

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ELLIS ISLAND ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Ann Walsh
Interviewer: Nancy Dallette
Interview Number: 200
Interview Date: June 26, 1986

®RHA®FC®PN

MS. DALLETTE: My name is Nancy Dallette and I'm speaking with Ann Walsh on Thursday, June 26, 1986. We're beginning this interview at 1:15. We're about to interview Mrs. Walsh about her immigration experience from Ireland in 1922. This is interview number 200.

Could you take me back to the beginning of your story.

MS. WALSH: Oh yeah. I remember more about that than anything.

MS. DALLETTE: Tell me when you were born.

MS. WALSH: I was evidently born the second of September, and you told me the year, I think. What year did you tell me?

MS. DALLETTE: Oh, I don't remember. I don't remember. You tell me.

MS. WALSH: Well, I have a problem there, because I was very young to be let go alone. So my mother added a few years to my age. You see? And I've had a problem ever since with that. I should have given the correct one earlier. But I followed up on what my mother told me. But, we were six children. And my older sister went to convent school in Dublin. And we had a wonderful father and mother. It was a place that was inherited for generations. And my great-grandfather spoke six languages, but I never found out where did he learn those languages. But when we were very little, we had two men that worked for us. And one of their names was James [Fillick]. And to try to teach the baby, I was the baby, to say "James [Fillick]," but I could say, I called him "baby-ck." And, as I got older, when he'd meet me on the road or at a dance or something, he'd say, "Hello, [beggy-nan]." But I enjoyed my life, and I liked school. We had to walk a long way to school. And I wasn't able to continue because I was a child who was always looking for trouble. And,

we had a large place, and a tributary of the Shannon River run through our place. And the Shannon River is the largest river in the British Isles. And it originated in Cavan, and that's the county I was born in. County Cavan, near the border of the north. When I was eight years old, my father died. And I was so fond of my daddy that I cried for days. I couldn't realize [about death]; I didn't understand it. And, when a person dies in Ireland, the wake is held at home. And there's always that extra room where they're laid out in. And when the friends come after the dead person's laid out, they pray for the evening, they say the rosary and prayers, and then they're taken to the parlor and given tea or coffee is served to them. Well, I was, I'm trying to think back to the-- I said I was eight years, yeah, so I more or less realized that he was gone. So, my grandmother moved in with us. And I became very attached to her. There's a little story to this. When she died, she was laid out in this special room, and I was allowed--I was a year then, when she died, a year and one month, and during the evening when they were having their tea, I disappeared. And, they went looking for me and there were several houses outside, one for the chickens and one for the ducks, you know, and all various ones. They still couldn't find me. So one lady went in and went to the room where my grandmother was laid out. And on the table there was lighted candles. But she went to look at the corpse, and she saw two little hands wrapped around my grandmother's neck. I had gone in with her and I was sleeping with her. And they told me that a lot of times afterwards. But, when I went--when I was maybe about eleven, I liked very much to get on the horse's back and ride them. I rode--I was quite young when I rode them. But this horse was being broken in by these men that were hired for this. He was being broken in for to carry a wagon. And I [. . .] to slip into the back of the wagons so they wouldn't see me. And the horse went up in the air, jumped, you know, up, and he was [. . .] the wagon. I was thrown, and they didn't notice me. They went on with the wagon a mile or two, but when they came back I still was lying on the ground where--I had a head injury. Well, when it come time to go back to school, I was at the time bright in my class. But not anymore. [I tend to] move all around and they had to take me out of school then. And that was--I was eleven. And I never got back. But I had such a love of reading, and my young [kins], my mother's brothers all went to Australia. Only one brother, he came here, and he became a priest. We have seven priests in the family. Well, anyhow, he became a priest, and of course, I grew up, and my sisters--the one in Dublin, Maryann, came to this country. And she wrote then for Margaret, and Margaret came after her. And then, about four or five years later, I came.

MS. DALLETTE: Why had your sisters left?

MS. WALSH: But what, honey?

MS. DALLETTE: Why had your sisters left Ireland?

MS. WALSH: The oldest sister left--no, because [she said, don't forget] we didn't have father anymore, and when you were a farmer, you have to be able to sell and buy. So we--mother found it very hard, she never knew anything about selling or buying. So, [Mimi] came, so she could send money to mother.

MS. DALLETTE: Did your mother keep up the farm?

MS. WALSH: Yeah, oh yes.

MS. DALLETTE: What kind of farm was it? What did you grow?

