

KECK-43/DEVLIN

KECK-43

BERTHA (BRIDGET) McGEOGHEGAN (McGAFFIGHAN) DEVLIN
BIRTH DATE: OCTOBER 8, 1901
INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 19, 1985
RUNNING TIME: 56:00
INTERVIEWER: DANA GUMB
RECORDING ENGINEER: O.J. CONNELL, III
INTERVIEW LOCATION: JAMAICA PLAIN, MA
TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986
TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: NANCY VEGA, 9/1995
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

IRELAND, 1923
AGE 22
PASSAGE ON "THE CAMERONIA"

GUMB: This is Dana Gumb, and I'm speaking with Mrs. Bertha Devil on the 10th day of October, 1985. We're beginning this interview at 11:29, and we're about to interview Mrs. Devlin about her immigration experience from Ireland in the year 1923. Okay, Mrs. Devlin, if we could start with where and when you were born?

DEVLIN: I was born on October 8, 1901 in Donegar, the place I was born?

GUMB: Right. What town?

DEVLIN: Clommany. The little town was Mindoran. If you know

how to spell . . .

GUMB: Yeah, could you spell that?

DEVLIN: M-I-N-D-O-R-A-N, Mindoran, and the parish was
Clommany, C-L-O-M-M-A-N-Y. Clommany.

GUMB: Okay. Um, what was life like there in Donegal?

DEVLIN: Oh, to us life was all right, we just didn't know any
better, you know. We were poor, we were poor, and
everybody had a little farm, maybe one cow, and you
had your own little farm, you had your own potatoes,
and vegetables and, uh, milk and butter and things
like that.

GUMB: Did you go to school there?

DEVLIN: We did not have to go to school. There was no
compulsory on us to go to school. We went to school
if we wanted to, and if we didn't want to we didn't
have to go, which was, wasn't a very good thing for
us. Um, we were poor and, of course, the farmer up
the street maybe was a little better off than we were,
and we were sent there to mind his cattle or his
children, and we got maybe a pound or two for doing
that. So that left us that we didn't get much

attention, which is sad.

GUMB: Uh, what did your father do?

DEVLIN: He was just a, a little farmer, took care of a little, us children. Sometimes he would go to Scotland in the wintertime because there was money to be made there, and then come back again and start and work his farm again.

GUMB: What kind of a house did you live in?

DEVLIN: Oh, a little small house, I still can see it, with a thatched roof. No running water, no lights, just an oil lamp. Very few beds. There wasn't money.

GUMB: What kind of other, what kind of jobs did you have there? You didn't go to school, so you had to work.

GUMB: Well, when I was eight years old, I could sew. I had learned to sew. And when I was thirteen years old I had my own machine, sewing machine, in my own home. We made the shirts that you wear. I could make a shirt when I was fifteen years old. Then I did that in my own home for about four years, and then I went to the, to Derry, to work in the factory, on a steam machine. Of course, we were better paid then, you

were better paid for your work there than you were at home. And it was from Derry I left to come out here.

GUMB: Were you still working at home when you worked at Derry?

DEVLIN: Oh, yes, I'd go home every weekend. Yup. There was no trains running then. There was a lorry, or, that's what they called them there, to bring you down and bring you back again Monday morning.

GUMB: Is that a bus?

DEVLIN: Well, it's not like the buses that's here, you're just crowded in there some old way.

GUMB: I worked there for four years. I liked it, too. It was really nice. And my brother was out here, and he sent my ticket. I had a, I can't settle myself, and I don't think I'll stay here. But then when I got my ticket I had to come here.

GUMB: Did you have any strong feelings about coming here? Did you . . .

DEVLIN: Well, the husband that I married was here. HE came here with my brother in 1901, and he was still here.

But he couldn't write to me because he had no education. His mother died when he was a little boy, seven years old. His father was out here, and he was just knocked around from one old farmer to another and never got an education. So, but anyway, he was the first one who came to see me. That was it.

GUMB: He came to see you in Ireland?

DEVLIN: No, right here, in Jamaica Plains. I came, when I came here, I came to my uncle on Mozart Street here in Jamaica Plains. I remember that night he came to visit me. Now, that's the first time I saw him for over two years.

GUMB: So you knew him in the . . .

DEVLIN: Oh, yeah, we grew up together, oh, yes.

GUMB: So, um, how old were you when you left Derry?

DEVLIN: Twenty-one. Twenty-one.

GUMB: And, um, so you came, uh, because you wanted to be with your future husband?

DEVLIN: No, that wasn't it at all. I didn't have any idea, because I didn't know who he was or what he was doing

in all that two years, you know what I mean. So, anyway, that was it.

GUMB: Right. So, um, once you decided to come, uh, what did yo have to do to come, to come to America at that time?

