

KM-0001

GEORGE MOORE

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INTERVIEWER: KATE MOORE

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**UNITED STATES: RIVER ROUGE, MI; LINCOLN PARK,
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K. MOORE: Kate Moore. I'm in Denville, New Jersey with George Moore, June 2, 1993. George Moore is from England. His year of immigration was 1947 at the age of twenty six. Where were you born?

G. MOORE: In Barrow-in-Furness, which is in the northwest part of England.

K. MOORE: And what size town was Barrow-in-Furness?

G. MOORE: Probably at that time I -- I would imagine about forty thousand people.

K. MOORE: What was your father's name and occupation?

G. MOORE: John James Moore and he was a -- an iron worker.

K. MOORE: And what was your mother's name and occupation?

G. MOORE: Sarah M—Moore and she was a housewife.

K. MOORE: Could you name all your brothers and sisters?

G. MOORE: My eldest sister is Doreen, my next sister was Mary, and the youngest is Brenda.

K. MOORE: What kind of dwelling did you live in?

G. MOORE: We had moved to Blackpool when I -- which is on the West coast of England -- again, in the northern [not understood] when [not understood] three or four, and we lived in a suburb of Blackpool called Layton, which was about a mile from the Irish Sea. We lived in a row house which had three small bedrooms and for the time, an innovation which was an inside bathroom, a small front room, and a kitchen, and a little uh, um, kitchen garden in -- in the back of the house.

K. MOORE: And was it heated?

G. MOORE: Yes it -- well it wasn't heated centrally. We had fireplaces in each room and uh -- so we would have to build a fire in the main fireplace which was flanked by ovens where the baking was done. And if we wanted to heat the bedrooms then we carried some fire from the main fireplace up into the bedroom fireplaces.

K. MOORE: Was this row house in or out of town?

G. MOORE: It was (clears throat) it was in the small suburb of -- of Blackpool. And at that time my guess would be considered to be out of town.

K. MOORE: And did you keep animals at all?

G. MOORE: We um, had uh, dogs at various times and uh, during the war -- during World War II we -- we kept uh, chickens for eggs. I had -- personally -- had ferrets, which I used to -- to hunt rabbits.

K. MOORE: Who else lived in the building?

G. MOORE: My mother, father, and uh, my three sisters.

K. MOORE: So you lived basically in the same row house alone?

G. MOORE: Yes.

K. MOORE: Who did the cooking in the family?

G. MOORE: My mother did the cooking.

K. MOORE: And what was your favorite food at that time?

G. MOORE: Well we -- we did um, a lot of fishing and so I guess my favorite food was fish, and particularly shellfish, of which there was plenty around us.

K. MOORE: Did you ever help cook at all?

G. MOORE: Yes I did. When -- when my sisters were born I used -- I -- I -- we -- my mother had a midwife come in. We didn't have a -- a doctor and she didn't

go to hospital at the time so I would do the cooking during the time the children were born and until she got back up on her feet again.

K. MOORE: And what was mealtime like there?

G. MOORE: Well we would start out in the morning with the usual early hearty English breakfast of -- of eggs and -- and bacon or ham and sometimes sausage and fried tomatoes and field mushrooms. Lunch time uh, was really (clears throat) a main meal at our house. And um, we would call it dinner. Which would really, often be a boiled dinner, with -- with boiled potatoes and -- and some meat, fish, and lots of garden vegetables. And we would have a tea time, which would be at about five or five thirty, consisting of -- of sandwiches and the ever-present tea. That would be a lighter meal. Then we would have the fourth meal of the day, which we called supper, which was usually about eight or nine o'clock at night and would be fish and chips or steak and kidney puddings or something of that kind. W—th— - they always believed you should go to bed with a -- a full meal in your stomach at that time.

K. MOORE: When you lived in Blackpool, were there other family members who lived nearby?

G. MOORE: Uh yes, my uh, step-father's mother lived just a few doors away. During the bombing of Barrow-in-Furness where I was born I had gone uh, to the town to bring my uncle and aunt and her four children to Blackpool to get them away from the heavy bombing that was taking place. They lived about two or three miles away from us.

K. MOORE: Did you see your family often, who lived nearby?

G. MOORE: Not too often. We -- obviously they uh, found me at my uh, step-father's mother, were there, and her sons were my best friends -- her other sons were my best friends.

K. MOORE: And, well this is related, but were you especially close to someone in your family?

G. MOORE: Well yes, I -- I was close to my second sister Mary -- I think the most. And we had a very um, close relationship and friendship all of our lives.

K. MOORE: Could you tell any anecdotes about family members that would characterize any one of them?

G. MOORE: Well we lived a very, I suppose relatively simple life. And I used to do quite a bit of hunting and -- and fishing and so we ate wild rabbits and sometimes birds. We would go out and collect water hens' eggs from the lakes and ponds and we had those for breakfast in the morning quite often. We raised our own chickens, as I mentioned. And we -- we really required very little from -- from the stores. We would get -- get roasts of -- of pork from the uh -- what we called a swill man. He was a fella that came around once a week to collect the -- the food refuse that we put out for him and as a reward for that at Christmas we would get a roast of pork. I don't have any particular anecdotes that would characterize our family. We were a very friendly family. Mary, my second sister and I, would go out often very early in the mornings to look for field mushrooms and our -- sometimes we would go out shooting and uh, she was ten years younger than I was but she followed me around wherever I went.