MS. WALSH: It's a farm that has a lot--that raise a lot of vegetables, and of course, cattle. And sheep. All sorts of cattle and sheep. [. . .] farmer's daughter [. . .] But, and, oh, lots of chickens and turkeys and geese. And ducks. All of these--sometimes, at night,

I'd have to bring them home. If they didn't come home, I'd have to go and get them. And, when I went one time for the ducks, there was two missing. And I came home, and I was very upset about the two ducks. But the next day, when I went, I found they had made houses. I guess this isn't of interest.

MS. DALLETTE: Oh, no, it is--please, yes. She's just checking because of the machine. Go ahead.

MS. WALSH: But anyhow, they left the other ducks. I used to have to go to the river, the one that was a tributary to Shannon, because the Shannon River--how do you call, the start of it, where it started--was in--at the foot of a mountain, near our home. And it--I had great, great interest in things on the farm. And the books [. . .] in Australia sent me [nanny] and my two uncles in England, I had a whole library when I went to leave. But that was my schooling. It was hard when I first come. But when I first come, Margaret was an infant nurse. She had taken training for infants. And the family was expecting the second baby. And then the two little girls, [Mazie] and [Abby] would have to have a nurse. And Margaret [. . .] had come, that she could have to train me, and would you like to hear the name of the people?

MS. DALLETTE: Yes.

MS. WALSH: Rockefellers. So I had [Mazie] and [Abby] for a couple of years, and loved the two of them. So I did at the beginning, I stayed two weeks with my sister. But I--a man--oh, but that would be going way ahead--I'm going on to the ship and when I landed--I don't want to do that.

MS. DALLETTE: Okay. Anything else you can tell me about life on the farm, and--were you near a market town?

MS. WALSH: No, well, there were quite a distance. That box that came over from Ireland recently, our home town, that's where he come from. But, life on the farm was very pleasant for children. And, my brother inherited the place. We all went to a lawyer's office and signed all the papers so that he could get it. So it's still in the family. And, just recently, the little girl wrote to me, her name is Olivia. And then, she's famous for singing voice she's got. But, most of the family were, but I wasn't, I wasn't a bit musical. So, she wrote to me and she told me she sings in the choir. Now this is going way on. I better go back and get it straight.

MS. DALLETTE: How old were you when your sisters thought it would be good for you to come to America?

MS. WALSH: Come to this country? Oh, at that time, I was fourteen. And one of them, Margaret, came home, and she tried to tell me that I'd like it here. But the last thing in the world I wanted was to come here. You know, to leave home, because she kept telling me I'd like it.

MS. DALLETTE: What did she say about it, to try to get you to come?

MS. WALSH: This country? Well, she had started with this training, infant training, infant hospital. That was her beginning. But she had my older sister ahead of her. And, she wanted me to come, and she told me that I'd get a nice position here, and if I wanted to go to school at night, that I could do it. And, of course, I'd have to give up everything that I loved over there, you know. And I'd always run to meet the mailman because he'd have another book for me. It really is a great thing to have a longing to read. [And] it is bad today. That poor girl, sitting there, and I'm not giving her anything of interest. So, I didn't get to town much, only once, I think, or twice. And the next thing that I did, I was down--but I loved to spend time at the river. I used to

make little boats and sail them on the water. The things that I'd enjoy. And this day mother told me I was never to go down to the river where she was away. But I did, I went down by the river and I was playing there. And I heard the wagon coming, and I rushed up the hill. I wasn't supposed to run, because I took an enlarged heart from the first fall. And, I jumped from the top of the fence down. And the farmers had been cutting the hay. And they left all their new scythes along there. And I jumped on the scythe. And, I think I killed my mother, the things I did. So, I crept along the street to the house, and I was leaving such trails of blood in back of me. And I got to the door. Poor mother, she opened the door, and she said, "Dear God, what are you going to do next?" So, they got a mattress, and they lay me on the mattress, and my uncle went to town and the doctor was away. And, they got another doctor, and when he come, and my blood was flowing down, the floor inside was cement on the kitchen, and there was a lot of iron gates [. . .] and it flowed down onto the gate. But, when he come anyhow. Poor [. . .], she cried so hard, she was there when it happened. So he put in one hundred and ten stitches. Well, one of my feet looks as if it was just sewed together, at the bottom. So, but I never cried. I was a tough little kid. So, he put in all the stitches and he told mother she'd have to bring me to town to get them taken out. He couldn't make it back. And she said, "Will she ever walk?" "Oh," he said, "someday she'll dance." And then he was telling me a story about Africa, and that's what I wanted. I wasn't watching the stitches at all. He had served with the English army in Africa. I think really they were responsible for the state that Africa is in today, and the way they have treated Ireland. But we won't get into that.

