

EI-981

ELLEN CONWAY

BIRTH DATE: FEBRUARY 19, 1907

INTERVIEW DATE: MARCH 11, 1998

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 9/1998

IRELAND, 1929; RETURNED TO NORTHERN IRELAND 1936

AGE 22

PASSAGE ON THE TRANSYLVANIA

LEVINE: Today is March 11, 1998, and I'm here in Northern Ireland,
County Tyrone, Greencastle.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: With Mrs. Ellen Conway.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: Who immigrated to America on February, no, on August 21,
1929.

CONWAY: 31st.

LEVINE: The 31st.

CONWAY: Yes, the 31st.

LEVINE: The 31st. And, you arrived in America on the 31st, and you returned to Ireland, when was that?

CONWAY: I returned to Ireland on the 12th of June, on the 12th of June, 1936.

LEVINE: Okay. And today Mrs. Conway is ninety-one years of age.

CONWAY: That's right.

LEVINE: And this is Janet Levine for the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.

CONWAY: Yes, that's for sure.

LEVINE: Now, if we could start at the beginning, Mrs. Conway, would you say again your birth date so we have it on the tape, your birth date? The date you were born.

CONWAY: Yes?

LEVINE: Would you say that again?

CONWAY: I was born on the 19th, 1907, of February, 1907.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

CONWAY: I was born here in Esker[ph].

LEVINE: And you were born in the same place . . .

CONWAY: On this spot I am on now.

LEVINE: And what was your father's name?

CONWAY: My father's name was James Slane Keenan, but he died when I was three-and-a-half, and I never remember him.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

CONWAY: My mother's name was Susan Keenan, her maiden name. But Susan Slane, her married name.

LEVINE: And how do you spell her maiden name?

CONWAY: S-U-S-A-N. Susan.

LEVINE: No, uh, and her name . . .

CONWAY: Oh, Keenan. K-E, K-double E-N-A-N.

LEVINE: K-double E-N-A-N?

CONWAY: Aye.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what do you remember about your mother when you were growing up here?

CONWAY: Well, I don't remember my mother when I was growing up. She was a big, very tall. I could show you a picture

even yet.

LEVINE: Well, when we're finished you can show me the pictures, okay?

CONWAY: Yes. A big, tall woman, and her hair was always white, and she wore it up here in a knot in the turn of her head.

LEVINE: And did you have brothers and sisters?

CONWAY: I had a brother and three sisters, three sisters besides myself. Four girls and a boy was in the family. That was in the family, and my oldest sister married and went to England.

LEVINE: Molly went to England.

CONWAY: That was Mary.

LEVINE: Mary.

CONWAY: And my other sister, Katherine, she went to America, and she got married in Boston, to a man the name of D'Ambroise[ph].

LEVINE: And, um . . .

CONWAY: My other sister, she got married to a man named McCullough[ph], and she lived in Brooklyn, I'll show you

the piece there I picked up today. She got married in Brooklyn. (aside - Will that go on this thing?) (she laughs) Brooklyn, to a man the name McCullough. And she had two girls and two boys.

LEVINE: And how about your brother?

CONWAY: My brother died when he was thirty-six, and my mother died, was dead before him, only year before him.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, uh, so when you, when you left for the United States you were twenty-two years of age.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: What, what was life like for you before you left?

CONWAY: What is that?

LEVINE: What was life like here before you left?

CONWAY: Life was very hard. You couldn't make nothing. You couldn't get no jobs of nothing, don't you know. And there was nothing to be made on the land.

LEVINE: And what did your mother do with her husband gone?

CONWAY: She just, she just go there. We tried to work ourselves. My brother who died (?) was all away. My brother and

I would work away ourselves, we'd do, put in spuds, do this and do that.

LEVINE: Well, did you go to school at all? Did you go to school?

CONWAY: I went to school, and, but a very short time. Some days I would be sent to other people to work because we had no horse at that time. He was fit to be a horse. (she clears her throat) Excuse me. And I wouldn't get much schoolin'. But I managed to get on in schoolin' all right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. When you would go to work for someone, what would you do?

CONWAY: Well, when I'd go to work for somebody, I'd work very hard with them, and I would get more (?).

LEVINE: What kind of work?

CONWAY: (?) turf and spreading turf, and (?) hay, doing all kinds of things like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, how, where were you in the family? Were you the . . .

CONWAY: I'm the youngest.

LEVINE: The youngest.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: And my sister that was nine years older, (?).

LEVINE: And so, um, you were here when your mother and your brother died.

CONWAY: Yes, I buried them. I buried both of them. And it was inside eighteen months. He took double pneumonia. He had pneumonia before him, but then he took double pneumonia again and died very quickly.

LEVINE: So when your mother died, your older sister was already in England?

CONWAY: She was in England, but war was on, and I couldn't get her home. I had nobody here to help me or do anything for me, and she would have to get a permit to come home that time, and that would take a month, to get that permit, that war was on that time. It would take a month, and she didn't get home before the month was up, to get the permit.

LEVINE: I see. And how about your other sister?

CONWAY: My other sisters, you see, they couldn't come either.

LEVINE: But she was in the United States.

CONWAY: Here in the United States, the one in Boston, and the other in Brooklyn. Well, the other, the one, she would have been in Philadelphia at that time. (?), that's my sister, my younger, next to me, she was four-and-a-half years older than me.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

CONWAY: And she was in Philadelphia. That's where I was all my life, all my time.