K. MOORE: What was religious life like there? What denomination were you?

G. MOORE: Well I belonged to the Church of England for a long time when I was young. For a while, my mother had sent us to a little [not understood] but

essentially we belonged to the Church of England. Church attendance by the parents was very sporadic, if nonexistent, for long periods of time. I sang in the -- in the church choir of a -- a large Church of England. Later on I joined the Unitarian church, mainly because they -- they taught ballroom dancing. And I -- I was one of the teachers, so I became very interested in that religion for a while.

K. MOORE: Um, could you describe holiday celebrations -- food, or music, or special activities, gifts you gave, etc.?

G. MOORE: Well the um, the holiday at Christmas of course was the -- was the biggest holiday and we had all kinds of uh, customs, as I remember, of -- of welcoming a dark impaired man into the house on Christmas Eve and he bringing coals to the house for good luck. We would go caroling and uh, down -- around the neighborhood, and uh (clears throat) we were always welcomed at the various houses and we would have cups of mead or wassail, and uh, it was gen-- Christmas was generally a very fine time. We -- we had Christmas crackers which were the things -- the bon bons that you sit at the table and pull and out come the paper hats or -- or little toys. We always at Christmas would have the goose which we had kept and fed very religiously -- if you like -- all year long so it was a very, very fat goose, and that would be our Christmas treat. The goose was very useful to us because it not only gave us the meat for our Christmas dinner but also the goose grease was used for all kinds of things like waterproofing boots or as a -- as a salve on people's chests when they had a cold, or -- or just a very, very useful ointment, if you like. And mother would make a -- an English Christmas cake, which she'd prepare two to three months in advance. The hard icing on it -- the very hard icing on it, and marzipan underneath. We'd decorate it with uh -- it would be decorated with -- with a little Father Christmas and little houses and trees and -- and whatever and -- and that was something that we'd look forward

to. Also there'd be a plum pudding and uh, in it uh, mother would've put little silver gifts – little tiny silver gifts so that each one of us would get a gift when we ate the plum pudding. So that was a time of – of great merriment. As far as gifts are concerned, the gifts that we exchanged were -- were quite simple, because we didn't have a lot of money. We didn't have a Christmas tree in the sense that we know it in America. We went out into the woods and would cut a branch that looked like it would look nice if it was decorated and then we would sit around and -- and wind each --each of the twigs on the bran—on the branch with – with green crepe and – and cut the edge of the crepe so th—th—they were fringed and that would eventually be our Christmas tree, with live candles on it and little candle holders. And the rooms would be decorated with -- with paper decorations, with paper bells, and streamers, and so on, and it was – Christmas was a very, very merry time. The day after Christmas, Boxing Day (which went back in history as the day of giving to charity), was a – was a day of rest for us, and recapping all of the joys of the Christmas time.

K. MOORE: What about Guy Fawkes Day?

G. MOORE: Oh Guy Fawkes Day, when we were children, was a very, very exciting event. Guy Fawkes Day occurred on the fifth of November and months beforehand we would go around chanting, usually a crowd of boys at the time -- with a few girls like my sister Mary who was somewhat a tomboy, with us -- and we would go around to various -- the various houses singing "Remember, remember, the Fifth of November," and collecting for fireworks and at the same time, wood for a bonfire. The bonfires were neighborhood bonfires. Great piles of – of wood and -- and branches, and whatever we could collect would go into the bonfire. And somebody would have to guard it all the time because the other neighborhoods who had bonfires would raid our bonfire for our wood and we would do the same

thing to them. And we would have a wheelbarrow -- it was actually -- we called it a cart -- it had two wheels on it. We always made them ourselves from boxes. And we would have an effigy of Guy Fawkes -- which, we would wheel around again asking for contributions for fireworks and any firewood that people might want to give us to make our pile a lot bigger. And then on the night of -- of the Fifth of November the Guy Fawkes was put on top of the fire -- the fire heap -- and the fire was lighted and all the fireworks were set off and we had a great time. And then when the embers of the fire died down and the embers were glowing we would all sit around and roast potatoes in the embers. So we would finish up with a -- a roast potato supper at the end of the -- -- of -- of the evening.

K. MOORE: What about your school life? Could you describe your school life to us?

G. MOORE: Well uh, the school -- school life was -- at that time was very strict in England. I started school when I was five and uh, did quite well. At the age of eleven they had the exam which was called 'the elevens's' which was used to -- I guess -- segregate the children into -- into one of -- into any of three categories. The -- the top category I guess had the brightest -- so called brightest children -- would go to grammar school. And the middle group in the exam would go to the commercial school where they would be trained for -- for business and secretarial work, commerce. And the third group would go to trade schools where they would learn uh, carpentry and plumbing and a lot of shop work and so on and so forth. And in my case I went to a very fine gra-- grammar school, which was a um, a fee -- a fee-paying grammar school and -- and I was given a scholarship there and -- and attended that school from the age of eleven to sixteen and a half. And that was quite a hard time for me because we, - - we really didn't have the money uh, to uh, outfit me properly in a proper school blazer and hat and the usual uniforms. The -- the cricket clothes were very expensive and we could never afford those. Everything I got

was some second hand. We played a lot of rugby. I was captain of the bantamweight rugby team for – for the school for about three years. I can't say that I really enjoyed that school. I – I should've uh, probably put out more effort but it wasn't the happiest time of my life.

K. MOORE: Where was that school exactly?

G. MOORE: That was right in Blackpool and it's not there anymore. They now turned it into a Salvation Army headquarters, I believe.