MS. DALLETTE: So he kept your mind off of the--

MS. WALSH: But it took me a year, for that foot to heal. For to walk. So you see, it interfered with my schooling. 'Twasn't that I didn't love school. I did. Well, let us see, now. That isn't a nice farm story, is it? But I loved Christmas. Mother taught me to make a lot of pretty things. And we had lovely, lovely shortbread. I tried so hard here to get it, but. Well, when I come here, there wasn't even a [. . .] and there wasn't no houses right here. And I loved to drive, I loved to drive then. And I'd bring home little trees, and grow seed, and Tom couldn't come down, he wasn't old enough to retire for three more years. So then I had all the planting and I loved it. And when they come up, you know, and see them bloom and all. I have about twelve, thirteen ribbons that I won in the show for violets, violets. Do you like violets? And now sometimes [no one bothered to. . .] and so only had one alive, and I give that to a woman that's been kind to me, you know, at the hospital, and all. In fact, I don't want to go into the hospital now, because it would shock you what I went through there. And I wasn't really ill at all, just I was put up there, at the hospital, because I had fallen and hurt my knee. I fell out of bed. I had a bad dream. And I don't take drink of any kind. Maybe if I had taken, I wouldn't be hurt.

MS. DALLETTE: Just another accident.

MS. WALSH: Oh, I had lots of them. And my husband died in an accident. [. . .]

MS. DALLETTE: Let's go back to the point where your sister is convincing you to come to this country, and you're not interested, really.

MS. WALSH: Well, I wasn't anxious. You know. And I hated leaving my mother. I was attached to her, you know. And the night before, they give me a big party, and I loved to dance then. And was a

young fellow that liked me, and I hated to leave him. But, there was two violins, and it was a really nice party. And, any other season, the cuckoo comes, and my brother come calling; he was my younger brother, Michael. But the cuckoo was here. And I run upstairs, because my window up there was near the tree--you can't expect me to tell you anything with this memory.

MS. DALLETTE: Tell us about the cuckoo then.

MS. WALSH: The cuckoo comes early, and you love to listen to her, because talking about it you can't get the feeling there is in the trill, the way she can say that cuckoo. And she's lazy, she never builds her nest. She lays all her eggs in the next of other birds. But still I wanted to hear her before I'd leave. So, I went to listen to the cuckoo and then daylight was coming and there was still dancing. So Michael then said good-bye at the--there was a long, winding lane up to the house, it was a beautiful home. And they came to the end of the lane to say good-bye to me. A lot of people. And then my uncle drove me to the nearest town, and from there I had to get a bus to the train, and I was to meet two girls there. They were going in the convent here. I [. . .] nobody, I never saw them. They were with a nun, and they stayed I think first class, or something. Well, I got on the train, I didn't cry much. Cried more when I got to the ship. And, I may confuse this with trips that I made. I made four trips to Ireland--

MS. DALLETTE: Did you bring any of your treasured books with you?

MS. WALSH: Any of what?

MS. DALLETTE: Your treasured books.

MS. WALSH: No. I wrote lots of articles. I read some of them and I'm kind of shocked, I didn't think I did that. No, I wrote quite a few. And I've written some poems that have become famous. The one when poor Kennedy was shot. I wrote that and [Thomas]' sister send it to the White House. And to the one in the memorial services. And then they wrote to me later telling me it was in Center for the Kennedy Library in Boston. And the Kennedys wrote three different letters to me, and Jackie Onassis wrote one. And then this past year, I wrote one about Ireland. I can show them to you.

MS. DALLETTE: Did you ever write one about coming to this country?

MS. WALSH: No, but I will if you want it. When do you have all this ready? You have to have it ready soon, don't you?

MS. DALLETTE: No, there's plenty of time.

MS. WALSH: Oh, there is.

MS. DALLETTE: Plenty of time.

MS. WALSH: I'm going to ask you a couple of questions.

MS. DALLETTE: Yeah, we'll go back to--you were talking about--

MS. WALSH: When I was little.

MS. DALLETTE: --taking the trip to this country.