LEVINE: How was it that you stayed here and your other sisters went away? Why did you stay?

CONWAY: They had a, I didn't stay here all the time. You see, I went to America and started making a bit of money.

LEVINE: That was 1929.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: You were twenty-two.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And then I come back in '36. So I didn't intend staying.

LEVINE: Oh, what did you intend to do when you went to America?

CONWAY: Well, I, if I got any kind of a job I'd start, you know, in the beginning. I'd take all the kinds of jobs, because the Depression was there, and there were a lot of people out of work, and there were a lot of these big people going bankrupt and everything. The banks were busting and whatnot. A lot of things like that. So I'd take any job for a while. But I managed to have a couple of good jobs.

I had Mrs. Eberlee down Germantown, I still remember as well as yesterday, she was very good to me, her and him.

LEVINE: This was in Philadelphia.

CONWAY: Philadelphia.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. But how, what did you do before you left here?

CONWAY: I worked on the land and everything.

LEVINE: On the land, uh-huh.

CONWAY: I would milk cows, done everything, churned. We'd have to churn out, old-fashioned churn with the stops up and down like this. There were no new things like that.

LEVINE: And how was it that you went to America? How was it that you went when you did? Why did you go at that particular time?

CONWAY: I want to get my sisters. I went to my sisters. I wanted to get away. And it was that glad to get away, you know, because there were nothing here for you. See, my mother and my brother was here at that time, and there was nothing here. Everyone was going. All the young people was going away, you see, in all countries, to make a living.

LEVINE: Did you know other people that, did you know other people who had went to, who had gone away?

CONWAY: I had one girl with me going that I knowed, but I knowed several others the away the Saturdays before, and several that come the Saturdays afterwards.

LEVINE: Did you write back and forth?

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: And what kinds of things did they tell you about the United States?

CONWAY: (she laughs) I'd write how I liked the United States. I liked Philadelphia. But I didn't like New York. It

was too congested. I didn't like at all New York. I'd only go over for a weekend or something like that. And I didn't like Boston, because I had cold up from Boston.

And my sisters always wanted me to come to the embassy, but I never left. But the second, my sister next to me, she got married, and then I took her job. I got her job.

LEVINE: What job was that?

CONWAY: That Whitman[ph], Bravers-Whitman[ph].

LEVINE: What is that?

CONWAY: It was a family.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

CONWAY: And then they would go away for the summer, you see, way up to New Hampshire, to Joffrey[ph]. Do you know where that is?

LEVINE: Yes. And where, what were your duties? What did you have to do for this family?

CONWAY: Wait on the table.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

CONWAY: Wait on the table. I could tell you, but it would get

on the thing. (she refers to the tape recorder) I could tell you one good joke about waiting on the table.

LEVINE: Okay.

CONWAY: You know, that time (?), maybe that (?), but there were a big dinner party, which was all twenty, and there were two girls coming to help me. And, uh, there was the quartermaster Hammacher[ph]. That man was very, very, very, big shoulders on him. And (?) because he has these big shoulders. And you know what I just had left a dish with sweet potatoes and mashed boilers(?) on the top of it, baked brown. The tried to lift that over his big shoulders. (she laughs) I had cooked to the wrong size (?). (she laughs) Hope that's not on this. Don't (?). (she laughs) I never forgot it, honestly, all the days of my life. I knew they all laughed at me, but I kept it anyway. But (?). (she laughs) Because if I turned around I went down, you know, and that's roasting hot. But it was scheduled before. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Well, tell me about when you were leaving here. What was it like for you to leave?

CONWAY: They were all vexed about me leaving. The mother was sorry for me leaving, you know.

LEVINE: Well, now, your mother had died before you left. Is that right?

CONWAY: Oh, no.

LEVINE: Oh, no?

CONWAY: I came back, that's why I took me back.

LEVINE: Oh, you came back.

CONWAY: That's why I come back, to see me mother.

LEVINE: Okay. So what did your mother say when you were leaving?

CONWAY: My mother . . . here, that time, the convoy, you know?
It was a convoy. But the (?) of a convoy, because you never come back, you see.

LEVINE: Oh. So what, did she, was there actually a convoy?

CONWAY: Yes, there were all, the people had all come in, all come in 'round, 'round, 'round to say goodbye, and dancing and playing music on till morning, until you leave in the morning. And this girl that was up by there said, "I hope that he sings us a song to (?) back here (?)." (she laughs)
This girl was with me, and, you know, cars was very scarce that time.

LEVINE: What was scarce?

CONWAY: Cars.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And she says, we'd get a car, and she says that will take us to the Omaugh, and we would get the train there for Derry. Well, I waited on the car to come to eight, I think, eight or nine o'clock, and it didn't come, and I'd say, "Well, I'm not going to wait no longer, because I want to get away." And I seen the bus coming, heading for me, coming up Cooks Town Road, down, and I got on the bus, and away on the bus. And I got on, met her, know me, and we went on the train to Derry. And we went down on the wee tender to the big boat.

LEVINE: And did you, do you remember anything you brought with you, anything you took with you when you went to the . . .

CONWAY: Well, they told me not to take much with me, very little with me, because I'd get me stuff when I'd go over there. And I don't, I never remember taking a coat with me, tell you the truth. I think, I just went with me dress on me.

LEVINE: And who were you going . . .

CONWAY: It was warm, you know, it was warm the 31st of August.

It was nice and warm that time, different to the weather we have now.

LEVINE: Yes. And you were going to your sister's?

