

KM-7

CHARLES ALFRED ADAMS, Jr.

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INTERVIEWER: KATE MOORE

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ENGLAND, 1923 (DETAINED AND DEPORTED), 1924

AGE: 8

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PORT: SOUTHAMPTON

RESIDENCES:

ENGLAND: PLAISTOW, LONDON

UNITED STATES: CARSON CITY, MICHIGAN

MOORE: Good morning. This is Kate Moore from the National Park Service. And today is the sixth of December, 1993 and I'm in Lansing, Michigan at the house of Charles Adams, who came from England in 1923 when he was eight years old. And why don't you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please.

ADAMS: Yes, my name is Charles Alfred Adams, born April 4th, 1915 in London, England. And I lived for a short time, before coming to this country, at 33 Egham Road, Plaistow, London.

MOORE: And where were you born? In London, England? That's where you're born?

ADAMS: I was born in London, England.

MOORE: And um, describe the neighborhood of the area that you came from. In London.

ADAMS: Oh, probably lower working class.

MOORE: What, what section of London was it? Do you remember?

ADAMS: Plaistow.

MOORE: Plaistow, yeah.

ADAMS: Well, that... I was uh, born at home. At um, I don't know, somebody's house in the district of Bow, which Cockney country in London.

MOORE: Could you spell Plaistow in full please?

ADAMS: P-L-A-I-S-T-O-W. It exists today. If you take the underground from London, uh, on the district line, you have to go through Plaistow.

MOORE: What was your father's name?

ADAMS: Same. Charles Alfred.

MOORE: Are you? Are you a junior then?

ADAMS: Yes. Ammunitions.

MOORE: What was his occupation?

ADAMS: Here? Or there?

MOORE: There.

ADAMS: Well, there was shortly after World War I and he worked in the 'munitions plant [referring to an ammunitions factory, i.e. war materials and weapons production]. Ah, Woolwich. Ah, city or district of Woolwich. Well, W-I-C-H, W-O-O-L-W-I-C-H. It's on the Thames River.

MOORE: What did your father look like? Can you describe him?

ADAMS: Ah, ordinary chap. English chap. I've got a picture of him.

MOORE: How tall would you say he was?

ADAMS: Um, probably a little shorter than. I'm five foot nine. He's probably just about uh, five foot. Black hair.

MOORE: Black hair. And what

ADAMS: Black hair.

MOORE: Black hair. And uh, what about his personality and temperament? How would you characterize it?

ADAMS: Just a hardworking English bloke. He get mad, once a while, when something didn't go right. No different than anybody else.

MOORE: And is there a story about your father that you associate with your father from your childhood?

ADAMS: I don't understand that question.

MOORE: Well is there anything if you were going to tell a story about your father, that typifies your father, what would you tell someone? Any anecdotes about him?

ADAMS: I don't uh, remember anything special about him over there. Except um, coming home from work tired because uh, to get to our home he had to take a ferry and a couple of trains.

MOORE: So it was a hardworking life there?

ADAMS: He was, yeah, he was a manual worker, worked with machines. As far as I know.

MOORE: And your mother's name, what was your mother's name?

ADAMS: Um. Charlotte Hannah.

MOORE: And, Hannah. H-A...

ADAMS: H-A-N-N-A-H.

MOORE: Right. And what, what did she do?

ADAMS: Well, uh, she was one of about uh, seven girls there were born to her mother and father. They operated a small store in the city of London.

MOORE: What was kind of store was that?

ADAMS: Grocery store.

MOORE: And what did she look like? How did she look?

ADAMS: She had real dark. She was short. Uh, I don't know.

MOORE: Brown or blue eyes?

ADAMS: No, I think she had brown eyes.

MOORE: And what about her personality and temperament? You know anything about
[inaudible]?

ADAMS: Oh, she get mad at my father once a while. And he get mad at her. Uh, but
ah, it blew over. I wouldn't say they're any different than any other English
person.

MOORE: And, what, what.

ADAMS: Nothing of exceptional difference.

MOORE: What about her chores around the house? What, what were her
responsibilities [inaudible]?

ADAMS: Well, a typical English housewife in London did the cooking, did the shopping,
and made the beds, and swept the floor, and stayed at home pretty much,
raised her kids.

MOORE: What about uh, any stories you have associated with your childhood? With
your mom?

ADAMS: If you're... I don't remember thinking anything in particulars, special.

MOORE: Anything funny she ever did or? (pause)

ADAMS: When you're getting back to beyond eight years, then I uh, I, I just don't remember too [inaudible]

MOORE: [interposed] What about after eight years? What would you say?

ADAMS: Well eight years, we come to this country.

MOORE: And, and then what? Would you say

ADAMS: [interposed] Well you see, they came to this country in 1924 and she only lived with us until about 1929 when she divorced my father.

MOORE: And do you have brothers and sisters that came?

ADAMS: One sister.

MOORE: One sister, what's her name?

ADAMS: That's Vera Florence.

MOORE: And how do you spell Vera?

ADAMS: V-E-R-A.

MOORE: Alright, and uh, what house did you have in England? Can you describe it, where you lived.

ADAMS: Uh, the house we lived, on Plaistow, was uh, a duplex. You wa-walked into the front entrance. It was uh, kind of a brick shaped uh, opening. Like a little uh, anti uh, porch, it was for. And on one side was one, towards one part of the

uh, apartment, and the other was ours. And you went in the door and you could walk through a small hallway all the way through the kitchen and scullery into the back yard. On one side of that hall, there was a living room and a stairway. There was an upstairs. There was uh, two bedrooms up there uh, [inaudible]. (pause) Very, very small rooms, c-compared to the American standard.

MOORE: How was it heated, that house?

ADAMS: (pause) Frankly I don't remember.

MOORE: And h-how about, was there a garden?

ADAMS: Well, you could have a garden. I think. Uh, the backyard's are about 15 by 10 or something like that. Very, very small. Right, very, very small. I... (pause)

MOORE: Then did you grow, grow any plants or ?

ADAMS: I don't think we did there.

MOORE: What kind of furniture did, was in the house? Do you remember anything special about the house, in your childhood?

ADAMS: No. Just ordinary furniture.

MOORE: And was it, that was in the city of London in... this house? Right in that neighborhood?

ADAMS: Well, in greater London.

MOORE: In greater London, yeah. Did you keep any animals at all?

ADAMS: Why they had a dog up one time. But he died, the dog died of distemper [reference to Canine Distemper Virus, an often fatal, multisystemic viral disease that affects dogs], I think.

MOORE: Who else lived in the building?

ADAMS: Well it just do happened in the other half, uh.... see, I call Auntie uh... I, anyway I can't. Right now I can't remember. But, she married my father's brother and um, Arthur and um, he died quite a while ago and she's still living today. Aunt Gertie. That was her name. Aunt Gertie.

MOORE: And then, and she's there in that house?

ADAMS: What, when she. Well I lived on the side. She was unmarried living on the other side with her mother. And uh, another daughter, I believe.

MOORE: Now um, what, who did the cooking in the family?

ADAMS: Who did it? My mother.

MOORE: And what was your favorite food?

ADAMS: (long pause) I uh, I don't really recall anything like that, er, favorite. Over there we ate what was put in front of us. We don't have any choices. You know, choices. And my mother's favorite saying was, before we sat down to eat, "I thank Lord for what we've had. A little more, we would be glad. But as times are so awfully bad. We've got to put up with what we've had."

(both laugh) (inaudible noises)

MOORE: Alright.

ADAMS: That's what I remember of my mother.

MOORE: Alright. And um, where, what was the kitchen like? And...

ADAMS: Well it's rather small, but I uh, I don't really, really remember that.

MOORE: And what about the mealtime? Did you eat together everyone? (pause)
What were meals like?

ADAMS: Well, the English system of eating was eating all the time. But when my father's working, I don't really recall, uh, special food. I did think we did have an evening meal and maybe a supper.

MOORE: And um, where were your grandparents? Were there any other relatives nearby, lived in the area?

ADAMS: I uh, my grandparents died in England a long time ago.

MOORE: Before you were a child?

ADAMS: Well, I didn't meet my, my grandfather and my grandmother on the maternal side while I was still in England. That be around six or seven. I met my, probably once when I was over there. But uh, my, my grandmother uh, think committed suicide so I understand she wasn't alive at the time that I saw my grandfather.

MOORE: And um, who were you closest to uh, in your family? Was there anyone you were close to?

ADAMS: Not particularly.

MOORE: And uh, was there any favorite uncle or cousin or something comes to mind?

ADAMS: Well yes, uh, one of my mother's sisters was Auntie Flo. She, she had a bike and she took me for a little ride on the bike one time. I had another uh, uncle, I can't remember, uh, exactly his name, on my father's side. And he worked for um, book, book publishing company at the time. And he gave me a complete set, ten books, of the children's encyclopedia. From which I read from cover to cover 'fore I was, 'fore I came to this country. I tried to bring the books with me, but they got thrown out because of the long journey. Because of the way the (inaudible murmuring) when I left England, left the books behind.