MS. WALSH: Oh, yes. Well, the first thing mother did was send me to a dressmaker. The dressmaker was noted for her beautiful suits she made. So, I can see just see my suit. It was navy blue. And, it was very, very beautiful. And she made me a beautiful pale blue blouse that I wore with it. And then, I don't know what they call them here, but there was smocks, and they were straight with pleats and a belt in the middle, so you can picture what they were. I had one in green and one in dark red. Or medium red, it was. Beautiful white blouse, she made me two. And then, you may not like to hear this ship, because it was terrible. Oh. Imagine what an insult it is, to come--and their hair. I had long hair, very light brown, down past my waist. Very long. The man, in fact, at Ellis Island, that talked to me, remarked about it. And he

said something it took quite a while to make sense something to me. "I met a lot of little girls going through here, but," he said, "I think I like you the best of all of them." And I said I wasn't anxious. He said why? I said "I don't want to get black." He said, "What?" I said, "I saw a black man with black hands and a black face," and I said--he said, "Why would you worry about that?" "Because I know," I said, "what it is, powerful sun you have in America." And I said, "I don't want to get black." So he said, "That's ridiculous. [. . .] They don't feel bad. They feel they were born black, and the sun didn't do it." And funny, I said, I didn't know that. But he took quite a while with me, and he said, "Who's meeting you?" But I talk about the ship just a little bit.

MS. DALLETTE: Yeah, tell me about the ship. What was the name of it? Do you remember?

MS. WALSH: I can't--I'm trying to think of--I'll call you up if it comes to my mind. But I've just been trying to think of what the name of that ship was.

MS. DALLETTE: Where did you get the ship?

MS. WALSH: In Queenstown.

MS. DALLETTE: Had you ever been to Queenstown before?

MS. WALSH: No. I never was on a train. So when I got on the train at three, or about four in the morning I got on the train, then I began to feel lonesome. And the girl--the [. . .] would not be with me at all, that went to the convent here. Wouldn't you think they'd be kind, a little bit? But they were just looking on, and they didn't talk or anything. 'Cause I was going to be bad--I wasn't a nun. Oh, I thought of it too, a few times, but I guess I wasn't made that way. So the ship, you know, I mixed this up, but I'll tell you. See, I went on ships on two of the trips, but they were American and they were beautiful. And we even had swimming pools on them. Oh, I had fun, they were lovely. But this was a dread ship I got on. Oh God, it was terrible. When I went to go to bed at night, something was creeping on the pillow. And there was bugs on the pillow. And the food was perfectly dreadful food. You see, when you grow up on the farm, you have fresh eggs and fresh chickens and all good food.

MS. DALLETTE: But you didn't find that on the boat.

MS. WALSH: No, it was terrible on the boat. And at mid-ocean, the storm was so bad that the ship had to stop. We were stopped for twenty-four hours. But the water came over the deck.

MS. DALLETTE: Did you have a cabin where you stayed?

MS. WALSH: Yeah, it was a cabin, and there was two other girls with me. And they were--they used to cry. I don't remember crying, but I used to look out through the port hole, look after them, [laughed] at the ocean, you know. And count the days--oh God, counting the days to get out of there! Well, the food was very bad, and then I became deathly seasick. And in all my trips I made, I never was seasick. Only that time coming over.

MS. DALLETTE: What time of year was it?

MS. WALSH: It was the month of May, I believe.

MS. DALLETTE: You still had bad weather.

MS. WALSH: Yeah, oh terrible weather. But when I got here it was nice.

MS. DALLETTE: Was it a long trip? How many days did it take?

MS. WALSH: Seven or eight days, I don't know which. I was a little bit lonesome, too. You know.

MS. DALLETTE: Were you frightened?

MS. WALSH: Probably, at times. One night, a man scared me. He was an Englishman, and he was all dressed up fancy. And every day he'd

stare at me. And he had--this night he came over to me, and he said, "Dolly. Dolly, I want you to come up on deck. Tonight, about nine o'clock." "For what?" He said, "I want to tell you stories." Well, he told a story to himself, 'cause I didn't go on deck. Although I didn't know too much about men, but I knew enough to keep away from him. And, finally, a disease broke out. Which of you girls did I tell that to?

MS. DALLETTE: I don't know. Tell us again.

MS. WALSH: Something broke out on the ship, and it was a skin disease. And, one nurse discovered it anyhow. Thank God I never got it. Anyone who wasn't a citizen--there was lots of Irish there that were going back and were citizens, and they could get off, they supplied them with a boat, or whatever it was, a conveyance, for the land. But we couldn't get off the ship. So they sent us to a place called Hoffman Island. And you had to go in a room and sit naked and I nearly died with embarrassment. Stripped naked. And the [hardwood] walls. I have always, during the years, when I was younger, menstruated very heavy. And I was menstruating. And they didn't give you napkins. So, then they told us to stand in this room. It was a room that had no ceiling, and they used hoses to hose us down, and one nurse said, "You poor little kid," she said to me, "this is terrible." But I still thank God I was able to get dressed. But that morning I put on my good suit. I didn't know we were going to be sent to that place. So we got back [. . .] and the next day, we were all dressing nice. We were going to land. But I heard the cheers on deck, when they saw, you know, the Statue of Liberty and all the--oh, it was great. What did they call that island then?