CONWAY: Yes. My sister was here at New York, but the one of them away from '21, she was away in 1921, and that is nine years' difference, you see, and I didn't know her.

LEVINE: Oh. Well, tell me about the voyage. What was, the name of the ship was the Transylvania?

CONWAY: Transylvania.

LEVINE: And what was that like?

CONWAY: The Transylvania was a (?), but sad leaving, you know. You know, we were never out before to see anything much, and getting up the gangplank we were afraid we would fall into the water. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Now, were you with your girlfriend?

CONWAY: Beg your pardon?

LEVINE: Now, were you with your girlfriend?

CONWAY: Yes, I was with my girlfriend, and we fell in with a lot of our age on the boat going over, and had a good time

playing card and everything, you know. We didn't think the time long going over.

LEVINE: Were you excited? How did you feel? How did you feel when you were on the ship going over?

CONWAY: I wasn't afraid. I wasn't annoyed. Oh, there was few died at sea when I was coming over. And I felt so sorry that they didn't put them into a coffin.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: You know, they died at sea, and they hadn't money enough to take them on. And they just dropped brown canvas over them, and the captain told us all to get up on deck, so we went all up on deck, and (?) yet after he said some prayers or something, and shoved them into the sea.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: I thought it so sad. It was a pity then, even like that, you know?

LEVINE: Do you know what they died from?

CONWAY: No, I didn't know. They might be old people, you know, I don't know. That time, you see, we wouldn't have much sense; we'd be too excited on that boat that time.

LEVINE: And where did you sleep on the boat?

CONWAY: I slept on the top bunk.

LEVINE: Was it down in the bottom of the boat?

CONWAY: Oh, yes, steerage, steerage. But it was a bunk, you see.
She slept underneath me, and I was on the top one.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were there a lot of people? Was it crowded?

CONWAY: Oh, it was crowded. But they did, we were looked after
and everything on the boat, well looked after.

LEVINE: Where did you eat your dinners? Where did you have your
meals?

CONWAY: We down the big dining room downstairs and table to
ourselves and everything first in the morning. We had
a good breakfast and a good dinner.

LEVINE: And was there music on board? Did people . . .

CONWAY: There was music up on the deck if you'd want to go, like,
we wouldn't bother much when we were going over, but coming
back we did. We'd join the music and dancing and
everything. We were coming back, I thought, I thought
we'd be back at the seventh of September, but I didn't

get back, you see. My mother wasn't feeling good, and I couldn't go back. The doctor said she couldn't be left alone. She was what you would call dottin', wandering, you know?

LEVINE: Well, tell me, when you first arrived, did you see the Statue of Liberty?

CONWAY: I did.

LEVINE: Did you know what that was?

CONWAY: I did pass the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island. I didn't bother to get through Ellis Island. We were all dreading Ellis Island, that they mightn't get through there.

LEVINE: What do you remember about Ellis Island?

CONWAY: I just remember a doctor or someone telling me to walk on, or move on.

LEVINE: Were there any people working there that you remember?

CONWAY: No, I wouldn't know anyone there.

LEVINE: But you, but . . .

CONWAY: But, uh, there was, like all suitcases and things sitting

there (she pauses) at Ellis Island. But my two sisters was waiting down below, but I didn't know one of them, you see. I know the other one, because she wasn't so long away, only four or five years away.

LEVINE: So you recognized her?

CONWAY: Oh, I recognized her, surely. So she went away, I went to Philadelphia to my uncle's.

LEVINE: What was it like to see your sisters again?

CONWAY: It was great to see them again. I was glad to see them.

LEVINE: Had they changed much?

CONWAY: Beg pardon?

LEVINE: The one that you remembered, had she changed much?

CONWAY: Well, she did, she changed a wee bit, but not so much.

She had a great big bushy head of black, curly hair when she left here, and she had it combed more flat when I met her, down like.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how about their personalities? Had they changed?

CONWAY: Not so much, all the same. Not so much. I think the oldest

one was changed a wee bit. She got thinner. She used to be, you know, red and fat when she was here.

(she pauses) She changed a bit.

LEVINE: Yeah. So then when you left Ellis Island, you went right to Philadelphia?

CONWAY: Yes, I went right to Philadelphia.

LEVINE: You went on the train?

CONWAY: Yes, I went on train to Philadelphia, about two hours, I think, that time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what, and what was your sister's apartment, or house, like?

CONWAY: My sister didn't have an apartment that time. See, they were all working. And she took me to meet my uncles, and I got a job the next morning.

LEVINE: The next morning?

CONWAY: The next morning. Way out, Ambler.

LEVINE: Ambler, uh-huh.

CONWAY: Do you know where Ambler is?

LEVINE: Yes, I do.

CONWAY: Well, I got a job way out to Ambler. And unfortunately, I took pussy ringworm, I must got it on the boat.

LEVINE: Say that again?

CONWAY: Pussy ringworm. Did you ever heard of that?

LEVINE: Oh, you, you had, you got that on the boat?

CONWAY: I must have got it on the boat. They allowed that I must have used somebody's towels, but I didn't, I could not have (?), I couldn't do that, you know? But, for I had my own towels with me and all. But I must have used somebody's, and I got it on my face, and I had, the lady said we'd better stop for fear that I'd give it to anybody else, you see. So it was very far out, you know, from Chestnut Hill. I had to take two buses. So my sister then, when I was better then, she said, "You'd better not go there, it's too far," she says. And I was sorry I was not going, because I had a good job, and I liked it. There was a German also, and he was an aviator, he used to fly, and she was a very nice lady. And there was an Irish girl, a cook. And I liked it out there.