[Recording Error 11:53 to 12:04. The volume of the recording is considerably lowered and the voices, while audible, are unintelligible.]

MOORE: What religion did um remember anything in uh... Did you go to church often or?

ADAMS: No, I can say something about that. The state religion is the Church of England over there. And I used to go on Sunday afternoons to the Band of Hope [an English religious temperance organization]. Well, it's an organization for small children and they give us a little song book with the words in and no, no music. And I remember going there, seeing, singing a few songs. But that's all. That's about the only religion, I remember. Band of Hope. (laughs)

MOORE: And um, what, was that nearby, that church? Nearby your house?

ADAMS: No, I had to walk two, three blocks. I, I, I don't know now where it was located.

MOORE: Did your parents practice religion at all? At all?

ADAMS: No.

MOORE: And you never had any religious persecution or prejudice or anything like that?

ADAMS: No.

MOORE: What about holiday celebrations? What were some of the favorites you had?

ADAMS: Well, Christmas, 'course.

MOORE: And what kind of food did you eat then?

ADAMS: Plum pudding, I think, uh, was kind of a delicacy back then. Steamed plum pudding for Christmas. It was very (unintelligible word), a very heavy cake and once you ate it, it was very heavy on the stomach. I think it's full of fat, but it was very rich. A typical English meal, which are, our meals over there are very heavy and satisfying.

MOORE: What about um, Guy Fawkes Day? Remember that?

ADAMS: Oh yes. I was going to come to that. Guy Fawkes Day. The only chance we had of shoot off fire crackers.

MOORE: And uh, do you remember much of that day, what, where [inaudible]

ADAMS: [interposed] Well, we didn't shoot any fire crackers. It cost too much. But uh, people had money used to shoot them off then.

MOORE: What about effigies? Did you do that effigies of Guy Fawkes as a child?

ADAMS: I never put one together. But that was done. M-made out of straw and some clothes that burned, yes. Um, I remember seeing them. But we didn't do it at, uh, like at their house.

MOORE: And so Christmas was basically, for you, the happiest holiday?

ADAMS: Oh yes, we got Christmas presents. We got money, got an orange in a stocking and uh, a few things um. The one thing I did get was a rocking horse. Uh, but we had to leave that behind, 'course, when I left. And um, (murmuring), I am very intrigued with an (inaudible word) set that I received for Christmas. Where you could build structures, you know and uh, I, I enjoyed building. I guess that's where I got my mechanical aptitude from.

MOORE: Did you take that with you when you came to the United States?

ADAMS: No, we didn't. Oh, we, you had to, limited what you brought. Anything that wasn't absolutely necessary was discarded 'fore we came.

MOORE: And so absolutely all, most of your toys were discarded?

ADAMS: Yes.

MOORE: Um, um, how did you feel about that, by the way?

ADAMS: I didn't give a second thought really. And then, nothing I could do about it.

MOORE: Uh, do you remember school life there?

ADAMS: Yes.

MOORE: In England? What would you play?

ADAMS: Well, we had strict, firm teachers. But uh, they, they kept discipline. And they were people you looked up to. Uh, the discipline didn't help me, hurt me a bit. If I, stepped out of line and got my knuckles wrapped. We accepted it in good faith and we didn't do it again. And that's something that we lack in this country, is discipline. But we, we had discipline and we learned more. ...uh.

MOORE: Where, where was the school that you went to? Do you remember the name of it?

ADAMS: Uh, no, I uh, I would remember it. I know where the location was because we're living at 33 Egham Road. At the foot of the road where it ran into was a main, main road and then across the main road was a park. And you went to the park and the school was outside the park.

MOORE: And um, this is, what were the conditions of school? Were many children in school? Was it crowded or was it?

ADAMS: Uh no, every, every seat was filled. (cough) But people were orderly and, and uh, we learned. And it wouldn't make much difference, if-f-f you uh, they think, we don't need a few students per teacher if you can keep order.

MOORE: How many were in a class, do you remember?

ADAMS: I haven't the slightest, maybe 30, 30 I would guess, yes.

MOORE: Do you remember any playmates or teachers of that time?

ADAMS: A little girl took a shine to me before I knew what was like, sex was all about.
(laughs)

MOORE: What was her name?

ADAMS: ... I, I can't remember now.

MOORE: A trip back for your memory uh...

ADAMS: Yeah.

MOORE: Did uh,

ADAMS: [interposed] Well, you see, I can add this, back in those days, our desks were really kind of like benches. Uh, a desk and, and the seat was like a stretched out seat over here. And uh, the boys sat on one end of the bench and the girls sat on the other end of the bench. And we had, a common table in front of us, you know. One piece. And uh, I was alright, I'll say you this. I stayed on my side. But she kept coming over, rubbing herself against me. And the teacher would come over and separate us. (laughs)

MOORE: What, what was your favorite subject? (laughs too)

ADAMS: Uh, none in particular, but I will say that uh, in the afternoons, we had... sewing on Monday afternoon. We had knitting on Tuesday afternoon. And we had (inaudible word) on Wednesday afternoon. They taught us to sew, and they taught us to sew. But in my particular case, I never could knit right and I kept going over and over and over doing, trying to do it right and I had the dirtiest uh, woolen thread and it didn't thread whole class. (laughs) But the girls, they were good at knitting, you know. I, they could knit doll dresses and they looked like, you know, if they would fit the dolls. But my square piece looked like, more like a trapezoid. It had more stitches at top than it had at the bottom. 'Sposed to be square or rectangular.

MOORE: Well, well, was that your favorite subject?

ADAMS: Well, there wasn't any favorite subject. Uh, we would just, we didn't decide what to take, of course. But uh, I uh...

MOORE: [interposed] You did your mechanical side right?

ADAMS: Yeah, but we didn't have to think about that over there.

MOORE: Try, what did you do for entertainment? What did you do for fun when you were that age back in England?

ADAMS: (clear throat) Well... 'course I had a friend across the road. I can remember his name, Jacky, Jacky Cousey. And we used to go on long walks. One time, we walked all the way down to the Thames River, went down the banks and put our feet in the water. And then, walked back home. Up the, up the steep bank of the Thames River. And walked back home. That was a long hike. And we had, uh, another area where people used to grow their vegetables, called The Allot, and we used to pass it. Way to the train station, Plaistow. And uh, Jacky and I, we'd go there... and play... and uh, see what people had grown and pick up discarded fruits and vegetables, and play with them. And one time, I, I did eat some berries, which turned out to be nightshade. Got sick. And you're, you know, these questions, they're bringing a lot up. Memories of me that I didn't think existed. ... That's a side issue. Getting sick eating nightshade...

MOORE: What's nightshade?

ADAMS: Well, it's a, a deadly poison. It's, it's berries that grow on a vine and they, they look pretty because they're red and turn black. And they look good. But I,

I think they had a very, very severe poison in 'em, but I'm but sure what it is, uh...

MOORE: What happened when you get sick, did they take you to the hospital?

ADAMS: No, you don't do those things. You call a doctor. Oh hospitals, traveling a long way on the bus. You only went to hospital when you was really sick. You know, we were hard enough people and if, if, if I were to describe myself in modern day language what we have around today in this country, I was underprivileged. But thing is, I didn't know it! And I enjoyed life. Uh, that probably uses two more of those buzz words, you know, to describe the condition of people here underprivileged or not, hell of a lot better off than we were in England. We weren't uh, allowed to expect too much.

MOORE: Came to America, how did you come? Who decides to come to America, do you remember?

ADAMS: Not too much, uh, this was after World War I. My dad has been in the British Army for, the beginning of it. And he's there, in France in 1914, uh, 1914. He, he was wounded, has some shrapnel injuries. He was discharged. And c-c-came back to England. My, my aunts tell me that he was covered in mud from head to toe and living in the trenches. And uh, and things were kind of rough in England. And uh, it seemed to me that the British government was uh, encouraging British people to emigrate to their processions because my, my folks were uh, seeming grocers or something uh, saying how good things were in South Africa and uh, different countries you could go to. And also from Australia.

MOORE: Now who was sending the grocers? The government or

ADAMS: [interposed] Yeah, the British government was encouraging uh, uh, they, the British people that wanted to, to emigrate to their possessions. Uh, but, America came in to the situation because you have to have somebody in those foreign countries vouch for you. As I understand. We had nobody. So uh, my father did have an uncle that lived in Carson City, Michigan. Uh... his name was William Hill. That was able to vouch for us to come to America. And that's why we changed, come to America instead. So, and the reason for coming is just that I thought that, well, there's one other things. Some of these American cousins that came over in 1917. Being Americans, they were bragging up about their country. How great it was. How terrible England was. America had this, and they had that, and they had uh, streets paved with gold and so forth. That line of talk. And I guess my dad took the bait. And uh, they decided, uh to come here. Once, once they found out they couldn't go any other place, they figured well, we'll go to America. It's so great. And uh, and uh, leave England because, like I said, the British government were, uh, encouraging their citizens to emigrate whenever possible.