K. MOORE: And was it crowded, the school?

G. MOORE: No, it was not crowded. The classes were uh, as I remember, relatively small – about twenty or so, with a very rigid disciplinary system. W-- when we went in the morning we would have to – of course we all wore uniforms -- that's you know, school blazers and caps – and when we arrived in the morning the first thing we would do is probably stop at the tuck shop to get some sweets – candies, that is. And then when we went into the school we would have to take off our shoes and um – and caps of course. But we took our shoes off and we would have slippers there waiting -- or galoshes, we called them -- something to -- to put on while we were in the school. If – if you arrived late you automatically lined up outside the headmaster's study and he would come out and you would stick out your right hand and he would cane it.

K. MOORE: Do you remember specific teachers or playmates in that school?

G. MOORE: Well I remember s-- some specific teachers. I mean uh, there was a young Drip Murdoch, for instances, who uh, was a Trotskyite, and a very – very unusual and gentle – and gentle fellow who wore odd socks to class and his suits never quite matched and all kinds of things. He was

anachronism in that kind of school. There was Bill Brees who was a bluff geography teacher. [Not understood] who -- who -- who taught um, history and mathematics, I believe. Drip Murdoch -- did I mention Drip? I probably mentioned Drip Murdoch, right? So there were quite a few of them. They uh -- the headmaster originally -- the original headmaster -- now I'm trying to think of his name. Well it doesn't come to my tongue right now, but any event -- he -- he was a Greek scholar and if you didn't take Greek I don't think he had very much use for you in the school. So everybody tried a little Greek and we took uh four -- four years or so of Latin and uh -- and the same period of time for French and, generally, tried to get an education befitting the future gentleman, I suppose.

K. MOORE: What was your favorite subject?

G. MOORE: My favorite subject was rugby, to tell you the truth.

K. MOORE: (laughs) Um, you went on after that. Did you have any other schooling after that?

G. MOORE: Yeah, I went to um -- I went to uh, Blackpool Technical College for a while and took some commercial courses because I felt that that was what was promising in the area. And uh, that of course was then -- we were then at the period when uh -- let's see that would be nineteen-- 1937-38 when things were turning very nasty in the continent of Europe, and everybody in England -- at least we realized that uh, it looked like we were going to be in trouble. As a matter of fact the Spanish Civil War occurred about that time. And again I -- I can't remember the dates but I remember trying to get into the volunteers to go and fight against Franco. At that time I was only sixteen so they -- they wouldn't let me go, which -- which as it turned out quite fortunate else I wouldn't be here giving this -- this very poor interview right now.

K. MOORE: (laughs)

G. MOORE: W—w—where – where was I now? What were we talking about? Oh, what?

K. MOORE: What other schooling you had afterwards, you said the technical school –

G. MOORE: [interposed] Oh yeah no. So-- so that -- that happened. And then, then of course I – I -- I went to work at um, a company called Robert Fielding and Son on a standup road in Blackpool. This was a company that built houses and it was a rather good education for me because they did everything for themselves. They had their own clay pits and they made their own brick and they had a brick works and uh, and they had great saw mills and uh, mill shops where they did finish their carpentry and mill work. (clears throat) And I -- my mother sold me into slavery as an article clerk to that t—that firm, which meant that (clears throat) she was supposed to pay, but I think she got – got me in free and signed articles where I was bound to the um -- the chief of the firm as an article clerk, which was something like a Dickinsonian – d-- atmosphere. We worked standing up at standup desks and uh, used India ink and uh -- and pens with long steel nibs and everything was done in India ink so you weren't allowed to make any mistakes. The um, head female employee, the -- who's the cashier [not understood] was assigned the duty of makes suring -- that I was – making sure that I was properly dressed when I came to work and that I washed behind my ears and that I attended church every Sunday. And – and -- it was a very, very strict thing. We had lots of tea in the office and a fire place that was going merrily all the time and uh, it was a hard but a well -- a well taken education for me. Uh, and then came 1939 and the writing was on the wall and Mr. Chamberlain was already making his – his trips to [not understood] and uh, um, I think most people knew what was

going to happen. We didn't feel that we were quite ready for it, and I think Mr. Chamberlain may have saved us -- gained us a little time -- a little breathing room while people prepared for what was inevitable. One of the effects was that the companies like the small company -- relatively small company -- I was working for, started to retool all -- reassess the future. There was gonna be -- they knew there was not going to be a great deal of home building, for instance, if war broke out, and so they started to cut back and -- and regroup and a lot of people were casualties in that -- in that they were put out of work. So I was put out of work there in that company and then I went to work as a -- as an assistant. So there, on some plants that were being built for the government, one of them was to make war gases and I worked there. Then of course in -- in September Hitler invaded Poland and at that time, war broke out. England declared war and uh, everything changed at that particular time in our lives. I joined the home guard and -- which was a regiment of you know, an army of territorial soldiers. Some of them were seventy, seventy-five years of age, just like I am now. They'd fought in the Boer War and in the First Great War. Some of us were very young. We had wooden rifles to start with, and shotguns and pikes -- whatever we could lay our hands on -- and we went to drill every day. And -- then we would start to -- at night, and uh, guard the hospitals and the airfields and patrol the roads and look for parachuters which we were convinced would arrive and uh, I remember one time we found -- stopped an old lady on Whohill[ph] late at night and we became convinced that she was a German parachute in disguise -- parachuters. And uh, so we had a high time with her until she started to lay about with her umbrella and -- and we just retreated. And we would -- on patrol we'd stop at my mom's house and we'd have a pork pie and some cocoa and -- and there were five of us that were good buddies and always on patrol with each other and uh, one or two of them survived the war, as I did, luckily. So that went on and we expected to be invaded and as a matter of fact I remember thinking that it would be a good thing if

Hitler invaded us, because we were convinced that we would -- we would -- we would beat them quite easy. Because we knew all the edge rows and the fences and the little places that we knew we could trap Germans in and we knew we had it all planned out, what we were going to do with them. And then in 1940 I joined the Royal Air Force and uh -- I don't know whether you want me to go on with this now. Where are we now?