DEVLIN: Well, you had to go, we had to go to Belfast, to the American counsel. And, uh, they asked you a lot of questions there and, uh, from there you got your passport. But I'll always, I'll always remember, the day that I went to Belfast to get my, uh, go to the American consul, didn't know where I was or anything, I was alone, so I asked the lady, and she said to me, "You go in that door and that's it." And I said, "Okay." So I went in the door and there was a man there and I asked him and he said, "Yeah, step in here." I did, and the thing went down in the dark. I said, "Oh, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, where am I?" I didn't know there was such a thing as an elevator. But it was dark. And I said, "This is it." Because Belfast had an awful name right then. People were frightened, and doing many things. And that's it.

GUMB: It was an elevator that . . .

DEVLIN: It was an elevator. First he says step in here and he closed the door and I went down in this dark hole. What an experience. I swore.

GUMB: What did they require that you do at . . .

DEVLIN: Well, they asked you a lot of questions, and you had to write your name, as long as you could write your name and write a few things, you know, it was all right.

GUMB: What few things did they ask you to write? Do you remember? They were just checking your education?

DEVLIN: Checking if you could write at all. So I was lucky enough I could do that much.

GUMB: Do you remember what they asked you to write?

DEVLIN: Oh, I think they just asked where you were going and who you were going to and so forth, like that. Yes, I knew my brother was here and I knew where I was coming to. I was coming to my uncle, he was, he met me, you know.

GUMB: Were they concerned about you, uh, first off, were you traveling alone?

DEVLIN: Alone. I left my father in Derry, and the next one I knew was my brother at the south station here in Boston. For eleven days. I did, I was, and I was sick all the way.

GUMB: Did the, were the people at the American Consulate concerned about you traveling alone?

DEVLIN: No. Oh, no. What the heck, they didn't care. Of course, you're never alone, you know what I mean. There was so many people there, but I didn't know any of them.

GUMB: You didn't have to have a chaperon?

DEVLIN: No, no.

GUMB: You mentioned leaving your father.

DEVLIN: My father in Derry. He was the last one I left. I had left my mother, sisters and brothers, you know, before that, and then he came to Derry with me, from my own home to Derry with me, and we went on a little boat there, ferry, they called it, and it took us to the big ship at Movill, and got on the big ship there.

GUMB: Could you spell that, Movill?

DEVLIN: M-O-V-I-L-L. Movill. I'm sure that's the way it's spelled.

GUMB: That's the name of the town?

DEVLIN: That was the name of the place where the ship was anchored, yes.

GUMB: How did it feel leaving your father?

DEVLIN: It didn't feel too good at all. No. I was almost going to go back again. When I was here about a few months I was gonna go back. Oh, I was homesick. It was terrible. But I, then my, I got a job working in a family. They were, you know, kind of nice to me, and my future husband used to come about twice a week and say hello.

GUMB: I didn't get you clear, why did you leave again, if you could say that again?

DEVLIN: Why did I leave Ireland?

GUMB: Why was, what was the . . .

DEVLIN: Well, we didn't have anything to do in Ireland, there was no, there was no work. And, you didn't want to be poor all your life. You could have married an old

farmer if you wanted to and stay there for the rest of your life, and work on that old farm, I could have done that. But I wasn't about to do that. He had a mother and a father and I'd have to go in and live with them and do as they told me to do. I wasn't about to do that. (she laughs) So I said, "Goodbye, I'll see you later."

GUMB: Why America?

DEVLIN: Well, there's always an opportunity here if you want it that way. This is a great country, you know. It is. You'll always find something to do. And if you live a good, honest life, I think you make out all right.

GUMB: So, um, uh, how about your vessel, the ticket for the vessel? How did you get that, do you remember?

DEVLIN: Oh, my brother sent it to me. Oh, yes. That was my passage to this country. Yes. My mother hid it on me. She didn't want me to leave. But my sister told me one day that it came. So I kept after her till she gave it to me. She didn't want me to leave, naturally.

GUMB: You said your mother hinted on you?

DEVLIN: She hid the ticket on me.

GUMB: Oh, right. right.

DEVLIN: Hid it, so I wouldn't find it. Yes. So. I found it.
I suppose that's the way it was to be.

GUMB: You mean, she finally let you have it.

DEVLIN: Well, my sister told me where it was, so I took it,
and I was going to Derry, you know, I was going back
to Derry to work, the next day, so I took the ticket
with me, and I just went right to the American consul
and I entered the ticket. So, there was nothing she
could do about it then.

GUMB: Where had she hid it?

DEVLIN: Oh, the Lord knows. I don't know where she hid it.
There wasn't too many places to hide things, the house
was so small. The house was just something like that,
there, on top of the television. One of those little
cottages. (she sighs)

GUMB: I'm wondering how you, um, how you decided that you
really wanted to go, that it was, just that same day

you went to the ticket office.

DEVLIN: Oh, yeah. If I didn't do it quick I wouldn't do it at all, so I just got it over with. I said, "I'm going, and I'll try it, see what it's like." But when I was on the Ellis Island, "Dear God, I wonder if this is the way it's gonna be always."

