Chapter 7, continued: Oral History and Narratives of Migration

by Deborah L. Rotman

Lawrence McDonough and Pam [McDonough] Grasmick
Monday, July 18, 2011

Conversation Summary: Mr. McDonough and Mrs. Grasmick shared many reminisces about family history, grade school, class division, agriculture, youth social life, dance parties, Irish traditions, roles of women, High Island, and changes on the Island (Figure 7.11).

Figure 7.11. Pam Grasmick and Lawrence McDonough in Mr. McDonough's home on Beaver Island, summer 2011.

KA: So, today is Monday, July eighteenth, two thousand and eleven, and I am here with Lawrence McDonough. The first question I have is when did your family first come to the island and how were they related to you?

LM: My mother was born on the island and I think my dad was too. And that would've been eighteen eighty, something, but I couldn't be sure.

KA: What were your parents' names?

LM: Sylvester McDonough was my dad, and Mary Connaghan was my mother. She married Vesty McDonough and they had six kids. And I was the second youngest.

KA: How many siblings did you have?

LM: Me? There was six of us. We lived at Mother's and Dad's on a farm. That's a picture of us, right up there.

KA: Just up there? They were farmers?

LM: Yeah, they were farmers. No Irishman was a farmer that I ever knew, but they said they were farmers. You know, I mean they'd just come as they came from Ireland. My grandparents came from Ireland.

KA: What were their names, your grandparents?

LM: Sylvester was my grandfather.

PG: and Ellen Corey.

LM: and Ellen Corey was my grandmother.

PG: And they came from Toronto.

KA: Oh ok. Toronto. Did you know them very well?

LM: I was pretty small, but I knew (audio unclear 2:30).

KA: Could you describe what your grandmother was like, what she would do?

LM: She was a medium-sized lady, and cared for her kids, and (audio unclear 2:50). And I had older brothers and sisters. One younger brother.

KA: What did your father do here?

LM: He run the farm.

KA: He was the farmer. Okay.

PG: He also did a lot of logging around here.

LM: Oh yeah. He farmed a lot. And when he was old, nobody had been there before them, you know? The Mormons were here, but they weren't any farmers to speak of. They cut a little bit of wood, but they stayed in town. They lived there.

KA: They lived in town. Yeah. Did your mother help out on the farm too, or was she mostly in charge of raising you?

LM: She'd----Quite of few of our neighbors—She was busy with cooking and the garden though. Had chickens.

PG: Dad, maybe you could tell them a little bit about the farm, like how many sheep you had, cattle, and..?

LM: Oh yeah. We had, at one time, a hundred sheep, but we used to take the wool off of them every spring, and sold lambs to people who wanted to buy meat, and we ate the lambs ourselves. And we had cattle. Probably thirty, thirty-five head of cattle. And our milk and butter was made right there on the farm.

AP: Did your mother and grandmother spin the wool of the sheep?

LM: Did you what now?

AP: Did they spin the wool from the sheep?

LM: Yeah. Oh yeah. We had a spinning wheel, about that high, and spin the wool. My grandmother mostly. My mother quit making the wool after they were living there. They'd go from Traverse City, Charlevoix, or

somewhere across the lake, and get wool. And then, she'd knit every night, after—from September on. She'd make a pair of mitts after we'd eat dinner. Knit them by hand. Two long knitting needles.

KA: She knitted most of your clothes, or?

LM: Yeah, no. We bought our—Most of our clothes were bought. Other than mitts or caps, we bought them. And there was five or six of us around all the time, so we'd lose a pair, or wore a pair. She was always knitting in the wintertime.

KA: So, when you were growing up, did you grow up out on the same farm?

LM: Right.

KA; Uh-huh. What was your childhood like with your five other siblings?

LM: They were—Some of them were older and they went to high school. We went to grade school up there was--. And then downtown was the high school, and it was taught by Dominican sisters. And if you wanted to go to high school after the eighth grade, you had to go downtown. And most of the family—I wasn't lucky enough. My dad fell when I was probably two or three weeks in school—in high school—And I had to go home and help on the farm, so I never got back.

KA: Did your other siblings also work at the farm or were they able to go--

LM: Oh yeah. Some of them did. Some of them worked at the place, but most of them grew up by age sixteen or seventeen, they were on the farm, and then they'd go on to other jobs. And some of them went to high school. Some of them didn't.
(Someone walks in the house).

KA: So, could you describe your school experience in grade school?

LM: Well, we had just a regular teacher, you know, that had gone to school. She was usually from the island, and she would teach us kids. We had about ten to twelve kids in school. All we had. And then after eighth grade, you went on to high school.
KA: Did you have to do any work at school to keep up the school at all, or?

LM: Oh. We done the janitor work and cleaned the school. There was nobody come to do that.

KA: Right.

LM: And we'd all get our turn doing that. But that was only to the eighth grade, and then like I said, we went to town for school.

KA: Before that, did you ever really see the people who lived in town, or would you mostly--?

LM: Oh yeah. They came to church. We all were Catholic. And come down every Sunday, or whenever there was church, And the Dominican Sisters taught the high school in town, so you had religion along with your other subjects. And we'd come down to stay—We had some aunts that lived down there, and we'd come down and stay with them while we went to high school. I only got three or fourth months of high school. My dad fell and got hurt, and I had to go home and do the farm. I was probably fourteen, maybe.

KA: So, what were the winters like here back then?

LM: Well, the winter lasted year-long here. We had no snow-ploughs. Had no cars. We would travel by horse. And, well, they weren't too bad, I guess. (10:00). Usually, it'd snow in October. And of course, they didn't try to remove it or anything. Sometimes it would stay 'til the last of May. Winters were long, but we didn't know any better. We never were used to it. But, we had –There was people scattered all over the island. And they'd come down and visit, and we could go and visit them. And there was always boys and girls around. Couldn't dance or anything, but they had music. Most everybody here could play a violin at that time.

KA: Could you play an instrument?

LM: No. I'd (unclear 10:51).

KA: Did you ever go ice-skating or anything?

LM: Oh yeah. That was a big deal. They had ice from October to May, so you'd be sick of ice-skating by that time. Yeah.

KA: Would you just walk to school then, in the winters? Walk through the snow?
LM: Mm-hmm. Carry your lunch to school, and someone would follow to see that they got there. (11:30).

KA: So, how about the summers? What would you do—In your childhood, what would you do in the summertime?

LM: Well, we lived—This house was about here from the road to the lake. And we'd swim everyday. The boys would go first, and then the girls would go. (Laughter).
KA: Separately?

LM: Yeah. Usually, the girls would have a suit, us boys wouldn't. Undress when we left the house, go over and swim, and dress on the way back. And there's nobody lives there for miles around us, you know? Nobody on the beach, or…So, you didn't care if anyone's coming. (12:30).
PG: You made it sound leisurely. There must have been a lot of farm work.

LM: Oh yeah. Worked every day. When you were small, you had to ride the horses, cull away corn, and stuff. When you had bigger—The smaller fellas, they'd ride the horse, when you'd get bigger, you could cull better.

KA: Could you describe the relationship between the farmers and the fishermen on the island?

LM: Well, we used to call them the "fish-chokers". That's the name they had. But, most of them were relatives, you know. Their relatives were farmers. Not all of them, but majority of them. And they lived downtown, the fishermen. In the harbor here. But, there were a lot of relationships, you know? A lot of them were related. Came from Ireland. When I was a kid there was probably five or six farmers came right from Ireland. And, they were not farmers. They lived, but they had a hard time.

KA: Another question I had was in light of the booming fishing industry, you said there were a lot of relations that you had—farmers and fishermen—So, was there ever any class division or anything between the occupations?

LM: Not really. There was a time that the fishermen had a better way of making a living than the farmers did here, because fishing was really good. And they got a good price for it right here. They got taxed (14:40) nice right in the dock down there, and then they'd take it to the mainland and ship it to Chicago or Detroit. And, their income was more steady than the farmers. Farmers had one time of the year, the fall. They'd make

pretty good money when they sold their cattle, and sheep, and the wool. They'd have good money, but the fishermen were from, I'd say, the first of April to the first of December, anyway, they had an income for near every day. And some of them were successful and some of them wouldn't make it, and they worked for other people. They never could afford to plan the fishing like they should have. They'd always kind of drag along, you know, with a lot of income, and good fishing boats, and nets.

PG: His mother and Mabel Cull were sisters, and the Cull family, they were big fishermen here on the island.

KA: After you left school to go work for your father, working on the farm, how long did you do that for?

LM: I worked there. I worked the lumber camps, and I run them myself. And then my brother and I went in the milk business. Pasteurized milk. And then we had to milk the cows, and pasteurize the milk. Cordwood (16:48) everyday. You had to hire (hide?) them. And we done that for eighteen years, I guess. And he moved to Grand Rapids, and I went captain of the boat for twenty two years here.

KA: Oh ok. Which boat was that?

LM: The Beaver Islander.

PG: And the first Emerald Isle.

LM: The first Emerald Isle. And we made a trip everyday. During the summertime, I had to live in Charlevoix, and then I managed the boat company. I don't know. I was there…

PG: Another twenty years? (Laughter)

LM: Quite a while, anyway. I managed the boat company, lived in Charlevoix, bought a house, and my wife and well, Pam was one, five other kids besides Pam, and they were away to school most of that time. And then they gave me a—said "You gotta come back here", so here I am. I bought the house, and fixed it up. I came back and my wife died. How long ago was that, Pam?

PG: A couple years ago.

LM: Yeah. Two years ago. We enjoyed it here. We'd come back. We knew everybody pretty much. And I had a lot of relatives. The people that owned the store in town, they were relatives of mine. And, you knew everybody on the island, then. Now, there's quite a few I don't know anymore.

KA: When you were farming, would you only—What else would you provide to the town? Would you just deliver the milk or..?

LM: We'd grow vegetables along with that, and potatoes, and meat. Somebody wanted to buy in the fall. They wanted to buy a quarter of beef, and we'd butcher beef, and sell the beef in town, and usually keep some for ourselves.

PG: You did a lot of grains too, and things—

LM: Oh yeah.

PG: --because of all the animals. Oats and corn.

Youth Social Life, dance parties

KA: So, when you were growing up were there a lot of opportunities to socialize with the other young people.

LM: No. We were six miles out in the country, and nothing but a horse to ride. My dad—So, we did have neighbors. We had a few neighbors who were close, you know, within a mile or two, and we'd visit them, but very few places in the wintertime, you know. Summertime, we had horses. We used to ride from the country downtown. (20:00). And if we're going to stay overnight, all we had to do was let the horses go. They'd be home in twenty minutes. Right back to eat and they'll stand there and somebody'd let them in. (20:15).

KA: Were there ever any house parties that you went to? Or, dances?

LM: Oh yeah. There used to be a lot years ago. After cars came, everybody had house parties. And we'd go to them all over the island. Everybody knew everybody else. You didn't wait for an invitation. You heard there's a party, you'd go.

KA: Could you describe what one of those was like at all?

LM: Oh, we danced, and there was always somebody who could play either violin or harmonica, or some type of music, you know. And they'd play, and we'd dance, and we'd all have a drink (21:00), and go home. And there was a lot—Every house, I think, that I remember had a hardwood floor that you could dance on. And somebody'd play music, didn't matter what it was. And we didn't know good music anyway, so it didn't make much difference (Laughter). But, there was always somebody that would play either harmonica or violin, or you had a piano. And for a long time, there were only two pianos on the island. And then, they became quite plentiful. They took a small boat from here, before Pam was born, and went down to Chicago, a man who lives there named Berger, and they lugged them back. And some of them were player pianos you pump, you know, and got a hell of a time remembering. (Laughter). They were really rich. And the elderly, they'd get up with us kids and dance too, you know. Square dance and stuff like that. (22:30).

KA: Who were some of the characters when you were growing up on the island?