K. MOORE: In terms of your education, what education you received from the Royal Air Force?

G. MOORE: Well I went -- I went to uh -- to down in College Cambridge for a while and that was -- I think it was probably [not understood] how long that was. I think it was probably six months or so. And uh, I had originally joined as a um -- as a wireless operator air gunner and as fate would have it by, I was posted -- that was -- that was um -- billeted, if you like -- in my hometown, where the big Royal Air Force radio school was located. And uh, so I did that for a while and -- but then I -- I got the impression, along with one or two of my friends, that there -- there wasn't much future in being a,-- in being an air gunner in bomber command, because the turnover was so great. Lots and lots of casualties, so -- and I really wanted to be a pilot, so I -- I re-mustered for -- to pilot, and -- and uh, they were send me to pilot training, to Cambridge initially. And then uh, we passed through Cambridge and uh, I went to um -- where did I go from there? I went to an advanced flying training base and it so happened that one of my best friends -- Eric Oxford, who died in a raid during the war -- and I were sitting in -- in Nathy[ph], which is the British equivalent, I guess, of the -- of the USO -- USO. But it's not -- it was inside the base so it would be something like a commissary or something like that. And that when some officer came in and said would any of you fellows like to volunteer to go to the United States? Now this was now, and uh -- and when America came into the war.

K. MOORE: You're at 1941.

G. MOORE: Yeah somehow we've gotten to 1941. I guess there was quite a bit of time in between but uh, in any event, we -- we were sitting having -- we -- we were walking through the airfield and -- and my friend Eric said, how about stopping for a cup of [not understood] and a -- and crumpet or muffin or something? So we, we -- we went into this Nathy room and -- and the officer came in and said is there anybody here who would like to volunteer to go to the United States because America had just gotten into the war at that time. And I'd always had a desire to see the United States. In our -- in our living room in Blackpool from the time I was a little infant I used to look at the -- the painting on the wall which was called 'The Boyhood of Raleigh'. I think the original is in the Tate Museum in London and it was a picture of Sir Walter Raleigh uh, talking, telling stories to two boys. They were dressed of course in -- in the c—in the clothes of that time, and pointing across the Atlantic towards America. He was -- ob-- obviously telling stories about his -- his expeditions to the Americas. And that always got me interested and so I -- I and Eric volunteered along with a few others. And then we came to the United States and -- first through Moncton, New Brunswick and then on to U.S. naval air station at Grosse Ile, Michigan. I think that's the one that George Bush went to initially too. And so I took training with the U.S. Navy there, Naval Air Force there. I think for about four or five months, or six months maybe. And uh, at that base they had a USO in the um -- on --on an island called Elba Island, uh -- which was a -- a home that had belonged to the Olds family of the automobile fame. And uh, and th-- that's where I met the woman who would become my wife, Juanita Clark [ph]. And I always say that she was the USO 'hostess with the mostess' at that time and uh, so, I guess we met to -- well we were dancing to 'Black Magic' or something like that. And then, after that -- and then of course we -- we -- we um, -- we

established a very strong relationship and uh, became sort of engaged. And then I – I was -- was sent to Pensacola where I finished up the – the training with the U.S. Naval Air Force. I got U.S. naval – navy pilot wings – and I also had my Royal Air Force pilot wings so I – I really felt that I was well equipped. And so then uh, we went from there back again to Moncton New Brunswick as usual, which was a big holding camp for uh, air crews in – in Canada or for the United States and Canada. And then on to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island for uh, some training in – as -- in long range navigation. And then from there back to England.

K. MOORE: When you finally decided to come to America – to immigrate to the States, um, was it because you knew someone who was in America already?

G. MOORE: Well I – I had met my – my -- the woman who was to be my wife – Juanita – in 19—[not understood] 1942 and uh --and – at that time -- I think it was '42, at Grosse Ile, in Michigan. And uh, so we got sort of engaged and had talked about getting married but uh, I decided – at the time that uh – I might not make it through the war and that was – that was a good – a good decision to make because my friends were already getting killed by the dozens and uh -- and uh – [not understood] and had trained there were dead before any – any of us got back to England. So there didn't seem to be any point in – in getting married and tying her up to an Englishman somewhere. So, we were engaged then for five years and never saw each other. And uh, I will say that I uh – I was true blue and I hope she was – I'm sure she was true blue too.

K. MOORE: Then you did want to come to America.

G. MOORE: Well yes I mean I'd already made that commitment and I – I didn't think she was going to be happy in – in England. And uh, so I decided that I

was going to have to come to America and – and that was on my agenda the whole time.

K. MOORE: Well how did your mother feel about this?

G. MOORE: (long pause) Oh. We were talking about how my mother felt about it. Well, I had already been away from home then, you know in the – during the war for close to four years or so and uh – part of the time in Africa. So I was saying that the people in that area are not -- not overly emotional so she never objected to me leaving. I'm sure the family as a whole thought I was uh, really uh, deserting Great Britain and uh -- to become a – to become an American. And I don't think that they really – really liked that – but they – they didn't – object vociferously to me about it.