GUMB: Do you remember how much the ticket was, how much it cost?

DEVLIN: Lord, no, I don't, no. It was so many pounds, anyway. I forget how much. It wasn't an awful lot, you know. Then it wasn't so much, but now it's a lot more.

GUMB: Okay. So you and your father, uh, got on a little ferry boat.

DEVLIN: No, my father did not. No, he couldn't go with me on that. I once got, just to say goodbye to him right there. HE went back home, and I went on my way. I never saw him again. Never saw him again.

GUMB: So, so you got on the little ferryboat and went on the . . .

DEVLIN: To Movill, yes, to the big ship. I think the name of

it was the Cameronia, I think that was the name of the ship that I came here on.

GUMB: Can you guess on the spelling?

DEVLIN: Cameronia? (she laughs) Not very well. I don't know. That'd be up to you, anyway.

GUMB: Okay.

DEVLIN: Whatever way you're gonna spell that, I don't know. But anyway, it took me here. Oh, it was painted, and it was a horrible ocean, the, I was sick all the way. So it went back, and it took a lot of other people that I knew here, to Boston. And it went back, and that was the last trip it made. It was old. (she coughs) Would you people like a drink of tonic or something.

GUMB: I'm fine, thank you. (break in tape) Okay, Mrs. Devlin, we were, uh, you were just getting on the boat, on the vessel. What, uh, what kind of, uh, conditions were there on the vessel?

DEVLIN: Well, there, we were steerage, because steerage is never so good, you know. And, uh, bunk beds and, I think there was about four of us in one bunk, in one

little place. And, oh, God, I was sick. Everybody was sick. And I think about the fourth day we got up on deck, it wasn't too bad then, but, I don't ever want to remember anything about that old boat. One night I prayed to God that it would go down because the waves were washing over it, March, you know how it was in March, the beginning of March? I was that sick, I didn't care if it went down or not. And everybody else was the same way. That's how sick we were.

GUMB: What kind of things did you have with you? What were you taking with you?

DEVLIN: Oh, it was awful funny what I had with me, and that's the way I got acquainted with that old man that was with me here to Boston. We didn't have much with us, a few things in the suitcase, I forget what they were. But I still remember, when I left home, somebody put a, about the size of a bottle, a potten, you know what potten is? No you don't know what that is. Irish Whiskey, that was made out on the hill, the same thing that my father made out on the hill. And that was called potten.

GUMB: Can you spell that?

DEVLIN: No, but I have a book here, I think it's P-O-T-T-E-N, something like that anyway. So anyway, I had that with me, and some oatmeal bread. And one day I was up on deck, and this old man was, in this country, for many years, and he was home for a visit. HE was an old man. And I was talking to him, and he was going to Charlestown, and i knew all about Charlestown, because my brother lived there when he came here. So anyway, I said to him, "I have a bottle of potten in my suitcase. Would you like some?" Oh, mother of God, I thought he'd got a million dollars. I give the old man the bottle of potten, and the oat bread. Well, I think if i'd given him a million dollars he couldn't have been any happier. And he was so good to me after that. Yeah. But I can remember the night that we were, everything, the examinations and all, were all over, and we were put down into some kind of dark hole with a little old leather bed and I was told to go to sleep on that bed. That'd be for the night. I said, "No, I'm not sleeping on that bed." They said to me, "What are you gonna do?" I says, "I'll sit on my suitcase out there. But the other poor

souls, none of them could talk English. The only good thing about it was that I could, the kind of English I talked they understood it, but the others couldn't talk any English at all, and they kind of wanted me to stay with them.

GUMB: This is on Ellis Island?

DEVLIN: Ellis Island. The last night. So I was sittin' on the suitcase and the old man came downstairs. He was second cabin. He was upstairs, sleeping on a good bed. And he came down and he said, "Little girl," he says, "you come on upstairs with me." Because he had asked somebody. And I went upstairs with him and he got me a nice bed, and I slept on that bed till I came into the South Station on the train.

GUMB: Oh, this was on the train.

DEVLIN: On the train.

GUMB: Oh, after Ellis Island.

DEVLIN: After Ellis Island, when we got on the train. So that old man . . . And then I never saw him again.

GUMB: Oh, it was the same old man that was on the boat.

DEVLIN: Same old man that I had given the whiskey to.

GUMB: Oh, so he was returning your favor.

DEVLIN: He was returning, he sure did. I had a nice bed and slept all the way to South Station.

GUMB: Did you meet any other people on the boat?

DEVLIN: No, not, oh, you would talk to people, you know, the tailor and things like that, but not really.

GUMB: What sort of other people were in steerage?

DEVLIN: Oh, there was all kinds of people there, every nation. But very few'n, was quite a few couldn't talk much English. But they'd got a lot of Irish people on there. A lot of Irish people talked their own language. I never did. I don't know any of it. A few swear words, that's all. (she laughs)

GUMB: Do you remember what other nationalities?