MS. DALLETTE: [Bedloe]? [Bedloe] Island?

MS. WALSH: No, where is the Statue of Liberty?

MS. DALLETTE: Just near Ellis Island.

MS. WALSH: Ellis Island, that's what it is. Ellis Island. They were cheering, and I run up the steps, and I clapped and I clapped with them, they were all clapping. They were--oh, they were so glad to see part of the United States. We were finally here. And it was men at the desks. And then there was a long railing, and relatives that came had to stand on that side of this railing, and then you'd be on the other side and they'd call for your name. But this man was interviewing me, that was the man I asked about the black. You know?

MS. DALLETTE: This is the end of side one of interview number 200 with Ann Walsh.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

MS. DALLETTE: This is the beginning of side two of interview number 200 with Ann Walsh.

When the boat came into Ellis Island, did you say that some of the people were able to get off?

MS. WALSH: Yes, the people who had lived in this country and become citizens, and they went home for a trip to see their parents or their old home. And, when it come within, I think, twenty-four hours of landing, they let them get off. They had a boat ready for them. And, some of them said good-bye that had become friends with, you know. And they were able to get off; their family was waiting for them. But we had to wait another twenty-four hours. And then this skin disease broke out. I don't know what you would call it. What is the name of skin disease?

MS. DALLETTE: Was it some sort of a rash? Did you see someone that had it?

MS. WALSH: Yeah, it was. Even this--the men that were there, the crew, had it. They may have had it first. But, everyone--you didn't have to have it, they just sent them all to Hoffman Island, and there

they were all put under chemical sprays. Which I dreaded, the whole thing. And I'd put on my new suit, to land. Which I thought I was landing. But no, we had to go to this place and get all this. Then the next day, I heard the cheers on the deck. And I run up, they could see Ellis Island, they could see the Statue of Liberty. And what joy that was! Lot of people cried, come to think of it now. Wonderful feeling, we were landed in America. And then, when we got off, I went, I guess they all had to go to the desk, and answer a lot of questions. And he was such a pleasant man, but he made me feel welcome.

MS. DALLETTE: What did he say to you?

MS. WALSH: Well he asked me again how old I was.

MS. DALLETTE: And how old were you then?

MS. WALSH: I was sixteen. And what part of Ireland was I from. And did I have any family to welcome me. And I said, "If my sister-- Margaret," she was the nurse, "she couldn't meet me," but my older sister, she met me. But she didn't know me. She couldn't identify me.

MS. DALLETTE: Because you had grown so much.

MS. WALSH: Oh, sure. I was only, I think, six or seven, when she had left. Then, what happened next?

MS. DALLETTE: What else did he ask you?

MS. WALSH: Oh, he asked me a lot of questions about home. And about school. I told him I didn't get back.

MS. DALLETTE: Did he ask you if you could read?

MS. WALSH: Yes. Oh, sure, I could read. I told him I had lots of books. Something in some newspaper about children reading in New York, that's supposed to be improving. Oh, I could read, I could read when I was five or six or something. I just loved it. So, he did, he asked me if I could read. He wanted to know if I had any brothers or sisters here. No brothers here. Years later, Michael came. I don't have one alive. They're all--every one gone. None of them lived over sixty. And mother came to see us. She came on a trip. She wanted to see the boy that was ordained priest.

MS. DALLETTE: And then what happened after the man was asking you the questions?

MS. WALSH: Well then I had to stand in the line. I said good-bye to the girls, the young girls my own age that I got friendly. They were going on to Chicago. And, I waited there. I wondered if anyone would meet me. And there was a lady there, in a suit, and I thought, she's too white in the face to be Irish. They have red cheeks from the land. That's not my sister. So a man, a tall, blonde fellow carrying a briefcase came and stood next to her. And whatever she said to him, this is what he did. He made a horn, like, and he called through it: "What's your last name?" And I called to him, "Sexton, Ann Sexton." And he had a big smile, and he said, "This is your sister! And I'm your brother-in-law." Oh, and I was happy to see them. And then they brought me on the subway and I was thrilled to go under the ground. And [a train] to go on. And I wanted to know that go all the way to the house. And they said no, it won't go all the way, but we get a bus that runs near the house. So they brought me to the house. And the next day, my brother-in-law was very ill. He was in the war, and he had come out of the war in very poor health. So, my sister called the doctor, and she gave me the prescription. And she told me to go to the drugstore. She had forgotten that you don't say "drugstore" in Ireland. And, I went out looking for the drugstore this prescription. And I couldn't find it, and I went about ten blocks, and I couldn't find any. So I met a man, and I said to him, "Could you tell me where I can have this filled?" I had it in my hand. He said, "Are you just out of school?" I said, "No, I'm