LM: Who wasn't? (Laughter). Well, let's see.

PG: Why don't you tell them the story about the Doneys? The Doney house.

LM: Oh yeah.

PG: Yeah, he told me—I was out there cleaning one day with the Little Traverse Conservancy, and he told me a story about it. They might enjoy that. (22:57).

LM: Which one?

PG: Well, about—Was it Peter?—and going back, he was living here, and he went back to Ireland to get a wife?
LM: Oh yes! (23:08). That one. Well, he came here, and he was all Irish too, and they lived—Have you been around the island at all?

KA: Mm-hmm. Yes.

LM: Well, we call the trail, this one that goes down from right up where the four corners are, you go down that way, they lived way down there in the woods. He…He was a terrible liar. So, he went back—He was going with this woman in Ireland a little bit. He knew her, you know. (Laughter). (23:49). And, he went back

to Ireland, and he told her he had a big farm on Beaver Island, and that he owned a fleet of fishing boats in New York. So, when they came back on the boat, he told her---when they passed two of the boats when they were coming into New York, he said "That boat's mine. That boat's mine". He didn't have a dime. He brought her to an old shack up here. And she was an awful nice woman, but she had no money either. And they lived there, and he lied to her 'bout the boats, and she never did find the farm I don't think, 'cause they had—farm was as big as the kitchen here, with a shack on it. And she raised six children. And somehow they survived. I don't know how. But, the Islanders at that time were here, and they had a little more, so they kept 'em pretty much, and food and all that so they wouldn't starve. He was a good worker, but he was an old liar. He'd lie about anything. But, he raised—They raised maybe one daughter and four boys I guess they had in the family. (25:25). But, the majority of the population at that time were Catholic. Most of them were Catholic. And they were kind of brought here by priests that would come here and then they'd go back to Ireland. They'd say it was just like Ireland over—I don't know if I would or not. I never got to Ireland. (26:00).

Irish Traditions

KA: Did your family ever pass down any Irish traditions?

LM: Oh yeah. Everything they--was Irish. But, of course, kids don't pay much attention to that, you know.

PG: It would be, what was it, six months ago, and out of the clear blue you could say the "Our Father" in Gaelic.

LM: Oh yeah.

PG: I remember Grandma speaking a few words—

LM: Oh yeah. We—Us kids had to learn it.

KA: You learned Gaelic?

LM: Yeah. Gaelic.

PG: And why don't you tell her about how, you know, your mother always believed in the little people, and maybe the hill behind Salty's?

LM: Oh yeah, you know, they believed—You know, the Irish believed in faeries. You probably don't know what the fairies are, do you?

KA: We know a little bit about them, but if you could tell us, that'd be great.

LM: There's a place up here—We had a Catholic priest at one time, and there was a place up here that he did the fairies' dance at. I don't know. I never saw it, but it's right up a little ways here. And, they were very superstitious, the Irish. And, somebody'd tell them something, they'd believe it, you know? And the fairies were dancing up here, and they'd swear that it did happen. I don't think it ever did. I know it didn't. But, they had some odd ideas of how you lived, you know. And they tell me—I've never been to Ireland, but they tell me the Irish over there are somewhat that way too. And, they were superstitious. I know that. Different things. They'd do very odd things. The Irish. Do you know, maybe you are—Are you Irish?

KA: I am a little bit Irish. (Laughter).

LM: How 'bout you?

AP: Quite a bit actually.

LM: Are you?

AP: What sorts of odd things did they—What sorts of odd habits did they have?

LM: Oh, what'd they do? Well, like, the faeries was one thing. And you could tell them anything, and they might repeat at twenty-five and swear it was the truth. And they were very gullible, swallowing stuff like that. But, you probably heard some, better than I do, Pam.

PG: Well, I'm trying to remember a few of them. I think one of the things that you could say is that they were deeply religious.

LM: Oh yeah. Yeah. They were. They wouldn't miss church, snow or anything else.

PG: And the rosary.

LM: Yeah. Oh yeah.

KA: Would you say the Catholic Church was the center of the community?

LM: Oh yeah. It was. I'll tell you one story. The Catholic Church was up on top of the hill, and there was a fellow lived up in the country there, and he was young. He lived with his mother and dad. Probably twenty, twenty-five years old. And the Irish were great for partying, you know? Drinking. And so, he got a bottle, and church was going to be at eight o'clock, so he went to church, put the bottle in the back of his buggy, and tied his horse up and went into church. And he fell asleep while the mass was going on. And the priest got up and he said "Judgement Day, you'll be there and I'll be there", and he woke up and said "So will I!". (Laughter). So, there were a couple of characters like that. That get partying and go to church. And they always, one thing they did . They always had the bootlegger that made booze for us, where you'd buy it, you know. And they'd tell anybody, so..so, there was lots of drinking around back in them days. (30:58).

KA: Who were some of the bootleggers? Did you know any of them? (Laughter).

LM: I knew them all! (Laughter).

PG: You even made a couple of batches.

LM: Yes. I knew how to make whiskey. My dad used to make it, but he wasn't a drinking guy…I made it then. After the dairy business, I thought I'd try it. I tried it in the house. I built a house when we got married and that's down in the woods. I don't know how to describe that. But anyway, we lived it in for—I don't know. We were there…You weren't born there, were you? No. And then we had six children of our own. My wife and I who died. And there's a---Did you come by boat?

KA: Mm-hmm.

LM: I got two sons on there. One's the captain. One's an engineer. And, so, there's a lot of activity around here to make a living.

KA: When did you meet your wife? Have you always known her?

LM: Oh, I knew her. She was--I don't know, much younger than I am. Quite a bit. And her dad owned the grocery store. My mother used to sell butter, and chickens, and stuff to him. When I was too small to drive a horse, I'd ride in the buggy with her down. She'd deliver the butter. I knew this girl. She was quite a bit younger than I am. Three or four years. Maybe more, right?
PG: I think she was eighteen when you married, and you were twenty-five.

LM: Yeah. So, I knew her since she was that high. And most of the island boys married island girls, you know. 'Course, they weren't very plentiful any place then.

About his mother

KA: Could you talk a little bit about what your mother was like? What her personality was like at all?

LM: Well, she must've been pretty good. She had quite a few kids. 'Course she coulda' killed some, I'm sure. She was Irish, too. And her dad owned the store up where the college is on the east side of the island. Were you ever up there?

KA: Mm-hmm. (33:49)

LM: They had a grocery store there. That was before town was settled. And, she was a quiet lady, didn't—you know, she didn't talk a whole lot. She done a lot of hard work. She used to go to milk cows, like we would when I was a kid, when us kids were too small. And, of course, as far as she went was eighth grade. The Irish had never been educated, you know. They came here, and they didn't think of school as anything, so they went…grew vegetables, and that's what they'd survive on, 'cause they didn't have any money. Then the Beaver Island Lumber Company came here and that was a boost to the island because they could work, and everybody'd work besides the ones they'd brought here. The islanders worked and sold their wood. So, that was quite a boost. (35:03).

PG: Grandma was a very independent lady, wouldn't you say?

LM: Oh yeah. Very much so.

PG: Deeply religious as I remember.

LM: Oh yeah.

PG: She died when--I guess I was twelve. She was eighty-eight at that time. And she'd seen her amount of tragedy too. Didn't she, Dad?

LM: Yes. Yes, she did. It wasn't an easy place to make a living on the island here, you know?

PG: The eldest one of his family fell out of a—Genevieve, she fell out of a high chair, and they always say she died of meningitis, but it was probably, you know, an internal bleed. And then, she—I mean, you all remember when the Marold blew up and that was Dad's older brother.

LM: Yeah. They had a boat, big boat tanker on the shore north of the island and they gave it up for anybody who wanted, could help themselves. It was full of fuel. And my brother was working on the boat that run between here and Charlevoix, and it blew up. He was killed and never found. There were five of them. And, well, there was kind of bad luck quite often, you know? There was no doctor for years here on the island. You got a broken bone, you lived with it, or you survived. There was—Some of the women were quite good at repair. Somebody had a broken arm or something like that, you know? And then we had Protar. You

probably heard of him. He lived out in the country here and he used to doctor. People would go there. He wasn't a doctor really, but he knew a little bit about it. He'd wrap you up or something and you'd go home.

And, I remember one time, my two brothers—They're older than me—were going hunting and they went—We had a bridge between the barn and the house where we lived, and they were going across there, and one fella said "I think I'll load the gun", so he pulled out the gun and he pulled the barrel up and it fired and hit my other brother in the leg. He was the youngest. And they took him out to see Protar, and he looked at him, and he was at that time in eighth grade going to school. I think I was maybe in the second grade, and so, they took him out there and he said, "Well, he's alright. That's alright". There was a wound, but it was in the flesh, the fat part of his leg there, and the bee-bee (sp?) (38:25) would keep coming out. So, he'd go to school and then one of us kids would have to come home and tell Mom and Dad to get the horse and buggy and go and get him from school.

They come back. And he had that for, I'd say, fifteen years. The bee-bees (?) kept coming out of his leg. And the cripple must have been the muscle or bone or something, and he couldn't walk. We'd have to come get my dad to come get him. And then he was killed in that boat blow-up. They never found his body. They found the rest of them, but not him. And my brother and I found the captain over on the west side. We walked the island several times. We think we'd find our brother, you know, but never did. We found the captain. He was all dressed with a hat on and everything when we found him on the west side of the island. And he had dressed from December, and this was in June we found him. The Coast Guard were here at that time. They went up and picked the body up, and send it back to Kenosha. I think he was from Kenosha, Wisconsin.

KA: Was that when you were working with the logging or as the captain—

LM: No, this was before.

KA: Oh, this was before.

LM: I was at home. (40:00).

PG: Just on the farm on Sand Bay. His mother used to send them out to look, and they would get on horseback and look, and scour the shores, you know. It's not an easy thing not to have a body and closure.

KA: It must have been very hard. (pause). Well, I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about your experience the logging and the lumber company?

LM: Well, the first part of it, a fella came from Grand Rapids and maybe you know this, maybe you don't, and he would make croquet sets. You know, croquet sets? He made them out of the bark, cut the timber up here. And I worked for him. I used to take the logs to the mill, the saw mill, and he'd saw the logs and cut them about that long, and they were turned into rounds about that much. (indicated size with his hands). And then they took them to Grand Rapids and they cut them into croquet sets. You know, the handles? And then they had a mallet about that long that you'd hit the ball with, and then they'd have the balls down in Grand Rapids, so it was a multiple work, you know. We cut the logs here, cut them in the sawmill and send them down to be finished. They made them smooth, and painted them like you see them with stripes around them.

KA: Where would they sell the croquet sets? Just in Grand Rapids, or--

LM: Grand Rapids. Well, the fella paid for us to work on the wood, lumbering here, and I'd have, oh, four or five men in the wintertime, and a team of horses, and we'd take them out. There was a sawmill up in the middle of the island at one time, and it had an outfit on it to turn the square timber that we'd cut in the mill

into round timber, and then when they got to Grand Rapids, they got them. We hold them down on the boat and took them to Charlevoix, and trucked them to Grand Rapids.

PG: You worked in other camps, too. Do you remember which other camps you worked?

LM: Oh, I did a camp of my own up on Lake Geneserath, and I was about sixteen, I guess, then. And we had four men, or five that would work in there and cut the tree down, and I had a team of horses. We'd pull them out to the road, and then down to the lake, and then they'd float them from the lake, around the island, and down to the sawmill down there. Cut it into stuff for building houses and stuff. That was soft wood, but the other was made of the hardwood. And that could only be gotten on the west side of the island. And you could walk, and see those trees they used. (43:30).

PG: And then you also mentioned that you did hemlock with your father?