DEVLIN: There was every nationality that you could think of. At the end they had cages, like, you know? Little rooms off, and every nationality was put there, like by themselves. I didn't think, I thought it was kind of horrible. But I was the only one that was comin'

to Boston, me and that old man. Did I do something to this, here? No, I didn't.

GUMB: Where were the cages?

DEVLIN: All around the place. You know, like here, now, you, like that kitchen of mine's there. The door under wires, or something. And you were in there.

GUMB: Eh, was this on the boat?

DEVLIN: It reminds you of cattle. On the, on the, on Ellis Island. Not the boat. This was Ellis Island. Oh, yes.

GUMB: Um, okay. Let's, we'll finish up with the boat. Do you remember anything about the food, uh, you mentioned what you brought from home, but do you remember what they served you on the boat?

DEVLIN: I didn't care for food. Horrible. Well, sometimes you eat bread, or you had tea or something like that. Some kind of soup. I forget, I didn't care for food. Didn't, just, couldn't look at food, I was that sick. I was sick. I think I was seasick for three months after I got off the boat.

GUMB: What were the accommodations like on the boat?

DEVLIN: Well, I suppose for people upstairs it was fine. Yes.

GUMB: What was it like for you?

DEVLIN: Oh, I don't know, I was kind of thick and I didn't care. Everybody was just, pardon my English, everybody was throwin' up, throwin' up here and there and everywhere. It wasn't very nice. I forget how many bathrooms, I didn't remember anything about them things. Sometimes you never got to the bathroom. I don't, I don't want to remember about it at all. I never went back. I was always scared. I didn't go back for thirty, thirty years. I was scared of the sea, that boat.

GUMB: When you left Ireland did you ever think you'd get back?

DEVLIN: Oh, I always intended to go back. Yes. I wasn't gonna stay long. I was coming back. But I never went back. I came here 1923, March, and in 1924, in October, I got married. And that ended Ireland.

GUMB: Do you remember, uh, what your impressions were when the vessel first approached land?

DEVLIN: Coming into New York? Well, the first thing you saw was the Statue of Liberty. And we had to stay way out, a long, long ways, for a whole day. The ice, you know, there was icebergs, whatever you call those things that they don't want to go near, we could see them plain, but they had to stay way out somehow to get around them. That kept us another day on the ship. And then, when you got off it, then you got on to Ellis Island. That was it.

GUMB: Um, you, do you remember what, uh, what your impressions were when you saw the statue?

DEVLIN: I didn't even know what it was. I can always remember seeing it, but I didn't know what you, I didn't know who it was.

GUMB: You'd never heard of it in Ireland?

DEVLIN: I don't think so.

GUMB: What sort of things had you heard about America in Ireland?

DEVLIN: Well, all the people coming and going at times, and they always talked so good about it. But, you know,

you had that feeling that you'd like to come here.

GUMB: Okay.

DEVLIN: My father was here. He went home.

GUMB: Oh, he didn't like it?

DEVLIN: Oh, no. (she laughs) I think he did like it, but I'll just tell you how he went back. My father was a kind of a sport, guess, in his young days, and he used to take a drink, and he used to be down around the North End, you wouldn't know where that is. John L. Sullivan was there fighting in those days. And he was a sport and he didn't give a hoot. But he had two sisters out there and three brothers. And one day they got together, which I didn't think was a very nice thing to do. They all got together, went over to the pier, where the boat was going out, got him good and drunk, paid his way, put him on the boat, and he was, when he woke up he was a long ways out. Now, that was a dirty trick, wasn't it, I told them when I came here. But he'd always say to us, if you go anyplace, he was in England and he was in Scotland, and he always said, "Yous ever go anyplace, go to America." He liked it here.

GUMB: Why didn't he come back?

DEVLIN: No, he never came back. Married my mother then, he never come back.

GUMB: Why did they do that to him?

DEVLIN: Because they figured he wasn't gonna do any good here. That he was just always gonna be like that. You know, people do become queer here, and bums and things like that. He worked and all, but he, I guess what he, maybe he just drank and sported around. That's what they done. Because they were all, they all had little homes of their own and they, they didn't like the idea. But he went back, and he lived to be ninety-five years old.

GUMB: So, um, the vessel came into the harbor, and you mentioned there were icebergs.

DEVLIN: Yes, there were. You could see them. Oh, great big, big thing almost as big as this house, you know.

GUMB: Floating in the . . .

DEVLIN: Floating way out, yes.

GUMB: Uh, uh, so, um, you had to sit out in the harbor
for . . .

DEVLIN: For a day. Yes.

GUMB: How did you spend the time?

DEVLIN: Oh, the Lord knows. I don't know. How did you spend
it? There was always somebody to talk to, I guess.
And you got up on deck. And then, if you weren't so
sick, you went up on deck like, you know, it was
better, get some air.