K. MOORE: How did your father feel?

G. MOORE: Well, the same way.

K. MOORE: And when you left, did anyone give you a goodbye party, before you left?

G. MOORE: No. I went over to – and then the night before I left I went over to my friend Bill Bradley's house and – he was one of the fellows that had gotten through the war. He – he and I were in the whole guard together and his father, as a matter of fact, was a sergeant in charge of the platoon that we belonged to. And so we sat there and just talked a while. So we – we – we sat around and – and talked about – you know, our boyhood and what a good life it had been and nobody said – you know, I'll miss you or anything like that. They – just accepted the fact that I was leaving and the next morning I got up and mom made me a good breakfast and came to the door as I took my suitcase out and we said goodbye. And I'm sure she knew that I was gonna go be gone forever, but she never shed tears

or anything like that. That wasn't the thing to do for those people in that part of the world.

K. MOORE: Well when you left, what did you take with you? How much luggage did you back?

G. MOORE: I just had one – one rather [not understood] old suitcase. But uh, I had – I don't really know what was in it. I guess – I guess I probably had a change of underwear or something and uh – just a few shirts, whatever. You know I had gotten rid of most of my stuff before left so I was traveling relatively light. Yeah I – I didn't have a lot of stuff at all. I – I just – just had a suitcase with the bare necessities in it.

K. MOORE: Did you take anything special along with you that was a mem—memory of your family?

G. MOORE: Hm.... I don't think so. I don't think I did, come to think of it. No no. Well, yes I did. I – I – I -- I – I had an axe head that had been forged, probably, a couple of hundred years ago. But that time that had been given to me by my grandfather. And for some reason or other I developed an affection for this ax, which had been pounded on an anvil by an ancient blacksmith somewhere and uh, I'd used it as a – as a boy to chop wood for the fireplace and so on. And – and so I -- I cut the handle off of the – axed off the axe and that was the heaviest part of my luggage – was the axe head. But I now have it sitting in my – my workshop.

K. MOORE: When you took only that suitcase, what did you leave behind, in terms of belongings?

G. MOORE: Well y—you know I'd just – relatively – just come out of the military so I didn't have – have many belongings of any kind in the – in the Royal Air

Force or any other branch of the British military there was no fuss about when you got out. You were demobilized. I was never discharged so the queen – I guess the queen could still call on me and – if she was in real trouble – which I think she is. But in any event, I'm still a demobilized pilot and we – when we – we got out we went in a great big [not understood] and walked in one door and put our uniforms and socks and shoes and whatever on – on a big pile – and walked through the [not understood] picking out a – a suit that might approximate the right size and the shirt and the pair of shoes and at the end you picked out a raincoat that might be – might fit you. And walked out the other door and you were a civilian. And that was – that was all of the – the stuff that I really had. Now at home I had uh, some – some shotguns and some very good uh, split bamboo fishing rods, built for trout and salmon and bottom fishing. And I - - I sold all of those to pay for my passage to the United States. So I didn't have any of that personal stuff. Some – some stuff I left behind, which were things that I'd received as a boy as presents and I didn't see any point in bringing those along.

K. MOORE: So when you traveled to America, you went by yourself, basically?

G. MOORE: Yes I did. I – I mean I – I did go by myself. I met people on the ship and on the way over of course, but I didn't know any of them before that.

K. MOORE: In what port did you leave from?

G. MOORE: I left from Southampton.

K. MOORE: And how did you get to Southampton from Blackpool?

G. MOORE: I went by train. It was the only way to get there at the time. You couldn't walk that far – it was a long way to walk.

K. MOORE (laughs) And what was the journey like on the train?

G. MOORE: On the train? Well it was generally like any other tr—journey on a train. I mean you – what? It was – I mean I don't know why you asked that question. (K. MOORE laughs) Just sitting in a railroad carriage and watching the countryside going by listening to the rails going clickety clickety clickety click – that's all.

K. MOORE: (laughs) What was the name of the ship that you sailed on?

G. MOORE: It was the – it was the U.S. Marine Falcon – belonged to the U.S. lines. It – it was a -- an ex-liberty ship – a cargo ship, really.

K. MOORE: And once you got to the port from the train, did you have to wait for the ship? Did you stay overnight?

G. MOORE: I stayed overnight in Southampton with a – with a – a brother of my step-father who had become the – an official in – in Southampton. I stayed the – the night there and then went down to the dock and the boat was – the ship was waiting for me.

K. MOORE: And did you – what was it like waiting to know – knowing that you were gonna go away and possibly never coming back?

G. MOORE: Well I remember standing on the dock --you know, looking up at the ship and – and saying hey, you know – you know – what in the hell are you doing this for? Why don't you just go back home – where it's comfortable? And there's someone that had been there and – and sort of talked to me a little bit. I – I might just have turned around, but I didn't.

K. MOORE: Did your family members that you stayed with that night – did they see you off?

G. MOORE: No, no. These weren't really family members . They – they were – they were just – they were just a place I was gonna stay for the night.