MOORE: Well um, so you knew you had an uncle. Was your father close to your uncle in Carson City?

ADAMS: Not too much. Uh, see the Hills was uh, my father's maternal side. Grandmother, his mother was a Hill. And it was uh, his uh, uncle on mother's side that uh, lived in Carson City. He was a railroad engineer, and uh, he vouched for us, uh. As a result, when we came to this country, the first place we stopped at was at Carson City, just to get our bearings.

MOORE: And uh, did any family members send you money to go over? Or, how did you get over, your own money?

ADAMS: Yeah, used our own money.

MOORE: Uh... did he go, did he, uh, proper papers? Did you remember, if you, you said you had to have uh

ADAMS: [interposed] Well we had to have vaccine, yeah.

MOORE: And so, did you, did you have to go to the doctor for that?

ADAMS: Ah... I, uh, I'm not sure if he came to the house or we went, went to his office. I do know this. There was, this, my uh, dad, I've got to say, he left in 1923. He was to come here first. At, and uh, he had no trouble getting in. He went right, he went through the Port of Boston. In 1924 when we finally out we were gonna go... We, uh, my mother, my sister and I, we were all back vaccinated at the same time and we really caught a bad case of smallpox. And uh, we were all in bed. Nobody in the house. And I was the first one that was able to pull myself. And I had to write a, my mother dictated a letter that I wrote down, put it in the mailbox to one of her sisters. As soon as her sister got it, why she came over and uh, helped us to get well. It was quite a touchy situation. I had to walk to down to the pillbox, put that letter in. No, no telephones then.

MOORE: Um, so you remember the, the medical part of getting ready.

ADAMS: Yeah, I was very sore, yeah.

MOORE: And what about um, did you want to come to America, do you remember?

ADAMS: I had no choice in it.

MOORE: You don't remember how you felt about it?

ADAMS: No, uh, just like, just like going across the Thames River to see another town, I guess uh.

MOORE: And how did you, what did you know about America at that, at the point in your childhood?

ADAMS: Not a darn thing.

MOORE: And uh, how did your mother feel about leaving?

ADAMS: Well, I uh, I think uh... I think she probably wanted to go. But when she came to this country, I know she was very homesick for her, her sisters.

MOORE: And how did your father feel?

ADAMS: Well I think he uh, accepted it in good faith. I don't remember him saying he was homesick.

MOORE: Uh, did anyone give you a goodbye party when you left?

ADAMS: Oh no. That cost money.

MOORE: (laughs) Um, how much luggage did you pack? How much did you take with you?

ADAMS: Uh, the main thing is, we were able to get a wooden packing bag. Probably about four feet long, and two and a half feet wide and maybe two and a half feet deep. I can remember that. We, we enforced it with wood and uh, metal straps and painted it black. And we put everything uh, also goods in that one trunk. And I, I don't remember any other little bags or anything, we must have had them, but I don't remember carrying any bags. But see that, that box of household goods uh, was we, we stowed in ship's, ship's uh, hold, you know. And it wasn't opened until we got to this country.

MOORE: So um, did you take any food with you?

ADAMS: No.

MOORE: Did you take anything special? Was each of you, were you able to take anything special with you?

ADAMS: No.

MOORE: What about those books? You couldn't

ADAMS: [interposed] Well, they, I uh, put them in this, this packing box like I said. But when I got this country, they weren't there.

MOORE: (laughs) What happened to them?

ADAMS: Well, I think my folks threw them out.

MOORE: Before you even started?

ADAMS: Yeah.

MOORE: Alright. Who came to, to America at first? Your father?

ADAMS: My father came in 1923 in June of 1923. Like I said previously, he went to a, immigration in the port of Boston. And he got right in. And he settled, I think, in Michigan, in [not understood], in this town here. And he got his first job, I guess, working for uh, Real Motor Car Company [Ransom E. Olds' REO Motor Car Company of Lansing, Michigan that was in operation from 1905 to 1975].

MOORE: And um, so you, when you, twice you said, right?

ADAMS: Yes.

MOORE: So the first time you came, what port did you leave from?

ADAMS: Southampton [major port city on the south coast of England].

MOORE: Southampton. And how did you get from your home to the port?

ADAMS: Just by train.

MOORE: And um, (recording noises, inaudible dialogue) What do you remember of that journey through the port?

ADAMS: Well I, I, I just remembering uh, bor-boarding, boarding the train probably at Victoria Street Station. And a normal forty miles, I think. [not understood] wanted me to [not understood] Southampton. We stayed in uh, a room overnight. And then we boarded the boat next day.

MOORE: And uh (pause) You boarded, you had to wait for the boat? You had to wait overnight?

ADAMS: Mmmhmm.

MOORE: And uh, where did you stay again?

ADAMS: Well we stayed in a room at Southampton.

MOORE: Ah, did, did you rent it? Or was it a friend's house?

ADAMS: Oh no. We had paid for it. I think [not understood]. We didn't know much about the area.

MOORE: And did any family members come with you to see you off?

ADAMS: No.

MOORE: And uh, what month and year did the trip start?

ADAMS: Well, the (pause) The manifest [refers to a ship's manifest] says the ship left 29th of September 19... 1920. Well, wait a minute, I'm, I'm getting mixed up. Oh no, wait a minute, that's right. 1923, our first time over here. Uh...

MOORE: [inaudible]

ADAMS: That was September 29th, wh-when we left England and we, we arrived at uh, New York somewhere around the 11th of October. That's all documented in, in here. I, I didn't know those dates until I got the manifest.

MOORE: From-from America?

ADAMS: Alright. Yeah.

MOORE: Um, wh-what were accommodations like on the ship? Do you remember?

ADAMS: Very smart. (pause) I uh, I remember the terrible paint smell that permeated the whole lower decks. We in uh, the steerage area, the rear of the boat. And I think we, all three of us, sister and I, and my mother, had one cabin. We must have had uh, three beds to sleep in. But uh, very small and cramped as I remember.

MOORE: And steerage then, what class was that?

ADAMS: Third.

MOORE: And what about the dining room? Do you remember that?

ADAMS: On the boat? ... Ah, nothing in particular. Just, just one [not understood], sat down and they brought the food to you.

MOORE: What about the food? What was it like?

ADAMS: Oh well not... nothing special. I can't remember that.

MOORE: Well the dining room, who [not understood] that dining room? [inaudible]
Remember the people were shoving and...

ADAMS: Oh this is. No that's, that's Ellis Island.

MOORE: Oh Ellis Island, [not understood]. But the boat trip itself, well, do you remember the eating situation at all or... who else

ADAMS: [interposed] Well, let-let's put this way, the first three days, the water was rough. We all got seasick. And we ate nothing. I think

MOORE: [interposed] The first days?

ADAMS: The first part [not understood].

MOORE: And uh, were you allowed to go on deck?

ADAMS: Oh yeah.

MOORE: And what, wh-what'd you see when you were on deck?

ADAMS: Well, the water was awful rough. It was grey and rough. And the boat was pitching pretty heavy. And uh, the water would like splash over the rails. Oh but they had the, 'course the boats had rails, you see. [not understood] It was usually cold and damp, and very, when you're sick like that. Later on though, I started enjoying the, voyage. It's 11 days. Uh, when when the, the uh, sea became smoother, the su-sun came out. And that was pretty nice. I spent most my time on deck, ah, looking at all of the machinery, watching the engines of the, ah, working on in the hull. And the listening

MOORE: [interposed] Did they let you look at the engines?

ADAMS: Yeah, they seemed to. Let us have the run of the ship. Had to send in. You see, you weren't allowed at second area or the first class. That was off limits.

MOORE: So they actually, people were pretty segregated?

ADAMS: Yes. Let's use the word discrimination. Everybody else is discriminated against. We were discriminated against and we didn't know it.

MOORE: And uh, were all three of you ill? Who was ill amongst your family?

ADAMS: Well, we were, we all got si, the three of us got sick.

MOORE: How long?

ADAMS: About two or three days.

MOORE: Were there any activities on that boat?

ADAMS: Er, well, nothing structured. You made your own, your own fun. You see, being at the rear, you could see where you had been, and ah, find fish jumping out of the water. I mean. [not understood], you know the propellers made. But there was nothing structured. No, this was, this was not a cruise ship. This was strictly business. And, treated ah, like cattle, you know. Give us a place to live and a place to eat. And you, took turn care of yourself, best way you could 'til you got to port.

MOORE: And do you remember anything unusual about that voyage at all? Anything comes to your mind?