LM: Oh yeah. He used---He was a lumberman along with farming in the wintertime. That's what you'd do You'd go and cut logs, sell most to the mills, and he'd cut them into to lumber in the spring. And it was the only kind of money you could make in the wintertime. Or, you'd cut wood, you'd sell it to the fishermen. Wood's five dollars a cord I think. You wouldn't get rich if you worked all day.

KA: Who were the other men that you would work with? Were they other islanders, or were they people who the lumber company would bring over?

LM: No, when the lumber company was here, they had a railroad going up through the island, and they brought their own men pretty much. And you could sell them your timber, and they'd buy it and they'd cut it up, but you didn't have much to do with the mill. But, anybody that wanted a job on the island could get a job in the sawmill. And they had railroad tracks, went from downtown up to the south side of the island.

PG: Who were the crewmembers that, you know, you would have hired, Dad?

LM: You mean—

PG: The men in the camps.

LM: Well, Hugh Connaghan, Jimmy Floyd, and another fella, I never did know his name. He never told his name. I think he was afraid of the law or something, and he didn't want anybody to know about him (laughter). I never did find his name. I had to pay him in cash. The rest of the crew would take in checks, but he wouldn't take any checks, so…But, I had an uncle work for five years, I guess, in the woods, and then we'd have a man cook. No women around the mill. The camp. (46:00).

PG: Tell them that one story about—at Carpenter's Mill when you went up one time to check on the crew? And the dinner? The pot and the chicken? You remember that one?

LM: No, I don't. You tell them.

PG: No, I-I—You'll have to tell it, but you went up there to check on them, up and I'm pretty sure it was near Carpenter's Mill, and they had been partying, and they made a dinner, and when you walked up there, they had the chicken in the pot and do you remember the potatoes you were talking about?

LM: Yeah, I knew what you were talking about but it don't come to me right now.

PG: The feathers on the chicken?

LM: Oh yes! That was uh Greg Palmer, Pat Cull---who else was there. They were going to get dinner for themselves. I was downtown, went back for something else for the camp, and they had definitely cooked, but they had gone to the bootleggers before they started cooking. And they were both teasing but it doesn't matter who it was that had (50 sec?) supper cause well by that time and they had the chicken were in the pot and the feet were sticking up and the feathers were floating in it and the potatoes were half peeled. So they were having the greatest time they were.. yeah.

AP: How- I'm sorry. How long did the train run on Beaver Island? You said there was a rail?

LM: I think it was about 12 miles. It was up in the middle of the Island where the timbers were. They went up one way and back down they didn't turn around or anything. And they got oh maybe 3 or 4 car loads of logs down to the mill where the marina is down there now. And uh then they go back for some more. They employed about 40 men with the mill. It was great for the Island alright, cause there wasn't anything else here. Well there was fishing but that- (phone rang) that- (phone)

KA: You mentioned that it was only men who worked at the logging and the mill.

LM: Right.

Roles of Women

KA: What were the roles of women on the island while you were growing up?

LM: Well you had a garden and the spend time there and the ones that lived on a farm, the women, they had to get all the cattle and had to feed them while the men were out in the woods, so they were employed but no money. (Laughs)

KA: Did you---when did you start working on the Emerald Isle as a captain?

LM: mmm I was.... 40? But I did fishing around here on the boats. Not on my own but I did fish with them. And then I worked on the in the (3:40-3:43) Indiana Harbor. I worked there for a couple of years during the summer.Which was good pay, then they...they lost money and I think one time there was 29 or 30 sailors worked every year on the boats. I didn't work, only a few years, some of them stayed on all the time.

KA: Do you have any stories of when you would fish with the other fishermen?

LM: No, I was just a worker then. I don't think I, I probably had some but it comes right now I don't remember.

KA: Who did you work for, do you remember?

LM: Yeah, I worked for uh... Mike Cull was his name, fellow owned a boat, a nice fishing boat, and I worked for, he was a Gallagher. Now I don't know if you're familiar with fishing or not but when you fish either with pound nets they're along the shore, you know, they drive stakes down, put nets on 'em and you pull the net up and get the fish out of it. And then the other ones that work on uhhh fish boats thats built for it to give in bad weather and stuff, you pull the nets aboard the boat and get the fish out and set them back in, return 'em. Sometimes you get ohhh two thousand pounds of fish sometimes fifteen hundred you know. They varied, sometimes [by] the year but there were usually about 10 boats out there at one time. And some are what they call pound net fishermen where you drive the stakes close to the shore and there's the lead the uh nets that they run in about 6 feet of water and out to what they call the pot and the fish comes up to this and there's no place to go, they go this way and get in the pot, and then they scoop them up and they can get two thousand pounds of fish in the net. Course they don't do it anymore there. And then they take them in,

dress them, and sell them. Ship them on the mail boat to Charlevoix. And they distribute them all over the place. This was one of the greatest places in the United States for fishing at one time. They finally fished them out.

AP: Actually, what is your favorite childhood memory?

LM: my what?

AP: Your favorite memory from your childhood.

LM: Mmmm…that'd be a hard one.

KA: Do you have any fond memories? Not just from your childhood just from living on the Island?

LM: Well.

KA: Favorite places to go?

LM: Well the only thing, I left here I never figured I'd come back. The kids said "You're going back" and I said "Ok" and they went and got the house here built and sold the house in Charlevoix, I don't know how long it's been.

PG: About twenty years.
LM: Twenty years. And then I (unclear) back on the Isle, but we lived, I don't know how to describe it. This house was on, have you been out in the country at all? How far out did you go?

KA: I've been all the way around the Island.

LM: Oh did you? Oh good. Well that house is burned down there's another house there, my sister-in-law lives in. And thats right in Sand Bay. There's a lot of houses along there but this was back between the river and the lake. It was built in there. (55:07).

Farming/High Island Trip

PG: You know there are probably two little stories that you might want to tell about farming. Umm one is talk-talking about your trip over to High Island, you were about fifteen.

LM: Oh.

PG: You went with, I can't remember, Brown?

LM: Huh?

PG: I can't remember who you went over to High Island with. Is it Brown?

LM: Yeah, I believe his name was Brown. The Israelites came from Benton Harbor, you know about this, who the Israelites are. And they went to High Island, and started farming over there. But, they didn't last too long. And they left there, and then there was a couple of Islanders tried to farm over there but it was all sandy, you couldn't go disturbing them even and I was….went over, my dad had a hay baler and this fella wanted it to go to High Island to bay the hay, but for the Israelites. The Israelites went down and….

PG: Benton Harbor?

LM: Huh?

PG: Benton Harbor.

LM: Benton Harbor, yeah, and then I don't know if there any more Israelites or not, but there were hundreds of them over there at one time. And they lived there and built a bakery for themselves, they are very thrifty people, and they farmed and bought their---had a boat and would bring the produce up there from Charlevoix. They really had a big, at Benton Harbor they had a big farm and they would take it down there so and they were here for, God, I don't know, twenty years? And my dad had a hay baler, and so after the Israelites left he went down there and cut the hay. But he couldn't get it up here whatever he cut it down there for I'm not, in nice bales, and my dad had the hay baler, and it used to cut bales about so big and compress it, and tie it with a wire, and another guy in High Island, and he wanted to bale the hay so he could move it off there and my dad wouldn't let the hay baler go unless I or my brothers went with it. So, we went down, I was down there for a week when my brothers got to the Island here, and we took a bale of hay and we threw it down the barn and that's where we slept. But they had big ovens and cooking utensils of all kinds there and they really lived good. So we used their stuff, we weren't supposed to, but we used their stuff. We were down there after a week's time. Boy, I was never that hungry before in my life. I wasn't that good of a cook myself.

PG: And the Indians brought you back didn't they?

LM: Yeah. The Indians took us out the west side of the Island and said you'll have to jump in. There was about 5 feet of water and so get in the five feet of water and uhhh (Son shows up, conversation for a few seconds).

PG: The other thing is about the thrasher. That was a big thing for the Island when they got their first thrashing machine.

LM: Oh yeah. We used to have a fella that---he was German---that came right from Germany, and he was a natural mechanic. He could make anything, a bike and anything. We had no thrasher on the Island and they had a meeting one time here and we all gathered up all we had and by the end we had about twenty-five dollars or something like that a piece and then we walked to (?) and got it back to the Island there, and we thought that was a really big investment you know?

PG: You got even the doctor here.

LM: Yeah, Dr. Palmer. He was the doctor here. He didn't donate twenty-five dollars, which drove others crazy with him, but anyway he---He helped a lot 'cause money was hard to get then, you know? I think he gave about ten dollars, or something like that, to buy it, and then we got it over here, and whoever bought it went to see. But they didn't provide power for it and all they had here was horses and the power. It didn't have what they call the power part of it, so then we had to get a gasoline-run one. Now, we got the farmers thrashing done. And, when they ground the meal one tried to outdo the other boy. One would do thrashing the other wouldn't do anything.

KA: Did you work a lot with the Indians here on the island or what?

LM: I didn't work much with 'em. I run into them in camp or something like that. I knew most all of them. Yeah, they were all happy-go-lucky guys who'd holler at you and wave at you. They really were nice people.

PG: You can talk about one fellow who was an Indian up on the west side. And, remember the rabbits he... you talked about him snaring?

LM: Oh yeah, Andy Birch. He was an Indian, that was---Her grandfather had a camp up on French Bay, and on the south west side of the Island, he couldn't get a crew one time, and I was fifteen I guess and he---I was downtown with my dad, and he asked if I wanted to go to camp, and he ended up being my father-in-law. So, I went up to that camp there, and that was six, if I remember right, men in the camp, and this Indian he was called Andy Birch, he was like the Indians that out here were famous for trapping. And rabbits were so thick on the Island any place you were. If you were here there would be six or eight in the yard. He'd set some snares there made out of copper wire, you'd make a loop in the top of the wire and in the winter time these rabbits run on the same trail so they run into this loop and hang themselves. And he knew just how to do that. So he caught…he put out so many snares, we call them, and he caught so many rabbits that he would pile them up like cordwood. He did it on the floor across his room from down on the ground to six feet high, and on the weekend when people came in to food and money and stuff he take them in and give everyone rabbits. God everywhere was so full of rabbits come spring I mean they wouldn't think it was rabbit. They were so thick you could look out that window there and there'd be fifteen rabbits out there, then they died off after that. Some hunted and some died, but he was a famous trapper. He did make a little bit of money and in the winter time rabbits they might not be (? 18:00-18:02) they would follow the track and maybe five or ten rabbits would go down this track. They don't run all over when the snow comes, they stay in the track and they find stuff to eat along the way. And so, he was famous for trapping. And we ate em all at camp too, that was the main food meat. I don't imagine you girls have ever had rabbit to eat.

AP: I have.

LM: Have you?

KA: Not me. One last question if that's alright.

LM: Sure.

KA: Is there anything about the Island that is changed or disappeared since you were growing up that you wish was still around or anything about the way of life or particular places on the Island.

LM. Oh yeah. You could come downtown from the country, if you lived in the country, and come downtown and no matter what house you passed ,there'd be someone there who'd say, come on in and have a cup of tea (?) or a little something to eat. That's all changed because, you know, there's strangers who don't know us and we don't know them, so that's one big change. And, of course, it was all horse and buggy in my day, and now it's all automobile. But that, I suppose that's the most---the means of traffic and the roads. We had roads you couldn't drive a car on. You had to have a horse or walk. And I don't know if there.... you knew everybody by their first name, and if a stranger came on the boat somebody would come, and tell you who they were, what their name was.

KA: Did you get to know a lot of the people who would visit in the summer time when you were the captain of the fer-?

LM: Oh yeah, you knew everybody. They came down, when we left the island. Yep.

PG: Well, and there weren't restaurants, I remember you just called them home and mom would feed people. They'd get here and there was no place for them to eat.

LM: (Laughs) yeah.