K. MOORE: Well when the ship left, do you remember the month and the year that was?

G. MOORE: This is in March of 1947.

K. MOORE: And what was it like on the ship? What were the accommodations that you had?

G. MOORE: Well I don't think you could call them accommodations. That would be giving them too much – more – much more than they – they're due in the way of description. I mean the ship was a living hell. What had happened was that at that time, in – after the war – everyone -- practically it seemed, in the world – was either going back where they came from or trying to escape from where they came from and go somewhere else. And so it was very, very difficult to get a pass—passage anywhere. And after I'd visited the American Embassy in London and attained a visa, I tried to get a passage and couldn't for many months until I met someone who knew a fellow who knew a fellow who could get me on the ship. And it turned out to be the Marine Falcon and the fare was – as I understand – as I remember – very reasonable. And rightly so, for what was gonna happen to me. And so that was the ship that I came on and uh, it – there were very few people got on in England. There was Carl Downs and his wife who had a boiler manufacturing business in Detroit. There was an Irish girl who was going to Brooklyn to become a maid. A young Frenchman who was going to be a translator at the – at the new United Nations

organization. And when I got on the ship I thought – my god, they – they can't be going with this – this few people. And sure enough, it sailed I – I think for Leav[ph] and when we got to Leav[ph] – I remember we got there at night and suddenly the ship started to fill up with – with hundreds of – of Jewish people who were I think Eastern Jews. They – they all were relatively short in stature, I remember – and wore long coats with astrakhan collars and – and – and – wore – wore the black hats all the time and – the women were dressed in all babushkas and had their legs wrapped with leggings and they trooped on and on and on and on into the bowels of the ship. I mean there were no real cabin – mess decks – that's all – there were mess decks. And so the ship filled up with these people and I heard later that they were going to New York for transshipment to Israel. Because – then again, this is just what I heard – that the British had blockaded the Mediterranean to the direct immigration from Europe to –to – to Israel for some reason or other. So th—that was the compliment that was on board the ship at that time. It was – it was full of people.

K. MOORE: What class did you travel? Was there a class at all?

G. MOORE: No, no. Just – just steerage.

K. MOORE: And what was the food like onboard?

G. MOORE: Well I – you know I mean it wasn't spectacular by any means. They had mess decks and you carried tin trays of food from – from the galley down to the mess deck and all ate together so I guess on the way over we probably I—ate a lot of S.O.S. and – and – and – and hot tea and – I don't know, whatever. Chip beef, lot of scrambled eggs. I really don't know. I can't remember.

K. MOORE: Did you t—you hadn't taken any food with you?

G. MOORE: No, no. I wish that I had.

K. MOORE: Were you allowed – where'd you sleep? Were you allowed on deck too?

G. MOORE: Well yeah you could go on deck if you – if you wanted to. As a matter of fact we spent most of our time on deck at one time because of the – the problems the ship ran into. So you could go anywhere on the ship you liked. But I mean there's nothing to see on the ship. It was a cargo vessel.

K. MOORE: And where did you sleep?

G. MOORE: I slept in a bunk. Like on a m– on a – on a – you know in a – in a mess deck with a lot of other guys. A lot of other people.

K. MOORE: And when you said it was hell, how was it hell?

G. MOORE: Well because (clears throat) in March '47 there was a terrible storm in the Atlantic and – and we were in uh, an unballasted ship, if you like. This – as I said this was an ex-liberty ship so – they got into this terrible, terrible storm which – in which I understand several ships were – were – sank. Or – is it sank or sunk? Sank.

K. MOORE: Sank.

G. MOORE: Sank. I think sank. And – I don't know, it – it – we – we – we – we were in real trouble and the ship – every time it raised up it would raise the bow out thirty or forty feet out of the water. It would come down and clang and spread out on the sea and all the toilets would spout water and – people were running around and screaming and praying and gathering in groups.

And so Carl Down and I and his wife and the other two or three people I mentioned – we decided we'd be better off on the deck. And so we went up on the deck and found a – an open cabin on the deck and we sat there for two or three days. And the ship – I think hove to in the middle of the Atlantic in the storm for several days. I think the trip – if I remember rightly – took seventeen days. And it was very strange for -- for the Downs because on the way over to England he had flown with his wife – managed to get an – a – an a— a—a—air – airf—airfare from the United States to England. And then they'd flown over and his wife got sick – sick on the plane. And she said I don't want to fly back so he arranged to get on this ship which was, for her jumping out the frying pan into a very hot fire. So she was worse off on the ship than she would've been being sick on the plane [not understood] going back.

K. MOORE: Did you get sick at all?

G. MOORE: No, not particularly. I – I – I don't remember getting sick.

K. MOORE: And your companions?

G. MOORE: No, no. We weren't very sick. A lot of people were. I think the people from Europe – from the continent of Europe that I've mentioned – had never been near the sea before. I was raised on the sea and spent a lot of time on the sea. But I don't think I'd ever been on an ocean before and – and they were in a big mess on that boat. The whole boat was in a big mess, come to think of it. It was a very harrowing experience that I wouldn't want to go through again.

K. MOORE: Were there activities on the boat at all for people?

G. MOORE: Just throwing up and things like that (laughs).

K. MOORE: (laughs) Do you have any anecdotes or stories about the boat to reflect?

G. MOORE: No I – then I think was one of the most miserable periods in my life. I mean the five others sat down and played poker for – day and night for three or four days and that – that’s an anecdote. But it was a very miserable experience.

K. MOORE: Well do you remember seeing land for the first time after this trip?

G. MOORE: Yes, yes we did. We – we saw land, thank god. If we hadn’t we would’ve been in real trouble. And yes, we saw land after the trip.