LEVINE: But you had to leave?

CONWAY: Well, I was just there waiting on the table, just, they showed me how to do it and everything, finger bowls and everything like that.

LEVINE: Well, um, when you found out you had the ringworm, when you found out you had the ringworm, then did you have to leave?

CONWAY: I had to leave because, you see, I could, someone else could contact it from me, you see? And I would leave that the house would be, you know, would have to be changed. But I ended up in a week. I was all right in a week.

LEVINE: Oh. Where did you go when you left the house?

CONWAY: There was a lady, she was an old Irish lady that lived near where my sister worked, and I stayed with her.

LEVINE: Was she an Irish lady?

CONWAY: Yes, she was Irish. And I stayed with her. And I, then I worked there all together when I went. I got a job then. I got a few bad jobs, I didn't like them. They used to send me out to wash windows in the cold in the morning, you know, and everything. I didn't like them. I left them. I was right then with a man the name of McKeehan[ph],

out the Main Lane. Although nice people, very nice people, they only had one little girl. Lovely people, too.

LEVINE: And you worked for them?

CONWAY: I worked for them.

LEVINE: And you lived there?

CONWAY: I did them. But then my sister was getting married, so that finished the run, and I had to call Chestnut, do you know where the car barn is?

LEVINE: Oh, yes.

CONWAY: The trolley car? Well, do you know where Gaver's[ph] Lane is? Well, at the very, it's a while over to the house, a big white house, it was the Savages, they called it, Mrs. Savage and Mr. Savage. And Mr. Savage's own people, his father and mother, lived down near it, from this side onto the, oh, only just down half through the lane there from him, and her people only lived over near the end of the lane. So on Sunday I used to go over and help, they'd all go for the (?). That was her people, on Sunday, and I'd go over and help to wait there on Sunday.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did they employ many people? Did they employ

a number of people?

CONWAY: There were a number of people from there that owned, their own family all over there, you know? See, the one of them, her sister then wasn't married, she was a member of Parliament, and she had her own wee plane, a five-seater.

LEVINE: Oh. Now, were there other people working in the house?

CONWAY: Oh, yes. The one from Kerry. Do you know where Kerry is? Well, the one from Kerry was very old. She wasn't fit to do a lot of things. She could go around cleaning and doing things. She was there all her life.

LEVINE: Oh.

CONWAY: Aye, she was there all her life. Lettie, they called her.

LEVINE: Lettie?

CONWAY: Aye, Lettie. But don't remember her last name. (she laughs)

LEVINE: And how many other people were working there? Were they mostly girls that had come from Ireland?

CONWAY: There were mostly all from Ireland, mostly all Irish, or Irish descent. There was another wee girl, I don't know

what her last name was, Suzella, too. She worked around there. And where I worked over farther over the road, too, it was, she was Alice Mulhearn was the cook, and Kathleen Rush, she was from Sturban[ph], if you know where that is? She was from there. She was upstairs girl, and I was the downstairs one. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Now, did you, did you socialize? Did you go out and have a good time together, or . . .

CONWAY: Well, we wouldn't go out too often, all the same. We were a right piece from the avenue, you know, and you wouldn't go out, like, we wouldn't be afraid or anything, like, maybe with girlfriends or something like that, you know?

We went to a dance nearly always on a Saturday night there, we'd go to Alley Guinness[ph], that's a dance hall down there, and down The Masonic Hall, down Cheltonham Avenue.

And then we went to the 16th and Arch sometimes.

LEVINE: So every week you would go out . . .

CONWAY: Well, we'd go out on the weekend. Sometimes we wouldn't go out.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And was there a lot, were there a lot of Irish people in that area?

CONWAY: All, a lot of Irish American, everything, you meet at the dances, you know. But, you know, that time would be all to . . . Oh, your thing's cold now. (referring to the drink)

LEVINE: No, it's good.

CONWAY: I'm talking too much.

LEVINE: No, keep going. It's very interesting.

CONWAY: (she laughs) We'd all come out, you know? Americans, Irish Americans, and everything out. But we'd enjoy it. We enjoyed it. But every one of them's dead now, that I remember.

LEVINE: They stayed.

CONWAY: Would you believe that?

LEVINE: They stayed there.

CONWAY: All my girlfriends that we used to have such a good time with. I stayed with, I wonder why Irish left here.

LEVINE: Oh. You've kept in touch with them? Did you keep in touch with them until they died?

CONWAY: Yes, always, always when I was over there, we'd keep in

touch.

LEVINE: And how about your sisters? After you got to Philadelphia, did you have a lot of contact with your sister?

CONWAY: It's that one sister was in Brooklyn when she got married. You see, I took her job and then she was in Brooklyn living.

LEVINE: Oh, so you didn't . . .

CONWAY: And the other sister was in Boston, Weston[ph].

LEVINE: So did you see each other then?

CONWAY: Send them all to get to see them, I would go in the summer if I could. A cousin of mine, another, Helen Slane was her name, too. We'd go up maybe for a week, you know. We'd visit them for a week in the summer, to a week in the holidays.

LEVINE: So how did you change, once you, once you became sort of situated in a job and you were working in Philadelphia for a period of time.

CONWAY: Yes?

LEVINE: How did you start to change? Did you change?