PG: So, when the Bobies (sp?) when they started CMU, they came here and got off the boat and there was no place to eat, so dad just brought them and the Allens up, and just put a couple more places at the table but we had... (Inaudible).

LM: When people got caught on the island and didn't have anything to eat they would bring them food. Everybody would bring food.

KA: That's really nice.

PG: That's the other thing you were saying. You had a grandmother who was married to an uncle. And that was the way-

LM: My-

PG: They had kids come in and your mother would take them in too if something happened to-

LM: Oh sure, sure. We had kids that went to school the elementary school that was up where you turn to Sand Bay about five miles from here. That's where I first went to school and, there were other people lived in, way out in the woods, and were little farms and such and they would go to school, and come and stay with us in the winter, go to school from there.

KA: Was that the Sunnyside School?

LM: No.

PG: Was that the Roosevelt school?

LM: That was the Greentown School. Yeah, we had as many as three or four stay at our place all winter, go to school.

AP: Was that common? For the rural schools to have kids from even further out stay in other houses?

LM: Oh sure.

PG: When I was talking about your grandmother and your uncle, they had a way of sort of taking care of people. There weren't any social services, it sounds like in those days, and so people would get together and live together, like your grandmother and your uncle. She didn't have a husband. Was he a bachelor?

LM: Yeah, he was a bachelor. We had more bachelors on the Isle. Well, there wasn't any women. Any woman that had any chance of running would get off the isle. And a lot of the girls went to nursing school, went to Grand Rapids, Chicago, and most of the choices in cities like Detroit or Chicago, they would go and get a job and live with friends or relatives.

KA: I just thought of something else, what were the---you still have homecoming dinners, do you remember when that first got started? The August dinners?

LM: That was before my time. That's... People would come here a few days before, and they would stay with relatives and... I don't know many people would come and there were a lot of them in here. And every bodies relatives would come and they would just move in with their you know and stay there until they were ready to go home.

PG: You used to always talk about the end of the boating season, when all the men would get off, you know, get off the freighters. And come back, and they were flush with money.

LM: Yeah we'd get thirty or forty men from the Island off there, working the freighters all summer and their pockets were bulging with money, they became big spenders you know? And they come home, and they had a raffle here, and they would raffle stuff off, and them fellas would throw money away like it was going out of style. They would take their money down, and get a ticket, and never even stay to see if they won something. Yeah, we had a lot of sailors here. One time there was twenty-six fellas from this little island on a schooner. It was a good way to make money, you know. And a lot of them moved to Chicago, Detroit to the car factories. They had no education, but they could do that kind of manual labor.

KA: Was that... did a lot of men become sailors sort of after the fishing industry declined a lot?

LM: And during that too, there wasn't any lack to get on a fishing boat, the smell alone was you know... so, they would head out to sail. And we had a lot of the captains that sailed boats out on the lake.

KA: Well, this has been amazing. Thank you so much for your time.

LM: Well, I hope you got the information you wanted.

Jim and Lynne Flanagan
Tuesday, July 19, 2011
Beaver Island

Conversation Summary: Árainn Mhór featured prominently in this interview with Jim and Lynne Flanagan, including Irish immigration, Irish chewing gum, house parties and musical tradition, farming on Árainn Mhór, religion on Árainn Mhór, leaving Árainn Mhór, Gaelic, Gog and Magog, changes on Árainn Mhór, and nicknames (Figure 7.12).

KA: Today is July 19th, 2011 and I am here with:

JF: Jim Flanagan

LF: And Lynne Flanagan.

KA: And Jim Flanagan is the son of:

JF: Nora Early or Nora Jimmy as she was better known from Árainn Mhór Island.

Figure 7.12. Jim and Lynne Flanagan, Beaver Island, summer 2011.

KA: Could you tell us a little bit about what her life was like on Árainn Mhór?

JF: Well, she left Árainn Mhór when she was fairly young, I think probably around 15 or 16, do you know the exact dates Lynne? No. And she---she was from a large family one or two children died as infants, she only had one brother and a lot of sisters. The family lived in a fairly primitive cottage with a small less than one-acre field attached. They grew potatoes, and had the fish that her father caught. He was a fisher/farmer. And they had some livestock, I mean she talked about chickens, I don't know if it was hogs or pigs, and some people had cows because they had milk. My wife is giving me the names of her sisters, Mary, Bridie, Francis and Kitty. And those are the ones who lived. There was another sister who died in infancy. And they cooked the food over an open fireplace that was quite large. I don't know the exact dimensions. They had a kettle hanging over it that they would boil water in for tea. They would bake bread on the stone in front of the hearth and cook their meals over the open fire. The girls, my mother and her sisters, would all knit at every possible opportunity. As my wife remembers it, my mother started knitting on quills at age three. They would knit their own clothes and spin the wool, so they must have had sheep as too.

LF: Yeah she, Nora, was thrilled when we saw a spinning wheel somewhere.

JF: Yeah we found a---we saw a spinning wheel at one of the old time historical places, and she was thrilled to see it. So, they collected the wool, carded it, spun it and then knitted it into their clothing. And then there was a co-op on the island that would supply them with wool that they would knit into commercial goods, and the co-op would pay them for that, and that is how they would get cash money for their various luxuries, which were mostly things like cigarettes or yeast for their bread, although most of their bread was--

LF: Soda bread.

JF: --soda bread, which yeast was not used in. And, actually, yeast was fairly restricted because they did not want the Irish brewing moonshine, which actually my great-grandfather did do, and she told about him brewing moonshine and taking it in a couragh between islands. There are some small islands around Árainn Mhór. It was a very tight-knit community. Everyone would always visit everyone else. When someone came to visit you would have to give them a proper cup of tea, which meant not just a cup of tea, but a little bite to eat with it. My mother would say it wasn't a proper cup of tea if you see we didn't give you a proper cup of tea.

LF: This would be a poor tea.

JF: Yes, this is a poor tea because we didn't give you a cookie or a slice of soda bread with some butter on it. And, I'm trying to think what else.

LF: I am trying to think of the story of her brother who took her up the mountain on a donkey, and then he left her there. It was his little trick, I don't know how old she was, but she loved her brother even if he was the mischievous one. And, he actually disappeared; the family has no idea where he went. They tried tracing him, but he disappeared, probably as a teenager.

JF: I'm guessing a dispute with the father would probably do it.

LF: Yeah, and never came back. And she was looking for him as late as in her seventies. One of those family tragedies. But I do remember that trick that he played on her. I am trying to remember everyone not liking the youngest in the family, the baby, but they reconciled more or less. I know that they had the prayer every night and that she sneaked out after the prayer after everyone thought she was in bed. I know she and her sisters all did that. You could be well behaved but you could still go have some fun. But that was as a teenager.

KA: Did she ever tell you stories about what her father was like? He was a fisherman but...

LF: According to her, a god. You know.

JF: We've got a couple pictures of him, and he looks like what you would call in Chicago, in the Irish community today, a hard case. He looked very rough-hewn.

LF: He didn't look like a drinker. He wasn't a drinker, but he did look....

JF: Yeah, it was a hard life, I mean they went out fishing in the Atlantic in small boats. Storms could come up very quickly. My mother tells a story that I have heard from other people but which since then I have learned might not be totally true. The reason that they developed so many different patterns in the sweaters was, so they could identify the fisherman who got drowned, and after they had been floating in the Atlantic for a while, after the bodies were fished out, it was difficult to identify them. But the sweaters would tell, they could look at the sweaters and say, "Oh, this is the pattern so and so uses, so it must be her husband".

LF: We don't know if that's true or not, but it makes some sense because everyone did have a different pattern. But I don't think we have –

JF: Oh, they would also--Another thing they would do is they would garret, they would go along the, Árainn Mhór being an island is entirely surrounded by the Atlantic, and along the shore there was lots and lots of seafood, and so they would gather.

LF: I want to call it dolce--

JF: No, I'm not talking about the seaweed. What were the little shells she talked about, that they liked to eat? It was some sort of small, like not a clam, but an animal that would attach itself to the rocks, like a limpet or something. It would attach to the rocks, and they would pry them off, and throw them in a bucket. And then they would boil them all up, and pull them out, and they would eat them, and I can't remember what they were called. She really loved them. She was not thrilled when she couldn't get them. Nope, don't remember the name of them.

Irish Chewing Gum

LF: Well, talk about Irish chewing gum.

JF: Yeah, and the Irish chewing gum was another kind of seaweed called dulce, and they would dry it out on the rocks and they would keep a big bag of it around and you would pop it in your mouth. It was very salty because it was dried out seaweed and you just, Lynne's tasted it, I used to like it actually but then again maybe that's why I like salty food. But it was very, very high in iodine I'm sure and probably very good for you in terms of some of the stuff you need. And then they actually developed a kind of commercial operation, I don't know when it happened, but there was a time for quite a while where they could sell, what's the other kind of seaweed? That they..

LF: Carrageen moss.

JF: Carrageen moss, that they could collect along the shore, and then they would sell it because Carrageenan, which comes from carrageen moss, is used in almost everything. It's in, if you look at your salad dressings carrageenan is an ingredient in salad dressings, it's a thickener, and it's used in lots and lots of stuff, so they could collect carrageen moss and they could sell it, and carrageen moss was also part of a dish my mother would make when somebody wasn't feeling well, and it would make, kind of, almost like a jelly.

LF: Like a milk jelly.

JF: Yeah, like a milk jelly

LF: A milk Jell-o

JF: A milk Jell-o. She would serve people that and she claimed to have cured my one cousin from a really bad case of ulcers with her carrageen moss.

LF: What it's called? I can't---I can't remember the name of it.

JF: Yeah, the dish she makes from it, I don't remember. But that, yeah, there were a lot of things that they would gather. Lobsters were considered garbage fish until there weren't really---until they got a market for them. And then, they would collect them, and they could sell them.

LF: But that's, I think, recently.

JF: I think that's more recently. It's also dangerous along the shore though, because there were cliffs all around the island, and, so there was quite a drop-off. There weren't a lot of ways to get down to the shore in a lot of places, number one. And number two, there were a lot of places where the cliffs would undercut the coastline, so there were actually holes in the ground which would go down, seventy feet down, to the ocean. So you would see---There would be a pasture, and the shore would appear to be a hundred feet off that way, and in the middle of the pasture, there would be a hole that would go straight down. And, they suspected that somebody actually fell into one of those. Somebody disappeared from the island, and they suspected that he had gone into the field to use the bathroom after coming out of the pub, and stepped into one of those, and was washed out by the sea.

LF: I know that they didn't want--there was one really dangerous one that they warned everyone about, but I don't know where it was.

JF: Yeah, and then lots of stories about, there was under---There was a sea cliff, a sea cave, on the island that there's a story about the English slaughtering a whole bunch of Irish people who were hiding there back in the 1800s, I think.

LF: Probably.

JF: Yeah, and apparently there had been a mini revolt, and some English tax collectors had been killed. And, so a group of English troops came onto the island, and so all of the, a whole bunch of men, women, and children hid down in this cave, and somebody made a sound, and they found them, and they all got slaughtered.

LF: A boat went by, and they spied them.

JF: Oh, is that what happened? Ok.

LF: Another lore.

JF: That's another lore, but that's in several of the books about the island. Whether or not it's true or not is another story. Yeah, I'm trying to think what else we can....

