

EI-936

MARY HYLAND KELLY

BIRTHDATE: DECEMBER 5, 1912

INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 1997

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 84

RUNNING TIME: 26:23

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

INTERVIEW LOCATION: NEW MILFORD, NEW JERSEY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

IRELAND, 1929

AGE: 17

SHIP: THE BALTIC

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. My name is Paul Sigrist and I'm from the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, which is part of the National Park Service.

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And I'm—I'm here. This is Woodcrest Center. Correct? New Milford, New Jersey. It's Wednesday, September 10th, 1997 and I'm here with Mary Kelly. Mrs. Kelly came from Ireland in 1927. Is that correct?

KELLY: 1929.

SIGRIST: It was '29?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay.

KELLY: Where'd you get '27?

SIGRIST: We looked on your—on your—your history. But it was hard to read so maybe it was 1929. [chuckles] And how old were you when you came over, Mary?

KELLY: Oh, don't start asking me questions that I have to think about.

SIGRIST: Okay. [chuckles] All right. Well, why don't we do this? Why don't we begin with you giving me your birth date? Can you remember what—

KELLY: Yes.

SIGRIST: Okay, what is it?

KELLY: It's December the—the 5th.

SIGRIST: December the 5th. And do you remember what year?

KELLY: Oh, my God—

SIGRIST: Well, on—on your—on your—your form, on your history it said 1912. Does that sound right to you?

KELLY: That's the year I was born.

SIGRIST: Yes, that's what I want to know.

KELLY: Oh, 1912—

SIGRIST: 1912.

KELLY: —was when I was born.

SIGRIST: And is December 5th—

KELLY: Yes.

SIGRIST: That's your birthday.

KELLY: Right.

SIGRIST: December 5, 1912. Where in Ireland were you born?

KELLY: Where was I born? In the county Westmead [PH].

SIGRIST: In Westmead.

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. And do you remember the name of the town itself?

KELLY: Oh, Tubberclare [PH].

SIGRIST: Tubberclare. In Westmead.

KELLY: County Westmead.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What do you remember about the town? What did it look like when you were little?

KELLY: Oh, it's nice.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

KELLY: It was really nice but it isn't like that anymore.

SIGRIST: But what—what did it look like when you were a girl growing up there? What do you remember?

KELLY: I remember what it looked like.

SIGRIST: Yes.

KELLY: It was a little town and it had—you're taxing my memory.

SIGRIST: You're doing a good job so far.

KELLY: Oh, yeah, great.

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Well, let—let me—let's talk about something then that you—I'm sure you remember. Can you describe the house that you lived in?

KELLY: It was a little castle.

SIGRIST: A little castle?

KELLY: Uh-hmm.

SIGRIST: And—

KELLY: And it was in the shape of a castle. I would call it a castle. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Yeah. And do you remember how many rooms you had in the house?

KELLY: Well, there was—upstairs, there was one room and downstairs there was two rooms.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And do you remember what your favorite part of the house was?

KELLY: You didn't have favorite parts of the house.

SIGRIST: No? There wasn't a part that you liked to—to be in more than the other parts of the house?

KELLY: The whole house was the same to me.

SIGRIST: I see. Okay. Did—what—was this—did you live in town or was this outside?

KELLY: Outside.

SIGRIST: It was outside of town. And—

KELLY: Outside Ashlong [PH].

SIGRIST: Outside of what?

KELLY: Ashlong.

SIGRIST: Ashlong? Was that the name of the town?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Was this a farm?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: No.

KELLY: But it was an estate.

SIGRIST: It was an estate, yeah.

KELLY: Colonel Pepper's estate.

SIGRIST: Colonel Pepper?

KELLY: No, Colonel Brareton [PH].

SIGRIST: Brackten?

KELLY: Brareton.

SIGRIST: Brareton.

KELLY: His estate.

SIGRIST: That was his estate?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your father work for him?

KELLY: Yes.

SIGRIST: What did your father do for him?

KELLY: He—oh, he was the horse trainer.

SIGRIST: A horse trainer?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That's interesting.

KELLY: And he trained polo ponies and was very good at it.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the horses when you were a little girl?

