I wanted to be there. And of course, as I said, I had written that I have my name on Ellis Island on the wall, my mom and dad's name. My family got together and we put my mom and dad and my mother-in-law and father-in-law. Their name is Deeks and my mom and dad is McDonald. And I also have my name on the Statue of Liberty, unfortunately, as Is—Isabella. And of course, I go under Ella most of the time. But any checks I write is Isabella.

LEVINE: Hmm.

DEEKS: So—but they say if you push the button in Statue of Liberty, my name pops up. I haven't seen it yet. I haven't been there since that happened.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: But it's there. And I went to the top of the Statue of Liberty when I was in my 20s and looked through her headband.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

DEEKS: So that was quite a feat.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DEEKS: I couldn't do it today, I'm sure. [laughter]

LEVINE: Okay. Well, before we close, is there anything else that you can think of that you want to say for—for this tape?

DEEKS: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: For the Ellis Island Immigration Museum—

DEEKS: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: —that maybe we—

DEEKS: Well—

LEVINE: —we haven't said?

DEEKS: As far as the immigration is concerned, as I said, I think we should have another Ellis Island, you know, something that people have to go through. Now, when I came to Ellis Island they went through your hair to see if you had any bugs. And they—they—a lot of people were deported when—you know, from—I don't know from different countries. But they—they give us the once over, or third degree, as I said. They gave us that. And as a little girl, I remember them going through and, on the ship, a nurse used to go through your hair and wash it, because she helped my mother with the two other little children. And—but Ellis Island wasn't bad in comparison to Southampton. It wasn't good but Southampton, I think it was worse, maybe because we didn't expect it, when Ellis Island, we had heard that you were going to get the third degree. And of course, as I said—but we passed and that was the main thing. And when they called my mom's name to leave that great big room—they call it the Great Room or something now?

LEVINE: The Great Hall.

DEEKS: The Great Hall. And then we went into this cage, you know, and—and going in there. And I saw my dad and they—wh—whatever they did, I don't know, back and forth, because my mom was there with the two little children and me. And then we left there and we went—came over to Kearny. And as I said, I have no recollection. It's the stupidest thing that I don't know how we got to Kearny from New York City, whether it was bus or what. I don't know.

LEVINE: Do you remember any new things, either foods or things you saw? I mean, I guess everything was new but—

DEEKS: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: —things that really struck you when you [unclear]?

DEEKS: Well, as I said originally, that peach. That—that—it took me years to eat a peach and the one aunt, she used to take the skin off and slice it with milk. Then—because that peach—liquid tasted like castor oil to me. And as far as food is concerned, we learned to eat hot dogs, you know. And

my mother used to send me to the store for round steak, which my mother made like a stew. And of course, we were big kidney people and liver people because, in Scotland, we used to do that. In America, they don't do that as much. We used to make kidney soup. And that was made with kidneys. You threw the first water away and then you used it and you cut the kidneys up in little pieces and then took all that other grisly stuff out and put rice—you know, rice and vegetables in it. And I remember, as a little girl in Scotland with the food, my—my grandmother used to make the beef. And I guess it was soup meat; I don't know. And she sliced the meat, and then mashed potatoes and peas. We always had peas. And I used to take the peas and put—decorate the potatoes with the peas. That was a funny little thing. And—but it—it was more or less we—Scottish people, in those days, was meat and potato people. You know, they didn't have a lot of vegetables because most of us didn't have yards. They used to have a park that had gardens there and some people had a garden but my father didn't because, as I said, he was a molder. And my mother worked during the—the First World War. And believe it or not, you could hear Big Bertha, I guess it was, from the German's thing. And we used to have black blinds on our windows so that you couldn't see any light. No light at all came through. That, I remember from Scotland. When we came here, of course, everything was freer because it was 1923. And I'm glad that I came here at that time. There was the 1929 crash but—and that was Depression days. But I wasn't really—I was 14—17, 18 years old that it didn't bug me. It was my mother's problem. And my mother had a nervous breakdown and I had to take care of my—that was another thing that I learned to do a lot—was my two brothers and my two sisters, that my mother had to go away to my aunt's up in Mai—up in New Hampshire and stay there for a couple of weeks. And I had to take care—I had to leave school and I had to take care of my father, make his dinner, wash diapers. In those days, you didn't have Pampers so I had to wash two diapers because there was my sister, who was—my youngest sister, who was only a baby, and the other sister was a little over two, and my two brothers. I was 14 so my other brother was only what, six?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

DEEKS: And the other one was—was four. And so the rest of them were down the line there and I had to take care of the house and take care of the brothers and sisters. But as I said before, I don't think it did me any harm.