KA: Can you talk a little bit about the co—

(Flanagan House Parties) House Parties and Musical Tradition

JF: Singing is a big part of it. Singing was a huge part of it. When I say they would go to visit, I mean on a Sunday, they might go to visit, in the afternoon they might have tea, but they would have impromptu parties at peoples houses all the time, and I got to see those at my house a lot. 'Cause my mother was, she was--I don't know if it was in reaction to the fact that they said she was going to stay home, and take care of her parents, and never get married or what, but she was the social center of the Irish community in Chicago. And almost every weekend, there would be 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 people at our house, and I would have to go in the bathroom, and I was a little kid at the time, soak my head in the sink to get the smoke out of my eyes because, at that point everybody smoked, and everybody smoked in the house, and the smoke was so thick in the house you could not see from one end of the house to the other. But, a big part of that was the music, and different people would sing, different people would play the accordion, the fiddle, and one or two people would play the fiddle and the accordion, and everybody would take turns singing. They would give a song, and that's what they said, "Give us a song". And, we had a couple of relatives who were really good singers. Andrew Early was a really good singer, and they would sing. And, of course, a lot of alcohol got consumed. And a lot---they would do the jig in the middle of the dinning room floor. And then later they would go downstairs too; the whole basement was like a big party room. That was... those were usually Saturday nights. I think those were usually on Saturday nights.

LF: His mother with a stiff leg, I can remember going to a wedding with her and we did the polka together, so I can tell you the stiff leg didn't keep her back at all. She was dancing; nothing could stop her because she loved to have a good time.

JF: And that's how kind of the thing we see here on Beaver Island too, there really is a lot of interest in music on the island, so there are a lot of musical families there's a lot of you know-

LF: Last year at the Music Festiv-no not the music fest. At museum week, they had a whole family up that had the grandfather, and the son, and the grandchildren. There was a whole---They were all fiddlers. I think they were all fiddlers.

KA: So, did your mother play an instrument?

JF: No, she didn't.

KA: Did any of her siblings?

JF: No. And actually, that was pretty sexist, because I don't remember a single person from the Árainn Mhór community where the woman played an instrument. There were a couple of singers, but playing an instrument wasn't---None of the women in the Árainn Mhór community in Chicago played an instrument. Like I said there were singers but not musicians. I don't know what that meant but.....

LF: But…I was thinking when she was knitting---when she learned to knit, she was knitting for Huey, the one whose ulcers she cured when he was a baby, so that's what she was doing. She was knitting little---I don't know if it was... probably little booties or something. That's what she was doing when she was three was getting those... yeah. And the other thing that she was not terribly fond of was she had to go take care of---when any of her sisters had a child, she got to go over there and, I don't know if she went over there for the birth or... She got to go over there and take care of everybody. I think that's another thing that got her off the island really quickly because she did not want---

JF: But that reminds me of another aspect of the whole culture and that is, and I'm sure the Chicago part of it was a reflection of the Árainn Mhór part. Everyone was so close that everyone knew everyone else. Everyone kind of knew everyone else's business. It made them work very, very, very hard to keep the things that were embarrassing private.

LF: Oh boy.

JF: So, there was never a case of you baring your soul to your friends in this community. People, if someone was having trouble because of their husband was drinking everybody else might know it but they would never talk about it. If somebody had a son who had a problem, they would never talk about it you know? But, anyways, whatever family problems you had they would---that was like our business, and I learned that very early on. You never mentioned that to any of the aunts and uncles and anybody else.

KA: That carried on into the Chicago community?

JF and LF: Yes, that carried over, absolutely.

JF: Yeah, everybody else would gossip about what they thought was going on in everybody else's families, but nobody...

LF: So and so had a gay son, well, that's a guess, they would---They would never admit to that.

JF: They would never....

LF: They would say he's fine, just doing great, you know?

JF: He just likes hair products... (phone rings and Lynne leaves for a bit)

Fishing on Árainn Mhór.

KA: If we could go back, How did fishing work on Árainn Mhór? Like, was it for subsistence or did he sell it?

JF: Ahh... interesting point. There was the co-op. That was probably the main thing the co-op did initially was buying fish from the fisherman, and selling it off the island. I am guessing it depended on how successful your catch was. There were times when the fish would run, and you would catch a lot of fish, and the times when fish were plentiful, they would sell them off the island, and they would sell it through the co-

op. And then when, in the off-season when fish were not so plentiful, they would still fish, but the fish then would be for themselves, and also for the other people in the family. As Lynne said before, another family might not have a father in the family. He might have died, he might have been a fisherman who drowned, or he might have been injured, and might not be able to go out and fish. And so if they would get five fish that day, somebody would go down the road and bring one of the fish down to the other family. They would share that kind of stuff a lot.

But yeah, when fish were plentiful, then the fishing would be sold off the island. And I would guess that the crabs were too, but I am not sure. I think that depended on eating fashions elsewhere, so I am not sure when crabs and lobsters became valuable commodities that they could actually sell. Initially, it was the real staple fish, the cod, you know, those kinds of things that they could sell. Salmon. Salmon was big around Árainn Mhór. My mother--oh another thing. They had an interesting relationship with the law. In many ways they were extremely, extremely law abiding people, but if they didn't agree with the law they just didn't pay attention to it. And so, my mother carried that into adulthood, because every year they would go over to Árainn Mhór, and every year when they came back my mother would smuggle one or two full salmon, huge salmon, in her luggage back to Chicago. She would deep freezer them on the Island, she would wrap them in about eight layers of newspaper and about four or five different layers of plastic, and she would hid them in her luggage. They were totally illegal, and then going in the other direction my dad would smuggle fireworks over to Árainn Mhór, because my dad was sort of like, he was an Englishman from Irish background, he was from London, but his great-grandfather was Irish. But he really loved being on Árainn Mhór, and he really loved kids, so he would bring a suitcase full of toys and stuff, but he would also bring lots of fireworks. And fireworks were pretty illegal over there too. So, they didn't pay attention to those kinds of---if they didn't agree with the law they just didn't pay attention to it.

KA: So who was---How did the co-op sort of work? Who was in charge?

JF: Ahh.

KA: Do you know anything about that?

JF: Yeah.... I'm trying to remember his name. There was a gentleman who, I don't know if he founded it or if he took it over, but for fifty years or something there was a man who ran it who was actually called Patty to Cope for co-op, which was his nickname because he ran the co-op. And---but I don't know much more about the actual workings of it. You know, it seems to me that unlike here in Beaver Island, where there was a lot of animosity between the fishermen on the island and the companies that would buy their fish, they really felt they were being taken advantage of, the co-op seems to have been much more in tune and connected to the community. So, I never got that feeling in people talking about the co-op that people really felt like they were abused or taken advantage of in their relationship with it. But that's about all I knew about it.

Farming on Árainn Mhór

KA: And the farming, was that just for subsistence?

JF: Definitely. They definitely didn't sell anything from the farm. Once again, it was shared though, I am sure, especially the larger animals. If you slaughtered a pig, you couldn't consume it all yourself, and there's only so much that you could dry or cure to keep, so you would share with everybody on the island. And by the same token, if somebody else slaughtered a pig two weeks later or a month later, they would share as well. So there was a lot of bartering, and not even bartering so much as "I'll give you this, if you give me that". But, you know, you would give pieces of the pig to ten other families that you were close to, and when one of them slaughtered something, they would share it with you. And, so it wasn't really an economic... it

surely knitted the families together. It tied everybody together because they would count on each other when times were not good.

KA: Was there any schooling on the Island?

JF: Yeah, there was a school. Lynne may remember more about that than I do from what my mother said. There was a school, because the story I remember is my mother's name was Nora Early, and, of course, my mother arrived at school late one day, and she was very embarrassed because the teacher said---what did he say?---Nora Early, you're never early, you're always late. And all the kids in the class laughed at her, and she was very upset about that. She was very little at the time, I'm sure. So, yeah, there was a school. I'm not sure how long they went to it, but yeah, there was a schoolhouse on the island, and it was kind of, you know, ru-it was taught by a schoolmaster. It wasn't taught by nuns like in Chicago, but I don't know how old the kids were when they stopped going.

KA: What---Did they mostly work, or did they get a lot of time to do recreational things?

JF: You know, without any machines to help them just the daily necessities of life, I'm sure resulted in working literally from sundown to sun dusk. Dusk on all---everyday except Sunday. I mean, you know, in the morning, they would have to take care of whatever animals they had, and they would have to weed the potato fields, and they would have to do whatever they had to do out there. They would have to, like I said, card wool and spin it, whatever opportunity they had. They were subsistence living, so, you know, if you don't have food in the larder, even if you can't do anything else on the farm, then you probably go down to the shore and see if you can pick seaweed or---still can't remember the name of that limpet like thing, but you would find things to eat, and if you got extra, there would be ways to put it away. Oh, the other big things was digging peat, 'course there was no trees on the Island, hardly any at all. The island today has many more trees, Árainn Mhór, than it did fifty years ago.

Fifty years ago, literally, the trees on the island almost had names because there was so few of them. You know, there was a tree by this house, the tree by this crossing, there were no trees on the island at all because it had been denuded generations and generations before, and with no trees to protect the landscape from the Atlantic winds and no trees providing seeds for new trees there were no new trees growing. In the last fifty years, a lot of people who have come back---gone back from America to Árainn Mhór have planted trees and there's a lot of trees on the island. But, because there was no trees, they needed something to burn in the fireplaces, and it was peat. And so, they would have to go up the mountain. Each family had their own patch of peat on the bog, and each family would dig out the peat. In fact, Lynne was just reading about this in a book she was reading, that was a kind of interesting book with a little bit of the history of Árainn Mhór in it. I was telling about them digging the peat, but part of what I'm telling them is actually a steal from what you read to me from that book. About how they dug the peat...

LF: The Bog Man. It was a great book by Walter Macken, and I found it as a discard at the--- either the transfer station or else at the museum. Really accurate picture of-

JF: And so, every opportunity they had though they would be doing something. They would be putting in peat for the winter because they didn't know how long the winter would last, so they would go up, they would take the donkey up the mountain---

LF: And the cart.

JF: --and the cart. Dig the peat, stack the peat to dry first on the mountain. If there was dry peat already there, they would take that peat, bring it back, and stack wherever it was that they stored it by the house to burn during the winter. And they would keep doing that. They would use a lot of peat I'm sure, so that was-

LF: Used for cooking. I have no idea about the heating

JF: Yeah. Well, it was from the fireplace.

LF: Cold.

JF: Yeah, but the climate isn't as bad as America, but still it's the Atlantic. The winds probably came in through there something awful, so when you get into November, December, October, you know, all those winter months.

LF: They were always talking about gale force winds. We had gale force seven. We had gale force five, so.

JF: But so they---She was asking what else would they do if they had time, and I was talking about, you know, there really was no leisure time, except on Sunday. I don't think---Or maybe Saturday nights, because they were subsistence living, and so if you had extra time, it wasn't as if you would spend it doing leisure activities. You would spend it doing something that would improve your lot, so that you would be a little bit further away from starvation and deprivation.

LF: Well, it's just like pioneering women here. The women didn't have any extra time; I don't know about the men.

JF: Yeah. Well, some of the men probably had a lot of extra time.

KA: Do you know anything about her mother? What her role was on the island... in Árainn Mhór?

JF: Not much. I mean, we can make suppositions from all the stuff we have been talking about. I mean she was the head of the household. She had to make sure the clothes got made, and the clothes got mended, and the house got cleaned and the food got cooked. Everything got cooked from scratch. You want bread you gotta... you know.

LF: I think it is very interesting that we know very little about her mother. We don't know that much about her father either except that he was so wonderful. And mom was not talked about very much at all. So, I really don't know. So, I don't know what that means but.

Religion on Árainn Mhór

KA: Could you talk a little bit about religion on Árainn Mhór and how-

JF: Well, there's an interesting- well you know--

LF: You told them--- You could tell the church thing again.

JF: Yeah, well, one of the----In fact, I think I have a picture of that. Did I take a picture of that, or see the picture somewhere else? I think I might have taken it. You know after the... when church was on there would be a line of men leaning against the outside of the church building. Like I said, mostly women inside, all the men would be outside having a smoke kind of gossiping or talking to each other. Ahhh, but the really interesting part of the religious thing on the island is the kind of role of the priest, 'cause the priest is almost like the feudal lord on the island, you know. The priest was the one that everyone went to if they had a dispute, to settle disputes. The priest was kind of like the authority on the island. At least in our experience, the priests we've heard about sort of lived like feudal lords. They lived very comfortably, lived off the fat of the land so to speak.