KELLY: Well, I remember the horses very well.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about the horses.

KELLY: I remember riding them bareback. My father would put me up on the horse and I would ride in. And I would catch them. I could catch the pony or the horse out in the field and bring 'em in. And it was fun.

SIGRIST: Were there pretty horses?

KELLY: Beautiful.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

KELLY: My father trained polo ponies so you know what that would look like.

SIGRIST: Sure. And these belonged to this particular colonel?

KELLY: What?

SIGRIST: The horses belonged to this—

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —to the colonel? What was your father's name?

KELLY: Joseph.

SIGRIST: Joseph. And what was his last name, which would be your maiden name?

KELLY: Hyland.

SIGRIST: How do you spell Hyland?

KELLY: H-Y-L-A-N-D.

SIGRIST: H-Y-L-A-N-D. Hyland. Can you tell me a little bit about your father's personality?

KELLY: Well, if you didn't do what he told you, you'd be—know about it. That's the one thing.

SIGRIST: You—

KELLY: He was very strict.

SIGRIST: Very strict. Uh-huh. What did he look like?

KELLY: Well, all I can tell you is that he was a very handsome man.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

KELLY: [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Did he—did he—did he work with any other kinds of animals too, other than horses?

KELLY: Well, he worked in the stable.

SIGRIST: That was his primary job—

KELLY: Right.

SIGRIST: —was—was doing the horses.

KELLY: Right.

SIGRIST: What did your father enjoy doing when he wasn't working? Was there something he enjoyed doing for his own—

KELLY: He enjoyed fishing.

SIGRIST: Enjoyed fishing?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Was there a place to fish near where you lived?

KELLY: Of course. There was a—a lake.

SIGRIST: Do you have any memories of yourself as a child at that lake?

KELLY: Yes, I do.

SIGRIST: Yes.

KELLY: I remember when—

SIGRIST: Okay, you can put your hands down now.

KELLY: —I had to row the boat for him to go out and catch. And he would catch the fish and we would spend some time on the lake, and that was nice.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What was your mother's name?

KELLY: Latisha [PH].

SIGRIST: Latisha. And do you know what her maiden name was?

KELLY: Yeah, Connelly [PH].

SIGRIST: Connelly. And what memories do you have of your mother in Ireland?

KELLY: Plenty.

SIGRIST: Yes?

KELLY: I have plenty of my mother and they're all good memories too.

SIGRIST: Would you like to—to tell me one of the memories? Something you remember doing with your mother, maybe?

KELLY: Now, you know the kids at home didn't do things with their mother like they do here. You went and did what you were told.

SIGRIST: Did you have a chore around the house that was your responsibility?

KELLY: No particular chore.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did your mother have to do around the house?

KELLY: Well, she had to cook and prepare the meals and straighten the house and all that jazz.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the kinds of food that you ate at that time when you lived on the estate?

KELLY: We ate the same kind of food as you eat. What do you mean, the same kind of—what kind of food?

SIGRIST: Well, for instance, you mentioned that your father went fishing.

KELLY: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did you ever eat the fish that he caught?

KELLY: Of course.

SIGRIST: Yeah?

KELLY: Only I didn't like it but he did.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. I was just wondering if there were different kinds of foods that you ate back then that—different than how we eat now.

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: No.

KELLY: There were potatoes and cabbage and bacon and all that stuff.

SIGRIST: Did—did you have brothers and sisters?

KELLY: Yes.

SIGRIST: How many?

KELLY: I guess there was five of us in all.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm. And how do you fall into those five? Are the oldest or the youngest or—

KELLY: No, I was second oldest.

SIGRIST: Second oldest, uh-huh. Was there one brother or sister with whom you were particularly close?

KELLY: Yeah, my brother Christy.

SIGRIST: Christy? Uh-huh. Is there a story you could tell me about something that you and Christy did when you were kids?

KELLY: You didn't interfere with your brothers when you were kids. You went out in the fields and did what you wanted to but it was different. He was a very good brother to me.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did he enjoy the horses like you enjoyed the horses?

KELLY: Oh, yeah. He enjoyed them.

SIGRIST: Did you go to school when you were in Ireland?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Where was the school?