CONWAY: How did I start to work here again?

LEVINE: No, how did you change, you as a person? Did you change much after you became sort of American?

CONWAY: I'll just show you a picture.

LEVINE: Oh, now, wait. Now, wait. You've got the mike . . .
Okay, we're pausing here. (break in tape) We're resuming here. So, in this picture, tell me about other people in your family who left Ireland. Where did they go?

CONWAY: Some of them went to New York, some of them went, some of them was in Philadelphia, and . . . I had one friend I may (?) from up there, told me that, and she got married after I left there to somebody, and they had a saloon a way back of Philadelphia someplace, but she died here lately.

LEVINE: Hmm. How about this cousin?

CONWAY: He's in a home in Dounymore down there.

LEVINE: So he went to Australia.

CONWAY: He went away to Australia when he was a young fellow, very young.

LEVINE: And he came.

CONWAY: And he stayed in Australia for a good few years, and he come back home and stayed home then, and the father and mother died, and this is where he landed, and now he has lost the sight, he has no herring, neither.

LEVINE: Hmm. Well, um, why do you suppose your sisters went to America rather than Australia?

CONWAY: Well, that time, you see, what . . . (break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming again after a problem with the equipment here. So, uh, let's just recap some of the things that we said.

CONWAY: Yes, all right.

LEVINE: Um, so, when you came back, you came back because your mother was ill.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: And, uh, and then you thought about going back to the United States, and you didn't know what to do.

CONWAY: Yes. A return ticket on the 7th of September.

LEVINE: And, and then what was, what was going through your mind as far as staying or going back.

CONWAY: Very, unsettled for a while.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What were you thinking? What were the, what were the reasons you wanted to go back, and what were . . .

CONWAY: I left here on the 13th, I was here awhile. I thought I'd go to England, and I would go over with me sister in England. She wanted me to come over and see her before and tell her to go on from England to America again, slip away.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did you go to England?

CONWAY: I went over to England, my sister, up Yorkshire, Meadowsboro[ph].

LEVINE: And what happened?

CONWAY: And then we decided there it would be better for me to go back again.

LEVINE: Well, what was it, what was it that decided you to go back?

CONWAY: To come back here again to my mother.

LEVINE: Oh, your mother was still alive then.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: So I come back to her then, and that's why I was left here then.

LEVINE: And then after your mother died, what were you thinking about going back?

CONWAY: I thought some, I thought my sister in England, her and her husband, might come home, you know, and stay here, and that I'd go back, but they wouldn't come home. They were no way interested in land at all. She was settled down in England.

LEVINE: So why was it that you stayed, then?

CONWAY: Well, the way it was, just that I wanted to keep the home there. My two sisters in America who said, tell me, well, it's a pity to let the home place go, because it had to be sold, you see? And it was, you know, you didn't know really what to do at the time.

LEVINE: Why were, what were the reasons you would have liked to have gone back to Philadelphia? Why would you have liked to have gone back to Philadelphia?

CONWAY: Why would I have liked? (she laughs) I supposed I would have went back and married there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah.

CONWAY: That's just it. But I had to put that off.

LEVINE: And then your brother died.

CONWAY: Well, at times I regretted it, and times I didn't. I thought maybe, sometimes I would think maybe I was well here. I never, like, I got on all right here and everything. Thank goodness we had all, like our family, four of the family. Two girls, two boys. The boy's married, he has five of a family. And the other wee girls, they're, they're all good to me. They couldn't be any better, I couldn't have a better family. And she's, her way [County] Down, she is working every day, and then the other one's living way up, way outside Omaugh, (?) if you know where it is.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Well, in other words, you did stay here and you did keep the land. You stayed here and you kept the homestead.

CONWAY: I still kept homestead going.

LEVINE: And then, um, looking back on it now, do you think you made the right choice?

CONWAY: I look back on it now, and they tell me, too, that if I hadn't stayed, there'd be no home here for them.
(she pauses) Now that my niece coming, she's coming the 8th, my daughter's meeting her at Omaugh, she's staying for three days, and she's going down to, her and her girlfriend's going down to the south of Ireland, and go around the south of Ireland. And she comes regular, this one. She comes nearly every year. She loves it here.

LEVINE: She comes from the United States.

CONWAY: The sister of this one here. The sister of this one here.
(she gestures to a photograph) Maureen and Susan.

LEVINE: So do you have any regrets?

CONWAY: No, no. No, now. Why should I regret now at ninety-one?
(she laughs) What good would be regretting? I (?) now. (she laughs)

LEVINE: That's true. So what is your life like now?

CONWAY: My life's good, my life's good. I don't do much now. My son is very good to me, and the girls come, the wee,

the young one down here, the youngest is coming the night now, her and her husband. They couldn't be any better to me, and the wee boy. And maybe tomorrow night I'll have the other one down, and Susan. And Petie comes tomorrow night, too, to me, and some of the family.

LEVINE: Well, can you imagine what your life might have been like if you had stayed?

CONWAY: I stayed in America? I don't know all the same. I've been watching some families there now, you know, over there. It was a very hard life and so on. The men drink a lot, you know, and booze a lot. And I think it's a very hard life for the women. I wouldn't like that.
(she pauses) Indeed. I've been watching these things, all.

LEVINE: So, um, so you, you had a good, a long marriage. You had a long marriage.

CONWAY: Yes, I had.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. (she pauses) Did you notice a difference in the people here and the people in the United States?