not, I just came from Ireland yesterday." And he said, "Well, you passed about twenty pharmacies." He called them a pharmacy, he said for to get here. "So you go on the next corner and there's one there that'll fill it for you." Well, when I got back, I had it filled. My sister was nearly out of her mind looking for me in the street. But she ought to have known better than to send me for anything like that. But--

MS. DALLETTE: Where was your sister living?

MS. WALSH: 216 Putnam Avenue, Brooklyn.

MS. DALLETTE: You remember the address!

MS. WALSH: Yeah, isn't it funny, you know, the things I forgotten. No, because see, I wanted to make sure that I wouldn't be lost again. That I'd know where I'd go.

MS. DALLETTE: What were your first impressions of seeing New York, when you first came off of Ellis Island?

MS. WALSH: Well, because of I looked at so many pictures of it, you know, home in Ireland, and Margaret would always send me a card with another picture of it, you know, and I'd see the museum, or I'd see something--almost felt as though I'd seen it before. Only I can't tell them all, I had experiences, you know. But I forget.

MS. DALLETTE: Did you like the first subway ride that you took?

MS. WALSH: Oh, that was wonderful. That was really good. It was much nicer then than it is today. I would never think to be afraid; I was thrilled when I [go along]. There wasn't a lot of horrible things happening like now. I wasn't afraid [. . .] I loved to go to a dance, yeah.

MS. DALLETTE: And your sister had a job ready for you when you came?

MS. WALSH: Yes, she had a job ready for me when I came. But, of course, she had to break me in, you know. It wasn't too hard, though. I'd [. . .] I remember, and I wore a white uniform, so that wasn't a headache either.

MS. DALLETTE: How did she have to break you in? What did she have to teach you?

MS. WALSH: Well, she taught me how to handle the children, how to talk to them, and if I wanted to get--they had lots of books that I could read and stories. And, of course I loved that, you know. And, I'd take them to the park. But there was some man, distance from us, that I think came. I heard it after I left. That watched out, you know. She knew all of them. She knew every one of them. Of the five brothers, she knew them all. That one was David, the one that's alive, that's with the banks.

MS. DALLETTE: That was the one that you worked--

MS. WALSH: That was the one, yeah, that time. I knew them all, eventually. Meet them coming and going, you know. I wasn't impressed.

MS. DALLETTE: How soon after you got here did you start to work?

MS. WALSH: Within two weeks. You don't want to hear anything, do you, about here?

MS. DALLETTE: Yes! Oh yes, please.

MS. WALSH: You do?

MS. DALLETTE: Yes. I'd love to know how it felt just to get--

MS. WALSH: Oh, I wanted to go to school to take something or other. So, what I did take, what do you think I took?

MS. DALLETTE: Something to do with reading.

MS. WALSH: No, I wish it was. That was my dream. No, I took up beauty culture. And after I got the diploma I hated it. I tore it in half.