KELLY: It was a long way off. It was about seven miles walk. Six miles walk.

SIGRIST: Six miles. And you would walk back and forth?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Does something—does something sticks out in your mind about going to school back then that you remember?

KELLY: No, the usual, you know. Nothing in particular.

SIGRIST: Okay. Tell me about religion. What religion were you in Ireland?

KELLY: Catholic.

SIGRIST: You were Catholic. And how did you practice your religion?

KELLY: By going to church.

SIGRIST: So there was a church nearby.

KELLY: Of course.

SIGRIST: How often did you go?

KELLY: Once a week.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And did you—how did you practice your religion at home?

KELLY: The same way as they do here. You say your prayers and all that.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you have any religious objects in the house anywhere?

KELLY: Yeah, we had pictures.

SIGRIST: And do you remember celebrating a religious holiday? For instance, did you celebrate—

KELLY: Outside of Christmas—

SIGRIST: How did you celebrate Christmas—

KELLY: —and Easter.

SIGRIST: Yeah, in Ireland?

KELLY: The same way as you do here. I don't know what you mean by that.

SIGRIST: Well, I'm just wondering if there were different ways that you would celebrate Christmas back then than they celebrate it now.

KELLY: Oh, we just got presents and you got candy for Christmas.

SIGRIST: I see.

KELLY: And my mother made a cake.

SIGRIST: And that was how you celebrated.

KELLY: That was how we celebrated.

SIGRIST: Is there a Christmas present that you got as a kid that—that you've never forgotten? One that you've always—

KELLY: Yeah. I got a doll and, because it wouldn't walk, I smashed it. [chuckles] Just threw it on the floor and my mother was very angry because it was a very good china doll. So that's one thing that happened.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me, when you were a little girl in Ireland, what did you know about America? How did you think about America?

KELLY: We just didn't think about it. [chuckles] It was a big country and it was away and it was America and that's it.

SIGRIST: Did you have any relatives who lived in America?

KELLY: Yeah. Of—

SIGRIST: Who?

KELLY: What?

SIGRIST: Who? What relatives were they that lived in—

KELLY: I had an uncle and an aunt.

SIGRIST: Were these your father's relatives or your mother's relatives?

KELLY: My mother's relatives.

SIGRIST: Yeah. And did you ever know anyone who went to America and came back to Ireland?

KELLY: Well, no.

SIGRIST: Well, why did you want to come to America?

KELLY: Because the opportunity presented itself.

SIGRIST: Yes.

KELLY: And my aunt said it was a good country for girls so here I am. And I cannot agree with her.

SIGRIST: You don't—

KELLY: It is a good country but—but Ireland was best of all.

SIGRIST: Well, when—when the opportunity presented itself, did you want to leave Ireland?

KELLY: Sure, because, just to get away from everything.

SIGRIST: Well, what was it that you were trying to get away from? I mean, what was making you—

KELLY: Nothing specific. You just had to go and that's—the opportunity came and I went.

SIGRIST: Where did your aunt live in America?

KELLY: She lived up in the Bronx.

SIGRIST: In the Bronx. And she had been here for some time?

KELLY: Right.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Had any of your other brothers and sisters—or, I guess you said you were the second oldest. Right? Did your older brother—

KELLY: Yeah, John—

SIGRIST: —come to America?

KELLY: Yeah, John came but he died here.

SIGRIST: Did he come before you did?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: No.

KELLY: The same time.

SIGRIST: Oh, you came over with him? And did anyone else come with the two of you?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: No. So—so your aunt was bringing over you and your brother, John. Yeah. And you said that you were happy about going.

KELLY: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. How did your parents feel about you going?

KELLY: Well, I think my mother was brokenhearted. My father too. So—but we—

SIGRIST: What—I'm sorry. Go ahead.

KELLY: We didn't have much thoughts on that.

SIGRIST: What did you have to do before you left Ireland? What did you have to do to get ready so that you could leave?

KELLY: Oh, we had to go to the—the consulate and get clearance from the consulate. And that was it.

SIGRIST: What about on the medical physical or anything like that?

KELLY: I never even thought about it.

SIGRIST: I see. And do you remember what you packed to take with you to America?

KELLY: Not much.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what, specifically?