ADAMS: Well I, I used to ah, pick up pieces of rope maybe about a couple feet long. And ah, found a piece of wood, I th... I would ah, make a rope by tying the strands together. And it was long enough so it would reach the water. Then I used to take this piece of wood and throw it overboard and drag along the side of the water. (laughs) You didn't see anything because it, you know, the way the boats, there's an overhang there, you. I didn't see it, but ah, back then I used to that boat along on the side of the ship. That sounds funny, but you do things er, when you don't have, anybodies telling you what to do or, telling what to play with. You made your own, er, fun.

MOORE: Ah, how long was that voyage?

ADAMS: 11 days. We stopped at Halifax [unclear which Halifax, possibly the capital of Nova Scotia, Canada]. I think we lost a day there to discharge cargo.

MOORE: What do you remember? When, do you remember seeing land for the first time?

ADAMS: (pause) Oh, I 'spose yes, I bring it to my memory. Yes, I 'spose I did, but... I didn't, it was a just a.... just kind of a grey mass in the distance.

MOORE: And how about the Statue of Liberty? Do you remember seeing that? For the first time?

ADAMS: Not, not so much coming, but I saw a lot of it when I was staying at Ellis Island.

MOORE: And um, did you know what the Statue of Liberty was before you came here?

ADAMS: Not particularly, no.

MOORE: What about other people, who in the [not understood]? Did anybody react [unintelligible].

ADAMS: Not, not especially at all. You, you weren't told, weren't told about those things, you know.

MOORE: What about your impressions of seeing New York City for the first time? Do you remember anything that, your impressions?

ADAMS: [interposed] Well, the tall buildings, yeah. But uh... I never really went into the town. The first time, we were shuffled from the boat that it came on, *Canopic* [ship of the British White Star Line], and put on a ferry boat. Shoved over to Ellis Island. And the second time, when we finally got through, seems what we did is just take a bus to the train station.

MOORE: And um, now this is your first trip to Ellis Island, and what happened at Ellis Island when you got there? Describe the, wh-what were your impressions when you got to Ellis Island? Your first time?

ADAMS: Well, uh... naturally, we were very much concerned because we were put on this ferry boat. And ah... we started on and I noticed there was Statue of Liberty and I saw this kind of a grey, ah... cold looking building, you know. And 'course, the ferry boat stopped and we got off. And ah, 'course we were, other people on the boat too. We were all herded together. And ah, I don't remember too much, how we ended up. But... ah, the first, the first thing I know, we were, we were shoved into um, a big dormitory like thing to sleep. And here they had a th-three tiered bunks, which I saw. I saw those things when I was on, took my trip, you know, in 1990. I saw the same bunks. And ah, seemed to me the, they had no mattress around. And the first night we were given an army blankets and that's all. And ah, thank goodness, my mother had an English spirit and she gave somebody hell next day about it. Er, we were English. We're not used to kind of stuff 'cause uh,

[Recording Error 41:08 to 41:14. Inaudible voices and bumps on the recording.]

ADAMS: Be-because Ellis uh, Ellis Island itself looked more like a prison! Uh, that ah, well it was a detention camp, but it certainly wasn't fancy, I'll tell you. It was just a, a detention place to warehouse people 'til they, uh, you know, officials knew what to do with them.

MOORE: What'd your mom tell people, what'd she say?

ADAMS: She must have got a kind of hold of somebody. And ah, and ah... so the next night, we, we were in a, a smaller room. And we, it was double bunks, but we had clean sheets and pillow cases. And uh, I'd say we were able to exist, you know.

MOORE: You think that because your mother complained?

ADAMS: I think so, yeah.

MOORE: And ah, what was the inside of the building? Describe the, what were your, wh-what was your overall impression there? As a child? Was it frightening, were you

ADAMS: [interposed] Well no, I just accepted the situation. Wh, remember we were put there and nothing was said to me. I didn't know how long we were going to be there. My age, first impression was there must be a damn prison we're in because all the windows had screens so heavy, uh, iron, uh... webbed screens, you know. So you couldn't, couldn't go and 'scape through the windows. And you couldn't go out of doors. And, and uh... just seemed like it was all confusion 'cause I remember that balcony, is still there by the way, where we stayed. And that was... uh, people filling up all those seats from everywhere. That's, that's you begin to realize all the different nationalities. And there are Russians and Polish people and Italians, people from the Middle East... ah, 'specially because they wrote their letters from right to left. (laughs) Ah, funny looking hieroglyphics. And there was nothing for us to do. Ah, just, just sit there. And ah, 'course we were concerned: what are we, what are we doing in a jail like that? What have we done? And all. But then, we weren't the only ones, so.

MOORE: [interposed] (unintelligible)

[Recording Error 43:32 to 43:46. Inaudible voices and bumps on the recording.]

MOORE: Excited that's pretty good though. Um. What I'll ask you is, what did your mother... did you feel any uh, did you feel anything that your mother having worries too?

ADAMS: Oh, I think, I think she was. But I don't remember her really complaining at all... English aren't really complaining people.

MOORE: [interposed] Well

ADAMS: [interposed] Err... (unintelligible)

MOORE: [interposed] H-how, what. Yeah, at what... I mean you weren't very emotional about it.

ADAMS: No. We, we accepted the situation, you know.

MOORE: And, uh, what were you wearing all of you? Which

ADAMS: [interposed] English clothes.

MOORE: Your best clothes or?

ADAMS: No, I don't think so. No, we weren't dressed up. We didn't have enough really dress up clothes. About the only thing I, I wore was English shorts. Kids my age or in England wore shorts.

MOORE: Now... what point, um, you said this place was crowded.

ADAMS: Yeah.

MOORE: Was it clean?

ADAMS: Yes, I, I think it was... They uh, I, I, no I don't think it was smelly... And I, I think the place was well maintained as far as that's concerned.

MOORE: What about the staff? How did they treat you?

ADAMS: I don't remember much in the way of staff there.

MOORE: And di-did you have a medical examination?

ADAMS: I must have, but I don't remember. I think it, it was required. Unless we're examined before we left England and maybe they expected that, but uh... Yeah, that's something I don't really know.

MOORE: And were there other children?

ADAMS: Oh yeah. All the kids around, but not, not too many. Ah, most of the people were... were, looking, well they looked poor. Ah, there was, there was nobody in, in striped pants and top hats or dressed up there. People... er, looked haggard and tired and weren't, 'specially people from uh, Eastern Europe, you know. (pause) But I uh, being English, I felt somewhat su-superior to them.

MOORE: And um... when um, y-you knew you going to be detained and you might have to go back, do you remember when they first said that you would have to go back? Your reaction to that?

ADAMS: Well er, when we found out we were going to have to go back to England, of course we were concerned, you know. We didn't really want to go. Come all this way and then go back, you know. Eleven, eleven days on a boat, you know. It's not like it is four days in the air today, you know. I-it's quite a time consuming uh, uh, rough, uh, journey back. And sickness, and you know. The boats weren't

MOORE: [interposed] Did your mother explain?

ADAMS: Well, we were... she did what she was told. She was told. No, I don't remember any screaming or hollering or crying. No, we accepted the situation. In good faith. I've got to say, uh, about uh, about eating in the uh, dining rooms there, uh. I looked for those dining rooms uh, when I went back in 1990, but they were blocked off. But, it seemed to me that we went down a hall and the door was opened. And we went inside and they had benches and tables. And usually had some food on. Uh, maybe like um, a loaf of bread, Italian style cut in chunks about two inches. Well, I am, remember was when they opened that door. The rush to get in there, mostly those, those Eastern Europeans, who were just like a bunch of animals. Pushed through that door and either I gets crushed a little bit or shoved through. And uh, I thought they were the dirtiest people because I could see the men blowing their noses on their hands and then rubbing their hands on their pants and then rushing in there. Every- and they had the line pushing their way in and grabbing the breads like wild animals and tearing it with their hands and sh-shoving it in their mouth. They er, to me as an Englishman, that was uncouth. I couldn't imagine people acted like that. Uh and that, uh, other things I remember, uh 'specially in the, in the toilets. I think there were people that didn't know what a toilet was. Because I could see uh, feces on the seat as they stood on the seat. And I also saw feces in the corners of that... of that er, toilet. I never seen anything before like that in my life. Why people were too, so dumb that they couldn't understand how to use a toilet properly? Because I feel... that Americans 'least had sanitary facilities that were worth, they were well kept, I mean er. Uh, but there are Europeans that never saw a flushed toilet before. That shows you the kind of people we were associated with. (pause) Er, no... Now those are the most ugly impressions I have of oth-other people from eh. Because at least uh, being in England, we were a little civilized than that. Okay.

MOORE: [interposed] Your mother, now what... were you entertained at Ellis Island at all?

ADAMS: Detained?

MOORE: Entertained. Was there any

ADAMS: [interposed] Of course not.