CONWAY: Well, you know, people here is more rougher, don't you know? They're rougher out in the country, you work the

land, everything, you know, and they're different over there, you know. You just have to get used to them, you know? You just have to pick up these things all.

LEVINE: And how about difference in what they want, or how they feel about life? Do you notice any differences?

CONWAY: No. Down here now the life, life's all changed. I come out, of course, in my time. Like, you know, the way they go now, when they get by there and the family grow up, they go in now and takes their own flat, and lives in it. And I remember that in my young days you stayed at home. You either get married or you go away to America and make money, or to other country, Australia or someplace. For yourself, maybe marry there and settle down.

LEVINE: How do you, when you look back on it, how do you feel about your immigration, about the time that you spent in the United States?

CONWAY: Oh, I was happy about that. Only for that I made a good bit of money in America. I was too foolish, I saved the money.

LEVINE: You did?

CONWAY: I did. I saved the money.

LEVINE: And you brought it back?

CONWAY: I brought it back, I have a sister that was sick, and I paid her (?). Society where she was sick. But then she paid me back and when she got well again and got back to her job again.

LEVINE: So the money you made helped you later.

CONWAY: It started me up here again.

LEVINE: Hmm.

CONWAY: Because there wasn't much to be made here. And it started me on my feet again.

LEVINE: So do you think you'd be very different if you had never left?

CONWAY: (she laughs) Well, I don't know. I wouldn't, maybe, have as much. I wouldn't, maybe, I might be back at that thatched house. (they laugh) I don't know, all the same. There's a big improvement in everything, you know? The people works hard now, very hard here, you know?

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you notice, when you were in Philadelphia, that there were a lot of Irish girls there?

CONWAY: Yes, there were a lot of Irish there, a lot of Irish.

LEVINE: And how about Irish boys? Were there a lot of Irish boys your age at that time?

CONWAY: Yes, there were a lot my age at that time. A lot my age. A lot from all the counties in Ireland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And were there other immigrants from other countries right around there?

CONWAY: Yes, there were from other countries, too. Down, I think, down Germantown, it was, you know, a, that was a lot of Japanese or someone like that. Down, there were all countries and other countries coming in at that time. It was all, like, mixed up with Irish and every country there.

LEVINE: How did you feel about being among people from all . . .

CONWAY: I didn't, I didn't mind. I worked with a, you know, you know the colored people? I worked with them. They come in to do cleaning, and I never seen nothing wrong with them. They were nice, very nice.

LEVINE: Did you have a religious upbringing here?

CONWAY: Hmm?

LEVINE: Did you have a religious upbringing when you were here in Ireland? Was your family religious?

CONWAY: Was my family what?

LEVINE: Was your family religious?

CONWAY: They were, they were very religious. My mother was very, my mother was very religious, very religious. You wouldn't believe how long we had to walk to the church. It was all the way down in, you know Martin McCullaugh's Pub is? No, you come this way, he's only down the road there, made from it. Well, the chapel's up there, and the school, we'd have to walk to the school every morning, no riding like now. And back, and we made work and do things in the evening for mother, even water, even this, we all carried that time.

LEVINE: So did you, was it, what church was it that you went to?

CONWAY: We would knit and do everything, at night.

LEVINE: Say it again?

CONWAY: We would knit, knit sweaters and things.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: At night, and socks.

LEVINE: What church did you go to?

CONWAY: The Catholic church down here.

LEVINE: Did you, when you were in America, did you, were you just as religious?

CONWAY: No, I kept up my religion still. I went to Mount Airey, and Chestnut Hill, I went to Chestnut Hill, and we would go down to a wee Catholic church, down, which ended, always, and when I was out on the Main Line, I went to that. I walked to it every morning. I shant forget, I always kept up my religion.

LEVINE: You kept it just as strong.

CONWAY: Yes, always. Kept up my religion. You see, the others, my sister brought them up, too, that way. We were brought up very strict, you know. My mother brought us up very strict.

LEVINE: Did you find that there were some things that, um, that made you uncomfortable?

CONWAY: No.

LEVINE: In the United States?

CONWAY: No, I never found anything uncomfortable. No, I was always happy in it, always happy in it, very happy. I would be content there, and ate there, and I would be, and ate there and take, maybe get a storybook and would lie in bed there and read a storybook till it would be time to go to sleep, and I'd go to sleep, happy as the day long. As long as I'd hear good news from home, but then for a long while I didn't hear, you see, and that's why I thought I'd better go home and see them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. Um, so do you think that you, you, uh, gained something in your experience?

CONWAY: I gained something. I did. Sure. If I was here, still, I would be doing nothing. I'd better go out into the world and see something. And you gain experience about everything. I look at the young girls over here at college, you know, they go from one school to the other, they're all any. They get a good chance, besides we only got school till about fourteen or fifteen. We stopped school then. But, still, I'd always get books and read them, and get the dictionary and everything like that, and teach myself.

LEVINE: Oh. Did you know how to read when you left?

CONWAY: When I went to America (?). Because, like, the meaning of a lot of things I wouldn't know, indeed. The haymakers (?). (she laughs) I don't hope that's not . . .

LEVINE: Okay. Well, before we close, is there anything else about going to America and coming back that we haven't really talked about?

CONWAY: No, I don't think so now. I don't think so now.

LEVINE: Okay. We're going to pause here. (break in tape) We're going to resume here. Now, this is a question you're going to have to think about, okay?