LF: Well, the last ones we heard of. When they would come over to get a benefit, going to raise money for the church.

JF: They seemed mostly---they weren't Jesuits shall we say. (Laughter). And, I don't know how far back that went, but the priest definitely was a central point, and the church definitely was a central point. The people were very religious, almost to a degree of superstition. The lighting of candles was a very strong thing. My mother would always light candles at church for different things. There was a lot of--

LF: Well, the rosary.

JF: The rosary.

LF: Old-fashioned. She was old-fashioned.

JF: Yeah, old-fashioned.

LF: An old-fashioned Catholic. The rosary. The novenas, going back to special masses. I am trying to think if there is anything else. Like I said, I know they said a prayer at night. There was a time when they prayed at night. It was after dinner at night.

JF: I mean, a strong, strong keeping of meatless Fridays. And, the fasting in Lent. All of those kinds of things were very strong. I especially remember fish dinners growing up Fridays. It was fish dinners on Fridays was almost a mix between a religious and a cultural experience. Although, my mother did make some good fish dinners.

LF: Oh yeah, she knew how to cook salmon better than anybody.

JF: And there was…the connection between the people on the Island and the church was very strong.

LF: I'm trying to think if there was anything she did here. I know she had a favorite saint. Saint Martin de Porres, which was unusual because he's black, and from Puerto Rico, or something. I don't know how she got him, but, anyway, that's all I can think of in terms of her religion.

Leaving Árainn Mhór

KA: When did she leave Árainn Mhór?

JF: She left Árainn Mhór in her late teens. I don't know the exact year, or how old she was, but I'm guessing she was sixteen/seventeen, in that area there.

LF: So, what year would that be? I double dare you.

JF: Well, she was born in 1914. So, that would have been 1930-1931. That would make about sense.

AP: And she went to...

JF: Well, she first went to---she went to Scotland, picking potatoes, but like I said, she had a friend, and I think she was working for Painy (sp?), I think the friend worked for Painy, and the friend told her he was looking for a good cook, and mother apparently at that age already....

LF: I don't think she went as a cook first. I think she went as a housemaid.

JF: Oh, ok.

LF: And then, when the war came, she went up, became the cook because they were short of staff.

JF: And my mother could cook just about anything. Painy would brag to all the people about how my mother would get good meat for him and how he would have meat all time.

LF: During the war.

JF: During the war, meat was severely rationed, and he didn't realize that most of it was horsemeat. But when she was done making it into a stew or a casserole, he didn't know the difference.

LF: Yeah. I think what happened was during the war, he had to get rid of all the servants and so she was it. She was the housemaid and the cook.

JF: And took care of the dogs.
LF: She was the housekeeper.

JF: Yeah, must have been quite an eye opener for her because he wasn't royalty, but certainly, he yachted with Sir Tommy Lipton of the Lipton Tea fame. Yeah, he was definitely---- So, it must have been really interesting for her to have lived in that house. So, yeah, quite a transition.

AP: So then, when did she come to America?

JF: 1955. We came over on the S.S. United States. And my father had come over here about a year, almost a year ahead of time to kind of get ready for us. And he got a job and got an apartment, the whole bit.

LF: He was a Sassenach. A cockney. And a Sassenach, I think that's the world they call them in England [Actually a derogatory Scottish term for the English]. He turned out to be very popular.

JF: Yeah, they liked him after a while. They would say he was the only good Sassenach. But uhh..

KA: So did he... Initially there was some animosity there because he was---?

JF: Oh yeah, I mean, English? Yeah. I think they were confused by his name though because he had a good Irish name, Flanagan. But…if you hear my father speak most---a lot of people couldn't understand him. He was cockney, and he spoke in a sort of rhythmic, cockney speech pattern. And when he wanted to he could speak the slang, which was totally incomprehensive, so unless you knew what the things meant... But uh, yeah, anyway, we came over in '55 on the S.S. United States. My mother came over principally because she had sisters over here who told her what a good life it was. She came over here almost literally believing that the streets were paved in gold. In some ways, my father never forgave her for that. He would complain to her, even when they were older about her making him come over to America, even though he did well and he had friends here and stuff. But I don't think he was every totally happy that he had left the old country.

Gaelic

LF: And one thing we should say is that she spoke Gaelic fluently.

JF: Yeah. And in fact, Árainn Mhór, on Árainn Mhór, because it was so isolated that everyone spoke Gaelic naturally to such a degree that when they started setting up the national schools, there is a name for those schools. It's a Gaelic word, so I wouldn't even know it, but when they set up the schools to learn Gaelic, they set up one in Árainn Mhór, and people go there for Gaelic immersion; kind of like the school in Mexico

where you can go to be immersed in Spanish to learn Spanish. And now when I read the website, it isn't as active as it once was, but they have a website and two-thirds of it is in Gaelic.

AP: So did you learn any Gaelic? Did she ever teach you any?

JF: Nothing at all. My mother would use Gaelic when she didn't want me to know what she was talking about. When my mother and the other Irish ladies were sitting around the kitchen table and they switched into Gaelic, I knew something good was being talked about. They didn't want little Jimmy to hear it. Yeah, there was no attempt to teach me Gaelic at all. I think the assumption was you're in America; it's better if you know English. And I mean, we came from England, it was better that I lost my English accent as well, so…

LF: But she never lost hers. He never lost his actually. I mean a lot of people do but they stayed to their accents. My mother couldn't understand my father-in-law at all.

JF: My dad.

LF: She just laughed when she thought it was the right time.

JF: And they would go back every summer. They would go back to Ireland for first a month or two, and later after my dad retired they would go over in May, and wouldn't come back until August/September. They would stay over for half the year almost. And, they would come back with illegal salmon.

LF: Frozen. She always got it back through customs. I am not sure how, she looked like a sweet old lady so I guess no one was worried.

KA: Did she ever talk about what were like the biggest challenges coming from Árainn Mhór to America?

JF: Well, she was bi-lingual. I mean, she spoke English quite well. She had an Irish accent, but she spoke English quite well, having been in England all that time, so there wasn't a language difficulty for her.

LF: I think the skills she brought were those of hearth and home, so, you know, I don't know what her education was but...

JF: But actually, for the most part, she did work when we were young. She worked in a factory that was across the alley from where we lived in Chicago. We grew up next to Wrigley Field, and there was, at that point, a factory on Clark Street there, and she would just walk through the alley. They made capacitors, and she would spin capacitors all day long. And then later, another factory took its place that made pick-up-sticks, and she would make pick-up-sticks all day long. Ahh, but beyond that, the kinds of jobs she got were she worked for a lady on Arlington Place.

LF: She was a nanny.

JF: She was a nanny and she worked for a lady who was down on Getaine on the Lakefront as a nanny.

LF: Miss Frank, as a housekeeper.

JF: Miss Frank, as a housekeeper and a cook occasionally. She would, every year Miss Frank would get like fifty lbs of Damson Plums and my mother would have to come up and make Plum jelly all day long with her.

LF: Even in her eighties, Miss Frank would call and say "Nora", and Nora would go down.

JF: 'Cause that was Miss Frank's big special gift to her special friends, she would give them a jar of homemade Damson Plum jelly. I don't know if she told them Nora made it. I think they all assumed she did, but anyway. So but yeah, it was the hearth and home sort of skills that she used. But adapting to coming to America wasn't hard because just like here on Beaver Island, the Irish community in Chicago was so close and tightly knit that---so, you know, she really didn't have to feel isolated. I mean, when we moved to Chicago, we lived temporarily in an apartment out west near Irving and Harlem, but very soon she moved into an apartment in an apartment building her sister owned, and then after a couple of years there, she bought the building next door, and we moved into that building. Literally by putting planks of wood to cross between the windows of the second floor and walking across between the two windows to move all the furniture from the second floor of the house my aunt owned to the second floor of this other house, and moved in there. And then, we rented the first floor of that house to different groups of Irish boys who would come over to America to work. And my aunt rented the third floor to a cousin of ours, and then when we moved out, the second floor to a cousin of ours. In those two buildings alone, there were five groups of Árainn Mhór residents, which is part of the reason all the parties were at our house. 'Cause my aunt's husband was too dour to ever have a party at his house. He was a pill.

House parties

KA: Do you remember any other specific stories about those parties?

JF: Well, you know, they really did have a kind of pattern to them. I mean people would sit around for quite a while talking, my mother would lay out a big feast. I... my recollection is that she laid it out, but as I think about it, I can't believe that all the other Irish women who came wouldn't bring something. So, I think my mother just made a few basic dishes, and then everyone would bring a tray, and I mean they would have cakes and cookies and bread and just all kinds of stuff, and everybody would bring a bottle, and they would sit around talking, and finally somebody would break out an accordion and start playing, or they would put records on. They would listen to records all the time. The Clancy Brothers and all the other Irish popular people and that was another big part of keeping the Irish community in Chicago together was the Irish Hour. They would listen to the Irish Hour on the radio, and get all the news about what was going on in the community from the Irish Hour as well.

LF: And call in and dedicate a song to so and so or in so and so's memory.

JF: But those parties were a big part of the cement that held everything together. Everyone got together at the parties, and carried on, and had a good time...

LF: And you went to sleep on the coats.

JF: I went to---Yeah, they would put coats all over my bed, and I would fall asleep in the coats.

LF: Yep, that was part of a fifties childhood. Well, sixties for you. I'm older than him, but yeah, my parents weren't Irish, but they drank a lot and partied, and you go to sleep on the coats. I think the only thing Jim took away from the parties was a great distaste for all of it.

JF: Yeah, the smoking and the over use of alcohol and those things. But they... what's happened since then in an off shoot of that is the Irish-American Heritage Center was founded, and a lot of the Árainn Mhór folks were instrumental in founding that and were very involved in it so...

LF: Well, as a matter of fact, what you should do when you go back to Chicago is talk to Michael Boyle who is---He's actually coming up here.

JF: In October, though.

LF: In October, and talk about a good memory, and he's got a house on Árainn Mhór.

JF: And his mother was one of my mother's best friends.

LF: And he really is a good source.

KA: Ok, I will definitely do that.

JF: I'll give you his contact information.

LF: Because James, he was there as a child. He doesn't remember too much of, and he went back as a twenty-year old.

JF: For a couple days.

LF: Just for a couple days. His brother has a fabulous memory for all the bad things we ever did, but he also remembers all the things on Árainn Mhór, but I wouldn't suggest talking to him. Michael would be a much better person.

KA: Were there any other Irish customs or traditions that were able to be maintained in the Chicago community? Like was the religion affected at all by living in Chicago verses Árainn Mhór?

JF: That's interesting. They didn't go to the same church anymore. I mean the group that was in our house would all go to Saint Mary's, which is a local parish, but then she had a couple of cousins who lived about six blocks south on Roscoe, and they would go to Saint Benedict's--no not St. Ben's, Mount Carmel--and then she had some relatives that lived a little northwest, and they would go to Saint Andrew's. I mean everyone was going to a different church because they would go to their community church.

LF: Which is interesting about De Paul because my father worked for De Paul. She had a real connection with father... whatever his name was. She would fix him steak and kidney pie, it was his favorite. He would come... Father Beard?

JF: Father Barret; he was the president of the University actually, at one point.

LF: And, that was a big custom. I don't know. Was that like every year or something? He would drop by for his steak and kidney pie. But I was thinking in terms of--I don't know about the religion, but I was thinking about the food. I don't know what the food in Árainn Mhór was like. If it was a reaction to Árainn Mhór, but you could not have a dinner without having---You would have to have a ham and a roast beef.

JF: Yeah, I think that was in reaction to the poverty, and the fact that you really showed your…conspicuous consumption. What do the Eskimos call it? Potlatch, like, you know...