MOORE: (laughs) No, at one point I meant there was some entertainment. That's what I'm trying to figure out, what years? Alright um, now talk about, you went back to England and how long did it take you to go back?

ADAMS: It took about a year. We um, we went back in, in, in, uh, in second class on the steamship, *Adriatic* [ship of the British White Star Line]. What's a much nicer boat. Now uh, I've uh, understood uh, or read somewhere... that uh, Ellis Island was a detaining area until they could locate transport for you and send you back. I think now that's why we were there about two weeks. We were waiting for a boat to go back to England, you know.

MOORE: You're in, tw-two weeks there in those accommodations?

ADAMS: Yes.

MOORE: That's why you were

ADAMS: [interposed] Come around to it.

MOORE: And so, when you went back second class, who paid for it?

ADAMS: I don't know. I, I am assuming that the steamship company, White Star [an English shipping company begun in the 1860's, more commonly referred to as the White Star Line, now currently operating as a subsidiary of Carnival Corporation & PLC] that had a [not understood] uh, must have guaranteed us

that we could make the quota 'cause I had the word "quota" used quite a bit. Uh and um, we didn't make the quota and I think since they guaranteed it. They had to ship us back. We didn't have that kind of money, you know, t-three trips across the ocean. So I think the steamship company paid for our trip and um, also for the return ship.

MOORE: Where, wh-what were the accommodations difference in second class and third class? There's a big difference?

ADAMS: Oh yeah, the cabin were bigger, beds were nicer and the food was better.

MOORE: And um, what was the return voyage like? Was it very sad for you?

ADAMS: No, I didn't cry about it. It-it wasn't too bad, you know, after all. (laughs)

MOORE: Was your mother going to do about your father in England for a year then?

ADAMS: We're English. We can take that kind of us. W-we went back and uh, uh, s-, my mother must have found a uh, one room uh. Uh, one room ground floor, I think in Layton, near one of her sisters. Uh, she had a sister living in Layton. And we stayed there for that one year. I, I went to school there.

MOORE: What about all your belongings? What did you do? You're already

ADAMS: [interposed] I don't, I don't know happened to them.

MOORE: I mean, you had only had trunks for

ADAMS: [interposed] One trunk. Maybe came back with us, I don't know.

MOORE: So you didn't see your father for that year?

ADAMS: That's right. But m-my father was, was uh, learning uh, I think, machine tools... at this uh, Real Motor Car Company. And he used to send me funnies. You know, funnies out of the Sunday papers, every two or months, you know. 'Cause I really enjoyed seeing the funnies. He used to send us. And he must have sent her, my mother, money to get by on. Well, I don't, we must have been awful struggle.

MOORE: An-and so then what happened? After a year... you get news from somewhere? How did you try it again?

ADAMS: Well, uh, the ship steam must have arranged to have us er... make the return trip. And uh, this time, uh... went to Southampton again, I think... Southampton? (pause) I'm, I'm really uh, I oughta look it up. Seems to me, might wasn't Southampton. Anyway

MOORE: [interposed] You had down West Southampton.

ADAMS: It wasn't?

MOORE: [interposed] You never

ADAMS: [interposed] It wasn't?

MOORE: Yeah.

ADAMS: Alright. Because that is the port th-that you, you leave there. It-it's a big port. It's...

MOORE: What was it different about the second time around? Wh, anything?

ADAMS: No, not particularly. Just the things that happened on ship. Lord, one thing we woke up and the ship was listing [tilting] to one side. They said the cargo moved. (laughs) And another time, uh

MOORE: [interposed] What happened, it was? What happened? How did the people react to that?

ADAMS: Well, I don't know. My, I know I got out and the ship was unlisting like this, you know you. I thought it was fun. But it, it didn't last long. They had a, th- they must have corrected it that morning.

MOORE: So it was rough? Was it rough seas?

ADAMS: Ah... not, not so much as. I got seasick again though.

MOORE: What about, how about your sister and mother?

ADAMS: Yeah, they did too. Well, we knew what to expect now see. We-we're seasoned travelers see.

MOORE: You've at [not understood] twice.

ADAMS: S-so you take it in your stride you know.

MOORE: What class did you go back out?

ADAMS: Steerage. Third class.

MOORE: S-so you came second class and steerage

ADAMS: [interposed] Yeah. Mainly because of the com-'ccommodations on the *Adriatic* I guess was there and they might think... figured. We could have got steerage I suppose maybe. But uh, we just, they gave us second class accommodations and we took what they gave us.

MOORE: [interposed] Now what boat did you take back over the second time?

ADAMS: Th-the, like I said before, the name of the boat was *Adriatic*.

MOORE: Alright, so you went over on the *Canopic*?

ADAMS: Yeah.

MOORE: And then you came back on the *Adriatic*?

ADAMS: Back to England on the *Adriatic*.

MOORE: Yeah, and then over?

ADAMS: Then it's the return back to this country was the *Pittsburgh* [ship of the British White Star Line].

MOORE: The *Pittsburgh*. And what was the

ADAMS: That's three ships.

MOORE: difference between the *Pittsburgh* and the *Canopic*? You went steerage?

ADAMS: Oh, about the same.

MOORE: Was it?

ADAMS: Yeah. It wasn't as, it-uh, it wasn't as good a ship as *Adriatic*. That's a classier ship.

MOORE: Alright now, when you got to Ellis Island this time? Wh-what happened?

ADAMS: We didn't go to Ellis Island. We went right through. Uh... got off the boat and through customs. And loaded up on a bus. And taken over to the train station.

MOORE: So y-you just bypassed this time, Ellis Island?

ADAMS: Yeah. Oh, though we were holding our breath. (laughs)

MOORE: That you could, 'til you got there you couldn't believe it?

ADAMS: Well we couldn't believe it. The way it went through so easy. You know th-the second time. And uh... (pause)

MOORE: You had the same trunk with you?

ADAMS: I don't know what happened that trunk?

MOORE: (laughs) It just

ADAMS: I th-think eventually we got it. Uh.

MOORE: Now where did you go? Where were you going now when you went Ellis Island? What address were you going to? What was your destination?

ADAMS: Well, to Carson City I would say because that's the destination we had to put down, you know, on our uh, passport or what it was, you know, where we were

going. See. Things are different then uh, they enforced immigration laws and you had to make sure that you wasn't going to a burden on the country. You, that you were going to, uh, America. You had to have some money and yo-you had to have somebody to vouch for you and you had to have a place to go.

MOORE: Right.

ADAMS: And when I, when I. That burns me up how hard it was for me to come on to this country back then. And how it easy it is to skip into this country and nobody cares. Like uh, people in...

MOORE: [interposed] That's not, well, th-that's kind of true, but not true. A lot of people get sent back to back and they do the same thing.

ADAMS: But the hell of a lot of us are staying over here too.

MOORE: Yeah, well a lot of people come from over the border, but they

ADAMS: [interposed] Yeah well like...

MOORE: [interposed] It is strict coming in now. They really give it to people and make them go back sometimes. Yeah. So um.

ADAMS: Well uh, I don't know if what I read, there's a lot of people coming through C-Canada and there's a lot of them coming across the Tijuana and the Nocallas [incorrect pronunciation of the Mexican city of Nogales] and all spots there.

MOORE: Yeah, but by the way they always did. Thomas Edison's father came across the same way, Canada. He [not understood]

ADAMS: [interposed] Did he?

MOORE: Yeah. So I mean

ADAMS: [interposed] So that's nothing new, but uh, well, I see. This is besides the point, but California having a hell of a time count, taking care of those wetbacks that's coming in.

MOORE: Yeah.

ADAMS: And they got to furnish them with Social Services and they haven't got the money.

MOORE: Yes. Yes.

ADAMS: But anyway, that's besides the point. But I feel like what I read and people uh, and maybe immigrations seems to be helpless about doing anything about it.

MOORE: What. You feel you had to fight to get in here?

ADAMS: Yeah. I think uh, considering what, eh, what we had and even, even my ancestors settled this country. You know. We certainly wasn't treated very royally when we came over here. Uh...

MOORE: What about, when do you uh (laughs) You got here by, by train to Car. Carson City is where by the way?

ADAMS: It's about forty miles from Lansing. Uh, it-it's just north of uh, it's on the map. Uh... y-you can up 20, 27 and I think there's a... main road north of St. Johns and you turn left on that road, I can't remember the number of it. And you go about 10 miles west and you run into Carson City.

MOORE: And who met you once you got there?

ADAMS: Uh... well, uncle Bill's um, children were, turned out were all farmers. And uh... they also had a son, William Hill, and his wife, met us at the train station at Carson City.

MOORE: Wait, was your dad there?

ADAMS: Yeah, I think he was. But uh... anyway, that was my first time that I rode in a passenger car owned by a person. They had a Model T, a touring [a popular car body style in the early 20th century]. And that's the first time I got off the train and got into a private car. Now this is livin'. (laughs) To be uh, eight. I was nine then you see, I had put on a year while I was living in England between the boats.