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: Do you think that going to America, do you think you developed any kind of strengths, any things that you developed that, the kind of person you are? Do you think you changed, or you developed any new ways because you went there?

CONWAY: No, I'm always the same ways there, ever seems to me, like, to get along well with me. No change in me.

LEVINE: No change at all.

CONWAY: No, no change at all.

LEVINE: You stayed the same, you . . .

CONWAY: I was always the same.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

CONWAY: Always the same. And I promised to go back to (voice of Mrs. Conway's son off mike) the lady that I worked first year in September.

LEVINE: She didn't change at all?

SHAMUS: I didn't think, you know, she would have, because I would imagine she didn't know, imagine that she, much the same when she came back. She would have went over there and she wouldn't have, you know, she wouldn't have been, like she'd have stayed much the same and stayed much (?). I would have (?). She didn't (?).

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, it seems as though, it seems as though you did come back with maybe, um, some extra money that you, that helped you, in a way?

CONWAY: Yes, yes, that's (?).

SHAMUS: That would have been the main reason of going over. (he

laughs) I would imagine.

CONWAY: The money I saved I held back, I had it all back of it, because I intend to go back. It was in the bank in America. But then a year or so afterwards I brought it home.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, okay. (voice off mike) (break in tape) We're resuming now. So you have about five hundred pounds that you wouldn't have had.

CONWAY: I wouldn't have, I wouldn't have five hundred half pence here. And that could be nothing. (They all laugh.)

LEVINE: Okay. (voice off mike) Okay. Well, um, I want to, I want to thank you so much. It's been such a pleasure talking to you. And to meet you, and nice to hear your story.

CONWAY: Glad to see you. Glad to see you, too. (she laughs)

LEVINE: I'm happy that you responded to the newspaper article.

CONWAY: I wish, I wrote into that, was that some time, two years ago. (voice off mike)

LEVINE: Yes, a long time ago. I expected to come last year, but I didn't get here.

CONWAY: Yes.

LEVINE: It's been a while.

CONWAY: I think it was two years ago.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

CONWAY: I saw it in the paper, and I said, I think they asked who sailed on that boat or something, or something like that.

LEVINE: Who went through Ellis Island and then came back.

CONWAY: Oh, that's what it was. I think that's what it was. Yes.
You see, Ellis Island's out there now, sure?

LEVINE: Yes, it is.

CONWAY: Still do you have to go through that yet?

LEVINE: No, it's a museum now. (voice off mike) And that's where this tape will go.

CONWAY: That's where all the old trunks and all those suitcases that in a museum?

LEVINE: Yeah, that's right.

CONWAY: That's (?).

SHAMUS: That's where this tape's going to go to. The tape will go there, you know. (Mrs. Conway laughs) The tape that this lady's making.

CONWAY: There's far worse than that on the tape she makes. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Let me ask you a funny question before we stop, okay? Do you remember any songs or any poems that you learned as a little girl when you were growing up here?

SHAMUS: I have to tell her that. (break in tape)

LEVINE: We're going to, you're going to say whatever you can remember of the poem.

CONWAY: Do I have to go over that again?

LEVINE: Okay, go ahead, from the beginning.

CONWAY: (she recites) "Down (?) and up through the barn, when you comes the little avenue that leads to Jimmy Barnes. The girls there are good dancers and (?) on the understand, Sally in the corner with the program in her hand. Georgie plays the violin and Parkie gives command." And that's all I know of it. (they laugh) It better never come back on me. (they laugh) (voice off mike)

LEVINE: Okay. I want to mention that Mrs. Conway's son is here.
What is your name?

CONWAY: That song was read, you know?

SHAMUS: My name? Shamus.

LEVINE: Shamus.

SHAMUS: Shamus.

LEVINE: Shamus is here with us now.

CONWAY: That song was made, you see?

LEVINE: Yeah.

CONWAY: And that was . . .

SHAMUS: (off mike) Do that piece again.

CONWAY: (she recites) "In the lower lands at Cragan[ph] there
lies a white hare. 'Tis as swift as a swallow that flies
through the air."

SHAMUS: (softly) I forgot. (he recites) "You may search the
wide world . . . You may search the wide world, but there's
none to compare . . ."

CONWAY: "You may search the wide world, but there's none to compare. She's the pride of lower Cragan[ph] and her bonny white hare." That's when I crossed the water, cross that bridge there. (Shamus speaks off mike)

LEVINE: Uh-huh. You said that . . .

CONWAY: Aye. (she recites) "She come over by Esker where, she come over by Esker where she knew the lands well, and to there graced her prize, the white . . ." These are huntsmen that came from Cooks Town and away from far away. You see, they're after the white hare, and that's the way the song was written. And "she come over by Esker where she knew the lands well, until they heard, to their great surprise, the white hare run farewell." That's Eske you're in now, you know. (she laughs) I can knowed it all, but I can't just come at it now.

SHAMUS: She can't remember it now.

CONWAY: I used to know it all by heart.

LEVINE: Okay. Um, you were saying how your life is now.

CONWAY: I like it well now. I like living here well now.

SHAMUS: Would that be from when she was small? Is that the change

in her life when she great up, you want?

LEVINE: Well, I was interested in why you like your life here now.

SHAMUS: Why you like living here now, why you'd rather be here than in America now.

CONWAY: Because I'm happy at home where I was born.

SHAMUS: You'd rather live where, she was born.

CONWAY: I'd rather live where I was born now.