K. MOORE: (laughs) Do you remember the feeling of first seeing land?

G. MOORE: Well I w—I thought I was very pleased that we’d arrived. I was very thankful we’d arrived. I – I – I then I guess I found out the true value of prayer, you know.

K. MOORE: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time?

G. MOORE: Yeah we did. We saw the Statue of Liberty coming in. It was a very thrilling experience to see it. You know, through the mist as you came into the harbor under the – under the – the – under the bridge. It was um – it was a very um, moving experience, yeah.

K. MOORE: And what were your first impressions of New York City as you came in?

G. MOORE: Well I’m going to New York City when we came in. I mean you could see it on the sky—skyline. It was a huge panorama of buildings on the – on the skyline that I’d never seen before. I mean London wasn’t like that.

London didn't have, in those days, any—anything about – above about four or five stories, you know. I – the – so – it was an experience to look at the New York skyline.

K. MOORE: How did you get from the ship to Ellis Island?

G. MOORE: Well after this trying time I had I -- I don't remember much of anything except that I got off the ship, which is the thing that was foremost in my mind. And I really – I really can't – I really don't know how we got to the island. Whether we were transshipped or the ship docked right at the island or something. I -- I mean I – for some reason that part of it blanked right out. All I know is that we got off and I was with Carl Down and his wife and the other two or three people – the young Irish girl and the Frenchman and two or three other young people. And we all got off together.

K. MOORE: Do you remember anything from Ellis Island – the inside of the building where you were – you were put through for processing—

G. MOORE: [interposed] Well I remember this being – you know, a big hall. And the thing that I don't remember is the – the other people that I said came on at Leav[ph] getting off the ship. I don't remember them getting off at all. And oh, we walked into this – this big hall – and you know, I had the papers and so on and so forth and so did everybody else and we didn't have any problem. Everybody seemed pleasant. You know in an official sort of way they weren't – they weren't giving us leis or anything like that – they just, let us go through.

K. MOORE: Do you remember – were you frightened or excited, at the time?

G. MOORE: No. No no no. I'd been through World War II. I wasn't frightened or excited by that kind of thing anymore. No I – I was – how could I say it – I was very, very pleased to be there and looking forward to wear I was going.

K. MOORE: What were you wearing and wh—what were the people you were with wearing as you went through, do you remember?

G. MOORE: Well we were – we were wearing suits. We were, you know – I mean in those days, people didn't wear casual clothes like they do now. I mean we were wearing suit jackets and – and so on – and we looked like – looked like ordinary people.

K. MOORE: Was Ellis Island crowded and was it clean? Do you remember any of that?

G. MOORE: I thought it was very clean and it wasn't crowded, as I mentioned. As I mentioned, I – I don't really – I don't remember these – these – these folks who c—constituted most of the [not understood] on the ship getting off at that time. So I don't know what happened to them. But it certainly wasn't crowded when we went through.

K. MOORE: Do you remember the medical examination?

G. MOORE: We didn't get a medical examination. They just looked at our papers and w—were—we were on our way.

K. MOORE: Did you stay overnight there?

G. MOORE: No. No, we went from there – I think right to Grand Central Station.

K. MOORE: You didn't eat there or have any other—

G. MOORE: [interposed] Nope, didn't do anything there.

K. MOORE: So how long was this – this process of you going through Ellis Island?

G. MOORE: Oh I would think about an hour or two. Not more than that.

K. MOORE: Was there any entertainment provided or anything while you were waiting?

G. MOORE: At Ellis Island? (laughs) You're kidding. (laughs) Why don't you go on to the next question.

K. MOORE: (laughs) Alright. What were your expectations about America before you came?

G. MOORE: I really – I really looked forward to – to coming to the country and it – and it wasn't because I was coming from – from a life of persecution or – or privation or – because I really enjoyed my life up to then. I mean I had a nice home in England and I loved what I was doing – loved the hunting and fishing and the fresh air and the sea and – and so on. So I didn't have any of that driven type of feeling that I was going to uh, a land where – where the streets were paved with gold or anything like that. And I had been in the United States before and had flown with the United States – U.S. Naval Air Force and – and also for other United States Air Forces – the Fifth and the Eighth Air Force for some time. So, I was familiar with Americans, my wife-to-be was waiting in Detroit and uh, to tell you the truth, that's exactly what I was thinking about.

K. MOORE: Where did you go after you left Ellis Island, and tell us the trip that you took.

G. MOORE: I took a train trip to Detroit. And when I got to Detroit my wife-to-be was waiting there for me.

K. MOORE: What address in Detroit?

G. MOORE: That was at 82 Batavia Street in River Rouge, Michigan.

K. MOORE: Alright so when you – when you – when she came to get you in Detroit, how did you get home?

G. MOORE: I think she – she drove in – I think her brother was with her and they drove me in the – in the c—in his car back to 82 Batavia Street.

K. MOORE: And describe 82 Batavia. What was the house like?

G. MOORE: It was a frame house. With a long porch in front. I guess nowadays it would be a – considered be an old fashioned house. It was a big – large house. White frame house.

K. MOORE: How many rooms, approximately?

G. MOORE: Oh I don't know. Let's see that'd be a – four or five bedrooms, and the dining room, and the kitchen, and the front room, and a big basement and a couple of bathrooms. Something like that.