MOORE: So what have you grown the entire home, to your home in [not understood]
59:47

ADAMS: No. No, we would, we went to the farmhouse and uh, th-these uh, h-his wife's name was Addy. And Addy put us, put us for uh, a few weeks, I guess, until my dad could locate something in, when they would locate thing in Lansing, I guess. Uh, I don't know understand if they had any money or not. I, uh... well, he didn't do it beforehand. But they didn't, he had to um, find us something to move into and then... uh, I think we were probably around three or four weeks of living in Carson City area, on this farm.

MOORE: [interposed] And uh

ADAMS: And th-then we, we, we came to Lansing.

MOORE: Did you see anything else besides the car that y-you'd never seen before?

ADAMS: Yeah. A short outhouses. We didn't have those very much. (laughs) Well, uh, farming's been back, you know, you talked about the '20's they didn't have electricity yet and they didn't telephones yet either.

MOORE: Did the farmers?

ADAMS: Yeah, the farmers. And they... they used oil lamps so to, to light at night, get around with. And uh, they used some pot bellied stomachs, uh, cold stoves and wood burning, cook stoves. Yeah, you pumped your water up ou-out of the yard, you know. Ordinary pump. So, this is primitive living compared to where we were. Oh yes. Ah... I better put my...

MOORE: So that farmer that you're talking about that, that, that had the heating and electricity that he used?

ADAMS: Yes, um. They um, the burned wood in the stoves. And also, in the heating stove, which kept their living room. And um, any oh... you know, something place cooler, someplace out, out of the ground and basement or something. No refrigeration, of course. No electric lights. Uh, the washing machine, I think, was run by a little gas powered motor. And most everybody went to bed early because uh, you were going to, to sit in the dark, or er, lamps. Lamps used coal, or kerosene. No, uh, uncle, uncle Bill, I call him that. He ran this farm when he, he had some milk cows, and he used horses. And I used go out with him, you know. And uh, and he also had a tractor, an old farm, er, Ford uh. An old Ford tractor. I forget the name. Ford-Fordson maybe it was. It had uh, steel wheels, no rubber tires with cleats. And that, that what he, he used in his farming operations. I used ride with him there there.

MOORE: You remember any difference in the language when you came here at first?

ADAMS: Oh, yes. I most certainly do um. I *can't* [pronounced with a long "a" like that of the name of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant] do this and I...

MOORE: [inaudible comment]

ADAMS: I, I have glorious... I, I had my English accent.

MOORE: They make fun of you?

ADAMS: No, but I found out they spoke terrible. They'd say, "I can't do this," and why don't say "I want [pronounced with an overstressed a as in the word quack] do this."

(both laugh)

ADAMS: The peculiarities of, of the American language.

MOORE: And what were the differences when you went to school finally? Did you

ADAMS: [interposed] Well. You know the English diction, you should know that. The English diction is very much, it's very clear over there. They sound their consonants. And over here, I see they talk kind of lazy. Uh.. and uh... by the way uh, I learned the American language pretty fast when we got to living in Lansing and had to go around these nine and ten year old kids who laughed me and punched me in the nose for

[both talk at once, inaudible]

ADAMS: so dumb.

MOORE: Did they say that to you?

ADAMS: Yeah, they, they didn't like that. But I, I picked the American language pretty fast. I lost my beautiful English diction and the all the nice words I used. Because by, the way they taught us they couldn't know vocabulary over there. The schools are much better there. You know, than at here. When I started here, I, I went to the four b grade, I was doing seven b work compared to the kids around me. That, I was... I could do things uh, in mathematics and English and spelling much better than the kids around me.

MOORE: Wh-did you

ADAMS: [interposed] But that will come later.

MOORE: Would, did your parents ever lose their accents?

ADAMS: Oh yes. My dad did. He caught, he started using "*can't*". I remember that word particularly. *Can't* do this. Can't do. Because I say "Can I have this?" "No, you *can't* have it." "You can't have it." It says here, you can't have it. So I learned that word re- very fast.

MOORE: What about your sister? Did she adjust well?

ADAMS: Yeah, she did. Yeah.

MOORE: She was younger?

ADAMS: Yeah, she was. See when I was nineteen, she'd be seven. And I think um, my mother probably retained a little bit of, of English inflexions, you know. Eh, could this, if you were over there trying to get twenty five before y-you leave and go anywhere, you're never going to lose your English accents. They're going to

know right away, knowing you use, use the right word like “can’t” (Kant) here. There’s an inflexion that you hear, you notice it right away. I, I notice English people, when they came over, uh, some people that, some women that I know that married American soldiers in World War II and they still have an English accent. But I lost mine completely.

MOORE: You were so young.

ADAMS: Yeah.

MOORE: But um, did you feel, were there other immigration children in your neighborhood?

ADAMS: Well, that, this is getting ahead of my story. But uh, my wife lived in this area here and she went to school with all kinds of Polacks and Czechs and Russians and Polish. (laughs)

MOORE: Was she English? Your wife?

ADAMS: No, no. She’s American.

MOORE: Wh-what did your neighborhood, that you go through?

ADAMS: In my neighborhood, uh, there’s mostly American kids. I uh, I, I lived uh, in over h- in a, Baker’s Street and Neller’s Court, which now today is a underprivileged area. And those houses were working men type houses. And the reason we moved there is because it’s right across the road from Rio and dad can walk to work, you see. I remember that, that part and when I was in four b grade.

MOORE: And how were you treated as an immigration in school? Were, was there any prejudice? Or any discrimination at all?

ADAMS: No, I don't see any different, well.

MOORE: What about your spelling and things that they?

ADAMS: Well I was ahead of everybody else. But they, I, they didn't speed up the class up to suit me and I, I slowed down to meet their requirements. But you know, uh, there were... well, there were a lot of the second uh, second generation kids up and down Baker's Street. And we had plenty wops and Syrians (laughs) living up and down that street. And a lot of Polish people. Uh, th-they were the kids that were, were, us kids in m-my class that were all mixed up nationalities because they were the second generation, see. I was the first generation to come here.

MOORE: And where about um, when you left that farm after some weeks, where did you go?

ADAMS: To Lansing.

MOORE: And your father found a place?

ADAMS: He uh, he found us a place.

MOORE: What kind of place was it, do you remember?

ADAMS: Yes, I do. The first place we stayed at was... uh, some bundles on South Washington Avenue. That's south of Mount Hope. Uh, also bungalows are uh, gone. There again. They built those bungalows ahead of the sewers and the water supply, so uh... you only stayed there four weeks, or, f-four weeks or

maybe six weeks. And we had to get our water from a pump, common hand pump in the area. We had the chemicals toilets up in the attic. And

MOORE: What about the lightning?

ADAMS: Did I? We had electric. We had that.

MOORE: And who lived there? It was a single family dwelling, or?

ADAMS: Yeah, they're single family dwellings there. They were just uh, four room bungalows.

MOORE: So this uh... cousin in Carson City, was that the... or the uncle in Carson City, was that the closest relative in America?

ADAMS: Yes.

MOORE: And the only relative?

ADAMS: Just the Carson City relatives. And they were distant, distant relatives.

MOORE: So basically you grew after nine years old with no grandparents or cousins?

ADAMS: That's right.

MOORE: And did you, um, get along well with your neighbors?

ADAMS: I thought so. Er, I got a bloody nose every now and grown. Kids with... (laughs) heads, that's growing, that's growing up.

MOORE: So your father at that time when was working where at the, Rio?

ADAMS: Rio Motorcar Company, yeah.

MOORE: Rio Motorcar Company. Did your mother go to work?

ADAMS: Not at first. But... but uh, I could show you how the conditions work. Oh, we, we moved from this place on South Washington to Neller's Court and that's where we had a lot of kids to play with. And trains, er, train tracks right there and trains going down. Glorious place for kids, you know, to play around. And then uh, when we, my mother, er, somebody decided that we could uh, we could afford a house. And they went and bought a house, I don't know what terms. On South Washington Avenue. And this was quite close to Rockford Road, on the corner of Rockford Road and Washington. The second house was a nice um, a three bedroom more modern house. And we moved there, I think around 1927. And, and we stayed there a year. But dad got laid off. Apparently we, we, my folks lost that house. Had to get out of it. And we moved.

MOORE: [interposed] Lost it how, they say?

ADAMS: Well foreclose. We don't, we couldn't make the payments.

MOORE: [interposed] Depression time then?

ADAMS: Well.

MOORE: What year was that in?

ADAMS: 9, I think 1927 was when my... (pause) Well, I think 19... 1927, I think that was the time when dad got laid off. And um, we must have moved to another small place on River Street, that's near the grand truck tracks And it's... and...

MOORE: That's where you moved now in how many years?

ADAMS: Oh god, we must have moved every year, I think.