GUMB: Were there any examinations or anything?

DEVLIN: Not on the boat. No.

GUMB: Do you remember where the boat docked? Do you have
any recollection of that?

DEVLIN: Well, it docked in New York right near to the Statue
of Liberty, whatever that was. I know it was near to
Ellis Island before we got off the boat and went right
on to Ellis Island.

GUMB: And there wasn't any smaller boat.

DEVLIN: No, not that I can remember. It was a long time ago,

you kind of forget, you know.

GUMB: Okay. When you first arrived at Ellis Island, do you remember the time of day?

DEVLIN: It was in the morning and some time in the morning I think that's what it was, some time in the morning.

GUMB: What was the first thing that happened?

DEVLIN: Well, the first thing that happened, (she laughs) your clothes was all taken off and your hair was all looked into. If there was one nit in your hair you had to have a shampoo. I didn't, thank the Lord. And, uh, they had chalkmarks, and then chalkmarks was put all over you, your back and whatnot, till you got to the other one, and if nothin' was the matter with you, you were lucky. You would get through. If you weren't you were detained. I was not detained at all.

GUMB: What were the chalkmarks? Do you remember? What mark did you get, do you remember that?

DEVLIN: Well, I think everybody got the same mark. It tells you right here, I think it does, anyway. I thought it did. Well, the mark, for your heart and for your, uh, if you were pregnant they put a "P" on there and that

was your . . .

GUMB: You don't remember . . .

DEVLIN: If it was your, if you were feeble-minded, it was an "F" there.

GUMB: Do you remember what your mark was, by any chance?

DEVLIN: (she laughs) I don't know. It must have been pretty good, because I got through. But then there was the tags, and then you were told to get dressed. If nothing was the matter you were told to get dressed. You got dressed. And there was a, I never saw black, I never saw anybody black till I came to Ellis Island, and there was an awful lot of black people.

GUMB: This is the end of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: This is the beginning of side two. Okay, Mrs. Devlin, we were talking about, uh, seeing black people.

DEVLIN: First black people I saw was in Ellis Island. And when we were children growing up, we were always

taught, told, that the devil was black, the devil was black and, of course, I was big enough then to know the difference. But anyway, that's what, there was a lot of them there, a lot of black people.

GUMB: What were they doing?

DEVLIN: Oh, they were all going around putting tags on you here and tags there, I had more tags on me. Here and there. And they took them all off, and the guy said to me, "You do now know where you're going." And I said, "I know too damn well where I'm going now." I was back, I wouldn't be here. (she laughs) I got here just the same.

GUMB: What was, do you remember anything about the tags, what they looked like, what they said?

DEVLIN: Well, you were going to Boston and you were going to, the different places you were going. Going on the train, I forget, well, we got the train. Or how we got it, I can't remember how we got that, on that train. We were taken on something anyway, to the train.

GUMB: But you mentioned the medical examination. Were they,

uh, female doctors examining you?

DEVLIN: No, they didn't, they didn't examine you internally or anything like that.

GUMB: What did they do?

DEVLIN: They just took your clothes off. I had some, few, pimples on my back and that always were there since I ever can remember. Oh, they made a big ha-di-do about that, I said, they have been there since I can remember and they don't bother me. So, they didn't bother with them any more.

GUMB: Um, were they, they were men, male doctors?

DEVLIN: Mostly male doctors. I don't remember any female doctors.

GUMB: Were they wearing uniforms, the doctors?

DEVLIN: Yes, I think they had some kind of blue uniforms or something like that, if I remember clearly.

GUMB: How long did that exam take?

DEVLIN: Oh, we were there for a whole day, way into the evening. And then, I think, and we, we were there day

and night, anyway, and then well into the next morning when we got the train to come to South Station.

GUMB: But, uh, the medical exam, how long did that take?

DEVLIN: Well, that took quite a while, goin' from one to the other. Yep. If nothing was the matter, you know, you just went right along. The poor things that were detained, I used to feel, I felt sorry for them. Some were detained and sent back. Many were sent back. Oh, yes.

GUMB: After the medical exam, what happened then?

DEVLIN: Oh, I just, tossed that around, and then we were taken down onto that place which we were told to go to sleep, or whatever. Stay there, we had to stay there till the morning. But I didn't stay there till the morning. The other people stayed there because they had nothing else. They had no other place to go. But I wasn't gonna, I went and sat on my suitcase, I was not gonna stay there, because it looked awful.

GUMB: Do you remember where that place was in relation to where the medical exams were?

DEVLIN: Alls the way down in the basement. Like, way on down

to the basement, to a small, dark basement.

GUMB: So you sat up the whole night, on the suitcase.

DEVLIN: No, the old man came down and, up, from the second floor, he was, as I said, he was the second cabin. He came down and took me upstairs and got a bed for me.

GUMB: Okay.