SHAMUS: I would imagine only she had felt a lot better here, she wouldn't have left over there and come back here, because things have been very hard, you know, there was very, there were very little luxuries, or, you know, there was no running water or anything, you know, but she had to come back here, you know, America, and no electricity.

CONWAY: No toilets, no nothing here that time.

SHAMUS: The houses would have been very poor compared to over there, compared to in the States.

CONWAY: You talk about, Boston, where I was, when I was up to Boston, I went to a house besides where my sister lived. She had a toilet, but, I don't know, I think it might

be an outside one, too. But would have to go a good piece to the toilet at the next house.

SHAMUS: That have been fifty, sixty years ago. It would have been nearly sixty year ago, now?

CONWAY: I know that. (a telephone rings) There's the phone.

LEVINE: So you must have wanted to stay in order to put up with the hard work and everything else.

CONWAY: Yes. You see, there's a big improvement now, everything, toilets and running, running hot water and everything, radiators, heat, central heating, you know, and everything. It's just like, you know, this one that's coming now from America says it's just like America now, you know?

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah, uh-huh.

CONWAY: So then I have to be content where I am. (she laughs)
I can't (?).

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I want to thank you so much for a most interesting talk. Thank you.

CONWAY: (she laughs) You're welcome, but don't put (?) and all

that. (voices garbled) (break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay. There's another bit of information about you going to Belfast for a physical before you left for America. Tell us about that.

CONWAY: I had to get an examination before I went to America.

LEVINE: And what did you do? You left from, you left here on your bicycle?

CONWAY: I left here on my bicycle and road to Cooks Town. Left the bicycle there, got the bus from there to Belfast, and stopped with a girlfriend from Belfast overnight, and got to the immigration office the next morning, and got through and got the bus and I come back to Cooks Town. I road the bicycle back again to Greencastle. Was that all right?

LEVINE: That's great, that's great. And now I think we, I want to just say that your son Shamus is a, is here farming the land that you managed to save by coming back.

CONWAY: What's that you say?

SHAMUS: She's asking you, am I farming the land that you managed to save by coming back again. You know, I am. Am I farming, am I farming the land that you managed, the farm that you

managed to save.

CONWAY: He's managing to farm the land that I managed halfways, roughly, at that time, I wouldn't be able to do what he does.

LEVINE: Right. But if it wasn't for you, it would have been sold off.

CONWAY: There would be no home. It would be sold.

LEVINE: Right, right. Okay, that's a good place to end. Thank you, thank you. (Mrs. Conway laughs)

CONWAY: Would you rather I had stayed in America?

LEVINE: How do you feel about your mother having gone and come back here?

SHAMUS: I figure, you know, she must have been, took a lot of courage to head out that time, you know, without any education or anything, had to go over there and trying to make a living, trying to get some money together and come back. It took a lot of courage. She must have been fairly ambitious, too, you know, to do that. I know a lot of young people now, and they might go away, (he laughs) but I don't think they come back again and start

doing hard work. You know, I don't think, you know, they would have been trying to stay and take it easy. I admire my Ma for that.

CONWAY: I managed to, there were ten, there were head here.

SHAMUS: Ten cattle.

CONWAY: Ten cattle here to manage, when they all died.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

SHAMUS: Once she was started? When she came back again.

LEVINE: There were ten when you came back.

CONWAY: Yes, there were ten, maybe more, you know, at times.

SHAMUS: You know, it was hard, I often wondered why did she come back and start and work as hard again. (voices garbled)

CONWAY: I had to milk them cows, you know?

SHAMUS: Whenever she could have had as easier life over there.

CONWAY: I would have to milk them cows, feed them cows from the mill, and follow them with, they . . . hay that time. Follow them, carry hay to them, and then you'd have to

clean out the house after that, you know, in the mornings always. It was hard work.

SHAMUS: I always thought she was a glutton for punishment. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Were you a glutton for punishment? (they laugh)

CONWAY: Well, I managed it anyway. (they laugh)

LEVINE: You did. You managed very well.

CONWAY: Indeed.

LEVINE: Okay, we're going to close here. (break in tape) Okay.
We have another wee piece here, and that was the part that Shamus and you and I were speaking about, your brother, that he died after your mother died, and if he had not died . . .

CONWAY: That's right.

LEVINE: That made a big difference in your decision.

CONWAY: A big difference.

LEVINE: Tell what difference that made, that your brother died.

CONWAY: Well, you see, there was nobody here to look for anything.

There was nobody here to look about the place or anything. The cattle and everything had to be sold out, because they may, nobody should look about them.

LEVINE: So if he had not died, she would have done it.

CONWAY: She wouldn't be fit to do it. She was wandering and dottin', you know.

SHAMUS: Mommy, if your brother hadn't have died, you would have probably went back to the States.

CONWAY: I would.

SHAMUS: Because he would have carried on the farm.

CONWAY: He was going to carry on the farm, surely.

LEVINE: But since he wasn't around . . .

CONWAY: But, you see, she died first, as I tell you, she was dottin' and was very frail of herself then, and she wouldn't be fit to carry on. But only he died, you see, there was nobody here. If he had lived, I'd have gone back again.

LEVINE: And how long after your mother died did your brother die?

CONWAY: They were only eighteen months, there were only eighteen months between them. She died in April, and he died the

following January.

LEVINE: So that posed a big decision for you.

CONWAY: That's what left to be for me.

SHAMUS: Changed her life . . .

LEVINE: Okay. We're closing again. (they laugh) (end of recording)