MOORE: So you moved a lot between 9 and what years?

ADAMS: Yes, I did.

MOORE: That's a big adjustment to make. So you moved to this country, and then you move, first to live in a farm for a couple weeks and then you moved after one year.

ADAMS: To, yeah. W-we moved from the farm to uh, this place on South Washington Avenue. Then we moved to Neller's Court. Then my folks, folks bought this house on uh, South or South Washington, but it was closer to Rio. And that, that one was out further. And from there went to a place on River Street. This was around... well, the part in 1928, River Street. Then we moved to a place on Rio Avenue, to attend Rio Avenue. And my mother divorced my dad and my dad took us and we lived in uh, 1929, to [not understood] on Harding Avenue. He was renting that house, Harding. And then uh.

MOORE: So. Let's go back to this

ADAMS: [interposed] Are we getting too far ahead?

MOORE: Your father lost a job, do you know why he lost, laid off? Was that normal?

ADAMS: Laid off, yeah. See we didn't have unemployment compensation then. He, (mumbles). When the automobile companies were going full blast, they, they, really were full blast maybe in spring. Then uh, people bought the cars in the

spring. And then they, they didn't sell anymore so laid off them off in the summer time. They might hire them back in the fall. They. You could not expect or get twelve months work a year working for a automobile company at that time.

MOORE: There was no guarantee of

ADAMS: [interposed] No guarantees, no.

MOORE: Well you said your dad got custody, was that? That's pretty unusual for that time, was that? For a man to take custody of the kids.

ADAMS: I, uh, it wasn't quite that way. My mother got custody, but my dad took care of us.

(long pause)

ADAMS: So uh. That was kind of a mix up. Well, t-to complete that part. My aunt, my mother contracted rheumatoid arthritis, somewhere about 1932, '33. And, and they put her in an institution. She was now single woman.

MOORE: Yeah.

ADAMS: Yeah. And she never, never did recover from rheumatoid arthritis.

MOORE: Were you able to see her ever?

ADAMS: Yes. I could go out to the old folks whenever they, whenever they called that institution, Ingham County uh, Hospital.

MOORE: Did she break up before she had arthritis?

ADAMS: Yes.

MOORE: Yes? She didn't know she had arthritis when [not understood]?

ADAMS: No. No idea.

MOORE: You still had access to see her?

ADAMS: Yes. I, I kept in touch.

MOORE: Did your sister did? Did she?

ADAMS: Yes, she. She was also, well... What happened in 1929 is that my dad was trying to better himself. He got a good job, a better job in Columbus. So he quit his job here and went to Columbus, you know, with the idea of living room and making more money. And he left us with here with the family and left me with the family. We were separated while he went down there. He worked three, four months (mumbles) and he got laid off then the Depression hit.

MOORE: Yeah, those were hard times.

ADAMS: Yeah, that was really hard times. And, and my sister, she being a girl, she could do things around the house. And he was paying her, my dad's paying for her. But I think she helped uh, supply services and it wasn't quite so much. But with me, I wasn't worth a damn, he had to pay m, pay the family I stayed with. And he didn't um, didn't really get paid off and paid up until maybe sometime in 1930. So those were, quite interesting years as I say from

MOORE: [interposed] For a little kid, you went through a lot.

ADAMS: Oh yeah.

MOORE: How did you feel about that time? About being, you had to adjust a lot. Quite an adjustment. Kids are pretty

ADAMS: [interposed] Well I think I was flexible.

MOORE: Yeah.

ADAMS: Yeah, that's a... a... I don't understand what. Well I just accepted everything in stride. This was life. Uh, I, I wasn't used a good livin', I wasn't used to a uh, wealth, or cars or [not understood]. Everybody that I went to school with was better off than I was, you know. Uh. And you just accepted that you were just a poverty stricken individual and did the best you could, you know.

MOORE: Well actually then what happened in the '30's that, once, once the Depression hit? What happened in your family? How'd your father manage you kids? How long did you stay with his family?

ADAMS: Well, ar-are we through talking about the uh, Ellis Island thing and all that? 'Cause, I, I, I just don't talk like this, but uh.

MOORE: Yeah.

ADAMS: I don't feel it has anything to do with Ellis Island and all.

MOORE: Well they wanted to see what happened to the immigrants once they've been here. About your life.

ADAMS: Well, alright, I guess we can go on with the story. Then uh... my father uh, got a small inheritance from, from England somewhere around 1930. And we

rented a house on South Cedar Street near uh, Baker. South Cedar and Baker. Rented there, that house. And he took Vera and me in with him. The three of us lived uh, by. He, he was able to find a job in the Depression. He was uh, an automotive machinist. He used to work for a place that. He used on auto-automotive engineering, engines. He could read more of these cylinders and fix pistons and rings and that sort of thing. It's quite a skilled job. He was able, people always repairing their engines, you know. They're not as built, good then as they are today. So he was able to make uh, ab-about twenty dollars a week, something like that. And we paid twenty five dollars a month for this, house we were staying at. And that time, I was now going to Eastern High School. Uh, and... it was a long walk. Uh.... and uh, the Depression, Depression hit about the time I got out of graduating high school, you know January 1933. That's. Things were really tough with people laid off everywhere. And factories had signs out "No help wanted," gates closed. And, but my dad was working. We were going a make go. And that time when mother was in that institution up there at Oaklawn's [reference to hospital in area]. And uh... um, well, I guess then I graduated, I. We had what we call, a post graduate education in high school. We, had more room th-than we had kids. So, if you wanted to stay and learn something more, you could stay another er, couple, couple semesters if you wanted to. So since I graduated in January, I think I might as well as stay in school another, another three months, you know. And I come out in the summertime, which I did. I took some extra courses. And uh, then I had a little job that paid me four dollars a week working six days driving a truck, delivering parts. You know I could drive like that. And uh, then I got laid off.

MOORE: Do you think your father was happy he came here?

ADAMS: Yeah, I think so.

MOORE: How about your mom?

ADAMS: I think m-my mother um, missed h-her sisters b-being a woman, you know. She's here in this country all along, you know. W-when you don't have relatives to go see, the only people that you would have anything in common would be any English people and it doesn't take long to find out. My mother was quite thick with an English family.

MOORE: Why didn't she go back ever, do you know?

ADAMS: Didn't have any money. What for.

MOORE: You mean she couldn't go back to England?

ADAMS: Well, eh, up to the time that she was taken so ill with rheumatoid arthritis. We didn't have the money for that.

MOORE: So you do think that would she have had the money, would she ever go back?

ADAMS: I'm, I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

MOORE: The reason that we ask this is because once you leave your country, can you ever go back there? That's, my father was the same way in this. He was very very homesick every day of his life.

ADAMS: Yeah.

MOORE: The question is once you leave all that, can you ever really go back if you want to? It's more complicated than that.

ADAMS: Well, the dollar bill, I think, answers the question. Without money, you couldn't go back under many circumstances. And when she took sick, she was in, physically impossible for her to go. And uh, she... she stayed there maybe in that institution maybe eight or ten years. And uh, Vera uh, on her side, she had got married. And uh, then she lost her husband. So my mother went down there to Miami where Vera was living. And she got her own place. And Vera. And they, they, they sort of kept it comfy. And Vera kind of watches after her, you see. Well I was up here, and of course, I got married and I couldn't take care, care... Well I had my family too.

MOORE: When did you get married now? Wh-wh-wh. So you went through and

ADAMS: [interposed] W-w-well, okay, I'll go back to that, right. I mean I'm getting into the 1950's now. Uh... so, let's say it's 1930, 1934. I was uh, I was able to get, get a job for fourteen dollars a week working in the machine shop, here in Lansing. Uh, Hugh Lance Company. And uh, I wanted to get into also training and all of this, as an engineer, you know. And I uh... I fill out all of the papers, but I was rejected for some reason or other. So I decided that I'd go to Michigan State [University] from that time. I made the decision to go college by hook or crook. I'd uh, saved a few hundred dollars from my job because I had, had ambition and I wanted to college. Now, by the dollar bills that I wasn't entitled to, but I uh, I applied. I didn't take engineering at that time because engineers were a dime a dozen. They were pumping gas. And this was the time of soil conversation and farming and uh... uh, killing little pigs and so forth, you know. This terrible times for farmers. And agriculture, there was a lot of openings coming up for educated people. So I decided to take up forestry. A friend of mine was taken up for the same reason that uh, there might be some work for us. I mean, when we graduated in four years later on. But we didn't want to an unemployed engineer. So I would have liked to take engineering, but since I was, had to work my way through college I really didn't have the time to take all of those engineering labs. Anyway. So uh... since I was rejected

from Oldsmobile [reference to the American automobile company headquartered at Lansing], I, I started at Michigan State in 1935. And uh, I got work around the college there, working heavy labor, moving furniture and uh, bleachers, cleaning girls' bathrooms and. (laughs) Swabbing up swimming pools and uh, enough of that work. So I didn't have to dip into my savings that much. And uh, I graduated 1939. And uh, believe it or not, I took a United States Civil Service Examination for forestry. Uh, that's all conversation, that's. And uh, I was accepted. I got my first job. First job we had money left over at the end of the week, in 19, 1940. By that time, I was married and I had a, a daughter at that time coming along, a bun in the oven. (laughs) And that's just about how I got started. From then on.