DEVLIN: And then I slept on the bed till we came to the South Station.

GUMB: Oh, that was on the train. Right.

DEVLIN: On the train. Yeah.

GUMB: How about Ellis Island, back at Ellis.

DEVLIN: Oh.

GUMB: Where did you spend the night, on Ellis Island. Do you remember?

DEVLIN: That old man took me upstairs and got a bed for me, on Ellis Island.

GUMB: On Ellis Island.

DEVLIN: On Ellis Island. Yes. Not on the train, no.

GUMB: Oh, okay. This was on Ellis Island.

DEVLIN: Yes.

GUMB: Oh, okay.

DEVLIN: That was a nice bed. It was kind of high, but there was nobody there but me.

GUMB: Uh, why did you have to spend the night there? Was that explained to you?

DEVLIN: Well, I suppose we had to wait for the train. Must have been, because the next day we went, next morning we went on the train to South Station. I was the only one coming to Boston, me and that old man. I'd have been lost if it wasn't for him, you know? Because he knew just where he was going.

GUMB: Okay. Um, do you remember anything about the questions that were asked at Ellis Island, the kind of questions?

DEVLIN: They asked you all kinds of questions about you, how you grew up and what you did and everything.

GUMB: Um, do you remember where that took place, where they

asked you those questions?

DEVLIN: What part of the Ellis, what part of Ellis Island?
Oh, the place was so big, I wouldn't remember. I know
it was a great big room, anyway.

GUMB: Do you remember the great hall, the great space,
uh . . .

DEVLIN: Yeah, with the chandeliers, and so forth. I went
through there.

GUMB: What happened there?

DEVLIN: I don't know. We just went through there. Guess
everybody had to pass through there some way. You
know, you were so, you were, I don't know, you were
sick, and you were homesick, and you were many other
things. You paid not much attention. You were glad
to get away from it all that way.

GUMB: What, do you remember anything of what you were
wearing, what kind of . . .

DEVLIN: Yes, I had a nice blue dress. I can remember that. I
still had it after I came here. I wore it when I had
my passport picture taken. I had that passport

picture, I wonder what the devil I done with it.

GUMB: Uh, was the idea to dress up, I mean, you wanted to wear, you wanted to look nice?

DEVLIN: Well, naturally. (she laughs) But, uh, yes, I bought that dress in Derry. I can still remember, it was a blue dress. It was nice.

GUMB: Um, so you did spend the night there?

DEVLIN: Oh, yes, spent the night there, and a day. My brother was there for three days, people were detained, and there was a lot of people come in or something. He, was no reason why they could keep him because he had a good education, he had. So he got it. But I don't know why he was detained. There was so many, I guess, come in here. The funny part of it is my husband, my future husband, came with him, to Ellis Island, to Ellis Island. And as soon as he got on to Ellis Island, he just stepped right off of that thing. Nobody asked any questions, because he came second, second cabin. So, you see, that wasn't fair. (she laughs) So, money talks. His sisters was here, and they knew that he didn't have an education, so when they sent his ticket they sent it second

cabin. Why didn't they send you a second cabin?

DEVLIN: I don't know. Just figured, well, she's smart enough to take care of herself, I suppose. That was it. I had a little education. Not too much. But, you educate yourself as you go along. My husband did. He could write to me when he was in the Pacific and all those things.

GUMB: Uh, so you spend that one night, you spent that one night on Ellis Island.

DEVLIN: Uh-huh.

GUMB: Do you remember what you ate, what they gave you to eat?

DEVLIN: Not really. I think the usual things. In the morning we got tea and toast and some kind of cereal. I don't know what it was. And the eats was all right, you know, if you could eat it. But then when I got to Ellis Island I was hungry. And anything they had there you ate it. The ship didn't care about feeding or that.

GUMB: Were there any unusual foods?

DEVLIN: No. Every food was unusual to you after you left Ireland. You know what I mean, we ate them. We ate the many things, fish and chicken and things like that. Everything was fresh, even the eggs. Everything was fresh from the farm. We caught fish, it was caught yesterday and you had it today so that everything, the milk was fresh from the cow, not pasteurized. so . . .

GUMB: Do you remember any of the unusual things, the unusual food that, uh, you had to get used to, either on Ellis Island or later in this country?

DEVLIN: No, I got very, I got used to the food here. But I went to work in a family and they had very good food. Yes.

GUMB: Okay. What about, um, money. How much money did you have? You know, when you came . . .

DEVLIN: You had to have five pounds when you got in here. You had to have that much money. But I had that much money. And I was putting it in an envelop and sending it back to my father. I think it was he who gave it to me. Yes, you had to have that much money, and you had to have some place to go. You had to have

somebody who claimed you. That was the way that was.

GUMB: How did you get the word that you had to have five pounds?

DEVLIN: We were told. We were even told at the American consul in Belfast.

GUMB: Did yo have to change any money on Ellis Island?