LEVINE: And how your mother? Do you think the nervous breakdown had anything to do with uprooting from Scotland and—and resettling in this country?

DEEKS: Maybe partially it was but then the—when my father—when we came to this country my father lost his job. So he was out of work for a while. Of course, jobs was easier to find. And that's why he moved from the one job to the Worthington Pump Work [PH] in Harrison. That's when we moved there. And then, oh, he went from there. I don't know whether he lost that job or whether he moved over to A.P. Smith's in East Orange. And there, he—he stayed until he had this accident where he had a fractured skull, and then he was out of work for five years.

LEVINE: Hmm.

DEEKS: So my mother—the nervous breakdown, I think, came because she was really—had no work. My father had—right away. Then they got a job. Then she had to move to Harrison. Then she had three boarders. Two was friends; one was a—her brother. And of course, in those days, no matter what they gave you, they ate more—you know, because my mother made Scottish food, you know and was always good. And this one guy always wanted cake. I remember he always wanted cake and, of course, we went to the Scottish bakers and got the cake. There were cupcakes and stuff like that. Then, when we moved they all went out. Everybody left. And then we moved up the street to the six-room house and then we were all alone there. And then after that, it was there that my mother had the nervous breakdown and she had to go up to my aunt's. I can't remember exactly how long it was but it was more than a couple of weeks and when I had to—

LEVINE: Was your father—was your mother—

DEEKS: Yeah.

LEVINE: —unhappy that she had moved here?

DEEKS: No, I don't think my mother was unhappy. My mother was easy to get along with and she made friends in Harrison. In fact, this one couple used to come and visit us when we moved to Bloomfield, was very friendly there. But my mother was the only daughter. My—my grandmother, Jeffries, had three sons. There was Tom, Bill and Walter. Walter was a hunchback. So when my mother left Scotland, my grandmother lost her daughter because she never—my mother never could get back to Scotland again. So she may have—in, you know, underneath her mind, she was too busy with her family to really get homesick, if you know what I mean. She was busy, busy, busy all the time with having five kids at that time and then, later on, having the two more, having seven children. And of course, they were all little. When I went to work—I was 18 years old when I went to—I worked in factories, but I was 18 when I went to live out.

So my brother, Walter, wasn't born yet. And my brother, Gordy, was born that year.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

DEEKS: So that I was never home when those two younger ones was born. My two sisters, more or less, took care of them because—so Mama never had her nervous breakdown then. You know, she—she was sick and then she died of cancer. She died at 52 years old of cancer—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

DEEKS: —and—when her children were—I think my youngest brother was about 12, so when things were getting easy. But my other brothers—my two other brothers was in service. My—my brother, John, was in the Army. He was in the Air Force and my brother, David, was over in the Battle of the Bulge.

LEVINE: Oh.

DEEKS: And so he was over with what's his name's Army. And both of them, thank God—my brother, John, n—never went overseas. He stayed in America and he enlisted. My brother, David, was drafted and he went over. And then my brother, Gordy, he went to the—the—to Korea. And my brother, Walter—of course, my mother never saw that—he joined the Navy. And he was in the—he was not torpedoed but one ship crashed into w—crashed into the hornet or something. And he was on that ship. But all four of my brothers came home. I never had any—they—none of them died—of course, the oldest brother died now. Unfortunately, he was only 71.

LEVINE: Hmm.

DEEKS: And then my sister died, 69.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

DEEKS: Here I am at 84. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah, and you look great.

DEEKS: Thank you.

LEVINE: [chuckles] I want to thank you so much for such an interesting interview.

DEEKS: Well, thank you.

LEVINE: It's really been a pleasure.

DEEKS: And this is Janet Levine. I've been speaking with Ella Deeks.

LEVINE: Yeah, I've got to get your name down too.

DEEKS: And I'm here in Nutley, New Jersey and it's April 30th, 1997. And I am signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]