KELLY: You mean you want an itemized list?

SIGRIST: Well, whatever you can remember.

KELLY: I can't tell you that.

SIGRIST: Okay.

KELLY: And anyway, we were coming out to my aunt and she was going to take care of us and that's that.

SIGRIST: So you didn't really need very much?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: Did your family give you a goodbye dinner or some kind of a—an acknowledgment that you were leaving? Like a gathering of people to say goodbye? Anything like that?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: No? Do you remember leaving your—your family when you were getting ready to—to go to get on the ship?

KELLY: Oh, I remember.

SIGRIST: Does anything stick out in your mind about that experience?

KELLY: I was brokenhearted, to start off with, and then I wondered why the hell I was leaving. And then I went.

SIGRIST: Where did you have to go to get on the ship?

KELLY: Well, to Cork [PH]. To Queenstown.

SIGRIST: Go down to Queenstown. And it's you and your brother. Correct? Did any other family member go down with you to Queenstown?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: How did you get down to Queenstown?

KELLY: By train.

SIGRIST: Took a train to Queenstown. And how long did you s—have to stay there before you could get on the ship?

KELLY: Not long.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the ship?

KELLY: The Baltic.

SIGRIST: Oh, you came on the Baltic.

KELLY: How can I forget it?

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Tell me what you remember about being on the ship.

KELLY: I remember I had a good time.

SIGRIST: What did you do?

KELLY: We danced and had parties and it was very nice.

SIGRIST: Did your brother stay with you on the ship?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He was—he slept in the same area where you did?

KELLY: No, he didn't sleep. He had a berth of his own.

SIGRIST: Anything else stick out in your mind about the ship? Maybe being up on deck of the ship?

KELLY: Oh, I was up on deck, sure.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

KELLY: You had to go up on deck because if you didn't, if you stayed down below you'd get sick.

SIGRIST: And what could see when you were up on deck?

KELLY: Water, water everywhere. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: [laughs] How long did the ship take to get to New York?

KELLY: Took us eight days.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when the ship came in?

KELLY: No—oh, yeah. I remember because everybody went up to see it.

SIGRIST: What else happened when the first ship arr—when the ship first arrived in New York?

KELLY: Don't ask me about that because my memory of that is not good.

SIGRIST: Okay.

KELLY: We got off the boat. [chuckles] You're going to think I'm terrible. But we walked into a bunch of black people and I got scared to death. I really did. I said I didn't want to stay here. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Was that the first time you had ever seen a black person?

KELLY: No, I saw one in Dublin but I was with my father then. He was a nice man. He was an engineer, like my father.

SIGRIST: When you got off the ship in New York, who was there to meet you?

KELLY: My aunt.

SIGRIST: And wh—and where did she—did—did you go to Ellis Island when you got off the ship?

KELLY: Yeah, when—we were on the island and we were on the boat and we were taken to EI—Ellis Island. And my experience at Ellis Island is not good.

SIGRIST: Would you like to tell me what happened?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: Okay.

KELLY: I would not.

SIGRIST: All right. But your aunt came to meet you?

KELLY: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes.

KELLY: And took us home to her house.

SIGRIST: Did you have to stay at Ellis Island for a long time?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: No. I see.

KELLY: No, it was just like passing through.

SIGRIST: I see. And so your aunt came and got you. And she was living in the Bronx, I think you said.

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. How—how did you spend your first night in America?

KELLY: [chuckles] Nothing special. I know that's what you want to hear but it was not special.

SIGRIST: The next day, when you got up, did you go to look for a job?

KELLY: The next day what I got up, I thought I would kill myself! I was so disgusted. But I got over it.

SIGRIST: What—what kinds of things did you do in those—that first week or two when you were in America?

KELLY: Nothing special.

SIGRIST: Did you look around at all or—

KELLY: Yeah, my aunt took me around.

SIGRIST: And did you see anything in America that you had never seen before that was new to you?

KELLY: Yeah, a lot of people. [chuckles] Crowds of people. And believe me, I didn't like it. So my first experience as America wasn't good.

SIGRIST: Did you write back to your mother and father?

KELLY: Of course.