LF: Well, they didn't give anything away, though.

JF: Well, they gave away all that food to people walked out with. My mother, when my mother would have dinners at the house, it was not a simple dinner. It was---And in fact, she would talk about somebody else's house, it was the same thing, "Oh it wasn't a very good meal they only had a ham". When she would have people over, she would have a salmon, a ham, a roast beef, all of them!

LF: And, then the potatoes.

JF: And then the side dishes, yeah. Potatoes, brussel sprouts.

LF: That was for your father.

JF: I think that was---yeah, there were eighteen---eighty-three million ways to make potatoes. Brucheen was the big favorite. Brucheen is mashed potatoes and-

LF: Cabbage?

JF: No, no. Mashed potatoes with a lot of butter and chopped up onions mixed in. Chopped up green onions. Not onions. Chopped up green onions mixed in. That was brucheen. And yeah... we would eat the left overs from her Sunday dinner all week long well but she would also give it to people to take with them as well. Yeah, she would have everybody. So, she did give it away. Everybody would have to take part, especially the salmon. She would come back from Árainn Mhór with a salmon, and she would cook the whole salmon as soon as she would get back, and she would have everybody over. And I mean, they were big salmon so, you know, we are talking about something that big (about 2.5-3 feet), and so, and then, everyone would have to take some of the salmon home with them.

Gog and Magog

KA: You may not know this, but do you know what kind of dishes your mother would use back on Árainn Mhór? Would she use blue willow?

JF: I don't know about back on Árainn Mhór, she was very--- she had some serving plates that were very important to her that are still up above the cabinets in Cl-

LF: Well, that may be more working for Mr. Panie but nothing from Árainn Mhór that we know about.

JF: Yeah, the only ceramics that we know about from Árainn Mhór are the dogs.

LF: Oh, you don't know the dogs, the china dogs that in front of every fireplace.

AP: Gog and Magog?

LF and JF: Maybe, I don't know.

JF: There are two dogs facing each other, and they are both about that tall, they are white, and they have got some black maybe a teeny bit of red on them.

LF: Gog and Magog, those sound like bad things.

AP: There's different names for them, but I have heard Gog and Magog.

JF: Yeah, and my father actually started collecting them and bringing them back. He's got about four in Chicago now. He would trade people on Árainn Mhór for them, because they didn't care about them anymore, they were old things that were sitting around, so yeah, there's four of them sitting at home now.

LF: The other thing is didn't everybody in Árainn Mhór have a dresser? In quotes a dresser, which is what you have when you go into his parents' house. The first thing you see is a great big glass display case.

JF: For all of your china.

LF: For all of your knick-knacks.

JF: The China case. The China cabinet.

LF: So, I know they had that in Árainn Mhór.

JF: Tea was such a--When I went to Maura's house for tea, it was served in I don't know/remember the pattern, but it was very nice china. Yeah that was in 1968. That was very nice china. And I am sure that was her special china because I was a guest. You know a lot of this depends on how far out of poverty you'd risen. How if your husband was not spending at the tavern, if he's physically fit, if when salmon fishing does occur if he can catch a lot of salmon and sell them so you have housekeeping money. And, if you knit a lot, and if you sell the knitting, and you have housekeeping money from that, if you could collect the carrageen moss and are able to sell it, whatever you can earn money for, then you have money for tobacco, and the baking things you need to have flour around or get ground flour. Those are the kinds of things you'd need. But, then if you have extra after you'd bought those things you need for just basically, what you consider your basic needs, I'm sure everyone liked to have---at least if they acted the same way as they acted in Chicago, they liked to show off the fact that they had made it. And, that was part of the big meals, and that was also part of the big china cabinet, and it was part of, in fact my mother made a big deal when she came back from Ireland one year, of bringing us...what's the pattern called?

LF: Oh my gosh. The richest people we know--he's a banker--we went to their house for dinner and they used that same pattern and it was like "Oh my goodness!" I don't know what it is. It has pink roses on it, and it would be nothing I would ever pick, but it was very expensive. It was very nice of her to do it.

JF: It's from.. what's the... what's the ceramic house?

LF: Doulton?

JF: Yeah, Doulton. I think it is Doulton. Or, it's some big ceramic manufacturer in Ireland, and they went and brought it in. And, we broke the teacup, so I went to look at replacing—no, the teapot---and it was like $125 for a replacement teapot.

LF: We were like "Oh ok. We aren't getting the teapot".

JF: So, yeah she did feel that ceramics were--

LF: I know one of the things she did in America that related to Árainn Mhór was that she got me going to thrift shops, and she would buy clothes for babies, clothes for little kids, and then she would wash them, and get them all nice. And then, she would send them, and these packages would cost a fortune to get over there.

JF: Yeah. She would make a big huge package full of clothes, and send it over.

LF: To different nephews, nieces, their children... umm there's something else that's niggling my mind. Oh! She would send dresses back to her sister, and they would go home and she would always find them, like, discarded in the barn. Sarah didn't want them. Sarah was the one who had to stay home with her mom and dad.

JF: Sarah was the one who did have to stay home with mom and dad. She lived her whole life as a spinster and took care of the parents. Did you have Sarah on that list?

LF: The family decided that everything was going to be done.

JF: You didn't have Sarah on that list you gave me.

LF: Oh, I didn't. Oh yeah, Mary, Briddie, Francis, Kitty, and Sarah.

JF:I didn't think that was enough names.

LF: Mary died. But, she has a child somewhere. I wonder if she died in childbirth or what.

Changes on Árainn Mhór

KA: So when your parents would go back every summer to Árainn Mhór, would your mother and father ever talk about any big changes that they noticed on the Island?

JF: Well, I think electricity was the biggest change.

LF: No, she would talk about how lazy everybody was.

JF: That was a just---

LF: She was really mad about that! Because everyone used to farm, and everybody used to keep animals, and then nobody does. Nobody farms anymore.

JF: Well, that's my mother's interpretation of things.

LF: So, she was very down on the fact that, you know, people were not...

JF: That people could plant their own potatoes, but now, will they plant their own potatoes? No. They just buy them in the store now. And now, the fishing there, there is a problem with the fishing now, and they are really going to have an interesting time of it. But yeah, that was one thing. Electricity was the biggest thing I knew of though. And maybe that's what she attributes the laziness to, because now they had T.V. sets, and now, they, you know. But what was another change that I was thinking about when you said that? I can't remember what that was. That's ok. Well, another big change that's happened to the island is that---the repatriation of Americans back to Árainn Mhór. Quite a few Irish people come out here, have stayed out here 20, 30, 40 years, built up a pretty good bankroll, and gone back to kind of retire on Árainn Mhór. Or, to start a business. Early's pub on Árainn Mhór, which is kind of famous, was started by Andrew Early, whom I talked about singing at those things. And Andrew worked for a National Team for twenty years, and then went back to Árainn Mhór, and did what he had always wanted to do. He bought the Hotel Glenn and opened a pub.

LF: And how many pubs are there in Árainn Mhór?

JF: There's way too many pubs on Árainn Mhór.

LF: Yeah, well, you should tell them.

JF: Well, I don't know the exact number. Nine or eleven, or something like that on a small island.

LF: And, you can get served if you can come up to the bar.

JF: Oh, the other thing I was trying to think about--the other thing she was very upset about though was the battle between the sheep farmers and the people who had dogs. The ongoing battle between the people. Some people, they weren't growing crops, but they were letting sheep run loose on the pastures, and apparently,

some of the people who were keeping sheep, who found it to be quite lucrative, would, like, break down walls that would allow their sheep to roam on other people's property, and also---

LF: Like theirs.

Transportation

JF: Yeah, like my parents' property. Also, were shooting the dogs of other people because they said the dogs were bothering their sheep, or poisoning them. That was... the dogs were being found poisoned. So, there was kind of a battle going on between sheep ranchers, or sheepherders, and the other people on the island. The other thing is an ethnic, or I don't know if it is ethnic or whatever. Ireland, the whole country of Ireland has changed since it has been in the common market. And Árainn Mhór is no different. There are a lot of non-Irish people living on Árainn Mhór. I don't know how many of them there are now that the economy has gone south, but when the economy was good, five or ten years ago, there were a lot of people from Poland, from Central Europe, who were living on Árainn Mhór, who working in the bars, working in the different places, and had literally moved there to work, and that was another friction, because this is a very clannish, tight-knit community, and then you've got these other people showing up. And, it's one thing to have other people showing up. They would get lots of tourism from German and Switzerland and other places. That's fine. Those people only stay two or three weeks. But when people who were not Irish, and were not from Árainn Mhór, started moving to the island and living there, I think there was some friction there too. But what else would my mother have noted? I don't know. I mean the other---transportation has changed a lot. I mean everything was done with a donkey. My father, when they started going back, used to bring a car back every year. He would go over to Northern Ireland, and he would buy a car. He would sneak into---

LF: Carefully go to Northern Ireland he didn't talk at all. Here he is with a Cockney accent. Yeah, he would take someone with him and they would get a car from---

JF: Ledderkenny I think

LF: No, no, no.

JF: Londonderry!

LF: Yeah, Londonderry. Bad place to go.

JF: Well, he was---as long as he didn't talk we was ok. As long as he pretended like he was a deaf mute because he had an American passport and an Irish last name. So he was probably ok, but if a word came out of his mouth that would be the end of him. So, he would bring the car back, and they would use the car that whole four or five-month period, and then they would give it to one of the cousins when he left the island.

LF: And do you know how they used to---Have you seen pictures of how they used to bring cars over before there was the ferry?

JF: They now have a very modern big huge ferry similar in many ways to this one. But before that, it was a big fishing boat. And the fishing boat would be pulled up to the dock and they would put planks across it sideways, and they would drive the car onto the planks, so it would be sitting on these planks across the bow of the boat, and then they would lash it down and then---

LF: The people, his parents, would get in and go over. They were lucky to live. There was one thing she did talk about, and I am sure people on the island would talk about it too, which was the people who that were lost at sea. All the fishermen and relatives.

JF: Well, then the big disaster. I don't remember exactly when that happened, but in the 1930s, I think it was a---When everyone was coming back from potato picking in Scotland, one of the fishing boats was bringing like thirty people aboard back over to Árainn Mhór, and the fishing boat sunk and like only one or two people survived.

LF: Yeah, that was a big... 'cause that would be all the young people. Her parents didn't go. Her father didn't go.

JF: Maybe when he was young he did. We wouldn't have heard about that.

KA: Oh, well, one thing I forgot to ask you earlier was did your mother ever talk about what winters were like on Árainn Mhór?

JF: Not really. No, I mean we can imagine. They only... When my parents first went over to Árainn Mhór, they really had a problem because the house was so cold, and they were not there in the winter. They were there in the fall and spring a little bit. And, so they had central heat put in the house, and they had the house insulated. So, but when my mother was growing up that house wasn't insulated, and they didn't have central heat, and they were out here all winter. So, I am sure it was quite cold.

LF: She never said anything about that.

JF: That's why those wool sweaters came in handy, and wool socks, and wool everything.

KA: Ok, could you talk about--

JF: It was probably dirty too though cause didn't they have a dirt floor in the---Didn't she tell us that? The cottage had a dirt floor?

LF: I really don't know.

JF: I'm pretty sure the cottage had a dirt floor, which would make it pretty hard to keep things clean.

KA: Well, would you mind talking about your connection to this island, Beaver Island?

JF: I think it is tenuous at best. The term I've heard a couple of times, although people won't use it very much, is we're blow-ins. Blow-ins is like something that blows in and blows out again. We are not permanent, and we probably wouldn't be considered permanent until three or four generations are here, 'cause the real island families here have all been here since the 1880s or 1860s or 1870s. So, we're blow-ins, but we really love the island. We've been coming here thirty years. We've only in the last couple of years been finishing this house so we can actually live here for a much longer period of time because then it was pretty expensive to come and stay and rent one of these cottages at $700-800 a week. So, we… the longest we came before that was for about three weeks at a time. And now…

LF: And we rented from John, and now he's somebody we know. He's one of our Island connections, so I mean it's very---

JF: And, he's a blow-in too.