MOORE: [interposed] How'd you meet your wife in that time? Who? Where'd you

ADAMS: Oh. Well uh, it goes back to about 1913. When I was going to high school, t- there was a uh, (mumbles) church called the Effort League in Mount Hope Methodists that used to have meetings on Sundays afternoons. And my my boyfriends and I, we went there, you know, like a, you know, something to do, at. I believe there were women there and there were boys there. And uh, I met her there see.

MOORE: Was your family religious when they came to, to the United States? Or did they?

ADAMS: No. No.

MOORE: Did you go to church?

ADAMS: Only for something to do, yeah.

MOORE: You mean like this, so [inaudible].

ADAMS: Yeah. I know I was not uh, hor-horribly religious uh.

MOORE: And, and your wife, what nationality and background was she?

ADAMS: Uh, her folks' er, grandparents, I guess, which they were in Switzerland.
Switzerland and uh... I mean maybe Germany.

MOORE: And um, so you had how many children altogether?

ADAMS: Three.

MOORE: Three kids. And um.

ADAMS: Three daughters.

MOORE: Three daughters. Hey did you go to the war? Or you didn't have to because you had kids right?

ADAMS: Well, at first, um... at first, I, when I registered for the draft, I put in um, 3-A, which deferred because of families and so on. But by the time I had two youngsters, you see. And um, then I've, also I see how I was getting around 29, 30. An-and um, then I eventually got, got started in engineering at this Real Motor Company over here. And uh, and uh, reorganized. Then they started getting some wa-war work in there. And I was lucky enough... to get a job there as a specifications clerk in the engineering department. And uh, I've had uh, drafting and things like that, and college, and um, physics and chemistry and all those goodies, you know. So I had really had an engineering head on me, see. And uh, (sighs). What was it that I er, I. I did that... uh, clerk work for about a year. And then, one of the... one of the uh, supervisors in the vamping room, knew that I was taking drafting at night, so know him. And he encouraged me

to do it. And he, he tried to get me in his department, you know, the draft room. And uh, he finally uh, I was finally to do that. But first, I had to get someone to replace uh, first, you know in the. They were able to get somebody uh. They replaced me. And then I broke him in and I went in the drafting room on January 1st, 1945. Now, we're still at war. And er, we were still, we were building uh, heavy duty trucks, special trucks for the, for the navy in particular. And uh... but we hadn't, hadn't won the war yet. So what the f... um, what'd they call. We, we moved into town here. We had a small place that I, I dealt m- my hands out in the country. And uh, I figured that this war was going to keep lasting and I thought I better get my family back in the town near, where our parents lived. Which was, it's not close by over here, uh, on South Logan, which is now paved over by the way, where the house used to be. But we were living, living close by eh, that water place and we moved in. And then, I got um, oh, my draft status, while I was working, was 2-B [draft deferral due to work in defense industry]. I'd done work, you see. And then the way we were running, scraping the barrel, I got put in 1-A, which was eligible for immediate service. Somewhere around March 1945 that I... and, and April, I went to Detroit and had my physical examination. And I was waiting for greetings that now you're in the army. And then uh... (pause) I still had, still had the two kids. I got Cathy. We got Cathy in December 1945, that was it. Well, I was all set to pack up and go to war and then Germany surrendered. And uh, it was so hard th-that other people we knew, you know, the same class and kids everything. There was a couple of them. Uh, they got in the draft ahead of me. And uh, when they come, and right there was the cut off point. I was the next bunch that, to go. And they, they cut off the uh, the recruitment of people, just about that time. So I come close to

MOORE: [interposed] You got a guardian angel, somewhere.

ADAMS: Yeah. Talk about luck, yeah.

MOORE: Well, um. Now after that you began working for... after the war, um, who did you, who did you work for? What job did you get?

ADAMS: Well, I was doing good at Real [Motor Car Company] uh, which was. Uh, I, I, I, by that time, I was doing some ummm, chassy [reference to chassis, the base frame of a motor vehicle] layout work and uh, designing c-car, auto, um, truck part, bus parts then. But I wanted to get into body engineering, which was, at that time, higher paid. And uh, they were doing some body work upstairs. But uh, when I took it up with my boss. He wouldn't hear of it. Actually, that's the, er, you are interested in making as much money as you could. All I know is that I worked 'til 5 o'clock and came home wh-when I drove down Washington Avenue where the, en-engineering department, those lights on the second floor were on all the time. Those guys were working overtime and. And that's what I wanted to do is is work overtime and get more money, you know. Eh, and uh, he wouldn't hear of it. So believe it or not, I uh, you've heard of the Tucker Automobile [a brief venture by Preston Thomas Tucker in the late 1940's to design a more modern car which folded in scandal]?

MOORE: Yes.

ADAMS: You have heard about it?

MOORE: [inaudible]

ADAMS: Well I went to work for them in August 1947.

MOORE: The Tucker?

ADAMS: Mmm. Well I worked there six months, and I, but I got into body engineering.

MOORE: Yeah.

ADAMS: And uh, they, since they were short of men, they accepted the fact that I didn't have too much experience, but I did have drafting experience. So I learned uh, quite a bit about body engineering. Uh, until uh, about 1948 when uh... uh... things weren't going so good for the company. And as it turns out it was wrong. But they were going to indict Preston Tucker, you know, for defrauding investors. And they closed up the place. And then I came out of work and uh, I couldn't come back to Lansing 'cause I, [inaudible] so uh, so I packed up much of Detroit and started other. A guy that uh, I working with, you know, in Tucker, he told me a couple places to apply, you know, like. I got a job uh... in a Detroit um, engineering company. An-and in

MOORE: [interposed] Which one?

ADAMS: 19, 1948. Well it was Wetlaufer at the time, Wetlaufer Engineering... So I guess that's about as f-far as I need to go.

MOORE: [inaudible]

ADAMS: Yes?

MOORE: Well if you look back at your life though, are you happy you came to the States? How, how do you feel about coming to the States?

ADAMS: Oh, I think the best thing ever happened to me. I [unintelligible]

MOORE: [interposed] Do you think your father would have said the same thing?

ADAMS: I think he would too, yeah.

MOORE: And you say, you're not sure if your mother would say the same thing?

ADAMS: No, well. She's not fortunately, being sick like that. She, I think, stood the miserable. But... during that time, I could not take care of her. I could hardly take care of myself, you know.

MOORE: Your sister, would, think, how do you think she would answer that question? How she felt, what, coming to the United States?

ADAMS: (pause) Well, I, I really, I really don't know for her standpoint and I can't ask her today because she's down (mumbles) in Key West. And, she got a metal condition. I, I don't know if it's Alzheimer or not. But she can't remember very much. Very, very, very short.

MOORE: Di

ADAMS: [interposed] Ah...

MOORE: Err, [unintelligible] are you pretty content coming here?

ADAMS: Mmm. Yeah.

MOORE: You're in contact with any relatives that in England still?

ADAMS: My ah, my wife writes to uh, Aunt Gertie. [unintelligible]

MOORE: [interposed] And how has their life been back there compared to those who stayed?

ADAMS: After the war? Well, she's pretty much on the welfare system now. She and, her eyes are bad and she's got arthritis. Her husband died, that was Uncle

Arthur. And uh, she, she-she's taken care of. But... she's, she's getting up in years over me.

MOORE: Do you think that you would have been better off in England? Would you have stayed?

ADAMS: Me?

MOORE: Yeah.

ADAMS: If I stayed in England, I think I'd be one of the first casualties of the uh... Nazi bombing of London. Because I would have been the right age, you see. Er, 'member, I was, when was I born? 1915. 1940, I was twenty five.

MOORE: Eh.

ADAMS: Was I right?

MOORE: Yes, yeah.

ADAMS: And uh, 1939, they started bombing London. So at 20, 24, I been right uh, first one in the army.

MOORE: And um, is there anything? You said that the original application that when you first came to Ellis Island, you didn't have a flattering opinion of this country because the conditions there.

ADAMS: Well, Ellis Island is not a good example of America, I'll say that. (laughs)

MOORE: So that experience was pretty miserable?

ADAMS: Eh.

MOORE: Ellis Island?

ADAMS: Why yes, it would be. Yeah.

MOORE: Well I want to thank you on behalf of the National Park Service for giving us the opportunity to talk with you and listening to your experience. And uh, and uh, well, this is Kate Moore signing off. And this is December 1993 for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.