MS. DALLETTE: Why? Why did you--

MS. WALSH: Well, see, I had to worry about getting a room. And paying for that room, while I would be taking this up, you see. But I went to a beautiful store, but--this is interesting, I'm going to tell you. I saw an ad in the paper, an agency. It was for manicurist. And I went to this man that had this agency. And he talked to me, and girls came in there and he'd hand them an address to go to. But he didn't give it to me. And I said, "How come you don't give me an address?" He said, "I'm gonna tell you a little I run the place. You don't belong in--you're not a manicurist at all. And you would never understand the men they'd meet in there." I said, "Why wouldn't I understand? Are they black?" He said, "No, they're not black. But, I'm gonna try," he said, "although I have nothing to do with the beauty parlors." So he gave me the address for Mademoiselle [Reif] on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, and it was a beautiful shop, and she was very nice. And I went to work there. But I found out that Abraham and Straus--I went shopping for dresses, as soon as I got money, I bought pretty clothes. And I went to Abraham and Straus. So this day, I thought I'll try and see if I get to work there. You'll laugh what I did. I didn't know anything about employment like for beauty parlors, where I would go, especially a department store. So I went up to the desk, and asked was she the manager, and she said yes. And I said, "Would you like an expert to work here?" I never forgot this! Well, she laughed, and she said, "Way down in the employment agency." "You mean," I said, "you have an employment agency?" "Oh, sure," she said, "on the second floor. And that's where you should have gone. But I'm going to give you the job on the reference you just gave me." So I went with Abraham and Straus. And I was with them a couple of years, and liked it very much. And one morning, I was going to get a gorgeous outfit. I got a blue coat with a great big black fur on it. And the most gorgeous little fuscia colored hat, and it was fifteen dollars just for my hat! But I loved clothes, and I was coming into work, and one of the girls walking with me said, "There's a man calling you." I said, "Calling me? I don't know." "It's Mr. Straus." So I went, and he said, "What's your name?" and I said, "Ann Sexton," and he said, "Well, come to my office. I want to talk to you." And I went to his office and he said, "You work in the beauty parlor." I said, "Yes." Well, he said, "From now on, you're going to be my model." And I modeled all their clothes from then on. Yeah. Oh, I had lots of strange experiences. I had more than that. When I was left a widow, I didn't know in the name of God what to do. And I thought [about] I'd study something, take something at night, that I could do at home in the house. You know, then I could raise my children and stay with them. So, I took a course and the woman across the hall, who was very kind, watched at night. I took a course in--one part of the company was cosmetics, the other is the one I took--it was medical--fit for medical garments. And I started the business in my own house. And make ten dollars, and then [. . .] these garments I could sell. And at that time, that was a lot of money. Oh, that was a lot of money at that time. Well, I got the children through school, and Kevin worked very hard to get through college. And graduated the valedictorian. And Pat did the same. And they went to convent school, the two girls. So I began to think my job was done. But, when I went to the company and told them now I could work, you know, whatever hours they have, I worked for six months with the company, and the vice president sent for me, and he told me he had promoted me to regional. And I'd be traveling from now on. So, I used to go to Kennedy Airport every morning, and I had the west coast, I had Chicago, and I had Lafayette and Gary, Indiana. And I had Ottumwa in Iowa. These are all distributors. And now at that time, salary wasn't

big, but all the commission I got was wonderful. Forty percent at that time was great. And then I had--oh, you only heard a couple--had Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. I had, in the south, Savannah, Georgia, and I had Wheeling, West Virginia, North and South Carolina.

MS. DALLETTE: You really got around.

MS. WALSH: I had Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and Erie, Pennsylvania. Well, one time I was in the west and I called up Pat, and I said, "Pat, I'm gonna take this weekend." Well, I mean, and finish Friday night. But if the distributor gives me Friday, even to get through at one o'clock there. So they did, they gave me the time. The distributor in Chicago liked me a lot. And I went to Pat's, and she said, "Mother, you look so tired." She said, "This traveling." "Oh," I said, "I love the traveling. And the distributors have been so nice to me." But you figure, only getting through grammar school, you know. Well, I [ran into] a problem with that. So I'd stayed Friday at noon, and then Saturday. Pat went shopping and she bought me all fall outfits. She's done this with me all the time. So I was thrilled to get them, but Sunday when they took me to dinner, on the way home, I started to worry about the company. I got home, the phone was ringing like mad, it was Tom. Said, "The company's looking for you." I said, "What do they want?" He said, "Well, they want you in Erie, Pennsylvania by Monday afternoon, for a meeting." So I said, "I can make it," although it is a trip, you know. I had to leave then for four hours wait there. And I had to get a plane from Washington, D.C. to get to Erie. And in the middle of the meeting I got a New York call to tell me, "The woman in Savannah, Georgia distributor had a lot of problems. I better get there." I said, "It will be a night flight; it's the only one I'll get now." So I made the night flight and got to Savannah, Georgia. But I don't think this part of it--is this necessary?

MS. DALLETTE: Well, take me back a little bit, before you were so well established and had such an established job. Do you remember the period you had mentioned before, that you were--people called you a greenhorn? That period where you were just getting acclimated to life in Brooklyn and in New York?