LF: Yeah, he is considered a blow-in.

KA: And, how did you find out about Beaver Island?

LF: Well, my parents came over after a friend of theirs came over and said "Oh, you've got to go because you rent a wreck. Literally you can see the road through the floor of the car, and then you drive around and it's a hoot", more or less is the whole idea. And so they did it, so then my parents did it. They thought it was fun, and then I have no idea why we decided---

JF: Well, we were going around Lake Michigan, and we saw on the map that the ferry to Beaver Island left Charlevoix, and we were going through Charlevoix, so we decided to take a day trip over here. And then after we took the day trip over here, we found out about the connection to Árainn Mhór. And since we were trying to do some genealogical stuff, so we thought well, maybe we can get some genealogical links here, and we came here and we looked at the death records and---

LF: At the church. They were very good.

JF: The cemetery records and stuff, and actually came back again thinking to get more information, finally realizing that there is no way to connect, at least no way we've found, to connect which family of Earlys, the Earlys here on Beaver Island, come from. According to the Árainn Mhór Links book, there are three different Early families on the Island, and the one of them, Hugh Dan Early, is my mother Jimmy Early, and I am sure the other two are related to her, but we don't know how, and with everybody having the same names--Patrick Early is not an uncommon name on Árainn Mhór, so it's really hard to tell.

LF: Actually, we should look up when Patrick Early came to the States. That would be... I don't think we have ever done that.

JF: We tried doing stuff, but we couldn't connect it. There's more records available nowadays though, so maybe we would be able to find something that would help us make the connection. So, then it was the genealogy stuff, and after we had come a couple of times for the genealogy stuff we began to fall in love with the island.

LF: And I met Sheryl who has got a store down on next to Daddy Frank's, and she is---I don't know how to explain it. There was a woman on the island whose name was (? 1:07:00) was like adopted by her, as not like a child, but into her tribe as it were, and they have a separate group that goes over to Garden Island. They are going over starting Sunday maybe. And it's--- I don't know--Menaditowan (sp?) or something. They have a name and Sheryl is a fount of information about Native Americans, so then that was something I was interested in, so we got to know Sheryl, so bit by bit we are meeting people. So, but it's funny. Everybody is, here's a typical example, The people that own Paradise Bay Coffee Shop, who we love dearly, and you should go there anytime you want for anything you want because it's all good.

JF: But, they do eggs perfect. And their smoked whitefish sandwich is to die for.

LF: So they've been coming to the Island for what? Thirty years or so? And they own this restaurant, and they say none of the people from town, like the families, go out there, have ever been out there. So, I mean don't ask me, I have no clue. But that's sort of the way, I mean, other people are quite accepted. I know that there's a lady who just passed away and she'd only been here for what? Maybe eight years? And she made a really strong Island connection with a lot of people and I think....

JF: Well, look at Stoney Acre. Those people aren't from here, but he's Irish. I don't know if that helps number one, and number two, it's a bar, so people can't stay away from it. But, you see all the island families in there.

LF: Yeah, well I was thinking more about the church the real--

JF:--connecting factor

LF: ---way to get integrated, because Gale is very active in that.

JF: John is, too.

LF: Yeah, John is too, so I think that is one of the factors on the Island, which is kind of interesting because there are two churches so. Scandal...

JF: No, there's more than two.

LF: And then, the scandal with the third church, so you know about that right?

JF: Four now actually, when you count the Episcopal.

LF: Oh yeah, the Episcopal Church.

JF: But yeah, that Christian Church broke in half over---they had an organist who turned out to be gay, and members of the community wanted him to be fired, and other members of the community didn't want him to be fired, and so they had a vote and decided not to fire him. But the acrimony split the group into two groups. So, now there's two churches.

LF: But the thing that is funny is when Father Pat, the priest that was so beloved retired, the Christian church has some kind of thing like he's ours too, you know? 'Cause he really was a fabulous guy.

KA: Was there anything that..... Were there any similarities when you were coming here to Beaver Island to the way you were brought up in Chicago, any Irish traditions?

JF: Nobody hit me here.

LF: Oh, that's true. God Jim.

JF: Similarities. Well, the problem of being able to see that is, like Lynne intimated, we've really not been part of the Irish culture here on Beaver Island.

LF: Or in Chicago.

JF: Well, in Chicago, I was as a youth. But I really uhhh--

LF: Jim claims to be English. Let's put it that way. Yep, and when I was doing all those things like pointing out to him, all the fine Irish people, all the fine Irish artists, and oh look Jim this is an Irish choreographer. It's like he's still seeing---

JF: I don't know how to put it.... I saw a lot of the dark side of the Irish culture, shall I say? And so, I kind of distanced myself from it as a young man. And so, and then here on Beaver Island, we are getting to know more and more people, but they seem to be people like us from off the island who are retiring here to the Island, and you know. And who were teachers and/or did something else like that in their previous lives.

LF: So, similarities between here and Chicago... Avoiding the Irish culture, not going to the bars, I mean that's always a way to get to know people. It's a really good way to know people, but we're not doing that. I think I'm more interested in Irish culture than he is.

KA: Would you say the transfer of the music is similar here to the way it was in Chicago?

JF: What I've read and heard about the house party kind of music here is very much like the Irish music in Chicago. I actually got a CD of the house party music here, and it was very reminiscent of music in---Well, even the music in Árainn Mhór has changed drastically.

LF: Country western.

JF: It's well---Early's is a real hot point for Irish music, not just in Árainn Mhór, but across the country and they have a lot of big names. And there is a fusion of rock and Irish traditional music that is taking place with people who play traditional music, but grew up listening to blues, and Stones, and all that kind of stuff.

LF: It's not Fiona Whatever-her-name-is that's on the radio. It's different, as far as we can tell.

JF: They actually have a website if you look at the Early Pub has a website, and if you look at their website, you'll see the kinds of bands they---and it's the same in Chicago if you look at my mother's friend--old friend, my mother's deceased---owns the Abby Pub in Chicago, I don't know if you are familiar with the Abby Pub. It's on Elston Avenue and Bernard. Well, it's on Bernard because William is living on Bernard, and that's the other end of the street. But that makes it about 3300 or 3400 on Elston Avenue, so almost where Elston crosses Kimble.

LF: There's another source for you.

JF: Yeah, and--but the kinds of bands that frequent there---My son will go there and hear a band because they are, you know, much more modern.

LF: Eclectic.

JF: Eclectic and I think the same thing has happened on Árainn Mhór, the same thing that you see out here at the Shamrock. You may see somebody playing the fiddle, but you're more likely to see somebody playing the electric guitar. (Jim takes a break).

Nicknames

KA: I know one thing that they have here are all the nicknames. Would you mind talking about those?

LF: No. My son was James Beg because his grandfather was James Mor ("Big James") and James Beg is "Little James". So, yeah, people still call my son James Beg, which is funny because he is thirty-one. I don't recall anybody else---maybe, it was just the children---but I don't recall anyone else from Chicago being called like "Nora Jimmy". She was just Nora, so the names dropped.

KA: Oh ok. When she came from Árainn Mhór?

LF: 'Cause her friend Gracie, her very, very best friend, Gracie, was just Gracie, nothing more. So, that's all I know about the names. But, we did have a couple names. I'm trying to think of anything else. I'm sure that when you leave, I'll have thought of anything interesting. I'm trying to think of her mother…She was describing her mother to me, and her mother carried the purse around her waist at all times. That's one of the things I remember. She'd be out in the fields, and it would be, you know, like the American pioneer kind of purse, you know? That was what—So, her mother would be out in the field, you know, working with this thing of how much money they had.

KA: Oh, ok.

LF: Yeah. But I'm trying to remember 'cause I'm mixing her up with my grandmother, with the long skirts, and that whole thing.

JF: I heard you ask about nicknames, did you?

KA: Mm-hmm.

LF: Yeah. Don't you think they all more or less dropped? Huey Annie was the only one—Well, we know Huey Annie. That was his cousin. He did have a nickname. But I don't recall—

JF: John Annie.

LF: John Annie. Ok. These are all her nephews.

JF: Yeah, no. See, I think when you're talking about immediate family, they didn't use nicknames, 'cause you knew who you were talking about, 'cause it was immediate family, but as soon as you talk about people in the extended Aran Mohr community, they use the nicknames.

LF: Well, that's not—That's part of your family. Your sister's son--

JF: Yeah, but, well, and if you're talking to him directly or you're talking to his brother, you might say John. But I think if you're talking to somebody else from the Árainn Mhór community, you'd say "John Annie". Yeah. Because you look in those books, there's ten John O'Donnells on the island. You say John O'Donnell to somebody else, they're not gonna know which one you're talking about.

LF: But, I was saying that Gracie, for instance, was just Gracie, and Nellie was just Nellie. They didn't---.

JF: To us, but once again, we only knew those people, so I'm guessing that those names were used as a way of distinguishing, you know, among—And Gracie may not have been Gracie's name. May have been unusual enough. There were not a lot of Graces.

LF: Yeah.

JF: But, once you start getting into the Marys, the Pats, the Johns….

LF: Ok, so I was wrong.

JF: And they do it here too. There was even a part in the comedy sketch we saw—

LF: Beaver Tales.

JF: Yeah, they were talking—It wasn't the Beaver Tales, or was it? The one we saw two weeks ago?

LF: I don't know.

JF: It was called something. But anyway, they did a little sketch about the nicknames on the island. And he was talking about how some of the nicknames actually have to do with what you do. You know, like Jimmy the—something in the lumberyard. And some of them had to do with, you know, who a relative was. And some of them have to do with, you know, with what you look like. Darkytown Road was, you know--That kind of thing. But, as the island gets more diverse, and you start having more Polish names, more German names, more other kinds of names, it becomes less important. And the Irish move off the island, 'cause most of them—Well, I mean, almost every—If you look at each year, when the graduates are graduating from

Beaver Island Community School, from high school, you'll see a list of where they're gonna go to college, and most of them go off to the mainland to go to either junior college or regular college, and once they do that, most of them don't come back. They can't—

LF: Well, they can't—

JF: Yeah. There's no--Unless their family has a business that they can kind of plug into, they have to stay off the island. You know, somebody we were just talking to whose daughter wants to be a vet. Well, you know, there's a vet on the island. There's not gonna be room for two vets on the island. So, if you're gonna be a vet, you're gonna work somewhere on the mainland. So, the Irish children are gradually moving off the island, and the people that are coming on the island are not all Irish.

LF: They're people like us.

JF: Yeah.

LF: What did Nellie--How were Nellie and Mary called?

JF: Moira Wacky. No, none of those.

LF: No, no, no.

JF: There was a nickname though.

LF: Ok. That's what I was wondering.

JF: I don't know what it was.

LF: Ok. So there was a nickname in Chicago. Ok.

KA: Interesting. Interesting. Well, one last question that I like to ask: What have your fondest memories been on Beaver Island? What do you like to do, or places that you like to go?

JF: Well, we've had a lot of them, I think. I mean we really like walking down the trail to Little Sand Bay.

LF: Yeah, that's one of our favorites.

JF: And seeing the—

LF: Harebells.

JF: Harebells. (1:20:07).

LF: Hiking, kayaking.

JF: And we're kind of partial to John Figgin's porch. He's got a fantastic porch overlooking Font Lake, which we hope to replicate here at a later date.

LF: Hiking, kayaking, Fishing.

JF: Peace and quiet.

LF: Yeah. All those things.

KA: Well, that's great! Thank you so much for your time. It's been amazing.