K. MOORE: Um, how many people lived in that house at that time?

G. MOORE: Well that – when we went there just uh, Juanita and her mother. And uh – and her father.

K. MOORE: What job in America did you get when you came – first came here?

G. MOORE: Well I – I – I didn't have any prospects for a job and – and I – so I – and I didn't real—really know how to look for a job. But I – I saw a – a little advert—advertisement in the local paper that said that in this furniture factory – so called furniture factory – they were offering a dollar an hour. And so I converted that right away to British currency and realized I was gonna be wealthy in about a couple weeks. And so I went to work for a dollar an hour to this – sort of a sweatshop making dinette furniture. And found out that a dollar in America is not – wasn't the same at that time as a dollar converted to British currency.

K. MOORE: Were other family members in that household working?

G. MOORE: Yeah. Her father was working. I think he worked in the – in the local ship yards at that time. There was a ship yard in – in -- in River Rouge. I believe that was what it was.

K. MOORE: Who else was working besides the father?

G. MOORE: Well my – my – Juanita – my wife-to-be was – was the office manager at Sharpless[ph] Chemicals Corporation, which was located on the d—on the Detroit River south of River Rouge.

K. MOORE: And did you experience any bigotry or persecution in – in America?

G. MOORE: Not a bit of it, no. None at all. As a matter of fact, quite the reverse. And – and remember now, that I uh, had been in that area in the – in the air

force and so I knew already, from my stay on the Grosse Ile air base and particularly the USO, a number of people. And so I wasn't really coming into totally strange territory.

K. MOORE: Were there other immigrants in your – in your area?

G. MOORE: I n—I was not in contact with any other immigrants. Yes, there was. There was another pilot from Britain. Um, he married Trudy McGonagall. He was called Doug Fields. Doug Fields was another pilot who came in at the same time. He survived the war. As a matter of fact he – everybody knew he was gonna survive the war because he was um – he was a real um – artful dodger all through the war. He never got out of training all the time the war was on. So [not understood].

K. MOORE: Um, did you get along with other people in your neighborhood – in that neighborhood – and in River Rouge?

G. MOORE: Yes, very well. They were all nice people. I never had any problem at all with any of the people.

K. MOORE: And did other family members live nearby?

G. MOORE: Yeah. Yeah her – her two sisters lived nearby – Juanita's two sisters. And – and her brother lived nearby. And we got along just fine.

K. MOORE: What was religious life like in America at that time?

G. MOORE: Well I r—I mean religious life is taken – religion is taken a lot more seriously in the United States than it is in the – certainly in England, where – and in England it's a sort of unnecessary pastime most of the time. But they were really serious about it, particularly in Juanita's family, because

they were – they were all – what they call old fashioned Methodists, I suppose you call ‘em. And they really believed in – in attending church and doing good things in the church and so on and so forth. So I – then I became a Methodist.

K. MOORE: Did you live near a house of worship in your River Rouge?

G. MOORE: Just around the corner.

K. MOORE: And what was that church?

G. MOORE: That was the First Methodist Church.

K. MOORE: When did you move from River Rouge and where to did you move?

G. MOORE: Well we got married on June the sixth, 1948 and live with – with Juanita’s mother for about two years until we found a house in Lincoln Park, Michigan, which is about five or six miles from – from River Rouge – if that.

K. MOORE: Were you satisfied with life in America?

G. MOORE: Yeah I was very happy. I – I eventually got a very good job and worked my way th—up through the corporation and I was very, very happy. I wouldn’t want it any other way.

K. MOORE: Did any family tragedy occur during the years following your coming to America and if it did, what?

G. MOORE: Well, not in the United States. But my – my sister Mary, the one I was very close to all my life – died at a relatively – relatively early age and that to me was a great tragedy.

K. MOORE: Briefly describe the course of your life – like your marriage, children, your occupation – or anecdotes about meeting your spouse, etc.

G. MOORE: Well as I mentioned previously, I met my – my wife at the – at the USO near the U.S. naval base on Grosse Ile and if there's such a thing as love at first sight, I guess it was that. We've been that way ever since for the last forty si—as a matter of fact it's fifty uh, it's – it's -- how long is it since I first met her? Four, forty-two, fifty-one years since I first met her. And so it's been a very happy time. What else did you want to know?

K. MOORE: Do you have children?

G. MOORE: Oh yeah, yeah we have children. We have three children – two daughters and a son. The eldest daughter was born in 1948 and my next daughter was born in 1953 and son in '55. And they've all done very well academically and the eldest girl teaches school at Camp Lejeune in – in North Carolina on the Marine base. She teaches high school. My son is teaching – my son is a – is a PhD teaching at a university in – in – in New York. And my daughter's at the University of Helsinki in Finland completing a PhD in linguistics and doing very well at it.

K. MOORE: Are you happy that you came to America when you look back over the years and you make an evaluation about what your life could've been or was?

G. MOORE: Well no one knows what their life could've been but I'm very happy that I came to America and as I said, I did very well. I finished up as a director

of insurance and real estate at BSF Corporation and it was – it was a good job and something that I was very interested in and – and I was very, very happy.

K. MOORE: What about your family – were they happy that you chose to come to America?

G. MOORE: I don't think they were particularly happy any – any more than they weren't particularly sad. It was just a total unemotional experience for me.

K. MOORE: Are there any other comments you'd like to make about looking back over your life and -- and coming and immigrating to States?

G. MOORE: Well not particularly. I think as it – as it turned out the – the thing worked out extraordinarily well all-around. In later years I was able to go back to – to Europe, traveled a lot on business in Europe, went back – visited my home town and my family once or twice a year for many years. So, everything worked out very well.

K. MOORE: Well thank you very much for the interview.

G. MOORE: You're very welcome.