DEVLIN: No. We didn't change it. We didn't use any money on Ellis Island. But there was nothing to use money for. You just had, you had to show that five pound note, anyway. I can still remember that five pound note, plain as day.

GUMB: Okay. Uh, well, did you need money to buy a railroad ticket, to buy the ticket to Boston?

DEVLIN: No. Our way was paid right to South Station. Everything was taken care of to South Station. And I remember the old man, that old man that I talked to you about, he wanted, my brother wasn't there right then, and he wasn't there, when I came in there. HE came a little while after that, and the old man wanted to take me to where I was going. So they just talked and told the old man you'd better go along, mind your

own business. We will take care of her. So my brother then came, and my uncle. He was the one that had the home here, and he was the one that, you know, that took me. I could stay with him.

GUMB: What were your first impressions of this country?

DEVLIN: Oh, I don't know. You know, in Ireland, we eat about six times a day. And we always had a good meal before we went to bed. So we ate about six o'clock at my uncle's in the evening, and, of course, bedtime came, nothin' to eat. I thought that was horrible. I went to bed without anything to eat. That was my first impression of it. You get used to it.

GUMB: What was your name in Ireland?

DEVLIN: My name was Bridget McGeohegan. That's why, I had to, they changed in on Ellis Island because they didn't pronounce it. I don't know if you can spell it or not, can you?

GUMB: Yeah, could you spell it?

DEVLIN: McGeoghegan.

GUMB: Right.

DEVLIN: M-C-G-E-O-G-H-E-H-A-N. Now, you pronounce it now, if you can?

GUMB: McGeoghegan?

DEVLIN: Right. My name was Bridget.

GUMB: Why couldn't they pronounce it on Ellis Island?

DEVLIN: I don't know. It was too complicated. There was a lot of names was changed on Ellis Island. But it wasn't changed till I, after I came. When I came here everybody was McGaffighan. My uncle, aunts and everybody were McGaffighan. So I went along with the McGaffighan. That was my maiden name, then, McGaffighan.

GUMB: Well, how did it happen that your names changed? I mean, what, do you remember what happened when it changed?

DEVLIN: I don't know. My brother is still in Ireland, and if you sent a letter to him with McGaffighan on it I think he would send it back to you. He's still Geoghegan, in Ireland.

GUMB: You, how did you know it was changed? What happened?

Did some official tell you that?

DEVLIN: No, when I came here, everybody was McGaffighan. And I became a McGaffighan, too. But you had to have that changed. And they didn't like Bridge, for some reason or another, so they called me Bertha. And I had to have that all changed. I wish I never did have it changed, because I like Bridget.

GUMB: Well, in your passport, it says Bridget.

DEVLIN: Bridget McGeoghegan.

GUMB: So the passport was presented . . .

DEVLIN: Oh, yes.

GUMB: . . . to the person at Ellis Island.

DEVLIN: Yes.

GUMB: What happened?

DEVLIN: They didn't say anything. No. It's when I came here this business was all changed. Not on Ellis Island. But I did hear that that's where it was changed to McGaffighan.

GUMB: How did you discover it was changed?

DEVLIN: I didn't discover it till I come here, and they all told me, "Your name is going to be McGaffighan from now on." But I could have kept my own name, though. I could have kept it, I suppose.

GUMB: Was there some form that had McGaffighan on it, some official document?

DEVLIN: No, not a thing. My birth certificate says McGeoghegan. I still got it.

GUMB: Hmm. How do you spell McGaffighan?

DEVLIN: M-C-G-A-F-F-I-G-H-A-N. McGaffighan.

GUMB: I wonder about, why Bridget to Bertha?

DEVLIN: Well, years ago, people used to laugh about Irish girls that came out here. They called them Dittys sometimes, just Ditty's day off. You worked for things, working families and so forth. So anyway, they changed it around to Bertha. My aunts, I went along with them. I didn't want to be haggling with them.

GUMB: Okay, um, so, um, well, let's, do you remember once you left Ellis Island, uh, I, I remember you said you

took a railroad to South Station?

DEVLIN: Yes.

GUMB: Do you remember how you got to the railroad station?

DEVLIN: I think they took us in something, some kind of a wagon or some kind, I forget what it was, that we came to, uh, where would we have got the train to South Station in New York?

GUMB: Maybe Grand Central?

DEVLIN: That would be Grand Central. That's right. Yes.

GUMB: You went as a group?

DEVLIN: No, there was only a few of us coming to Boston. I think it was about three, that old man and me and another person, I didn't know who it was.

GUMB: Was there a guide with you?

DEVLIN: That old man. That old man stayed right with me, he was about sixty, you know. I'm so sorry I never saw him again. He was so good to me.

GUMB: Did you have a tag on at that time?

DEVLIN: No, no, no, them tags was all off. I made sure they were all off. (she laughs) An idea, that. I was very tired of those tags.

GUMB: Um, okay. So, um, once you arrived in Boston, did you start working right away?