SIGRIST: You were writing to them? And what were you telling them about, you know, what was happening to you?

KELLY: I wrote to my father and I told him to send me money to go home and get—that's what I wrote. And that's the truth.

SIGRIST: How long did it take you to—to start feeling more relaxed in America?

KELLY: Quite a while. You don't get over those feelings fast.

SIGRIST: No, of course not. Did you—did you get a job at some point?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was the first job that you got?

KELLY: It was a domestic.

SIGRIST: In somebody's house?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like to—to be a domestic?

KELLY: Well, I was minding children, two kids. And they were very good to me, these people.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay with them?

KELLY: Boy, are you going to write this up?

SIGRIST: Well, we leave it as a—as a tape recording.

KELLY: I hope you don't—

SIGRIST: Are you tired? Do you want to stop?

KELLY: I'm not tired.

SIGRIST: Okay.

KELLY: I'm just annoyed that you ask so many questions.

SIGRIST: Well, I don't—I don't have to ask anymore if you don't—

KELLY: I'm not—

SIGRIST: —want me to.

KELLY: I'm not good at answering questions.

SIGRIST: You're doing a very good job.

KELLY: Except—especially personal.

SIGRIST: Well, you're doing okay. Really. Well, what—what would you like to tell me about—I mean, you told me that you weren't happy here in America when you first got here. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about that experience and—and the sorts of things that you were doing when you first got here? You got a job. What did you do for fun when you first got here?

KELLY: Well, my cousin and I would go out for a walk up on 39th Street. [laughs] it sounds stupid.

SIGRIST: Well, I imagine at that time that was something exciting to do.

KELLY: Well, it's something we wanted to do.

SIGRIST: Was there something there that you wanted to see?

KELLY: No, just the stores.

SIGRIST: Do you remember buying anything? When you first were getting money from when you were working, do you remember what you—

KELLY: I sent it home.

SIGRIST: Sent all of it home?

KELLY: Most of it.

SIGRIST: Most of it. What about your brother? What job did he get when he came?

KELLY: Oh, he got a job with sheet metal.

SIGRIST: Sheet metal. Had he had any experience in Ireland doing that kind of work?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: Had you had any experience in Ire—in Ireland working in other people's homes?

KELLY: I worked in my own home.

SIGRIST: Right.

KELLY: And that was enough.

SIGRIST: But you never were in a situation where you were sent out to other people's homes to work?

KELLY: No. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Well, sometimes young ladies were.

KELLY: Oh, I went to work for [chuckles]—for a man with a store. And he collected eggs and I had to count them. And then I had to go out in the truck and pay the people we bought the eggs from and sell groceries. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: So you did have a job in Ireland then?

KELLY: Oh, and it was so much fun.

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Well, did you ever go back to Ireland to visit your parents?

KELLY: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How long were you in America before the first time you went?

KELLY: About 10 years.

SIGRIST: And what was it like to go back to Ireland after all that time?

KELLY: It was wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

SIGRIST: Were your parents still living at that point?

KELLY: No.

SIGRIST: They were both dead?

KELLY: Uh-hmm.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did you go back to the—to the town—

KELLY: Yes.

SIGRIST: —where you had grown up?

KELLY: I went back and I went to the cemetery and all that stuff.

SIGRIST: You still had brothers and sisters who were living over there? Yes?

KELLY: I had a brother that came out here with me.

SIGRIST: Right.

KELLY: My other brother got killed in a car accident.

SIGRIST: Oh.

KELLY: And, oh, the other two are at home.

SIGRIST: I see. Did it look—when you went back for the first time, did the town look different in any way to you, somehow? Had any—had any changes taken place?

KELLY: Oh, there was a lot of changes and things I didn't appreciate so no sense in talking about them. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Okay. [chuckles] All right. Well, look, Mary. Thank you very much—

KELLY: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: —for me asking questions. You did a good job.

KELLY: Oh, excellent. I'm not good at answering questions.

SIGRIST: Okay. [chuckles] This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Mary Kelly on Wednesday, September 10th, 1997, at the Woodcrest Center in New Milford, New Jersey.

KELLY: [laughs]

SIGRIST: Thank you. [chuckles]

[END OF INTERVIEW]