MS. WALSH: Well, of course, the life in Brooklyn made me first step sure of myself. But the model did beautiful things. And I did get in once in a while at night to school. To try to take up something. But when I got on that trip, this is the reason I wanted to tell you this, to visit Pat, I said to Pat, "You know, I'm having a problem right now with math." I didn't even had math, I just had some decimals and something very beginning of it all. I know what I'll do [. . .] these problems here right now Frank can do this, but I don't have Frank here all the time. So when I got in to New York, I went to the vice president and I told him, I said, "I love my job, I enjoy it very much. But I can't--I'm very bad in math." So he said, "Well you know, we have two office girls. They're all good in math. But I'd never put them on the road to do the job that you so far have been doing." He said, "You"--one company--another company said [. . .] So, he said, "I'm going to take one of the best, and Mary, you're the secretary. And your problems in math will be over." So I could call her up when I had a problem. I look back at it now and I said, "God, I don't know how I ever got that job." [. . .] But, the children were out of my house. The worries I had to get them, you know, raised, [. . .] of things. And that was a success, too. Yeah. Oh, they were so--we'd get along. Pat would help Kevin with his study. She'd help him every night. They got along wonderful. There were always afraid to lose me, because with the father went, you know.

MS. DALLETTE: When did you become a citizen?

MS. WALSH: Oh, I was here quite a while. I was here quite a while. I didn't realize that it was terribly important. But I had no questions or problems and I went to get it and I got it easily. But I was my late--twenty-four, twenty-five, when I got it. Yeah, that was a good question.

MS. DALLETTE: And, when you first arrived, were you sorry you had come, or were you excited about what life was like here?

MS. WALSH: No, I was terribly interested in things. I loved department stores. I like that. I still like that. And I liked the [. . .] and the quality of everything, the styles, everything. I still love pretty clothes. Tom could tell you that. If you give me some money and let me go, he knows what I'd buy. But I'm telling you something sad right now. My car isn't there. And I haven't [. . .] to drive it. Some of the men asked me, well there's one comes here to take Mass, Tom and I, on Sunday. And that's very nice. But as I said before, the people are very kind here. But, I have something about driving that no man wants to see. No man wants to see, or ever will admit, that a woman is a good driver. But, he won't talk once I give him this. Can I show it to you?

MS. DALLETTE: Yes. Just as soon as we're finished with this, because we're still on, tied up, here.

MS. WALSH: Playing with this. I missed this.

MS. DALLETTE: I think I've asked you everything I need to, but I would love to hear one of your poems, if you wouldn't mind reading.

MS. WALSH: Well, I don't mind reading it at all.

"Memories of [. . .] Isle"

As green banners wave and marchers play
year after year on the memorable day,
I ponder, memories awaken, like a visual ray
the ethereal beauty of Killarney.
Lakes are crystal and the air is clear,
rivers flow more gently here.
Visit the shrines that dot this land.
See the round towers and castles
where once reigned the grand.
See the purple heather that covers the peaks
this ancient fuel [. . .] the fragrant heat.
Watch the glorious sunset behind the hill
or take a walk by that old water mill.
The sky here has a vivid hue.
You never saw such shades of blue.
Shamrocks [. . .] a carpet of green,
wildflowers with a depth of color you never seen.
Hedges cut with an artist's skill
Your soul is soothed by the nightingale's trill.
Worries and cares seem far away
as you look forward to the joy of each new day.
Thank you, dear Lord, for this beautiful Isle.
You surely helped her through many a trial.

Yeah, that Ireland.

MS. DALLETTE: That's really beautiful.

MS. WALSH: Well, it's a description of what you see. Yeah. I hope sometime you might see it.

MS. DALLETTE: Have you visited often?

MS. WALSH: Five times I went back. But that's not enough. I'd like to go again. But I doubt it.

MS. DALLETTE: Were you ever tempted to stay in Ireland?

MS. WALSH: Oh, how could I, with the children, and grandchildren here? If I didn't have them, I'd stay. I'd buy a little cottage down by the stream. And maybe I could fulfill a dream. All day long, come [. . .] Everything that he says. He always told me he's lucky he got me. But I'm the one that's lucky. And he had a terrific war record. And he did all, all seven years married to him, and I opened the drawer one day, and when I found, God bless it, he had so many ribbons. And so many stars that he won. But he never wanted to talk about it at all. Are you married to an American boy?

MS. DALLETTE: I'm married to an Englishman.

MS. WALSH: You are? I see. They're good and bad there too, you know. I had lots of--some relatives went into business over there. Butter and egg business.

MS. DALLETTE: Okay, I think I've asked you everything I need to, unless there's anything else you want to add.

MS. WALSH: No, I don't really think so. I'll show you what I paint, but they're nothing special.

MS. DALLETTE: And your roses out back. Okay, thank you very, very much.

MS. WALSH: Oh, honey, it was such a joy, meeting both of you. Someday I hope I get over to where you work.

MS. DALLETTE: And that is the end of side two and the end of interview number 200 with Mrs. Ann Walsh.