DEVLIN: About a week after I got here I went to work out in Winchester in a family. Yep. I stayed there for about six months and then I left there. I went to work out in Massachusetts Mental where, you know, the people were coo-koo, and that wasn't a very nice place to work. But I knew I was gonna get married, so I stayed there. Then after I married I didn't want, I didn't work any more

GUMB: How did you get your first job?

DEVLIN: Oh, my aunts and them, they always worked in families and they, you'd see in the paper, people would be applying for help. So we went to this lady's house and I got the job. She had three children. She was, she made you work awful hard, she did. But anyway, oh, there's the thing again.

GUMB: Were you living with your aunts?

DEVLIN: Yeah, I made my home there with my aunt. And my days off I'd go there. I had a lot of aunts and uncles. Uncle for aunt, for one to the other, my days off.

GUMB: Oh, you were living with the family.

DEVLIN: Oh, I lived in with the family. I lived there at night and all. Oh, yes. But you had Sunday afternoon off, and Thursday afternoon. Those two times you were off.

GUMB: Okay, um, uh . . .

DEVLIN: There was no such thing as eight hours a day, you know, when I came here. You worked twelve hours, in Massachusetts Mental I worked twelve hours a day. Twelve dollars a week. (she laughs) So, you got your eats. Your bedroom and board was with that twelve dollars. You got the twelve dollars.

GUMB: Well, how did that, uh, that experience, well, how did the experience here in this country compare to what you expected when you were in Ireland?

DEVLIN: Well, this is not, it's a funny country to come to, you know, when you first came here. It is. To get used to. It's very different. You know you got to

work for a living, or else. So . . .

GUMB: How was it different?

DEVLIN: I don't know. Well, people were a little different.
Hard to explain it.

GUMB: You say it's funny. What, funny peculiar, or funny
ha-ha?

DEVLIN: I don't know. It was, you know, as I say, you knew
you had to work for a living, or else . . .

GUMB: There wasn't that same feeling in Ireland?

DEVLIN: No. You could work if you wanted to. If you didn't
want to work it didn't make any difference. People
mostly did their own work, you know what I mean. Only
when I went to the factory, then, of course, I had to
work. It was different.

GUMB: Well, what would happen to you in . . . (break in
tape) So, you were talking about, uh, the
difficulties of adjusting.

DEVLIN: Yes. It was hard to adjust. Yes, it was.

GUMB: Do you remember anything specific about things that

were hard to get used to?

DEVLIN: Well, the way of living was sort of different, the cooking was different, the way of cooking and things like that. But we cooked on open fires, you know, stoves and whatnot here, hard to get used to those things.

GUMB: You said the people were different?

DEVLIN: Well, yes, in a way. There was a lot of people I knew, that weren't different. But these people I worked with, you know, they were born in this country and you didn't talk the way they talked. Your English was so different.

GUMB: Was that a problem?

DEVLIN: Well, sometimes they'd correct you, a few things you would say. Instead of saying that, uh, must've been, or something, I'd always say vit-a-vie. That's the way they said it in Ireland. I was chastised for that many times. But I got away from it. (she sighs) But it's still a good country. Oh, yes.

GUMB: Do you ever regret coming here?

DEVLIN: No, never did. No.

GUMB: What do you think, if you had stayed in Ireland, what do you think would have happened?

DEVLIN: I told you, I'd have either stayed in Derry and still worked in that factory, which I liked and I was doing very good there, because I could do anything to a shirt, you know, I could make a whole shirt from one thing to the other. Some people only could do one thing, I could do the whole thing. Either that or I'd have married some old farmer, and that I wouldn't like. So I wouldn't have got married at all.

GUMB: Okay.

DEVLIN: Married my childhood sweetheart. That's the way it was.

GUMB: Did any of your other family come over?

DEVLIN: My brother and my sister. I have a sister living out in West Roxbury. She came through Ellis Island, too. Uh-huh.

GUMB: Okay. How long did it take to become a citizen?

DEVLIN: I think it was about seven years. Yeah. My sister

never became a citizen. Never bothered about it.

GUMB: Did you hesitate becoming a citizen?

DEVLIN: No. Because I figured I was gonna stay here. After all, I got married in 1924, I had four children by 1930. So I think I had to stay here, don't you think so? (she laughs) Then around 1953 I went home to see my mother. She was still living. She lived for six years after I come back here. She was ninety-three.

GUMB: How did it feel to return?

DEVLIN: Oh, it was a kind of a funny feeling. It really was. Things were different, a little different, you know. There was cars and there was, houses were much better. A lot of people had their running water and they had the lights and all that and, uh, we had nothing, never nothing like that when we left. Of course, a lot of my old pals were gone, dead and run away. And me and my husband went back in 1970, things were so much different then. Eh, airplane again.

GUMB: This is the end of side two, of the interview with Mrs. Bertha Devlin, number 043.